

Chatterbox #155 – Travelling in Canada on a budget

Episode Description

Many people would love to visit Canada but are worried about the cost. Fear not! In this episode, Harp and Andrew talk all about how to visit Canada on a shoestring budget. They provide great recommendations about where to stay, what to eat, and what to do while on a Canadian vacation so that you don't have to break the bank!

Sample Dialogue

Andrew: And one final tip that we have for you today is that if you are hardcore about saving money and you don't care about comfort, you can travel around Canada in a bus.

Harp: That is true. The bus is quite cheap.

Andrew: It's super-cheap. But it's not very pleasant, is it?

Harp: If it's short rides it's not too bad. But I wouldn't personally take the bus across Canada. **Let's just say it that way.**

Expressions Included in the Learning Materials

- A shoestring budget
- To pop into your head
- An outdoors person
- To build up something
- A word of warning
- Bang for your buck
- Tight
- To mellow down
- Hard to say
- Let's just put/say it that way
- Craigslist and Kijiji
- "Kumbaya"



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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.

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew. And we're back with another Culips episode.

Harp: Yes. Make sure you check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there you can sign up and become a member. And when you're a member, you have access to what?

Andrew: You have access to our learning materials, which are super cool. For each and every episode, you get a transcript so that you can read the episode and see each and every word while you listen to the podcast. You also get detailed explanations for all of the key expressions and idioms that come up in the podcast. And finally, you get quizzes to test your comprehension.

Harp: Yes. So check out our website and remember that we're also on Facebook and on Twitter, so you can come on over there and say hi, leave a comment, or if you have an idea for an episode, leave it there.

Andrew: That is right.

Harp: OK, so I think we should get started with today's episode.

Andrew: Yes. And today's episode is all about travelling in Canada, but with a little twist.

Harp: Yes. We're going to give you some tips on how to travel in Canada pretty much on a budget.

Andrew: Mmhmm. Because I know a lot of our listeners probably want to visit Canada, but, to be honest, it's not a cheap place to visit. You can spend a lot of money while you're here.

Harp: Yes. And it's pretty isolated so it's pretty expensive to get here in the first place, so you might not have that much money left over once you do get here. And it's such a big country that trying to see more than one region is really expensive.

- Andrew: That is right. So we're going to give you some tips and some suggestions about how to do this on **a shoestring budget**.
- Harp: All right. Let's get started.
- Andrew: OK, so the first category we're going to talk about is accommodation.
- Harp: Yes, where to stay.
- Andrew: That's right. And now, the first place that **pops into my head** is a hotel.
- Harp: Yes, but hotels are expensive.
- Andrew: Exactly. Hotels are expensive, so we have a couple of suggestions about where you could stay to save some cash.
- Harp: Yes. The first one I think about is a hostel.
- Andrew: Yeah. Hostels are great. I've stayed at them while I've been travelling in Europe, and in Asia too. And I've always had a really good time at hostels.
- Harp: Yeah, me too. And, so basically, a hostel is where you have usually shared accommodations, so you have maybe a room with four or six other people, and you share a bathroom. And oftentimes I find they have kitchens, where you can cook, and so it's much cheaper than staying at a hotel.
- Andrew: Yeah. So usually hostels are more where young people stay, but people of all ages can stay there. And, like you said, they have a kitchen that you can access, so you can cook your own food if you want, to save some money. You don't have to go to a restaurant. And hostels are also great places to meet other travellers, so you can make lots of friends and go do fun things with these other people that you meet.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly, because if you stay in a hotel, you're usually in your own room. You don't talk to anyone at the hotel. It's really hard to make friends. But at a hostel, you have shared spaces, so you're more likely to talk to people. And if you're in the kitchen, you can make friends, and then you hang out with these people, and there're usually locals who work at the hostels and they're usually really friendly, so it's just great.
- Andrew: A problem that I've run into in the past – and I think this happens to a lot of people, actually – is you go to a hostel and you sort of go down to the lounge area and you hang out and then you end up talking to somebody from your own country. I've met people that have been almost from the exact same place that I'm from, and then you're happy to meet a new friend, but at the same time you're like, "Oh, I'm in this foreign country. I should be meeting locals."

