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**Article:**

Anderson, P. [orcid.org/0000-0002-9321-853X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9321-853X) (Accepted: 2025) "I'm Taking the Costa Brava Plane": Affluent British Workers' Holidays to Spain in the 1950s and 1960s. *Journal of Tourism History*. ISSN: 1755-182X (In Press)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2025.2607568>

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# “I’m Taking the Costa Brava Plane”: Affluent British Workers’ Holidays to Spain in the 1950s and 1960s<sup>1</sup>

‘Oh this year I’m off to Sunny Spain Y Viva España  
I’m taking the Costa Brava ‘plane Y Viva Espana  
If you’d like to chat a matador, in some cool cabana  
And meet señoritas by the score, España por favor’<sup>2</sup>

‘Some simply lived all the year round for their holidays, concentrating all their hopes and dreams on them.’<sup>3</sup>

‘Last year I went to Spain...confided a man of twenty-four with pride.’<sup>4</sup>

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## Introduction

From the 1950s, millions of newly affluent British workers began to holiday abroad for the first time. Many of them travelled on cheap air-package tours and the majority to Spain which they turned into a significant site of British social history. We enjoy only very limited social and cultural histories of this major transformation in both the Spanish or British historiography.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that the historiography of tourism in Spain has grown impressively, it tends to concentrate on the economic, political, and social effects of tourism within Spain.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, while historians have studied the origins of tourist and travel culture

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<sup>1</sup> Data-Access Statement: This publication is supported by sources which are available at locations cited in the footnotes section of this paper. Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge helpful discussions with Sasha Pack, Richard Cleminson, Laura King, Gregorio Alonso. Funding Acknowledgement: this research was kindly supported by a British Academy funding award 130167. This is the accepted but not typeset or proof-read article in *The Journal of Tourism History*. Article ID 2607568.

<sup>2</sup> From the UK version (selling more than a million copies in 1974) of the international hit known in the UK as ‘Y Viva España’. The original Flemish version written by Leo Caerts and Leo Rozenstraten. An account in *Billboard*, 05/10/1975, 66 and in *El País*, 02/03/2020, ‘La historia tras la canción ‘Y viva España de Manolo Escobar’.

<sup>3</sup> Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society* (London: Heinemann, 1961), 155.

<sup>4</sup> Zweig, *The Worker*, 155.

<sup>5</sup> A book based on TV interviews Miriam Akhtar and Steve Humphries, *Some Liked it Hot. The British on Holiday at Home and Abroad* (London: Virgin Publishing, 2000). Growing ‘Europeanisation’ explored in Sina Fabian, ‘Flight to the Sun: Package tours and the Europeanization of British Holiday Culture in the 1970s and 1980s’, *Contemporary British History*, 32.3, (2021), pp. 417–438. The growth of package holidays in Dave Richardson, *Let’s Go! A History of Package Holidays and Escorted Tours* (Stroud: Aberley Books, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Classics in the growing historiography include Carmelo Pellejero Martínez, (Director), *Historia de la economía del turismo en España* (Madrid: Civitas, 1999). Rafael Vallejo Pousada, *Historia del turismo en*

in general, we do not possess a history of the growth of large-scale tourism to Spain that explores in depth the social and cultural experiences of British tourists and their agency.<sup>7</sup> Equally, while we enjoy a set of studies by anthropologists and tourism scholars which take tourists seriously, these excellent works often adopt a present-day focus and do not seek to study how tourists experienced change over time and through their lifetimes.<sup>8</sup>

Although historians have remained largely silent on development of the mass tourist experience, contemporary commentators often took a profound dislike to mass tourists. Elite groups who had long dominated travel to Spain frequently tried to distinguish themselves from the new tourists by denigrating them as uncultured and accusing them of low-brow taste.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, left-leaning intellectuals often lambasted tourists for becoming victims of materialist consumption that stripped away all historical, cultural, and political context.<sup>10</sup> A range of academics similarly portrayed tourists as part of an essentially colonialist and

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*España 1928–1962. Economía, política y administración turística* (Madrid: Sílex, 2021). Sasha D. Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship. Europe's Peaceful Invasion of Franco's Spain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Justin Crumbaugh, *Destination Dictatorship. The Spectacle of Spain's Tourist Boom and the Reinvention of Difference* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009). Jorge Villaverde e Ivanne Galant, (eds.), *¿El turismo es un gran invento? Usos políticos, identitarios y culturales del turismo en España* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, Centre Valencià d'Estudis i d'Investigació, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England. Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830–1885* (London: Methuen, 1987 [1978]). Susan Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840–1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Robert C. Ritchie, *The Lure of the Beach. A Global History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021). Dave Richardson, *Let's Go! A History of Package Holidays and Escorted Tours* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Sue Wright, 'Sun, Sea, Sand and Self-Expression. Mass Tourism as an Individual Experience', in Hartmut Berghoff, Barbara Korte, Ralf Schenider and Christopher Harvie (eds.), *The Making of Modern Tourism. The cultural History of the British Experience, 1600–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 181–202. Karen O'Reilly, *The British on the Costa del Sol. Transnational Identities and Local Communities* (London: Routledge, 2000). Hazel Andrews, 'Feeling at home: Embodying Britishness in a Spanish charter tourist resort', *Tourist Studies* 5.3 (2005): 247–266. A strong piece of TV journalism in Miriam Akhtar and Steve Humphries, *Some Liked it Hot. The British on Holiday at Home and Abroad* (London: Virgin, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> The classic study of distinction in tourism is James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). The founding idea in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010 [1984]). A telling example for Spain in Ian Jack, 'Majorca', *The Sunday Times*, 6/08/1972, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Cape, 1972). Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Crónica sentimental de España* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1970), 'Turismo y libertad', 186–191.

capitalist project that destroyed local cultures.<sup>11</sup> For their part, contemporary sociologists studying the rise of the affluent worker were often driven by anxieties that materialist workers were becoming concerned with status and domestic life at the expense of political commitment and solidarity. Some stressed that workers were becoming more middle-class through the growing status bestowed upon them by materialist consumption. In response, other sociologists stressed that affluent workers placed less emphasis on class status and took a keener interest in new opportunities.<sup>12</sup> If leisure lives were explored in this literature it was through the domestic sphere of the home and debate centred around questions of whether affluent workers were becoming more focused on home and family and less enmeshed in communal networks which bred solidarity.<sup>13</sup> In some ways, this silence around affluent workers' foreign-holiday experiences continues to haunt current debates around overtourism which present tourists as consumers damaging local communities, keeping workers in low-paid jobs, and harming the environment.<sup>14</sup>

This article rereads the mass tourists and affluent workers of the 1950s and 1960s by attending to their voice and agency while moving from materialist and dismissive

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<sup>11</sup> Mario Gaviria *et al*, *España a Go-Go. Turismo chárter y neocolonialismo del espacio* (Madrid: Turner, 1974). Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes. International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975). Joseph B. Aceves and William A. Douglass, (eds), *The Changing Faces of Rural Spain* (New York: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> On the link between materialism, consumption and new stuats see Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society*. On structures of opportunity for affluent workers see John H. Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer, Jeniffer Platt, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For the focus on the move towards middle-class identity see Jon Lawrence, 'Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930–64', *Cultural and Social History*, 10, 2 (2013), 273–299. On opportunities see Mike Savage, 'Working-Class Identities in the 1960s: Revisiting the Affluent Worker Study', *Sociology*, 39, 5 (2005), 929–946. On middle-class re-newed distinciton strategies as affluent workers grew in status see Mike Savage, 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55', *Contemporary British History*, 22, 4 (2008), 457–476.

