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How the Summer of Atomic Bomb Testing Turned the Bikini Into a Phenomenon

The scanty suit's explosive start is intimately tied to the Cold War and the nuclear arms race



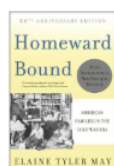
Nude dancer Micheline Bernardini models the first bikini in Paris, France. (Bettmann/CORBIS)

By [Jennifer Le Zotte](#)
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MAY 21, 2015

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The cover of this year's *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, featuring a honey-haired model tugging at the bottom of her snake-print string bikini, generated swift reaction. The steamy glimpse of her pelvis prompted howls of outrage—risque, racy, inappropriate, pornographic, [declared](#) the magazine's detractors. "It's shocking, and it's meant to be," wrote novelist Jennifer Weiner in the *New York Times*.

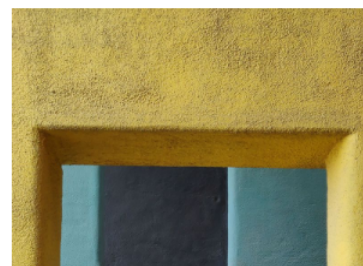
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But when French automobile engineer-cum-swimsuit designer [Louis Réard](#) launched the first modern [bikini](#) in 1946, that seemingly skimpy suit was equally shocking. The Vatican formally decreed the design sinful, and several U.S. states banned its public use. Réard's take on the two-piece—European sunbathers had worn more ample versions that covered all but a strip of torso since the 1930s—was so flesh-baring that swimsuit models were unwilling to wear it. Instead, he hired nude dancer [Micheline Bernardini](#) to debut his creation at a resort-side beauty pageant on July 5, 1946. [These](#) [read](#) [about](#) the "functional fashion" — "bikini."

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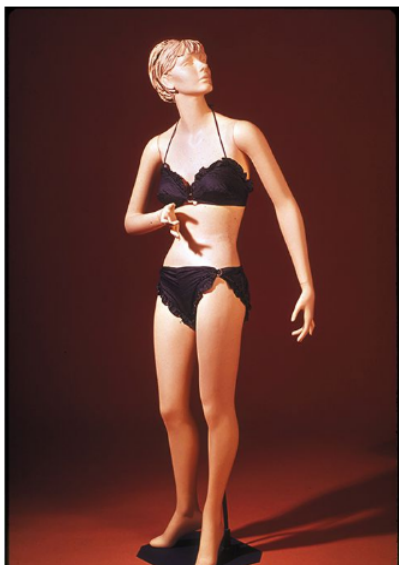
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There, Réard dubbed the four triangles of nothing a bikini, named after the Pacific Island atoll that the United States targeted just four days earlier for the well-publicized “Operation Crossroads,” the nuclear experiments that left several coral islands uninhabitable and produced higher-than-predicted radiation levels.

Réard, who had taken over his mother’s lingerie business in 1940, was competing with fellow French designer Jacques Heim. Three weeks earlier, Heim had named a scaled-down (but still navel-shielding) two-piece ensemble the *Atome*, and hired a skywriter to declare it “the world’s smallest bathing suit.”

Réard’s innovation was to expose the bellybutton. Purportedly, Réard—who hired his own skywriter to advertise the new bikini as *smaller* than the world’s smallest bathing suit—claimed his version was sure to be as explosive as the U.S. military tests. A bathing suit qualified as a bikini, said Réard, only if it could be pulled through a wedding ring. He packaged the mere thirty squares inches of fabric inside a matchbox. Though Heim’s high-waisted version was embraced immediately and worn on international beaches, Réard’s bikini would be the one to endure.



A bikini designed by the California swim suit company Mabs of Hollywood is held in the Smithsonian collections. (National Museum of American History)

Beyond Europe, reception for Réard’s teenie, weenie bikini was as lukewarm as the San Tropez shores that inspired the *all but bare-bottomed* design. U.S. acceptance of the suit would require not only bikini-clad appearances on the silver screen by Brigitte Bardot, but also by Disney’s wholesome mouseketeer Annette Funicello. A later version of the bellybutton-baring bikini is held in the collections of Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. It was designed by Mabs of Hollywood and dates to the 1960s and is quite modest compared to Réard’s initial conception.

World War II rations on fabric set the stage for the bikini’s success. A U.S. Federal law enacted in 1943 required that the same synthetics used for bathing-suit production be reserved for the production of parachutes and other frontline necessities. So the thrifter two-piece suit was deemed patriotic—but of course, the design modestly hid the bellybutton, not unlike the halter-topped “retro” swimsuits famously favored today by pop superstar Taylor Swift. In the meantime, Mabs of Hollywood, the designer of the shiny black Smithsonian suit, gained its reputation making those modest two pieces during World War II, when American fashion mavens were limited to stateside designers.



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The competition between swimsuit designers in 1946 laced with language related to the new weapons of mass destruction was not just a curious fluke. Historians of the Cold War Era such as the authors of *Atomic Culture: How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* have noted that advertisers capitalized both on the public's lurid fascination, as well as its fear, of nuclear annihilation.

One of the hot stories of the summer in 1946 was [the naming of the first Operation Crossroads bomb](#) after actress Rita Hayworth. All summer, international news reports buzzed with details of the Pacific Island nuclear tests designed to study the effects of atomic weapons on warships, and the homage to the leggy star was no exception.



Actor Orson Welles, who happened to be married to Hayworth at the time, broadcast a radio show on the eve of the first bomb's release near the Bikini Atoll. He added a "footnote on Bikini. I don't even know what this means or even if it has meaning, but I can't resist mention of the fact that this much can be revealed concerning the appearance of tonight's atom bomb: it will be decorated with a photograph of sizeable likeness of the young lady named Rita Hayworth." An [image of the star](#) was stenciled onto the bomb below *Gilda*, her character's name in the current film of the same name, whose trailer used the tagline: "Beautiful, Deadly. . .Using all a woman's weapons."

In that same radio show, Welles mentioned a new garishly red "Atom Lipstick" as an example of "the cosmetic being fashioned according to the popular conceptions of the original war-engine." That very week, Réard would offer the bikini as yet another, more enduring example of the same.

Equating military conquest and romantic pursuits is nothing new—we've all heard that "all's fair in love and war." But this trope got considerably sexed up during the war between the Axis and the Allies. Pin-up girls pasted on the noses of WWII bombers ("[nose art](#)") kept American soldiers company on long tours, and the sexy songstresses who entertained troops were dubbed "bombshells." But an even weirder tone to the innuendoes crept into the lingo once nuclear weaponry appeared. Women's bodies, more readily on display than ever before, became dangerous and tempting in magazine advertisements, even weaponized in competitions like the 1957 [Miss Atomic Bomb](#) champion. The scandalously scant bikini was simply an early example of this postwar phenomenon.





Designer Louis Réard, seen here in 1974, invented the modern bikini in 1946, naming it for the location of the testing site for the atomic bomb. (Bettmann/CORBIS)

Allusions to nuclear destruction multiplied after Russia developed its A-bomb in 1949 and the Cold War escalated. In the battle between capitalism and communism, economic growth took top billing. Tensions between the U.S. and Russia included debates over which system provided the best “stuff” for their citizens—like the famous 1959 “[Kitchen Debates](#)” between then vice-president Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev over which country’s “housewives” had better home conveniences. Technological resources and consumer satisfaction became a popular measure of Cold War American success.

