

Time out



Photo: Brochure „www.latviatourism.lv“

„The beachy margin of the sea“

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If you are fortunate, sometime in the next few weeks you will be setting an „out of office“ reply on your e-mail, asking colleagues to water your plant and heading off on holiday.

Travelling home, you have time to decompress, to make the transition from your professional to your private persona. You try to redirect your mind and leave behind you all thoughts connected with work. The problems, the challenges and the satisfactions will all be there waiting for you when you get back; but for now you are free to „fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world“, to move off and explore other areas of your being, follow the interests and activities you've put to one side since you last had time for yourself ...

Time. Why is it you can never take your time over anything these days? You get so caught up in all the things you have to do that you forget how to go slowly, experience the moment, look around you. And it seems to get worse as you get older, with more and more to do and more and more energy needed to do it ...

Once home, you change into mental and physical „mufti“ and switch off your alarm – time's tyranny torn down. A slice of unstructured life lies stretched out luxuriously before you. You are your own master and can live at your own pace.

Adapting to the new regime takes time though, and a holiday, like Gaul, in three parts divided is. During the first days you start to slow down: slowly you stop waking up at your usual early hour and your inner rhythm gradually goes into leisure mode. The second part de-

pends on how tired you were beforehand: you can either feel relaxed and calm or be a walking zombie. You might just fall ill: it's a well-known fact that as soon as you stop living on nervous energy and begin to relax, the body is more vulnerable. If all goes well though, the last days of your holiday let you stretch and flex and slowly get back up to working speed.

Holidays are about freedom. With routine and constraint suspended, you can choose your own rhythm, staying up all night and sleeping all day if you feel like it. Time becomes shapeless: weekends lose their special quality, with the expectative pleasure of Friday afternoon and the gnawing anxiety of Sunday evening ceasing to exist.

You can indulge in that rarest of pleasures, reading a book properly – from cover to cover, instead of in sleepy half-page doses through half-closed eyes, forgotten next day and read again next evening.

Holidays are for recreation, for reconstituting your being. They open up the mental space for you to entertain those neglected „yin“ thoughts, to inhabit the less rational, more poetic parts of your self; to remind yourself who you are when you're not doing things in the ordered world of men, when you're on your own, just being ...

Like the seventh angel of Revelation, you stand with one foot on the sea and the other on the earth and decree that there shall be time no longer. You contemplate infinity upon the beachy margin of the sea, where the fixed masculine element meets the changing feminine one, the sea, the cruel sea, that free men ever cherish ...

How good it is to let the mind roam wild and have no fear of losing yourself

in your thoughts ... Holidays give you the chance to reconnect with your feelings.

When my father died in February 1994, the tears of shock were shed. But a few days' compassionate leave doesn't let you mourn properly and back in the world of work you simply keep the pain at bay, pushing it firmly to the back of your mind. Then come the holidays and one day you find yourself sitting on the bathroom floor doubled up with grief

The freedom you enjoy during the holidays depends for its existence on the obligations you take on when working – as Shakespeare's Prince Hal says, „if all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work“.

In fact, holidays themselves only exist in a context of continuous employment.

The notion of having a job as opposed to doing one is relatively modern. In past centuries, you did one job and then you did another. Industrialisation brought longer-term employment and much later, employees finally gained the right to paid holidays.

These days, in our post-industrial, ultra-liberal world of downsizing, outsourcing and short-term contracts, we seem to be heading back to the situation of centuries ago. Perhaps in a couple of decades' time, holidays as we know them will no longer exist.

Meanwhile though, if you are fortunate, you will be soon heading off on holiday. And afterwards, when your time out is over, you will take up the mantle again, assume the other persona, the public, „yang“ being, and return to work.

And your recreated yin-yang you, with your unravelled self knitted safely back together, will be content to do so.