- Harp: I know exactly what you mean. And I actually met someone who lived, like, down the block from me.
- Andrew: No way.
- Harp: Yeah. But it's true. But you can also meet the locals there, so...
- Andrew: Yeah. So you've got to just try it all.
- Harp: Yes.
- Andrew: OK, what about this other place? Have you heard of couchsurfing?
- Harp: I have heard of couchsurfing, but I've never tried it.
- Andrew: Me neither. I have never tried it. I have some friends who've tried it, but, yeah, it seems a little bit scary to me.
- Harp: For me as well.
- Andrew: Yeah. So what is couchsurfing, for people who don't know it?
- Harp: So it's basically where people will let other people stay on their couches when they're travelling. So you stay on different people's couches, for free.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So you go to the couchsurfing website, you make a profile, and then you say, "Hey, I'm coming to your town. Can I sleep on your couch?" And people say yes, and then you can just do it. But you have to be very brave, I think.
- Harp: I think so. I don't think I would try it.
- Andrew: But it's free. So if you're really on a budget, this is the place for you.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Andrew: What about camping? If you came to Canada in the summer, do you think you could go camping?
- Harp: I think if I liked camping, I could definitely go camping.
- Andrew: Yeah. I would say if you're **an outdoors person**, check out camping. Maybe this is the option for you. Because I guess, Harp, you're not **an outdoors person**?

- Harp: No. Not at all.
- Andrew: But I am, and I love camping. So I would recommend it as an accommodation place, for sure.
- Harp: Yeah. I have actually heard of many people doing that, kind of camping their way across Canada so that you basically stay for free or very cheap cost at campgrounds.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. I think you could probably expect to pay between \$20 to \$40 per night for a campground site.
- Harp: Yeah. And they usually have showers and all the amenities like that.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. You could have a little fire pit and you could sit around the campfire and sing "**Kumbaya**," whatever you want.
- Harp: Yes. But remember, Canada has a lot of wild areas, so be careful about the wildlife and follow all the precautions that the park people tell you.
- Andrew: Absolutely. OK, those are some places you could stay if you're on a budget, but what about eating? This is something everybody has got to do every day, and it can add up.
- Harp: Yes. I would say the best way to do it is to stay at a place where you can cook for yourself.
- Andrew: I totally agree with you. When I have travelled in the past, one of the best things that I've learnt was that if I just stay in and eat one meal a day that I cook for myself, I can save a ton of money.
- Harp: Yeah, I agree. And I find that I get sick of eating out, so it's quite great that way. But you'll really save so much money, especially if you can have breakfast and lunch at the place where you're staying and you make it yourself. It will end up being so much cheaper, if you think about the price of a loaf of bread with some peanut butter versus eating out and getting a croissant every day or something. It's much, much cheaper.
- Andrew: Or if you even have a coffee machine in your room, you can brew a cup of coffee and that will save you a couple of bucks right there.
- Harp: Yeah, for sure.
- Andrew: And one thing that I really like, when I'm in a different country, is checking out the grocery stores.

Harp: I love it. I'm obsessed with checking out grocery stores in other countries.

Andrew: Even when I'm in a different city, I like to check out the grocery store.

Harp: I totally agree with you.

Andrew: Yeah. So it can be a fun kind of way to learn about the culture of the place you're visiting, just by seeing how they sell food and what they eat.

Harp: Yeah. And if you don't have a place that has a kitchen, you can always still do a little picnic for your lunch. Just buy a couple of small things. It'll be cheaper than eating at restaurants.

Andrew: Absolutely. Now, there is a website called Groupon.com, and I have some friends that are obsessed with this website.

Harp: Yeah. I know a lot of people who use Groupon, or similar sites, like DealFind or Twango.

Andrew: Oh, you know all about them.

Harp: Yeah. I look at them often because you can get some really great deals.

Andrew: Mmhmm. And now, why we mention these websites is because, if you're looking for a restaurant and you're on a budget, you can find some great coupons on these websites. Now, you usually have to buy the coupons, but you're going to save maybe 50% or more once you purchase the coupons, so it can be a great way to eat out on a budget.

Harp: Yes. I think it's a great idea.

Andrew: Yeah. So check out those websites. Some other things you could do – maybe if you're visiting Montreal, for sure – is to go eat at a restaurant at lunchtime.

Harp: Yeah. That's actually a really great idea, because they often have cheaper kind of set menus during lunch than they would at dinner, so you can even try some of the nicer restaurants for much cheaper.

Andrew: Mmhmm. And right where I live, there is a ton of Indian food restaurants and they serve the exact same food at lunch and at dinner – the exact same portion size – but the lunch price is always much cheaper than the dinner price. So if, you know, I want to save some money, I'll go at lunch as well and I'll have my treat at lunch and then I'll just cook at home for dinner.

