

Chatterbox #296 – Anna’s trip to Scotland

Episode description

Have you ever travelled abroad during summer vacation? Depending on where you travel, summer can be one of the best times to take a trip. In this episode, Andrew and Anna talk about Anna’s trip to Scotland during the summer. Listen to this Chatterbox episode to hear about the food, sites, weather, and more that Anna experienced on her trip.

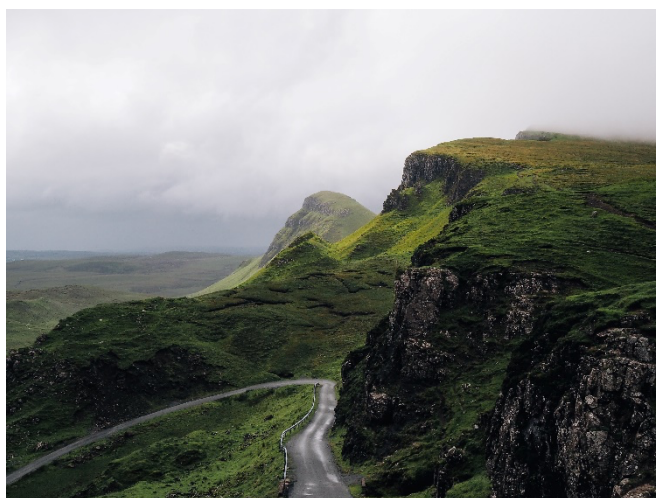
Chatterbox is a series of natural conversations between two native English speakers about diverse and interesting topics. This series is designed to help intermediate and advanced English learners improve their listening and speaking ability in a fun and engaging way.

Fun fact

In this episode, Anna and Andrew talk about haggis, one of Scotland’s most iconic foods. There is a myth about haggis that some travellers may hear, which is that haggis is a small four-legged creature with a mane that is hunted in the Highlands of Scotland. Most people know this is not true, but if you ever have the opportunity to eat haggis you may also end up hearing this legend!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To recharge (one’s) batteries
- To take it away
- Picky and choosy
- Quite the hike
- Bucket list
- Achilles’ heel



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everyone, my name is Andrew.

Anna: And my name is Anna.

Andrew: And you're listening to the Culips English Podcast.

Hello, listeners. Welcome back to Culips. You're listening to Chatterbox, which is our series for intermediate and advanced English learners that features natural, unedited conversations between native speakers about an interesting topic. Today, I'm joined by my cohost, Anna. Hello, Anna.

Anna: Hi, everyone, and hello, Andrew. I hope you're all doing very well.

Andrew: Anna, it's good to be back here with you again. We took a couple of months off during the summer **to recharge our batteries**—during the summer and actually into the fall, as well. But we're back now and I'm excited to start recording more great Chatterbox episodes with you again.

Anna: Absolutely. So, Andrew, I know that our listeners know all about how you spent your summer, but they probably don't know too much about how I spent the last few months.

Andrew: Yeah, and I don't want to bore everybody with the details about my summer again. So I thought we could focus on what you did, Anna. And, you know, I follow your Anna with 2Ns Instagram account, and you posted a couple of stories, a couple of pictures from what you got up to during the summer. But other than that, I don't really know what you did. So I thought we could catch up during this episode, and if you don't mind letting us know about what you've been up to for the last little while, I think that would be great.

Anna: Sure, of course, absolutely. But before I tell you all about that, Andrew, let's remind all the listeners about the study guide for this episode, because it could be really useful.

Andrew: Indeed. So, guys, we make study guides and transcripts for all of our episodes, and we designed them to help you build your English skills and to reach your learning goals faster. So to become a Culips Member and get unlimited access to all of our study guides, plus some fantastic bonuses, like invitations to our monthly livestreams and more, just visit [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com), our website and you can sign up.

And now let's get into our conversation Anna. So today, we're talking about how you spent your summer and early fall and what you've been up to the last few months. So, Anna, I'll let you **take it away**. What did you get up to over the last little while?

Anna: Yeah, well, summer feels like a rather long time away now. It always seems like that when you start again in September and you think what happened to my summer? Where did it go? The time seemed to pass really, really quickly. But I did kind of a little bit of a mix. I did some work. I was working a little bit and then I took a month off.

Andrew: Wow.

