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**ESL Podcast 330 – Traveling by Bus**

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**GLOSSARY**

**in advance** – with anticipation; ahead of time; before something else happens

\* The dentist is always very busy, so we need to make our appointments at least four weeks in advance.

**terminal** – station; a large building where buses or trains stop to let people on and off

\* This hotel will send a car to pick us up from the train terminal when we arrive in Denver.

**boarding** – the act of getting onto a bus, train, plane, or boat; loading

\* The airline asks its passengers to arrive for boarding at least one hour before the flight is scheduled to leave.

**to reserve** – to make arrangements for something to be available for one's use at a future time so that it is not given or sold to another person

\* Please reserve a hotel room for next Friday night in Mobile, Alabama.

**first-come, first-serve basis** – a way of giving things to customers, so that the first customer to arrive gets to choose which seat he or she wants, other customers have fewer choices, and the last customer doesn't have a choice

\* At camp, the bicycles are given to children on a first-come, first-serve basis, so if you want to choose a good bicycle, you need to wake up early.

**peak** – busy; very active; with the greatest demand; with the most use

\* November and December are peak months for toy sales because many parents are buying toys for their children as Christmas presents.

**night service** – services that are offered at night, especially transportation that leaves late at night and arrives early in the morning

\* I think riding buses is boring, so I prefer to use the night service so that I can sleep during the long ride.

**stop** – the time and place where a bus or train stops moving for a short period of time to pick up new passengers and let other passengers off

\* The train from Washington, D.C. to Boston has stops in Philadelphia and New York City.

**en route** – on the way; between two points; while traveling from one place to another

\* The flight includes breakfast en route from Minneapolis to Houston.



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**rest stop** – a time and place where a bus stops for a short period of time so that people can use the bathroom, buy food and drinks, and walk a little bit

\* I hope we reach the next rest stop soon because I really need to go to the bathroom!

**express** – quick and non-stop, or with few stops; rapid

\* This is the express subway train to downtown, and it makes only three stops instead of seven.

**on board** – on a bus, train, or boat; carried on a bus, train, or boat

\* How many people are on board this train?

**handler** – a person who carries heavy things and helps people move their luggage and other bags onto a bus, train, or boat

\* The handler hurt his back while lifting a suitcase that was too heavy.

**to load** – to put many things onto a bus or train, or into the back of a car

\* Could you please help me load these groceries into the car?

**to retrieve** – to get something back from where it has been kept or stored; to pick up something that belongs to oneself but that one didn't have for a period of time

\* You'll need to bring your receipt to retrieve your clothes from the tailor after he has finished fixing them.

**have a safe trip** – a polite phrase used to wish someone a nice trip or safe travels

\* Becca's whole family stood waving as the bus left, shouting "We love you, Becca! Have a safe trip!"



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does the agent mean by, “seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis”?
  - a) Seats are available only in first class.
  - b) People who sit in the first seats are served first.
  - c) Customers can choose their seats as they arrive.
  
2. If Samantha wants to get to Myrtle Beach as quickly as possible, which bus should she take?
  - a) The express bus.
  - b) The night service bus.
  - c) Any bus at a peak time.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**peak**

The word “peak,” in this podcast, means busy or very active, with the greatest demand or with the most use: “At this restaurant, peak dinner hours are between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m.” The word “peak” also means the time or place when something is at its best, largest, strongest, or most successful: “The peak of his career was when his book became an international bestseller.” Or, “The organization is at its peak membership – it has never had more members than it does right now.” In nature, a “peak” is the pointed top of a mountain: “How many people climb to the peak of Mount McKinley each year?” A “peak” can also be any pointed shape at the top of something: “She wears her hair in a strange peak over her forehead.”

**express**

In this podcast, the word “express” means quick and non-stop, or with few stops: “I wish there were an express train between Portland and Seattle because driving takes too long.” The word “express” can also refer to anything that travels quickly, especially mail delivery services: “If I send the package to you via express mail, you will receive it by tomorrow morning.” As a verb, “to express” means to do or say something that makes one’s feelings or thoughts known to other people: “Shimpur isn’t very good at expressing his feelings.” Or, “Arrey expressed to me that she feels frustrated at work.” Finally, the word “express” can mean definite or clear, or something that is very openly stated: “Hector’s express wish was that his grandchildren finish college.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, traveling by bus is usually less expensive than traveling by train, plane, or car. Unfortunately, it is also slower and less “luxurious” (comfortable, with expensive things that make one feel good) than other “modes” (ways) of transportation. If you are going to take a short bus trip, this probably doesn’t matter. However, if you are considering traveling by bus across the country, it’s important to “keep some things in mind” (to think about or be aware of some things).

