

NOSTALGICATIONS: WHY WE'RE RECREATING OUR CHILDHOOD HOLIDAYS

Cast your mind back to post-war Britain. The Holiday Pay Act made travel affordable (within the UK at least). In the 1950s and 1960s, the great British seaside holiday had families flocking to Brighton, Blackpool and Scarborough; children gobbled Mr Whippy ice creams and bikinis caused controversy. If mentally revisiting those rows of miniature, sherbet-coloured huts has you feeling sentimental, you're far from alone.

This is the year of nostalgications — a longing to return to the places where we holidayed as children. We asked more than 1,200 *High Life* readers if they would consider doing just that, and a resounding 65 per cent said yes. "Nostalgia, which is triggered by a memory, or smells, sounds and tastes, is a social emotion, and holidays are a great example of that," says Agnes Arnold-Forster, historian, health researcher and author of *Nostalgia: A History of a Dangerous Emotion* (spoiler: nostalgia has more highs than lows). "Scientists think nostalgia evolved to make us better, so we could forge closer connections with others," she continues. "Having children is partly about reliving childhood experiences through their eyes." It makes sense then, that many travellers are taking their kids to the destinations from their youth.

The most sought-after spots for UK travellers have come full circle: trips to Mallorca, the Greek islands and Malta are the same destinations that formed the Mediterranean package holidays of the 1970s. These had exploded in popularity thanks to the debut of the 'jumbo jet' (the Boeing 747) and the repeal of a law that banned selling package holidays for less than the cost of a return flight. By 1972, more than a third of British tourists had visited Spain.

You can no longer book a break via Teletext or pay just £32 for a two-week all-inclusive in Benidorm, but you can sip sangria on the soft, golden sands of Levante Beach, and reminiscence (wince) about factor two sunscreen, or dancing until disco turned to birdsong. "If you can reflect on an experience like a holiday, you can resurrect it," says Arnold-Forster, adding that "people who are more nostalgic are also more optimistic."

It's no bad thing to long for the 1980s when long-haul travel first took off (and Phuket's sapphire shores had a sense of solitude), or for the rise of all-inclusives in the 1990s that made unbounded booze and buffets a novelty amid the Caribbean's coconut-infused breezes and the cheerful cadence of mariachi bands in Mexico.

"Right now, people have the sense they're living through a time of uncertainty," says Arnold-Forster. "There's lots going on in the world that is causing stress, and nostalgia can be therapeutic. It can lessen feelings of anxiety and depression, and make people feel less lonely."

At the turn of this century, travellers transitioned from taking longer holidays to shorter city breaks that could offer this respite more frequently. Cultural capitals such as Rome, New York and Tokyo that made their mark then are just as popular now. The one catch? "There's always the risk the place has changed," warns Arnold-Forster. "Nostalgia is a bittersweet emotion. When you do brain scans on people experiencing it, the bits responsible for joy and sadness, and also memory, all light up."

But even if that holiday haunt from childhood has gone from all-yours to buzzing, or that little *panadería* is no longer there, the memories of Mum and Dad taking you for a treat, the warmth of the sun and soothing sound of the sea make it more than worth it.

Mr Whippy, Teletext and our favourite travel memories throughout the decades: nostalgic vacations are on the rise, discovers **Agatha Zarzycki**





PAST PERFECT

Where would these well travelled types return to?



ACTOR **TOM CULLEN**

Growing up, we didn't have a lot of money, so my parents would find these interesting, intrepid places. Halki (above) in Greece really sticks in my head as this tiny, beautiful island with one village, one road, one beach and three restaurants. It wasn't touristy at all, mostly locals and their fishing boats. I remember guys dancing at night and creating circles of fire around them, and this little bakery that made traditional honey bread. I went back when I was 18, we went last summer and I'm heading back for my 40th birthday.



FASHION DESIGNER **ALESSIA FENDI**

While my maternal family is from Rome, my father was from southern Sicily: a fishing village called Donnalucata (left). In Arabic, it means 'Fountain of the Hours', because at certain times of the day, fresh water comes out from deep beneath the beach. As a child, I used to spend summers there with my grandparents. The sun burns your skin, and the air smells of sea and salt. The golden sand massages your feet, lemons scent the streets and churches and palaces soak themselves in Baroque art. I go back to Sicily whenever I can. As soon as you land in Catania, stress goes down, while excitement and joy rise.



