

## Staying at home

**Level:** Intermediate

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Summary:** This lesson is about the increasing popularity of holidays taken at home. In this lesson, students:

1. discuss any negative experiences they've had whilst travelling abroad;
2. study an article on the benefits of staycations, which includes tips on how to make them a success;
3. complete and discuss statistics and tips related to holidays;
4. decide how much they agree or disagree with statements about holidaymaking, then compare their answers with other students;
5. write an out-of-office email and record an out-of-office voicemail message.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**Group size:** Any

**Note:** This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 5/2017.

### Warmer

The warmer question will encourage students to start thinking about the possible negative aspects of summer holidays abroad.

### Key words

Students write the key words next to the definitions, then find them in the article to read them in context.

**Key:**

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. boost     | 8. stimuli       |
| 2. domestic  | 9. relief        |
| 3. down time | 10. confident    |
| 4. itinerary | 11. exhilaration |
| 5. approach  | 12. valid        |
| 6. oxymoron  | 13. refit        |
| 7. encounter | 14. charity camp |

### Understanding the article

Students should answer the questions in pairs and compare their answers with the whole class.

**Key:**

1. *The fall in the value of the pound has made holidays abroad more expensive.*
2. *She and her husband made their home feel like five-star holiday accommodation by paying for a cleaning service and not answering work-related emails or phone calls. They also planned their itinerary in advance.*
3. *Often, people approach their staycation like a long weekend. They have no plans or goals and so it feels like they're staying at home because they can't afford a proper holiday.*
4. *This is when you take time off work, do not go abroad but stay in your own country and do some work that is unrelated to your everyday job, such as volunteering or working on your house.*

### Facts, figures and tips

Students complete the first section with the statistics in the box and then discuss which statistics surprise them, giving reasons. They then complete the second section with the correct headings in the box and try to come up with a further tip of their own.

**Key:**

- Holidays at home:** 1. 2.2 billion; 2. 54%; 3. 12%; 4. £245; 5. £729.53
- Top tips for a successful staycation:** 1. Stay close; 2. Unplug; 3. Be original; 4. Don't overdo it; 5. Treat yourself; 6. Save money

### Holidays

Students do the first part of this task on their own, without discussing it with anyone else. They should put a cross on each line to show how much they agree or disagree with each statement.

When they have done this, they should draw a line that runs through all of their crosses (most likely creating a zigzag shape).

Then, students sit together with one or two other students and first compare the patterns that their zigzag lines make before discussing their answers to each individual statement.

## Staying at home

Finally, hold a class feedback session in which students find out where their opinions on holidays are similar and where they diverge.

### Leaving messages

Have students work in pairs or groups of three so they can help each other with these real-life tasks. They should write generic messages that they can keep and adapt to use again in the future.

You may want to point out that a typical out-of-office email includes information on:

- the dates when you are going to be unavailable;
- who to contact in your absence.

A typical example is:

*Thank you for your email. I will be out of the office from ... to ...*

*If you need immediate assistance during my absence, please contact ... [contact's name] at ... [contact's email]. Otherwise, I will respond to your emails as soon as possible after my return.*

*Kind regards*

*[name]*

An example of an out-of-office voicemail message might be:

*Hello. You have reached ... I will be out of the office until ... Please leave me a message and I will return your call then. Thank you for calling.*

### Extra task: Portmanteau words

*Staycation, holistay* and *Brexit* are portmanteau words; that is, words that combine the sound and meaning of two words.

See if students can work out which words are combined in these three further examples:

- *smog* (*smoke* + *fog*)
- *bankster* (*banker* + *gangster*)
- *floordrobe* (*floor* + *wardrobe*)

Set students the task of finding other portmanteau words. This task could be set as homework and the findings discussed in the next lesson.