Anna: Which is my classic summer vacation now or holiday. Oh, I can't believe I said vacation, that's not like me.

Andrew: Is vacation a North American word?

Anna: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah.

Andrew: So, British people or in the UK, you would say holiday?

Anna: Absolutely. Yeah, guys, if you were speaking to anyone in the UK, they would definitely say holiday rather than vacation. So, I'm not really sure why I said that but anyway, vacation. So, I started doing that a couple of years ago. And for me like a month is just, it's, I'm very lucky that I can take a month. I take some unpaid leave and some paid leave, so I kind of put it all together. There's a really cool thing in Spain that everyone who's employed can have up to 2 weeks unpaid leave per year. You can use it if you want to, but you have to use all of it at the same time.

Andrew: Oh, interesting.

Anna: Yeah. So, I kind of stick it all together and I take off a month. And that for me is like the perfect time to really disconnect, because for me a month, or sorry a week is not really long enough because I'm still thinking about when I'm going to be going back. So, 1 month

gives you enough time to actually relax and think, OK, maybe I just want to read a book or I don't know, whatever. So, I had a month off and I actually went to Scotland. I don't know if you've ever been to Scotland, Andrew?

Andrew: I have been one time in 2019, right before the pandemic. The summer before the pandemic I visited Scotland only for, like, 4 days I think I spent in Scotland total. So, it wasn't very long, short but sweet. But, yeah, it was fantastic. I really enjoyed it.

Anna: Where did you go? Where did you visit?

Andrew: I visited the classics, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and I went to my mom's hometown, which is called Dunoon, and I visited my cousin there. And I got to see a lot of cool stuff like where my grandparents grew up, like my grandma's house, my grandpa's house and some other family like areas in this small town. So it was a really meaningful trip. It was really special, I think.

Anna: Yeah, and if you guys don't know, so Scotland, well, above England, just to clarify that and there's loads of amazing places. You've probably heard of Edinburgh. Edinburgh is really, really famous. It also has an amazing festival in August, the Fringe Festival. And you've got Edinburgh, another big city is Glasgow. And then at the top of Scotland, Scotland's actually got the Highlands, which are right, right at the very top. So, if you look on a map, and you look at the UK, the Highlands are right at the top, and then you've got like other islands as well, like you've got the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands that are way up there in the North Sea. So, all of that is part of Scotland, but I actually went to the Highlands. The furthest I've ever been to the top of the UK, so right up there in that last tiny slice of Scotland at the top, near Inverness.

Andrew: Wow, that's amazing. I actually wanted to go up north. Like, I wanted to spend more time in Scotland, but unfortunately, I just didn't have enough days, there's never enough time, right? So, I had to be kind of **picky and choosy** about the places I visit. Hopefully, I'll go back again in the future and visit some of the places that I wasn't able to see.

But, Anna, how did you get way up there? Did you fly directly from Spain or did you go to London first and then kind of work your way up? Or did you fly up? Did you take the train? How do you get there, because it is quite remote, isn't it?

Anna: Yes, I would say that it's probably the most remote place I've ever been to in the UK because you have to remember that the UK has got like a big population. And we're all kind of squeezed together, especially in England. England has got the majority of the population of the UK and in Scotland, the populations around 6 million and much more spread out. So, you know, in England, you can't really find places like you can in Scotland that are really, really isolated and remote.

So, in terms of getting there, well, there's no way I could get a direct flight to Inverness from Madrid I don't think, it's not a popular route. You know, there's not people from Madrid sort of every day like, "Oh, do you know what, I'm just gonna go up to Inverness for the day." So I took the plane from Madrid, I went to Edinburgh. And then I stayed at my grandmother's house. So, I also have family from Scotland, like you, Andrew, and I stayed in Perth, which is where I was actually born, which is another city near Edinburgh, about an hour away. And then we drove from Perth to this place where we stayed and that was about 4 hours from there. So, from that place near Edinburgh to where we were going was still 4 hours driving.

Andrew: Wow. So it's **quite the hike** to get there.

Anna: Yeah, I was like, "Mom, let's not make this a regular thing, right?" You know, you're like ... It's beautiful, though. But you think, wow, it is a real nightmare to get there. I mean, you have to drive. There's like one bus and it goes once a day from Inverness.

