

**NOSTALGIA-FUELLED HERITAGE TOURISM IN BRITAIN:  
THE REVIVAL OF SEASIDE RESORTS**

Any of Britain's seaside resorts is packed with parents making sure their kids experience the classic seaside holiday. And according to a survey by Tripadvisor, 48 % of people have taken their kids back to their own childhood haunts. The UK was top of the list of most popular places to re-visit, with traditional seaside resorts like Whitby and St Ives particularly popular with those looking to re-live their British childhoods.

All in all, childhood memories are not the only reason for visiting places of nostalgia. The poll of 500 people conducted by Expedia reveals that the top reasons for nostalgia tourism is a desire to re-live youth in any of its kind. In recent years, visitors tend to view sea resorts with affectionate nostalgia, whilst the credibility of remaining seaside heritage has strengthened. Moreover, nostalgia-fuelled heritage tourism offers a valuable life-line for some resorts.

*Morecambe, Lancashire* is a traditional medium sized seaside resort with a population of nearly 36500. The resort developed in the nineteenth century. Accurate historic visitor numbers for Morecambe that would allow meaningful comparison between decades do not exist. However, it is clear to see that tourism infrastructure developed extensively in the late nineteenth as the resort gained the Winter Gardens, Summer Gardens, two piers and a revolving tower to name but a few attractions aimed at a growing market.

Census information indicates that between 1911 and 1951 the resort started to become demographically distinct as a retirement centre. The 1940s and 1950s saw the continuation of Morecambe's prosperity. Morecambe's height of popularity was due to "switch on" nights of 1949 and 1950 which attracted well over 100,000 visitors but these numbers were never to be repeated. Morecambe suffered a calamitous fall in visitor spending from £46.6 mln in 1973 to £6.5 mln in 1990, expressed in constant values. Few resorts have suffered such a collapse.

The reasons for Morecambe's decline are open to speculation but they include socio-cultural shifts and changing tastes, increased competition both domestically and internationally, a lack of investment compared to larger resorts like Blackpool, relative geographical isolation in the age of the car and environmental pollution problems. Yet, despite long standing challenges, the 1990s saw the start of a modest recovery of tourism, as parts of the resort and especially the promenade saw regeneration. The re-opening of this destination hotel drew much needed positive media attention to Morecambe.

In recent years, visitor numbers have increased.

The seaside experience endures, and seaside nostalgia can be considered cyclical in nature. One can still observe or join in with the un-self-conscious play of a child on the beach; parents and grandparents brought children to the beach to play as they once did. Seaside visits were part of family narratives and traditions

stretching back many decades but potentially stretching across the time horizon into the future. Seaside nostalgia allows both a connection to other generations and to the child within.