

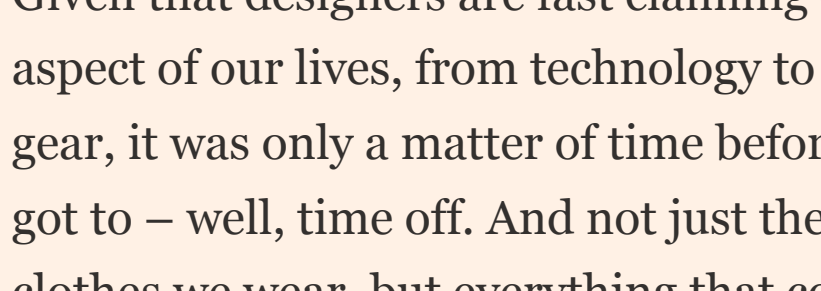
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Life's a beach, go shopping

Holidays are no longer a fashion-free zone, with designers supplying summer with the most luxurious beach kit



Neverfull monogram bag, £575, Summer Ikat beach towel, £370, and monogram beach towel, £325, all by Louis Vuitton

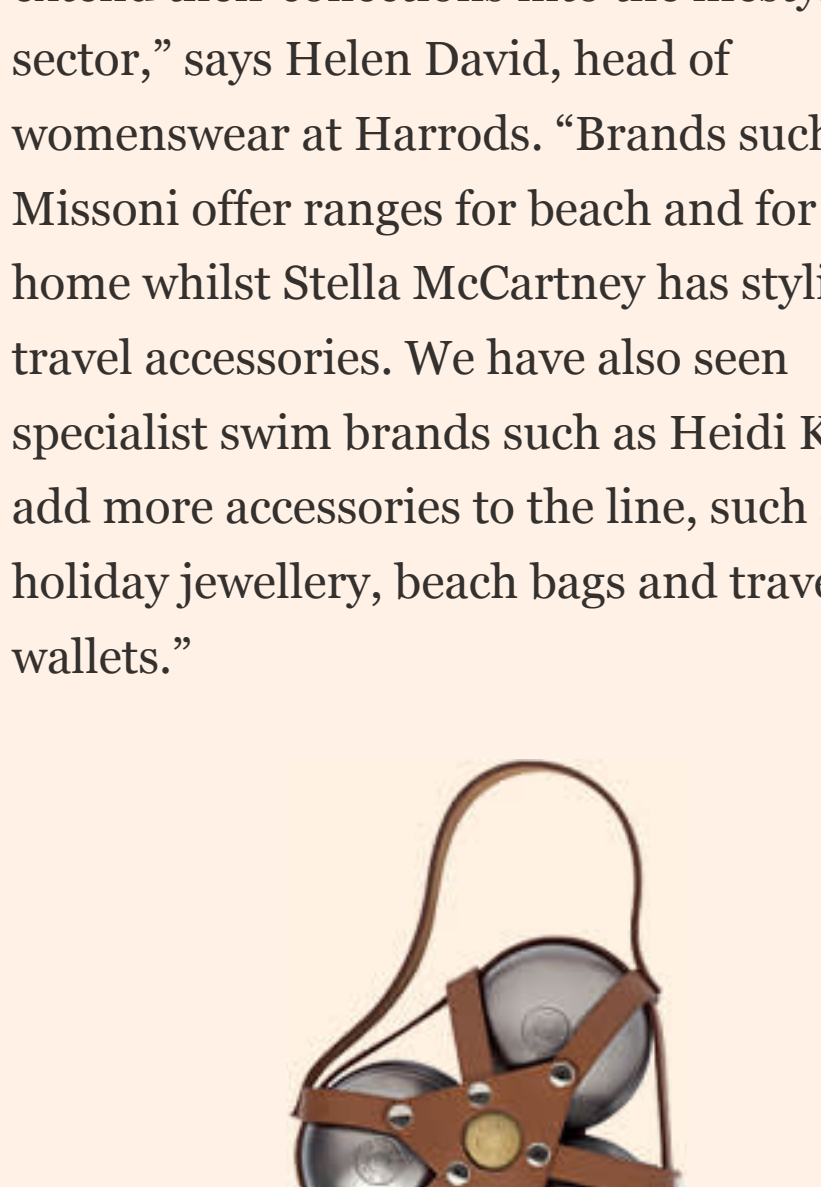


David Hayes AUGUST 9 2013

It is a key indicator that we have reached the apogee of the off-duty months when the news is filled with snaps of politicians on holiday. In Portugal, David and Samantha Cameron helpfully posed for the press: here pointing at squid in a fish market in Aljeur; there walking hand in hand, with said squid in a carrier bag; both getting enthusiastic critical approval not just for their culinary choices but their sartorial ones. The British prime minister wore a short-sleeved linen shirt, smart khaki shorts and beige suede slip-on shoes, while his wife sported a dark green dress recycled from a holiday in Spain back in 2011.

Holidays are no hiding place from fashion. Given that designers are fast claiming every aspect of our lives, from technology to sports gear, it was only a matter of time before they got to – well, time off. And not just the clothes we wear, but everything that comes with that.

“Consumers are investing in luxury beach accessories more than ever before,” says Helen Attwood, swim and travel buyer at Selfridges, London. “Shoppers are looking for more than just swimwear. Beach style is all about accessorising and detail. It’s not about co-ordinating a look, more a process of personalisation. With so much now on offer that is both practical and luxurious, we have opened year-round travel stores for both men and women in response to the strong demand.”