<sup>13</sup> An exploration in A Franklin, 'Working-class Privatism: an historical case study of Bedminster, Bristol', *Environment and Planning: society and Space*, 7 (1989), 93-113.

<sup>14</sup> <https://elpais.com/espana/catalunya/2025-10-26/el-cierre-de-10000-pisos-turisticos-en-barcelona-impactara-en-un-empleo-ya-precarizado-ganan-cientos-de-euros-por-noche-y-no-nos-pagan-las-horas-extra.html>. <https://elpais.com/clima-y-medio-ambiente/2025-10-02/aguas-fecales-y-turismo-tenerife-el-paraiso-contaminado.html>. Accessed 17/12/2025.

explanations of their consumerism. It adopts some of the more sympathetic approaches to the tourist seen in present-focused tourism studies which view consumerism in terms of identity making rather than commodification and exploitation.<sup>15</sup> These approaches also pay attention to the peak emotions experienced by tourists to understand the deep meaning that holidays can hold in tourists' lives.<sup>16</sup> The article links these approaches to the study of life narratives which centres on how individuals understand important past events in shaping their personal development and how they believe they became who they are in the present.<sup>17</sup> To study these life narratives, we need to delve into tourists' emotional practices—the 'habits, rituals, and everyday pastimes that aid us in achieving a certain emotional state'.<sup>18</sup> In our case, life narratives of British affluent workers and tourists became infused with joy in overcoming fear, benefiting from new opportunities, demonstrating personal adaptability, and experiencing personal growth. For these reasons tourism to Spain became eagerly anticipated, intensely experienced, and treasured as a memory. By focusing on affluent workers' neglected holiday lives, the meanings behind their consumption, their enthusiasm for new opportunities, and their desire for personal development we can better understand affluent workers and tourists as historical agents who forged their own meanings and fashioned their own understandings over time. We can also demonstrate the importance tourism gained within individuals' life courses refracted by new transnational experiences. Through this

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<sup>15</sup> Chaim Noy, 'This Trip Really Changed Me. Backpackers' Narratives of Self-Change', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31, 1, pp. 78–102. Ian Munt, 'The 'Other' Postmodern Tourism: culture, travel and the new middle classes', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11, 3 (1994), 101–123. Luke Desforges, 'Travelling the World. Identity and Travel Biography', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27, 4 (2000), 926–945.

<sup>16</sup> David Picard and Mike Robinson, *Emotion in Motion. Tourism, Affect and Transformation* (Farnham, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Ruth Behar, "Rage and Redemption: Reading the Life Story of a Mexican Marketing Woman." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1990, 223–58, 225–226. Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* Second Edition (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 33–41. An excellent study in Lynn Abrams, 'Liberating the Female Self: epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women', *Social History*, 39, 1 (2014), 4–35.

<sup>18</sup> Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And is that What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51, (2012), 193–220, 209.

approach we can better locate the British experience of Spain within the growing historiography that has studied the relationship between tourism and tourists' identity.<sup>19</sup>

One of the challenges in telling this story is to find the voice of affluent workers who became tourists and to do so the article draws on a range of documentary sources. The travel-trade press made its appearance from the 1950s. The *Travel Trade Gazette* (TTG) forms the central publication for the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s with copies held in hard copy at the British Library. The Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism (MIT) took an especially keen interest in British press reactions to holidaying in Spain and employed a professional cuttings agency to clip national and local stories on tourism in the 1960s and 1970s. These voluminous clippings are now held in the Archive of the State Administration in Alcalá de Henares. The Wellcome Trust in London also holds a vital set of twenty interviews with tourists carried out by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and material drawn from 100 letters of complaints. The article also draws on memoirs and from the archives of the British Mass Observation project held in the University of Sussex which in the 1980s, and again in 2010, issued a directive on tourism which captured the voice of hundreds of tourists who told their life story of holidays before and after the Second World War. These documents preserve the voice of many who are no longer with us to give interviews. The article also makes use of travel brochures from the British Library and material in provincial archives in Mallorca as

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<sup>19</sup> Examples include Polona Sitar, 'Workers Becoming Tourists and Consumers: social history of tourism in socialist Slovenia and Yugoslavia', *Journal of Tourism History* 12, 3 (2020): 254–274. Emma Gleadhill, 'Improving upon Birth, Marriage and Divorce: the cultural capital of three late eighteenth-century female Grand Tourists', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10, 1 (2018): 21–36. Sarah Lemmen, 'Travelling Second Class. Czech Tourists Between National Identity and Europeaness in Cairo, 1890s–1930s', *Journal of Tourism History* 15, 1 (2023): 3–19.

well as the Spanish National Library in Madrid.

## The Fear and Joy of New Opportunities

The 1950s opened up new leisure opportunities for many Britons for whom holidays, and especially foreign holidays, had previously proved beyond reach. Until the late 1930s, entitlement to holidays in the UK remained patchy with workers in some areas such as Lancashire and Yorkshire enjoying a week of annual holiday while elsewhere employees had to make do with a six-day working week and six bank holidays a year.<sup>20</sup> Lower-paid workers tended to benefit from the least holiday of all. In 1919, of 18,500,000 manual workers in the UK earning under £5 a week, just one-twelfth had even just a few days of paid holidays.<sup>21</sup> As one Mass Observation respondent noted to receive two weeks holiday a year employees needed a middle-class job such as a bank manager, solicitor, or doctor. The lack of time compounded the financial difficulty of holidaying abroad and ferry trips across the English Channel would swallow up prohibitive chunks of people's often meagre holiday leave.<sup>22</sup> This makes it unsurprising that many tourists who would later visit Spain remembered the contrasting pre-war years for their poverty of opportunity. Even for the slightly better off, chances could be few and between. One Mass Observation respondent noted when discussing holidays before the Second World War noted that 'The most any of my friends or myself could expect was a day trip to a neighbouring resort or a few days with a relative', although workers also stayed with friends and some enjoyed working holidays such as hop-picking.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Dr H C Wood, *Brain-Work and Overwork*, (Philadelphia: Presley Blackiston, 1880).

Lord Amulree, 'Industrial Holidays', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 11/11/1938, 3–14. Arthur Shadwell [MA MD], *Industrial Efficiency. A comparative Study of Industrial Life in England, Germany and America*, Vol II (London: Longmans and Co, 1906).

<sup>21</sup> Francis Williams, *Journey into Adventure. The Story of the Workers' Travel Association* (London, Odhams Press, 1960), 27.

<sup>22</sup> University of Sussex Special Collections (USSC), SxMOA2/1/23/1/3/, F 1694.

<sup>23</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, F-H, F 1780. Similar testimony in USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3/, F-H, G 1158.

