

# EASTER BLUES

The Bank Holiday experience can be a double edged sword.

BY BRYONY TAYLOR

It's Easter, the first opportunity since last Christmas one is supposed to feel that happy holiday feeling. Around the cute fluffy bunnies and copious amount of chocolate indulgence however, one has to navigate the grid locked roads of Britain full of red tale lights and blaring horns in the inevitable rain and drizzle to achieve some sort of weekend 'break'. The question is – is it all worth it?

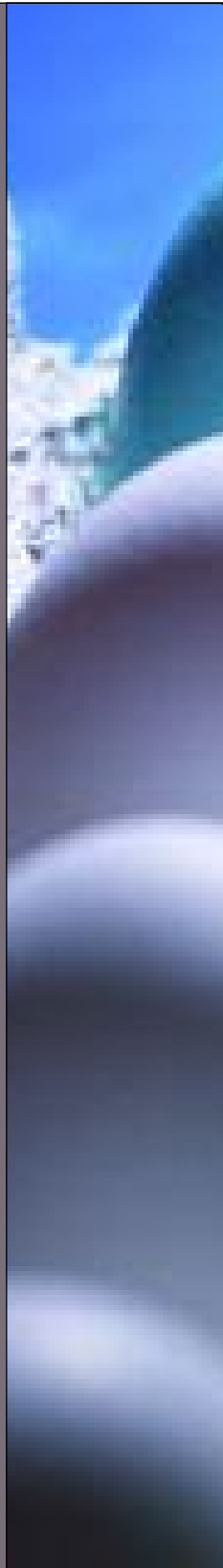
It's a fact begrudged by many that Britain has only eight Bank Holidays, one of the lowest in Europe (indeed only Holland has less with seven), compared to Italy's sixteen. The British worker bee has to wait up to fifteen weeks between Christmas and Easter for a statutory break, while working some of the longest hours in Europe. Such disparity in the

placing of Bank Holidays in the annual calendar has had unions like the TUC campaigning for the allocation of more to help lessen the British workload. The main argument for this being that many employees find it increasingly difficult to maintain a satisfactory balance between work and other activities, and some argue that long hours reduce the amount of voluntary work done by those in employment.

While the Bank Holiday is supposed to be a break from the mundane workload, the build up to one can cause more stress and work than merely not having one at all. In today's non-stop working environment, to take those precious two days off can mean extra hours earlier in the week and inbox overload when you get back, the lurking fear of which can

dampen even the most festive holiday weekend. The TUC estimates more than three million workers have to work over the holiday period. However such employees, mainly in the service and retail sectors, often get better pay during the period and choose to work.

What disturbs most unions are the number of employees who have the eight days docked from their statutory twenty day annual holiday allowance. With this a reality in some companies, perhaps we should just brave the traffic and make the most of the ones we do have? And on this particular holiday season reward our working commitment and booming economy by munching our way through some of the 250,000 tons of chocolate sold worldwide over the Easter period. ■





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