

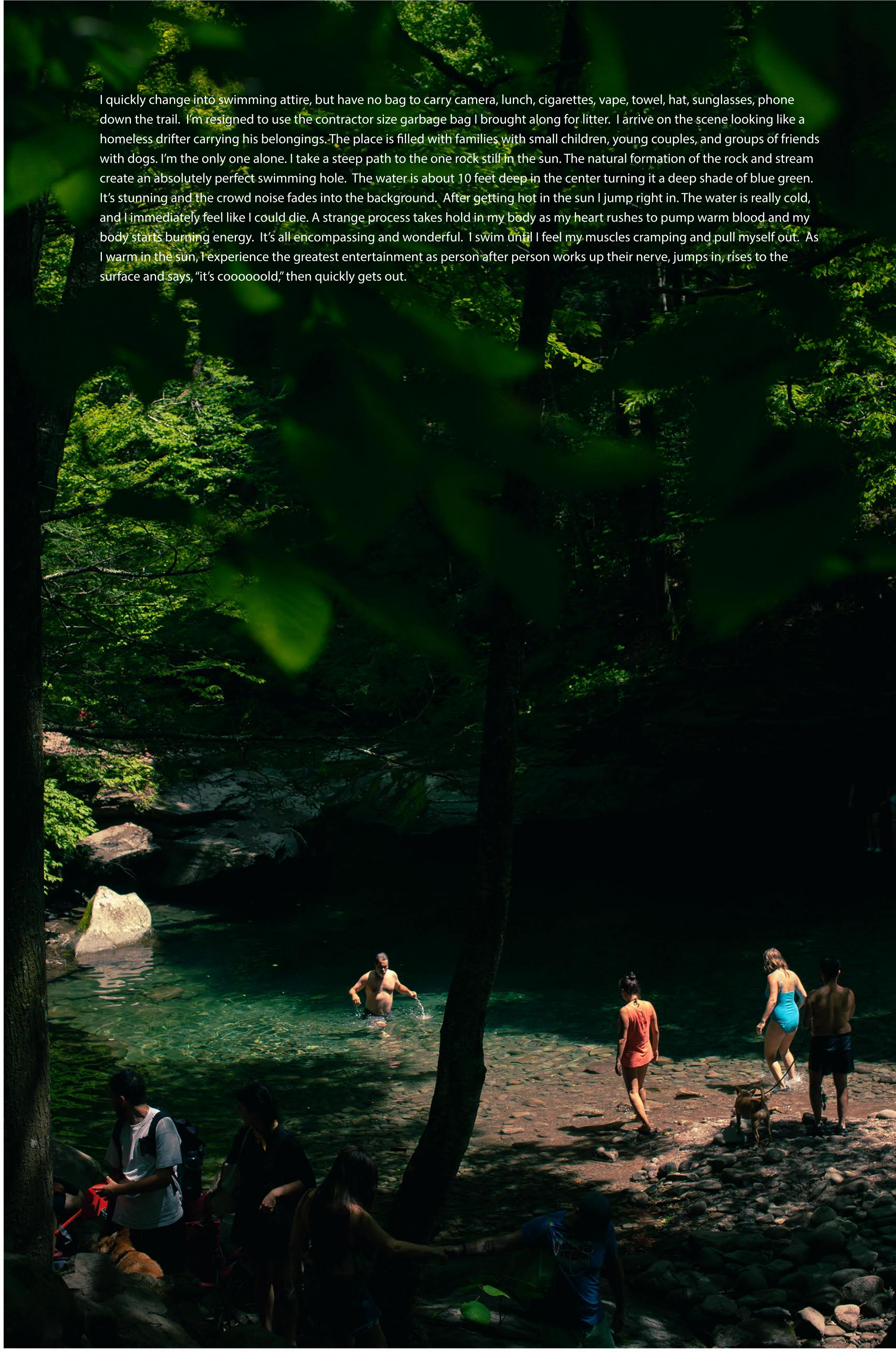
1mlost: Peekamoose Blue Hole

Dipping in the cold waters of the Fjords in Norway has awoken an addiction to cold water. There are only a few things that can evoke such an intense physical sensation as getting hot and then plunging into cold water. I live about an hour from one of the coldest, most ideal swimming holes in upstate NY. I've ridden past it a bunch of times and knew it must be good by the amount of no parking and posted signs hung at every feasible pull-off along a 3 mile stretch.

It's Friday. I'm paid my 2.75 to the parks department (7.75 service fee to Reserve America) to obtain the necessary permit for the chance to swim at Peekamoose Blue Hole. I stop to pick up a packed lunch at Barryville General, head up Rt. 55, meet back up with Rt. 42, left towards Sundown and I'm in Peekamoose Valley. It's a nice twisty road, but you can't trust the surface. The State has erected a temporary sign board explaining that a permit is required for Peekamoose Blue Hole. The posted signs get frequent and the parking lots start to fill about a mile from the Blue Hole. Motorcycles excel at parking and I pull right into the main lot, next to a table of permit-checking employees of something called The Catskill Center. It sounds like a place to take an aging feline. They approach me as if they are about to give me the bad news. Their faces brighten when I tell them I have a permit. Onyx tells me that they turned away 800 people without permits this past Saturday. Permits are capped at 76 people.



I quickly change into swimming attire, but have no bag to carry camera, lunch, cigarettes, vape, towel, hat, sunglasses, phone down the trail. I'm resigned to use the contractor size garbage bag I brought along for litter. I arrive on the scene looking like a homeless drifter carrying his belongings. The place is filled with families with small children, young couples, and groups of friends with dogs. I'm the only one alone. I take a steep path to the one rock still in the sun. The natural formation of the rock and stream create an absolutely perfect swimming hole. The water is about 10 feet deep in the center turning it a deep shade of blue green. It's stunning and the crowd noise fades into the background. After getting hot in the sun I jump right in. The water is really cold, and I immediately feel like I could die. A strange process takes hold in my body as my heart rushes to pump warm blood and my body starts burning energy. It's all encompassing and wonderful. I swim until I feel my muscles cramping and pull myself out. As I warm in the sun, I experience the greatest entertainment as person after person works up their nerve, jumps in, rises to the surface and says, "it's coooooold," then quickly gets out.



I left my cigarettes in the bike and it's not really the place for smoking with all the children. When I arrive back at the parking lot, Onyx is arguing with someone from the Bronx because there is no WiFi. "I drove two and half hours and there's no WiFi. How can there be no WiFi?" The lesson being: don't go traveling to find the comforts of home.



I return for another few dips in the water. As I swim, various children throw rocks into the pool around me. A fully dressed father with a t-shirt proclaiming "Above Average Dad" is throwing a huge magnet into the water. I snap and peddle the water. I see a few people looking at me like I'm the creepy, trash bag, solo, pedophile at the swimming hole, so I pack up and head out.



The bike is telling me it's 98 degrees and I'm wearing shorts, a t-shirt, an airbag vest, a black heavily padded jumpsuit, but the cooling effect of the water lingers for over 30 minutes. Peekamoose Blue Hole is a place to experience. As with all truly great places, it attracts a lot of people. People need these spaces and the scarcity of this tiny swimming hole indicate there is a shortage of easily obtained beauty in this world. A permit is required.