And by the way, guys, sorry, just to be clear, Inverness is kind of the last big city before you go into the Highlands of Scotland. You may have heard of it, actually, it's quite well known and it has a train station. So you can actually get a train all the way from London right the way up to Inverness. It's like 9 hours. So, but you can actually get a train from London to Inverness. So, it's like the last big city, well, it's not really a big city. It's like the last big town.

Andrew: OK. Anna, but I have to ask you, by Scottish standard, what is a big city or a big town? Are we talking like maybe 100,000 people for a population, something like that?

Anna: That is a really good question. And you know what, I'm actually going to have a little look at that because I have no idea.

Andrew: OK. I'm gonna guess 100,000 people.

Anna: Oh, right. You might be sorely disappointed, Andrew, because it is 46,870. But that was in 2012, so that was 10 years ago. So I imagine that we're thinking more around the 50,000 mark. I don't know.

Andrew: I was way off and you were also way off by calling it a big city.

Anna: Yes, OK. All right. It's more like a town, but it is technically a city.

Andrew: OK.

Anna: So, yeah, I actually really want to do, there's a really cool thing where you can get a train from London to Inverness, and it's called the Caledonian Express. And it's where you can have a room with a bed and it's very posh and da da da and you can sort of, it's like an overnight train. So you get on the train at 9:00 at night in London and then you arrive in Inverness the next day at 8:00 in the morning. And that's on my **bucket list**, it's really expensive. So I think that will have to wait for a couple of years. But it's one thing that I really want to do. I think maybe most people's idea of spending like 500 euros would not be paying for an overnight trip on a train. But for me, it's really interesting and I really want to do it, but, well ...

Andrew: I get where you're coming from, there's something like romantic about that. It's like kind of old fashion. Like, I don't know, I get it. I think that would be fun.

Anna: Yeah. So, I went to the Highlands of Scotland. And I guess maybe some of you might be thinking, like, Outlander, like, you know, in the middle of nature. And it was exactly like that, like, it's so beautiful the landscape. And it's really hard to compare it. In fact, there's no other landscape that I've seen that's similar. I haven't seen many, many places in the world. But there's something really special about Scotland, as you said before, Andrew, there's just something, like, special about that place. And I went specifically to an area, which is the northwest of the Highlands, which is, it has mountains and so I did a lot of hiking, and it's just so peaceful as well, like it's one of those places where when there's no noise, there is actually no noise.

Andrew: Right. That's really interesting, because I think a lot of our listeners maybe haven't experienced that, because here in Asia, it's pretty hard to get out by yourself. Like there's kind of civilization everywhere, even when you're like hiking, there's other people. And you can find some solitude sometimes, but it's hard. And then like in other countries that I have been to, other Asian countries, or especially hotter countries, tropical countries,

even if you're in nature, or you're like out there by yourself, because it's so hot, there's like bugs making noises, and birds singing all the time. And it's never truly quiet. But I think maybe what you've experienced, and I've experienced some of the same thing in Canada, especially in northern Canada, where you're really out there by yourself. It's like dead quiet and it's a little bit eerie, but a really cool experience.

Anna: Yeah, and like you said, I mean, I live in a city as well. So you're always, there's like that background noise of just traffic and people and whatever. And here, just to give you a comparison, the place where I went had a population of 80 and that's probably being optimistic. I don't know where those 80 people were, but I saw about two people when I was there. So, I don't know if they're living in some kind of secret bunker, or I don't know. But I mean, there was a few cottages, so these are kind of like small houses and that was it. And it really was remote and quiet, and you know, you wake up in the morning, you go outside, and all you hear is the sea, the birds, and whatever, and that's just a different type of environment. And I, you know, I feel really lucky that I was able to go there, because it really was, it really was incredible. So, you know, I always recommend people to try and find somewhere like that. But you kind of, you think, well, I love it for a week. But to live, I don't know.

Andrew: You couldn't do it?

Anna: I mean, the closest thing to, like, you know, there was a tiny shop, like a little supermarket or grocery store maybe as we would say. And, you know, that was the only shop for 13 miles.

Andrew: Wow. Are prices quite expensive too?