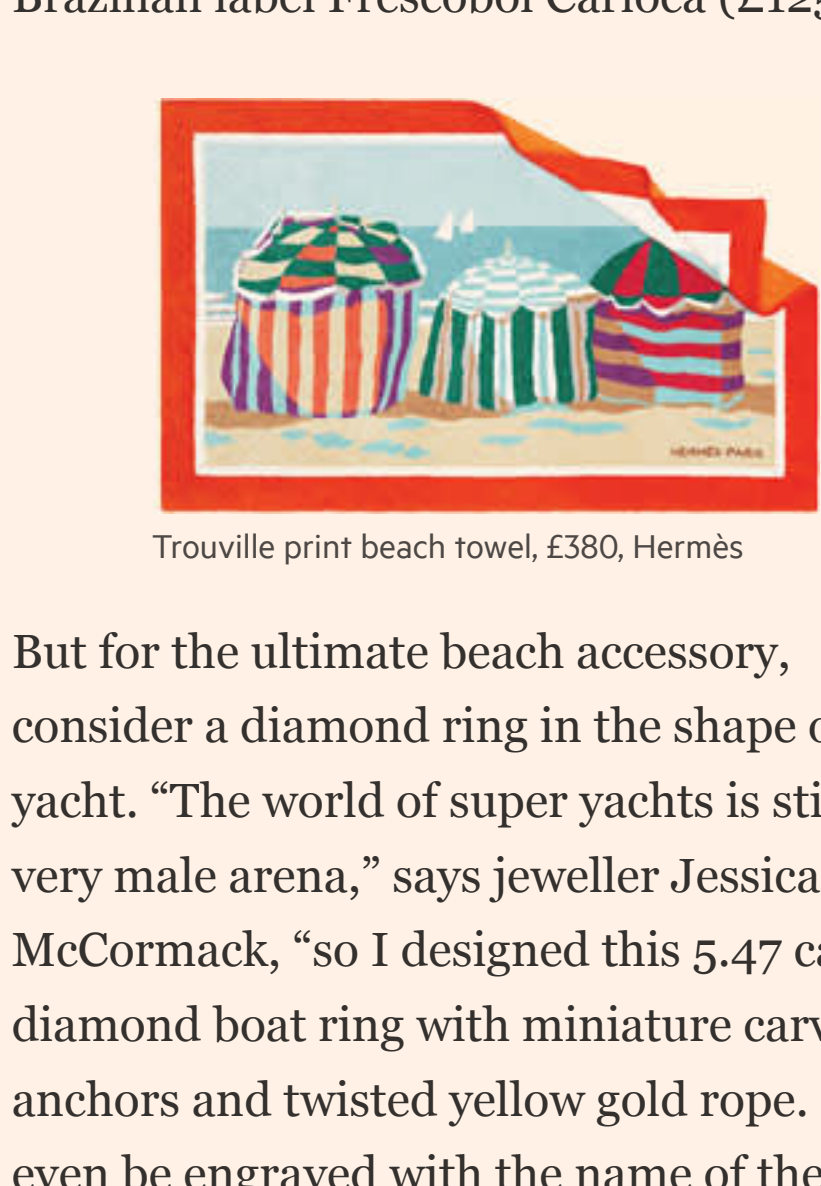
Mindoro tote bag, £1,135, Bea Valdes

In other words, we have gone beyond the bikini, the flip-flop and the sun hat. It started with towels: the designer offerings from, among others, Pucci in the label’s iconic swirls (£392), Hermès in the “Trouville” print (£380), and Maslin & Co’s leopard-spot number, cut to the shape of an animal skin rug (£140). It moved on to beach bags, from Heidi Klein’s raffia tote (£220) and clutch bag (£180) to Anya Hindmarch’s Capability Nevis embroidered straw tote (£495) and Ipanema shell clutch (£350) – all the way up to Louis Vuitton’s “Articles de voyage” monogram tote (£575) and Bea Valdes’s cult raffia holdall (£1,135). Now the trend has now grown to encompass a myriad of “lifestyle” accessories.



Print towel, £392, Pucci

“We offer a large selection of international designers, many of whom continue to extend their collections into the lifestyle sector,” says Helen David, head of womenswear at Harrods. “Brands such as Missoni offer ranges for beach and for the home whilst Stella McCartney has stylish travel accessories. We have also seen specialist swim brands such as Heidi Klein add more accessories to the line, such as holiday jewellery, beach bags and travel wallets.”



Pétanque set, £720, Hermès

It’s not just the established brands; a host of niche artisan labels have stepped in to cater for the demand for luxury holiday extras. Fancy a picnic hamper in the style of a golf trolley? Look no further than the Gourmet Trotter from Sherwood, complete with linen