

Weekender

Friday the 13th



BBC Learning English – Weekender

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Yvonne: Hello – I'm Yvonne Archer and this is Weekender!

Last week when someone mentioned that it would soon be Friday the 13th I must admit that I hadn't noticed. Now I'm not superstitious, but I did decide to phone one of my best and most sensible friends, Jakki, for a few words of reassurance. Well, Jakki hadn't noticed the date either - but she quickly thanked me for the warning and made it crystal clear that on Friday, she wouldn't be leaving the house at all!

Kate Goslett

From my observations, I would say that if you suffer from anxiety, Friday the 13th is going to increase that anxiety.

Yvonne: The words of Kate Goslett, a Psychotherapist, who we'll be hearing more from later on. So why is Friday the 13th such a source of anxiety - nervousness - utter dread and bad luck for so many people? Well, I found out that religion has a large part to play. Of course, Fridays see the start of both the Jewish and Muslim Sabbaths – so no real problems there. But for Christians, things seem to be a little different... Here are three examples:

Voice

- Evil was introduced into the world when Adam ate an apple – and Muslims say that happened on a Friday.
- Jesus and his followers made up a group of 13. But he was betrayed by the 13th man and killed as a result - on a Friday.

Yvonne: Well, that was the news from thousands of years ago, but what about more recent times? Let's take away the 'Friday' for a moment and find out whether the number 13 on its own, is still unlucky.

Voice:

The Apollo 13 space ship was launched at 1313 hours USA central time. It was launched from pad number 39 – that's 3 times 13 if we do the maths. And on April 13th 1970, there was an explosion - and the mission was stopped.

Yvonne: So were all those 13s simply a coincidence or were the scientists tempting fate – making it easier and almost inviting bad things to happen? What do you think? For example, would you get married or start a new job on Friday the 13th? Now there's something to talk about with a few sensible friends in English after today's programme!

Kate Goslett

I think the most extreme example that I've come across of Friday the 13th is when I went to a large dinner party and there were in fact 13 of us but they had laid 14 places.

Yvonne: Kate Goslett is a Psychotherapist which means that she's sensible and analytical. So didn't she ask why the 14th guest never arrived for dinner?

Kate Goslett

There was no explanation. Somebody said "We've got too many places" and there was a silence – they just didn't react to it. They obviously wanted 14 places.

Yvonne: And does Kate or any of her clients believe that bad things sometimes happen for no other reason than it being Friday the 13th? As we hear from Kate again, try to catch the three things she says her clients wouldn't do on that date - and why...

Kate Goslett

I don't think I'm superstitious, but I am aware of Friday the 13th and I think quite a lot of my clients are also aware of it and they wouldn't push their luck. They wouldn't, for instance, buy a new house or they wouldn't buy a new car, go on holiday or book a holiday. They might go on holiday if it was in Europe but they wouldn't fly a long-haul flight.

Yvonne: Kate isn't superstitious, but as she said her clients wouldn't 'push their luck'. They'd rather not do anything important on Friday the 13th because it might be more likely to go wrong. We heard how they wouldn't 'push their luck' by buying a new car, a new house or by going on a 'long haul' flight – a very long trip by airplane. But here's a final and more sobering thought from Kate...

Kate Goslett

I think it'll be interesting to see now whether Friday the 13th holds the same potency for us in the light of various disasters, for example, 9/11, December the 26th the Tsunami, and July 7th the London bombings. I'm going to be interested to see what happens.

Yvonne: So will Friday the 13th continue to be such a potent – a powerful and influential date in the future? That's a good question which only time can answer. But that's all for today.