



ESL Podcast 247 – Asking for Recommendations

GLOSSARY

picky – difficult to please; selective; willing to accept only certain kinds of things
* I'm not that picky, but I couldn't find a suit at the store that I liked enough to buy.

moderately priced – not too expensive and not too cheap
* They wanted to find a moderately priced hotel room, but the cheapest one they could find was more than \$200 per night!

walking distance – the distance that one can comfortably walk, making driving unnecessary
* Sheldon wants to find an apartment that is within walking distance of the university, because she doesn't want to drive to her classes every day.

to make a reservation – to ask a restaurant or club to hold a table for someone who will come later
* Café Zenon is one of the most popular restaurants in town, and people have to make a reservation at least two weeks in advance.

to check with (someone) – to ask for someone's opinion before deciding to do something
* Yes, I think my roommate and I can go to your party, but I need to check with her before saying for certain.

by the way – an expression used to say or ask something that isn't connected to what one was just saying
* Please buy some milk and eggs when you go to the store tonight. And by the way, if you see Janet at the store, please thank her for the beautiful flowers that she sent us last week.

to see the sights – to go to the interesting places that are visited by tourists
* This summer, we're going to see the sights in Chicago: the Sears Tower, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Adler Planetarium.

museum – a building that has educational, scientific, historical, or artistic objects for people to look at and learn from
* Sean's favorite museum is the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

botanical garden – a large outdoor area with many interesting plants
* The botanical gardens are the most beautiful in the spring, when all of the flowers are blooming.



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don't miss (something) – an expression meaning, “Make sure that you see or do something,” or “I strongly recommend that you see or do something”

* When you go to eastern Oregon, don't miss the High Desert Museum. It's really interesting.

shopping district – an area in a city with many stores

* The “Fashion District” in downtown Los Angeles is one of the most famous shopping districts in the United States.

on foot – by walking; not in a car or bus

* After we walked from the Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol Building on foot, we were really tired.

bus system – public transportation that uses buses; the system of public bus transportation in a city

* A good bus system should help people move through a city quickly, safely, and inexpensively.

day tour – a group of tourists and a guide who visit many interesting places in a city during one day, either by walking or on a bus or boat

* We paid \$40 for a day tour in Seattle, Washington, that went to Pike Place Market, the Space Needle, and the Seattle Art Museum.

help yourself – take whatever you would like; serve yourself

* Please help yourself to the coffee and desserts on the table in the back of the conference room.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn't Victor want the clerk to make a reservation at the restaurant?
 - a) Because he wants to know whether his guest likes the idea.
 - b) Because he'll be in town for only four days.
 - c) Because he prefers a restaurant where he can see the sights.

 2. What does the clerk give to Victor?
 - a) A map of the bus system.
 - b) Brochures for day tours.
 - c) A map of the city's tourist sights.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to check with

The phrase “to check with (someone),” in this podcast, means to ask for someone’s opinion before deciding to do something: “Please check with your teacher to find out whether it’s okay to do the homework assignment in small groups.” Or, “Have you checked with your wife to see if she’s available to help at the event?” The phrase “to check up on (someone)” means to make sure that someone is doing what they should be doing: “Karen’s parents asked their neighbors to check up on her while they were gone, because they didn’t want her to have any parties at home.” Or, “Our supervisor keeps checking up on us every 15 minutes, and it’s really bothering us.” The phrase “to check over (something)” means to look at something closely to see whether it is correct or appropriate: “Dad, can you please check over my math homework to see if I made any mistakes?”

on foot

In this podcast, the phrase “on foot” means by walking, and not in a car or bus: “Can we get to the park on foot, or is it too far to walk?” The phrase “to be back on one’s feet” means to be well again after an illness or difficult times: “Last year Melanie had stomach cancer, but now she’s back on her feet again.” The phrase “to put one’s feet up” means to relax: “This week has been so stressful that I just want to put my feet up and read a good book this weekend.” The phrase “to put one’s foot down” means to very strongly be against what another person wants to do: “Chuck really wanted to go to Orlando, Florida for spring vacation, but his father put his foot down and said it was too expensive for him to go this year.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Many people in the United States use “restaurant reviews” to decide where they want to eat. A “restaurant review” is a written “opinion” (what someone thinks) about the quality of a restaurant.