As Cold War anxieties grew, Americans bought more consumer goods and a greater variety of them than ever before. *Mad Men*-style advertisers and product designers eager to capture valuable consumer attention played to the public’s fixation with nuclear disaster—and its growing interest in sex. Hit songs like “Atomic Baby” (1950) and “Radioactive Mama” (1960), paired physical allure and plutonium effects, while Bill Haley and the Comets’ 1954 hit “[Thirteen Women](#)” turned the fear of nuclear catastrophe into a fantasy of masculine control and privilege. All in all, a startling number of the songs in [Conelrad’s collection of Cold War music](#) link love, sex and atomic disaster.



Brigitte Bardot, playing the role of Javotte Lemoine, waves from the shore in a scene from the 1952 French comedy *Le Trou Normand*. (Bettmann/CORBIS)

We all know sex sells. In 1953—the same year Senator Joseph McCarthy’s widely publicized communist witchhunt peaked and the Korean War suffered its dissatisfying denouement—Hugh Hefner upped the ante with his first, Marilyn Monroe-festooned issue of [Playboy](#). The 1950s *Playboy* magazines did not just sell male heterosexual fantasies; they also promoted the ideal male consumer, exemplified by the martini-drinking, city-loft-living gentlemen rabbit featured on the [June 1954 cover](#). The bikini, like lipstick, girly mags, blockbuster films and pop music, was something to buy, one of many products available in capitalist countries.

Clearly, plenty of American women chose to expose their tummies without feeling like dupes of Cold War politics. Women’s own preferences had a firm hand in shaping most 20th-century fashion trends—female sunbathers at St. Tropez reportedly inspired Réard’s trim two piece because they rolled down their high-waisted suits to tan. But if the 2015 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue controversy is any

indication, the bikini is *still* all about getting an explosive reaction. The barely-there beachwear's combative reputation, it seems, has a half-life not unlike plutonium. So maybe, given the bikini's atomic origins and the continuing shock-waves of its initial detonation, pacifism (along with Brazilian waxes and punishing ab routines) gives women another reason to cover up this summer—a one-piece for peace?



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Jennifer Le Zotte teaches history and humanities at the University of Nevada, Reno. She writes on dress, gender and capitalism, and is the author of the book [From Goodwill to Grunge: A History of Secondhand Styles and Alternative Economies](#).
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FASHION

A Brief History of the Bikini

How the tiny swimsuit conquered America.

By JULIA TURNER

JULY 03, 2015 • 3:10 PM

This holiday weekend, Americans will be cavorting on the beach, many of them in swimwear that covers as little as possible. In 2006, Julia Turner traced the history of the bikini to explain its exploding popularity. The article is reprinted below.

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Micheline Bernardini, 1946.

Sixty years ago, the world's first bikini made its debut at a poolside fashion show in Paris. The swimsuit is now so ubiquitous—and comparatively so demure—that it's hard to comprehend how shocking people once found it. When the bikini first arrived, its revealing cut scandalized even the French fashion models who were supposed to wear it; they refused, and the original designer had to enlist a stripper instead. The images below illustrate how the bikini slowly gained acceptance—first on the Riviera, then in the United States—and became a beachfront staple.

When the bikini was unveiled in 1946, it was by no means the first time that women had worn so revealing a garment in public. In the fourth century, for example, Roman gymnasts wore bandeaus, bikini bottoms, and even anklets that would look perfectly at home on the

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bandeau tops, bikini bottoms, and even anklets that would look perfectly at home on the beaches of Southern California today.

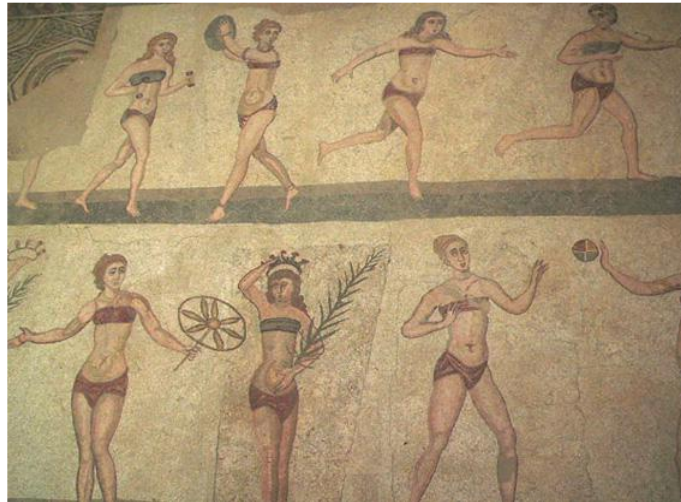


Image of the "bikini girls" mosaic at the Piazza Armerina in Sicily.

Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

At the turn of the 20th century, though, such displays would have been unthinkable. Female swimmers went to extraordinary lengths to conceal themselves at the beach. They wore voluminous bathing costumes and even made use of a peculiar Victorian contraption called the bathing machine, essentially a small wooden or canvas hut on wheels. The bather entered the machine fully dressed and donned her swimming clothes inside. Then, horses (or occasionally humans) pulled the cart into the surf. The bather would disembark on the seaside, where she could take a dip without being observed from the shore.



Woman perching on the edge of a bathing machine at an Ostend, Belgium, beach.

Photo by Topical Press Agency/Getty Images



Annette Kellerman circa 1905.

Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images

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In the decades that followed, the seaside dress code loosened up considerably. In 1907, Australian swimmer and silent-film star Annette Kellerman—a vocal advocate of more hydrodynamic swimwear—was charged with indecent exposure for appearing on Boston's Revere Beach in a form-fitting, sleeveless tank suit. The ensuing high-profile legal scuffle led beaches across the nation to relax their swimwear restrictions. By 1915, American women commonly wore one-piece knitted maillots.

Oddly enough, the two-piece swimsuit—which usually consisted of a structured halter top and modest bottom that covered the navel, hips, and derrière—arrived with much less fanfare than the bikini. By the early '40s, film stars including Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, and Lana Turner were all wearing the two-piece, and it was seen frequently on American beaches. Why were the inches of skin above the bellybutton so much less controversial than those below it? Hollywood's Hays production codes allowed two-piece gowns but prohibited navels on-screen. That meant the rib cage earned a ho-hum reputation, but the bellybutton was uncharted territory.



In the 1940s—as Kelly Killoren Bensimon details in [The Bikini Book](#)—attractive women were known as “bombshells,” and anything intense was “atomic.” So, when two Frenchmen independently designed skimpy alternatives to the two-piece in the summer of 1946, both suits got nuclear nicknames. [The first designer, Jacques Heim, created a tiny suit called the *atome*.](#) The second, Louis Reard, introduced his design on July 5, four days after the United States had begun atomic testing in the Bikini Atoll. In a rather bold marketing ploy, Reard named his creation *le bikini*, implying it was as momentous an invention as the new bomb.

Thanks to its provocative name and cut, the bikini made international headlines. Photos of Micheline Bernardini, the stripper Reard had enlisted to model it, circulated across the globe. But in the United States, women—including actresses in movies like 1947's [My Favorite Brunette](#) and the model on [this 1948 cover of Life magazine](#)—stuck with the traditional two-piece.



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Poster of My Favorite Brunette, 1947.

Image courtesy Everett Collection

In 1950, *Time* interviewed American swimsuit mogul Fred Cole and reported that he had “little but scorn for France’s famed Bikini bathing suits,” because they were designed for diminutive Gallic women. “French girls have short legs,” he explained to *Time*. “Swimsuits have to be hiked up at the sides to make their legs look longer.”



Brigitte Bardot at the 6th International Cannes Film Festival, 1953.

