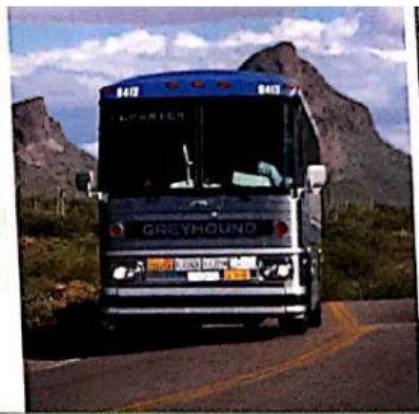


My nightmare holiday!

A Pauline Vernon – Malaysia

My dad was teaching in Kota Bharu, Malaysia. When my mum and I flew out to visit him for three weeks, he had already organised our stay in great detail. On our first evening we had a party on the beach. It was an idyllic scene: a beautiful empty beach, palm trees, white sand, the warm gentle waters of the South China Sea. I swam in the shallow water thinking "this is the life", when a jellyfish swam between my legs. The sting, on both legs, was agony, and it was only then I discovered that two people had died from jellyfish stings that year and until that point, no one had bothered to mention the sea-snakes, for whose bite there is no cure. I now understood why the beach was deserted.



Happy holidays?

C Cat O'Donovan – the USA

Twenty-three hours into an epic bus trip across the States, I began to wonder what I had let myself in for. I was at Denver bus station, sitting on my backpack, drinking coffee. Before boarding the first bus in LA, I had been filled with romantic ideas of friendship among the passengers and fascinating stops, as well as spectacular scenery. After the guy next to me had finished talking about his time in jail, I realised my expectations were a bit off. After all, I was 17 and travelling alone.

I had no idea when the next bus was, so I went up to the counter to ask. One unfriendly staff member was so large I feared she had eaten several passengers, so I waited until her colleague was free. "Three-and-a-half hours," she said. I groaned. Would I ever reach New York? I sat back down to drink my coffee.

D Graham Whitely – Nepal

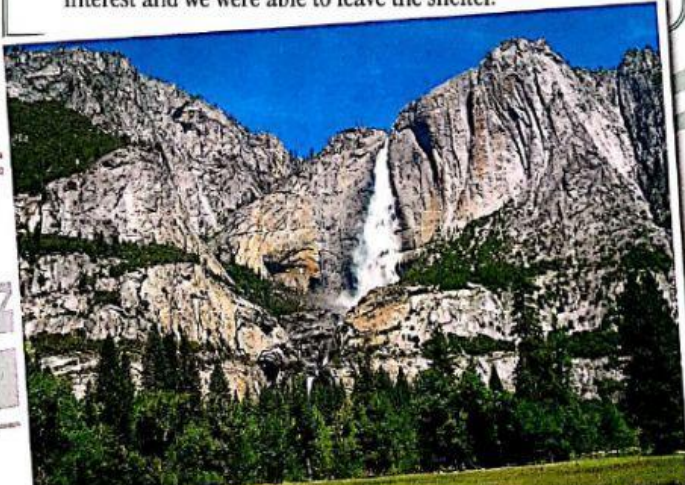
It was not my first walking holiday to Nepal, but for some reason I no longer remember, I decided to go several weeks before the walking season actually began. There were no other walkers on the flight to Kathmandu, which suggested I might not have made the best decision. Walking to my empty hotel through rainy streets on the first night, I tried not to think what conditions would be like at higher altitudes.

Next day I flew to Tumlingtar to start walking up the remote, rarely visited Arun valley. As I climbed, the bushes on either side of the path were covered in ice and the weather was constantly cloudy. The lodges where I stayed were run by people who spoke no English, and the only meal available was boiled rice with lentil soup.

Each day required at least eight hours of unpleasant solitary walking, longing for a conversation with someone. During all the long walk towards Kathmandu, it continued cloudy and I never even saw a mountain.

B Sandy Henderson – the USA

I was on a camping holiday in Yosemite National Park in California with a friend, when I awoke to the sound of screaming. I looked out of my tent and saw my friend trying to get out of his sleeping bag, with a giant black bear rearing up behind him. Quite possibly the quickest I've ever got out of bed, I scrambled up and we both sprinted in no particular direction. By pure chance, we'd passed a small cabin a little way back on the trail and we made a dash for that, jumped inside and locked the door. Seconds later, the bear was scraping at the door as we cowered inside, afraid that the whole thing might fall off. After quite a long time, the bear lost interest and we were able to leave the shelter.



1 Work in groups. You are going to read about four people's nightmare holidays. Before you read, discuss what things sometimes spoil people's holidays.

2 Read questions 1–10 carefully and underline the key words in each question.

Which person

had to hide from danger?

1

found an employee intimidating?

2

was not pleased to spend so long somewhere?

3

had visited the country on a previous occasion?

4

worried about how strong something was?

5

missed speaking to people?

6

had a painful experience?

7

travelled with an ex-criminal?

8

was unaware of the danger in what they were doing?

9

realised the holiday might be a mistake before arriving?

10

3 For questions 1–10, choose from the people (A–D). Each person may be chosen more than once.

4 Work in groups. Which of the holidays sounds the worst to you? Take turns to tell each other about a memorable holiday you have had. Then decide which of you had the most interesting holiday.