AUTHOR **DAVID NICHOLLS**

I found myself in Edinburgh again, with my daughter the other day. I was very badly travelled as a kid. We never went abroad, and I didn't get on a plane until I was 21. The first city I went to outside my hometown of London and university town of Bristol was Edinburgh (above). I thought it was the most beautiful city I'd ever seen. I still retain that affection for it. I always get excited to see Arthur's Seat. It means a lot to me, and not just because of *One Day*, but because of a particular time – like the characters in my book – when I was just about to start my adult life.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

More than 1,200 *High Life* readers responded to our 'nostalgications' survey. Here's what you said

WHY GO ON A NOSTALGICATION?

54%

believe it boosted their happiness

47%

say it helped them appreciate their past

47%

say it relieved the stresses of modern-day life

THE GENERATIONS WEIGH IN...

40%

of Gen Zs and Millennials agree that a nostalgication would strengthen their family bond, and a quarter would like to recreate memories with their own children. Ages 45-65+ yearn for bygone eras, with a third stating that nostalgia for a simpler time is a big motivation



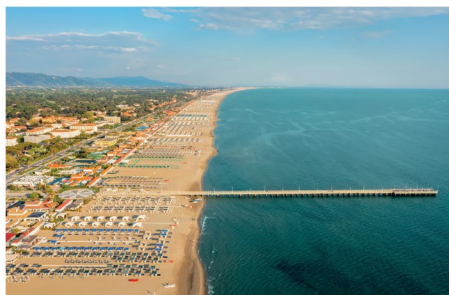
**MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF
EMMANUEL RENAUT**

My most memorable vacation from my youth was a family trip to Europe and our time on the Greek islands. I remember the calm and the food. Cretans enjoy an unrushed lifestyle. They take time to appreciate their beautiful landscapes, warm climate and diet rich in olive oil and fresh vegetables. Santorini (above) looks so different to Crete, with its volcanic caldera and whitewashed buildings. I've returned to both islands many times as an adult – both with my wife and children, and also for my work at Lauda, the restaurant at Andronis Boutique Hotel in Santorini.



SINGER-SONGWRITER BRYAN ADAMS

When I was about 11, my parents took me to Sharm El Sheikh. It was the first time I ever tried snorkelling. I've never been back, but I know it's not the same – there were no hotels, just some basic buildings. It was quite barren. There was a place called Coral Island, and on top of it were ruins from Crusader times (left). Perfect for a young kid to explore. I'd love to see more of Africa some day, especially the north. I can't believe that I've never been to Morocco, a country with such an amazing musical heritage. Maybe that could be my next holiday...



**COFOUNDER BAR LEONE, HONG KONG,
RANKED #1 OF ASIA'S 50 BEST BARS
LORENZO ANTINORI**

Until I was about 16, I spent my summers at my grandparents' house in Forte dei Marmi, Tuscany (above). The drive from Rome to the beach house was so exciting. I remember the scent of the pine forest along the road as we got closer. The days were full of small rituals: breakfast at the local bar with warm cornetti, cycling to the beach, swimming till sundown and local gelato at 6pm. Revisiting as an adult was emotional. Places I recalled so clearly had changed. But it also stirred up many great memories – those long warm days, the smell of the sea, the gelato. Just walking around brought a sense of calm. It felt like reconnecting not just with the place, but with a part of myself.

**THE TOP ERA
TO INSPIRE A
NOSTALGICATION?**

The 2000s

31% of all age groups agree it was the best decade for holidays

**BA TRAVELLERS'
BIGGEST MOTIVATION?**

50%

are most curious to see what has changed

**THIS YEAR'S MOST
SEARCHED BRITISH
AIRWAYS HOLIDAYS
DESTINATIONS***

1. NEW YORK
2. DUBAI
3. BARBADOS
4. CANCUN
5. TENERIFE
6. ORLANDO
7. MALDIVES
8. MAURITIUS
9. ST LUCIA
10. MALTA