

Chatterbox #200 – Hiking up Mount Fuji

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne talk about Andrew's summer trip to Japan and his hike up Mount Fuji. Join them and improve your conversational English skills!

Fun fact

Mount Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan and has been designated a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- At hand
- To haul butt
- To shave off
- To hoof it
- To put your head down



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hello everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And my name is Suzanne.

Andrew: And you are listening to Culips. Hey, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew. How are you?

Andrew: Suzanne, I'm so happy.

Suzanne: You are?

Andrew: Yeah, I just realized that this is our 200th Chatterbox episode here at Culips. Our 200th episode!

Suzanne: That's amazing!

Andrew: Can you believe it?

Suzanne: No! That ... I mean, I knew we talked a lot, but I didn't think we'd talk for 200 episodes already.

Andrew: Yeah, 200 Chatterbox episodes. So I'm pretty impressed you know. This is a big number. We're definitely getting up there with episode production.

Suzanne: Wow, that's something to be proud of. That's an accomplishment.

Andrew: Absolutely. And of course, Chatterbox, if you don't know by now—and guys, you probably should know what Chatterbox is by now after 200 episodes, come on—but Chatterbox is the series where we have natural conversations. And we let all you English learners out there listen in. Today, actually, our topic is a continuation of where we ended last time, talking about my summer vacation and my day in Beijing.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: But after Beijing, I went to Canada for a couple of weeks to see my family and friends. Then after that, this is when the real vacation started. And I got to go to Japan, and so today, we'll chat about something I did while I was in Japan. And that was climb Mount Fuji.

Suzanne: Wow, that's pretty exciting. I'm very excited to hear about this, Andrew.

- Andrew: Suzanne, have you ever been to Japan?
- Suzanne: No, I've never been. I've been to Asia, but not Japan. And that's one of the places I really would like to go.
- Andrew: I had never been to Japan either. Even though I've lived in Korea for, man, almost 5 years now.
- Suzanne: Wow.
- Andrew: Surprisingly, I had never been to Japan. So I finally got to cross that off my bucket list and visit. And one of the things that I was super, super excited to do was climb Mount Fuji.
- Suzanne: Now, I have a question: is Mount Fuji maybe the highest mountain in Japan? What makes it so special?
- Andrew: I think there are several reasons why it's special. And you're absolutely right that it is the highest mountain in Japan.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: I wrote this down because, just in case it came up, I wanted to have the information **at hand**. It is 3,776 metres tall.
- Suzanne: Wow.
- Andrew: So, it's a pretty high mountain.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: So because of its height, it's famous. But I think the other reason is it's absolutely gorgeous. There's no mountain quite like it. You know, if you think of Japan, it's kind of the iconic Japanese image, isn't it? Mount Fuji, just sitting there in all its glory.
- Suzanne: Wow. Did you have, like, "I want to conquer that mountain" urge? Did you have that kind of urge? Or what was it that was really inspiring you, calling you?
- Andrew: Well, I just like hiking, honestly. I enjoy hiking a lot, and I've climbed many mountains in Korea. Hiking is super popular in Korea because this country is comprised of about 70% mountains.
- Suzanne: Wow.
- Andrew: So there's great hiking in Korea.

Suzanne: Didn't know that.

Andrew: But the mountains aren't that high here, and Mount Fuji seemed like the next step up.

Suzanne: Nice.

Andrew: It's not like a huge, huge mountain, but it's still an impressive size. Actually, it was funny going back to what we talked about in the last episode about my trip to Beijing.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: Remember I told you that I was stuck on the tarmac for about 5 hours?

Suzanne: Yes, that's right.

Andrew: Well, some of the people that were sitting around me in the airplane were mountain climbers. We got to chatting, just because, you know, you're sitting in an airplane together for 5 hours stuck. You're gonna start chatting, and they were on their way to climb Mount Everest.

