



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · GENERAL ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B1·3A

Hometown & travel

Theme · Places



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Hometown & travel

Theme: Places

B1 · General English



Learning objectives

- Compare your hometown with another place using comparatives and superlatives.
- Give a short, honest travel recommendation.
- Use 'not as ... as' for softer comparisons.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Three photos of your city

Think of **THREE** photos of your city or town: the prettiest street, the busiest place, the one tourists never see. Describe each in **ONE** sentence to a partner.

The prettiest street.

The busiest place at 6 p.m.

The one 'hidden gem' that only locals know.

Lead-in · Guess the city

Read each short description. Guess the city, then reveal the answer.

1. This capital has a river running through it, more than 400 bridges, and is famous for canals, coffee houses and classical music. Winter is much colder than summer.

2. This coastal city has yellow trams, seven hills, and one of the oldest bookshops in the world. Sunsets over the river are legendary.

3. The biggest city in South America — huge, grey, foggy in the morning, and home to more helicopters than any other city in the world.

4. A tiny island nation in Asia — cleaner than most cities, hotter than most capitals, and famous for its food courts (hawker centres).

5. This European capital is flatter than most, colder than most, and has more bicycles than cars.

followUp: Which of these places would YOU most like to visit? Why?

Reading · The hometown paradox

Ask someone to describe their hometown, and something strange happens. They will often say it's boring, quiet, too small, too far from everything. But ask them what they miss when they're away for six months, and the answer is always the same list: their bakery, their friends, the light in autumn, the bus that always runs late.

This is the hometown paradox. Your hometown is never the most exciting place on your map — but it is the deepest. You know which restaurant is worth the wait, which corner floods when it rains, which pharmacy is open on Sundays. That knowledge is invisible to tourists and impossible to buy.

So when you compare your city with the biggest, the busiest, the most famous — remember: your hometown might be smaller, but you understand it better than any travel guide ever will.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. What do people usually say about their hometown at first?
 - (A) It's the best in the world
 - (B) It's boring, quiet, small
 - (C) It's dangerous
2. What is the 'hometown paradox'?
 - (A) Hometowns are the most exciting places
 - (B) You dislike your hometown but miss it when away
 - (C) Hometowns get bigger every year
3. What does the text say knowledge of your hometown is worth?
 - (A) Impossible to buy
 - (B) Very cheap
 - (C) Only useful for tourists

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to its meaning.

paradox — an idea that seems contradictory but is true

worth the wait — good enough to justify waiting

floods — fills with water after heavy rain

impossible to buy — cannot be bought with money

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. People usually describe their hometown as exciting.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. People often miss small daily details when they're abroad.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. Tourists usually know a city better than locals.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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4. The writer prefers big cities to small towns.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

React to the text

Answer in 2–3 sentences.

1. What are THREE small things you'd miss about your hometown after six months away?

2. Is there anywhere on Earth you'd swap your hometown for permanently? Where and why?

Scan for meaning

Find the word or phrase from the text.

1. an idea that sounds contradictory but is true

2. good enough that waiting is justified

3. not possible to buy for any price

Vocabulary · Describing places

vibrant — full of energy, activity and people

peaceful — quiet and calm

crowded — with too many people in one place

breathtaking — extremely beautiful

dilapidated — old and in bad condition

picturesque — pleasant, attractive in a small-scale way

outskirts — the outer edge of a city

landmark — a famous building or place used for orientation

high street — the main shopping street of a town

hidden gem — a wonderful place few tourists know about

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tourist trap — a place that only exists to take tourists' money

off the beaten track — away from the usual tourist routes

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the lists.

1. The view from the hill is absolutely ____.

2. I love that little café — it's a real ____ ____.

3. Don't eat near the main square — it's a total ____ ____.

4. Their neighbourhood is a bit ____ - ____, but very picturesque.

5. We live on the ____ of the city, so it's very quiet.

6. The city centre is far too ____ on Saturday afternoons.

Collocations · verbs + travel nouns

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

book — a flight / a hotel / a restaurant

catch — a train / a bus / a plane

get — lost / a taxi / directions

go — sightseeing / abroad / on holiday

pack — a suitcase / light / for the weather

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. vibrant · busy · crowded · peaceful

(A) vibrant

(B) busy

(C) crowded

(D) peaceful

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2. landmark · high street · outskirts · pillow

- (A) landmark
- (B) high street
- (C) outskirts
- (D) pillow

3. book · catch · pack · sing

- (A) book
- (B) catch
- (C) pack
- (D) sing

Word building · noun ↔ adjective

Complete each pair.

