

Czechs offer "Retro" communist holidays

A Czech travel agency has come up with a novel idea for a holiday. It is offering holidaymakers "retro" holidays where punters are given the opportunity to turn back the clock and re-live the past. These 'communist' holidays are package holidays for people nostalgic for the trade union perks of communist Czechoslovakia, when factory workers were bussed off to recuperate from the daily grind. For a modest sum guests can stay at a grim-looking hotel in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains, to relive the sights, sounds and smells of pre 1989 holidays *the BBC* recently reported. These 'retro' holidays are being offered in the style of the workers' breaks that used to be organised by the Communist Revolutionary Trade Union Movement – or ROH – to use a Czech acronym. The holidays were a reward for a year of toil in the offices, factories and coal mines of socialist Czechoslovakia. Most visitors today are middle age or elderly Slovaks or Czechs – coming to rekindle fond memories of times gone by. Why not?

Moravian travel agency manager Petr Krc: "The idea came about by chance." When looking round the basement of the hotel he came across an old storeroom. Inside was an 'Aladdin's cave' of boxes of flags, towels, and napkins with the ROH logo on them. Krc added: "The owner of the hotel said he was going to chuck them out. I said 'for God's sake don't do that. You're sitting on a goldmine!'" 'Retro' holidaymakers can now come to the large and eerie Hotel Morava in Tatranska Lomnica, a winter resort in the Tatra Mountains, to rekindle fond memories of ROH holidays gone by. The hotel rooms are gloomy and claustrophobic. The bathrooms have a certain smell. Ugly 1950's chairs sit empty at the end of silent corridors. A bust of Stalin is in the hotel lobby. For some guests this authentic communist ambience is all part of the hotel's charm. But surly communist-style service is no longer a feature! At 7am the hotel wakes with a start. Loudspeakers crackle into life, blaring out a mixture of revolutionary songs and socialist-era music. Those guests still asleep are roused by a hotel worker with a whistle. Bleary-eyed and yawning, the holidaymakers are dragged out onto the hotel lawn for some vigorous open air exercise. Lovely!

Category: Czechoslovakia / Slovakia / Retro holidays

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Holidays: What was the best holiday you remember taking as a child? Where did you stay? Would you like to go back there to remember the good times? What do you know about 'retro holidays'? Go round the room swapping stories.

2. Geography: Where is the Czech Republic? Where is Slovakia? What are their capitals? Where is Moravia? In which country will you find the Tatra Mountains? **(Look on Google maps to help you)**

3. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

4. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Have you ever been on a trade union holiday?

7. Let's think! Czech and Slovakian holidays: With your partner think of three interesting places to go in the Czech Republic and Slovakia on holiday. Why here? Discuss together. (You might need to use the internet for this)

Czech Republic	Slovakia
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's think! Trade union holiday: You and your partner are going on a trade union holiday in Czechoslovakia. It is somewhere between 1955 and 1989. Choose your 'time period'. Discuss your holiday. *5-minutes*.

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their 'holiday' in front of the class.

9. Let's talk! *In pairs:* You are on Skype speaking to your friend who is in another country. The conversation gets onto what one of you did in today's English lesson in class – **Czechs offer "Retro" communist holidays**. Discuss. *5-minutes*.

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10. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What area of the Czech Republic does the travel agent come from?
- 2) What does ROH mean in English?
- 3) Name the hotel.
- 4) In what era did these holidays originally take place?
- 5) What happens at 7am?
- 6) Sum up what Mr Krc said.

Student B

- 1) Describe the hotel.
- 2) What are "retro" holidays?
- 3) Who is likely to go on these holidays?
- 4) Who were the holidays originally for?
- 5) Where exactly is this holiday taking place?
- 6) Describe the 'Aladdin's cave'.

11. Czechoslovakian holidays: With your partner look at the list below. Add two choices of your own. **Either – imagine** you are going on holiday in Czechoslovakia – a time travel experience **OR** briefly discuss life during Czechoslovakia using the subjects below to prod your memory. What conclusions do you come to?

1	Cars / train journeys	5	Coupon shops
2	Cheap holidays...	6	Best jobs and why?
3	Hotels	7	Life!
4	Pioneer camps	8	Holidays in Eastern Europe
Your choice 1 _____		Your choice 2 _____	

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The "retro" holiday _____
- b) At 7am we _____
- c) The hotel guests _____
- d) The Tatra Mountains _____

13. Let's think! Holidays in Czechoslovakia during socialism: Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with **holidays in Czechoslovakia during socialism** as you can. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

14. Let's write! An e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Holidays in Czechoslovakia during socialism.** (Imagine!) Your e-mail can be read out in class.

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What and where is the worst hotel you have stayed in? Why?
- 3) Have you ever come across an Aladdin's Cave of treasures? If yes, where?
- 4) What 'retro' themed holidays do you know of in your country?
- 5) Aren't 'retro' holidays just a bit of nostalgia?
- 6) Are you a member of a trade union? If yes, which one? Is it useful to you?
- 7) What's the daftest thing you remember doing on holiday?
- 8) Have you ever been to Moravia?
- 9) How does your company reward you?
- 10) Would you like to go on a week's holiday with all your work colleagues and their families? Why? Why not? Surely, it would be a privilege wouldn't it?

