

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #628
The Rise and Fall of the British Seaside Holiday
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Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge, and today is the third and final part of our three-part mini-series on unusual British traditions.

[00:00:32] In part one, we looked at Punch and Judy, the strange, violent puppet show.

[00:00:39] In part two, we turned to the unusual, and even more violent, history of fox hunting.

[00:00:46] And in today's episode, we step back from any single tradition to tell the story of the rise and fall of the British seaside holiday: where it came from, how it took over a century of national life, why it nearly died, and what is happening to it now.

[00:01:07] We've got a lot to get through, so let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

[00:01:16] In 1750, an English doctor named Richard Russell published a book in Latin.

[00:01:25] Its name, or at least its English name, was "A [Dissertation¹](#) on the Use of Sea Water in the Diseases of the Glands".

¹ a long piece of writing about one subject

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[00:01:36] In it, he argued that sea water was a powerful medicine. Both drinking it and bathing in it had all sorts of magical results. It could cure [glandular](#)² problems, skin conditions, [tumours](#)³, even [venereal](#)⁴ disease.

[00:01:56] The book was a hit. It went through six editions. And in a [roundabout](#)⁵ way, it ended up creating an entire industry: the British seaside holiday.

[00:02:11] Now, to understand why Dr Russell's book was so important, you have to understand what came before it.

[00:02:21] In 1750, the idea of going to the coast for fun would've sounded mad to most people in Britain. The coast was where fishermen worked. It was cold, it smelled of fish, the sea was dangerous, and respectable people certainly did not go there for pleasure.

[00:02:43] Russell changed that, almost [single-handedly](#)⁶, by [reframing](#)⁷ the sea as a hospital.

² connected with glands, small parts of the body that make useful fluids

³ lumps in the body that may be caused by illness

⁴ connected with diseases passed during sex

⁵ not direct; happening in an indirect way

⁶ alone, without any help from others

⁷ changing the way people thought about it

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[00:02:52] In 1753, he built a grand house on the seafront at a small fishing village in Sussex called Brighthelmstone. Wealthy patients began arriving to take his treatments, which involved drinking sea water, bathing in the sea, and following various complicated [regimens](#)⁸ designed to flush their systems clean.

[00:03:19] Russell's basic [prescription](#)⁹ was that the patient should bathe in cold sea water at sunrise, several times a week, for as long as they could stand it.

[00:03:31] He also recommended drinking sea water, sometimes mixed with milk, sometimes with crab's eyes or burnt sponge. To modern ears, the recipes sound almost medieval. To Russell's patients, they sounded like [cutting-edge](#)¹⁰ medicine.

[00:03:53] And for a generation at least, they were; people believed in them.

[00:03:59] Brighthelmstone was shortened to Brighton, and it started to grow. New [lodging houses](#)¹¹ went up.

[00:04:08] Bathing machines became popular. These were small wooden huts on wheels, which were dragged into the [shallows](#)¹² by horses.

⁸ fixed plans or routines, especially for health

⁹ the doctor's advice or treatment

¹⁰ very modern and new

¹¹ houses where visitors could pay to stay

¹² the part of the sea or water that was not deep

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[00:04:18] They allowed a respectable woman to change into a bathing costume, walk down a few steps directly into the sea, swim about a bit, and then come back out, all without any man seeing her in a state of [undress](#)¹³, which of course was very important back in those days.

[00:04:39] Then in 1783, Brighton received a royal visitor: the future King George IV, who was then the Prince of Wales. Now, this young prince was something of a [hedonist](#)¹⁴; he drank and ate too much, and his physicians advised the 21-year-old to go to Brighton to seek the [medicinal](#)¹⁵ properties of the sea.

[00:05:08] He liked the place. He kept coming back. And eventually, he built a vast and slightly ridiculous palace on the seafront, which he called the Royal Pavilion.

[00:05:21] And if you've been to Brighton, you'll know it's still there today. It has domes and [minarets](#)¹⁶, and looks less like an English seaside house than an Indian palace.

[00:05:34] The entire thing cost a fortune, and was the subject of plenty of [mockery](#)¹⁷ in the London papers.

¹³ not wearing all her clothes

¹⁴ a person who loved pleasure, food, drink, and fun

¹⁵ used for health or to cure illness

¹⁶ tall, thin towers

¹⁷ jokes or laughter at something

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[00:05:42] But it [set the tone](#)¹⁸ for Brighton.