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: And so I was like, "Hey guys, you know, I'm on my way to climb Mount Fuji." And they all laughed. They're like, "Oh yeah, that's nice. That's really cute." So it's not like one of those super duper, intense mountains where you need a bunch of equipment to climb. But it's still, you know, it's a mountain for sure.

Suzanne: Yeah, yeah. Very cool. So tell us about what it was like getting there, your experience.

Andrew: Sure, so my friend and I travelled together in Japan. And when we arrived in Japan, we first visited Tokyo, stayed there for about 5 days, and then we headed to go climb Mount Fuji. But this whole trip was very impromptu. We didn't do a lot of planning. We didn't do a lot scheduling, which was good and bad. There are good aspects to that and bad aspects to that. And so one of the bad aspects to that was we decided, "Oh, we should climb Mount Fuji tomorrow," when we were sitting in Tokyo. We're like, "Let's do it tomorrow!" And we didn't really realize how long it would take us to get to the mountain. So we left Tokyo in the morning. By the time we got to the little city that's close to the mountain, dropped our bags off at the guest house, and then actually got to the base of the mountain, it was around three in the afternoon, 2:30–3:00.

Suzanne: OK. Wow.

- Andrew: Now, the problem is that it takes a long time to get up and down this mountain. I had texted one of my friends who visited Japan last year and asked him, “Hey, how long did it take you to get up and down Mount Fuji?” He said 9 hours.
- Suzanne: Oh my gosh.
- Andrew: This is a long time. But the biggest problem is that the last bus from the base of the mountain back to the little city where we’re staying, called Fujiyoshida, this bus, the last one leaves at 9 o’clock. So we had about 6 and a half to 6 hours to get up and down. But my friend had told me that it took 9 hours, so we’re kinda panicking a little bit. Like, “Is my friend just out of shape, or does it actually take that long?”
- Suzanne: Right.
- Andrew: So because we were so disorganized with our travel plans that day, we really had **to haul butt** up the mountain.
- Suzanne: Oh gosh.
- Andrew: So we were like, “Challenge accepted!” Let’s see if we can do this and catch the last bus.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and **shave 3 hours off** your other friend’s time.
- Andrew: Right, so we got to it. We just **hoofed it** as fast as we could.
- Suzanne: I’m just thinking I would be like ... I would be the old lady like, “Y’all go ahead.” I wouldn’t be able **to hoof it** up the mountain. I’d be having a cocktail at the base, being like, “I’ll see you later.”
- Andrew: There were many, many, many people climbing the mountain. Like, it’s a huge tourist draw, so at the base, it was a little frustrating.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: Just because there were long lines of people, of all shapes and sizes and ages, climbing the mountain, and they’re kinda blocking the path. As you go up the mountain, there are several resting stages, resting points.
- Suzanne: OK.
- Andrew: Where there is accommodation, so a lot of people climb up to one of these resting points. And they stay the night in one of these huts, and then in the morning, they get up and watch the sunrise. That’s one of the big, cool things to do. But of course, like I said, we were disorganized. And all of the huts had long been reserved and sold out. So there was no space for us to

sleep, so this is why it was really vital that we get to the top, get to the bottom.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh. You guys are scaring me. I'm so nervous.

Andrew: We were a little frustrated at the speed of the other hikers, but we just tried to pass them. And yeah, we just **put our heads down** and really just tried to go up as fast as we could. And it was tough. I was really, really, really tired by the time I got to the top. I was exhausted.

Suzanne: Oh my God.

Andrew: I was absolutely pooped. And the oxygen is much lower. The oxygen level is much lower at the top. So I had read on the internet that some people could become sick because of this. When I was going up, I passed people who were actually breathing in from those oxygen canisters, you know, that you can attach to your face.

