

CLOUDS 3 / A BANE, WHILE WAITING FOR THE GREAT BRITISH SUMMER

_Cloud-cuckoo-land

_A love/hate relationship with the British weather in idioms

*by Stef Bottinelli
photos by Samuel Cogliati*

The weather is the bane of the Brits and most visiting the UK. Changeable and unpredictable it affects people's every day's life. But resourceful as ever, the British people have learnt how to deal with it and have mastered the fine art of clothes layering. In fact on this island the climate ought to have its own throne right next to the Queen's such is the importance given to it. The weather here is like an old tyrant: mostly despised but occasionally worshipped. A sort of Stockholm Syndrome of the celestial sphere. So despite the fact that, whatever the season, the sky is almost constantly abundant with pregnant, pigeon-coloured clouds, people always refer to the warmer months as "the great British summer". Truth of the matter is, if you've lived in Britain for a while, you'll know very well that the summer lasts for about four weeks at best, out of which only few days can really be deemed "great" and, if really lucky, hot. Most people here will put up with it – those who don't move to Spain, unless they are middle or upper class, in which case they'll prefer Tuscany or Umbria. When one gets rain, sun, wind and snow all in one day, it's not difficult to see why the locals often and happily talk about the weather and why there are so many elements-related idioms in the English language.







Cloud-cuckoo-land, by S. Bottinelli

The aforementioned Brits who escape to warmer climates, temporarily or permanently, won't take too long to *break the ice* with the locals, over a beer or ten, and inevitably the day after they'll feel *under the weather*. But it won't last long. As this is not a *once in a blue moon* occurrence, the Brits have the stamina and the training to deal with a glass too many. And *come rain or shine* there's nothing like a good fry-up the morning after a boozy night for them to regain their *sunny disposition* again.

Those who remain in the UK will be on *cloud nine* when the sun makes an appearance. With the weather being so unpredictable, resourcefulness is of utmost importance. For instance, organising summer parties and barbecues (which the Brits are incredibly fond of, almost as much as the Australians) does take some effort. If a garden marquee isn't available, then two options must be provided to secure a successful gathering: an outdoors one in the event of a warm day, and an indoors one, if it suddenly starts to *rain cats and dogs*, because - as we know - a hot day turning grey and damp is not a *bolt from the blue* over here.

British people however don't make *a storm in a teacup* about the weather. They are used to it and the rain makes their grass really green. So if you see someone with a *face like thunder* because of a wet day, that person is likely to be a visitor coming from a sunnier climate. But if you are heading to the UK expecting a long summer of fair days, you are definitely *chasing rainbows* and you've been *left in the dark* about this country's elements.

When you do get bright, dry days, my suggestion is *to make hay while the sun shines* - literally - and enjoy one of the many beautiful parks this

Cloudy idioms glossary

BREAK THE ICE: *to break down formality, make acquaintances with strangers*

UNDER THE WEATHER: *feeling unwell*

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON: *rarely*

COME RAIN OR SHINE: *something that happens all the time*

SUNNY DISPOSITION: *happy, optimistic*

CLOUD NINE: *very happy, ecstatic*

RAIN CATS AND DOGS: *heavy rain*

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE: *unexpected*

STORM IN A TEA CUP: *overreaction in a situation*

FACE LIKE THUNDER: *furious*

CHASING RAINBOWS: *hoping/trying for the impossible*

LEFT IN THE DARK: *having no knowledge of something*

MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES: *making the most of a situation whilst it's possible*

TEETH ARE CHATTERING: *very cold*

RAINY DAYS: *bad times*

FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND: *opportunistic person who's one's friend only when times are good*

IT NEVER RAINS, BUT IT POURS: *when something bad happens more bad things follow*

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM: *at the centre of a difficult situation*

REACHING FOR THE MOON: *aiming high*

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country has to offer. The Brits in fact make the most of their green patches all year around, including in winter when it's so cold their *teeth are chattering*, if you are watching the pennies or are a recovering alcoholic, parks also make for a free alternative to pubs as a meeting place. And talking of pennies, let's face it, who's saved up for these recession-burdened *rainy days*? Not only have we all been struggling during this financial crisis, but many of us have also realised that among our acquaintances there were definitely one or two *fair-weather friends*. Gone the cash, gone the friends. As they say, *it never rains, it pours*.

The global financial crisis was not as unpredictable as the British weather but *in the eye of the storm* it's however important to never stop *reaching for the moon*. In the UK we may be feeling the pinch, but we always have the great British summer to look forward to.

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