It is true, of course, that before the 1939–1945 war Blackpool had mushroomed into a major destination for working-class visitors from Lancashire and Yorkshire mill towns and attracted over 7 million visitors a year by the 1930s.<sup>24</sup> Many Blackpool landladies from these hinterlands had enjoyed their holidays there so much that they spent years saving to be able to set up their own boarding houses.<sup>25</sup> Despite the evident joy tourists experienced, from the vantage point of the post-war years, many holidaymakers looked back on their limited UK pre-conflict holidays as happy but marred by the poor accommodation and disappointing weather that holidays to Spain would allow them to leave behind. A man from Wakefield expressed a common memory when he described relaxed hours on a UK beach, but he also remembered his boarding house had no lounge where his family could retreat when the weather turned bad. Even worse, during days and evenings his family could not frequent the guest house outside mealtimes. As alternative places to spend time such as Blackpool Tower proved too expensive for his family, they were forced to pound the streets. The family never returned to the resort after a wet holiday in 1928.<sup>26</sup> Many other respondents described holidays in guest houses in rather impoverished terms. Some visitors in an extension of everyday domestic frugality took their own food for the landlady to cook as this drastically cut costs.<sup>27</sup> These postwar memories were also shaped by the growing belief in the opportunities and greater choice and freedom than offered by the regimented guesthouse particularly in the 1960s. As *The Sun* noted in 1965 people were turning against the ‘landlady’ because they wanted ‘eat when they like, sleep when they like, sunbathe when they like’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John K. Walton, *Blackpool* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>25</sup> John K. Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady. A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 80–84.

<sup>26</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/1/, A-B, B 1254.

<sup>27</sup> Example in USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, D 1508.

<sup>28</sup> *The Sun*, 17/03/1965 ‘Mass Escape from Landladies’.



Meanwhile, back in the inter-war period the Trades Union Congress ignited a campaign for paid holidays in 1926. In 1938, the campaigners scored a victory with the Holidays with Pay Act which recommended one week of annual paid leave to all full-time workers. Although many better-off workers had by this point won some paid holidays, and holiday camps such as Butlins had already emerged, the Act marks the arrival of workers as mass leisure consumers in search of rest and a change of scene.<sup>29</sup>

The anticipated change would be some time coming as the Second World War rendered holidays scarcer and so more valued. During the conflict, families were frequently separated and war work became a vital priority. England's east and south coasts were also heavily defended and beaches closed first from the Wash to Bexhill and then from Berwick to Dorset, with only Brighton remaining open—although Blackpool on the north-west coast continued to boom.<sup>30</sup> The restrictions placed holidaying out of reach for large sections of the population and made the opportunities of the post-war period appear even richer in people's memories. One Mass-Observation respondent recalled that in the Second World War beaches were surrounded by barbed-wire and that dogs were occasionally blown up when they strayed into mined zones of beaches.<sup>31</sup> The immediate post-war years also proved hard with biting austerity and many families struggling to afford small luxuries while petrol rationing made travel difficult. The hardships of the war and postwar, however, lent holidays even greater meaning for tourists. This is why recollections of post-war holidays often appear so emotional and visceral, infused as they are with heightened emotion and rich senses. One woman writing for Mass Observation described a holiday in Sussex in 1945 with her father freshly returned

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<sup>29</sup> Sandra Dawson, 'Working Class Consumers and the Campaign for Holidays with Pay', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18, 3 (2007), 277–305.

<sup>30</sup> Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady*, 188.

<sup>31</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, F 1589.

from the Second World War and declared her joy and excitement: 'I can still smell every whiff of seaweed...and feel the...sand between my toes'.<sup>32</sup> Another woman recalled her mother crying with joy in 1946 because she felt her children had been deprived of holidays in the war and had finally managed to secure a hotel in Eastbourne, although the beach remained covered in barbed wire.<sup>33</sup>

The 1950s and 1960s brought British workers new affluence and growing opportunities to travel that would shape the way they remembered their lives and holidays. It is true that historians have disagreed about several aspects of the rise of the 'affluent society' in the 1950s and 1960s. They differ even on when the rise in affluence took place and some trace growing prosperity back to the 1930s; others have challenged the degree to which social life became more family focused from the 1950s, and a range of scholars have pointed out that a stark generation gap did not emerge between groups such as teenagers and their parents as some commentators of the period had insisted.<sup>34</sup> It is also true, however, that the 1950s and 1960s witnessed enormous improvements in wages, job security, living standards, and the development of a welfare state which gave unprecedented protections against previous root causes of poverty such as illness, old-age, or bereavement.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/12/, C 1404.

<sup>33</sup> USSC, MOA, Directive 2010, L1991.

<sup>34</sup> On the longer-term history of affluent workers see Jon Lawrence, 'Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64', *Cultural and Social History*, 10, 2 (2013), 273-299. On continuing poverty and debt see Selina Todd, 'Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class', *Contemporary British History*, 22, 4 (2008), 501-518. On the charge of privatism being a myth see A Franklin, 'Working-class Privatism: an historical case study of Bedminster, Bristol', *Environment and Planning: society and Space*, 7 (1989), 93-113 and Hannah Charnock, 'Teenage Girls, Female Friendship and the making of the Sexual Revolution in England, 1950-198', *The Historical Journal*, 63 (4) 2020, 1032-1053. On co-operation between teenagers and older people Selina Todd and Hilary Young, 'Baby-Boomers to 'Beanstalkers'. Making the Modern Teenager in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 9 (3) (2012), 45-467. A critique of the 1960s as a youth revolution in Helena Mills, 'Using the Personal to Critique the Popular: Women's Memories of 1960s Youth', *Contemporary British History*, 30, 4 (2016), 463-483. The argument that affluence created consumers and emasculated political citizens in Avner Offer, 'British Manual Workers: from producers to consumers, c. 1950-2000', *Contemporary British History*, 22.4 (2008), 537-571. A

<sup>35</sup> B. Seebohm Rowntree and G. R. Lavers, *Poverty and the Welfare State. A Third Social Survey of York Dealing Only with Economic Questions* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1951). On growing education levels and opportunity see Lynn Abrams, 'Mothers and Daughters: negotiating the discourse on the 'Good

Contemporaries readily perceived change and while in 1950 the average weekly wage stood a little over £6, by 1959 it had nearly doubled to just under £12. At the same time, jobs proved plentiful and unemployment through the 1950s and 1960s never surpassed 2 per cent.

Improving incomes and greater confidence helped drive growing consumer spending. To take just two examples, spending on household items soared by 115 per cent in the 1950s and by 1966 60 per cent of households owned a washing machine.<sup>36</sup> The tremendous surge in holiday spending, however, occupies a special place in this growing consumerism and, in turn, helps reveal the importance people gave to their valuable leisure time. While between 1950 and 1963 consumer spending in general boomed by 100 per cent, expenditure on foreign travel skyrocketed by 450 per cent.<sup>37</sup>

Alongside this extraordinary change, the 1950s also witnessed a gradual lifting of despised currency restrictions. In 1954, journalists in Liverpool complained that the currency tourists could take on holiday had increased by a ‘miserable’ £10 from £40 to £50, which made the British the poor of Europe while the Germans who ‘lost’ the war could take £125.<sup>38</sup> By 1960, however, one travel journalist revelling in the easing of restrictions extolled that it was now ‘a joy it is to travel around the continent’ and ‘we need not feel inferior...to Americans, Germans, Belgians and the rest, who did so well for themselves in the days of our austerity life’.<sup>39</sup>

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Woman’ in 1950s and 1960s Britain’, in Michael Gauvreau and Stephen J. Heathorn (eds), *The Sixties and Beyond: de-Christianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 60–83.

<sup>36</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good. A History from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Hachette, 2005), Kindle, Location 2336–2725.