First, because buses are not luxurious, they aren’t very comfortable. Sometimes the seats are too hard. You can make your trip more comfortable if you wear “sweats” (sweatsuit; very comfortable, informal clothing) and bring a pillow and soft blankets. It’s also a good idea to bring food and drinks for the long trip.

Because bus rides are long and slow, you will want to bring things to “entertain” yourself (to keep one interested in something). If you don’t have “motion sickness” (feelings on nausea while being in a moving vehicle), bring something to read. Other good activities on a bus include listening to music and doing “crossword puzzles” (games on paper when one puts words in a grid based on clues).

Finally, if you are taking a bus across the country, consider reserving one or more hotel rooms where you can rest and “refresh” (do something to feel cleaner, rested, and more relaxed) during the trip. Traveling on a bus 24 hours a day isn’t very much fun, and most people want to stop somewhere en route.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 330: Traveling by Bus.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 330. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). You can download a Learning Guide for this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension questions, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Traveling by Bus." It's a dialogue between Samantha and an employee of the bus company; they're talking about different kinds of bus travel. We'll go over some vocabulary in this dialogue that you would need if you were going to travel by bus in English. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

(telephone ring)

Samantha: Good morning. I had a few questions about buying a bus ticket. Do I need to buy one in advance?

Agent: You can, but it's not necessary. You just need to arrive at the terminal at least an hour before the scheduled departure time to buy your ticket. Boarding begins about 15 to 30 minutes before departure.

Samantha: Can I reserve a seat?

Agent: No, seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis. I recommend getting there early during peak times, but getting a good seat isn't usually a problem with the night service buses.

Samantha: I want to go from Charlestown to Myrtle Beach. Do you know how many stops the bus will be making?

Agent: I think that bus makes six stops to pick up passengers en route, but you can check the schedule to be sure. That doesn't include rest stops and meal



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stops. If you want to make fewer stops, you can buy a ticket for one of our express buses.

Samantha: How many bags can I bring on board? I'll have two big pieces of luggage.

Agent: You're allowed two bags. The handler can help you load them upon boarding, but you're responsible for retrieving them when you get off. Can I help you with anything else?

Samantha: No, thanks.

Agent: Thank you for calling and have a safe trip.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begin with Samantha saying to the employee, we would probably call them the "agent," who works for the bus company, "Good morning. I had a few questions about buying a bus ticket. Do I need to buy one in advance?" When we say you buy something "in advance," we mean ahead of time, before something actually happens. "The dentist is always very busy, so we need to make our appointments at least four weeks in advance" – before the time of the actual appointment. You can't just wait and do it on the same day. So, Samantha is asking if she needs to buy a bus ticket in advance – a day, or a week, or sometime before the day that she is going to travel.

The agent says, "You can, but it's not necessary (you don't need to). You just need to arrive at the terminal at least an hour before the scheduled departure time to buy your ticket." The agent is telling Samantha she needs to arrive at the "terminal," which is another word for the station – the large building where buses or trains stop to let people off in a town, and let people get on the bus or the train. We also use that word "terminal" in an airport; the different parts of the airport are called the "terminal." Some airports have just one terminal; big airports, like here in Los Angeles, we have eight.

The agent says, "Boarding begins about 15 to 30 minutes before departure." "To board" means to get on a bus, or to get on a plane, or to get on a train. "Boarding," then, is the verb for getting onto a bus, train, plane, or perhaps a boat. So, the agent says she can buy the tickets on the same day as long as she buys them at least one hour before the time that the bus leaves – the departure time. "Departure" is when the bus or plane leaves, "arrival" is when it comes to or arrives at a place.