Suzanne: When I was in Colorado, they sell them in all the little stores, like in the bodega or like little deli or whatever. They're everywhere, like gift shops, wineries—they just sell canisters of oxygen. And I was like, "What is that?" But yeah, the elevation is so high. Just the living elevation is high, meaning even before you climb mountains, just the base elevation is super high. So you're kind of already starting out at a higher elevation than you would normally be at if you live, especially in a city, that is, you know, considered sea level.

Andrew: Sea level, yes.

Suzanne: Yeah. So yes, I know a lot about the oxygen canisters that you can buy.

Andrew: Yeah so, I saw people using those, and I didn't feel any effects of the lack of oxygen at the top. I didn't notice that at all. So that was a good thing 'cause that possibly could've slowed me down.

Suzanne: It could be really detrimental to your health those effects.

Andrew: It's something to take seriously.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: And I didn't take it seriously. But thankfully, it was OK.

Suzanne: That's good. Well, you're a healthy guy, so that's good.

Andrew: So I got to the top, and thankfully, my friend who I was travelling with—well, maybe not thankfully, but at least it was nice for me—I was ahead of him. You know, I didn't wanna slow down and wait for him, so I just kept going

when he wanted to take a little break. So that meant that when I got to the top, I was able to rest and wait for him to get to the top.

Suzanne: Oh, that's good.

Andrew: But I took a break at the top. I ate a sandwich. We took some pictures. Actually, I filmed a little video clip and posted it to the Culips Facebook page. So if anybody's curious about what it looks like on the top of Mount Fuji, you can visit [Facebook.com/CulipsPodcastto](https://www.facebook.com/CulipsPodcastto) to check out that clip.

Suzanne: That's so cool.

Andrew: The scenery was amazing, just a really, really beautiful place. And of course, Mount Fuji is a volcano. So there's a crater at the top, so it was cool to look into the crater.

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: I have never done that before. That was a first, looking into a crater of a volcano. The crater, of course, is the hole at the top of the volcano where, when the eruption occurred, all that material was blown out and then there's the hole. So you can look down into the crater. Of course, it's roped off, but still it was a crater.

Suzanne: Did you see like the lava inside or no?

Andrew: No, I wish. That'd be awesome.

Suzanne: Ah, gosh. I just, wow. I'd love to see that in person, but not too close, not too close.

Andrew: Not too close.

Suzanne: So you got to the top. You ate a sandwich.

Andrew: Ate a sandwich.

Suzanne: You saw the view and then?

Andrew: I got to describe the top here a little bit 'cause it's funny. In typical Japanese fashion, there are vending machines at the top of Mount Fuji.

Suzanne: What?

Andrew: Yeah, there's three or four vending machines. So if you're dying for, I don't know ...

Suzanne: A Snickers?

Andrew: Ah, they just had drinks. It's weird.

Suzanne: Oh, OK.

Andrew: Yeah, so like cola, you know. But we got to the top. We didn't rest long, and then it was time to head back down. And actually, for me when I hike, going up is the easy part. It's going down that I hate 'cause it's just a lot of wear and tear on your knees, just constant wear and tear on your knees. So I don't like going down the mountains, but I mean, it was a lot easier in terms of the cardio work out. It was pretty straightforward going down. So we got down in, I'd say, in a third of the time that it took us to go up.

Suzanne: Wow, that's amazing.

Andrew: The scenery going down was really, really beautiful. There are, I believe, five lakes that surround Mount Fuji, and we could clearly see one of the lakes. And so that was gorgeous. And just there's lots of beautiful landscapes that you can see from the top. And the dirt that is on Mount Fuji is really rich, red dirt.

Suzanne: Oh, wow.

Andrew: And it's super soft and fluffy. So actually, instead of walking down, we were able to slide down the mountain, like, almost like we were snowboarding. It's a little bit difficult to describe, but I was super thankful for that because it saved my knees, just being able to slide down.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah, but it was great. And by the time we got down, we had finished the hike in 5 hours and 50 minutes.

Suzanne: Wow. High five! You did it.