<sup>37</sup> *Travel Trade Gazette (TTG)*, 22/09/1967, ‘Consumers the key to Tour Marketing’, 14. See also A. H. Halsey, *British Social Trends since 1900. A Guide to the Changing Social Structure of Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 16–17

<sup>38</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, ‘Trippers’, 13/07/1954.

<sup>39</sup> *Travel World*, August 1960, Harold Champion, ‘Living it Up on the Adriatic Riviera’, 51–53.

While the comfortable middle classes could joyfully return to the ‘continent’, for newly affluent workers one very particular type of foreign travel took on new importance: the air-package holiday to the Mediterranean, and above all to Spain which developed into the destination of choice for most British charter tourists.<sup>40</sup> Many antecedents to these types of holidays exist including travel companies like Thomas Cook created in the nineteenth century or even the rise of the holiday camps such as Butlins in the 1930s.<sup>41</sup> A series of post-war entrepreneurs, however, grasped that a new mass market was opening and moved quickly to provide customers fresh opportunities at affordable prices. Vladamir Raitz stands out as one of the earliest pioneers. A graduate of the London School of Economics, Raitz founded Horizon Holidays in October 1949. Like other air-package leaders of the time who quickly followed in his wake, such as Harry Chandler, Ted Langton, Harold Bamberg, and Doug Ellis, Raitz offered customers fast and comfortable air travel to previously exotic locations at bargain prices. Above all, Raitz and his fellow entrepreneurs realised that the Mediterranean, and most of all Mallorca and the Costa Brava, offered wonderful holiday locations for British tourists eager for a warm, and dry, climate, dazzling blue seas, and rock-bottom prices but who wanted to travel without the inconvenience of trains, buses, and boats.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For the rise of the German air-package industry see Christopher M. Kopper, ‘The Breakthrough of the Package Tour in Germany after 1945’, *Journal of Tourism History*, 1: 1 (2009), pp. 67-92.

<sup>41</sup> An overview of tourism history in Eric G. E. Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

History of working-class tourism in Francis Williams, *Journey into Adventure. The Story of the Workers’ Travel Association* (London: Oddhams Press, 1960). Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England. Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830–1885* (London: Methuen, 1987 [1978]). Susan Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840–1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Roger Bray and Vladimir Raitz, *Flight to the Sun. The Story of the Holiday Revolution* (London: Continuum, 2001).

Harry Chandler, *Chandler’s Travels. A Tour of the Life of Harry Chandler* Packaged by John Carter (London: Quiller Press, 1985). Vincent Cobb, *The Package Tour Industry* (Hertford: Blackie & Co, 2012). Fred Pontin and Peter Willsher, *My Happy Life. Always...Thumbs Up!* (London: Solo Books, 1991).

The arrival of cheaper aircraft for charter operators seeking opportunities to undercut national airline carriers helped entrepreneurs prise open this new market. Raitz bought up DC-3s in fire sales after the Second World War which he used to fly to destinations then of little interest to the major airlines which had carved out monopolies on the most profitable business routes and travel destinations for the well-heeled—and which the UK government protected through exclusive licensing. Raitz began by setting up routes to Italy for which BEA charged £70 to its major airports and which by finding new destinations and filling the plane to capacity he was able to price at just over £32. By the early 1950s, Raitz had secured a seven-year licence for flights to Mallorca (then not covered by BEA which flew to Barcelona).<sup>43</sup>

Spain soon became the air-package destination par excellence for British tourists. A good part of the secret of Spain's success lay in its bargain prices. Contemporary experts calculated that while on average visitors to Spain would spend \$10.68 a day on all holiday costs, the same visitor to Greece would need to find \$13.57, to Italy \$17.87 and to France \$25.20.<sup>44</sup> When Britain devalued its currency in 1967, Spain's exclusion from the European Economic Community left it free to devalue its currency(which EEC-member Italy and then Spain's greatest rival could not do) and maintain its long-standing low prices for British customers hit by the falling value of sterling.<sup>45</sup> We know from market research in the 1960s that some British tourists chose Spain specifically because it was much more affordable than rivals such as Greece.<sup>46</sup> One clerical worker rejoiced that Spain's knock-down prices allowed her to move from holidaying in notoriously wet North Wales and instead enjoy 10 days of rest in Mallorca

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<sup>43</sup> Bray and Raitz, *Flight to the Sun*, 1–23.

<sup>44</sup> *Editur. Documentación e información turística*, 2, 66, 16 de junio de 1966—reporting statistics from the Centro Per l a Statidtica Aziendale in Florence.

<sup>45</sup> *Diario SP*, 'El turismo inglés se vuelca en España', 14/06/1967. Italy was unable to do the same and it started to become much more expensive than Spain. *TTG*, 24/11/1967, 'How Sterling Slump Will Hit Tourism', 55.

<sup>46</sup> Wellcome Collection (WC), SA/TIH/B/2/41/2.

off-season in October.<sup>47</sup> Journalists too enthused with unabandoned joy about the low prices in Spain including the sparkling wine cava, which they described as champagne, at just 2 shillings a bottle.<sup>48</sup>

Spain also offered a wide range of modern but cheap hotels that proved hard to beat. The Spanish pressed ahead quickly with the building of modern hotels, generally near the beach and with modern conveniences. The pace of growth proved rapid and the number of hotels in Mallorca mushroomed from 150 in 1950 to 1,400 in 1965.<sup>49</sup> Operators soon seized on the benefits the construction boom brought for the tourist. The 1972 Wallace Arnold Air Tours brochure made this plain when it proclaimed that the Hotel Estay in Benidorm offered fifteen-day breaks from £38 in a hotel with a ‘magnificent’ palm-tree island, rooms largely facing the sea front, a private balcony, and ensuite bathrooms alongside a ‘fine restaurant’ on site.<sup>50</sup>

British tour operators squeezed Spanish hotel owners hard to offer such comfort at knock-down prices. Many Spanish hoteliers yearned for credit and craved deals with British travel operators who could guarantee custom through a whole season.<sup>51</sup> This bestowed British companies substantial leverage and Spaniards frequently complained that they were paid well below the market rate and that foreign-tour operators evaded tax payments.<sup>52</sup> For their part, travel companies boasted of the huge savings they secured. The Everyman brochure for 1967 bragged that two weeks in Tossa de Mar could be secured for just £34 and ‘if you did it alone it would cost you £52’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3/ H 1705

<sup>48</sup> *Express and Echo Exeter*, 3/02/1965 ‘Holiday Abroad Can Be Cheap’.

<sup>49</sup> *Western Mail*, 13/08/1965 ‘Where the Welsh Go on Holidays’.

<sup>50</sup> *Wallace Arnold Air Continental Holidays*, 1972, 20. Similar marvels described in *Daily Sketch*, 04/01/1969, ‘No Wonder We Can’t Wait to Get to Spain’. Also in *Knaresborough Post*, 10/01/1969, ‘Pleasures of the Costa Brava’.

<sup>51</sup> Cobb, *The Package Tour Industry*, 155.

<sup>52</sup> Arxiu del Regne de Mallorca, Gobierno Civil, 1944, 52, ‘Escrito Sobre Proliferación Industrias Ilegales’.

<sup>53</sup> *Everyman. Every Holiday under £49. All Flights from London*, 1967, p. 2.

