

## **Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside.**

*Posted by Peter on 15 September 2010*



The beach at Brighton with the pier in the background.

It is September. The summer holidays are over. People have gone back to work. The children have gone back to school. And, when we meet people, often they ask us, "What sort of summer did you have? Did you go anywhere nice?"

How do we reply? Perhaps we say, "Oh, we went to Spain for a fortnight."

Or, "We went climbing in Scotland."

Or, "We didn't go anywhere. We just stayed at home and enjoyed the garden."

Nowadays, many English people go abroad for their holidays. They go to the Mediterranean, or even to America. More adventurous people go walking in the Andes, or sunbathing in Thailand, or travelling across India by train, or photographing the wild animals in South Africa.

A generation or two ago, it was quite different. Summer holidays meant a week at an English seaside [resort](#) (or, if you were unlucky, two weeks at an English seaside resort). Seaside resorts had cheap hotels and [boarding-houses](#) where people could stay. They had pubs and cafes and restaurants. They had a promenade (a "prom") - a broad road or path beside the sea where you could walk and enjoy the views and the sea air. They had cinemas and theatres, too, to provide amusement in the evenings or when the weather was bad. They had a beach, of course, where you could swim and build sand castles, and there were donkeys on the beach for the children to ride. And many seaside resorts had a [pier](#), which ran out into the sea. The piers had cafes, and [amusement arcades](#), and shops where you could buy postcards and souvenirs, and a place where small boys could fish for [crabs](#).

But then things changed. People had more money. And the cost of travelling by air fell

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dramatically. So English people started to travel [further afield](#) for their holidays. They found that they preferred places where it was always hot and sunny in the summer. Instead of eating fish and chips in the cold and rain in England, they decided that it was better to eat fish and chips in the sunshine in Spain.

The old English seaside resorts declined. They became [seedy](#) and [run-down](#). Many of the hotels and boarding houses closed, or became homes for people on [social security](#) benefits. The lidos (the open-air swimming pools) where the children used to swim became filled with empty beer cans and crisp packets. And, worst of all, in several resorts, the piers were destroyed by the sea or by fire.

Today there are some signs that things are changing. Because of the economic [recession](#), more people are taking their holidays at home instead of travelling abroad. The newspapers have invented a new word - "staycation" - for staying at home for your holiday, or your "vacation" as they call it in America. Some of the old seaside resorts have tried hard to make themselves more attractive to modern visitors. In the old days, people arrived at a seaside resort by train and stayed for a week. Modern visitors arrive by car, and many of them stay only for a day. However, people still want to sit on the beach and enjoy the sea, and small girls with pink bicycles still want to cycle up and down the promenade. So local authorities have repaired some of the [crumbling](#) facilities, and cleared away the litter and cleaned the beaches. New restaurants and cafes have opened. In Weston-super-mare, which is Birmingham's favourite seaside resort, they have even built a new pier.

To finish, here is a song about the seaside which was very popular a hundred years ago. It is sung by Florrie Ford, who was a famous music hall singer. She made this recording in 1909. You can find the words on the website, and you will see that the songwriter wanted to use the word "beside" as many times as possible!

Oh! I do like to be beside the seaside

I do like to be beside the sea!

I do like to be upon the Prom, Prom, Prom!

Where the [brass bands](#) play:

"Tiddely-om-pom-pom!"

So just let me be beside the seaside

I'll be beside myself with glee

And there's lots of girls beside,

I should like to be beside

Beside the seaside!

Beside the sea!

This is the text of the podcast at <http://www.listen-to-english.com/index.php?id=537>.