

An aerial photograph of a tropical resort pool area. The pool is rectangular with blue mosaic tiles and is surrounded by a light-colored deck. Several white lounge chairs are arranged around the pool. The area is lush with greenery, including many palm trees. In the background, a building with a red roof is visible. The sky is blue with some clouds.

The Worst Vacation Ever!

a Talking Points English lesson for reading,
vocabulary, speaking and writing

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The Worst Vacation Ever!

I knew this was going to be a terrible vacation as soon as we arrived at the hotel.

The travel agent told us that it was a brand-new hotel in a quiet part of the island. But when we arrived we found that it was not brand-new at all — the hotel was not even finished.

There were construction workers still building parts of the hotel!

But the manager assured us that our stay would be fine. In fact, he told us we would have a great stay.

We got to our room and it didn't seem too bad. Everything looked like a normal good quality hotel room.

Then we looked in the bathroom. There was no shower. Only a washbasin and a toilet.

I asked the manager how we would take a shower and he just shrugged and said that we could use the showers in the spa. My wife asked what time the spa opened every day and he said 10:00am.

At that point, we had had enough, so I said to my wife that we would leave immediately. I didn't say another word, just took hold of our luggage trolley and went to leave the room.

Then the manager stopped me. He was very apologetic about it. That week was one of the busiest times on the island. Apparently, there was a wine festival that had just started the day we arrived.

Every hotel is fully booked, said the manager. I can't let you leave. You will have nowhere to sleep for the night.

My wife raised her hands to the ceiling and rolled her eyes.

I swore out loud.

The manager told us he would do everything he could to make it up to us. Then he left.

I lay down on the bed and kicked off my shoes. My wife unpacked our things and put them in the wardrobe. As she was doing that, she let out a scream.

I jumped to my feet and she leapt onto the bed. She was pointing at something in the wardrobe. I looked inside and I saw a huge dead rat. It looked like it had been dead for several days.

I was furious. I told my wife that we would go downstairs and tell someone on the front desk to change our room. And then hopefully go to the bar and get a stiff drink.

We left our room and went to the lifts. It was then that we saw a sign that said only one of the lifts was in operation. The other one was being repaired.

Things were just getting worse and worse!

Eventually, we got downstairs and I told the front desk about the dead rat but they said they couldn't change our room as they didn't have any other rooms available.

At that point, I didn't need just one drink — I needed three or four.

I asked them where the bar was and they pointed to a door. Above the door was a sign that said The Lounge Bar.

We went in and there was no one around. No customers and certainly no barman.

I just shook my head. My wife started to cry.

Essential Vocabulary

travel agent	brand-new	construction workers
washbasin	shrugged	spa
at that point	had enough	immediately
luggage trolley	apologetic	wine festival
fully booked	raised her hands	rolled her eyes
ceiling	swore out loud	make it up
kicked off	unpacked	wardrobe
let out	leapt	pointing
furious	a stiff drink	lift
sign	in operation	repaired
available	barman	shook my head

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

When did Mike know that it was going to be a terrible vacation?

Is the hotel new or old? Is the hotel in a noisy or quiet location?

How did Mike know the hotel was still being built?

What was the problem with the bathroom?

What alternative did the manager offer as a bathroom? What time did it open?

Why did the manager stop Mike from leaving the hotel?

What did Sylvie find in the wardrobe?

Why did Mike want a drink after seeing what was in the wardrobe?

Why did Mike and Sylvie go downstairs?

What was the problem with the lift?

What was the name of the bar?

Why couldn't Mike get a drink?

Discussion Questions

Why does Mike and Sylvie's hotel have all these problems? Is this acceptable do you think?

Should the hotel offer them an alternative? Or compensation?

How did the dead rat arrive in the wardrobe do you think?

What did Mike mean by wanting a 'stiff drink'?

If you were in this situation, what would you do? Talk about all the steps you would take.

Have you had a 'vacation from hell'? What was it like?

What is the worst hotel you have ever stayed in? What about the best?

How can we check the quality of the hotel before going there? Provide details in your answers.

What are the ten most popular complaints that hotels receive do you think?

Have you ever lost your luggage on a vacation? What happened? How did you get your luggage back?

Have you ever lost your passport or a large sum of money while on vacation? What happened? Did you recover the lost items?

A Vacation From Hell!

Work on your own or in small groups.

You have to make up a story similar to Mike and Sylvie's experience in the story above.

Try to make your story as crazy as possible!

Use your imagination and think of all the terrible things that could happen when you go on vacation.

When you are ready, tell your story to all the class.

Offering Help Using 'Will'

If someone asks us for help – or tells us of a problem that they have – we often use the word 'will' to explain the things we want to do to help them.

For example, maybe a guest has arrived in a hotel and they tell the front desk that the airline has lost their luggage.

They don't know what to do.