Andrew: We didn't even have to rush for the last bus. We were able to get the second last bus, so we really kicked some butt. We were proud of ourselves, and we had a great time power hiking Mount Fuji.

Suzanne: Wow, what was, like, the one thing that you take away from the mountain experience that you had—the Mount Fuji experience? Like, what was your favourite part?

Andrew: Well, I had two favourite parts, I guess. The first would just be doing it because it had always been something that I wanted to do. So to cross that off my bucket list felt super good. And the second was the challenge of having to do it within a tight time constraint.

Suzanne: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: So yeah, that was another thing that made me feel happy.

Suzanne: On this climb of Mount Fuji, did you guys have good weather or no?

Andrew: Japan in the summer is extremely hot.

Suzanne: OK.

Andrew: I really just wanted to wear shorts and a tank top for the hike 'cause it was so hot. But I had read online to never do that. It's a terrible idea to wear shorts. So I wore pants and a T-shirt, and I packed a light jacket as well because I read that it can be quite chilly at the top.

Suzanne: Sure.

Andrew: My friend that I was travelling with, my travel companion, he just laughed at that and said, "Ha, I'm wearing shorts." So he wore shorts, and the weather is very volatile there.

Suzanne: Yeah, so going from like one extreme to the other, kind of back and forth.

Andrew: Absolutely, it changes every 5 minutes. So it would be sunny for 5 minutes. It looked like it was gonna pour rain for the next 5 minutes. The wind was quite strong, and unfortunately, there was cloud cover for most of the time that we were there. I never actually got to see that iconic Mount Fuji scene from the bottom, where you're looking up at the mountain, 'cause it was just too cloudy.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: But yeah, it was like the internet had warned. It was cold on top. It was probably about, I don't know, 33–34 degrees at the bottom. And probably under 10 degrees at the top.

Suzanne: Wow.

Andrew: So there was quite a change.

Suzanne: So what did your friend say? The one that was laughing at you that wore shorts.

Andrew: Well, he was ... He continued to laugh at me 'cause you know Canadians. He's Canadian as well. We can deal with 10 degrees, like it's not that cold for us. So he was really comfortable the whole time wearing shorts, and I was actually quite uncomfortable in my pants. And I regretted my decision

too. If I did it again, I would be wearing shorts for sure. Maybe I would pack the pants just in case.

Suzanne: Yeah, just in case. Or you know, Olivier has these pants that kinda zip at the knee. So they're, like, hiking pants that you can unzip the bottom part of the leg off. So they can become shorts. Those are handy for when you're hiking.

Andrew: Super handy, yeah. I wish I had something like that. So if I went and did it again, I would bring that. But yeah, guys, that's my experience hiking Mount Fuji. And if you ever get the chance to do it, I would recommend it. It's a really beautiful thing to do in Japan and a great way to spend a day.

Thank you for listening today everybody. I hope you enjoyed my story about Mount Fuji, and I would like to tell you about Culips membership. If you are interested in taking your English to the next level and you want to really dig down and study hard with Culips, then the best way to do that is by becoming a Culips member. And when you're a member, you get access to our learning materials, which is kind of, like, a custom study guide that we write for each and every Culips episode. And so the learning materials include a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and also a quiz. So if you're interested in signing up and becoming a Culips member, just check our website, Culips.com. Suzanne, we're also on social media, aren't we?

Suzanne: Yes, we are. We are on Facebook, so you can send us a message on Facebook. We'd love to hear your comments, so please keep in touch with us. And you can find us there at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast.

Andrew: Guys, we will be back soon with another new episode. Hey, it was the 200th episode, and thanks for being part of this journey. We got lots of good stuff to come in the future, so stay tuned for that. And we'll talk to you soon. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

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Detailed Explanations

At hand

When something is **at hand**, it is close by or nearby. In this episode, Andrew mentions that he wanted to have information about Mount Fuji's height **at hand**. That is, he made a note about Mount Fuji's height, and he kept the note close to him so that he could easily share the mountain's height with Suzanne and Culips listeners. So **at hand** means nearby or easily accessible.