Spain's low prices, its modern and comfortable accommodation, its extensive coastline, and its relative closeness to the UK all attracted huge numbers of UK visitors with Britons forming the largest group of air-package holidaymakers to the country and Spain becoming the principal air-package destination for UK holiday makers. Already by 1958 the UK sent 174,618 tourists to Spain by air. The next biggest national contingent came from France with 115,426 and then Germany with 91,558. True many thousands more French citizens arrived by car, but at this point in the trend towards air transport the British stood at the front of the queue.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, 56 per cent of UK charter holidaymakers went to Spain in 1974, the next largest group of UK air-travellers, just 10 per cent, travelled to Italy, 5 per cent to Greece, 4 per cent to Yugoslavia, and 3 per cent to France.<sup>55</sup> A study of travel brochures for the period brings home this growing dominance of Spain. The representative Everyman brochure for 1967 featured 15 Italian destinations, but the company had chosen 17 resorts in Mallorca alone and another 14 Spanish resorts in addition, ten of these on the most easily accessible destination from the UK on the Costa Brava.<sup>56</sup>

Importantly, not all British social groups shared the desire or income to take advantage of the new opportunities. For manual workers the chance to holiday in Spain proved an aspiration beyond their financial reach or their limited entitlement to vacations—56 per cent of people from this class did not holiday at all.<sup>57</sup> For their part, older people often tended to fear or find little joy in the prospect of travelling abroad. In 1961, opinion polling by Gallup revealed that 62 per cent of over 65s would prefer to spend their ideal holiday in the UK. Gallup also found that in 1962, British resorts still attracted 72 per cent of British holiday makers.<sup>58</sup> Some of the

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<sup>54</sup> Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) 82, 13251 'Información sobre Aviación comercial y turismo', E 57/46 Cuadro 1, p. 42

<sup>55</sup> Luis Fernández Fúster, *Historia general del turismo de masas* (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 684.

<sup>56</sup> *Everyman. Every Holiday under £49. All Flights from London* (1967).

<sup>57</sup> *TTG*, 06/10/1967, 30.

<sup>58</sup> *TTG*, 08/09/1961, 'Agents Will Benefit from Switch in Holiday Habits', 13. *Herald Express* (Torquay),

older tourists had perhaps inherited a sense of fear of foreign holidays such as one man who declared ‘My father was a xenophobe and was convinced that people taking holidays abroad would be either murdered in their beds or contract some fearful disease. This was in the 1930’s.’<sup>59</sup> For some families, even as late as the 1970s, holidays to Spain simply seemed so impossibly strange and beyond their ‘station’ in life, as one female respondent to Mass Observation put it: ‘like another universe I never expected to access myself’.<sup>60</sup> Others had such visceral and peak emotions of joy from childhood memories of holidays in the UK that they felt no desire to travel overseas. One woman from the north-east of England recalled her childhood holidays in the UK and declared she could still almost taste the crunchy toffee covering crispy apples, feel the candy floss melting on my tongue, like snowy sugar...[and that] I haven’t really yearned for holidays aboard.’<sup>61</sup> For others still, the destination counted for little as it was the joy of being on holiday rather than the joy of being elsewhere that counted most. One woman who had found deep pleasure in her first trip away—to rainy Scotland in 1948—recalled ‘for me a holiday was composed of a period of peace, quiet and freedom from looking after other people. It didn’t matter where I was—as long as I had those blessings I felt rested and happy.’<sup>62</sup>

Many others, however, were persuaded to travel abroad and overcome their fear of the unknown. Even as late as 1965 travel specialists estimated that of the record 4.6 million people who went overseas from the UK that year, one third had never left the country before. Market researchers in the 1960s were also aware that for many ‘going abroad was a major step to

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09/05/1963, ‘Holiday Trends in Cash and Numbers). See also *Glasgow Weekly News*, 27/03/1965, ‘I’m a Keen Fish and Chip Man Myself’.

<sup>59</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, Summer 1987 Directive, Holidays, Respondents C–E, C 1349.

<sup>60</sup> USSC, Summer 2010 Directive, Holidays, W3967.

<sup>61</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, Summer 1987 Directive, Holidays, Respondents F–H F 1145.

<sup>62</sup> SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, Summer 1987 Directive, Holidays, Respondents C–E, C 1624.



take'.<sup>63</sup> Research by British European Airways in 1957 corroborated this point and discovered that people in handsomely paid artisan groups tended to see 'that every difference is a difficulty or an embarrassment'.<sup>64</sup> This somewhat fearful market, however, offered spectacular growth, as tourists in the C1 and C2 social groups composed of white-collar and skilled manual workers began to find that package holidays offered affordable prices and reassurance—especially because packages offered brochures, travel representatives, and guarantees. The two C groups formed a joint cohort of 22 million people and by 1967 7 per cent from these groups were enjoying annual foreign holidays.<sup>65</sup> It helped that growing numbers were travelling to Spain and to the same resorts. This meant that conversations with friends, neighbours and colleagues who had visited Spain also proved crucial in confirming that destinations could be worth visiting or in deterring people from travelling.<sup>66</sup> Crucially, people's fears in most cases turned out to be groundless and reassurance worked. Market research by the Thomson Organisation in the late 1960s, as it contemplated its move to become a major travel operator, found that 85 per cent of British air-package tourists felt their foreign holiday had been either their best ever or very enjoyable.<sup>67</sup>

Younger people proved the most willing of all to put fear aside and embrace joy. An opinion poll by Gallup revealed in 1961 that 75 per cent of those under 30 would prefer to travel overseas rather than holiday in the United Kingdom.<sup>68</sup> This dream turned to reality for many younger people and by 1971 26 per cent of those aged 16–24 travelled abroad, while just 16 per cent of these younger consumers holidayed in the UK.<sup>69</sup> The rise of baby-boomer

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<sup>63</sup> WC, SA/TIHB/2/41/2. Mr and Mrs H.

<sup>64</sup> *TTG*, 'Travellers Know their Agents', 15/03/1957, 5.

<sup>65</sup> *TTG*, 27/10/1967, 'The Travel Picture'. On the importance of the agent *TTG*, 15/03/1956 'Travellers Know their Agents', 5.

<sup>66</sup> WC, SA/TIT/B/2/41/2, Mr B. WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mr and Mrs R.

<sup>67</sup> *Travel World. The Professional Journal for Management in the World's Largest Industry*, September 1967.

<sup>68</sup> *TTG*, 08/09/1961, 'Agents Will Benefit from Switch in Holiday Habits', 13.

<sup>69</sup> Tourist Authority, *The British on Holiday*, folio 4.

generation brought large absolute numbers to these percentage changes and by 1972 50 per cent of the British population stood under the age of 35.<sup>70</sup>

These changes captured the attention of market researchers for whom teenagers, and especially newly affluent teenagers, occupied an important niche within the new generational travel market. As early as 1960, experts estimated that there were five million teenagers in the UK who lived at home with subsidised food and accommodation and enjoyed an income of £8 a week which left them with £4 a week for spending. Marketers also believed they should not squander time courting middle-class teenagers who they pronounced could ‘amuse themselves’, but the vast mass of teenagers who might never have travelled abroad and who, in a new and profitable trend they did much to encourage, wanted to do so with people of their own age.<sup>71</sup> This partly reflected the belief that teenagers, in the consumer sense of the word, were largely working class because their middle and upper-class peers were in school or university education.<sup>72</sup> The teenage market also promised continued growth and analysts estimated that by 1964 there would be 750,000 more teenagers between 15–19 than in 1959.<sup>73</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Co-Op travel agency, among others, began to arrange special tours for teenagers and brochures started to feature photographs of teenage girls and even photographic stories of their holidays in Spain. Agents clearly recognised that teenagers formed a group for whom ‘the idea of flying to the Continent came more easily now than it would have only a few years ago’.<sup>74</sup> These brochures played a central role in framing expectations and encouraging the anticipation of joy. Importantly, the photographs of young women in the

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<sup>70</sup> *TTG*, 27/10/1967. ‘The Travel Picture—And Where U.K. Agents Will Make Money in Tourism’s Next Decade’.