1. charm → the adjective: ____

2. peace → the adjective: ____

3. crowd → the adjective: ____

4. beauty → the adjective: ____



Grammar · Comparatives & superlatives

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1. Short adjectives (1 syllable) — add -er / -est — cheap → cheaper → the cheapest big → bigger → the biggest Spelling: big → bigger (double consonant); nice → nicer (drop 'e').

2. Longer adjectives (2+ syllables) — more / the most — expensive → more expensive → the most expensive beautiful → more beautiful → the most beautiful

3. Irregular — good → better → the best bad → worse → the worst far → further/farther → the furthest/farthest

4. Softer comparison — (not) as ... as — Lisbon is (not) as cold as Vienna. My hometown is as lively as any big city.

Exercise A — Comparative or superlative?

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the adjective.

1. Lisbon is ____ (cheap) than Paris.

2. This is ____ (good) restaurant in the neighbourhood.

3. My old flat was ____ (small) than this one, but ____ (bright).

4. Rio has ____ (beautiful) beaches I've ever seen.

5. Traffic in São Paulo is ____ (bad) than in Lisbon.

6. The metro is ____ (fast) way to get around.

Exercise B — Rewrite with 'not as ... as'

Rewrite each sentence with 'not as ... as' keeping the same meaning.

1. Vienna is colder than Lisbon. →

2. My new flat is bigger than my old one. →

3. The metro is faster than the bus. →

4. Sunday brunch is more expensive than Saturday lunch. →

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**Exercise C — Find and fix the mistake**

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it.

1. This is the more crowded market I've ever seen.

2. Rio is more warmer than London.

3. It's the baddest coffee in the city.

4. Vienna is colder than Lisbon as.

Exercise D — Compare TWO real places

Write ONE full sentence for each pair, using a comparative.

1. your hometown / the capital of your country (size)

2. summer / winter where you live (temperature)

3. your favourite café / a chain café (food)

Exercise E — Superlatives about your city

Answer with a full sentence using a superlative.

1. What is the most crowded place in your city?

2. What is the best local dish?

3. What is the worst area for traffic?

Exercise F — Complete the recommendation

Complete each gap with a comparative or superlative form.

1. If you have only one day in my city, go to the ____ (old) market — it's ____ (colourful) than any museum, and ____ (cheap) too.

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2. The metro is ____ (fast) than a taxi, and ____ (safe) at night. But taxis are ____ (comfortable), especially in the rain.

Listening · A local vs a tourist

A tourist and a local run into each other at a viewpoint. The tourist is on day 2 of a 4-day trip; the local has lived there for 20 years.

pre

When you visit a new city, do you ask locals for recommendations, or use apps?

What is the ONE recommendation you always give tourists in your city?

gist

1. Where does the conversation take place?

2. How long has Voice B lived in the city?

3. What is Voice B's number-one recommendation?

detail

1. What is the tourist doing right — according to Voice B?

2. What tourist trap does Voice B warn her about?

3. What does Voice B say is the BEST time of day in the city?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

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1. Does Voice B like the city or is he tired of it?

2. Do the tourist and the local click? How do you know?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Skip the one on the main square." — warns against a specific place

"Two streets behind it, tiny family place." — gives a precise, local alternative

"Around sunset is the most beautiful." — superlative recommendation with a time

"That's how you actually see a city." — friendly compliment on the tourist's approach

"You're on the right track." — informal reassurance / encouragement

Voice A: Wow — the view from up here is incredible. How much of the city can you see?

Voice B: On a clear day like this, all of it. Even the port. First time in the city?

Voice A: Second day. I've been walking everywhere and asking locals what to eat.

Voice B: That's how you actually see a city. You're on the right track. Twenty years I've lived here, and I still hear people miss the good stuff.

Voice A: Give me ONE tip. Just one.

Voice B: Fine. See that big restaurant on the main square with the red awnings? Skip it. More expensive, worse food, tourists only. Two streets behind it, there's a tiny family place — no sign, just a wooden door. The mother cooks, the son serves, everything on the menu is under €15.

Voice A: Is it better than the one on the square?

Voice B: It's not as pretty inside, but the food is much better. Much.

Voice A: One more — what's the best time of day in this city?

Voice B: Around sunset. Come back up here at 8. The light on the buildings — it's the most beautiful thing you'll see this week. I promise.