Photo by LIDO/SIPA

Whether or not the thong ever makes it out of the lingerie drawer, though, the bikini is here to stay. Still, like most sexagenarians, it’s gotten a bit tame: It still has the power to titillate, but it’s lost the power to shock.

Just three summers later, though, the bikini had established a beachhead on these shores. This was in large part because of the increasing popularity of the private pool, which gave women a secluded place to test out the new look. A Neiman Marcus buyer classified the bikini as “a big thing” for 1960. Brian Hyland also had a hit that year with the song “Itsy Bitsy, Teenie Weenie, Yellow Polka Dot Bikini,” which takes on new meaning when you realize the swimsuit was still catching on at the time. No wonder the song’s protagonist was “afraid to come out of the water.”

OUT OF THE WATER



| Bikini beach scene 1965

Still from *Dr. No*.

Photo courtesy Everett Collection.

The bikini soon became ubiquitous. In 1965, a woman told *Time* it was “almost square” not to wear a bikini—which, given the outlet, suggests she was right. In 1967 the magazine wrote that “65% of the young set had already gone over.” The *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue debuted in 1964—with [a white bikini on the cover](#). And the swimsuit’s increasing popularity was reinforced by its appearance in contemporary movies like Annette Funicello’s *How To Stuff a Wild Bikini* and Raquel Welch’s *One Million Years B.C.* One of the bikini’s earliest and most memorable film roles came in the 1962 Bond film *Dr. No*. (A journalist who saw an advance screening reported, “Actress Ursula Andress fills a wet bikini as if she were going downwind behind twin spinnakers.”)

The bikini certainly complemented the va-va-voomery of Raquel Welch and her peers, who tended to be busty and a little soft in the middle. (In early bikini shots, stomachs are often evidently sucked in.) But the 1970s saw the rise of models like [Cheryl Tiegs](#), who possessed the athletic figure that, for the most part, remains in vogue today. The advent of this lean ideal led many women to wonder: Who, exactly, should wear the bikini? In the 1960s, Emily Post decreed, “It is for perfect figures only, and for the very young.” Since then, though, a number of swimwear designers (most notably [Malia Mills](#)) have encouraged women of all ages and body types to take up the style.

Bensimon’s lively *Bikini Book* splits the difference on this question. In one Q&A, the author asks venerated swimwear designer Norma Kamali who shouldn’t wear the bikini. She responds, “Anyone with a tummy.” Eighty-odd pages later, though, professional beach volleyballer Gabrielle Reece (who competes in a bikini) declares that “confidence” alone can make the abbreviated swimsuit sexy. Easy for her to say.



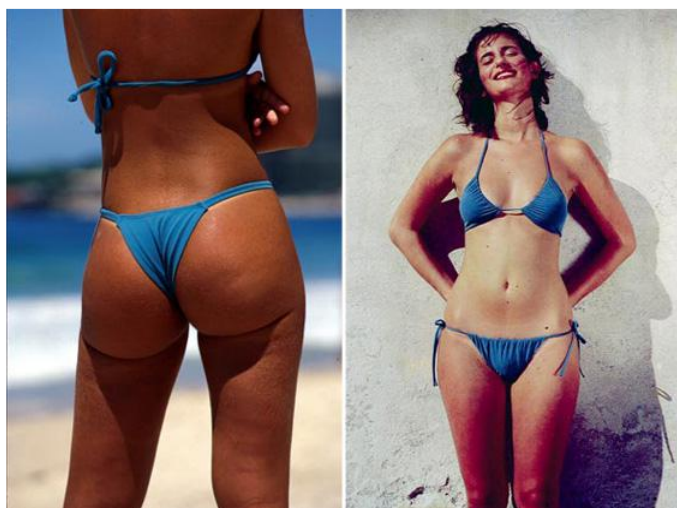
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Cheryl Tiegs, late 1970s swimsuit poster; volleyball player/actress Gabrielle Reece appears on the set of *Cloud Nine* at Will Rodgers State Beach on May 12, 2004 in Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Photos courtesy Everett Collection; Stephen Shugerman/Getty Images

Today, you have to wonder whether the thong bikini—which first appeared in Brazil in the 1970s but has since made scant inroads here—will ever become common on American beaches. Never, you say? It's a suspect garment favored by licentious Latin types? Exactly what Americans used to think about the bikini.



Thong bikinis at Copacabana Beach, Brazil; woman in bikini.

Photos by Eric Slomanson/ZUMA Press; AFP/Getty.



Fashion

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History of the bikini

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Evidence of bikini-style women's clothing has been found as early as 5600 BC, and the **history of the bikini** can be traced back to that era. Illustrations of women wearing bikini-like garments during competitive athletic events in the **Roman era** have been found in several locations, the most famous of which is at *Villa Romana del Casale*.

Although two-piece bathing suits were being used by women as early as the 1930s, the bikini is commonly dated to 1946, when partly due to material rationing after *World War II*, French engineer **Louis Réard** introduced the modern bikini. It modeled by **Micheline Bernardini**, on July 5, 1946, the name for his design borrowing from the **Bikini Atoll**, where post-war testing on the **atomic bomb** were taking place.

French women welcomed the design but the **Catholic Church**, some media, and a majority of the public initially thought the design was risqué or even scandalous. Contestants in the first **Miss World beauty pageant** wore them in 1951, but the bikini was then banned from the competition. Actress **Brigitte Bardot** drew attention when she was photographed wearing a bikini on the beach during the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1953. Other actresses, including **Rita Hayworth** and **Ava Gardner**, also received press attention when they wore bikinis. During the early 1960s, the design appeared on the cover of *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated*, giving it additional legitimacy. **Ursula Andress** made a huge impact when she emerged from the surf wearing what is now an **iconic bikini** in the James Bond movie *Dr. No* (1962). **The deer skin bikini Raquel Welch** wore in the film *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) turned her into an international sex symbol and was described as a definitive look of the 1960s.

The bikini gradually grew to gain wide acceptance in **Western society**. According to French fashion historian **Olivier Saillard**, the bikini is perhaps the most popular type of female beachwear around the globe because of "the power of women, and not the power of fashion". As he explains, "The emancipation of swimwear has always been linked to the emancipation of women."^[1] By the early 2000s, bikinis had become a US\$811 million business annually, and boosted spin-off services like **bikini waxing** and **sun tanning**.^[2]



Woman wearing bikini in Chicago (1973)

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In antiquity [edit]

Pre-Roman [edit]

In the **Chalcolithic** era of around 5600 BC, the mother-goddess of **Çatalhöyük**, a large ancient settlement in southern **Anatolia**, was depicted astride two leopards while wearing a bikini-like costume.^[3] Two-piece garments worn by women for athletic purposes are depicted on Greek **urns** and paintings dating back to 1400 BC.^[4] Active women of ancient Greece wore a **breastband** called a *mastodeton* or an *apodesmos*, which continued to be used as an undergarment in the **Middle Ages**.^[5] While men in ancient Greece abandoned the *perizoma*, partly high-cut **briefs** and partly loincloth, women performers and acrobats continued to wear it.^[6]



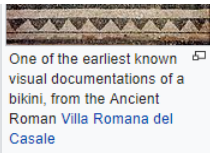
Leather thong bottom from the time of Roman Britain

Roman [edit]