<sup>71</sup> *Travel World*, October 1960, ‘Tailor Made Tours for Teenagers’, 59-61.

<sup>72</sup> Mark Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: The London Press Exchange Ltd, 1959), 13.

<sup>73</sup> *TTG*, 03/11/1961, p. 30 ‘Call for Airline-Agency Sales Attack on Teenagers’.

<sup>74</sup> *TTG*, ‘Co-op Plans Teenager Tours of the Continent’, 24/2/1961, 13. *TTG*, 17/02/1962, ‘They’ve £60 Million to Spend on a Holiday’, 15.

brochures were not just aimed at the male market but also angled after the new female pound. Marketeers had certainly noticed that young women were ‘leading the field’ because they both earned growing incomes and found themselves trapped in jobs such as typists ‘with a certain amount of routine’.<sup>75</sup> Travel agents even reported that 60 per cent of sales came from women.<sup>76</sup> 18-year-old Susan Dansie from Luton offers an example of this kind of new tourist. She worked in an insurance company and travelled with three school friends from Luton Airport to Lloret de Mar on the Costa Brava and when she arrived won a prize for becoming Spain’s eleventh millionth visitor in the 1967 season.<sup>77</sup>

## The Joy of Being Elsewhere in Life Narratives

The satisfaction tourists gained from overcoming fear and experiencing the joy of being elsewhere became linked to life narratives of social mobility. Researchers from the Tavistock Institute in interviews in 1966 noted how much this comfort meant to people accustomed to austere British guest houses. One woman ‘described at great length’ the benefits of a private shower’ and ‘the comforts of the hotel’ with much better service than she had ever received in the UK.<sup>78</sup> Research by travel operators similarly points to the transformative delight of affluence made real by previously unobtainable comfort. When the British tour operator Clarksons conducted a survey of clients from Manchester and Glasgow in 1972, 15 per cent came from homes with no bathroom and an outside toilet. Their previous experience of holidays had centred on British caravan parks or guest houses.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *TTG*, ‘They’ve got £60 Million to Spend on Holiday’, 17/02/1962, 15.

<sup>76</sup> *Travel World*, January 1968, ‘We Didn’t Meet a Single Boy, 61.

<sup>77</sup> *Luton News*, 17/08/1967, ‘Susan Had the Lucky Number’

<sup>78</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mrs H. For an attack on the British guest house and the demands for better see *The Sun*, 17/03/1965 ‘Mass Escape from Landladies’.

<sup>79</sup> Dave Richardson, *Let’s Go! A History of Package Holidays and Escorted Tours* (Stroud: Aberley Books, 2016), 36.

As living standards gradually rose and opportunities increased, holidays played an especially important role in the meaning and value people gave both to their growing affluence and the enriching experiences which holidays gave them—all remembered through heightened emotions and senses. Travelling to the Mediterranean represented a step change in opportunity and experience. This comes across in an example of a man writing for Mass Observation who had no opportunities for holidays as a child, but in the early post-war period managed to save for holidays with poor accommodation in the UK. He later became a teacher and went on to enjoy holidays in Mallorca's modern hotels.<sup>80</sup> For others too travelling abroad took great meaning as a token the new possibilities opened by increasingly well-paid jobs. The importance people gave to making the most of these opportunities comes across in the dedication many showed by saving through the entire year to be able to enjoy an overseas holiday.<sup>81</sup> One woman who noted that as soon as she obtained work as a laboratory technician her mind turned to saving for a holiday in Spain. In 1963, she marked one of the most important stages in her life by spending her honeymoon in Mallorca.<sup>82</sup>

An important reason why people made such an effort to travel to Spain lay in its almost cast-iron guarantee of restorative sunshine and one newspaper commented that people left the UK pale and tired and come back ready for another 50 weeks of work.<sup>83</sup> The widespread social acceptance of the restorative power of the Spanish sun and the status it conferred also comes across in the 1955 interview of two women who had proudly donned their bikinis at a time when sporting this skimpy wear in Spain could lead to fines. They told a British journalist 'we both of us think that the sun does us so much good we believe in getting as much of it as

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<sup>80</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2 D 1437.

<sup>81</sup> Examples in WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mr and Mrs K.

<sup>82</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, C 706.

<sup>83</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 17/01/1967, 'Queue Here for a Dose of Sunshine'.

possible'.<sup>84</sup> This, of course, points to the sunbathing craze of this period with one woman declaring that sunbathing 'is important to me as my holiday is 90% sunbathing and 10% sightseeing'.<sup>85</sup> That said, the hold of sunbathing in conferring status should not be underestimated and one woman wrote of her relief when awareness of skin cancer began to increase in the 1980s and declared 'At one time I would have felt pasty and inferior, but now have no qualms about remaining pale'.<sup>86</sup>

The fixation on sunshine, however, went beyond questions of status and took on a symbolic and emotional importance. One woman writing for Mass Observation remarked that from the early 1950s people from Lancashire began to go further afield than the northern resorts of Blackpool or Morecombe and instead headed for resorts in southern England such as Bournemouth. Here 'the sun was hotter and we saw more of it', partly because the smog never lifted over Blackpool in her memory and 'so it was a novelty for us to feel the rays of the sun when they had not first struggled through a perpetual smoke screen'.<sup>87</sup> Tourists who flew to Spain experienced this novelty several times over. Mass Observation respondents who travelled to Spain commented with joy on the 'colours we never see here [in the UK]' and effused about the sharp light and almond groves or how they had 'revelled in the non-stop sunshine'.<sup>88</sup> Comments such as these point to the peak emotional experience of holidays and one woman rejoiced that 'I have never fallen out of love with the smell of the...umbrella pines, and the heat and feel and beauty of the Mediterranean'.<sup>89</sup> The deep meaning such experiences could have on those who had never travelled abroad before comes across too in the statement

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<sup>84</sup> *Sunday Chronicle*, 'Bikinis', 30/01/1955.

<sup>85</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, H 1705.

<sup>86</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, C 1875.

<sup>87</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, F 1614.

<sup>88</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/2/11/14, E 1445. See also SxMOA2/1/23/1/2 C 1932. *Women's Realm*, 30/12/1967, 'Bachelor Holiday'.