### Related topics on onestopenglish

These news lessons look at the anti-tourism marches that have been taking place across Europe:

[www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/weekly-topical-news-lessons/2017-weekly-news-lessons-archive/14th-september-2017-anti-tourism-marches-spread-across-europe/556255.article](http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/weekly-topical-news-lessons/2017-weekly-news-lessons-archive/14th-september-2017-anti-tourism-marches-spread-across-europe/556255.article)

This *Business Spotlight* lesson examines the question of whether staff should have unlimited holidays:

[www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/should-staff-have-unlimited-holidays/554091.article](http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/should-staff-have-unlimited-holidays/554091.article)

And this *Business Spotlight* lesson looks at whether Americans work too much:

[www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/do-americans-work-too-much/551926.article](http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/do-americans-work-too-much/551926.article)

## Staying at home

### 1 Warmer

Have you ever experienced any of the following problems (mentioned in paragraph 1 of the article)?

- travel delays at the airport
- long queues at the airport
- crowded beaches
- extreme heat
- overpriced food

If so, when and where?

### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find the words in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

approach    boost    domestic    down time    encounter    itinerary    oxymoron

1. an action or event that helps something to increase, improve or become more successful (para 3) \_\_\_\_\_
2. relating to the country being talked about and not other countries (para 3) \_\_\_\_\_
3. when you are not working and can relax (para 4) \_\_\_\_\_
4. a plan of a journey that you are going to make, including information about when and where you will travel (para 5) \_\_\_\_\_
5. deal with a situation in a particular way (para 6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. an expression that contains words with opposite meanings (para 7) \_\_\_\_\_
7. experience (para 7) \_\_\_\_\_

charity camp    confident    exhilaration    refit    relief    stimuli    valid

8. things or events that provoke a reaction (para 7) \_\_\_\_\_
9. the reduction of something such as pain or stress (para 7) \_\_\_\_\_
10. certain that something will happen (para 8) \_\_\_\_\_
11. the feeling you have when you are extremely happy, excited and full of energy (para 8) \_\_\_\_\_
12. accepted by officials (para 9) \_\_\_\_\_
13. repairs or renovation work (para 10) \_\_\_\_\_
14. a fun educational place that disadvantaged or disabled children can go to during the school holidays (para 10) \_\_\_\_\_

## Staying at home

### Staying at home

by Julian Earwaker



**An expensive holiday can bring more stress than pleasure, especially for families. JULIAN EARWAKER asks whether a holiday at home isn't just as relaxing, as well as better for your wallet.**

- 1 The summer holidays are over. But memories of that expensive holiday remain: travel delays and long queues at the airport, crowded beaches, extreme heat and overpriced ice cream. Perhaps next time, it might be better to try a "staycation".
- 2 Regularly seen on lists of least-liked modern words, "staycation" ("stay" + "vacation"), sometimes also called a "holistay", means "a holiday spent at or close to home – either in your own house or in your home country rather than abroad".
- 3 Economically, staycations provide a welcome boost to the tourism industry. In the US, domestic tourism accounts for almost 80 per cent of the industry's \$504 billion direct tourism earnings. In the UK, Visit England statistics show that a record-breaking 7.3 million Britons took a break in England in the first quarter of 2016. Leading up to the 2017 summer season, *The Independent* reported a 24 per cent rise in British holidaymakers planning UK stays for summer 2017, a result of the post-Brexit drop in the value of the pound and falling real wages.
- 4 But what does this mean for down time and escaping the stress and pressure of work? "Staycations are a great way to get some relaxation and fun during your time off without spending money or time travelling," says lifestyle website LifeHacker.com.
- 5 "One of the best holidays my family ever had was the one we never took," writes *New York Times* columnist Ronda Kaysen. Instead of a beach holiday, she enjoyed a "five-star, week-long staycation" with her husband and young family. They paid for a cleaning service so they could start their week with a home "like a hotel", set out-of-office and voicemail messages for email and phone, and planned their itinerary as if it were a real holiday. The total cost? Including car fuel and \$150 for a top restaurant, just \$500.
- 6 So why don't more people do it? "Staycations tend not to work for most people because they approach it like

a long weekend," says organizational consultant and author James C Galvin. "They typically have no plan. They have no goals. In their mind, they are staying home because they can't afford a holiday right now." The most important thing, he says, is to plan properly, which means working out how to balance choice with budget.