See also: *Clothing in ancient Rome*



Artwork dating back to the **Diocletian period** (286-305 AD) in *Villa Romana del Casale*, **Sicily**, excavated by **Gino Vinicio Gentili** in 1950-60, depicts women in garments resembling bikinis in **mosaics** on the floor.^{[1][7]} The images of ten women, dubbed the "Bikini Girls",^[8] exercising in clothing that would pass as bikinis today, are the most replicated mosaic among the 37 million colored tiles at the site.^[9] In the artwork "Coronation of the Winner" done in floor mosaic in the Chamber of the Ten Maidens (*Sala delle Dieci Ragazze* in Italian^[10]) the bikini girls are depicted weight-lifting, discus throwing, and running. Some activities depicted have been described as dancing.^[11] as their bodies resemble dancers rather than athletes.^[12] Coronation in the title of the mosaic comes from a woman in a **toga** with a crown in her hand and one of the maidens holding a palm frond.^[7] Some academics maintain that the nearby image of **Eros**, the primordial god of lust, love, and intercourse, was added later, demonstrating the owner's predilections and strengthening the association of the bikini with the erotic.^{[13][14]} Similar mosaics have been discovered in **Tellaro** in northern Italy and **Patti**, another part of Sicily.^[15] Prostitution, skimpy clothes and athletic bodies were related in ancient Rome, as images were found of female sex workers exercising with **dumbbells/clanners** and other equipment



One of the earliest known visual documentations of a bikini, from the Ancient Roman *Villa Romana del Casale*

located in ancient Rome, as images here found of female sex workers exercising with *subligaria*, *flappers* and other equipment wearing costumes similar to the Bikini Girls.^[16]

Charles Seltman, a fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge, curator of the Archaeology Museum there and an editor of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, illustrated a chapter titled "The new woman" in his book *Women in Antiquity* with a 1950s model wearing an identical bikini against the 4th-century mosaics from *Piazza Armerina* as part of a sisterhood between the bikini-clad female athletes of ancient Greco-Romans and modern woman. A photograph of the mosaic was used by Sarah Pomeroy, Professor of Classics at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, in the 1994 British edition of her book *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* to emphasize a similar identification.^[17] According to archeologist George M.A. Hanfmann the bikini girls

made the learned observers realize "how modern the ancients were".^[18]

In ancient Rome, the bikini-style bottom, a wrapped loincloth of cloth or leather, was called a *subligar* or *subligaculum* ("little binding underneath"), while a band of cloth or leather to support the breasts was called *strophium* or *mamillare*.^[20] The exercising bikini girls from Piazza Armerina wear *subligaria*, scanty briefs made as a dainty version of a man's *perizoma*, and a *strophium* band about the breasts, often referred to in literature as just *fascia*, which can mean any kind of bandage. Observation of artifacts and experiments shows bands had to be wrapped several times around the breasts, largely to flatten them in a style popular with flappers in the 1920s.^[21] These Greco-Roman breastbands may have flattened big breasts and padded small breasts to look bigger. Evidence suggests regular use.^[22] The "bikini girls" from Piazza Armerina, some of whom sport the braless look of the late 20th century, do not depict any propensity of such popularity in style.^[21] One bottom, made of leather, from Roman Britain was found in a first century AD well in London, "Bodies at the Museum of London", 1998-11-01</ref> There has been no evidence that these bikinis were for swimming or sun-bathing.^[23]

Finds especially in Pompeii show the so-called Roman goddess Venus wearing a bikini. A statue of the so-called Venus in a bikini was found in a cupboard in the southwest corner in Casa della Venere, others were found in the front hall.^[24] A statue of the so-called Venus was recovered from the *tablinum* of the house of Julia Felix,^[25] and another from an atrium in the garden at Via Dell'Abbondanza.^[26] Naples National Archaeological Museum, which opened its limited viewing gallery of more explicit exhibits in 2000, also exhibits a "Venus in Bikini".^[27] However, the Naples National Archaeological Museum is keen to stress that this statue actually depicts her Greek counterpart Aphrodite as she is about to untie her sandal, a common theme among other works depicting Aphrodite.^[19] The museum's exhibits include female statues wearing see-through gold lamé brassiere, basque and knickers.^[28] The Kings of Naples discovered these Pompeii artifacts, including the one meter tall, almost unclothed statue of Venus painted in gold leaf with something like a modern bikini. They found them so shocking that for long periods the secret chamber was opened only to "mature persons of secure morals". Even after the doors were opened, only 20 visitors were to be admitted at a time, and children under 12 were not allowed into the new part of the museum without their parents' or a teacher's permission.^[27]

There are references to bikinis in ancient literature as well. Ovid, the writer ranked alongside Virgil and Horace as one of the three canonical poets of Latin literature, suggests the breastband or long strip of cloth wrapped around the breasts and tucked in the ends, is a good place to hide love-letters.^[22] Martial, a Latin poet from Hispania who published between AD 86 and 103, satirized a female athlete he named Philaenis, who played ball in a bikini-like garb quite bluntly, making her drink, gorge and vomit in abundance and hinting at her lesbianism.^[29] In an epigram on Chione, Martial strangely mentions a sex worker who went to the bathhouse in a bikini, while it was more natural to go unclothed.^[30] Reportedly Theodora, the 6th century empress of the Byzantine Empire wore a bikini when she appeared as an actress before she captured the heart of emperor Justinian I.^[18]

There is evidence of ancient Roman women playing *expulsim ludere*, an early version of handball, wearing a costume that has been identified as bikinis.^[31]

Interval [edit]

Between the classical bikinis and the modern bikini there has been a long interval. Swimming or outdoor bathing were discouraged in the Christian West and there was little need for a bathing or swimming costume till the 18th century. The bathing gown in the 18th century was a loose ankle-length full-sleeve chemise-type gown made of wool or flannel, so that modesty or decency was not threatened.^[32] In the first half of the 19th century the top became knee-length while an ankle-length drawer was added as a bottom. By the second half of the 19th century, in France, the sleeves started to vanish, the bottom became shorter to reach only the knees and the top became hip-length and both became more form fitting.^{[32][33]} In the 1900s women wore wool dresses on the beach that were made of up to 9 yards (8.2 m) of fabric.^[34] That standard of swimwear evolved into the modern bikini in the first of half of the 20th century.

Breakthrough [edit]

In 1907, Australian swimmer and performer Annette Kellerman was arrested on a Boston beach for wearing a form-fitting sleeveless one-piece knitted swimming tights that covered her from neck to toe, a costume she adopted from England,^[32] although it became accepted swimsuit attire for women in parts of Europe by 1910.^[35] Even in 1943, pictures of the Kellerman swimsuit were produced as evidence of indecency in *Esquire v. Walker, Postmaster General*.^{[36][37]} But, *Harper's Bazaar* wrote in June 1920 (vol. 55, no. 6, p. 138) - "Annette Kellerman Bathing Attire is distinguished by an incomparable, daring beauty of fit that always remains refined." The following year, in June 1921 (vol. 54, no. 2504, p. 101) it wrote that these bathing suits were "famous ... for their perfect fit and exquisite, plastic beauty of line."^[32]

Female swimming was introduced at the 1912 Summer Olympics. In 1913, inspired by that breakthrough, the designer Carl Jantzen made the first functional two-piece swimwear, a close-fitting one-piece with shorts on the bottom and short sleeves on top.^[38] Silent films such as *The Water Nymph* (1912) saw Mabel Normand in revealing attire, and this was followed by the daringly dressed *Sennett Bathing Beauties* (1915–1929). The name "swim suit" was coined in 1915 by Jantzen Knitting Mills, a sweater manufacturer who launched a swimwear brand named the Red Diving Girl,^[39] The first annual bathing-suit day at New York's Madison Square Garden in 1916 was a landmark.^[40] The swimsuit apron, a design for early swimwear, disappeared by 1918, leaving a tunic covering the shorts.^[41]