Many newspapers have restaurant reviews that are written by a single reviewer. This reviewer goes to a restaurant as a normal customer, eats there, and then writes a review describing the food, the “service” (how well the waiters treated the customer), “atmosphere” (the feeling of being in the restaurant), and the cost. These reviews are helpful in deciding where to eat, but they may not be very “accurate” (correct). The reviewer may have been at the restaurant on a bad day, or the reviewer’s opinions about the restaurant may be very unusual.

For these reasons, there are now many restaurant guides that provide restaurant reviews based on the opinions of thousands of people instead of a single reviewer. In the United States, one of the most popular guides is the Zagat Review. The company creates restaurant “surveys” (sets of questions) about restaurants that are sent to thousands of people. Zagat uses these peoples’ opinions about restaurants to develop its restaurant reviews. Most people think that these reviews are very accurate because they are based on the opinions of many people instead of only one reviewer.

The Zagat Review looks at four things in each restaurant: food, “décor” (decoration and atmosphere), service, and cost. Each of these categories receives between 0 and 30 points. This allows people to find the types of restaurants that they’re looking for anywhere in the country.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – a; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 247: Asking for Recommendations.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast number 247. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Honolulu, Hawaii - no, just kidding! In beautiful Los Angeles, California, but Honolulu is very beautiful, too!

This podcast is going to be about "Asking for Recommendations," when you want someone to help you, and you're asking for their opinion or their advice about something. In this particular dialogue Victor is going to be talking with someone at a hotel - a person who works for the hotel - to try to get some recommendations about things in that area. Let's get started

[start of story]

Hotel Clerk: Can I help you with something?

Victor: Yes, I was hoping you could recommend a restaurant nearby.

Clerk: What kind of food would you like?

Victor: I'm not picky. I'm looking for something moderately priced that's within walking distance.

Clerk: There's a good seafood restaurant called "Galeno's" about two blocks away. Would you like me to make a reservation for you?

Victor: Thanks, but that won't be necessary. I need to check with my guest before deciding. By the way, I'll be in town for four days, and I'd like to see the sights.

Clerk: Is this your first time here?

Victor: Yes, it is.

Clerk: Then, I'd suggest seeing our museums and the botanical gardens, and don't miss the shopping district near downtown.

Victor: Can I get there on foot?



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Clerk: I'm afraid not. You can take a taxi or a bus. We have a very good bus system. The other option is to take a tour. There are several tour companies that have day tours leaving from this hotel. Help yourself to their brochures. They're over there.

Victor: Do you have a map showing where those sights are?

Clerk: Sure. Here you are. Is there anything else I can help you with?

Victor: No, that's all. You've been a big help. Thanks.

[end of story]

Our episode begins with the hotel clerk asking Victor, "Can I help you with something?" That would be a very polite, standard thing that an employee of a company, such as a hotel or a store, might ask you when they are asking if you need some help - "Can I help you with something?" Or, they may say, "Do you need some help?"

Victor says, "Yes, I was hoping you could recommend a restaurant nearby." There's another polite expression - "I was hoping" - "I was hoping you could help me." The use of the "I was hoping" is, again, a little more polite. You're not demanding - you're not saying you must help me, you're saying I was hoping that you would be able to help me.

The clerk asks what kind of food Victor likes, because he's asking for a restaurant recommendation. Victor says, "I'm not picky," "picky." To be picky means to be very selective - difficult to please. Children are sometimes picky about the kind of food that they will eat. When I was young, if you were picky, you just didn't eat anything because my brothers and sisters would eat whatever food you didn't want.

Victor says, "I'm looking for something moderately priced that's within walking distance." The phrase moderately, "moderately," means not too expensive. Not necessarily something with a very low price, but not something that is very expensive - something in between - moderately. So, he wants a restaurant that is not too expensive but still pretty good, in terms of the quality, and he wants something "that's within walking distance."

Walking distance is the distance you can walk, usually a person means within 15, 20, maybe 25 minutes of walking. It depends on who you are and how far you



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want to walk, but I would say that if you were at a hotel and you asked for a restaurant within walking distance, you're looking for something within 10, 15, maybe 20 minutes from your hotel. You could also say how many blocks it is from your location, but even though the expression is walking distance, we usually give the person the amount of time it would take for the average person to walk. So, perhaps we should say, "walking time," but we don't.

