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Why more people are choosing to take a holiday with their ex

It might sound problematic, but a getaway with your former lover could be the best way to part

By Sophie Dickinson

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Courtesy Lake Austin Spa Resort.

Erica Crompton is effusive when she reminisces about her trip to Lanzarote. “We had a few glasses of wine on the plane, and then spent the week sunbathing and reading books,” she recalls. “We felt like we needed a nice break to just relax and enjoy the sunshine. It was really beautiful.”

The only issue? Erica, a public speaker based in Staffordshire, was travelling with her former long-term partner – they had broken up a few weeks earlier. With a trip to Lanzarote in the calendar, the pair attempted to work through their split by the pool. While many would find the experience excruciating, Erica thinks it was crucial to their ultimately harmonious break up.

She explains: “The key was to not spend all of our time together. We’d have our evening meals – and all the other times that you’d feel self-conscious on a solo holiday – with each other. We did spend the daytime at opposite ends of the pool though, doing our own thing.”

Their villa in the Canary Islands wasn’t exactly set up for a post-relationship debrief: Erica and her ex had to share a double bed and spend the long summer nights together. Some resorts, however, actually offer specific packages for this exact situation – sometimes marketed as ‘breakup holidays’ – even suggesting ‘discussion prompts’ and exercises designed to kickstart the forgiveness process.

Psychologically-focussed hotel packages

With psychologically-focussed wellness packages commonplace, perhaps it should come as no surprise. Earlier this year, hotel chain Kimpton began offering therapy sessions to its guests via mental health app Talkspace. For the Dharana Hotel in India, providing emotional support to those staying the night – including those going through a split – is a key part of its offering. Guests are able to book ‘Conflict Resolution’ sessions with experts, or visit ‘spiritual masters’ for guidance. And at Lake Austin Spa Resort in Texas, divorcing couples can opt onto curated ‘It Takes Two’ packages that encourage time spent in nature together.



Courtesy Lake Austin Spa Resort.

It seems millennials, in particular, are keen to avoid the hostility that traditionally accompanies a split. Rather than the blazing rows and bitter accusations, couples are, somewhat sensibly, choosing to take steps that reduce the distress.

That isn't to say that there aren't horrendous moments on these holidays. Lydia Bird, a student from Connecticut, found that the holiday she took with her ex to the Dominican Republic actually exacerbated the split – there was an ample amount of time to rehash old arguments and squabble about who was on their phones too much.

Perhaps the choice of destination was to blame. Resorts like Canyon Ranch, a hotel chain that operates in various US locations, offer specific packages for guests going through significant life changes, whether that's the birth of a new child or, as in Lydia's case, going through a break-up.

Guests book a stay via a 'pathway' – essentially a guide for staff about their specific circumstances. Amy Hawthorne, the Director of Mental Health and Wellness at Canyon Ranch, advises two in particular. "Our 'Build Resilience' pathway is a big

one, as is ‘Reconnect With Joy’. That’s especially good for people who are looking at parting ways or are newly separated,” she says.

“We hear a lot of people saying that they’ve lost themselves, and asking who they are without their significant other. We can support them in that journey here.”



Courtesy Canyon Ranch.

This might sound slightly too intimate for some, but as Hawthorne says, the alternative could be more upsetting. Social media was set alight in the summer as TikTok user Eliz, who posts as @sadgirlhours3344 on the platform, shared videos taken on a “traumatic” two-week holiday with her ex. Chronicling uncomfortable days spent on the sun loungers together, she evidently didn’t feel the benefits of an international excursion with her former lover.

While ‘ritual therapy’ and ‘intention setting’ might not be for everyone, Amy Hawthorne points out that a number of the packages at Canyon Ranch are designed for people with children, who necessarily need to have a civil relationship. There’s couples therapy, of course, but also “activities that promote cooperation between

people who are parenting.” These include activities like high ropes and adventure courses, which bolster “cooperation and connection and communication” – all good stuff if there are offspring in the picture.

Disentangling a life together

Aside from the emotional impact of a split, there’s the more pragmatic question of disentangling a life – who technically owns those bedside tables? Who gets custody of that wayward friend who refuses to pick a side? At the Glass House Retreat in Essex, guests are encouraged to think about how the anxiety of a split can affect their health – which doesn’t quite sound as relaxing as lounging on deckchairs or sharing a plate of pasta.

General Manager Mericia Chapman says that it’s important that both members of the couple are equally engaged. “Often, it’s a process of learning how to manage stress, not project it onto others, and realise what works for each person as individuals.”

There is a sense, however, that even those experiencing the healthiest of break-ups could mark the end of the relationship at home. Why endure the awkward intimacy of airport check-ins when you could just be in the living room?



Courtesy Glass House.

Andrew G Marshall, a marital therapist, thinks that there's a risk that former couples might feel isolated while travelling, especially if there's still an element of disagreement. "I think it is a little dangerous because what you need is emotional support," he says.

He is not, however, entirely dismissive of the idea. "Travelling together can help you see each other in a new light. A challenge like that can actually be very bonding – but it's good to have some kind of backup plan."

"Travelling allows people to get perspective"

Amy Hawthorne disagrees, saying that an interruption of our daily lives can be helpful. "Travelling allows people to get perspective. We see couples create really powerful, deep change really quickly, because they've quieted down the rest of the world to focus on themselves."

Erica found something similar – it was much easier to deal with the effects of the split once the pair left behind the domesticity of bin day and negotiating with mortgage brokers. "We didn't really do any sightseeing, visit art galleries or engage in anything even slightly romantic," she says. "We just took it easy, I think because the breakup had been so volatile."



Courtesy Canyon Ranch.

As for the chance of a rekindling? At Glass House Retreat, counselling does sometimes end in reconciliation. At Lake Austin, a divorced couple left holding hands after just four days at the retreat. Erica Crompton admits to wondering about the possibility, saying that the pair were getting on so well that there was, briefly, hope of rapprochement. However, a conversation between the pair clarified that this wasn't an option.

For some, this sort of definitive conclusion might be hard to bear. But Erica remains extremely positive about the trip. "I see the holiday now as a celebration of almost seven years together. At the end of it all, our relationship had lasted longer than many marriages, and we were pleased with that achievement. The trip was an opportunity to celebrate that."

Essentials

A two-night break at the Glass House Retreat is priced from £232 per person, including full use of facilities, dinner and breakfast (glasshouseretreat.co.uk). An all-inclusive stay at Canyon Ranch on the 'Build Resilience' pathway starts at around £2,000 per night (canyonranch.com).

Lake Austin Spa Resort's 'It Takes Two' packages start at £330 per couple (lakeaustin.com).

Have you been on a post-break up holiday with an ex before? Please tell us about your experiences in the comments below