And the front desk might say:

I will call the airline and ask them what they can do to find your luggage. Then I will give them your flight number and your name and boarding pass details. After that, I will call the airport security and see if they know anything.

Once the airline or airport give me any information, I will call you and let you know what they said.

In this exercise, pretend you are working on the front desk in a hotel. Many guests have some problems today and need your help.

Using the word 'will' explain to them what you plan to do and how you can help them.

Look at all these guests' problems below and prepare things to say.

- Our room is too small! We booked a room for three people.
- We are hungry but the restaurant is closed.
- Last night, some workers were repairing something on our floor and made too much noise.
- We went to the beach but it was really dirty! Lots of trash and litter all over the sand.
- We got sunburned lying on the beach because there were no sun umbrellas available.
- We tried to make some coffee in our room this morning but the kettle was broken
- We tried to brush our teeth this morning but there was no toothpaste
- Last night we tried to sleep but the bed was too cold
- We wanted to watch a movie last night in our room but we didn't know how to use the TV remote
- The air-con in our room is set to hot and it makes us uncomfortable

Role Play

This is a role play exercise using the exercise above.

There are two main people in this role play:

1. You are working on the front desk of a five-star hotel. The hotel is very busy but sometimes the guests complain about the smallest things.

It is your job to deal with these guests and ensure they are happy at all times.

Many guests approach you with complaints. You must help them.

2. You are a guest in the hotel. You have a complaint using one of the examples in the exercise above.

Express how unhappy you are to the front desk. Make sure you get complete satisfaction from the staff as you are a high-paying guest in a top hotel.

One student can be the front desk while the others take on the role of hotel guests. Each hotel guest has to express a complaint to the front desk.

You can change the student who is at the front desk. Let other students take on this role too.

Writing

You are Mike from the reading exercise at the beginning of the lesson. You have just got back home with your wife and you have had the worst experience in the hotel.

Write to the travel agent company and express how angry you are with their service.

Go through all the complaints and things that went wrong one by one.

In the end, ask the hotel what they will do about it. And see if you can get some compensation.

Teacher's Notes

Introduction

Go through all the questions and ask the students. Elicit as many responses as you can. If you are a foreign teacher working abroad, you might want to add one or two comments of your own about going on a vacation or holiday in your culture to try to get more responses from the students.

The Worst Vacation Ever

Pick a few students to read through all the text. You might need to read through twice, but hopefully, the students are at the right level where they can pick up most of the meaning.

Reading Comprehension Questions

You can do this by going through all the questions as one group with all the class. Or you could put the students in small groups. Or let them do the whole exercise individually.

Essential Vocabulary

This is a list of vocabulary that may be very useful to your students.

You can do this for homework or as an in-class activity.

For either purpose, I would suggest doing the following:

- Look the word or phrase up in a dictionary
- Write down the meaning of the new word in the students' vocabulary notebook
- Think of a sentence using the new word

You could do this as a class activity for the first four or five words, then assign the rest as homework. Students often need to practice using a dictionary, so this could be a useful exercise for them.

Discussion Questions

This is a class activity.

Go round the class and ask the students all the discussion questions one by one. Their answers and responses may encourage further or follow-up questions.

The point is for the students to become active in discussing what they have read and the vocabulary they have gained.

A Vacation From Hell!

This is a group exercise – put all the students in small groups of three or four.

The students need to use their imagination for this exercise. For some students, this may be something of a challenge and so you may need to circulate and offer prompts and ideas for their story.

Get the students to write out a story – or just make some notes – so they have something to refer to when telling their story.

When the students are ready, get them to stand in front of the class and tell their stories.

There should be a strong emphasis on fun in this exercise. The crazier the students' stories, the better.

Offering Help Using 'Will'

In this exercise, the students need to use 'will' to offer help to hotel guests.

Get one of the students to read out the example. Point out the uses of the word 'will' and how it is used to explain what the front desk intends to do to help the hotel guest.

The students can then work in pairs or alone. Get them to write out scripts of things the front desk can say in response to all the hotel guest complaints.

Then all the students can read out their scripts in class.

Role Play

This is a role play exercise using the scripts created in the previous exercise above.

Ideally, if you can, set up a desk to be the front desk of the hotel. One student should go behind the desk and act as the front desk staff member.

Then one by one, the other students can come forward with all the hotel guest complaints. They should be as demanding and entitled as they can – this will make the activity more fun!

Then the front desk student has to offer help, saying what they intend to do using the word 'will'.

You can change the student acting as front desk so that others get a chance to play this part.

Writing

This could be done in class or as homework.

The students write letters of complaint acting as Mike from the story at the beginning of the lesson. They should write to the travel agent and list all the things that went wrong on their vacation.

When the students have completed all their letters, they can read them out in class one by one or you can assess them as homework.

Credits

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