The clerk says, "There's a good seafood restaurant called 'Galeno's' about two blocks away. Would you like me to make a reservation for you?" To make a reservation means to call the restaurant and to say, "I am going to be coming and eating there." Usually you tell them how many people there will be and the time that you will be coming.

Victor says, "Thanks, but that won't be necessary. I need to check with my guest before deciding." To check with someone means that you need to ask someone's opinion before deciding what to do. If you're married and you're a man, you know that you can't do anything important unless you check with your wife. I know that's true in my life!

So, Victor is going to check with his guest - the person he is with - before he decides. To check with actually has a couple of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide today for some additional definitions.

Victory then says, "By the way, I'll be in town for four days, and I'd like to see the sights." The expression by, "by," the way, "way," is used when you want to say something or ask something that isn't necessarily connected or related to what you just said. So, it's a way of changing the topic in a conversation.

Victor is answering the clerk by telling him that he needs "to check with his guest before deciding," then he thinks of something else he wants to ask the clerk that is not related, so uses the expression by the way. "By the way, I'll be in town," meaning I'll be here, in this city "for four days, and I'd like to see the sights." To see the sights, "sights," means to see the important or interesting places in the city - the places that someone who is visiting the city would want to see. So, if you go to Paris, you would want to see the Eiffel Tower. If you come to Los Angeles, you would want to see Hollywood, and of course, the Center for Educational Development!

Victor says that he's going to be in town for four days, and the clerk asks, "Is this your first time here" - the first time you visited this city.



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Victor says, “Yes.” The clerk then says, “Then, I’d suggest seeing our museums and botanical gardens, and don’t miss the shopping district near downtown.” A museum, “museum,” is a place where you can see famous art. You could also see some historical information - some historical objects - in a museum. You can have an art museum; you can have a history museum and so forth. Famous museums include, here in Los Angeles, the Getty Museum, as well as, in New York, the Metropolitan Museum. Those are two art museums.

Botanical gardens, “botanical,” are places where you find flowers and trees; usually a very large area that has many different interesting plants. Here in Los Angeles, we have the Huntington Gardens. These are botanical gardens that you can go and visit, that have different kinds of plants and trees.

The clerk also recommends that Victor visit the shopping district. The expression she uses is “don’t miss.” If someone says to you, “Don’t miss this,” they mean you must do this - this is very important - you must go here - I strongly recommend that you see or do this thing. You can say, “Don’t miss the movie, ‘LA Story,’ by Steve Martin; it’s a very funny movie.” That is an example of using that expression - you really should see it, I strongly recommend it.

The shopping district, “district,” is an area in the city where there are many stores. Most big cities have several different shopping districts. Victor says, “Can I get there on foot?” The expression on foot is the same as by walking. Can I walk there? There are a couple of meanings, again, of this expression, on foot; take a look at the Learning Guide for more information about those other definitions.

The clerk says no, but he says it in a polite way, he says, “I’m afraid not.” When you want to say no to someone, but you want to be polite, this is a good way to do that - “I’m afraid not.”

He says, “You can take a taxi or a bus,” that the city has, “a very good bus system.” The bus, “bus,” system is the system of public transportation in a city that uses buses. You can have a subway system; you can have a bus system. Both these are ways of getting around the city.

“The other option,” the clerk says, “is to take a tour. There are several tour companies that have day tours leaving from this hotel.” These are companies that come with their own bus and pick you up at your hotel and take you to the important sights in the city. A day, “day,” tour is usually a short tour - four, five, maybe eight or nine hours that you go with a group of other tourists, and you



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have a person that explains all the different places you are going, we would call that person a tour guide.

The clerk says, “Help yourself to their brochures.” He's talking about the brochures or printed information about these tour companies. The expression, help yourself, means go ahead and take whatever you want.

Victor then asks if the clerk has a map. The clerk does, and gives him one, and Victor thanks him. He says, “You’ve been a big help.” That’s another way of saying you have helped me a lot.

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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Victor: Do you have a map showing where those sights are?

Clerk: Sure. Here you are. Is there anything else I can help you with?

Victor: No, that's all. You've been a big help. Thanks.

[end of story]

The script for this podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks again for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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