



Britons fly abroad to 'Attila the Gum' for low-cost dental work

JUDITH O'REILLY

IT'S a long way to go for the perfect smile, but many Britons are travelling to [Hungary for dental treatment](#) to avoid spiralling domestic charges as high as £30,000.

One surgery in Budapest is even advertising "teeth holidays" offering packages of flights, discounted hotels and cut-price dentistry that can work out cheaper than a trip to the local dentist.

The rising cost of Britain's private dentists has made the trips cost-effective for those who need implants, crowns and bridges. A crown can cost as much as £950 in Britain as opposed to just £180 in [Budapest. Implants are £580 in Hungary](#) compared with about £2,000 here, while one bridgework procedure costing £1,110 there costs nearly £7,000 in Britain.

Attila Knott, who runs the [Kreativdent clinic in Budapest](#), said that more than 70% of his patients are foreigners, including a growing British contingent.

"The patients from Britain are coming over for big restoration work. We make less profit than British dentists," he said.

Andrew Jeffrey, a decorator, had 17 teeth out. The repairs are ongoing and may include implants and bridgework. His local dentist estimated up to £15,000 for the bridgework or £30,000 for implants compared with £6,000-£7,000 in Hungary.

Jeffrey said: "One good thing about it is you are with other toothless people over there. We all went round the city with no teeth and had a good time."

Another patient, a London solicitor, needed extractions, five implants and dentures because his receding jaw bone left him with only one natural tooth. He travelled to Budapest with his wife for a bill of £10,000, which was £20,000 less than his UK estimate.

The treatment was spread across three visits during February, June and December and the couple spent an estimated £1,500 in extra travel and hotel costs.

Dentistry in Britain is big business. There are 32,000 dentists registered and they share an annual NHS pot of £1.2 billion.

During Labour's first term, private dentistry rose by just under 50% to more than £1 billion, with 7m people regularly receiving such treatment. Only children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and those on benefit get their dental costs covered. An NHS patient pays 80% of the cost of treatment.

While fees are fixed for NHS work, private costs are set by the dentists themselves. Paul Hughes, editor of the magazine *Private Dentistry*, said: "Fees fluctuate wildly but then you can say the same thing about hairdressers, solicitors and car mechanics."