- Harp: Yeah. It's a really good way to try to save money.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. And my final recommendation for when it comes to eating out on a budget is to use a review website, like Yelp. Yelp is very popular.
- Harp: Yes, because then you're finding good restaurants that are cheap.
- Andrew: Exactly. Because you don't want to go to a bad restaurant. This is the easiest way to waste your money, is just to pay for something that is not good. So my suggestion is to do a little research before you go somewhere to eat and find a place that's going to be worth the money.
- Harp: I agree. And I think that's a great idea.
- Andrew: Should we move on?
- Harp: Yes.
- Andrew: OK. So now we are going to talk about some tourist attractions, because when you're travelling, you've got to see those tourist attractions.
- Harp: Yes, definitely. That's why you're coming to Canada, is to see all of the cool things.
- Andrew: Yeah. So again, I think Groupon and these other coupon sites that you mentioned can be a very good way to save money. You can get two-for-one passes or you can get 50%-off discounts. You can get amazing things. When I searched on Groupon today for Montreal, I found that there were helicopter tours; there were golf packages, water park packages, and botanical garden deals, all on the website. So I think this would be great if you are a tourist, so check these things out.
- Harp: Yeah. And if you're coming and you know that you're coming in a couple of months, you can check frequently, because the deals always change, and kind of **build up** some coupons so that you have some coupons ready for when you come visit Canada.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. That's a great idea. Also, if you are into checking out art galleries and museums, in a lot of cities in Canada, they'll have a free day, either once a week or once a month.
- Harp: Yeah, and it's often days like Wednesdays or Sundays, so check out on the websites and usually most places have a free day. Like you said, either it's once a week or it's once a month. And try to plan your visit around that.

- Andrew: Mmhmm. But **a word of warning**: Those days are usually pretty busy.
- Harp: Yes.
- Andrew: Yeah. So if you don't like crowds, then maybe it's worth it just to pay the extra money.
- Harp: Yeah. But a lot of cities also have kind of a museum pass, where you can buy a pass for maybe 3 days, like a weekend, and you can go see many, many different museums, so you can kind of avoid the crowds that way too.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Good suggestion. What else?
- Harp: Well, when you're in Canada, nature is one of the best tourist attractions, and it's pretty much free. You can go to the parks, the beaches, you can go for hikes. Most of the time, it's completely free.
- Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. Visiting Canada's national parks and seeing the lakes and the rivers and the forests. All these things are amazing. And I think, really, if you come to Canada, you should be interested to see this because this is what we have to offer the world, is this natural beauty. And it's free so this is great; you can check it out and save some money.
- Harp: We're going to say that some of the parks you have to pay to get into, but the majority are free.
- Andrew: Yeah, you're right. I stand corrected, because some of the national parks, you actually have to pay a small amount of money to go in, but most are free.
- Harp: Yeah. And it's such a small amount for how beautiful the park is that that's not something you want to be too cheap on. You want to see the parks and all the beautiful stuff.
- Andrew: You get a lot of **bang for your buck** at the national parks.
- Harp: Yes, definitely.
- Andrew: OK, well, before we end this episode, I have a few more suggestions for you to save some money. And the first one is: If you are really, really serious about saving money and you're on a **tight, tight** budget, then you should consider coming in the off-season.
- Harp: Yes. So in Canada the off-season is October, November.

- Andrew: Mmhmm. And this is the off-season because it's not a very popular time for people to travel. People in Canada usually take their vacation in the summer, when their kids are on holiday as well. So the off-season in October and November is when things **mellow down** and the prices will drop.
- Harp: Yeah. You'll get really good deals on accommodations, and even food deals.
- Andrew: Totally. But you've got to be careful, because the weather can also change in November and you might be in a little bit of snow. It's **hard to say**.
- Harp: It is completely **hard to say** that, because sometimes in October and November it's still just beautiful, or sometimes it's full-on winter.
- Andrew: Yeah. It depends where you are. But I would say, generally, October is probably not quite winter, but towards mid- to the end of November, you're looking at some winter weather for sure.
- Harp: Yeah. So you might have to pack for both.
- Andrew: Yeah. Be prepared.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Andrew: And another tip that I... I actually found this one out when I was living in Korea, because I had some friends that wanted to visit Canada and they were looking for plane tickets, and they asked me for some good websites to buy plane tickets, because all the sites that they were checking out were just Korean sites and they didn't look at the Canadian websites. So if you're in a foreign country that's not Canada, I would recommend, you know, Googling Canadian airlines and Canadian travel sites just to compare prices with the domestic travel services in your own country, because you never know, you might find a deal that way on a plane ticket.
- Harp: That's a really good idea, and in Canada there are mainly two big airlines: WestJet and Air Canada. So it's pretty easy to check both those out before you book.
- Andrew: And one final tip that we have for you today is that if you are hardcore about saving money and you don't care about comfort, you can travel around Canada in a bus.
- Harp: That is true. The bus is quite cheap.
- Andrew: It's super-cheap. But it's not very pleasant, is it?

