



off to south-east Asia and getting their sexual kicks from brothels and pimp-controlled prostitutes, but even in their own communities the Caribbean men who hook up with Western women are known as 'rastitutes' – so is female sex tourism really any different? 'I don't think so,' says Sanchez-Taylor. 'Women are never going to walk into a brothel and demand a

blow job, so they tend to meet men at bars or hotels – but essentially they are paying for sex the same way men do.'

Sarah is outraged at the suggestion that her holiday flings amount to prostitution. 'It's not like that at all,' she insists. 'I buy things because the men are poor and it helps them out. If I were at home and seeing a bloke with no money, no one would bat an eyelid if I paid for him in a restaurant or bought him a pair of trousers.'

### Being a 'milk bottle'

Whether or not you agree female sex tourism is prostitution, these relationships do carry risks for both the men and women involved. Some experts claim it can damage local communities because the men are too busy romancing women they affectionately call 'milk bottles'

## 'He was in it for the

## meals and clothes, I

## was in it for the sex'

(because they are white vessels waiting to be filled) and therefore ignore local women.

Others are worried that a rise in female sex tourism will increase the number of cases of HIV and sexually transmitted infections in the UK (the HIV rate in the Caribbean is second only to sub-Saharan Africa). While Sarah, Thea and Carol all claim to have been careful, it's easy to forget safe sex in the throes of passion.

After reading this article, you could be forgiven for wondering if the time you bought a drink for that waiter in Turkey or shared a quick kiss with the DJ in Ibiza makes you a sex tourist but, as psychotherapist Liz Cervio reminds us, 'Holiday romances are all part of the thrill of being away. There is nothing wrong with having casual or anonymous sex abroad so long as the negative consequences of these relationships don't outweigh the benefits.' □

## 'I WAS A SEX TRAVELLER FOR 12 YEARS'

Journalist Jeannette Belliveau, from Surrey, was approaching 30 and recovering from a divorce the first time she had holiday sex. For the next 12 years she had sexual encounters with eight men across Europe, the Caribbean and South America.

'My marriage broke down after nine years and I booked a trip to Greece to recuperate. As I walked around Athens, I was shocked by how many men tried to chat me up. Most of them were downright creepy so I ignored them, but later I was sitting in a bar looking at postcards when a gorgeous local man started chatting to me. He offered to drive me round the beaches and no one was more surprised than me when I agreed. That evening he took me to a secluded bay and within minutes we were naked in the sea. Afterwards, we made love in the sand. I was shocked but exhilarated. I never saw him again, but I did sleep with two more men that holiday.

'After that, I visited the Caribbean a couple of times and had two more flings. One of them, with Daniel, lasted a few nights. One day, after we'd had lunch, he pushed the bill over to me and made it clear he expected me to pay. This was the first time an economic element had come into my holiday flings and I didn't like it. He made it obvious he was interested in me only as a wealthy Westerner and not as a desirable woman, so I paid the bill and our relationship ended soon after.

'I tended to keep my holiday adventures secret from my friends and family – I wasn't sure how they'd react. But when I met my husband, Lamont, I knew I had to come clean. I hadn't always been careful with these men and I didn't want to put him at risk of disease. I booked myself in for tests – waiting for the results was nerve-racking. Luckily, I was clear.

'I'm now 52 and have been married 10 years. Far from being critical, Lamont is fascinated by my stories. Some say women like me exploit poor men but that's nonsense. Sex between two adults that doesn't harm either partner is definitely a good thing. I learnt so much from it and it healed me after a painful divorce.'

*Romance On The Road by Jeannette Belliveau (Beau Monde Press, £13.99) is out now.*



Jeannette on the north coast of Bali in 1985