Floating in the Dead Sea: the lowest point on Earth, the saltiest water, and the mud that does work

Four hundred and forty metres below sea level, 34% salinity, and the mud worth the dirt under your fingernails. How to do the Jordan-side resort beach properly.

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The Dead Sea is at 439.78 metres below sea level — Earth's lowest land elevation — with a salinity of 34.2%, approximately 9.6 times saltier than ocean water.[1] The water density is high enough that a person doesn't sink — you literally can't if you tried. Most travellers come to the Dead Sea for exactly one experience: lying on your back, reading a newspaper, while the mineral water holds you up. The mud, too, is the real thing — magnesium, calcium, potassium, bromides — and the spa industry around it has half a century of research to back its skin and joint claims.

One half-day, done right, gives you the experience plus mud + sunset.

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1Why float here

Three things make the Dead Sea unique:

- **Buoyancy.** 34% salinity (vs ~3.5% in the ocean) makes the water dense enough that you float effortlessly. You can sit in the water reading.

- **Therapeutic claims.** Reduced ultraviolet radiation and higher atmospheric pressure create conditions where persons experiencing reduced respiratory function from diseases such as cystic fibrosis seem to benefit. The mineral mud is studied for temporary pain relief in osteoarthritis.[1]
- **Lowest land elevation on Earth.** The geographic curiosity. Your phone's altimeter will read about 430 m below sea level.

2The minerals + the mud

The Dead Sea's mineral profile is unusual. The dissolved salts are magnesium chloride 50.8% and sodium chloride 30.4%, with notably high bromide concentrations — different from ordinary seawater, where sodium chloride dominates. The mud at the shore — black, fine-grained, mineral-rich — is what the spa industry packages and sells.

Apply a thin coat to dry skin, let it sit for 10 minutes (it dries to a chalky grey), wash off in the lake. Most resorts sell branded jars of the same mud at premium prices; the on-the-shore version is free and the same minerals.

3Where to go on the Jordan side

- **Amman Beach.** Public beach with day-use facilities. Showers, changing rooms, café. The cheapest legitimate access point. ~20 JD per person.
- **Resort hotels.** Marriott, Mövenpick, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn — all on the same northern strip. Day-pass options ~30–60 JD per person, includes pool access and shower facilities.
- **Wadi Mujib trail beach.** The wadi mouth has a small public beach. Combine with the Mujib canyon trail (April–November).

> The water density is high enough that you can sit in it reading a newspaper.

4How to float (it's not what you think)

It is harder than it looks. Three rules:

1. **Don't dive in.** The salt water in your eyes is genuinely painful — sharp, stinging, slow to wash out. Walk in slowly, let your eyes adjust to the proximity.
2. **Lie on your back, not your front.** The buoyancy lifts your hips, but if you try to swim like normal you'll get water on your face. Lie flat, relax your arms out, let the lake hold you. It will.
3. **Don't shave for 24 hours before.** Any small cut stings on contact with the water.

> **For solo travellers**
>
> Amman Beach is the budget option. Bus from Amman 60 minutes; spend a half-day; back by evening.

5Practical tips

- **Don't open your eyes underwater.** Treat the lake like undiluted soap.
- **Don't drink it.** A mouthful is genuinely toxic; rinse immediately with fresh water.
- **Cover small cuts.** A waterproof plaster avoids 30 minutes of stinging.
- **Best time of day.** Mid-afternoon (3–5 pm) — the temperature is more comfortable and the resort beaches are less crowded.
- **Combine with.** Mount Nebo (45 minutes east) and the Madaba Map for a full Dead Sea + Madaba day-trip from Amman.

References

1. Wikipedia — Dead Sea

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a Dead Sea resort spa or Jordan Tourism Board representative before final publication. Drafted from Wikipedia.