

An exotic holistay!

In her latest article for this column, Polly Zipperlen considers sun, sea, scenery, birds, a puppy and the aftermath of this year's family holiday

The Sunday supplements have been drenched with alluring staycation suggestions, but just to be different, my son coined the phrase 'holistay', and, like many other Brits, we decided to stay on home turf for our annual jolly. This was after much disappointment on my part, as 2020 was to be the year of a long-awaited exotic trip to Malawi with a local youth group. Covid crashed and Malawi will have to wait. But, lo and behold, after tantalising Government indecision, Europe was opened – hooray! Music to my Francophile ears and a chance to enjoy a supermarket dash around my favourite haunts.



Again disappointment: my sons, desperate to reunite with their cousins after a tedious lockdown, pleaded a gathering of the clans and my sister-in-law, who is infinitely more sensible than I am, suggested a UK-based location. Three of the four of us work for the NHS, what if the situation spins on its head and we all have to quarantine at short notice on return? I capitulated and we scoured holiday-letting sites for a cottage, but, after dithering for a nano-second, the available rentals rocketed from £1800 to £3000 a week!



“Let’s stay at home and make it fun!” I hear myself saying. Our Rectory is very spacious and comfortable, easily able to accommodate eight people and a dog – or so I thought. To induce the ‘exotic’ I hired a hot-tub, bought a chiminea, booked a rib-ride (complete with face-masks) and planned a week’s worth of high-adrenaline and exhausting activities. The most exhausting of which has been clearing-up. A thin layer of sand covers every surface, Nerf bullets have replaced flower heads and as for the puppy....not at all exotic!

The second week of our holistay involved visiting our parents in Sussex and London, languishing in the exotic warmth of the southeast. The balmy weather seemed to have encouraged exotic garden visitors, discovered by Marcus’s Dad, who was bemused by our underwhelmed response at the goldfinch he was gesticulating at. But we had our comeuppance when enthusing about the parakeets (exoticism at last!) that are now common-place in my Mum’s area of East London, which met with *her* underwhelmed response.

Perhaps exotic pursuits are not all they're cracked-up to be after all. In fact, the children have all developed a mild skin rash, which traces back to the hot tub! Anyone fancy France at half-term?