<sup>89</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, C 1932. See also USSC SxMOA/1/23/1/1 A2. On peak emotions see David Picard and Mike Robinson, *Emotion in Motion. Tourism, Affect and Transformation* (Farnham: Routledge, 2012), 16.

by woman who visited Mallorca at the age of 42. Referring to the joy she had taken in the entirely new experience she declared simply that ‘The morning we were leaving I went out on the balcony and cried’.<sup>90</sup> We should not, however, become overly romantic and recognise that a minority experienced strongly negative emotions like contempt, such as a nurse who visited Alcudia in Mallorca and found ‘teenagers throwing up, urinating over the balconies...and copulating in the alleyways’. Similarly, one man derided his childhood friends in the 1960s who had holidayed in Benidorm where they got drunk, fought and ‘crapped’ in the swimming pool.<sup>91</sup>

One of the problems with such perspectives, beyond the fact that they are not always representative, stems from the distinction strategies used to belittle mass tourism as low brow. This means that the pleasure in self-development that many affluent-worker tourists gained becomes obscured by condemnations of some behaviours. Importantly the archival record helps us recapture this other story. Perhaps more than any other phenomenon becoming familiar with Spanish food brought together a sense of new experience that allowed package holidaymakers to overcome fear, experience peak emotions, and take satisfaction in personal growth by becoming more familiar with another culture. This interest in other cultures points towards a weak cosmopolitanism and in recent years scholars have attempted to uncover how cosmopolitanism exists in more complicated forms beyond these binaries of those very open and very closed to other cultures. They have searched for these richer understandings in consumption practices in everyday life.<sup>92</sup> Importantly, these forms of cosmopolitanism often gain meaning through the sense of joy fulfilment they provide. Crucially, pleasure in a sense of self-development often sits centrally in the consumption of cultural diversity and engaging

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<sup>90</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/2 C 1922.

<sup>91</sup> USSC, Summer 2010, P1836 and M3190.

<sup>92</sup> Craig J. Thompson and Siok Kuan Tambyah, ‘Trying to Be Cosmopolitan’, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26: 3 (1999), 214–241, 216.

with enriching cultural experiences. Both strong and weak cosmopolitans can also find fulfilment in becoming more flexible in their tastes and outlooks—changes often narrated through stories of adaptability.<sup>93</sup> The challenge, then, for the historian is to see beyond class-based binaries and to grasp some of the ways in which affluent workers became more cosmopolitan in their outlook, even in somewhat weak ways, and to appreciate the meaning this weak cosmopolitanism held in their lives.

Tour operators certainly realised the desire of their customers to broaden their experiences and the Clarksons guide in the early 1970s framed expectations of joy by encouraging clients to savour sights ‘you thought you’d never see’ by exploring bodegas and or even tasting the ‘real thing’ such as ‘Gazpacho the way the Andalucians meant it’.<sup>94</sup> We know of a significant number of cases where the new consumers who flew to Spain on package holidays proved open if a little anxious to taste new food. Sidney Toone worked in Birmingham in the clerical section of the Midlands Electricity Board and jetted with his wife to Mallorca in 1967. He described the island as a paradise and said that although he ‘was a little apprehensive about eating Spanish food’ he was pleased with the good variety’.<sup>95</sup> Research by the Tavistock Institute revealed the way many people like Toone overcame their lack of familiarity and anxiety and soon proved open to new, enriching cultural experiences. In fact, many seemed pleased to be able to show they had broadened their outlooks. One woman reported that when ‘she went abroad for the first time she was afraid she would not be able to sit down at the table and face foreign food, but found in fact she was wrong.’<sup>96</sup> Similarly, one foreman at the Water Board in London reported that he was looking forward greatly to the ‘foreign food’ he would enjoy on his family’s upcoming trip to Spain.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Thompson and Kuan Tambyah, ‘Trying to be Cosmopolitan’.

<sup>94</sup> *Clarksons Winter Sun-Jet. Jet Holidays and Cruises to Winter Sun 1972/3*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>95</sup> *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 30/11/1967, ‘How to Get to Paradise’.

<sup>96</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2. Mr and Mrs P.

<sup>97</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mr and Mrs. R.

Savouring foreign food became part of a project of personal development and part of a narrative of personal adaptability with participants in Mass Observation surveys reporting enthusiastically on their encounters with exotic food as part of the search for something they ‘have to experience’ once. One man reported eating the food in Spain ‘with relish, including paella and other sea-food dishes’. He even recalled a dinner in Spain as ‘one of the most memorable meals I have ever had’.<sup>98</sup> Others took enormous pleasure from touring markets and savouring Spanish specialities such as *Jamón Serrano* and *Queso Manchego*. Memories like this could become linked to the peak emotions experienced on holiday often through the senses. The man who toured the market declared ‘The smell of the herbs in the meat market will live on in my memory.’<sup>99</sup>

At the same time, first-time tourists could feel slightly fearful about cuisine they found intimidating or too strange. One Spanish hotelier in Alicante explained how his understanding of this apprehensive mind-set allowed him to ‘market’ his meals. It turned out that when his British guests saw octopus named on a menu, they often declined to choose it. The hotelier then observed his guests would complain that they were not being offered enough Spanish food. His comment perfectly captures the tension between the desire to develop and try new things and the anxiety triggered by the unfamiliar. His solution lay in capitalising on the desire for the culturally different and he explained that ‘if you tell them it [the octopus] is Spanish fish rings. Then they love it’.<sup>100</sup>

## Joy and Pride in Self Development

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<sup>98</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, G 1438.

<sup>99</sup> SxMOA2/1/23/1/2, D 1574.

<sup>100</sup> *Jersey Evening Post*, 02/02/1965, ‘Spain Wants to Be Friends’.



The desire for safe but enriching experiences resonated particularly strongly with young, female travellers. Seen from this perspective it is unsurprising that new magazines aimed at teenage girls such as *Honey* in the 1960s could focus on the holiday experience as a time for independence, fun, and self-fulfilment. These magazines had found a mass market and were read by 40 per cent of women between 16 and 24 in 1959. Like many of its ilk, *Honey* featured stories on independent living, experience, romance, advice, music, fashion, and travel.<sup>101</sup> As Claire Langhamer has shown in the post-war period ideas of romance had become deeply intertwined with both emotional intimacy and mutual self-development. Emotional intimacy and love in this context became linked to satisfying both erotic desire and hope for personal growth.<sup>102</sup>

*Honey's* focus on self-fulfilment and growth certainly comes across, as Penny Tinkler has shown, in its survey entitled 'Are you Really Living?'. In many ways the focus on eroticism, love, and self-fulfilment reached a high point in international travel. Research for the magazine revealed that by the 1960s 50 per cent of its readers had travelled abroad.<sup>103</sup> This fits with a general sense at the time that travel was both possible and literally opened the world to young people.<sup>104</sup> Features in *Honey* also framed anticipation of the joy of traveling with a romanticised eroticism that offered the opportunity to experience real love. One feature from 1967 included descriptions of cheap air-package holidays to locations such as the Costa Brava where 'you'll be seduced by the atmosphere and, incidentally, by the first man you meet'. In the intimacy encouraged by 'cheek-to cheek dancing' readers on holiday would feel both

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<sup>101</sup> Penny Tinkler, 'Are you Really Living?' If Not, Get With It!'. Teenage Self and Lifestyle in Young Women's Magazines, Britain 1957-70', *Cultural and Social History*, 11, 4 (2014), 597-619.

<sup>102</sup> Claire Langhamer, 'Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 9.2 (2012), 277-297.

<sup>103</sup> Tinkler, 'Are you Really Living?' , 597-619.

<sup>104</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 19/02/1955, 'Wanderlust Strikes Nottingham Youth'.

‘desirable’ and possible meet the ‘man-in-the million, by the million’.<sup>105</sup> The biggest pleasure of all for the *Honey* journalist, however, would come from chatting with girlfriends about holiday romances and sexual experiences. This fits entirely with a period when young women regularly shared their experience of aspirational sex which made them feel desirable while courting potential future life partners.<sup>106</sup> The foreign holiday, and most commonly of all in Spain, offered one of the richest chances for this social eroticism. It also offers a broader way of thinking about the ‘swinging sixties’: a term which in fact applies to a reduced number of young people often living in major cities like London.<sup>107</sup> In this context, mass and young tourists from the provinces and somewhat isolated from ‘hip’ culture experienced important social change through holidays to Spain.

