

# The weird origins of going to the beach

By Ana Swanson, Washington Post

Like the steam engine, the tin-can telephone and the first vaccine, the modern American beach holiday was actually invented in Britain.

A beach vacation might seem like the most natural thing in the world – to head to the shore, play in the waves and splay your limbs out on the sand. But people didn't always consider the beach a place primarily for relaxation and entertainment. After all, the beach can be cold, hot, sandy, wet, dismal and/or uncomfortable. And then there's the whole prospect of drowning in the sea.

Like so many things, the beach vacation actually rose to popularity in Britain around the turn of the 19th century and spread through the world from there. (This isn't to say people avoided the beach entirely before then, but vacationing at the beach wasn't a cultural phenomenon.) Its origins were tied up with how industrialization was remaking Britain at the time, as well as in popular contemporary medical theories that now sound bizarre.

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