

Holidays WITH MY husband

Is your idea of the perfect trip the same as his?
Christina Hopkinson celebrates the difference...



Wise men say that the worst thing about travelling is that however far you go, you always take yourself. To which, they might have added

that you also have to bring mosquito repellent, your printed boarding pass and, most trying of all, the one you love.

When I fell in love with my husband, Alex, 14 years ago, I couldn't wait to go away with him. Being both in love and on holiday would be the ultimate escape.

Adverts for holiday companies are based on our fantasy that once we're away we're the best version of ourselves with a miraculous bikini body. But in reality, travel doesn't transform us into better people, it just makes our faults more obvious, along with the bits of our bodies we'd prefer to cover up. I don't know why we think of holidays as times when love will be enhanced, since most couples never come nearer to divorce than while trying to navigate the airport slip road in a hire car.

Alex is lovely, but a foodie he isn't. When I go on holiday, I like to tour every restaurant in the area, examining the menus, before settling on one for the evening. The next night the process is repeated, with the only proviso being a new place has to be tried. Alex, on the other hand, believes that if we eat well on the first night, we should just go back there every night of the holiday. And eat the same dish. Ideally at the same table. Why risk a bad meal by messing with a successful formula, he argues, sighing when we did do exactly that one night on our first holiday, ending up at a taverna

where the drunk chef chased the waiter with a knife through the restaurant.

For him, travel is an exercise in recreating the familiar rather than embracing the unfamiliar. When we arrive at a new place he has a ritual of going to the nearest supermercado and buying a pack of the crisps he feels are the most similar to his favoured UK brand. I feel like we're on a bizarre quest to eat Lay's Ready Salted in all 28 member states of the EU.

The desire to recreate home extends to packing. I favour a ruthlessly minimalist wardrobe, calculating to the last pair of pants the fewest clothes I can get away with. As I put the final touch to my most capsule of capsule wardrobes, he'll throw in whatever he fancies – a cricket bat, two towelling robes, the much-travelled unread copy of *Wolf Hall* and some random things that "might come in handy".

He would argue that he's a holiday realist, while I'm a romantic. He knows that the best you can hope for is to have a nice time, while I want a technicolour Oz to our everyday Kansas. I fret that we're missing the guidebook-recommended sunset, while he quite reasonably points out

that there are plenty of great sunsets to be seen from his parents' garden.

Once, two years into our relationship, we found ourselves in a Vietnamese village just as the electricity was being turned off for its rare paper lantern festival. As we watched lanterns float down the river with the full moon above, I thought to myself, this is possibly the most romantic moment ever and he is bound to propose. He didn't, of course, since he was wondering when we could stop watching the endless parade and go get a beer.

I've now learned that we're not different on holiday, we're just more like ourselves than ever. But in the same way that our flaws are exposed in the sunlight, so Alex's very best qualities also emerge.

He is always calm, never railing at things you can't change, a wonderful quality for someone you might be stuck with in a budget-airline queue. On our last day in Turkey I insisted we make a detour

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on our way to the airport to pick up an unimportant item that I'd left at our previous hotel. I was driving, far too fast, along an unpaved road and the hire car blew a tyre. We had two children in the

back, a plane in three hours' time and we were in the middle of nowhere in 33 degree heat. And he didn't lose his temper. He didn't even raise his voice. I don't think I've ever loved him more. **w&h** *The A-List Family by Christina Hopkinson is out now (Hodder & Stoughton, £6.99)*