During the 1920s and 1930s, people began to shift from "taking in the water" to "taking in the sun," at bathhouses and spas, and swimsuit designs shifted from functional considerations to incorporate more decorative features. Rayon was used in the 1920s in the manufacture of tight-fitting swimsuits,^[34] but its durability, especially when wet, proved problematic,^[42] with jersey and silk also sometimes being used.^[43] Burlesque and vaudeville performers wore two-piece outfits in the 1920s. The 1929 film "Man with a Movie Camera" shows Russian women wearing early two-piece swimsuits which expose their midriff, and a few who are topless. Films of holidaymakers in Germany in the 1930s show women wearing two-piece suits.^[44] Actress Dolores Del Rio was the first major star to wear a two-piece women's bathing suit onscreen in *Flying Down to Rio* (1933).^[45]

Necklines and midriff [edit]

By the 1930s, necklines plunged at the back, sleeves disappeared and sides were cut away and tightened. With the development of new clothing materials, particularly latex and nylon, through the 1930s swimsuits gradually began hugging the body, with shoulder straps that could be lowered for tanning.^[44] Women's swimwear of the 1930s and 1940s



The so-called "Venus in a bikini", from the house of Julia Felix, Pompeii, Italy actually depicts her Greek counterpart Aphrodite as she is about to untie her sandal, with a small Eros squatting beneath her left arm, 1st-century AD ^[19]



Annette Kellerman in a self-designed form-fitting one-piece tank suit, c. 1910s.



incorporated increasing degrees of *midriff exposure*. *Coco Chanel* made sunbathers fashionable,^[46] and in 1932 French designer *Madeleine Vionnet* offered an exposed midriff in an evening gown. They were seen a year later in *Gold Diggers of 1933*. The *Busby Berkeley* film *Footlight Parade* of 1932 showcases *aquachoreography* that featured bikinis. *Dorothy Lamour's The Hurricane* (1937) also showed two-piece bathing suits.^[44]

The 1934 film, *Fashions of 1934* featured chorus girls wearing two-piece outfits which look identical to modern bikinis.^[47] In 1934, a National Recreation Association study on the use of leisure time found that swimming, encouraged by the freedom of movement the new swimwear designs provided, was second only to movies in popularity as free time activity out of a list of 94 activities.^[32] In 1935 American designer *Claire McCardell* cut out the side panels of a *maillot*-style bathing suit, the bikini's forerunner.^[48] The 1938 invention of the Telescopic Watersuit in shirred elastic cotton ushered into the end of the era of wool. Cotton sun-tops, printed with palm trees, and silk or rayon pyjamas, usually with a blouse top, became popular by 1939.^[46] Wartime production during World War II required vast amounts of cotton, silk, nylon, wool, leather, and rubber. In 1942 the United States *War Production Board* issued Regulation L-85, cutting the use of natural fibers in clothing^[49] and mandating a 10% reduction in the amount of fabric in women's beachwear.^[50] To comply with the regulations, swimsuit manufacturers produced two-piece suits with bare midriffs.^[51]

Postwar [edit]

Fabric shortage continued for some time after the end of the war. Two-piece swimsuits without the usual skirt panel and other excess material started appearing in the US when the government ordered a 10% reduction in fabric used in woman's swimwear in 1943 as wartime rationing.^[50] By that time, two-piece swimsuits were frequent on American beaches. The July 9, 1945, *Life* shows women in Paris wearing similar items. *Hollywood* stars like *Ava Gardner*, *Rita Hayworth* and *Lana Turner* tried similar swimwear or beachwear.^[52] Pin ups of *Hayworth* and *Esther Williams* in the costume were widely distributed.^[38] The most provocative swimsuit was the 1946 *Moonlight Buoy*, a bottom and a top of material that weighed only eight ounces. What made the *Moonlight Buoy* distinctive was a large *cork buckle* attached to the bottoms, which made it possible to tie the top to the cork buckle and splash around *au naturel* while keeping both parts of the suit afloat. *Life* magazine had a photo essay on the *Moonlight Buoy* and wrote, "The name of the suit, of course, suggests the nocturnal conditions under which nude swimming is most agreeable."^[53]

American designer *Adele Simpson*, a *Coty American Fashion Critics' Awards* winner (1947) and a notable alumna of the New York art school *Pratt Institute*, who believed clothes must be comfortable and practical, designed a large part of her swimwear line with one-piece suits that were considered fashionable even in the early 1980s.^[54] This was when *Cole of California* started marketing revealing prohibition suits and *Catalina Swimwear* introduced almost bare-back designs.^[55] Teen magazines of late 1940s and 1950s featured designs of midriff-baring suits and tops. However, midriff fashion was stated as only for beaches and informal events and considered indecent to be worn in public.^[56] Hollywood endorsed the new glamour with films such as *Neptune's Daughter* (1949) in which *Esther Williams* wore provocatively named costumes such as "Double Entendre" and "Honey Child".^[46] Williams, who also was an *Amateur Athletic Union* champion in the 100 meter freestyle (1939)^[57] and an *Olympics* swimming finalist (1940),^[58] also portrayed *Kellerman* in the 1952 film *Million Dollar Mermaid* (titled as *The One Piece Bathing Suit* in UK).^[59]

Swimwear of the 1940s, 50s and early 60s followed the *silhouette* mostly from the early 1930s. Keeping in line with the ultra-feminine look dominated by *Dior*, it evolved into a dress with cinched waists and constructed bustlines, accessorized with earrings, bracelets, hats, scarves, sunglasses, hand bags and cover-ups.^[60] Many of these pre-bikinis had fancy names like *Double Entendre*, *Honey Child* (to maximize *small bosoms*), *Shipsshape* (to minimize *large bosoms*), *Diamond Lil* (trimmed with *rhinestones* and *lace*), *Swimming In Mink* (trimmed with *fur* across the *bodice*) and *Spearfisherman* (heavy *poplin* with a *rope belt* for carrying a knife), *Beau Catcher*, *Leading Lady*, *Pretty Foxy*, *Side Issue*, *Forecast*, and *Fabulous Fit*.^[53] According to *Vogue* the swimwear had become more of "state of dress, not undress" by the mid-1950s.^[60]

See also: *Swimsuit and Beachwear*

The modern bikini [edit]

French fashion designer *Jacques Heim*, who owned a beach shop in the French Riviera resort town of *Cannes*, introduced a minimalist two-piece design in May 1946 which he named the "Atome," after the smallest known particle of matter.^[61] The bottom of his design was just large enough to cover the wearer's navel.

