

Working from home, or from France - what's the difference?

As **DICK LUMSDEN** prepares for his summer holiday, he has no intention of being out of touch

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Later this month, I'm going on holiday.... yay!
Two weeks in the south of France with my family, my closest friends and their families. About 20 of us all together in a large rented villa with swimming pool and tennis court - fantastic!

But hang on a minute... I own and run a small business. I have clients who need me and I have projects which can't just stop because I'm spreading runny cheese onto a fresh baguette in the Mediterranean sunshine.

So, more accurately, I should say later this month I will be "relocating" my desk to the south of France where, thanks to the miracles of modern technology, no-one will ever know.

I can send emails from the side of the pool, I can download documents by the side of the barbecue and, if I want, I can have conference calls on Skype wearing my Speedos. (Ok I made up that last bit, I couldn't possibly squeeze into a pair of Speedos).

At this point, half of you reading this are calling me a sad, pathetic loser who can't relax and is just going to spoil the holiday for everyone else. And the other half just don't care.

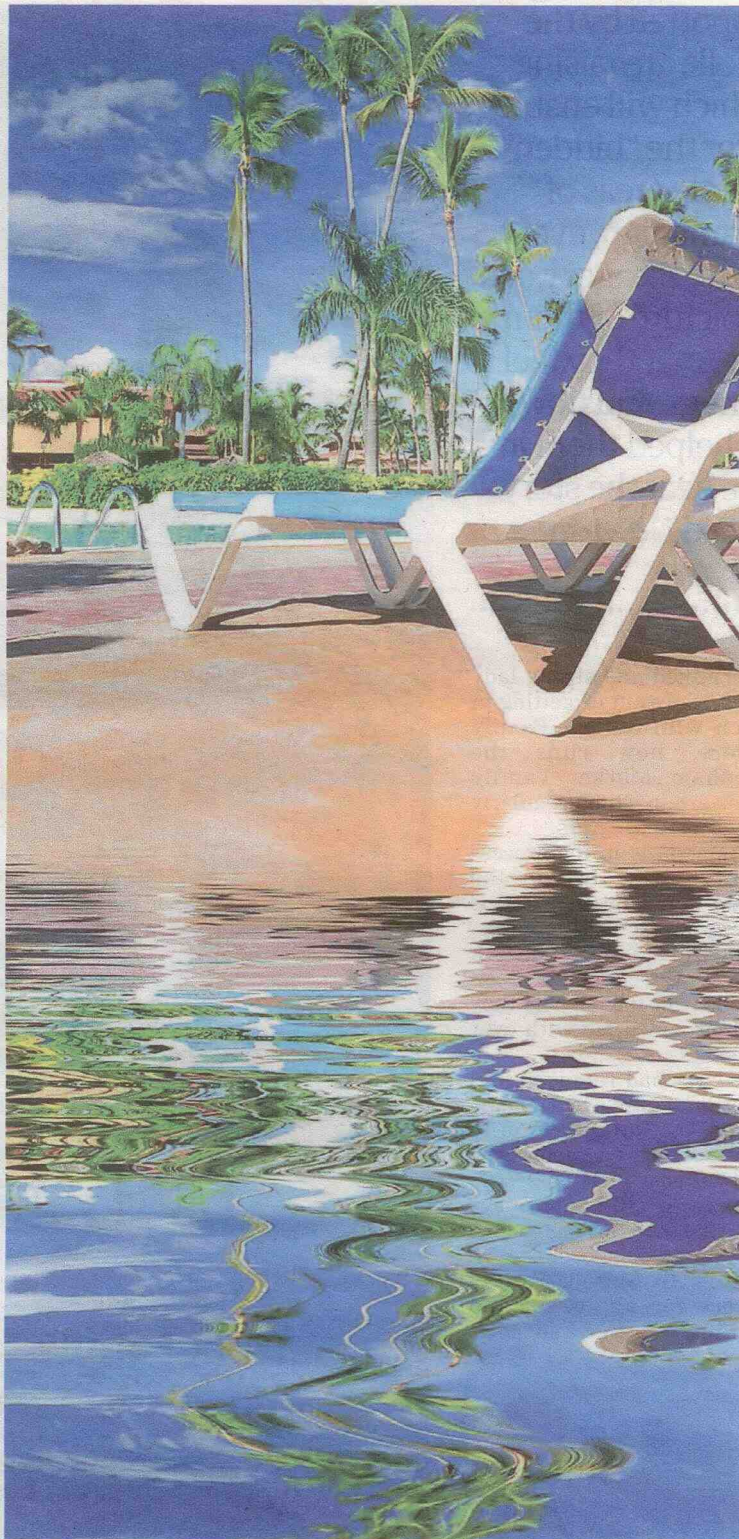
Taking work on holiday is a modern day phenomenon... but is it really such a bad thing?

I grew up among the coal fields of Scotland in the 1950s and 60s when virtually every family had someone working in the industry. All holidays were taken at the same time when the pits closed for two weeks.

Fathers took their families off to seaside caravan parks with absolutely no thought of the work they were happy to leave behind for two weeks.

But we live in different times now. Virtually everyone carries a mobile phone - 94% of all adults in the UK now own a mobile according to Ofcom. Half of these phones are now smartphones, giving millions of us instant access to the internet.

Is it any worse to be checking work-related emails and documents than it is to be constantly checking in on social media sites to see what your "friends" had for breakfast? I



■ Dick Lumsden looks forward to basking in the Mediterranean sunshine with a glass of chilled white wine... and his smart phone.

Picture: GETTY IMAGES

genuinely believe my holiday would be far worse for me and my family if I didn't have the ability to keep things ticking over.

I'm not, by nature, a worrier. But the thought of being out of contact for two weeks and not knowing what issues I would face when I got back, is enough to send me running for the Rennies.

There is a famous American

of worry "toxic worry" and "good worry" - a bit like cholesterol I suppose.

If you do nothing, "toxic worry" can eat away at you, paralysing you with fear. But if you make a plan and take action, you can turn it into "good worry" which is healthy and constructive.

So, I've followed Dr Hallowell's advice. I've made a plan. I've

back in London. I'm taking a tablet computer as back up, plus my Blackberry and an assortment of chargers.

I may be a little bit over the top here, but I'm certainly not alone in the "working while on holiday" stakes. A recent poll by Regus found that 40% of UK workers admitted to doing anything up to three hours a day working when they were officially on holiday.

And in a separate survey, 65% of couples admitted they had argued on holiday because one of them was constantly checking work emails. To be fair, Mrs Lumsden and I could argue over anything and everything from the runny cheese to the failures of the sat nav... so work email is just one more thing on a very long list.

Still... at least I am actually having a holiday. More than half of all small business owners surveyed said they couldn't afford to take any time off at all and had no plans for a vacation.

I would argue that their families

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have more right to feel aggrieved than those of someone checking work emails, sipping a chilled Sauvignon Blanc while their family enjoys the sun alongside.

I read this week that British Airways is planning to offer a broadband service inside its passenger cabins while in flight... so not only is there a demand for people checking emails while abroad, it would seem that they also want to do it while they are still travelling.

Talking of which, as I'm driving all the way down to the south of France, I'll be asking Mrs Lumsden to check the Blackberry every half hour or so - just in case I miss something really important while I'm driving.

Dr Hallowell would be so proud.

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■ Dick Lumsden is managing director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to contribute