

OUTDOOR SWIMMING

Take a break from chlorine and swim under a bright blue sky or an expanse of twinkling stars. Immersing yourself in wild waters can be the jolt you need to feel truly alive. For each of the following refreshing options, list where you hope to go, where you've been, and magical memories you've made.

SWIMMING HOLES

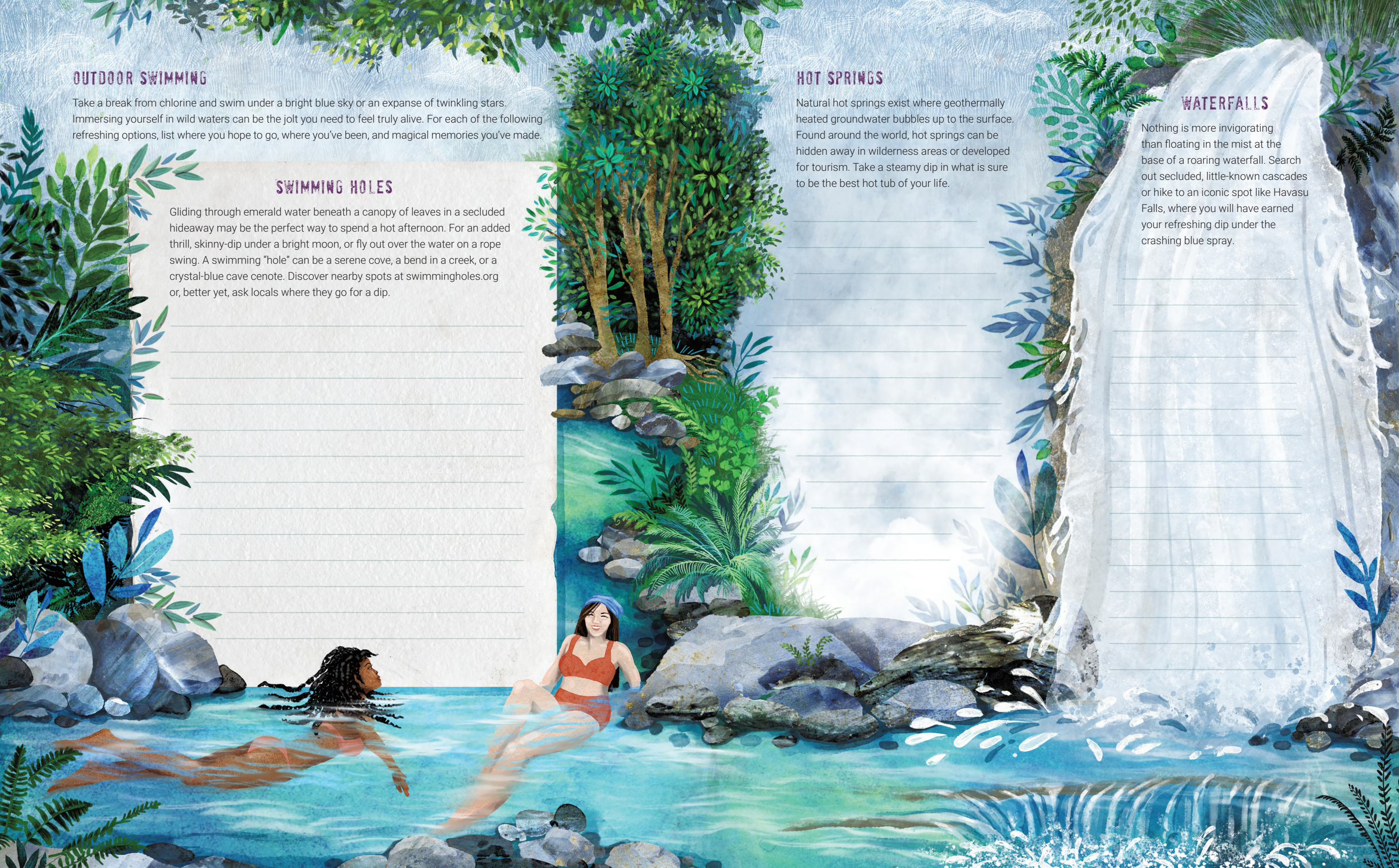
Gliding through emerald water beneath a canopy of leaves in a secluded hideaway may be the perfect way to spend a hot afternoon. For an added thrill, skinny-dip under a bright moon, or fly out over the water on a rope swing. A swimming "hole" can be a serene cove, a bend in a creek, or a crystal-blue cave cenote. Discover nearby spots at swimmingholes.org or, better yet, ask locals where they go for a dip.