Anna: It is a little bit expensive. And the another thing to say as well as is this is really popular, like tourism in this part of Scotland is really popular because they have this, there's this thing called the 500 mile something, I can't remember, which is a route of roads that kind of go 500 miles around Scotland, the top of Scotland in that Highlands thing. So it's loads of tourism, it can be a little bit expensive, but it's not outrageously expensive. But, yeah, I mean, you've got that little shop, it closes at 6:00 and if you need some pasta or something like that, well, you know, you're a little bit screwed. So it's a way of life, I mean, I think living there would be a very different feel, but to go on holiday it was just you know, incredible, really, really incredible.

Andrew: And was there any specific reason that you chose to go there?

Anna: Yes, so someone in my family rents a house there every year and so we decided to go there. It's the first time I've been there, actually. So it was great and just it was fantastic. The nature, we went hiking, you know, there was like a little beach near our house and, OK, one thing I have to be really clear about OK, because some people are probably thinking, but what was the weather like?

Andrew: Yeah, I was gonna ask you about that. Because I visited Scotland in August as well when I was there, and I was wearing a jacket and it was like raining. And, yeah, it wasn't summery according to my definition of what summer is. So, did you get lucky or were you kind of rained out? What was it like?

Anna: I got lucky. So, we had I think some of the best weather I've ever seen in my life in Scotland in summer.

Andrew: Really?

Anna: You can't imagine. It was clear blue skies and this is massive, because when you're in these parts of Scotland, it's nearly always cloudy, OK. Even if it's sunny, there's normally always a cloud in the sky. So, to have a complete sky free of clouds is, like, I don't know, I've never seen it before in my life, to be honest. And we had the consecutive days of that, so we were so, so lucky. But that was absolutely not a representation of what the weather is normally like. So normally, the weather in Scotland is grey. It's rainy, especially in August, so it rains a lot. And really, it's like the typical weather in the UK, you can have a sunny morning, then it starts raining, then it's windy, then there's a thunderstorm, then it's sunny again, then it snows. I mean, really, you can get everything in a day so it's very unsettled. But we just had, I don't know what happened, but I can't complain at all.

But there is one thing that I really don't like about Scotland. I don't know if you've heard of these things. They're very small, they have tiny wings, and they're called midges.

Andrew: Midges, midges. I probably, I haven't heard of them but I'm wondering if we have like a similar insect in Canada, we just call it a different name. Let me see. Can you describe it for me?

Anna: So, midges and this is the one kind of **Achilles' heel** about Scotland as well as the weather, obviously. But maybe the Scottish tourism board won't be very happy with me saying this. But in summer, these tiny little bugs called midges, well, actually, it's called the

Highland midge, invade Scotland, well, invade, populate. And they are these tiny, tiny, tiny little flies and they bite you. They're not mosquitoes, but they bite you. And they are everywhere, everywhere. Not in the big cities but when you're out in the countryside, and you're in nature, whatever, they are everywhere, and they swarm. So you'll get out of the house, and they'll just be like.

Andrew: Oh my god. OK, no, I don't know about this bug. This is the first time hearing about it. It sounds terrible.

Anna: They're annoying, because apparently, they sense you with carbon dioxide, right? So, once you start going outside, they can kind of see where you are and then they kind of all travel towards you. And then in one moment, you look around and they're like, all swarming around your head.

Andrew: Oh, gross.

Anna: Yeah, so this is one thing is that it's hard to kind of enjoy the outside sometimes if there are lots of midges. So, I don't know if most people know about that. That's the one thing that is just so annoying. Like you can't have your windows open. You can't be outside for too long if there are a lot of them. So, the perfect thing is you need a little bit of wind, because if there's even a tiny bit of wind, the midges can't fly and they can't like attack you and basically eat you. Because I went hiking a lot as well, they do bite you. So, you come back from the day and you've got bites, the kind of itchy bites all over your arms and things like that.

But the worst thing was is that when we were hiking, and these were some of the most difficult hikes I've ever done in my life, the worst thing was, is that you had to keep walking, because if you stayed still you get like surrounded by a cloud of these tiny little human blood eaters. And so you had to keep walking. And it was so hard because it was really difficult, it was a really difficult hike, but we couldn't take a break. So, we just had to keep walking and walking and walking and walking to get away from these things. So fun fact about Scotland there.

Andrew: Anna, I got one final question here that I'd like to ask you about and that is about food. So, I guess I have two questions. First is like, is there a distinction between English food and Scottish food? And second, is there any like local specialty food that you ate when you were in the Highlands? Like, is there anything unique just to the Highland that you tried?

