



Dear Friends,

Kathryn and I recently spent two weeks in Erowal Bay, a sleepy little place tucked away on the NSW south coast. We have traditionally travelled north of Sydney for our seaside holidays. This time, we went south. We found it much quieter and colder than past holiday destinations.

We instantly fell in love with the south coast. We loved its pristine beaches, rugged coastline, village vibes, and amazing bushwalks.

We were blessed with wonderful weather, which meant plenty of time outdoors. We did bushwalks, visited nearby towns, watched whales, and trawled through art and craft shops.

There was one activity we participated in that took me by complete surprise. We both packed our swimmers. Just in case. But we didn't expect to use them. That was before we saw Hyams Beach. Wikipedia describes Hyams Beach as:

“a stunning seaside village on the NSW South Coast, famed for having some of the whitest sand in the world ... The area is celebrated for its crystal-clear turquoise waters and pristine, squeaky quartz sand.”

Before we left to visit Hyams Beach, there was no talk of taking swimmers. Instead, we dressed for the cold. Even though it was sunny, the weather was chilly.

When we arrived at Hyams Beach, we were blown away by its beauty. We had the beach to ourselves. We walked the length of the beach and back. By the time we finished, it was almost midday. The sun was beaming down and we felt the warmth of its rays. We felt so toasty while walking the beach, we had removed our jumpers!

Kathryn suddenly said, “Let's go for a swim.” I was flabbergasted! Only hours earlier, we had discussed whether to wear long pants and how many jackets to pack.

We drove back to our accommodation, grabbed our swimmers and towels, and returned to Hyams Beach. When we arrived, we chose a sheltered part of the beach where the waves gently rolled in to shore, nearby to change rooms so we wouldn't have far to go after leaving the water. The midday sun was shining. The water was crystal blue. It was picture perfect! The only problem was the air temperature and icy cold water.

I was apprehensive. How would my body respond to the shock of cold water against bare skin? Unlike me, Kathryn didn't hesitate. She headed straight for the water.

I eventually inched my way in, finally immersing myself in what felt like an ice bath. Despite feeling cold, I have to say it was fantastic. I was also grateful that the sun was still out.

After that first dip, we swam almost every day for the rest of our holidays. Why be so crazy?

One of the main reasons I chose to swim in the middle of winter was that I wanted to immerse myself in God's creation. I didn't simply want to see the water. I had no interest in merely being a spectator. I wanted to be in the water, to feel the water on my body. Swimming in the ocean reminded me that I am an embodied being. I felt fully alive.

That is how I want to live for Jesus. I don't want to be a spectator, but be a participant. To be fully alive. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Having “life to the full” is to follow Jesus in every part of my life. It's to be physically present at church and to break bread with a fellow believer. It's to put away my phone to read the Bible and to go for a walk and pray, It's to give money to church and to call a friend. It's to sit and listen to a person who feels sad, to sing in church with gusto.

God Bless,
Mark Adams