[00:05:46] The town filled up with grand white-fronted [terraces](#)¹⁹, gambling houses, theatres, and the whole [apparatus](#)²⁰ of a Georgian playground for the rich. By the time George IV died in 1830, Brighton had a population of more than forty thousand people, more than ten times what it had been when Dr Russell first arrived.

[00:06:15] Other [resorts](#)²¹ soon followed, or grew in parallel: Scarborough, Margate and Weymouth on the coast, as well as inland [spa towns](#)²² such as Bath.

[00:06:28] The whole [apparatus](#) of the early British seaside was in place by the early nineteenth century. The [lodging houses](#). The [pump rooms](#)²³. The seafront [promenades](#)²⁴. The polite, well-dressed crowds taking their morning walk along the front.

¹⁸ showed what it was like

¹⁹ rows of houses joined together

²⁰ all the things or parts needed for it

²¹ places where people went on holiday

²² towns where people went for health treatments, often using special water

²³ rooms where people drank special health water

²⁴ wide paths by the sea where people walked

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[00:06:45] But at this point, it was still a [pursuit](#)²⁵ of the wealthy, the [aristocracy](#)²⁶.

[00:06:52] A trip to the seaside took several days. It wasn't exactly [compatible](#)²⁷ with a job. And it cost serious money.

[00:07:02] The vast majority of people in Britain had never been near the coast in their lives, not for pleasure at least.

[00:07:10] The thing that would change all of that was a new piece of technology: the railway.

[00:07:19] Railways arrived in Britain in the 1830s, and within a generation, they had remade the country.

[00:07:28] For our purposes, the key year is 1846, when the railway reached Blackpool, on the north west coast of England, about fifty kilometres north of Liverpool.

[00:07:41] Until then, Blackpool was a small Lancashire village on a windy stretch of the Irish Sea coast, of no great importance to anybody.

²⁵ an activity or thing people did

²⁶ the richest and highest class of society

²⁷ able to exist together with it

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[00:07:53] Within a few decades, it would be the most visited seaside [resort](#)²⁸ in the country.

[00:08:00] The reason was geography.

[00:08:04] In the 19th century, the north of England was the great economic [powerhouse](#)²⁹ of the country.

[00:08:11] And Blackpool sat within easy train reach of the great industrial towns of the area, like Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Bolton, and Bradford.

[00:08:23] These were the [mill towns](#)³⁰, the cotton and wool towns, where hundreds of thousands of people put in long, hard, weeks in the factories.

[00:08:34] When the railway first arrived in Blackpool, the visitors were still mainly the "respectable" middle classes. And for them, a trip to the seaside was still the [genteel](#)³¹, slightly [medicinal](#) sort of activity that you heard about a few minutes ago.

²⁸ a place where people went on holiday

²⁹ a very strong or important place

³⁰ towns with many factories, especially for making cloth

³¹ polite, quiet, and trying to look upper-class

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[00:08:52] And if you were a seaside town trying to attract these respectable visitors, there was one thing you needed: a [pier](#)³².

[00:09:02] A [pier](#), if you aren't familiar with the word, is a long raised platform that stretches out from the beach into the sea.

[00:09:13] Blackpool's first [pier](#), the North Pier, opened in 1863. It was a quiet [promenade](#)³³, somewhere to stroll, take the [bracing](#)³⁴ sea air, and exchange polite nods with other well-dressed visitors.

[00:09:31] But over the following decades, wages rose, train fares fell, and the factory workers began to arrive in far greater numbers.

[00:09:43] Many came during [Wakes Weeks](#)³⁵, when the mills in a particular town shut down and workers had a rare week off. Suddenly, a cheap train could take them from the factory floor to the beach in just a couple of hours.

[00:10:00] But this new crowd wanted a different kind of [pier](#).

³² a long platform that would go from the beach out over the sea

³³ a wide path by the sea where people walked

³⁴ fresh, strong, and healthy-feeling

³⁵ weeks when factory workers had time off and often went on holiday

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[00:10:06] Just five years after the North [Pier](#), in 1868, a second [pier](#) opened a short walk down the front. This was the Central [Pier](#), and it was [a different beast](#)³⁶ entirely: dancing, music, drinking, and cheap entertainment, all [aimed squarely at](#)³⁷ the new, working-class crowds.

