



## HOLIDAYS (NEED NOT BE) FROM HELL

The media and the brochures portray the summer holidays as a trouble-free time of sun and sand, but family problems can escalate when the holiday season arrives. The reality of your two weeks in the sun, much like life, is that real people and families are not perfect. If you can change your expectations and do not expect the annual holiday to be like the adverts, you may have a much more enjoyable experience.

Statistically, Christmas and summer holidays are the worst times for stress and family breakdowns. Holidays are times where people who do not spend much time with each other are forced together for two weeks in an alien environment. Working parents are not used to spending twenty-four hours, seven days a week with their children, let alone with each other. There are bound to be strains.

Like all big projects, the holiday's success is founded in preparation and forward thinking. A holiday is a big project; it can be the year's greatest financial outlay, so it is worth giving it some forethought. This does not mean planning every day in minute detail, producing a checklist where you have to tick off the historical monuments one-by-one. It simply means discussing what you want from the holiday with your partner. You may want an active holiday, they might want a beach holiday. Come to a compromise so one of you does not spend two weeks feeling sullen and resentful as they are stuck somewhere where they would rather not be.

Explain to your children about the type of holiday you are planning and what is in it for them. Listen to what they say; they might have some great ideas as well. As the holiday approaches, talk to your children in more detail about the trip and prepare them for the differences. Where you are going the weather might be very different, food strange and languages and customs seemingly incomprehensible. This is true when you go abroad, but equally true if you stay in the United Kingdom. (Try taking urban kids anywhere in the countryside and notice the differences.) Teaching them a few local words, trying out the local cuisine at a restaurant or setting a small project to find out about the holiday destination can open up their minds wonderfully.

While on holiday, talk to your family about schedules and finances. Take time to explain each day's activities to your children and let them know what you expect of them and how much you can afford. Together, choose activities that you all really want to do. You cannot do everything, so you might let your children pick their favourite things for your family to do. Do the things you all will enjoy the most and say "no" to extra activities. No is a very

**WEB: [WWW.MOVINGONCOACHING.CO.UK](http://WWW.MOVINGONCOACHING.CO.UK)**

**PHONE: 020 8400 9045**

**E-MAIL: [INFO@MOVINGONCOACHING.CO.UK](mailto:INFO@MOVINGONCOACHING.CO.UK)**

important word in this case, doing too much can tire your children out and the definition of holiday hell is over-tired children.

Do your best to stick to your regular family routine. Changing your schedule to fit in holiday activities can be tough on you and your children, so try to keep things as normal as possible. If you can, keep bedtimes and mealtimes the same even when you are away from home.

Preparation is a guide, not a straitjacket. Be prepared to go with the right attitude and do not expect everything to go as planned. Your child might get sick or the skies might open up; in these cases let the family help decide upon a new plan. Do not let these unexpected events ruin your holiday, be adaptable and flexible, it is all part of the adventure.

Finally, be prepared for some conflict. These are bound to arise, even with the best-planned vacation with the most loving family, as there are so many different personalities, needs and interests. If you only see your children in the mornings, evenings and weekends, because of work or school, be prepared for some differences as you are all thrust together for a week or more. Family tensions are often heightened during holidays and misunderstandings can intensify and become very stressful. You can approach these situations with a sense of realism; this is part of family life. Defuse the situation with a sense of humour and remind yourself what you love about them. Remember, have a good trip.