For some women self-fulfilment passed into emancipation. This was true for a woman who had spent her childhood holidaying in British resorts at the age of 18 managed to work all summer to pay for a holiday to the Costa Brava. Her family did not approve but she saw her ‘adventure’ as part of her liberation from the traditions and control of family life.<sup>108</sup> This is not an uncommon way to remember, and a woman recalled that in 1967 at 18 she lived under the control of a strict father but was working in a tinning factory at night and as a typist in the day. With her father attempting to control the way she dressed and socialised, she booked a trip to Ibiza for two weeks for just £30. She recalled the trip for its freedom and experience and even in later life she continued to hanker to escape through travel, to take her from her responsibilities, and to go to a place where ‘I can be myself’ and ‘fulfil a lifetime dream’.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Honey*, Feb. 1967, ‘Luv’.

<sup>106</sup> Hannah Charnock, ‘Teenage Girls, Female Friendship and the making of the Sexual Revolution in England, 1950–1980’, *The Historical Journal*, 63 (4) 2020, 1032–1053. On the need for working-class women to carefully avoid being cast as vulgar, tasteless, and overly sexual see Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London, 1997), 81.

<sup>107</sup> Helena Mills, ‘Using the Personal to Critique the Popular: Women’s Memories of 1960s Youth’, *Contemporary British History*, 30, 4 (2016), 463–483.

<sup>108</sup> USSC, SXMOA2/1/21/1/3 H 1651.

<sup>109</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, G 218.

Older women could also see holidays as a chance to move on from oppressive husbands such as a 42-year-old who in 1966 had left her ‘dull’ civil-servant husband who always wanted to visit the same place and to drink excessively. She had also recently liberated herself from caring for her frail mother.<sup>110</sup> Older and bereaved women also used package holidays to mark their change in life stage.<sup>111</sup> Others turned their holidays into rituals to mark life stages. One couple, a clerk and a foreman, interviewed by researchers from the Tavistock Institute in 1966 explained that their children had now left home and they were looking for something ‘exotic and unfamiliar’ by travelling to Spain to take the place of child care.<sup>112</sup> Their turn to ritual holidays reveals, as anthropologists of consumption have demonstrated, the use consumption or material objects to evoke emotions, to mark moments or experiences as meaningful, and to forge memories.<sup>113</sup>

Tourists also became involved in other rituals as they approached the much-desired first foreign holiday. Buying clothes in advance and showing them off to friends worked in this way by helping frame both a sense of anticipation and a means to share an event with others seen as both exciting and novel.<sup>114</sup> For some Mass Observation respondents this really mattered and ‘assembling the appropriate wardrobe’ became a ‘major part of the holiday’.<sup>115</sup> The anticipation of nostalgia also became a crucial part of the holiday ritual of shopping for souvenirs which, as the Clarksons brochure promised, allowed people to share ‘holiday memories with others when you get back home’.<sup>116</sup> These words rang true for many families which put great store by buying souvenirs: a process which took on its own rituals. One

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<sup>110</sup> WC SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mrs B.

<sup>111</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2 Mrs L.

<sup>112</sup> WC SA/TIH/B/2/41/2.

<sup>113</sup> Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods. Towards and Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1996), 38–44.

<sup>114</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2, Mr and Mrs R. WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2.

<sup>115</sup> WC, SA/TIH/B/2/41/2 Mrs and Miss B.

<sup>116</sup> *Clarksons Winter SunJet. Holidays and Cruises to Winter Sun 1972/3*, 7.

woman described how she had enjoyed haggling in a local market for a leather bag and a ring. Meanwhile one of her sons bought a bullfighting poster and her daughter bought Spanish presents for her friends.<sup>117</sup> Such consumption which can be dismissed too easily as kitsch in fact reveals how consumption helped build nostalgia for the joy and opportunities that occurred in special moments and places. It also shows how Spain had moved from being a simple space in the mass British imagination to a place invested with meaning, experience, and memory. These joyful memories of Spain also played an important role in the emotional lives of millions of British tourists whose visceral experiences of Spain they continued to recall in their everyday lives. One woman who declared she loved package holidays and when in the UK she filled with nostalgia and with evocative memories proclaiming she ‘longed for Spanish coffee, Spanish brandy and Spanish peach juice.’<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

For large numbers of visitors, like this British woman with her joyful embrace of Spanish beverages, their new holiday opportunities meant that Spain changed from a mere a space on a map to a place personally significant to them and so became a major site for British social history. This occurred on a vast scale and by 1967, 1,950,828 British tourists holidayed in Spain.<sup>119</sup> Over the years these numbers have swelled and in 2024 18.4 million Britons spent their holidays in Spain.<sup>120</sup> By attending to the experience of the first mass visitors we not only lift a stone covering a process of major social change but gain an opportunity to re-consider the affluent worker and the tourist. Both groups have been looked down upon by class-based

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<sup>117</sup> USSC, SxMoA2/2/4/6/ Special Report Number 206.

<sup>118</sup> USSC, SxMOA2/1/23/1/3, G 1041

<sup>119</sup> *El Alcázar*, 29/06/1968, Juan Caño, ‘Más de dos millones de ingleses pasarán sus vacaciones en España’.

<sup>120</sup> [Press Release: Tourist Movements at Borders \(FRONTUR\). December 2024 and year 2024. Provisional data.](#) Accessed 17/12/2025.

distinction strategies while the social and cultural history of their holidaying lives in Spain has largely gone unwritten. Importantly, while the package holiday is easily dismissed as drunken or depraved in fact many affluent workers saved hard and took pride in their holidays. By taking their history seriously we can re-read affluent workers in the context of holidaying rather than work or home life and in terms of the desire to seek out new opportunities, meaning and personal development rather than status-orientated materialism or work-place alienation. This allows us to add a historical understanding to groups largely studied from a present-day perspective.

This is also why exploring their holidays in terms of life narratives matters so much and seen from this perspective the chance to holiday in Spain brought a tangible sense of new opportunity and progress over lifetimes shaped by memories of pre-war and wartime restricted opportunities and a contemporary emphasis on opportunity. But these life narratives went much further and feature triumph over fears of the unknown through stories of personal adaptability and of personal growth. Memory, as is well known, is shaped by the collective values of the present and in many ways these life narratives were informed by the zeitgeist of the time with its emphasis on progress and personal growth but this also chimed with the lived experience of millions of tourists who took their first foreign holidays to new, more comfortable hotels with greater freedom of choice, better climate and where they became more familiar with another culture in a form of weak cosmopolitanism. This is also why the peak emotions and emotional practices of affluent-worker tourists matter so much. The almost visceral and joyful nature of memories of sunlight, aromas, tastes derive from experiences stood out in people's life narratives and made saving hard for holidays and facing fears of travel so worthwhile. For many young people from the provinces, foreign travel and romance became one of the more meaningful ways they experienced social change in the

1960s and beyond the relatively narrow and often London-focused groups which took part in the 'swinging sixties'. The emotional resonance of such experiences helps explain the rituals of anticipation and of nostalgia which both heightened tourists' emotions and speak to treasured experiences and memories.