HOT SPRINGS

Natural hot springs exist where geothermally heated groundwater bubbles up to the surface. Found around the world, hot springs can be hidden away in wilderness areas or developed for tourism. Take a steamy dip in what is sure to be the best hot tub of your life.

WATERFALLS

Nothing is more invigorating than floating in the mist at the base of a roaring waterfall. Search out secluded, little-known cascades or hike to an iconic spot like Havasu Falls, where you will have earned your refreshing dip under the crashing blue spray.



SNOWSHOEING

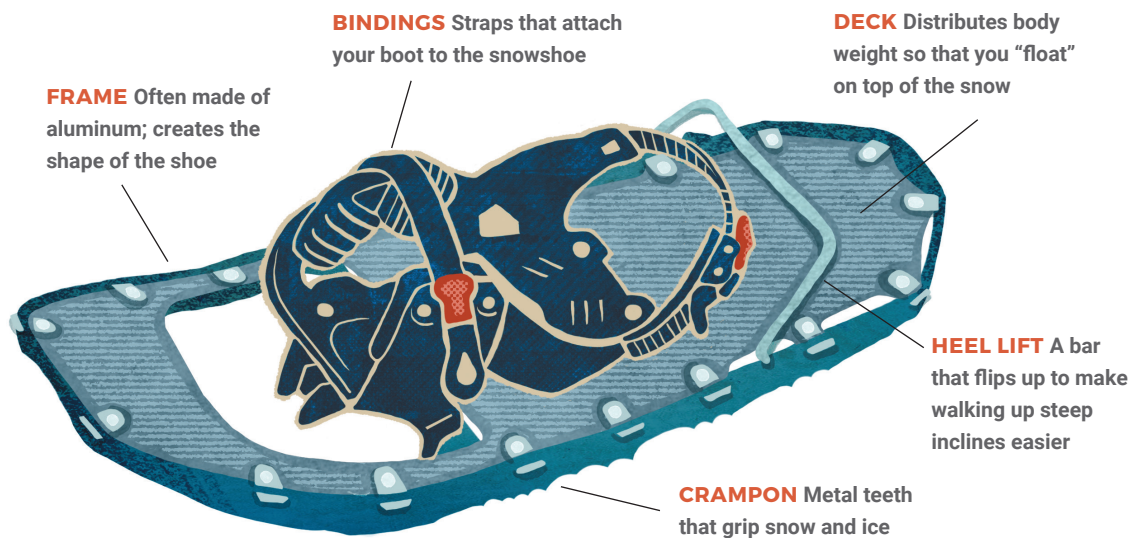
Strap a pair of snowshoes over your warm waterproof boots and take a hike! Trekking poles with snow baskets will make your walk easier. Many resorts have wooded trails to explore—a great option if ski conditions up high aren't perfect. Be sure to wear ski or rain pants with a base layer to stay dry.

Layering is important for both snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. It's best to start out chilly because you'll soon warm up from exertion. Always carry the Ten Essentials in a day pack. Treat yourself by adding a thermos of your favorite warm drink.

If you'll be snowshoeing in the backcountry, take classes about avalanche preparedness and pack the necessary safety equipment. With the sport's growing popularity, some competitions such as winter quadrathlons have added a snowshoe component.

ANATOMY OF A SNOWSHOE

Historians believe snowshoes were used in central Asia as far back as 6000 years ago. When the ancestors of Native Americans and the Inuit migrated into North America, they brought early versions of wooden and rawhide snowshoes. Modern snowshoes use the same principles, but the materials have evolved to make a day of trekking easy for all ages and fitness levels.



CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Glide over beautiful, snowy terrain for an aerobic workout or meander along groomed trails while admiring the winter wonderland around you. Also known as Nordic skiing, cross-country (XC) skiing features a free-heel binding system: your toe clicks in to the binding while your heel remains unattached and free to maneuver. The easiest style to begin with is classic skiing. Simply step into the groomed tracks and stride forward on one ski, then the other, while pushing with the opposite pole—similar to the natural rhythm of walking.

The other popular style is skate skiing, which resembles speed skating in that you push off in diagonal strides to propel yourself forward. Skate skiing works best on hard, compact snow and requires wide, groomed trails.

Find trails and classes for beginners at resorts across the US and Canada at xcski.org. If racing piques your interest, consider entering the Yellowstone Rendezvous Race, with 10K, 25K, and 50K options. What a great way to see a national park!

WINTER WALKING

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are two of the world's oldest forms of "winter walking." Spend a peaceful yet energetic day roaming winter landscapes and seeking frosty views. List the trails or destinations you hope to explore, and check them off as you go.