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Samantha says, “Can I reserve a seat?” “To reserve” means to make arrangements for something in advance for you to use. You’re asking if you can have a seat assigned to you – given to you – so that when you get on the bus you know where your seat is, you’re going to sit in a specific seat. So, she wants to reserve a seat. The agent says, “No (that’s not possible), seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis.” “Seating (or deciding where you’re going to sit) is on a first-come, first-serve basis.” That expression, “first-come,” means whoever gets there first. “First-serve” means you get to do what you want – you get to, in this case, select your seat. So, the first people who get there are the ones who get to select their seats, and as new people arrive, they can select any seat that hasn’t been taken. We use that expression a lot: “It’s first-come, first-serve,” that means there are no possibilities of reserving a seat – you can’t ask for a specific seat. Most airplanes, for example, have reservations, and you can reserve a seat. There are some airlines, such as Southwest Airlines here in California and other states, where it is first-come, first-serve; whoever is in the line first gets to pick the seat first.

The agent says, “I recommend getting to the terminal early during peak hours.” “Peak” (peak) means very busy, when something is being used the most. So, the “peak times” would be the busiest times of, in this case, the terminal where the buses are. The agent says, “getting a good seat isn’t usually a problem with the night service buses.” “Night service,” you can guess, are buses that go at night, versus during the day. I should mention the word “peak” has a couple of different meanings in English; you know what to do, take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Samantha says, “I want to go from Charlestown (Charlestown, South Carolina, in the southeast part of the United States), to Myrtle Beach (which is also located in South Carolina). Do you know how many stops the bus will be making?” A “stop,” as a noun, is the place where a bus or a train stops for a short time before going on to another place. So for example, if you’re taking a bus between New York City and Boston, Massachusetts, the bus might stop at some cities in between to pick up new passengers, or to let some passengers leave who don’t want to go to Boston, who want to go to some city in between Boston and New York. If you have a bus that doesn’t stop, that goes directly from one city to another, we would call that a “nonstop.” If it makes just a couple of stops, or very few stops, you could also call it an “express” bus (express).

So, Samantha is asking how many stops the bus will make. The agent says, “I think it makes six stops to pick up passengers en route.” “En route” (en route - two words) means on the way, in between one place and another. So, in



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between Charlestown and Myrtle Beach there are six stops. The agent tells her she can “check the schedule to be sure. That doesn’t include rest stops and meal stops.” A “rest stop” is when you stop after traveling for a long time to let people get out of the bus, stretch their legs, walk around, use a restroom, that sort of thing. A “meal stop” would be a place where you would stop and pick up a meal – something to eat. The agent says, “If you want to make fewer stops, you can buy a ticket for one of our express buses.” That word “express” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional definitions.

Samantha then asks, “How many bags can I bring on board?” “On board,” means on the bus or on the train – things that you carry with you, bags that you are taking to the place where you are going. The agent says, “You are allowed two bags (two pieces of luggage). The handler can help you load them upon boarding.” The “handler” (handler) is the person that carries, in this case, heavy luggage – helps people put them onto the bus or the train. “The handler can help you load” the luggage; “to load,” in this case, means to put many things onto the bus, or in the back of a car, or on a train.

So, the handler will carry and put the luggage on the bus when you board, or “upon boarding,” when you get on the bus, “but you are responsible for retrieving them when you get off” the bus. “To retrieve” means to get something back from where it has been kept or stored, to pick something up that belongs to you that was being kept in a different place, in this case, below the bus, or on the bottom or back of the bus.

“Can I help you with anything else?” the agent asks. Samantha says, “No, thanks.” The agent says, “Thank you for calling” – she calls on the telephone – “Thank you for calling and have a safe trip.” The expression “have a safe trip” is a polite way of saying “have a good trip.” “Have a safe trip” – have a nice trip. In French, you may say, and we use this expression in English, “bon voyage” – have a good trip, have a safe trip.

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

[start of dialogue]

(telephone ring)

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Agent: I think that bus makes six stops to pick up passengers en route, but you can check the schedule to be sure. That doesn't include rest stops and meal stops. If you want to make fewer stops, you can buy a ticket for one of our express buses.

Samantha: How many bags can I bring on board? I'll have two big pieces of luggage.

Agent: You're allowed two bags. The handler can help you load them upon boarding, but you're responsible for retrieving them when you get off. Can I help you with anything else?

Samantha: No, thanks.

Agent: Thank you for calling and have a safe trip.

[end of dialogue]

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

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

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