

#Poolfloat: The rise of Instagram-worthy, colourful floaties

Sunbathers lounge on floats in the shape of pizza slices, which when connected form one pizza, on Sand Lake in the Adirondacks near Hadley, New York



Search #poolfloat & there's an endless scroll of babies, dogs, fully grown adults reclining on inflatables of all shapes & sizes. Celebrities do it. Influencers do it. Even dogs are doing it



#LOKIFLOATIE: Instagram star Loki the Wolfdog was seen chilling on a float recently. "A duck and a dog set sail for chill island," the post read

In the beginning, there were inflatable waterfowl. Then came the doughnuts, the unicorn floats and the novelty coffins. Children have drifted out to sea and across lakes on them. They have terrorised highways, carried by the wind. And last year, on Fish Lake in Chisago County, Minnesota, a group of four women stranded on a rainbow unicorn were rescued by local deputies.

With each passing summer, more and more bodies of water are invaded by the species known as the polyvinyl chloride inflatable pool float. Search #poolfloat on Instagram and there's a near endless scroll of babies, dogs and fully grown adults reclining on inflatables of all shapes and sizes. Celebrities do it. Influencers do it. Even ferrets and tiny inanimate dolls are doing it.

The act of lounging on a novelty pool float, or, more specifically, the photographic evidence of one lounging on a novelty pool float, has become visual shorthand for a carefree, idyllic lifestyle. The phenomenon shows no signs of deflating; there has been a spike in searches for "pool float" on Google every summer for the past three years, according to Google Trends. (Popular related search topics include unicorn, swans and pineapple)

HOW TAYLOR SWIFT HELPED IN POPULARISING #POOLFLOAT TREND

While other buoyant devices like the humble pool noodle existed long before photogenic floaties took over, the rise of Instagram-worthy inflatables can be traced back to Taylor Swift. The year was 2015, and Swift posted a picture of her and Calvin Harris (a DJ, and her boyfriend at the time), riding a large inflatable swan on Instagram. That same summer, a flock of floats appeared at Swift's star-studded Fourth of July party.

'THE FLOAT THAT YOU CARRY TO A POOL PARTY AND GATHERINGS DEFINES YOU'

Pool parties and mass gatherings like Coachella are the floatie's natural habitat. In New Jersey, Floats & Boats is a popular festival at Tices Shoal that, as the name implies, celebrates both floats and boats. In a Facebook post, the or-



#VACAYGOALS: Sarah Hyland's float is inspired by a pink convertible with a built-in cooler

CELEBS' LATEST SUMMER TRADITION: TAKING PICS ON COLOURFUL POOL FLOATS

From inflatable swans to giant inflatable pieces of pizza and hot pink flamingos, FOMO-inducing inflatable floats are a hit with celebrities including Miley Cyrus, Emily Ratajkowski, Kendall Jenner and Justin Bieber, among others, who are often spotted enjoying their vacations and lounging by the pool

ganisation behind the event, now in its fourth year, encouraged attendees to bring only "really cool" floats, adding that "round tubes and noodles are not allowed unless they are doughnuts or seamonsters of sorts." (The event, formerly known as Floatchella, underwent a name change after receiving a cease and desist letter from Coachella last year.)

The festival is the brainchild of Nicole Cesario, 26, and Marissa Laudati, 27, childhood friends who grew up on the Jersey Shore. They first got the idea to throw one after seeing how much attention their personal pizza floats drew from beachgoers in 2015. "Everyone looks cute on a float," Laudati said. "It's not just, 'Hey, I'm standing on this body of water.' It can go along with your outfit - it just adds to your outfit appeal or aesthetic, your brand, in a way. You keep seeing new ones you want to buy even if you already have one," she said, adding, "It's like a lifestyle. It makes for a really cool Instagram opportunity that celebrities are able to do. Now you post and it's like you're one of them." Though Cesario and Laudati consider pineapples "basic float bait", that is, not very original, they said fruit-themed floats and oversize inflatables continue to be big trends in the float-o-sphere. They have even spotted an inflatable bull-riding float that rocks with the waves. "It's like a statement," Cesario said. "The float that you bring defines you." Sanam Yar/New York Times

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