Voice A: Give me your Instagram. I want to send you a photo when I do it.

Voice B: Done. And send me the photo of the plate at that little restaurant too.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Listen again and complete the exact phrases.

1. That's how you ____ see a city.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Skip it — more expensive, ____ food, tourists only.

3. It's not as ____ inside, but the food is much better.

4. The light on the buildings is the ____ ____ thing you'll see this week.

Speaking · Your 60-second city guide

In pairs, take turns being 'the local'. Give your partner a 60-second personal guide to your city. You MUST use at least 2 comparatives, 1 superlative and 1 'not as ... as' construction.

Scene: A tourist has ONE day in your city — where do you send them?

A: You: the local with strong opinions.

B: You: the tourist with limited time; ask 3 real questions.

Scene: A friend is moving to your city next month

A: You: warn about the neighbourhood traps.

B: You: the future resident; ask about rent, transport, weekends.

Scene: An old classmate hasn't visited your city in 10 years

A: You: describe what's changed and what's stayed the same.

B: You: reminisce — 'is X still there?'

Discussion · places

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What is the biggest difference between your hometown and the last city you visited?

If you could move to another country tomorrow, which one — and what would you miss most from home?

Do you prefer big cities or small towns? Why?

What is one 'tourist trap' in your city that you always warn people about?

Role-play · The wrong recommendation

Read your role card, prepare, then run the conversation for 2 minutes.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: Yesterday you recommended a restaurant. It was terrible. Your friend is angry.

A: You: the recommender. Apologise, explain (it used to be great), and give a much better alternative.

B: You: the friend who had the bad meal. Complain politely but honestly, and demand a better choice for tomorrow.

Mini-presentation · 60-second postcard

Prepare and deliver a 60-second 'postcard' from your city to someone who has never visited.

Beat 1 (10s) — Name the city + one big number (population, age, altitude).

Beat 2 (15s) — The most beautiful thing to see (superlative).

Beat 3 (20s) — One 'hidden gem' AND one 'tourist trap' (comparative).

Beat 4 (15s) — Your final piece of advice for their first day.

sample: Welcome to São Paulo — 22 million people, and yes, that's more than the whole of Portugal. The most beautiful thing to see is easily Ibirapuera Park at sunset — the light on the lake is unreal. My hidden gem is a tiny Japanese place in Liberdade — Restaurant Kinoshita — better than any big-name sushi place in the city and half the price. The tourist trap? Any restaurant on Paulista Avenue with pictures of food outside. Skip. My final advice: don't try to see everything. Pick one neighbourhood a day and walk. That's how you actually meet São Paulo.

Writing · A short travel post

Write 80–100 words for a travel blog about your favourite place in your city. Include: (a) at least 2 comparatives, (b) 1 superlative, (c) one 'hidden gem' recommendation.

bonus: Bonus — Write the same recommendation as a single tweet (max 280 characters).

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

Short adjectives → -er / -est. Long adjectives → more / the most.

'Not as ... as' softens the comparison.

The 'hometown paradox' — you know your own place better than any guide ever will.

A good local recommendation always includes ONE 'skip this' and ONE 'go here instead'.

Quiz

1. Choose the correct sentence.

- (A) Vienna is more colder than Lisbon.
- (B) Vienna is colder than Lisbon.
- (C) Vienna is coldest than Lisbon.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. "This is ____ restaurant in the city."
(A) the best
(B) the better
(C) the most best
3. "My old flat wasn't ____ ____ this one."
(A) as big as
(B) big as
(C) bigger as
4. 'Hidden gem' means...
(A) a real diamond
(B) a wonderful place few tourists know
(C) a very expensive shop
5. Choose the correct superlative.
(A) the more beautiful
(B) the beautifulest
(C) the most beautiful

Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary recall

Complete each sentence with the best word.

1. Write ONE new word from the lesson and its meaning in your own words.

2. Write ONE collocation from the lesson and use it in a sentence about your life.

3. Write ONE phrase you'd use in real conversation this week.

2. Grammar practice · Comparatives / superlatives

Rewrite each sentence using the target grammar of this lesson.

1. Sentence 1 → rewrite it correctly with the target grammar.

2. Sentence 2 → rewrite it correctly with the target grammar.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Sentence 3 → find and fix ONE mistake.

4. Sentence 4 → complete the gap with the correct form.

5. Sentence 5 → write your own example, true about you.

3. Reading recall

Look back at the class-book reading. Answer briefly in your own words.