The expression handy means the same thing as **at hand**. In other words, handy means close or readily available. For example, if you're talking to someone on the phone and they ask, "Do you have a pen handy?," they're asking if you have a pen ready. So if you ask someone if something is handy, you are asking them if that something is nearby or available.

Handy is a more casual expression than **at hand**, but both mean the same thing.

Here are a couple more examples with **at hand**:

Christina:	Do you remember when we were having coffee last week, and you told me you were having your house painted?
Grant:	I sure do. The painters did an excellent job.
Christina:	I want to give them a call and see if they can paint my house. Do you have their phone number at hand ?
Grant:	I do. I'll text it to you right now.

Customer:	How long is the warranty on this car?
Salesman:	I don't have that information at hand , but I can look it up for you quickly. Do you mind waiting just a moment?
Customer:	No problem, take your time.

To haul butt

To haul butt means to move really fast, so you won't be late. In this episode, Andrew says that he had to **haul butt** up Mount Fuji, so he wouldn't miss the last bus. In other words, he had to climb and descend the mountain quickly or he would miss the bus.

The expression **to haul butt** is best understood if it is broken down. To haul means to pull. Butt is the slang expression for a human's rear end; in the expression **to haul butt**, it represents the entire body. So when someone **hauls butt**, they pull their whole body in order to move quickly and avoid being late or missing a deadline.

To haul butt is a very common spoken expression. It is extremely casual and shouldn't be used in formal situations.

To haul ass is an alternative expression. It means the same thing as **to haul butt**, but can be considered rude. When talking to people who aren't your close friends, you should be careful not to offend them by saying, "**Haul ass!**"

To recap, when you **haul butt** or **haul ass**, you move, work, or do something quickly so that you won't be late.

Here are a couple more examples with **to haul butt**:

Nolan:	What a morning!
Melissa:	Why? Was there a big traffic jam?
Nolan:	No, I slept in. I had to haul butt to the office.
Melissa:	But you made it in time?
Nolan:	Yeah, just barely!

Renee and Todd are supposed to meet up to see a show. Todd still hasn't arrived, so Renee calls him.

Renee:	Where are you? The band's about to start.
Todd:	I'm on my way. I should be there soon.
Renee:	Haul your butt down here! You're going to miss the show.

To shave off

To shave off is a phrasal verb that means to reduce either the amount of time something takes or the amount of something. In this episode, Suzanne says that Andrew would have **to shave 3 hours off** the time it took his friend to climb Mount Fuji, or he'd miss his bus home. In other words, Andrew would have to take 3 hours less to climb Mount Fuji than his friend. Because Andrew's friend climbed Mount Fuji in 9 hours, Andrew would need to climb it in 6 hours ($9 - 3 = 6$). So if a quantity or time is reduced, it is **shaved off**.

Imagine a carpenter working with a block of wood. In order to carve the wood into the desired shape, the carpenter needs **to shave little pieces of wood off** the block. The size of the block becomes smaller with each shave. This is the imagery behind the expression **to shave off**. Just like the size of the block of wood becomes smaller as the carpenter shaves pieces of wood off the block, the verb **to shave off** means to make an amount or quantity smaller.

Usually, **to shave off** is used to talk about reducing something by a very small amount. For example, an Olympic athlete might **shave off** a tenth of a second from a world record, or someone might **shave off** their credit card debt by making their minimum monthly payments.

Like all phrasal verbs, **to shave off** is informal and not used often in formal writing. It is a separable phrasal verb, meaning the object can go in between the verb and preposition, or after the preposition. For example, **shave 3 hours off** and **shave off 3 hours** are both correct.