Anna: I'm probably going to do it a disservice here. But I mean, yeah, there's similar dishes that we have in England and Scotland. Probably the most famous Scottish dish is haggis. But haggis is a particular meat, which people eat on Burns night, which is in January. So, it's not necessarily something that people eat all the time, but sometimes. So it's called haggis and it is a mixture of some kind of meat. It's kind of gross, but really tastes incredible.

Andrew: When I was in Scotland, actually, I was staying at like a B&B. And they had a free breakfast every morning and haggis was on the menu. It was one of the options that you could order. So, I was like, I'm just going to order it every day. I ate it every day, it was actually surprisingly good. But the name sounds kind of gross. And I don't know exactly what it is. But I heard originally, it was like a sheep's stomach that is stuffed with something. It kind of tastes almost like a sausage, like a dry sausage or something like that. But yeah, that is a typical Scottish food for sure, haggis.

Anna: It is and that's what comes to my mind. It's a typical Scottish thing. It's best not to think about what's inside it and just kind of, you know, eat it and it tastes really nice, that's the thing you've got to keep in mind. Another couple of classic things that are very Scottish, they're not necessarily foods, but the Scottish drink is Irn-Bru. So that is the iconic Scottish drink, which is a bright orange fizzy drink. It looks kind of nuclear.

Andrew: It does.

Anna: I think it's the most popular fizzy drink in Scotland. So that is like the quintessential Scottish drink. And then other things that I eat in Scotland specifically for there are like biscuits, so they have something called Tunnock's caramel wafers, and snowballs, which are like chocolate with marshmallow inside, and tea cakes. So those are some of the things, biscuits and things like this that are very, you know, come to my mind about thinking about Scotland. So yeah, yeah.

Andrew: All right. Well, I'm glad that you had a great time and that you made it back in one piece and you weren't completely eaten alive by the midges. And now that you're back in Spain, do you feel refreshed and ready to go again?

Anna: I do. I do feel refreshed. And I think it did me so much good just getting out there, being in nature, because that's one of my favourite things to do. And yeah, I think I'm really glad that I got to go there. And I definitely encourage you guys as well. If you're thinking about going to Scotland, there's some amazing places, or maybe in the future or

whatever. But there's you know, many more places apart from Edinburgh. Edinburgh is amazing but there's so many different places that you can go and see. But be careful of the midges, guys, be careful of the midges, you heard it from me first.

Andrew: Well, Anna, thank you for telling us all about your trip. And like I said, we're happy to be back and recording some more brand-new Chatterbox episodes with you. But, listeners, I think for today, that will bring us to the end of this episode.

So, thank you for listening, and congrats on getting some English listening practice in today. Great job on that. And now it's your turn to contribute to the conversation. So maybe you have a question for Anna or maybe you visited Scotland and would like to tell us about your experience. Or maybe you've just done something interesting over the summer and the early fall here as well. Get in touch with us and let us know and you can do that by leaving a comment on our website or posting on our forum.

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Anna: You can also support us by following us on Instagram or YouTube, telling your friends who are learning English to check Culips out, or by leaving us a five-star rating and a positive review on your favourite podcast app.

Andrew: We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Anna: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

To recharge (one's) batteries

Idiom

In this episode, Anna talks about how she usually takes time off during the summer to **recharge her batteries**. **To recharge (one's) batteries** means to rest and recover after being worn out. Similar to the way a cell phone or computer battery has to be recharged after a long period of use, people also have to recover after using a lot of energy. You can use this expression to talk about activities that help you recover or to refer to a period of rest.

On the other hand, the opposite expression is to **drain (one's) batteries**. Having your batteries drained means feeling exhausted or having low energy. You can use this expression to talk about anything that makes you feel tired or worn out.

Here are a couple more examples with **to recharge (one's) batteries**:

Ted: Hey, some friends and I are going to get dinner and then go watch the baseball game tonight. Do you want to join?

Sam: I think I'll pass this time. I'm way too tired from work this week. I'm just going to go home and relax. I need to **recharge my batteries** before going back into the office tomorrow.

Ted: Still a rough time at the new job? Well, that's all right. Get some rest and maybe you can join us next time.

Sam: Yeah, hopefully I'll feel energized enough to join next time.

Emma: How do you get so much work done all the time? You're like a productivity machine!