1. What was the main idea in ONE sentence?

2. What is ONE opinion of the writer you agree with?

3. What is ONE opinion you disagree with, and why?

4. Listening · a follow-up dialogue

Two voices talk about places for about a minute. Notice the target grammar in use.

1. What is the main topic of the conversation?

2. Who sounds more confident and why?

3. Which target-grammar phrase appears TWICE in the audio?

Voice A: So — tell me about your places this week. Anything different?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Voice B: Honestly, yes. I've been trying something new — and it's changed how I feel completely.

Voice A: Give me one specific example — I want the small detail, not the big story.

Voice B: OK: I stopped checking my phone before bed. Just that. And I already sleep better.

5. Writing · a short reflection

Write 70–100 words about the theme of this lesson. Use at least 2 examples of the target grammar and 3 words from the vocabulary list.

6. Reflection

Look back at your notes from class. Answer briefly.

1. What is ONE thing from this lesson you already use naturally?

2. What is ONE thing you'd like to practise more this week? How exactly?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Guess the city

1. Vienna, Austria.
2. Lisbon, Portugal.
3. São Paulo, Brazil.
4. Singapore.
5. Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Reading · The hometown paradox

1. (B) It's boring, quiet, small
2. (B) You dislike your hometown but miss it when away
3. (A) Impossible to buy
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (C) Not Given
1. Model: the smell of coffee from the corner bakery at 7 a.m., the way the light turns gold in October, and the taxi driver who always calls me 'chefe'.
2. Model: probably Lisbon — the light, the food, the sea. But I know I'd miss my São Paulo bakery within a month.
1. paradox
2. worth the wait
3. impossible to buy

Vocabulary · Describing places

1. breathtaking
2. hidden gem
3. tourist trap
4. dilapidated
5. outskirts
6. crowded
1. (D) peaceful
2. (D) pillow
3. (D) sing
1. picturesque
2. peaceful
3. crowded
4. beautiful

Grammar · Comparatives & superlatives

1. cheaper
2. the best
3. smaller / brighter
4. the most beautiful
5. worse
6. the fastest
1. Lisbon is not as cold as Vienna.
2. My old flat was not as big as my new one.
3. The bus is not as fast as the metro.
4. Saturday lunch is not as expensive as Sunday brunch.
1. This is the most crowded market I've ever seen.
2. Rio is warmer than London.
3. It's the worst coffee in the city.
4. Vienna is colder than Lisbon. (Or: Lisbon is not as cold as Vienna.)
1. Model: My hometown is much smaller than Brasília.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Model: Summer here is hotter than winter, but winter is greyer.
3. Model: My favourite café serves better coffee than any chain café in the city.
1. Model: Paulista Avenue on a Sunday afternoon is the most crowded place in São Paulo.
2. Model: The best local dish is coxinha, hands down.
3. Model: Marginal Tietê at 6 p.m. is the worst area for traffic.
1. oldest / more colourful / cheaper
2. faster / safer / more comfortable

Listening · A local vs a tourist

1. At a viewpoint high above the city — you can hear seagulls and wind.
2. Twenty years — he moved for university and never left.
3. Skip the famous restaurant near the cathedral and go to a small family place two streets behind it.
1. Walking everywhere and asking locals — he says that's how you actually see a city.
2. The restaurant right on the main square — 'more expensive, worse food, tourists only.'
3. Around sunset — 'the light on the buildings is the most beautiful thing you'll see this week.'
1. He clearly still loves it — the way he describes the light at sunset gives him away.
2. Yes — they end up exchanging Instagram handles and joking about the tourist trap.
1. actually
2. worse
3. pretty
4. most beautiful

Quiz

1. (B) Vienna is colder than Lisbon.
2. (A) the best
3. (A) as big as
4. (B) a wonderful place few tourists know
5. (C) the most beautiful

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary recall

1. Open answer — check with your teacher.
2. Open answer.
3. Open answer.

2. Grammar practice · Comparatives / superlatives

1. Model answer — see class notes.
2. Model answer — see class notes.
3. Model answer — see class notes.
4. Model answer — see class notes.
5. Open answer.

3. Reading recall

1. Open answer — around 15 words.
2. Open answer.
3. Open answer — 2 sentences.

4. Listening · a follow-up dialogue

1. Model: both speakers compare their own experience of places.
2. Open answer — look for specific detail and full sentences.
3. Open answer — see transcript.

6. Reflection

1. Open answer.
2. Open answer — be specific: what, when, how often.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class