Read and listen.

Micronations

If you go to the local library and look for Sealand, Bergonia or the Aerican Empire in an atlas, you won’t find them. People often create tiny new countries, called micronations, but they won’t appear on maps if they aren’t recognised by the rest of the world – and that doesn’t happen very often.

So why try to create a new country? Well, it seems that there are always people who are unhappy with the government, its policies or where they live. Others simply want to have some fun!

You won’t succeed in starting a country in the real world unless you have some territory. To do that, people sometimes claim, buy or even build islands. In the case of Sealand, the territory is a metal platform in the sea near the British coast. Since they claimed the platform, the Bates family – ‘Prince’ Roy, ‘Princess’ Joan and ‘Prince’ Michael – have tried to be recognised as rulers of a nation, but without success.

Sealand has got a flag and has produced its own currency and stamps. If you visit, you might not be very welcome. Sealand was once invaded by a small gang of people, so you could have problems with the residents as soon as you try to land there.
Apart from the micronations which have real territory, there are now hundreds of virtual countries on the Internet. Bergonia, for example, was started as a hobby by an American lawyer, Joseph Cometti. He has written a complete online history of his fictional country.

He has invented flags and maps, and you can even read Bergonian laws and other ‘historical’ documents. When you apply for a Bergonian passport on the Internet, you’ll receive one, but if you go to the airport with it, you won’t actually be able to travel.

Another popular but less sensible micronation is the Aerican Empire, which was founded in 1987 and has a population of more than a hundred. Its citizens are mostly very well-educated, and it’s an ideal nation for people with a sense of humour. The nation’s website says that it owns a house in Canada and land on Pluto, and it will also own the planet Verden – if somebody discovers it.

Eric Lis declared himself emperor and there are elections for jobs such as Minister of Silly Things. There are also 28 public holidays every year, including Happy Things Day and Idiots’ Day. So if you need some time off, just become an Aerican.