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Snapshot, 1957: Caution, mermaids crossing Daytona Beach

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While today's bikini-bathers on Florida's most popular stretch of beach fear the sun's rays most, in the 1950s there was a more immediate risk – being run over by a burbling eight-cylinder...

A hot, early summer's day in 1957. What on earth is going on, on the sands of Daytona Beach? Children play in the surf and young women parade in the latest swimsuits of the season, while in between, men tear up and down with their cars and motorcycles. In a country that today covers its coffee mugs with warnings, it's almost unthinkable that the United States of the 1950s actually happened. The only car-free zone was the living room and at least one or two Daytona Beach mermaids per season were fatally injured – but little, if anything, was done about it. Especially cheeky or lazy bathers parked their car right up near the surf, to avoid getting sandy feet, or they used the vinyl seats of convertibles as beach chairs. Even while taking a short 'nap' with one's latest beach date, the Chevy or Buick was always within reach. Who was it that said, all progress depends on the unreasonable man?

Photo: J. Baylor Roberts/National Geographic/Getty Images

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