- Harp: If it's short rides it's not too bad. But I wouldn't personally take the bus across Canada. **Let's just say it that way.**
- Andrew: I have a friend that lives here in Montreal, and when he first came to Montreal, he came from British Columbia and he took the bus from Victoria all the way to Montreal and it took 3 and a half days in a bus.
- Harp: Wow.
- Andrew: Can you imagine?
- Harp: And I'm sure that bus stopped at all sorts of little, small towns on the way.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's insane to try to sleep on a bus. I couldn't do it. But it was under \$150 for his ticket.
- Harp: Wow.
- Andrew: So it is cheap.
- Harp: It's very cheap. I have another idea, though, for travelling cheap.
- Andrew: Yeah? What's that?
- Harp: Doing ride shares.
- Andrew: Oh, yeah. That's a good one. I never thought of that.
- Harp: Yeah, that's actually what I do often when I'm going, for example, from Montreal to Toronto. You can look on different sites, like **Craigslist** or **Kijiji**, and there's always a ride share section, and you can get it for very cheap. I think it's about \$20 to go from Montreal to Toronto.
- Andrew: Yeah. I've done that in the past too, to go to Toronto. It's a good way to get there quickly, and for a good price.
- Harp: Yeah. And often, if someone has to drive across the country – if they're moving or they need to take a car there – they don't want to do it alone. So they're looking just for company, so you'll get it for much cheaper, and it will probably be a lot more comfortable than taking the bus.
- Andrew: Totally. But again, be cautious when you use a website like **Kijiji** or **Craigslist**, because you can never be 100% sure who you're going to meet.
- Harp: Yeah. And if it doesn't feel safe, don't get in the car.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. But I've had good experiences with it in the past; I think it's mostly OK.

Harp: Yeah, I agree.

Andrew: Cool. Well, I think that wraps it up, Harp.

Harp: Yeah. I think so too. So I think we gave you some ideas about how to travel for cheap in Canada.

Andrew: Yeah. So come and visit us. We'd love to have you here.

Harp: Yes, we would.

Andrew: All right. Well, thanks for listening everybody. And we will talk to you next time.

Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanations

A shoestring budget

In this episode, Andrew and Harp talk about travelling in Canada on **a shoestring budget**. When you do something on **a shoestring budget**, you live off a very small amount of money. So, in other words, Andrew and Harp talk about how to travel in Canada without spending too much money.

The origin of this expression is debated. Some experts suggest that it was first used in the early 1800s to describe gamblers who did not have much money. Others think that it might have first been used to describe a man who was so poor that he didn't own a belt and had to use a shoestring to hold up his pants. Another theory is that a tight budget that is thin and stretched out resembles a shoestring. Whatever the real origin might be, these days we use the expression **a shoestring budget** to talk about living off a small amount of money.

When you are on **a shoestring budget**, you have to shop wisely and be careful with spending your money, because you do not have very much!

Here are a couple more examples with **a shoestring budget**.

Ian: I'm thinking about throwing a surprise birthday party for my brother's 40th birthday. Do you think you could help me plan it out?

Faye: Sure. I'd love to help. Do you have any ideas in mind?

Ian: I really don't have a lot of extra money lying around, so we'll have to plan it on **a shoestring budget**.

Faye: Oh, that's OK. We don't need to spend too much money to have a fun party.

Ian: Perfect!

Aaron: I'm thinking about travelling to Eastern Europe next summer. You've been, right? Do you have any travel tips?

Michelle: Well, I went there about 20 years ago. When I went, you could travel on **a shoestring budget** and still live really well. I think things have changed a bit these days.

Aaron: Yeah, that's what I heard.

Michelle: You should talk to my sister Jane. She went to Eastern Europe last year. She'd be a better person to talk to. I'll give you her email address.

