



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 100

TOPICS

Traveling in the U.S., gimmick versus trick, to call 'em like you see 'em, in demand versus on demand

GLOSSARY

the open road – the idea that roads in the United States are open for anyone to explore and have an adventure or vacation

* Last summer, we hit the open road, driving from Washington to Florida.

spats – a short argument or fight about something that isn't very serious

* Melissa often has spats with her younger brother, but they usually stop being mad at each other within the hour.

KOA – Kampground of America; a network of places for people to camp around the United States

* This weekend the Hansons are going camping at a KOA in Idaho.

hitch – trailer hitch; a small, round piece of metal that is placed on the back of one's car and used to connect to and pull a trailer

* Sometimes it's difficult to connect the trailer to the trailer hitch on this car.

GPS – global positioning system; a technology that uses an electronic device to show one where one is on the planet

* If you go far into the mountains, the park ranger recommends carrying a GPS device so that you don't get lost.

pop-up – pop-up trailer; a small, flat type of trailer that can be opened and made taller, so that people can sleep inside it

* This pop-up trailer looks very small from the outside, but once you set it up, there's room for five people to sleep in it.

AAA – Automobile Association of America; an organization that provides maps and emergency road service to drivers who are members

* When Janet locked her keys in the car, she called AAA and someone came to help her open the car in less than 20 minutes.



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bicentennial – the 200th anniversary of something; relating to the day that something happened 200 years ago

* The United States celebrated its bicentennial on July 4, 1976, 200 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed.

gimmick – something that is said or done to get people to do something, especially to get people to buy something

* One common sales gimmick is to advertise a car at a low price, but then, when people come into the car dealership, tell them that the car has already been sold and try to sell them a more expensive car instead.

trick – something that is done to make people believe something that isn't true

* The children played a trick on their classmate, telling him that everyone was going to wear their pajamas to school the next day.

to call 'em like (one) sees 'em – to say the truth about what one thinks; to say what one honestly thinks, without softening the statement to make other people happy

* The referee said that the ball was out, and when the players became angry, he just said, "I call 'em like I see 'em" and wouldn't change his mind.

in demand – something that people want to have or buy; wanted by many people

* Wide-screen televisions are in demand right now.

on demand – when and how one wants something; done whenever and however one wants it to be done

* Charlene is tired of having to bring coffee to her boss on demand.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

RVs and RV Parks

Many Americans like to take vacation in an “RV,” or “recreational vehicle,” which is a large vehicle that people can live, cook, and sleep in while they are traveling. Some people call them “houses on wheels,” because large RVs have everything that one would find in a house, including a bathroom, kitchen, and even TV.

RVs are expensive to buy and “maintain” (to keep something in good condition). They also use a lot of gas, but many people like RVs because they’re cheaper than staying in hotels. Some people even choose to travel around in RVs during their “retirement” (the time in life when older people have stopped working).

Some “campsites” (places where people can stay overnight, usually in tents) have special sections for RVs. But many people with RVs choose to stay in “RV parks” that are “exclusively” (only) for RVs. RVs need “water and sewage hookups” (connections to receive water and get rid of waste water), and RV parks offer these for a small fee.

Some popular movies are about RVs and “road trips” (long driving vacations, often across the country). National Lampoon’s Vacation, for example, is a comedy where the Griswold family goes on vacation driving across the country. They have many problems on their vacation, such as getting lost, having accidents, and running out of money.

Another, more recent movie about RVs is simply called RV. In this comedy, a family “rents” (pays money to use something for a short period of time) an RV to go on vacation. They have many problems with the RV, including its “brakes” (the things that slow down or stop a car) and its water and sewage hookups.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 100.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 100. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Number 100! We have been doing these English Cafés, now, for more than a year. I hope you have enjoyed them; I know we have!

If you'd like to get a transcript for this episode, as well as all of the vocabulary words, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions not found on the audio portion of the podcast as well as cultural notes, you can go to our website at eslpod.com and take a look under Learning Guides.

The topic in this Café is going to be traveling in the United States. During the summertime, many people travel. I'm going to talk a little bit about my own experience as a child traveling with my family; talk a little bit about the trips we took and the things we saw. As always, we'll answer a few of your questions as well. Let's get started.

The summertime is a popular time for people to take a vacation. One popular way of taking vacations is to take what we would call a “road trip,” where you get in your car and you drive to the vacation spot that you have selected. The United States is a big country; it takes several days to travel from one side of the country to the other by car.

I grew up in the state of Minnesota, which is located in the middle of the United States at the very northern border with Canada. My father was a schoolteacher; he taught from September until May or June, so he had the summer free to travel. He and my mother enjoyed the open road. The expression “open road” means going out and traveling outside of the city or between cities, or simply going and traveling in your car.