[00:10:31] The two [piers](#)³⁸ stood within sight of each other. Both were open to anyone, but every visitor to Blackpool knew which [pier](#) was meant for them.

[00:10:43] And it was the working classes who quickly became the [dominant](#)³⁹ force. By the 1880s, Blackpool was getting hundreds of thousands of working-class visitors every summer.

[00:10:57] And this format of "cheap and cheerful", transforming the seaside holiday into something accessible to everyone in society, was incredibly successful.

[00:11:09] Brighton [followed suit](#)⁴⁰. So did Margate, and practically every other seaside town. By the late Victorian period, the seaside was no longer just for the wealthy. It was for everybody.

³⁶ a very different kind or type of thing

³⁷ made especially for

³⁸ long platforms that went from the beach out over the sea

³⁹ most important or powerful

⁴⁰ did the same thing

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[00:11:24] As for what you actually did there, a Victorian day at the seaside had a recognisable rhythm to it.

[00:11:32] You arrived on a morning train, found your boarding house, dropped your bags, and walked down to the front.

[00:11:39] You took your shoes off and [paddled⁴¹](#) in the [shallows](#).

[00:11:43] You ate fish and chips out of a newspaper.

[00:11:46] You watched a Punch and Judy show on the sand.

[00:11:49] You queued up for the donkey rides.

[00:11:51] In the afternoon, you walked along the [pier](#), and perhaps paid a penny to look at the strange wonders in a [peep-show⁴²](#) booth.

[00:12:01] In the evening, there was a music hall performance, or a brass band on the [bandstand⁴³](#), or a [singalong⁴⁴](#) in the pub.

[00:12:10] By the time you fell into bed, sunburned and full of beer, you had had the kind of holiday your great-grandparents could not even have imagined.

⁴¹ walked or played in shallow water

⁴² a small show that people watched through a hole

⁴³ a small outdoor stage for musicians

⁴⁴ an event where people sang together

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[00:12:21] Alongside the railways, there were two more things that made it work.

[00:12:27] The first was the Bank Holidays Act of 1871, which created the very idea of the modern public holiday.

[00:12:37] Before this, ordinary workers had almost no guaranteed holiday; they were [at the whim of](#)⁴⁵ a kind boss letting them have a day off.

[00:12:48] After 1871, they had four official bank holidays a year, in addition to Christmas and Good Friday.

[00:12:58] And for hundreds of thousands of people, every one of those bank holidays became an excuse to get on a train to the coast.

[00:13:09] The second thing that made it work was an entire [ecosystem](#)⁴⁶ of seaside entertainment, much of it imported from elsewhere and [rebadged](#)⁴⁷ as British.

[00:13:21] There were donkey rides for the children.

[00:13:24] There were brass bands on the [pier](#).

⁴⁵ depending on what he suddenly decided

⁴⁶ a whole connected system of people and things

⁴⁷ given a new name or style

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[00:13:26] There were **saucy**⁴⁸ postcards, those rude, comic, cartoon-style cards that became their own minor art form.

[00:13:34] There was fish and chips, which was itself a **fusion**⁴⁹ of fried fish brought to Britain by Jewish immigrants and chipped potatoes from somewhere on the Continent.

[00:13:45] And there was Punch and Judy. As you will remember from part one of this mini-series, Mr Punch had started life as an Italian street puppet character before finding his **calling**⁵⁰, his perfect English home, on a windy British beach.

[00:14:03] And from the 1880s to the 1950s, for about seventy years, this was the centre of British leisure.

[00:14:14] If you lived in a city, the seaside was where you went to escape.

[00:14:20] If you ran a hotel or a boarding house in Brighton or Blackpool or Skegness, you ran a **thriving**⁵¹ business, with a guaranteed flow of customers.

[00:14:32] If you were a child, summer meant sand in your sandwiches, salt in your hair, and a sunburned nose.

⁴⁸ slightly rude in a funny way

⁴⁹ a mix

⁵⁰ the perfect job, role, or place for him

⁵¹ doing very well

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[00:14:40] It seemed like the British seaside holiday was a [permanent fixture](#)⁵² of life in Blighty, in Britain.

[00:14:49] And as paid holidays became more common, the seaside stopped being just a day trip. It became a full week away.

[00:14:59] In 1936, a young [entrepreneur](#)⁵³ named Billy Butlin [capitalised on](#)⁵⁴ this, opening a new kind of seaside [resort](#) at Skegness, on the east coast of England. He called it a holiday camp.