For some, the concept of staycations is horrifying: "The idea of 'holidaying at home' is an oxymoron and does a real disservice to the benefits you receive by encountering new sensory stimuli," blogs Carrie Havranek on Frommer's travel-guide website, "things like stress relief, spirit renewal, expansion of one's mental, physical or psychological horizons."

Research shows that while 26 per cent of Americans are "not at all" confident they will have a holiday, those who do are spending more. In the UK, families spend around 20 per cent of their net incomes on holidays. This means that choosing the right type of break is really important. As always, it's a question of balance: the stress of packing and travelling versus the feeling of freedom and escape from everyday life. The financial savings from staycations versus the expense of long-distance travel. The pleasures of playing tourist in your own garden versus the exhilaration of overseas culture, food and language. Perhaps the best option is to start with a short staycation and test things.

According to the US State Department, only 36 per cent of Americans have a valid passport, compared to 60 per cent of Canadians and 75 per cent of Brits and Australians. This means that staycations are a fact of life for most Americans.

New Yorker Adam Moskowitz takes an unusual approach with what he calls a "working staycation". Instead of avoiding work, he recommends working at something different. Moskowitz, who works in eco-business finance, points to two recent staycations he has enjoyed: the first was a DIY (do-it-yourself) refit at home, resulting in a new bathroom. The second staycation was teaching tennis lessons at a children's summer camp. Next time, he plans to volunteer at a charity camp.

**JULIAN EARWAKER** is a freelance journalist, prison writer-in-residence and book author.

© Business Spotlight, 5/2017  
[www.business-spotlight.de](http://www.business-spotlight.de)

## Staying at home

### 3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. How has Britain's decision to leave the European Union affected its citizens' holiday plans?

---

---

---

2. What preparations did Ronda Kaysen make to ensure that her staycation was a success?

---

---

---

---

3. Why are many staycations unsuccessful?

---

---

---

---

4. What is a 'working staycation'?

---

---

---

---

## Staying at home

### 4 Facts, figures and tips

a. Complete the gaps in 'Holidays at home' with the statistics in the box.

£729.53      12 per cent      £245      2.2 billion      54 per cent

b. Do any of the statistics surprise you? Why?

#### Holidays at home

- \_\_\_\_\_ domestic one-person trips for both leisure and business purposes were taken in the US in 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_ of US employees left holiday time unused in 2016 (662 million unused days).
- The British pound has fallen by \_\_\_\_\_ against the euro since the EU referendum in June, 2016. It has fallen 15 per cent against the US dollar and 16 per cent against the Indian rupee and Australian dollar.
- There has been a \_\_\_\_\_ rise in the cost of a holiday for the average UK family of four, one month after the Brexit vote because of the fall in the value of the British pound.
- The average spend by UK adults on staycations has risen from £399.28 in 2013 to \_\_\_\_\_ in 2016.

c. Complete the gaps in 'Top tips for a successful staycation' with the headings in the box.

Be original      Don't overdo it      Save money      Stay close      Treat yourself      Unplug

d. What do you think about the tips? Add one more of your own.

#### Top tips for a successful staycation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Choose activities near to home so you can sleep in your own bed at night. Try to limit travelling time and distances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turn off the computer and promise not to check work emails on your mobile for the entire staycation. Don't cheat!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Research your local area and find something new that you and your family or staycation companions can enjoy. Let each person choose one thing and plan an itinerary around those ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Try not to plan too much. Leave plenty of time to refresh and recharge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend on luxuries within your budget. Why not enjoy a night in a nearby hotel or a meal at a top restaurant? It's a holiday, after all!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Look for money-off vouchers, family or group deals and discounts.
- \_\_\_\_\_

