

Catching up after a trip

Listen to two friends talking about a recent trip abroad to practise and improve your listening skills.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. fabulous
2. appalling
3. noticeable
4. spacious
5. comparable
6. disastrous
7. unspoiled
8. scenic

Definition

- a. shocking and very bad
- b. very unsuccessful; said of a situation where everything goes badly wrong
- c. similar
- d. extremely good
- e. with a lot of space
- f. giving a beautiful view of nature
- g. easy to hear, see or feel
- h. somewhere that has not been changed in a way that makes it less beautiful

Tasks

Task 1

Write a number (1–8) to put the conversation topics in the order they are mentioned.

_____ The description of a holiday flat in Toronto

_____ Rental flats in general

_____ A rental in Barcelona

_____ Long-distance phone calls

_____ The weather in winter

_____ Toronto neighbourhoods

_____ The underground city

_____ A house in the countryside

Task 2

Circle the best answer.

1. If Dave was abroad and saw a phone call from someone at home, he ...
 - a. wouldn't answer it.
 - b. would be worried something had happened.
 - c. would think it was a work call.
2. When he first arrived in Toronto, Dave was a bit worried about ...
 - a. contacting his uncle.
 - b. his accommodation.
 - c. being mugged.
3. Jean's friend had a problem in her holiday flat, because ...
 - a. it didn't look like what was advertised.
 - b. the air conditioning didn't work.
 - c. the neighbours were really noisy.
4. Dave's apartment was ...
 - a. small but modern, with spectacular views.
 - b. comfortable and with a roof garden with spectacular views.
 - c. big, light and with spectacular views.
5. He particularly enjoyed the ...
 - a. green spaces.
 - b. shopping.
 - c. meeting of different cultures.
6. Dave thought the PATH was particularly good ...
 - a. as a shortcut when walking around the city.
 - b. for tasting many different types of food all in one place.
 - c. for keeping warm.
7. The temperature ...
 - a. can feel much lower because of the humidity.
 - b. can feel much lower because of the wind.
 - c. was unusually low for that time of year.
8. Dave's uncle lives ...
 - a. in the suburbs of the city.
 - b. in an area that was more beautiful before it was affected by development work.
 - c. in a small house next to a lake.

Discussion

What was the last place you travelled to? Would you recommend it to a friend?

Transcript

Dave: Jean, hi!

Jean: Hi, Dave. How are you?

Dave: Good, good.

Jean: Wait a second, I'm not calling you in Canada, right? You're back now, aren't you?

Dave: Yeah, I got back two days ago.

Jean: Oh good, phew. Because I wouldn't want to be calling you long distance without realising it and suddenly ...

Dave: You've spent a fortune on a long-distance call. No, I know, it's OK. I actually wouldn't answer the phone while I was over there if I saw the call was coming from England. But no worries, we're in the same country now.

Jean: Yeah. So, how was the trip? Did you meet your long-lost uncle?

Dave: I did, actually. It was very good. I flew to Toronto and stayed there for a few days. At first I was really worried about my accommodation because I kept reading these appalling stories about rental flats going all wrong.

Jean: Oh, was it one of those?

Dave: Yeah.

Jean: My friend had a disastrous experience in Barcelona with one of them. The place didn't look anything like the photos, and all the neighbours hated that there was a holiday flat in their building. Awkward situation. Urgh.

Dave: Right. So, as I was saying, I was really worried because I heard these stories. And at first I couldn't find the place. Turns out I was in the wrong building. It was next door, and on the top floor, and ... wow. Jean, this place was fabulous! Really spacious, with these floor-to-ceiling windows and the most scenic views of the city. I could see the lake and the whole city skyline and skyscrapers from my bedroom. I had to pinch myself to prove I wasn't dreaming.

Jean: Sounds pretty cool. So, what's it like? The city, I mean. I've always wanted to go to Canada.

Dave: It's nice. I mean, it's another big, vibrant, modern city. But it's really clean, and there's lots of parks. One of the things I liked was the multiculturalism. We visited Chinatown, Little Italy, Greektown, Little India ... umm, I can't remember the others but it was sort of a new area every three or four blocks, you know?

Jean: Hey, is it true that there's a whole part of the city that's underground? I read that somewhere about Toronto, or saw it on some TV show.

Dave: It's true! I asked about that. They call it the PATH. There's, like, almost 30 kilometres of restaurants, shops, cinemas and stuff all underground. In the middle of the downtown area.

Jean: Amazing!

Dave: Yeah, but actually once you're down there it's not that noticeable. There's actually a lot of natural light. I forgot we were underground. It's mostly useful to get out of the cold weather.

Jean: What temperature was it while you were there?

Dave: It was still only November, but it was getting cold. We had at least a day where it was less than zero. My uncle told me that in January and February it can go down to 20 below zero.

Jean: Oh, wow. I think I'd die!

Dave: Yeah, and the worst thing was what they call the 'wind-chill' factor. So they say the temperature is zero degrees, but minus eight with the wind chill. So it feels like minus eight. And my uncle said the wind-chill factor can go down to minus 40.

Jean: Stop it! You're making me feel cold just thinking about it. So, how was meeting your uncle? The famous Uncle George.

Dave: That was great too. He lives outside of Toronto, in a cottage by a lake. Really tranquil and unspoiled nature.

Jean: I'm dying to see photos. You want to meet up soon? Or are you too jet lagged still?

Dave: Yeah, I'm actually free tomorrow if you like.