Here's one more example with **to shave off**:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Travis: | You should take a left-hand turn at the next intersection. |
| Fanny: | Why? That's not the way I usually go. |
| Travis: | This way is much faster! I recently started taking the service road home, and I was able to shave 5 minutes off my commute. |
| Fanny: | OK, left it is! |

To hoof it

To hoof it is an informal expression that means to walk somewhere. When you travel by foot, you **hoof it**. In this episode, Andrew says that he had to **hoof it** to the top of Mount Fuji as fast as he could in order to not miss his bus.

However, there is a slight difference between the meanings of **to walk** and **to hoof it**. When you walk, you simply go somewhere by foot. When you **hoof it**, you have to walk because you have no other options available. For example, if you miss the last subway home, you have **to hoof it**. You have to walk home because the train is no longer running. Likewise, if your car breaks down, you have **to hoof it**, unless you can find alternative transportation.

Andrew had to **hoof it** to the top of Mount Fuji because walking is the only way to get to the top of the mountain.

You may be wondering what a hoof is. A hoof means a foot covered in horn. For example, a horse's foot is called a hoof. The feet of certain animals—horses, sheep, pigs, oxen—are covered in a tough material (horn) that protects their toes. These animals have no way to transport themselves other than walking. So just like these animals, when humans **hoof it**, they walk somewhere because other transportation options are unavailable.

Here are a couple more examples with **to hoof it**:

Clay:	Could you give me a ride to school?
Bill:	Sorry buddy, I'm already late. I don't have time to drive you.
Clay:	I guess I'll have to hoof it .
Bill:	Enjoy the walk! The fresh air will be good for you.

Janet:	How are you feeling today?
Lyle:	Not great. I've got a brutal hangover.
Janet:	You drank a lot last night at the party.
Lyle:	Yeah, way too much.
Janet:	By the way, how did you get home? You were in no condition to drive.
Lyle:	I left my car at the party and just hoofed it home . I'll go pick it up this afternoon.

To put your head down

To put your head down means to try really hard or to put a lot of effort into doing something. In this episode, Andrew says that he **put his head down** and climbed Mount Fuji as quickly as possible. In other words, he put all of his effort and concentration into climbing Mount Fuji.

When you **put your head down**, you focus on doing something. You don't look out the window or enjoy the view. Instead, your attention is completely focused on doing a task. Culips members are awesome at **putting their heads down** and studying English. In fact, **putting your head down** and studying every day is one of the best ways to become a better English speaker.

The expression **to put your head down** can also mean to go to sleep. For example, after a long day at work, you might come home and say to your partner, "I'm really tired. I'm just going to **put my head down** for a couple of minutes." This means you intend to take a short nap.

Remember context is everything! Because the expression **to put your head down** can have two totally opposite meanings—to work hard or to sleep—always pay close attention to the context of the conversation.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put your head down**:

Pam:	I can't wait for summer vacation! It seems so far away, though.
Frank:	That's just because you've got so many assignments due before the end of the semester. Just put your head down and get them done. Before you know it, it'll be vacation time.

Sophia:	Did you hear John got promoted?
Trent:	Yeah. Good for him!
Sophia:	Right? Hard work sure pays off.
Trent:	Definitely. John's always been one to put his head down and work like a dog. Now he's getting his reward.

Quiz

1. What does to put your head down mean?

- a) to ignore someone
- b) to expect a good result
- c) to work hard
- d) to daydream

2. Something that is at hand is located _____.

- a) above you
- b) near to you
- c) away to you
- d) under you

3. In which of the following situations would you most likely have to haul butt?

- a) you arrive at work early
- b) you have a free schedule
- c) you have no plans
- d) you overslept for work

4. Fill in the blanks.

**Pete: I'm so happy. I played the best round of golf of my entire life! I _____
two points from my best score.**

- a) shaved up
- b) shaved off
- c) shaved on
- d) shaved over

5. What does to hoof it mean?

- a) to leap
- b) to jog
- c) to run
- d) to walk

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.b 3.d 4.b 5.d

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