



TheObserver Escape : Print version

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Summer for the seriously skint

How to holiday for free

Being broke needn't mean going without a break this summer. From sleeping on strangers' sofas to working your passage across the Atlantic, **Gemma Bowes** offers 10 ways to get away on a tiny, or even non-existent, budget.

Gemma Bowes

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Blazing a trail ... youth hostelling is a cheap way to enjoy Britain's beauty spots. Photograph: Alamy

Or try Wwoofing - volunteering on an organic farm through World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (www.wwoof.org). As well as Leslie Woit's milkmaid experience in Austria (see page 7), there are openings from the Bahamas to Zambia. Alternatively, you can find fruit-picking work, usually with free camping included, across Europe at www.seasonalwork.dk.

For summer jobs in bars, hotels and hostels, try www.natives.co.uk. Or if you fancy seeing one of the top summer sporting events, how about getting a catering job there - the Wimbledon Championships, the Oval, Chelsea FC and Harlequins all hire temporary staff through FMC Catering (020 8247 3000; www.fmccatering.co.uk). Compass Group (www.compass.peoplebank.com) also has openings for bar and waiting work at sports events. For litter-picking jobs at summer festivals including Womad, Shambala and Greenman, try www.eventrecycling.co.uk; Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk) needs stewarding volunteers for Womad and Summer Sundae.

Volunteer

Paying through the nose to work hard and help others always jars slightly, but although some volunteer projects abroad charge thousands, many don't charge anything and provide free board, and sometimes transport in exchange for labour. Worldwide Volunteering (01935 825 588; www.wvw.org.uk) is a charity with more than a million volunteering opportunities, many at minimal cost. Those with availability over the summer include Barretstown in County Kildare, Ireland, a centre set up by actor Paul Newman to help seriously ill kids have fun. Food and lodging are provided. At Pueblo Ingles schools, (www.puebloingles.com) volunteers spend nine days helping professionals learn English in beautiful sunny locations in Soria, Spain, or the Tevere valley in Umbria; food and lodging are free.

Country Holidays for Inner City Kids (01822 811 020; www.chicks.org.uk) provides holidays for children aged eight-15 across the UK and needs four volunteers a week from March-December to help kids enjoy kayaking, abseiling and cycling. Original Volunteers (0800 345 7582 www.originalvolunteers) has projects from as little as £12 a week; and the National Trust (01793 817 400; ; www.nationaltrust.org.uk) runs 450 working holidays each year in the UK, providing free accommodation in base camps (barns, farms and bothies) in return for practical conservation work. There's availability for September on at least four projects.

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