[00:15:15] The idea was simple. For one fixed low price per week, a family could get accommodation, three meals a day, and constant entertainment, all in one place.

Dance halls. Swimming pools. Sports fields. [Singalongs](#)⁵⁵. Children's activities.

Everything organised, everything included, no nasty surprises on the bill.

[00:15:42] The first Butlin's camp at Skegness was a [phenomenal](#)⁵⁶ success.

[00:15:48] The opening week alone brought ten thousand booking requests.

⁵² something that seemed always to be there

⁵³ a person who started a business

⁵⁴ used it as a chance to succeed

⁵⁵ events where people sang together

⁵⁶ extremely successful or impressive

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[00:15:53] After the Second World War, Butlin's expanded, opening new camps up and down the country. And a handful of rivals copied the winning formula.

[00:16:05] This was the absolute peak of the British seaside.

[00:16:10] But within a generation, it would have all but disappeared.

[00:16:16] The killer was the [package holiday](#)⁵⁷.

[00:16:19] From the late 1950s onwards, cheap [charter flights](#)⁵⁸ began carrying British [holidaymakers](#)⁵⁹ to the Mediterranean, principally to Spain.

[00:16:30] The Costa del Sol, the Costa Brava, the Balearic Islands: all of them were suddenly accessible to ordinary British people for not much more than the cost of a week at Butlin's.

[00:16:44] And what they offered was something Britain could not match: reliable, practically guaranteed sunshine.

[00:16:54] It's hard to [overstate](#)⁶⁰ how [decisive](#)⁶¹ this was.

⁵⁷ a holiday where travel, hotel, and sometimes food were bought together

⁵⁸ flights hired by a company, often for holidays

⁵⁹ people who were on holiday

⁶⁰ make it sound bigger or more important than it was

⁶¹ very important in deciding what happened

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[00:16:58] The British seaside had built its entire offer around the idea that ordinary people could escape the city, breathe sea air, and have a good time, and the weather almost didn't matter. It might rain, sure, but you'd have a lot of fun.

[00:17:17] Spain offered something different.

[00:17:21] Or rather, it offered the same thing, but minus the rain, wind and black clouds. Instead, you'd get glorious sun, and sea water that was actually pleasant to be in, and didn't leave your teeth [chattering](#)⁶² and your fingers blue if you stayed in it too long.

[00:17:40] There were other factors too, other non-sun-related factors.

[00:17:45] The post-war British [holidaymaker](#)⁶³ was richer than ever before.

[00:17:51] New [package holiday](#) companies started up to do the planning for you. They handled the flight, the airport transfer, the hotel, and the meals. You did not need to speak any Spanish. You did not need to organise anything. You handed over your British pounds in Britain, got on a plane in Britain, and woke up the next morning next to a Mediterranean beach.

[00:18:17] You could probably even start your day off with a full English breakfast and a pint of English beer.

⁶² shaking quickly because of cold

⁶³ a person who was on holiday

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[00:18:24] Given all this, by the 1970s and 1980s, the great British seaside [resorts](#) were in deep trouble.

[00:18:35] Boarding houses closed. [Piers](#) fell into [disrepair](#)⁶⁴.

[00:18:40] Towns that had [thrived](#)⁶⁵ on summer visitors found their high streets [boarded up](#)⁶⁶.

[00:18:47] Some [resorts pivoted](#)⁶⁷ into cheap hotels and low-cost temporary accommodation, for example for homeless people.

[00:18:56] And these towns experienced very high levels of economic [deprivation](#)⁶⁸.

[00:19:03] By the early 2000s, Margate had one of the highest unemployment rates in the south of England.

[00:19:10] This was a town that had once been one of the most popular [resorts](#) on the south coast.

⁶⁴ bad condition because they had not been looked after

⁶⁵ done very well

⁶⁶ closed, with windows or doors covered with wood

⁶⁷ changed direction or changed what they did

⁶⁸ poverty; not having enough money or chances

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[00:19:17] Blackpool had become a place [stand-up comedians](#)⁶⁹ would poke fun at, the home of cheap [stag and hen parties](#)⁷⁰.

[00:19:27] In cultural terms, the seaside was somewhere between a sad memory and a joke.

[00:19:34] But then, gradually, something else began to happen. Things started to get better, or at least, a new trend appeared.

