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Glittery Beaches and Glowing Oceans: The Best Places to See Bioluminescence

Strictly for people who are into THE COOLEST THING EVER.

BY KRISTYN POMRANZ

The average beach getaway is pretty magical in its own right — sand in your toes, ocean lapping at your feet, drinking booze out of hollowed coconuts. But y'know what would make such a vacation even more enchanted? If said sand and said ocean lit up in neon colors and twinkled like they'd been strewn in Christmas lights (while you drink booze out of a hollowed coconut).

Such is the case at the world's bioluminescent beaches; they're dreamy and romantic places that also play a critical role in the survival of many species. The glowing effect is caused by certain sea creatures that emit light to attract mates, confuse pray, and send signals to their underwater buddies. It also *totally* delights humans, although that's just incidental.

The sparkly spectacle is so striking that some enterprising travelers plan entire vacations around bioluminescent high seasons. We're telling you exactly where to go — including some beaches within the U.S.!

1

The Maldives

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These coral islands in the Indian ocean are the ultimate spot to get your glittery beach fix. The little local shrimps maintain their glow for longer than the average bioluminescent animal, ensuring you will get a good show. Bonus: You can swim in these waters!

2

Mission Bay, San Diego

Thank the region's bioluminescent algae for red ocean waves during the day and neon blue ocean waves at night. The algae can be toxic, so it's advisable to look but not touch — or take out a kayak instead.

3

Koh Rong, Cambodia

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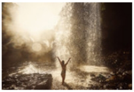

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In places such as Koh Rong, Cambodia, bioluminescent plankton lights up the surrounding coastline. These thousands of small creatures glow an iridescent blue colour when disrupted, and so illuminate the breaks in the waves along the sandy beaches at night.

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This island offers a nightly boat tour where guests can jump into the ocean and hang with some glowing plankton. But even more surreal is the fact that every motion and every ripple sets off a trail of twinkling lights.

4

Glowworm Caves, New Zealand

What's that? Beaches are boring and you're more of a spelunker? Perfect. Head off to the glowworm caves of New Zealand's north island. Take a tubing trip through the dark caves and marvel at walls covered in thousands of light-up worms that look like stars.

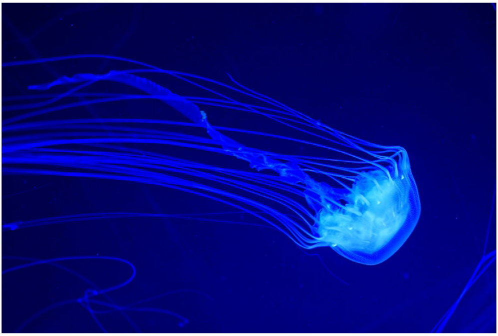
5

Goias, Brazil

You'll have to plan a private tour to Emas National Park, but the payoff will be seeing Brazil's famous glittering termite mounds. As part of a nightly ritual, sneaky beetles sparkle to lure in the mites, which they immediately eat. (We're surprised the termites are still falling for it.)

6

Merritt Island, Florida



The bioluminescent jellyfish of the Sunshine state's Indian River Lagoon don't just emit the same-old blue-green glow — they *also* scatter their light like a prism, creating a brilliant rainbow effect across the water.

7

Puerto Mosquito, Puerto Rico

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Bioluminescent Bay, Fajardo, Puerto Rico

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One of the creepiest yet coolest experiences ever, night kayaking in the Bioluminescent Bay in #puertorico #bucketlist #biobay #kayaking #nightkayaking Ps. depending on how dark it is, it may not be as visible.

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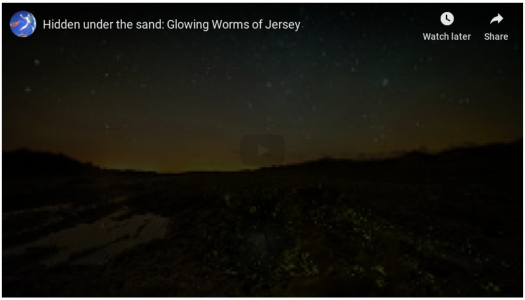
OK, don't get completely turned off by the name — the real organisms of interest here are called dinoflagellates. When kayakers travel over the little guys, they react by bursting with light, causing an effect that looks like blue shooting stars.

8 Jersey Island, U.K.



Hidden under the sand: Glowing Worms of Jersey

This island on the English Channel offers nightly "moonwalks." The beach is swathed with worms that emit a bright green glow for up to 20 seconds. Tour guides take travelers on gentle walks through the sand, which transforms into twinkles underfoot.

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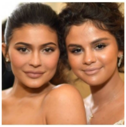

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