

My Love Letter to the Girl's Holiday

After taking an obnoxiously annoying video of waves lapping against the shore, the clear blue sky acting as a backdrop, I look over to my right, over the mountain of snacks piled high between me and my friend, the crumbs from the chocolate-filled biscuits gathering in the plastic grooves of the white table along with torn pieces of freshly baked baguette precariously perched next to a packet of salami that's sweating in the heat. My friend is lying on her front, the sun turning her back a light pink while alternating between napping and reading her book, the pages fluttering in the soft breeze. I smile to myself whilst glancing lovingly up at the hot October sun and realise that I didn't need a floatation tank, a bunch of crystals or to sage my home, I just needed a girl's holiday.

About a month ago on a particularly depressing September morning while WFH I got a text from my best friend with a link to cheap flights to Greece for the end of October. Twenty minutes later I was requesting annual leave for three days off and frantically digging out my bikini ready for a trip that an hour ago didn't exist for three weeks' time.

I remember my first girls holiday. The year was 2015, I was 17 and I had transferred £50 to my friend from school who looked the closest like me to take her driving license to Magaluf where it spent the entire trip at the bottom of my suitcase, untouched. Me and the two girls I went with had just sat our A-levels and were determined to have the kind of holiday that you hear about once you finish school. I can't remember what was worse, the limp toast and watery scrambled egg from the two-star hotel buffet or the seedy rep that would find us on the beach every day and never leave us alone. I still have the neon yellow 'Made in UK Destroyed in Magaluf' polyester vest top gathering dust at the back of my wardrobe with stains from cocktails made up of the type of spirits that could pass as cleaning products. It'll never be worn again but it'll also never be thrown out. I can see myself in years to come proudly showing it off when nostalgia decides to overcome me.

Nearly a decade later and the template for a girl's holiday has taken on a new form. From spending a few days in Cornwall with a school friend and her family all the while planning a house party for when her parents were away the following week that would see us both hung, drawn, and quartered (rightfully so) to celebrating my 21st birthday with a trip to Mykonos with a friend. The girl's holiday has taken on many forms but one thing remains the same: it has continued to remind me how much of a tonic it is to my life.

Back in Greece and after a few days racking up nearly twenty thousand steps a day, alternating between dipping in and out of the sea with sipping two euro sangria from a cardboard carton and eating enough mussels saganaki to keep us going through the winter, it felt like we'd really done the holiday properly. On the final night with our bags begrudgingly packed ready for an early start to the airport we decided to skip dinner and instead prop ourselves up at a bar that spilled out onto the street. The evening began with rounds of 'Shag, Marry, Avoid' and 'Would You Rather' while sipping Strawberry Daiquiri's and Aperol Spritz's as if we were giddy teenagers on our first night out. Fast-forward to 4:30am where you could find us sat with three Greek bar workers whom we'd befriended earlier in the night who had plied us with enough vodka and Baby Guinness that resulted in us sitting on our soap boxes and plying them in turn with unrequested relationship advice. After swapping Instagram handles and slurringly promising to come back next year, we eventually climbed into bed, our mouths thick with that film of alcohol that doesn't shift no matter how many times you brush your teeth. I remember in that moment, despite the tell-tale signs of a world-class hangover slowly creeping over my body and the prospect of the alarm blaring us awake in three hours' time, feeling like one of the luckiest people in the world.

Don't get me wrong, there is nothing quite like that first trip away with your partner. The feeling of bobbing aimlessly in the sea together whilst feeling incredibly smug at the world and almost sure that no one could have as much dopamine flowing through their veins as you do in that moment. Or when you head out to dinner hand in hand and pretend to understand the menu, trying to ignore the stinging of your sun burn because it doesn't matter, you're in love, you're an adult, you can blister your skin and nervously order carpaccio while secretly wishing you'd opted for the pasta and no one can tell you what to do. But for me, there is truly nothing like escaping to another part of the world and exploring it with your best friend.

A girl's holiday has all the best bits of a friendship. Sharing a bed each night and talking into the darkness about the silliest of things, sharing a bottle of four euro wine while your cheeks grow warmer by the minute, and creating in-jokes that will last longer than the olives you've unceremoniously shoved into your backpack to take back home in a sore attempt to re-create the Greek salad you know won't taste the same as the one you had at the Mermaid Taverna.

But most importantly, the best part is that you have time. Time to talk about all the things that a Saturday morning spent over a plate of pancakes doesn't allow for, time to properly listen to each other without the constant distractions of everyday life and time to fall back in love with your best friend and remember how much you need them in your life. Because we really do need them, we need them to share our happiest of memories with and we need them to hold our hands when our world breaks down.

As the clocks turn back and we descend into the depths of winter, you best believe I'll be re-watching that video of the waves gently lapping against the shore on a loop until my bank balance allows me to peruse Skyscanner once again.