

# Tripping lightly

NO MORE WORRIES FOR A WEEK OR TWO ...

**SARAH DREW JONES** IS IN HOLIDAY MOOD

**H**oliday season never fails to provoke an embarrassingly teenage squeal of approval from me. Thinking of the fortnight's bliss ahead is roughly equivalent in excitement terms, I think, to that legendary school disco in 1984 when I first clapped eyes on sixth-form heart-throb Stephen Lowe and had to be slapped across the face by my friend Jo, for fear of biting him on the arm out of sheer lust.

Holidays don't just represent the holy trinity (sun, sea, and shopping), but freedom, and that's what gets me every time. Had I been a slightly more wild-spirited kind of girl, I fancy my sense of adventure may have taken me down an entirely different route than the one my life has taken.

Horse-whisperer on a glamorous Argentinian pony ranch, for example.

Mysterious-yet-bewitching herder of camels across the bleak desert plains of the Sahara. Fancy-footed bolero-jacketed flamenco dancer in the Andalucian mountains, all slicked-back hair and snotty attitude to outsiders.

That's the life I should have had.

Because I've always loved to travel, but sadly, the need to pay off my student debt and start a proper career

before my mum

burnt, as per her threat, all my albums as a protest against my post-degree laziness, unfortunately spurred me into gainful employment.

I did manage a good long stretch living in Australia: but even then, the sheer strength of my working-class Welsh work ethic meant that I

was writing for the local newspaper when I could have been barrelling around the Outback in a dust-covered bus with blonde backpackers called Sven and Gurtie (oh, they're always Swedish, you know they are, it's a universal law of independent travel, like Delhi belly and Jesus sandals).

These days, my travel instincts, dampened by years of deadlines and post-work trips to flippin' Tesco, have been restricted to twice-yearly holidays. Which is still not bad, I reckon, and gee, we have some fun with them.

Here's my top five holiday experiences; see if you can beat them for pleasure value. They're all totally true (sadly):

◆ The time I was 'arrested' by police in 45 degree heat in a scarily remote gold-mining town in Western Australia (with tumbleweeds and everything) and made to sit, white-faced with fear, on the traffic-cop motorbike, holding a gun, wearing a helmet, while they took pics, as punishment for my 'crimes' (my friend had put them up to it).

◆ The time I and my boyfriend of the time had a screaming row on a crowded beach on a teeny Greek island, which culminated in a thoroughly-overheated me attempting to land one on him (the louse!), and all the fat old Greek widows applauded.

◆ The time I and my friend Louise went to Madrid, ostensibly on a business trip but really just to get drunk for four days on expenses: the airline lost my luggage, we emptied the minibar every morning and mitched off our responsibilities at the work event to go to bullfights with Spanish men who didn't seem to mind the language barrier.

◆ The time I had a spectacular panic attack on a 13-hour flight to Mexico, just after the September 11 attacks: when I tearfully said to my husband that we had to get off, he calmly called my bluff, summoned the trolley dolly over and, in his best posh English accent, demanded that the pilot immediately turn the plane around, his wife had urgent business with a psychiatrist. The look on her face was so surreal I burst out laughing and forgot my panic.

◆ The time I hired a scooter on Gran Canaria and wobbled all over the road so much that the boyfriend I was with had to stop driving the scooter behind me to wee in the bushes because he was laughing so much. That holiday I crashed into: another two bikes, an ice-cream freezer, our villa, and a pizzeria (don't ask).

Still, this year, we're going to Miami and I'm hoping for a cracking time. Hope springs eternal...

Picture: River Island