When I was nine years old, actually I was eight years old, back in 1972 – so you can calculate how old I am now – we went on a trip, our first big trip. It was a camping trip. Now, we didn't have a tent, which is what many people use to “camp,” to go out somewhere away from the city and you put up your tent and you sleep inside of it. It's like a little portable place – room – for you to sleep.



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We had something called a “camper,” and a “camper” usually is something on wheels that is more permanent.

We had a – a big car. Of course, I come from a big family; I am the youngest of 11 children. After I was born, my parents looked at me and said, “Okay, no more children!” It’s a good thing I wasn’t born first, but we were talking about our car. It was an old car; it was a 1963 Chrysler Imperial – that was the name of the car. This was 1972, so it was nine years old. But it was big; at least we could put about half of the family in the car because we were small. I was 9, my brother was 10, my sister was 12, my other brother was 14, and I had an older sister who was 19, in college, who also went with us on our first trip. So, we had seven people in this one car: my mother and father and one of the children in front, and then the other four people in back.

The car had a hitch on it. A “hitch” (hitch) is something you connect to the back of your car, and it allows you to pull a trailer. A “trailer” is another vehicle that has wheels on it that is separate from your car. So you have the hitch, and then you connect the trailer with the hitch, and the car pulls the trailer. In this case, we had a camper trailer, and we slept in the camper. So, we didn’t sleep outside; we slept in this little camper.

Now, when you travel in a camper, you need to find a place where you can have your bathroom and a place to shower, and so forth. This would be called a “campground.” There was a popular company that had campgrounds; they were called “Kampgrounds of America,” but they spelled “campground” with a “K,” so the name of these campgrounds was “KOA.” And, you could go and pay \$10-\$15 each night, and you could put your camper in their campground and use their bathrooms and showers. Sometimes these campgrounds had other games or a swimming pool.

Most people use these campgrounds just as places to sleep at night. They would then go and visit and travel to other places near the campground. So for example, when we came to Los Angeles in 1972 – we drove from Minnesota to Los Angeles, it took several days – couple of weeks, actually, because we stopped at many different places. When we came to Los Angeles, we stayed in a campground outside of the city, and then drove into the city.

In 1972, we took a trip out to the western part of the United States. This was a six-week trip, so you can imagine having seven people traveling in a car every day for six weeks together. Sometimes we children would have some “spats” (some disagreements). A “spat” (spat) is a small argument, we might also call it



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a “quarrel” (quarrel); that means the same thing. So, children will sometimes have quarrels, and my father was the person who told us to be quiet. Of course, I was an angel when I was a child, so I never had any problems – it was my brothers and sisters, you see!

Now, when we traveled, we didn't have GPS in our car. “GPS” stands for “global positioning system,” that's the modern system where a satellite connects to you and you can see where you are, and you have a map of where to go. We didn't have a GPS system back in 1972; we had maps, and most Americans – at least when I was growing up – if they wanted a map, they would go to AAA (Triple A). AAA stands for the Automobile Association of America, and one of things they do, if you are a member, is – they used to – give you free maps. So before every trip, my father would go down to the local AAA office and get maps.

I was responsible for helping plan our trips – where we should go, that was one of my jobs as a nine-year-old – or an eight-year-old. So, I would look at the travel books and see what would be interesting for us to see.

When we took this six-week trip, we didn't know exactly where we were going to go or even how long we were going to travel. We drove south from Minnesota to Iowa and visited a friend of my father's there, then we drove across the state of Nebraska to Colorado – to Denver, Colorado. Colorado is famous for its mountains, and so we would drive up into the mountains and we camped up in the mountains. It can get very cold even in the summertime.

We had what is called a “pop-up” trailer.” “Pop-up” is a trailer you can make bigger or smaller. If you are driving on the road you make it smaller, and then when you arrive at the campground you can “pop-up” (or put up) the camper so that it is taller and wider. We had electricity in the campgrounds, so we could have a heater, also, when it got cold.

We went through Colorado, spent quite a bit of time there. We then traveled across Colorado to New Mexico and Arizona, and in Arizona, we saw the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon is, well, one of the most famous places in the United States. When I was eight years old, I wasn't really very interested, but it is, I think, a beautiful area. The Grand Canyon is basically a big hole – a huge hole in the ground – that was caused by the river – the Colorado River – over many, many centuries that created this hole. It is in northern Arizona.



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After the Grand Canyon, we went to Las Vegas, Nevada. Of course, I was only eight so I did not gamble any money, but it was interesting to see all of the lights. Las Vegas is a beautiful city at night with all the different lights.