Student B questions

- 1) Have you ever been to either the Czech Republic or Slovakia?
- 2) Have you ever been to the Tatra Mountains? If yes, when, why?
- 3) Would you like to go on a 'retro' holiday? Why? Why not?
- 4) Isn't the article holiday just a bit of fun?
- 5) Would you like to go on this particular 'retro' holiday? Why? Why not?
- 6) Have you ever stayed in a large old communist/socialist hotel? If yes, how was it?
- 7) What was the cheapest holiday you remember?
- 8) Do you think this holiday will prove to be popular? Why? Why not?
- 9) If you were on holiday would you want to be woken at seven then required to take morning exercise on the lawn outside of your hotel every morning? Why? Why not?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's brainstorm! Team building

Location _____

Allow 10-20 minutes - Small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You are going on a team building course (today's equivalent) next month with your work colleagues/fellow students. You are all going to be travelling, eating, sleeping, working and team building together! The competitive week with other teams includes you partaking in a three day two night camping exercise. You are required to share a room, bathroom and a tent. Brainstorm some ideas about the **team building course** and what you might do together. Choose a spokesperson who can present your ideas to the class at the end of your preparation. Present it visually or use the board etc... Try to be imaginative!

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) Travel – how you get there | 4) Food preparation / cooking |
| 2) Hotel - Four to a room/tent | 5) Two overnights camping |
| 3) Indoor teambuilding exercises | 6) Outdoor teambuilding exercises |

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A _____ travel agency has come up with a novel idea for a holiday. It is offering holidaymakers "retro" holidays where punters are given the opportunity to turn back the clock and relive the past. These '_____' holidays are package holidays for people _____ for the trade union perks of communist Czechoslovakia, when _____ workers were bussed off to recuperate from the daily grind. For a modest sum guests can stay at a grim-looking hotel in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains, to relive the sights, sounds and smells of pre 1989 holidays *the BBC* recently reported. These '_____' holidays are being offered in the style of the _____' breaks that used to be organised by the Communist Revolutionary Trade Union Movement – or ROH – to use a Czech acronym. The holidays were a reward for a year of toil in the offices, factories and coal mines of socialist Czechoslovakia. Most visitors today are middle age or elderly Slovaks or Czechs – coming to _____ fond _____ of times gone by. Why not?

rekindle

factory

Czech

retro

communist

workers

memories

nostalgic

Moravian travel agency manager Petr Krc: "The idea came about by chance." When looking round the basement of the hotel he came across an old storeroom. Inside was an 'Aladdin's cave' of boxes of flags, towels, and napkins with the ROH logo on them. Krc added: "The owner of the hotel said he was going to chuck them out. I said 'for God's sake don't do that. You're sitting on a goldmine!'" 'Retro' holidaymakers can now come to the large and _____ Hotel Morava in Tatranska Lomnica, a winter resort in the Tatra Mountains, to rekindle _____ memories of ROH holidays gone by. The hotel rooms are _____ and claustrophobic. The bathrooms have a certain smell. Ugly 1950's chairs sit empty at the end of silent corridors. A bust of Stalin is in the hotel lobby. For some guests this _____ communist ambience is all part of the hotel's charm. But surly communist-style service is no longer a feature! At 7am the hotel wakes with a start. Loudspeakers crackle into life, blaring out a mixture of revolutionary songs and _____-era music. Those guests still asleep are _____ by a hotel worker with a whistle. Bleary-eyed and _____, the holidaymakers are dragged out onto the hotel _____ for some _____ open air exercise. Lovely!

erie

fond

socialist

lawn

yawning

gloomy

vigorous

roused

authentic

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A Czech travel agency has come up (1)___ a novel idea for a holiday. It is offering holidaymakers "retro" holidays (2)___ punters are given the opportunity to turn back the clock and relive the past. These 'communist' holidays are package holidays for people nostalgic for the trade union perks of communist Czechoslovakia, (3)___ factory workers were bussed off to recuperate (4)___ the daily grind. For a modest sum guests can stay at a grim-looking hotel in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains, to relive the sights, sounds and smells of pre 1989 holidays *the BBC* recently reported. (5)___ 'retro' holidays are being offered in the style of the workers' breaks (6)___ used to be organised by the Communist Revolutionary Trade Union Movement – or ROH – to use a Czech acronym. The holidays were a reward for a year of toil in the offices, factories and coal mines of socialist Czechoslovakia. (7)___ visitors today are middle age or elderly Slovaks or Czechs – coming to rekindle fond memories of times gone by. Why not?

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	napkins	11	claustrophobic
2	ugly	12	revolutionary
3	authentic	13	recuperate
4	acronym	14	vigorous
5	nostalgic	15	rekindle
6	Czechoslovakia	16	holidaymakers
7	Moravian	17	loudspeakers
8	grind	18	crackle
9	lawn	19	goldmine
10	yawning	20	ambience

LINKS:- <http://www.hotel-morava.sk/intro-2> <http://www.tatry.sk/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatra_Mountains <http://www.cometoslovakia.eu/>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8659518.stm>

<http://www.webcams.travel/webcam/1217347738-Weather-Tatransk%C3%A1-Lomnica-Tatransk%C3%A1-Lomnica>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Czechs offer "Retro" communist holidays: A **Czech** travel agency has come up with a novel idea for a holiday. It is offering holidaymakers "retro" holidays where punters are given the opportunity to turn back the clock and re-live the past. These '**communist**' holidays are package holidays for people **nostalgic** for the trade union perks of communist Czechoslovakia, when **factory** workers were bussed off to recuperate from the daily grind. For a modest sum guests can stay at a grim-looking hotel in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains, to relive the sights, sounds and smells of pre 1989 holidays *the BBC* recently reported. These '**retro**' holidays are being offered in the style of the **workers'** breaks that used to be organised by the Communist Revolutionary Trade Union Movement – or ROH – to use a Czech acronym. The holidays were a reward for a year of toil in the offices, factories and coal mines of socialist Czechoslovakia. Most visitors today are middle age or elderly Slovaks or Czechs – coming to **rekindle** fond **memories** of times gone by. Why not?

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