

## A history of holidays, part 1: Early Holidays

In the Middle Ages, wealthy people went on pilgrimages for religious reasons. However pilgrimages were not really holidays – or they were not meant to be! In the 14th century, Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales about a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. In England, people went on pilgrimages to shrines in places like Winchester. Sometimes people went on pilgrimages abroad to places like Rome or Jerusalem.

Pilgrimages in England ended during the reign of Henry VIII when shrines like those of St Thomas A Becket were destroyed.

However, in the Middle Ages, there were no holidays in the modern sense. People traveled for work, for war, or for religious reasons.

- 10 However, even for Medieval peasants life was not all hard work. People were allowed to rest on Holy days (from which we get our word holiday). During them, poor people danced and played a very rough form of football. The men from 2 villages played on a ‘pitch’, which could include woods and streams!

- 15 In the late Middle Ages, people in England began dancing around a Maypole. (Although they did not tie ribbons to the pole. That was invented in the 19th century). In 1644 during the Civil War in England, the Puritans banned the Maypole as they believed it had pagan origins. However, after the Restoration in 1660 Maypoles became common again.

- 20 In Tudor England the whole 12 days of Christmas were celebrated, (25th December – 6th January) but not every day was celebrated equally. All work stopped except looking after animals, spinning was even banned as this was the most common occupation for women, and flowers were placed around the spinning wheels. People would visit friends and it was seen as very much a community celebration. Work re-started on Plough Monday the first Monday after 12th night.

In the late 16th century and in the 17th century it became common for wealthy young men to travel abroad on a grand tour of Europe to finish their education. A grand tour would last years and would take in the most famous places in Europe.

- 25 From the mid-17th century, stagecoaches began running between towns in England, and in the 18th century, the building of turnpike roads (which were of high quality) made travel easier.

In the 18th century, rich people visited spas. They believed that bathing in and/or drinking spa water could cure illness. Towns like Buxton, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells prospered.

- 30 In Tunbridge Wells in the late 17th century lodging houses were built near the springs, so were coffee houses where you could drink coffee. So were bowling greens and shops. Members of the royal family visited Tunbridge, which boosted its reputation.

In the 17th century, people also visited Bath and in the 18th century, it boomed. Many new houses were built. During the Summer 18th century Bath was full of rich visitors. They played cards, went to balls and horse racing, went walking and horse riding.

- 35 At the end of the 18th century, wealthy people began to spend time at the seaside. (Again they believed that bathing in seawater was good for your health). Seaside resorts like Brighton, Worthing, Margate, and Eastbourne boomed. A man named Richard Hotham deliberately created a new seaside resort at Bognor.

In the 19th century, other seaside resorts grew up at Blackpool, Southport, and Bournemouth. Brighton also flourished and by 1848 250,000 people were visiting the resort every year.

- 40 In the 18th century, it was still common for rich young men to go on a grand tour of Europe, which would last for years.

There were inns in the Ancient World and in the Middle Ages but in 1768 a new building in Exeter was the first establishment in England to have a French name – The Hotel.