Then we traveled to southern California. We went to Disneyland. I remember going to Disneyland and getting sick on one of the rides at Disneyland. A “ride” is like a Ferris wheel or a roller coaster; these are things that you go on and move very fast. And all I can remember about Disneyland is getting sick. Not surprisingly, I have never returned to Disneyland. I've lived in California for many years now, and I have never gone back to Disneyland. So, Mickey Mouse and I, we don't talk!

After Los Angeles, we went to San Francisco and then up to the states of Oregon and Washington. We finally went into Canada and visited some of the parks in western Canada. We came back into the United States in the state of Montana, where we visited the Glacier National Park. This is a park that has big mountains; it is part of the Rocky Mountain chain in the western part of the United States. That's the name of the mountains in the western U.S. And then we came home, driving through South Dakota and back to Minnesota.

All that took about six weeks. I don't know how I survived, but we all survived. We actually took another trip – several more trips. In 1973, we went out to the eastern part of the United States. In 1974, we went back to the western part the United States for three weeks.

Perhaps the most interesting thing that we did was in 1976. 1976 was the bicentennial of the American independence. “Bi” (bi) in front of a word usually means two, so “bicentennial” (centennial meaning 100) would be the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

So, we went to see Washington D.C. during the bicentennial; it was very exciting. Philadelphia, Boston; these were all famous places during the American Revolution that we visited. And then we went to Montreal, Canada, because in 1976 the Summer Olympics were in Montreal, and we actually went to some of the Olympic competitions. Nothing very interesting however, we went to some of the less popular sports. But, we did go to the Olympics. I didn't win anything, unfortunately!

Well, we took these trips for about five years, until I was in high school, and then I think my father got tired of driving so much. But, it was a great experience; I got to see most of the states in the United States, about 40 of the 50 States during



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these five or six years, in the summertime. I was very lucky. I think one reason why I became interested in travel and learning languages, and eventually teaching languages, was partly from that experience. So, you can thank my mother and father for ESL Podcast, because they are the ones that gave me the experience of traveling.

So, traveling in the U.S. is very difficult if you are going try to drive from one side of the country to the other, but it can also be a very beautiful experience. One thing that I will probably not do again in my life, however, is camp. I'm not so interested anymore in camping. I do like a good hotel, however!

Now let's answer of few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Apple (Apple – not the computer company). Apple lives in China. Apple wants to know the difference between the word “trick” (trick) and “gimmick” (gimmick).

A “trick” is a general word for anything you do to make someone think something is true when it is not true. We might also use the verb to “deceive” (deceive – to fool someone).

“Gimmick” is a type of trick often used by a person or a business to get your attention – to get more customers. A “gimmick” isn't necessarily a lie. It isn't always dishonest, sometimes it is; it's a way of getting your attention. So for example, when I was growing up, and today on television, sometimes you will see a commercial for a used car dealership (this is a company that sells old cars), and they will have someone on there often dressed in a strange or funny costume (with weird or funny clothes on). The idea is to get your attention so that you will watch the advertisement, you will watch the commercial and go and buy a car. Many times, now, you'll see beautiful women who are standing and talking about the car. Those are the commercials I watch! The “gimmick” is a trick – it gets you to watch it or gets you to buy something or go somewhere.

Our second question comes from Malte (Malte – I apologize for the bad pronunciation) in Germany. The question has to do with an idiom: “I call 'em like I see 'em.”

The expression “I call 'em” – an 'em (em), or apostrophe E-M is short for them: “I call them like I see them.” But sometimes instead of saying “them,” we just say “em,” especially if you are speaking quickly, or if you want to talk more informally.



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The expression “I call 'em like I see 'em” means “I give an honest opinion.” “I call 'em” means “I give my opinion” – “like I see 'em” – just as I see them. I don't lie; I tell you exactly what I see or I tell you exactly what I think.

Our final question is from Anthony (Anthony) in the Philippines. He wants to know the difference between “on demand” and “in demand.”

“On demand” means that you make something available for someone to use whenever they want. It is there waiting for you. For example, on cable television or satellite television, you can sometimes order a movie “on demand.” You come home, you want to watch the latest movie with the Simpsons – well, the only movie with the Simpsons – you can order the movie “on demand.” You press a few buttons or you call on a telephone, and then there is the movie for you to see when you want.

“In demand” means people – a lot of people – want something; it is very popular. For example: “My singing is so in demand that every radio station wants to play my songs.” Just an example, of course – you know that's not true if you have heard me sing!

If you have a question or comment, email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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