



By: *Harvey Morris*

Vance's 'love-bomb' visit fails to charm the Brits



US Vice-President JD Vance would have been naive to expect that a summer holiday in England's rural Cotswolds might **provide** him with a quiet family break.

Perhaps someone should have warned America's number two that, in this region of rolling hills and picture-postcard villages, he was more likely to bump into a former prime minister or off-duty screen celebrity than a rustic with a plough.

He might even cross paths with Ellen DeGeneres, the American comedian and television host who recently **confirmed** she had made her permanent home in the Cotswolds to escape Trump 2.0.

Vance's choice of vacation venue in a hyper-gentrified corner of England's south-west has proved to be a topic of controversy since it was first revealed last month.

As journalists and US secret agents descended on the area ahead of the Vances' arrival by motorcade at the weekend, locked-down locals were warned to brace for protests of the kind that obliged Washington's second family to switch venues during a winter ski break in Vermont.

While those domestic dissidents took to the slopes to oppose the White House stance on Ukraine, British opponents of Vance's visit have a wider range of complaints.

The Stop Trump Coalition, which campaigns to **rescind** the US president's invitation to a second UK state visit in September, said it wanted to amplify the voice of those opposed to Britain becoming enmeshed and entangled with the politics of the Trump-Vance administration.

An unlikely bromance

Vance is not naive, of course, at least when it comes to picking his holiday spots, and is aware that, in the current fevered international mood, even his choice of getaway can be an opportunity to wield political clout.

After all, he scheduled a "cultural" **tour** of Greenland with his wife, Usha, in March after his boss had mused that Denmark's autonomous North Atlantic territory might become the 51st state.

Although no such takeover is mooted for the UK, many Britons are uncomfortable with the seemingly cosy relationship between their Labour government and the White House.

The two men posted photos of fishing together in the Chevening lake

Vance **prefaced** his Cotswolds foray with a two-day-stay with Foreign Secretary David Lammy at the latter's official country residence of Chevening House in Kent.

In the latest episode of an unlikely bromance between Vance and Lammy, the two men **posted** photos of fishing together in the Chevening lake and posing with their spouses in the mansion's 17th-century grounds.

The pair are said to be bound by their shared Christian faith and what Lammy has described as their working class backgrounds and dysfunctional childhoods.

Positive theatrics cannot disguise UK-US differences

The news site Politico **suggested** Vance has sought to 'love-bomb' the UK with a string of enthusiastically positive remarks about a country whose prospects, on issues such as immigration and free speech, he had previously cast in negative terms.

The Chevening stopover was part-work, part-play. The two ended up co-hosting a meeting with Ukrainian and European officials to discuss the quest for peace in Ukraine.

The positive theatrics of the Vance visit cannot disguise the fact that the UK and US are at odds as crises in Ukraine and Gaza approach

their latest crunch points just as the vice-president settles into his Cotswolds mansion retreat.

Starmer and European partners plan a joint call to Trump ahead of the Alaska summit to reinforce their stance

Ahead of the scheduled Trump-Putin summit in Alaska this week, European leaders shut out of the meeting, including the UK's Keir Starmer, have insisted no peace deal must be imposed on Ukraine.

Starmer and European partners **plan** a joint call to Trump ahead of the Alaska summit to reinforce their stance. That is likely to include trying to persuade Trump not to negotiate territorial swaps to resolve the war in Ukraine.

Starmer's message will likely reflect the guidance **offered** by his official spokesman this week to "never trust President Putin as far as you could throw him".

Sceptical electorate

The British and the Americans are also potentially at odds over Gaza after the Israeli government's decision to escalate the war there by extending its control over the enclave, starting with Gaza City.

Vance, during his Chevening stay, acknowledged "disagreement" with the UK's Gaza stance and Starmer's conditional offer to recognise a Palestinian state.

The prime minister had previously described Israel's planned expansion of its Gaza operations as "wrong". That earned him a somewhat gratuitous insult from Mike Huckabee, US ambassador in Israel, that if Starmer had been in office during the Second World War, Britain would have **lost**.



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Much of the electorate appears sceptical about being nice to the White House duo, as reflected in polls that show the US's favourability rating has plummeted since the start of Trump's second term.

"Ill-informed" comments

Vance might consider confining himself to saying more nice things about Britain during his extended summer stay and avoid provocative half-jokes like the one in which he warned that the UK risked becoming the first truly Islamist country with nuclear bombs.

The left-of-centre New Statesman **told** readers to be on the alert for Vance using the visit to make "bland diplomatic gestures towards the special relationship".

Most celebrity-plagued locals were taking the Vance visit in their stride

A bookshop owner near Vance's temporary holiday home told the Financial Times it was maybe a good thing that Vance was visiting the

UK, citing previous “ill-informed” comments by Donald Trump that parts of the country were no-go areas because of rampant crime.

Reports from the Cotswolds’ frontline indicate most celebrity-plagued locals were otherwise taking the Vance visit in their stride. Some were nevertheless said to have drawn the line at being asked to reveal their social media profiles, US border security-style.