napkins, fine glassware, cutlery and stainless steel containers (£599) – just the thing to keep your personal chef’s dietary-specific delights in. Or for the wine connoisseur, Cedès Milano have a handy travelling handcrafted pigskin case with glasses for two (£1,539) – vintage Châteauneuf-du-Pape not included.



Hemingway Design deck chair, £75, John Lewis

The high street has got in on the act too. Department store John Lewis offers nostalgia in the form of quirky picnicware (from £7, by Orla Kiely) and retro print deck chairs (£75).

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For those not content just to sit and soak up the sun, there are no end of smart beach-perfect games, such as Hermès’s leather-strapped pétanque set (£720), Uber Games’ Six Player Pro Croquet set (£200) or Giant Connect Four (£100). There’s even a handcrafted wooden bat and ball set (as spotted being played by Andy Murray and Kim Sears in the Bahamas recently) by Brazilian label Frescobol Carioca (£125).



Trouville print beach towel, £380, Hermès

But for the ultimate beach accessory, consider a diamond ring in the shape of a yacht. “The world of super yachts is still a very male arena,” says jeweller Jessica McCormack, “so I designed this 5.47 carat diamond boat ring with miniature carved anchors and twisted yellow gold rope. It can even be engraved with the name of the owner’s boat, should you wish.” At more than £100,000, now all we need is Louis Vuitton to come up with a customised beach safe for storage.

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