[00:19:45] Starting with Margate, many of these former seaside towns started to [reinvent](#)⁷¹ themselves as new artistic centres for [creatives](#)⁷² who had been pushed out of London by high prices. A new wave of restaurants, bars, and design shops followed.

[00:20:05] Margate, and other seaside towns like it, started to be talked about as a fashionable place to spend a weekend. These are places you can still get to pretty easily, by train or by car from London, and they now have [boutique](#)⁷³ hotels, coffee shops, and restaurants.

⁶⁹ people who told jokes on stage

⁷⁰ parties before a wedding for the man or woman getting married

⁷¹ change something so it felt new and different

⁷² people who did creative work, like artists or designers

⁷³ small, stylish, and often expensive

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[00:20:27] Now, this is not the case in every seaside town, and many British seaside towns remain in serious trouble.

[00:20:36] The towns that have recovered have come back mainly because they are close enough to London.

[00:20:41] In other parts of the country, the picture is much [bleaker](#)⁷⁴.

[00:20:45] Towns like Blackpool and Skegness have struggled for decades to find a new economic identity, and have become known for high levels of unemployment, [deprivation](#), and political [disenchantment](#)⁷⁵, with politicians starting to talk about the so-called "seaside town problem".

[00:21:06] And even in the success stories, not everyone is delighted.

[00:21:13] Long-time residents have watched local cafés become [artisan](#)⁷⁶ bakeries, their favourite pubs become [hipster](#)⁷⁷ wine bars, and their rent double in a decade.

⁷⁴ worse, sadder, or less hopeful

⁷⁵ disappointment; no longer believing in it

⁷⁶ made in a careful, skilled, and often traditional way

⁷⁷ a fashionable person who likes unusual or trendy things

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[00:21:25] Sure, it's good news if you own a hotel in Margate, but for everyone not [catering to⁷⁸](#) the [well-heeled⁷⁹](#) London tourist, it's turning your town into something that feels very different.

[00:21:39] Still, the tourists are coming back, and they are bringing their money with them. People are once again going to Margate for the weekend, for the first time in fifty years.

[00:21:53] And just as in the Victorian era, a modern weekend in Margate has its own recognisable rhythm.

[00:22:01] You arrive on a Friday evening on the fast train from London.

[00:22:06] You drop your bag at a small hotel run by a former London chef.

[00:22:12] You eat at a restaurant where the menu is short and the staff have [well-groomed⁸⁰](#) beards and tattoos.

[00:22:19] You walk along the seafront on Saturday morning, past the same Victorian buildings that have been there for a hundred and fifty years, and visit the [contemporary⁸¹](#) art gallery.

⁷⁸ serving or providing what they want

⁷⁹ rich

⁸⁰ clean, tidy, and neat-looking

⁸¹ modern; from the present time

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[00:22:32] You buy a coffee from a place that roasts its own beans. It costs as much as a coffee in central London, but on your City salary, you don't worry too much about the price.

[00:22:45] So, to wrap up this mini-series, like Punch and Judy, and like the fox hunt, the British seaside has been many different things over its three centuries of existence.

[00:22:57] Each generation has remade it. Each remaking has lasted for a while, and then [given way to](#)⁸² something else.

[00:23:06] What the next remaking will look like, we will see. But it seems we are not quite finished with our seaside yet.

[00:23:16] OK, then, this is it for today's episode on the rise and fall of the British seaside holiday, and the final part of our three-part mini-series on unusual British traditions.

[00:23:27] I hope it's been an interesting one and that you've learnt something new.

[00:23:31] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode, and of the whole mini-series.

[00:23:37] Have you ever been on a trip to the British seaside? Where did you go, and what did you think?

⁸² been replaced by

[00:23:43] I'd love to know, so let's get this discussion started. You can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:23:55] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:24:00] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Dissertation	a long piece of writing about one subject
Glandular	connected with glands, small parts of the body that make useful fluids
Tumours	lumps in the body that may be caused by illness
Venereal	connected with diseases passed during sex
Roundabout	not direct; happening in an indirect way
Single-handedly	alone, without any help from others
Reframing	changing the way people thought about it
Regimens	fixed plans or routines, especially for health
Prescription	the doctor's advice or treatment
Cutting-edge	very modern and new
Lodging houses	houses where visitors could pay to stay
Shallows	the part of the sea or water that was not deep
Undress	not wearing all her clothes