At the same time, *Louis Réard*, a French automotive and mechanical engineer, was running his mother's lingerie business^[1] near *Les Folies Bergères* in Paris.^[62] He noticed women on *St. Tropez* beaches rolling up the edges of their swimsuits to get a better tan^[1] and was inspired to produce a more minimal design. He trimmed additional fabric off the bottom of the swimsuit, exposing the wearer's navel for the first time. Réard's *string bikini* consisted of four triangles made from 30 square inches (194 cm²) of fabric printed with a newspaper pattern.^[1]

When Réard sought a model to wear his design at his press conference, none of the usual models would wear the suit, so he hired 19 year old nude dancer *Micheline Bernardini* from the *Casino de Paris*.^[63] He introduced his design to the media and public on July 5, 1946, in Paris^[64] at *Piscine Molitor*, a public pool in Paris.^[38]^[50] Réard held the press conference five days after the first test of a nuclear device (nicknamed *Able*) over the *Bikini Atoll* during *Operation Crossroads*.^[65] His swimsuit design shocked the press and public because it was the first to reveal the wearer's navel.^[66]

To promote his new design, Heim hired *skywriters* to fly above the Mediterranean resort advertising the *Atome* as "the world's smallest bathing suit."^[61]^[67]^[68] Not to be outdone by Heim, Réard hired his own skywriters three weeks later to fly over the French Riviera advertising his design as "smaller than the smallest bathing suit in the world."^[61]

Heim's design was the first to be worn on the beach, but the name given by Réard stuck with the public.^[1] Despite significant social resistance, Réard received more than 50,000 letters from fans. He also initiated a bold ad campaign that told the public a two-piece swimsuit was not a genuine bikini "unless it could be pulled through a wedding ring."^[69] According to Kevin Jones, curator and fashion historian at the *Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising*, "Réard was ahead of his time by about 15 to 20 years. Only women in the vanguard, mostly upper-class European women embraced it."^[70]

Social resistance [edit]



Bikini sales did not pick up around the world as women stuck to traditional two-piece swimsuits. Réard went back to designing conventional knickers to sell in his mother's shop.^[62] According to Kevin Jones, curator and fashion historian at the *Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising*, "Réard was ahead of his time by about 15 to 20 years. Only women in the vanguard, mostly upper-class European women embraced it, just like the upper-class European women who first cast off their corsets after *World War I*."^[70] It was banned in the French Atlantic coastline,^[71] Spain, Belgium and Italy, three countries neighboring France, as well as Portugal and Australia, and it was prohibited in some US states,^[72] and discouraged in others.^[73]



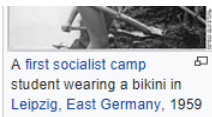
Academy Award winning actress *Jane Wyman* on a California beach in a two-piece swimsuit that bares the legs and midriff, 1935



A pin-up of Williams from a 1945 issue of *Yank, the Army Weekly*



Micheline Bernardini modeling one of the first modern bikinis



In 1951, the first Miss World contest (originally the *Festival Bikini Contest*),^[74] was organized by **Eric Morley** as a mid-century advertisement for swimwear at the **Festival of Britain**.^[76] The press welcomed the spectacle and referred to it as *Miss World*, and Morley registered the name as a trademark.^[78] When the winner **Kiki Håkansson** from Sweden, was crowned in a bikini, countries with religious traditions threatened to withdraw delegates.^[77] Håkansson remains the first and last Miss World to be crowned in her bikini,^[78] a crowning that was condemned by **Pope Pius XII** who declared the swimsuit to be sinful.^{[79][80]} Bikinis were banned from beauty pageants around the world after the controversy.^[81] In 1949 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Miss America **Bebe Shopp** on her visit to Paris said she did not approve the bikini for American girls, though she did not mind French girls wearing them.^[82] Actresses in movies like *My Favorite Brunette* (1947) and the model on a 1948 cover of *LIFE* were shown in traditional two-piece swimwear, not the bikini.

In 1950, *Time* magazine interviewed American swimsuit mogul **Fred Cole**, owner of **Cole of California**, and reported that he had "little but scorn for France's famed Bikinis," because they were designed for "diminutive Gallic women". "French girls have short legs," he explained, "Swimsuits have to be hiked up at the sides to make their legs look longer." Réard himself described it as a two-piece bathing suit which "reveals everything about a girl except for her mother's maiden name."^[38] Even Esther Williams commented, "A bikini is a thoughtless act."^[38] But, popularity of the charms of Pin-up queen and Hollywood star Williams were to vanish along with pre-bikinis with fancy names over the next few decades.^[83] Australian designer **Paula Stratford** introduced the bikini to **Gold Coast** in 1952. In 1957, *Das moderne Mädchen* (*The Modern Girl*) wrote, "It is unthinkable that a decent girl with tact would ever wear such a thing." Eight years later a Munich student was punished to six days cleaning work at an old home because she had strolled across the central **Viktualienmarkt** square, **Munich** in a bikini.^[84]

The Cannes connection [edit]

Despite the controversy, some in France admired "naughty girls who decorate our sun-drenched beaches".^[85] **Brigitte Bardot**, photographed wearing similar garments on beaches during the **Cannes Film Festival** (1953) helped popularize the bikini in Europe in the 1950s and created a market in the US.^[52] Photographs of Bardot in a bikini, according to *The Guardian*, turned **Saint-Tropez** into the bikini capital of the world.^[67] Cannes played a crucial role in the career of Brigitte Bardot, who in turn played a crucial role in promoting the Festival, largely by starting the trend of being photographed in a bikini at her first appearance at the festival.^[86] with Bardot identified as the original Cannes bathing beauty.^[87] In 1952, she wore a bikini in *Manina, the Girl in the Bikini* (1952) (released in France as *Manina, la fille sans voiles*), a film which drew considerable attention due to her scanty swimsuit. During the 1953 **Cannes Film Festival**, she worked with her husband and agent **Roger Vadim**, and garnered a lot of attention when she was photographed wearing a bikini on every beach in the south of France.^[88]

Like Esther Williams did a decade earlier, **Betty Grable**, **Marilyn Monroe** and Brigitte Bardot all used revealing swimwears as career props to enhance their sex appeal,^[89] and it became more accepted in parts of Europe when worn by fifties "love goddess" actresses such as Bardot, **Anita Ekberg** and **Sophia Loren**.^[90] British actress **Diana Dors** had a mink bikini made for her during the 1955 **Venice Film Festival** and wore it riding in a gondola down Venice's Grand Canal past **St. Mark's Square**.^{[51][91]}

In Spain, **Benidorm** played a similar role as Cannes. Shortly after the bikini was banned in Spain, **Pedro Zaragoza**, the mayor of Benidorm convinced dictator **Francisco Franco** that his town needed to legalize the bikini to draw tourists. In 1959, General Franco agreed and the town became a popular tourist destination. In less than four years since Franco's death in 1979, Spanish beaches and women had gone topless.^[92]

Legal and moral resistance [edit]

See also: *Indecent exposure*

The swimsuit was declared sinful by the Vatican and was banned in Spain, Portugal and Italy, three countries neighboring France, as well as Belgium and Australia, and it remained prohibited in many US states.^{[52][72]} As late as in 1959, **Anne Cole**, a US swimsuit designer and daughter of Fred Cole, said about a Bardot bikini, "It's nothing more than a G-string. It's at the razor's edge of decency."^[93] In July that year the *New York Post* searched for bikinis around New York City and found only a couple.^[53] Writer **Meredith Hall** wrote in her memoir that till 1965 one could get a citation for wearing a bikini in **Hampton Beach, New Hampshire**.^[94]

In 1951, the first Miss World contest, originally the *Festival Bikini Contest*,^[74] was organized by **Eric Morley** as a mid-century advertisement for swimwear at the **Festival of Britain**.^[76] The press welcomed the spectacle and referred to it as *Miss World*, and Morley registered the name as a trademark.^[78] When the winner **Kiki Håkansson** from Sweden, was crowned in a bikini, countries with religious traditions threatened to withdraw delegates. The bikinis were outlawed and evening gowns introduced instead.^[77] Håkansson remains the only Miss World crowned in a bikini,^[78] a crowning that was condemned by the **Pope**.^[79] Bikini was banned from beauty pageants around the world after the controversy.^[81] Catholic-majority countries like Belgium, Italy, Spain and Australia also banned the swimsuit that same year.^[72]

