

## Why Go Abroad?

Following the Brexit vote the pound is weaker. So with foreign travel more expensive how about taking a break at home?

Do you know that there is a large chain of holiday camps spread around the country rivalling better known brands like Butlins or Haven? I refer to the Happy Members Parks (or HMPs for short). Some have been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century whilst others are brand spanking new, but their popularity has never been higher. Member numbers have doubled in the last 25 years and currently approach 90,000. Demand is increasing, particularly with the over-60s, and you have to practically kill to get into the most popular ones, or Category 'A's as they are affectionately known. These Parks are much vaunted by the popular press, particularly *The Sun*, with their regular rave reviews portraying the carefree and idle life of guests.

Unlike their major rivals HMPs do not suffer from seasonal variations. Numbers are steady throughout the year. This is because guests are committed to medium and long-term stays only; there are no short breaks here! You're booked in either for a fixed term or staying indefinitely whilst spaces permit. There are even growing numbers of loyal guests who keep returning; no doubt recalling the happy times before.

Great care is taken to make the Parks private and exclusive. There are high perimeter walls, some topped with razor wire, to keep people out. You are locked away from the outside world, and work won't bother you with pesky texts or e-mails; you probably haven't told them where you are.

The accommodation ranges from basic to enhanced. Most rooms are single-occupancy, although the more adventurous can share with like-minded souls who has been scrupulously vetted and assessed for compatibility. Rooms are a unique combination of TV lounge, bedroom and toilet (although some come with a shower). In some Parks the toilet seat has thoughtfully been removed; this is to discourage

long sittings which can lead to lower digestive system problems later. Equally the hard bed, mattress and chair all promote good posture thereby avoiding back problems. 'Softies' can upgrade to a quilt and softer pillows.

The house blocks or wings are warden-patrolled for guests' peace of mind and well-being. Around 5 a.m. there is a visual check to ensure all is well. Incidentally the rooms are locked overnight from the outside. This is to ensure privacy and safety. HMPs have a proud record that no sleepwalker has ever injured themselves by wandering out of their room.

Meaningful activity will make the days fly. There is a captive audience for all types of courses, where new skills (making up breakfast packs is a favourite) can be learned and useful qualifications gained. A varied healthy diet and gym membership ensures your physical health is not ignored.

Have I whetted your appetite for a MHP break yet? Well here's the best bit. Thanks to a government-backed funding scheme it is all free! It would be criminal not to apply.