Henry: I try to exercise often, eat a healthy diet, and get a good night's sleep every night to **recharge my batteries**. That way, I feel fresh and ready to work in the morning.

Emma: Exercise? That sounds like more work, not like **recharging my batteries**!

Henry: I'm just telling you what I do to stay energized. Everyone has their own routine.

To take it away

Idiom

After introducing the topic for this episode, Andrew tells Anna that he'll let her **take it away**. **To take it away** means that someone begins a performance or an action that they were waiting to do. In the episode, Andrew is telling Anna that she can now begin telling the story of her summer trip to Scotland. This idiom is often used right before someone gives a speech, starts playing music, or begins acting on stage.

To take it away is often used by one person who is telling another person to begin some type of performance. For example, a teacher might tell a student to **take it away** and begin giving a presentation in class.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take it away**:

Kay: Hello, and welcome to our band auditions. So, you're auditioning for the lead guitarist position, right?

Greg: Yup! I've been playing the guitar for years and think I'll be a great fit for the band.

Kay: OK, let's hear how well you can play. **Take it away!**

Greg: OK, here goes!

Gail: You're late to rehearsal again!

Brian: I know, I'm sorry. I got stuck in traffic.

Gail: Please tell me you at least practiced your lines for the play this time? Last time, we wasted so much time because you didn't have your part of the play memorized. All the other actors had to wait for you.

Brian: Yeah, I completely memorized all my lines in the play this time. I'm definitely ready, I promise.

Gail: OK, get up on stage and **take it away**, then.

Brian: Oh, it's already my turn? I thought I'd have a little more time before going on stage. I feel so nervous. I think I just forgot my lines.

Picky and choosy

Phrase

In this episode, Andrew says that he had to be **picky and choosy** about the places he visited while he was in Scotland because he wasn't there for very long. **Picky and choosy** means that someone has to be strict when selecting between different options. If someone is **picky and choosy**, it means that they won't make a selection carelessly. Instead, they will consider carefully and select the best option available.

Picky and choosy comes from the two words pick and choose. Sometimes **picky and choosy** can have a negative meaning if the person is being too strict or sensitive about selecting the thing they want. For example, if a child won't eat their food, a parent might tell them to stop being so **picky and choosy** and just eat the food.

Here are a couple more examples with **picky and choosy**:

Bart: I'm so excited for our date tonight! It's been such a long time since we've been able to go out.

Symone: I know. It feels like it's been forever since we've had time to go out. Let's go somewhere special for dinner. What do you want to eat?

Bart: Anything is fine with me. I'm not too **picky and choosy** about restaurants.

Symone: But you always make me choose the restaurant. I wish you would pick one at least once.

Bart: OK, OK, fine. How about that nice lobster restaurant downtown?

Kevin: Do you get much vacation time at your new job?

Joyce: I get the standard 2 weeks. But we're a travel agency, so our busiest seasons are usually when other people are travelling the most. I have to be a little **picky and choosy** about when I use my vacation time, otherwise my boss will be upset.

Kevin: That makes sense. You wouldn't want to leave you coworkers to handle the busiest season alone.

Joyce: Fortunately, tickets are cheap in the off-season, so I don't have to be **picky and choosy** about where I travel.

Quite the hike Idiom

When you hear the word hike, you may think of walking up a mountain. But in this episode, we heard an idiom that uses the word hike in a figurative way.

In this episode, Anna says that she had to drive 4 hours to her destination, which Andrew says was **quite the hike**. **Quite the hike** means that travelling to a place is long or difficult. You can use this idiom when you want to say that walking or driving somewhere is far or hard to get to. For example, if your house is far from your office or school, you can say that travelling back and forth to your house every day is **quite the hike**.

Here are a couple more examples with **quite the hike**:

Helen: Hey! Why are you carrying a chair?

Jacob: I was walking home from the library, and I saw this chair sitting on the sidewalk with a sign next to it that said it was free. It looks like a good chair, so I decided to take it.

Helen: Where was that?

Jacob: It was over on Third Avenue, close to the library.

Helen: Third Avenue is six blocks away! You carried that chair the whole way here? That must have been **quite the hike**.

Jacob: It's a pretty light chair, so it wasn't too difficult.

Tamara: I heard you moved recently.

Bobby: Yeah, we bought a new house. We're still organizing our furniture, but we are mostly moved in now.

