

School's out as UK basks in long, hot summer

Are staycations the best type of holiday? The summer holidays are about to begin. Millions will travel abroad. But with the UK's heatwave in full swing, is it better to stay at home?



Decisions: Britons spent £43.8 billion on trips overseas in 2016.

When the final bell rings this afternoon in schools across Britain, it is a safe bet that many teenagers will be unable to suppress a cheer. Perhaps even the teachers will struggle. Today, for the majority of British schools, is the beginning of the summer holidays.

A month of baking heat combined with a dazzling World Cup means that, for many, the summer already feels half-finished. But there are still holidays booked, festivals to be attended, and weeks of glorious emptiness stretching out until the start of September.

As **foreign tourists flock to the UK**, Britons themselves will evacuate the isles in their millions. Over a quarter will travel abroad over the next six weeks; over half will holiday in Britain. Families across the country are tightening their budgets; but for many, even so, a yearly holiday is vital.

According to the World Tourism Organisation, 1.18 billion people spent at least one night abroad in 2015 — a seventh of the world's population.

But it was not always this way. Up until the 19th century, few people travelled more than a few miles from their own home. If they did, it was usually for war or a **pilgrimage**.

The only people who often travelled just to take in the sights were wealthy. As part of their cultural education, young aristocrats would tour the wonders of the ancient and modern world. This was known as the **Grand Tour**. From the mid-17th century until the 19th century it became a rite of passage.

It was not until the late **19th century** that the tradition of the British working-class holiday was firmly established, with families flocking to seaside resorts that new railways had made reachable from cities.

International tourism has taken over since the early package holidays to Spanish resorts in the 1970s. Blackpool, Clacton and Hastings **fell into decline**.

But with Britain basking in one of the hottest summers on record and with Brexit close, many are now arguing in favour of

"staycations" — holidays within one's own country.

Are the best holidays found closer to home?

Away from it all

Of course not, say some. We are incredibly fortunate to live in an age where the entire planet is at our fingertips. We can experience wonders that were beyond our ancestors' dreams. Travelling as widely as possible helps you understand the world, and to broaden your mind beyond your homeland.

Why this desire to escape? reply others. Britain has its own ancient towns, pristine beaches and soaring mountains. It is arrogant to ignore these wonders. And in any case, holidays are about discovering yourself, not discovering the entire world. And staying in Britain is cheaper and more environmentally friendly as well.

Q & A

Q: What do we know?

A: Today is the last day of term for most schools in Britain as the six week-long summer break begins. While it seems like the heatwave has been going on forever, forecasters believe

it still has a long way to go. Temperatures will soar into the 30s next week as beaches from Blackpool to Brighton fill with holidaymakers. We know that Britain is not the only country experiencing an unusually hot summer this year.

Q: What do we not know?

A: Whether the age of foreign travel will ever plateau. The number of foreign holidays taken by Britons dropped for a short time after the financial crisis, but numbers are now back above pre-2008 levels. It could be that only serious environmental changes alter where and how often we go on holiday.

YOU DECIDE

1. Do you prefer holidaying in Britain or abroad?
2. Are holidays about discovering places or discovering things about yourself?

WORD WATCH

Foreign tourists flock to the UK – Around 35.8 million tourists visit the UK each year, placing it sixth in the world tourism rankings behind France, the US, Spain, China and Italy.

Pilgrimage – As far back as the days of ancient Rome, religious people would travel many miles to visit sites of significance. Holy

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a short story on the theme “escape”.
2. Imagine your perfect holiday and make a poster similar to the two above advertising it.

sites like the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which Muslims visit for the Hajj pilgrimage, are still some of the most popular destinations in the world.

Grand Tour – The heyday of the Grand Tour ended when the Napoleonic Wars made it too dangerous to travel around Europe, leading to the development of a British tourist industry.

19th century – Thomas Cook organised the

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

“Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability.”
Sam Keen

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

first package excursion in 1841 – a one-day rail trip costing a shilling a head from Leicester to Loughborough and back. It was put on for a group of anti-alcohol campaigners.

Fell into decline – With a few exceptions, seaside towns remain some of the poorest areas in the UK.

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Notes