To pop into your head

When an idea or a thought **pops into your head**, it appears suddenly and without warning. In this episode, Andrew says that when he thinks about travel accommodation, the first thing that **pops into his head** is a hotel. In other words, Andrew automatically thinks about hotels when the subject of travel accommodation is discussed.

So, when you automatically, suddenly, or unexpectedly think of an idea or a thought, then we can say that it **popped into your head**. This expression is often used to talk about thinking of good ideas. We also use it frequently when we suddenly remember an important fact or piece of information.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pop into your head**:

Henry: Did I tell you I joined a hockey team?

Claire: No! That's cool.

Henry: Yeah. We play in a recreational league every Thursday night.

Claire: What's your team called?

Henry: The Skate Sharks!

Claire: That's a funny name. How did you think of it?

Henry: It was actually our goalie who thought it up. He said it just **popped into his head** one day.

Claire: Awesome!

Beatrice: Do you have any suggestions about what we should do tomorrow?

Wesley: I'm not sure. What do you feel like doing?

Beatrice: I don't know. Maybe something outside?

Wesley: Oh, an idea just **popped into my head**. Apparently, there is a festival in the park tomorrow. How about we check it out?

Beatrice: Yeah, sounds cool.

An outdoors person

An outdoors person is someone who really likes spending time outside and doing activities like hiking and camping. In this episode, Harp mentions that she is not **an outdoors person**. Instead of camping, she prefers to sleep indoors!

If you are the type of person who likes spending a lot of time outside, and doing outdoor activities outside of the city, like camping, hunting, hiking, swimming in a lake, skiing, or snowshoeing, then you are **an outdoors person**.

Here are a couple more examples with **an outdoors person**:

Susan: What did you do this past weekend?

Richard: I went hiking.

Susan: Oh yeah? What's that like?

Richard: It's great. You've never been hiking?

Susan: No. I'm not **an outdoors person**. All the bugs and the cold? No thanks!

Richard: Wow. You're really missing out. Breathing the fresh air and being among the wildlife and natural beauty are my favourite things about hiking!

Susan: Nope, I'm a city person. I'll take the hustle and bustle of a busy city over being in the woods any day.

Annie: Are you **an outdoors person**?

Marc: Kind of. I like swimming in lakes during the summer and I occasionally go camping, but I'm not hardcore or anything. What about you?

Annie: Oh yeah, I love being outdoors. Hiking, camping, canoeing. You name it, I love it.

Marc: That's awesome. Do you own a canoe?

Annie: I sure do. Wanna take it out sometime?

Marc: Yeah, let's do it. That'd be awesome.

To build up something

In this episode, Harp provides a travel tip by saying that you can use a website like Groupon **to build up** coupons to use while travelling. When you **build up something**, you collect or increase your quantity of that thing. In other words, Harp advises collecting many coupons before you leave for your trip so that you can use them and save money while travelling.

So, when you have collected a large amount of something or amassed a large quantity of something, you have **built up** that thing.

We often use this expression when we talk about finances and economics. It is possible for people **to build up** wealth, debt, shares, and stocks. We also use **to build up something** to talk about success, as we can **build up** experience, knowledge, and achievements.

So, when you **build up something**, you collect a large amount of that thing.

Here are a couple more examples with **to build up something**:

David: How's work going these days?

Esther: Pretty good!

David: Have you ever considered trying to move up the corporate ladder?

Esther: Yes. I would like to work my way up to a management position. But first I'd like **to build up** a few more years of experience.

David: That's a great plan!

Caroline: I'm having a garage sale this weekend. You should stop by.

Jean: Oh, nice. What are you selling?

Caroline: All sorts of things. I've **built up** this massive collection of junk that I really need to get rid of.

Jean: Cool. Yeah, I'd love to stop by. You know what they say: One man's trash is another man's treasure.

Caroline: Yeah, exactly! Well, I guess I'll see you at the garage sale.

Jean: Yeah. See you there.

A word of warning

The expression **a word of warning** is said before you alert someone about something. In this episode, Andrew gives Culips listeners **a word of warning** when he says that free days at Canadian museums are very busy and should be avoided if you don't like crowds. He introduces this piece of advice by using the expression **a word of warning**.

So when you need to caution someone about something or warn someone about something, you can introduce it by using **a word of warning**.

This expression is a little bit confusing because it contains the phrase **a word**. Even though the warnings or cautionary tales we introduce with this expression can be very long and contain many words, we still need to introduce it by saying **a word of warning**. The warnings you introduce with this expression do not need to be only one word long.