Tamara: Congratulations! Where is the house?

Bobby: It's over on the edge of town near the lake.

Tamara: That's a bit far from our office. It must be **quite the hike** to come into work every day.

Bobby: The commute is long. But the house was cheap and it has a great view, so it's worth it.

Bucket list

Noun

When talking about her trip to Scotland, Anna says that one of the items on her **bucket list** is to take the overnight train from London to Inverness. A **bucket list** is all the things a person wants to do before they die. Things on a **bucket list** usually include achievements, fun experiences, or travel.

When you use the term **bucket list**, you can say that something you want to do is on your **bucket list**. Since this is a list of things a person wants to do before they die, the things on the list are usually unique, expensive, or hard to do. For example, someone might say that running a marathon, climbing Mount Everest, writing a novel, and learning a foreign language are items on their **bucket list**.

Here are a couple more examples with **bucket list**:

Cecilia: How was your vacation?

Grace: It was fantastic! We spent 2 weeks backpacking through Spain. Both the scenery and the food were amazing.

Cecilia: Wow, sounds like a great experience. Backpacking through Spain is on my **bucket list**. I don't know when I'll have the time to go, but I really want to do it at some point. Maybe I can make a plan for next summer.

Elaine: I heard you've been training for a marathon.

Lisa: Yeah, I started training 3 months ago. Running a marathon has always been on my **bucket list**, so I thought I should just sign up for a race and start training.

Elaine: Isn't it hard to train?

Lisa: It's not too hard. I started slow. I still have 4 months to train, so I can gradually increase my training.

Elaine: That sounds so cool. Maybe I should add running a marathon to my **bucket list** too.

Achilles' heel

Noun

While talking about her trip to Scotland, Anna mentions small insects called midges that bite you if you go outside. She says that this is the one **Achilles' heel** about Scotland. **Achilles' heel** means the weak point or negative part of something.

A heel is the back side of your foot. The expression **Achilles' heel** comes from the Greek myth about a warrior named Achilles who was very strong and won many battles. The only weak point Achilles had was the heel of his foot. Even though the term comes from this ancient myth, people use the expression commonly in daily conversations to talk about the weak point or the downside of something.

We use the expression **Achilles' heel** to emphasize that all the other parts of something are good, but there is one aspect that is weak or negative. For example, a student might have A+ grades in all subjects except math. We could say that math is that student's **Achilles' heel**.

Here are a couple more examples with **Achilles' heel**:

Neil: I've been feeling so tired lately.

Karen: Why don't you try going to sleep earlier?

Neil: I've been trying to go to bed at an earlier time, but YouTube is my **Achilles' heel**. Even if I get in bed early, I end up watching videos until 3:00 in the morning!

Karen: Maybe you should put your phone in a different room before going to bed.

Kendall: Do you think your team can win the championship this year?

Jade: I think we have a chance. We have several great offensive players, good team dynamics, and a fantastic coach. The only problem will be our defense. We lost some of our best defensive players this year, so that will be our one **Achilles' heel**.

Kendall: Hopefully your team's new defensive players can improve enough to help you win at the end of the season.

Jade: I hope so too!

Quiz

1. What does to recharge one's batteries mean?

- a) to plug in your cell phone
- b) to rest and recover after being tired
- c) to buy new batteries
- d) to forget to change batteries

2. True or false? To take it away means to quit performing and get off the stage.

- a) true
- b) false

3. If you are picky and choosy, it means you are _____.

- a) open to many options
- b) strict about which option you will select
- c) chosen as the best person
- d) angry because you can't have the option you want

4. A bucket list is a _____.

- a) buck full of lists
- b) list of types of buckets
- c) list of things you want to do before you die
- d) list of your favourite TV shows

5. What does it mean if something is quite the hike?

- a) it is a beautiful hike
- b) it looks like a mountain
- c) it is on top of a mountain
- d) it is a long or difficult distance to travel

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. If you made a bucket list, what types of activities would you put on it?
2. Which activities make you feel the most tired? Which activities recharge your batteries?
3. Do you like trying new foods, or are you picky and choosy about the types of things you eat? What is your favourite food?
4. What do you think you are most talented at? What do you think is your Achilles' heel?
5. When you travel, do you like going to city centres or travelling to places that are in nature, outside the city? What are some of your favourite places that you have travelled?

Quiz Answers

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

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