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Hedonist	a person who loved pleasure, food, drink, and fun
Medicinal	used for health or to cure illness
Minarets	tall, thin towers
Mockery	jokes or laughter at something
Set the tone	showed what it was like
Terraces	rows of houses joined together
Apparatus	all the things or parts needed for it
Resorts	places where people went on holiday
Spa towns	towns where people went for health treatments, often using special water
Pump rooms	rooms where people drank special health water
Promenades	wide paths by the sea where people walked
Pursuit	an activity or thing people did
Aristocracy	the richest and highest class of society
Compatible	able to exist together with it
Resort	a place where people went on holiday

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Powerhouse	a very strong or important place
Mill towns	towns with many factories, especially for making cloth
Genteel	polite, quiet, and trying to look upper-class
Pier	a long platform that would go from the beach out over the sea
Promenade	a wide path by the sea where people walked
Bracing	fresh, strong, and healthy-feeling
Wakes weeks	weeks when factory workers had time off and often went on holiday
A different beast	a very different kind or type of thing
Aimed squarely at	made especially for
Piers	long platforms that went from the beach out over the sea
Dominant	most important or powerful
Followed suit	did the same thing
Paddled	walked or played in shallow water
Peep-show	a small show that people watched through a hole
Bandstand	a small outdoor stage for musicians

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Singalong	an event where people sang together
At the whim of	depending on what he suddenly decided
Ecosystem	a whole connected system of people and things
Rebadged	given a new name or style
Saucy	slightly rude in a funny way
Fusion	a mix
Calling	the perfect job, role, or place for him
Thriving	doing very well
Permanent fixture	something that seemed always to be there
Entrepreneur	a person who started a business
Capitalised on	used it as a chance to succeed
Singalongs	events where people sang together
Phenomenal	extremely successful or impressive
Package holiday	a holiday where travel, hotel, and sometimes food were bought together
Charter flights	flights hired by a company, often for holidays

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Holidaymakers	people who were on holiday
Overstate	make it sound bigger or more important than it was
Decisive	very important in deciding what happened
Chattering	shaking quickly because of cold
Holidaymaker	a person who was on holiday
Disrepair	bad condition because they had not been looked after
Thrived	done very well
Boarded up	closed, with windows or doors covered with wood
Pivoted	changed direction or changed what they did
Deprivation	poverty; not having enough money or chances
Stand-up comedians	people who told jokes on stage
Stag and hen parties	parties before a wedding for the man or woman getting married
Reinvent	change something so it felt new and different
Creatives	people who did creative work, like artists or designers
Boutique	small, stylish, and often expensive

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Bleaker	worse, sadder, or less hopeful
Disenchantment	disappointment; no longer believing in it
Artisan	made in a careful, skilled, and often traditional way
Hipster	a fashionable person who likes unusual or trendy things
Catering to	serving or providing what they want
Well-heeled	rich
Well-groomed	clean, tidy, and neat-looking
Contemporary	modern; from the present time
Given way to	been replaced by

Language spotlight

1. In a roundabout way

- **Meaning:** Doing or saying something in an indirect way, rather than being simple and direct.
- **Synonyms:** Indirectly, circuitously.
- **Antonyms:** Directly, straight to the point.
- **Examples:**
 - I found out about the new job **in a roundabout way** through a friend of a friend.
 - He didn't say "no" exactly, but **in a roundabout way**, he made it clear he wasn't interested.

2. Follow suit

- **Meaning:** To do the same thing that someone else has just done.
- **Synonyms:** Copy, imitate, do the same.
- **Antonyms:** Differ, go your own way.

- **Examples:**

- When the first guest stood up to leave the party, everyone else **followed suit**.
- One supermarket lowered its prices, and the others quickly **followed suit** to stay competitive.

3. Cheap and cheerful

- **Meaning:** Something that is not expensive but is pleasant, simple, and good value for money.
- **Synonyms:** Inexpensive, budget-friendly, basic.
- **Antonyms:** Expensive, sophisticated, high-end.
- **Examples:**
 - We didn't want a fancy meal, so we went to a **cheap and cheerful** café near the station.
 - The hotel was a bit **cheap and cheerful**, but it was clean and perfect for a one-night stay.

