



How high can guys go? The long and short of it

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Long, baggy shorts have dominated for so many years, it's hard to imagine men showing skin above the knee. But is it time for a change? Can men finally consider wearing short shorts again? Yea or nay?

At the invite-only fashion show at Obakki (44 Water Street) on May 29, these questions are put to attendees.

Lincoln Clarkes, a photographer well known for his portraits of addicted women, says, "I'd rather see a short film than a man in short shorts."

Freelance patternmaker Renate Bobeldijk just wants to see a man in the right shorts: "All men wear their activity shorts. They're on Grouse Mountain and then they walk around downtown with them. It's not very attractive."

When asked to imagine proper city shorts, Bobeldijk says, "They would be a pinstripe [like] a little Bermuda and [with] a short-sleeve shirt worn open, no belt, with nice leather sandals. Not outdoor-activity sandals. No."

As the wine stock diminishes, the first call for some skin comes forth. "I miss the male leg, if the guy has nice legs to show off," says stylist Claudia Da Ponte. "Guys don't know which length will properly suit them. Guys consistently wear long shorts, and it makes them look short. If you're short, try to avoid stuff below the knee. It makes the leg look stumpy." She suggests hems ranging from a titch above the knee to mid-thigh.

Bruce Chatwin is briefly evoked. The deceased author, who wrote the travel classic *In Patagonia*, wore khaki twill shorts with socks and sandals, and still came across as cool. But most men aren't Bruce Chatwin, are they?

Instead, consider wearing dark or black shorts. "Go with classier cuts, classier colours, because when you're wearing shorts, you're going to attract more attention," Da Ponte says.

Good advice, but what is the consensus on a man going, like a polar explorer, a bit further north with regard to hemlines?

Carrying off short shorts, according to Obakki head designer Elizabeth Davey, requires a certain type of personality. Says Davey, "That's a confident person."

CJ Swanton, who handles public relations and marketing for the label, pipes up, "That's someone who doesn't need to be dictated to by social norms."

"I don't think there's a lot of places to find shorts to pull off that style," Davey says. "It's not American Eagle or Tip Top Tailor," Swanton says. "I see tailored shorts. It would have to be proper material. Not nylon," he warns. "That would be atrocious."

Davey nods, "Out of the question. But a nice twill or a heavier fabric like denim, but not denim, to give it some weight."

With regard to footwear, Davey prefers shoes, rather than sandals, on men: "Maybe a tennis-type sneaker

like a canvas lace-up." Swanton recommends Oxford lace-ups with no socks.

According to Davey, "A low-profile shoe with a minimum heel. You don't want a strong heel."

Swanton jumps in: "A heavy sole is sexually charged and inappropriate, unless you're trying for a David Bowie glam-rock look."

Fashion photographer Kris Krug shows up in a pair of Obakki pants that go to midcalf. In the next few days, he plans to crop them fairly high up the leg. For Krug, he follows only one crucial rule: "You have to have a long enough inseam so your boy parts don't hang out, sitting or standing."