The **National Legion of Decency** pressured Hollywood to keep bikinis from being featured in Hollywood movies.^[95] The **Hays production code** for US movies, introduced in 1930 but not strictly enforced till 1934, allowed two-piece gowns but prohibited navels on screen.^[96] But between the introduction and enforcement of the code two **Tarzan** movies, *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932) and *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), were released in which actress **Maureen O'Sullivan** wore skimpy bikini-like leather outfits. Film historian **Bruce Goldstein** described her clothes in the first film as "It's a loincloth open up the side. You can see loin."^[97] *All at sea* was allowed in the USA in 1957 after all bikini-type clothes were removed from the film.^[98] *The girl in the bikini* was allowed in **Kansas** after all the bikini close ups were removed from the film in 1959.^[99]

In reaction to the introduction of the bikini in Paris, American **swimwear manufacturers** compromised cautiously by producing their own similar design that included a **halter** and a midriff-bottom variation.^[100] Though size makes all the difference in a bikini,^[101] early bikinis often covered the navel. When the navel showed in pictures, it was **airbrushed** out by magazines like *Seventeen*. Navel-less women ensured the early dominance of European bikini makers over their American counterparts.^[102] By the end of the decade a vogue for strapless styles developed, wired or bound for firmness and fit, along with a taste for bare-shouldered two-pieces called **Little Sinners**. But, it was the **halterneck** bikini that caused the most moral controversy because of its degree of exposure. So much so as bikini designs called "Huba Huba" and "Revelation" were withdrawn from fashion parades in Sydney as immodest.^[103]

Rise to popularity [edit]

The appearance of bikinis kept increasing both on screen and off. The **sex appeal** prompted film and television productions, including *Dr. Strangelove*. They include the surf movies of the early 1960s. In 1960, **Brian Hyland**'s song "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" inspired a bikini-buying spree.^[104] By 1963, the movie *Beach Party*, starring **Annette Funicello** and **Frankie Avalon**, followed by *Muscle Beach Party* (1964), *Bikini Beach* (1964), and *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965) that depicted teenage girls wearing bikinis, frolicking in the sand with boys, and having a great time.^[105]

The beach films led a wave of films that made the bikini pop-culture symbol. In the **sexual revolution in 1960s America**, bikinis became quickly popular.^[1] Hollywood stars like **Marilyn Monroe**, **Jayne Mansfield**, **Gina Lollobrigida**, and **Jane Russell** helped further the growing popularity of bikinis. Pin-up posters of Monroe, Mansfield, Hayworth, Bardot and Raquel Welch also contributed significantly to its increasing popularity.^[2] In 1962, *Playboy* featured a bikini on its cover for the first time.^{[1][52]} Two years later, *Sports Illustrated* featured Berlin-born fashion model **Babette March** on the cover wearing a white bikini. The issue was the first **Swimsuit Issue**.^{[1][106]} It gave the bikini legitimacy, became an annual publication and an American pop-culture staple, and sells millions of copies each year.^[107] In 1965, a woman told *Time* it was "almost square" not to wear one. In 1967 the magazine wrote that 65% of "the young set" were wearing bikinis.^{[108][109]}

When **Jayne Mansfield** and her husband **Miklós Hargitay** toured for stage shows, newspapers wrote that Mansfield convinced

Time magazine list of top 10 bikinis in popular culture

* **Micheline Bernardini** models the first-Ever Bikini (1946)

- "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" (1960)
- **Annette Funicello** and *Beach Party* (1960s)
- **The belted Bond-girl bikini** (1962)
- **Sports Illustrated's first Swimsuit Issue** (1964)
- **Raquel Welch's fur bikini** in *One Million Years B.C.* (1966)
- **Phoebie Cates' Bikini** in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*
- **Princess Leia's golden bikini** in *Return of the Jedi* (1983)

the rural population that she owned more bikinis than anyone.^[110] She showed a fair amount of her 40-inch (1,000 mm) bust, as well as her midriff and legs, in the leopard-spot bikini she wore for her stage shows.^[111] Kathryn Wexler of *The Miami Herald* wrote, "In the beginning as we know it, there was Jayne Mansfield. Here she preens in leopard-print or striped bikinis, sucking in air to showcase her well noted physical assets."^[112] Her leopard-skin bikini remains one of the earlier specimens of the fashion.^[113]

In 1962, Bond Girl [Ursula Andress](#) emerged from the sea wearing a [white bikini](#) in *Dr. No*. The scene has been named one of the most memorable of the series.^[114] [Channel 4](#) declared it the top bikini moment in film history,^[115] [Virgin Media](#) puts it ninth in its top ten,^[116] and top in the [Bond girls](#).^[117] *The Herald* (Glasgow) put the scene as best ever on the basis of a poll.^[118] It also helped shape the career of Ursula Andress,^[119] and the look of the quintessential [Bond movie](#).^[120] Andress said that she owed her career to that white bikini, remarking, "This bikini made me into a success. As a result of starring in *Dr. No* as the first [Bond girl](#), I was given the freedom to take my pick of future roles and to become financially independent."^{[121][122][123]} In 2001, the *Dr. No* bikini worn by Andress in the film sold at auction for US\$61,500.^[1] That white bikini has been described as a "defining moment in the sixties liberalization of screen eroticism".^[124] Because of the shocking effect from how revealing it was at the time, she got referred to by the joke nickname "Ursula Undress". According to the [British Broadcasting Corporation](#), "So iconic was the look that it was repeated 40 years later by [Halle Berry](#) in the [Bond movie](#) *Die Another Day*."^[1]

[Raquel Welch's fur bikini](#) in *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) gave the world the most iconic bikini shot of all time and the poster image became an iconic moment in cinema history.^[125] The poster image of the deer skin bikini in *One Million Years B.C.* made her an instant pin-up girl.^[1] Welch was featured in the studio's advertising as "wearing mankind's first bikini"^[126] and the bikini was later described as a "definitive look of the 1960s".^[127] Her role wearing the leather bikini raised Welch to a fashion icon^[128] and the photo of her in the bikini became a best-selling pinup poster.^[127] One author said, "although she had only three lines in the film, her luscious figure in a fur bikini made her a star and the dream girl of millions of young moviegoers".^[129] In 2011, *Time* listed Welch's *B.C.* bikini in the "Top Ten Bikinis in Pop Culture".^[130]

In the 1983 film *Return of the Jedi*, Star Wars' Princess Leia Organa was captured by Jabba the Hutt and forced to wear a metal bikini complete with shackles. The costume was made of brass and was so uncomfortable that actress [Carrie Fisher](#) described it as "what supermodels will eventually wear in the seventh ring of hell." The "slave Leia" look is often imitated by female fans at *Star Wars* conventions.^[131] In 1997, 51 years after the bikini's debut, and 77 years after the [Miss America Pageant](#) was founded, contestants were allowed wear two-piece swimsuits, not just the swimsuits (nicknamed "bulletproof vests") traditionally issued by the pageant.^{[132][133][134]} Two of the 17 swimsuit finalists wore two-piece swimsuits, and Erika Kauffman, representing Hawaii, wore the briefest bikini of all and won the swimsuit competition.^[133] In 2010, the [International Federation of Bodybuilders](#) recognized Bikini as a new competitive category.^[135]

In India [edit]

