



## Sun, sangria, socks with sandals... the British are coming

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**Why do Brits have such a bad reputation abroad? It's something a Calderdale ex-pat considers in his new book. Virginia Mason reports**

STUART Wright poses a question. "What it is about us Brits that makes us stand out from other tourists? Why do we have such a bad reputation?"

And he is probably more qualified than most to answer because, for the past eight years, Stuart has been living the life of an ex-pat in sunny Spain.

The major life change – from stressed-out sales director living in Shelf to relaxed retiree on the Costa del Sol – inspired Stuart's first book, *Life's A Laugh On The Costa – Honest*; a light-hearted layman's view of life in his new surroundings.

But the long, sun-soaked days have given Stuart time for further contemplation about his fellow man – particularly how we behave on our holidays and the result is a second witty book – *They're All Foreigners Abroad*, an hilarious A-Z inventory of what we might expect to see or experience on our foreign jollies.

"The Brits are a strange nation but I have decided that we're not really that much different to everyone else – maybe apart from the alcohol consumption.

"You don't have to be British to wear socks with sandals and you certainly don't have to be British to be a bigot, a slob or a snob. Stereotyping can be dangerous and, let's be honest, we Brits are not difficult to take the mickey out of while we're on our hard-earned holidays," he says.

Stuart, now 56, chats while he is in Halifax to visit family. He has a few days to catch up with old faces and old places before heading "home" again.

"I do refer to Spain now as home because that's how it feels. I'm settled there now, even though there are one or two things I really miss," he divulges, listing gala pie, marzipan fruits and his former local, the Brown Horse at Coley among his favourites.

He is also in Halifax of course to organise sales of his book, which he hopes will strike a chord with many.

The topics he covers with razor-sharp observation, run into the hundreds, from ants and airport security, to folding back sunbeds, flip-flops, Germolene, sunbed vigilantes, taxi fares, plugholes and political correctness.

In and among he weaves in characteristics and situations many of us will recognise.

"How many times do you get asked 'Is it hot enough for you then?' when you're on holiday?"

"Usually it's someone you've never clapped eyes on before. The heat is probably burning like hell and the last thing you want is someone asking if it's hot enough."

Stuart says he's confident most of us will be nodding our head in agreement at his observations before we have got beyond the first chapter.

"If the cap fits, wear it. If you say you don't recognise yourself then frankly I don't believe you," he says.

Back in 2001 he made one of the most important decisions of his life.

"I pulled up the drive after another 240-mile round trip to work and thought there must be more to life than this," he reveals.

It was then just a case of persuading his long-term partner, Chris that moving abroad was the answer.

"I thought she'd think I was mad but fortunately she didn't," says Stuart.

The couple married in Spain last year ("another book sometime because you wouldn't believe the bureaucracy.")

For a while they ran an English tea shop – The Tea Tree – which gave him plenty of ideas for his first book, as well as for *They're All Foreigners*, which he started writing three years ago.

"I have just kept adding bits and dipping back into it. I just hope people will now enjoy reading it and having a bit of a laugh at themselves. At least that's something we Brits are capable of," he says.

One comical observation is the holidaymaker who decides to get up from his sunbed to take a dip in the sea – forgetting that the sand has reached searing temperatures.

"They get mid-way between the two and then start jogging on the spot, thinking do I go back to the sunbed or leg it to the sea? Either way you're going to burn your feet. Cruel but funny."

Some topics are described in great detail, while others are dismissed with the one-line derisory comments they deserve.

Socks with sandals for example, are included with a curt "the less said the better" and as for Speedo swimming trunks, Stuart simply comments: "I don't think so."

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• **They're All Foreigners Abroad by Stuart Wright is available at Fred Wade, Halifax and The Book Case, Hebden Bridge. Life's A Laugh On The Costa – Honest is shortly to be republished under the title Tea And Tortillas. Stuart is now working on a third book, I Suppose You Think You're Clever, You.**