4. Poke fun at

- **Meaning:** To make jokes about someone or something, often in a friendly or mocking way.
- **Synonyms:** Mock, tease, make fun of.
- **Antonyms:** Praise, respect, admire.
- **Examples:**
 - The comedian likes to **poke fun at** himself and his own mistakes.
 - In the UK, people often **poke fun at** the terrible weather.

5. Capitalise on

- **Meaning:** To use a situation or an opportunity to your own advantage or to make a profit.
- **Synonyms:** Take advantage of, exploit, make the most of.
- **Antonyms:** Waste, ignore, miss out on.
- **Examples:**
 - The shop managed to **capitalise on** the heatwave by selling hundreds of fans.

- You should **capitalise on** your ability to speak three languages when you apply for the job.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. What did Dr Richard Russell argue in his book?
 - a) Sea water was dangerous for health
 - b) Sea water could be used as a powerful medicine
 - c) Fishing villages should become holiday towns
 - d) Rich people should stop travelling to the coast

2. Why did Brighton become especially fashionable in the late 18th century?
 - a) It became a major fishing centre
 - b) The railway arrived there first
 - c) The Prince of Wales began visiting it
 - d) It had the cheapest hotels in Britain

The Rise and Fall of the British Seaside Holiday

3. Why did Blackpool grow so quickly in the 19th century?

- a) It had warmer weather than the rest of Britain
- b) It had more doctors than other seaside towns
- c) It was popular with foreign tourists
- d) It was close to industrial towns in the north of England

4. What made Butlin's holiday camps so successful?

- a) They were only for rich families
- b) They offered foreign travel at a low price
- c) They provided accommodation, meals, and entertainment for one fixed price
- d) They were open only in winter

5. What was the main reason for the decline of the British seaside holiday?

- a) Cheap package holidays to sunny countries became available
- b) People stopped liking the sea
- c) British trains became too expensive

The Rise and Fall of the British Seaside Holiday

d) The government closed many seaside towns

True or False

6. Before 1750, most people in Britain thought going to the coast for pleasure was normal. (True / False)

7. Bathing machines helped people change clothes and enter the sea privately. (True / False)

8. Blackpool's Central Pier was quieter than the North Pier. (True / False)

9. King George IV built the Royal Pavilion because he hated the smell of the sea. (True / False)

10. According to the episode, all British seaside towns have now recovered successfully.
(True / False)

Fill in the Blank

11. To modern ears, the recipes sound almost medieval. To Russell's patients, they sounded like _____-edge medicine.

The Rise and Fall of the British Seaside Holiday

12. The entire thing cost a fortune, and was the subject of plenty of mockery in the London papers. But it set the _____ for Brighton.

13. These were the _____ towns, the cotton and wool towns, where hundreds of thousands of people put in long, hard, weeks in the factories.

14. Many came during _____ Weeks, when the mills in a particular town shut down and workers had a rare week off.

15. Before this, ordinary workers had almost no guaranteed holiday; they were at the _____ of a kind boss letting them have a day off.

Vocabulary Practice

16. What does “**lodging houses**” mean in the episode?

- a) Large royal palaces by the sea
- b) Places where visitors could pay to stay
- c) Buildings where trains arrived
- d) Shops selling holiday clothes

17. What does “**bracing**” mean in the phrase “the bracing sea air”?

- a) Cold but fresh and energising
- b) Warm and relaxing
- c) Dirty and unpleasant
- d) Wet and dangerous

18. What does “**capitalised on**” mean in the sentence about Billy Butlin?

- a) Lost money because of
- b) Made good use of an opportunity
- c) Closed down suddenly
- d) Travelled away from

19. What does “**boarded up**” mean?

- a) Decorated with lights
- b) Painted in bright colours
- c) Closed and covered with wooden boards

d) Full of tourists

20. What does “**well-heeled**” mean in the episode?

a) Rich

b) Tired

c) Friendly

d) Old-fashioned

Answers

1. b) Sea water could be used as a powerful medicine
2. c) The Prince of Wales began visiting it
3. d) It was close to industrial towns in the north of England
4. c) They provided accommodation, meals, and entertainment for one fixed price
5. a) Cheap package holidays to sunny countries became available
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. False
10. False
11. cutting
12. tone
13. mill
14. Wakes
15. whim
16. b) Places where visitors could pay to stay
17. a) Cold but fresh and energising
18. b) Made good use of an opportunity
19. c) Closed and covered with wooden boards
20. a) Rich