Bollywood actress [Sharmila Tagore](#) appeared in a bikini in *An Evening in Paris* (1967).^[136] a film mostly remembered for the first bikini appearance of an Indian actress.^[137] She also posed in a bikini for the glossy *Filmfare* magazine.^{[138][139]} The costume shocked the conservative Indian audience,^[140] but it also set a trend of bikini-clad actresses carried forward by [Parveen Babi](#) (in *Yeh Nazdeekiyan*, 1982^[141]), [Zeenat Aman](#) (in *Heera Panna* 1973; *Qurbani*, 1980^[141]) and [Dimple Kapadia](#) (in *Bobby*, 1973^[141]) in the early 1970s.^[142] Wearing a bikini put her name in the Indian press as one of Bollywood's ten hottest actresses of all time,^[143] and was a transgression of female identity through a reversal of the state of modesty, which functions as a signifier of femininity in Bombay films.^[144] By 2005, it became usual for actors in Indian films to change outfits a dozen times in a single song — starting with a [chiffon sari](#) and ending up wearing a bikini.^[145] But, when Tagore was the chairperson of the [Central Board of Film Certification](#) in 2005, she expressed concerns about the rise of the bikini in Indian films.^[146]

See also: *Bikini in popular culture*

Acceptance [edit]

In France, Réard's company folded in 1988,^[70] four years after his death.^[4] By that year the bikini made up nearly 20% of swimsuit sales, more than any other model in the US.^[53] As skin cancer awareness grew and a simpler aesthetic defined fashion in the 1990s, sales of the skimpy bikini decreased dramatically. The new swimwear code was epitomized by surf star [Malia Jones](#), who appeared on the June 1997 cover of *Shape Magazine* wearing a halter top two-piece for rough water.^[68] After the 90s, however, the bikini came back again. US market research company [NPD Group](#) reported that sales of two-piece swimsuits nationwide jumped 80% in two years.^[4] On one hand the one-piece made a big comeback in the 1980s and early 1990s,^{[4][70]} on the other bikinis became briefer with the string bikini in the 1970s and 80s.^[60]

The "-kini family" (as dubbed by author [William Safire](#)^[147]), including the "-ini sisters" (as dubbed by designer [Anne Cole](#)^[148]) has grown to include a large number of subsequent variations, often with a hilarious lexicon — [string bikini](#), [monokini](#) or [numokini](#) (top part missing), [seekini](#) (transparent bikini), [tankini](#) (tank top, bikini bottom), [camikini](#) (camisole top and bikini bottom), [hikini](#), [thong](#), [slingshot](#), [minimini](#), [teardrop](#), and [micro](#).^{[149][150]} In just one major fashion show in 1985, there were two-piece suits with [cropped tank tops](#) instead of the usual skimpy bandeaux, suits that are bikinis in front and one-piece behind, [suspender straps](#), [ruffles](#), and daring, navel-baring cutouts.^[151] To meet the fast changing tastes, some of the manufacturers have made a business out of making made-to-order bikinis in around seven minutes.^[152] The world's most expensive bikini, made up of over 150 carats (30 g) of flawless diamonds and worth a massive £20 million, was designed in February 2006 by [Susan Rosen](#).^[153]

Actresses in [action films](#) like *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (2003) and *Blue Crush* (2002) have made the two-piece "the millennial equivalent of the power suit", according to [Gina Bellafonte](#) of *The New York Times*.^{[38][154]} On September 9, 1997, Miss Maryland [Jamie Fox](#) was the first contestant in 50 years to compete in a two-piece swimsuit to compete in the Preliminary Swimsuit Competition at the [Miss America Pageant](#).^[155] PETA used celebrities like [Pamela Anderson](#), [Traci Bingham](#) and [Alicia Mayer](#) wearing a bikini made of [iceberg-lettuce](#) for an advertisement campaign to promote [vegetarianism](#).^{[156][157]} A protester from [Columbia University](#) used a bikini as a message board against a [New York City](#) visit by Iranian president [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#).^[158]

By the end of the century, the bikini went on to become the most popular beachwear around the globe, according to French fashion historian [Olivier Saillard](#) due to "the power of women, and not the power of fashion". As he explains, "The emancipation of swimwear has always been linked to the emancipation of women",^[1] though one survey tells 85% of all bikinis never touch the water.^[153] According to [Beth Dincuff](#) Charleston, research associate at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "The bikini represents a social leap involving body consciousness, moral concerns, and sexual attitudes."^[38] By the early 2000s, bikinis had become a US\$811 million business annually, according to the [NPD Group](#), a consumer and retail information company.^[70] The bikini has boosted spin-off services like [bikini waxing](#) and the sun tanning industries.^[2]

See also: *Bikini variants*

Continued controversies [edit]

The bikini remained a hot topic for the news media. In May 2011, [Barcelona, Spain](#) made it illegal to wear bikinis in public except in areas near the beaches. Violators face fines of between 120 and 300 euros.^[159] In 2012, two students of St. Theresa's College in Cebu, the Philippines were barred from attending their graduation ceremony for "ample body exposure" because their bikini pictures were posted on Facebook. The students sued the college and won a temporary stay in a regional court.^[160]

In May 2013, [Cambridge University](#) banned the [Wyverns Club of Magdalene College](#) from arranging its annual bikini jelly wrestling.^{[161][162][163][164][165]} In June 2013, actress [Gwyneth Paltrow](#), who also is interested in fashion, produced a bikini for her clothing line that is designed to be worn by girls 4 to 8 years old. She was

- The official uniform of the female Olympic Beach Volleyball players (1996)
- Miss America pageant's bikini debut (1997)

Source: [Chris Gayomali](#), "Top 10 Bikinis in Pop Culture", *Time* online, 07-05-2011

criticized for sexualizing young children by Claude Knight of Kidscape, a British foundation that strives to prevent child abuse. He commented, "We remain very opposed to the sexualisation of children and of childhood ... is a great pity that such trends continue and that they carry celebrity endorsement."^[166]

Four women were arrested over the 2013 Memorial Day weekend in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina for [indecent exposure](#) when they wore thong bikinis that exposed their buttocks.^[167] In June 2013, the British watchdog agency Advertising Standards Authority banned a commercial that showed men in an office fantasizing about their colleague, played by [Pamela Anderson](#), in a bikini for degrading women.^{[168][169]}

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"The statuette portrays Aphrodite on the point of untying the laces of the sandal on her left foot, under which a small Eros squats, touching the sole of her shoe with his right hand. The Goddess is leaning with her left arm (the hand is missing) against a figure of Priapus standing, naked and bearded, positioned on a small cylindrical altar while, next to her left thigh, there is a tree trunk over which the garment of the Goddess is folded. Aphrodite, almost completely naked, wears only a sort of costume, consisting of a corset held up by two pairs of straps and two short sleeves on the upper part of her arm, from which a long chain leads to her hips and forms a star-shaped motif at the level of her navel. The 'bikini', for which the statuette is famous, is obtained by the mastery use of the technique of gilding, also employed on her groin, in the pendant necklace and in the armilla on Aphrodite's right wrist, as well as on Priapus's phallus. Traces of the red paint are evident on the tree trunk, on the short curly hair gathered back in a bun and on the lips of the Goddess, as well as on the heads of Priapus and the Eros. Aphrodite's eyes are made of glass paste, while the presence of holes at the level of the earlobes suggest the existence of precious metal ear-rings which have since been lost. An interesting insight into the female ornaments of Roman times, the statuette, probably imported from the area of Alexandria, reproduces with a few modifications the statuary type of Aphrodite untying her sandal, known from copies in bronze and terracotta."
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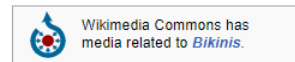
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External links [edit]

- "Bikini Timeline" ↗, *Los Angeles Times*
- Bikini Science -- A Comprehensive History of the Bikini and Species of Swimwear ↗
- Cole of California and history of the bikini ↗



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