



CHANGED TIMES: Even if you can get away, flying off on holiday isn't what it used to be

No holidays abroad for me but at least I have golden memories

DO not travel light. The late Loving Spouse used to look in despair at the two bulging suitcases, straining at their zips I expected him to carry if we went anywhere for more than a weekend.

He never got his head round my necessity to cater for all meteorological and social eventualities. "What if it's hot/cold/wet/casual/dressy-uppy?" I'd say. "Why don't you just run a rope round your wardrobe and I'll drag it behind me?" he'd respond. No need to be sarcastic, dear. The number of items packed 'in case' made the cases almost part from their handles. This holiday scenario was re-enacted annually for 35 years.

I snort sceptically at magazine features offering pre-holiday advice on 'a capsule wardrobe' – half a dozen garments "that'll take you from beach to dinner to nightclub looking effortlessly fabulous," they promise. Hah! That's what I hate about 'abroad' – the continentals – so cool, so chic, so appropriately garbed, making us beetroot faced, sweaty tourists look like badly tied bags of chaff, instantly recognisable by our travelworn appearance in a wee top exposing a bad case of sunburn, sad shorts or tragic trousers and big hoofy trainers like characters from a Disney cartoon. (Yes, I know they're the epitome of current fashion, but they look ridiculous on anyone over 25.)

The forensic ferocity of foreign light does nothing for fair-skinned gingers like me. Why am I going to this hot place in high summer? I'd need a hazmat suit for protection.

A word to the wise – elegant heels are unsuitable for continental

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cobblestones, though the stylish locals manage gracefully. Also, linen creases if you look at it and the last thing you need is a travel iron in your luggage. Truthfully, no matter how spartan your packing, you really only wear half of it – two thirds at most and you'll want to leave a little room for the irresistible little item(s) you might impulsively buy.

Airports used to be exciting, anticipatory places. Now, they're the seventh circle of hell. 'Decant your toiletries into travel-size containers,' they insist. The combination of tiny plastic bottles that wouldn't last me a week and the miserly six-inch square 'liquids' bag demanded by airlines, doesn't hold half my cosmetic needs. Mine is invariably the little bag that's taken away for testing. I doubt if either airport or aircraft is much imperilled

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by Estee Lauder Advanced Night Repair. Meanwhile, I stand barefoot on a grubby floor waiting to be frisked by a humour-free security officer because my replacement hip-joints have set off the beeper machine. It's at this point I begin to regret not staying at home and supporting Tourism Ireland.

It was to be Vienna last year, before lockdown put the kibosh on travel. Hope springs eternal. At least I have a golden store of memories – opening the shutters on a sunlit Florentine piazza straight out of 'A Room with a View'; alien southern hemisphere stars and a shimmering moonlit rainbow above Victoria Falls; walking gingerly up the cindery slope of Vesuvius; standing in the immense silence on the site of the battle of Rorke's Drift.

Regrets? I've had a few. Victims of the 'no space to carry it home' syndrome were the handbag I didn't buy in Siena and the green suede boots not bought in Florence. I did buy a two-foot diameter wall clock in Bruges (but that's another story) and watched the soles peel slowly off my comfy moccasins in a flash flood in St Mark's Square, Venice. Wasn't I wise to have brought three pairs of shoes with me? What upset me more was the fifty dollar blow-dry I got in New York that fell flat before I got back to the hotel.

For someone with an A-level in geography, I have no sense of direction. Splitting up to visit different attractions, I've got lost in at least five European cities. Basically, I shouldn't be let out alone, a sentiment my travelling companions would heartily endorse. As the old philosopher put it: "Them as goes tae foreign parts deserves all they gets."

ON THIS DAY

AUGUST 24 1921

Dev Says 'No'

A COMPLETE surprise was sprung on the press and politicians by the publication of the British Cabinet's peace proposals. President de Valera's reply on behalf of the Dail Cabinet and Mr Lloyd George's rejoinder.

The correspondence had been preceded by the release by Lloyd George of General Smuts's [South African Prime Minister] remarkable letter to Mr de Valera in which he labours the 'Ulster' difficulty and urges that Irish unity should be regarded as an 'ideal' to be striven for after a 26-county settlement, but not at present insisted upon.

The British Government's proposals, signed by Mr Lloyd George, dated July 20th, state that Ireland shall assume forthwith the status of a Dominion under which she would enjoy complete autonomy in taxation and finances, her own military force and take over all matters relating to: education, agriculture, etc. It is laid down that the settlement must allow for full recognition of the existing powers and privileges of Northern Ireland.'

Mr de Valera, in his reply of August 10th, stated that Dail Eireann could not, and the Irish people would not accept the British government's proposals. It was, he wrote, the deep conviction of his colleagues and himself that true friendship with England could be obtained most readily through amicable but absolute separation. However, Mr Lloyd George replied the British Government could never acknowledge the right of Ireland to secede and were unable to go beyond the present proposals ...

Sir James Craig adheres to the attitude that Ulster does not want to interfere with any settlement with the South but will insist on being left alone, promising cooperation with the rest of Ireland 'on equal terms'

RIC Man and Civilian Shot in Belfast

EARLSWOOD Road, Knock was the scene of a sensational occurrence on Saturday when Constable Thomas Keane was shot at and wounded and Frederick Fox (19), a civilian of Durham Street received a bullet wound. Francis Crumme, Raglan Street, and Fox were arrested. When constable, becoming suspicious, questioned the men, one of them produced a revolver and fired, wounding him.

A CENTURY ago today, the Irish people learned with some foreboding that the Dail cabinet had rejected Lloyd George's 'final offer' of Dominion Status for 26 counties. Indeed, the South African PM, General Smuts, a key figure in ending the Anglo-Irish conflict, was used by London to try to persuade de Valera to place Irish unity on the long finger. As nationalist Ireland held its breath, de Valera was inundated by a host of northern deputations seeking assurances that northern nationalists would not be abandoned in future negotiations.

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