So **a word of warning** is a nice expression to use when you need to tell someone a cautionary piece of advice or a warning.

Here are a couple more examples with **a word of warning**:

Angela: Are you all prepared for your meeting with Dan?

Jeff: Yes. I think so.

Angela: I've got **a word of warning** for you. Dan hates it when people are late. So make sure you show up on time.

Jeff: Of course! I'm always on time.

Angela: Perfect!

Chris: I'm driving to Toronto tomorrow for a conference.

Quinn: What route are you taking?

Chris: I was thinking about taking Highway 401.

Quinn: **A word of warning**: That highway gets very congested. Make sure you leave early enough that if you get stuck in traffic for an hour or two, you won't be late.

Chris: OK! Good to know. I'll make sure to do that.

Bang for your buck

When you get **bang for your buck**, you get a lot of value compared to the amount of money you spend. In this episode, Andrew and Harp say that visiting Canada's national parks provides a lot of **bang for your buck** because for just a small entrance fee you get access to all the parks have to offer – natural beauty, fresh air, and opportunities to hike, camp, swim, etc.

So, when you get a great deal or bargain or you get a lot of value for the price you pay for something, you get **bang for your buck**.

The word *buck* is a slang expression for money. And in this context, the word *bang* means excitement. So when you get **bang for your buck**, you get a great deal or a lot of value for the money that you pay.

This expression is very casual and should be avoided in formal contexts.

Here are a couple more examples with **bang for your buck**:

Tina: Have you ever been to Disneyland?

Steven: No. Why?

Tina: I'm planning a trip there. One of my friends told me that if you buy the day pass you get the most **bang for your buck**, but I'm not sure if that's true.

Steven: Yeah, sorry, I can't help you on that one. I'm sure if you Google it, you'll find lots of advice.

Tina: Yeah, I think I'll do that.

Adam: There's a special deal going on at the department store right now. If you spend over \$100, you get a \$50 gift certificate.

Eva: Wow. That's a pretty good deal.

Adam: Yeah! You get a lot of **bang for your buck**.

Eva: Are you going to do it?

Adam: Yeah! I need a new pair of shoes, so I might as well buy them there to take advantage of the promotion.

Eva: Perfect!

Tight

When something is **tight** (like money, space, or time), it means there is not much of that thing. In this episode, Harp and Andrew talk about travelling in Canada on a **tight** budget. In other words, they talk about travelling in Canada while spending as little money as possible.

This expression can also be used to describe other situations where something is limited. For example, if you were to squeeze five people into a small car, you could describe it as a **tight** ride. This is because there would not be much free space in the car.

Or, if you didn't have much time before a deadline you needed to meet, you could say that you were **tight** on time.

So, when you describe something as **tight**, it means that you do not have much of that thing.

Here are a couple more examples with **tight**:

Brenda: Guns N' Roses just announced they are playing a concert in July! Want to see them with me?

Walt: Yes! How much are tickets?

Brenda: Well, if we want good seats, we're going to have to pay, like, \$200.

Walt: That's crazy!

Brenda: I know. But that's how much they cost.

Walt: All right. Well, I can afford to buy them now but the rest of the month is going to be **tight** until pay day.

Brenda: Yeah, it's a big expense, but it'll be worth it!

Tom: How do our finances look this month? I'm feeling pretty burnt out from work. I was thinking we could use a weekend away. Maybe we could spend a weekend at the mountain and go skiing or something?

Callie: That would be super-fun. Well, it'll be **tight**, but I think we'll be able to afford it.

Tom: Awesome. Let's do it!

Callie: Yeah!

To mellow down

In this episode, Andrew says that the Canadian tourism season tends **to mellow down** in October and November. When something **mellows down**, it calms down or settles down. In other words, October and November are less popular months for tourists to visit Canada than the busy spring and summer seasons. If you are thinking about making a trip to Canada and you hate crowds, October and November might be the perfect time for you to visit.

So, when something has become calmer or more relaxed, then we can say that it has **mellowed down**.

This is a very casual expression and is more characteristic of speech than writing. It would be a good idea to avoid using **to mellow down** in formal contexts.

If something or someone **mellows down**, they become relaxed and calm.

Here are a couple more examples with **to mellow down**:

April: How's your son doing these days?
Donna: You know toddlers. They're always hyper and active!
April: Yeah, definitely.
Donna: I'm feeling pretty tired because of it. I'm looking forward to the day when he **mellows down** a bit.
April: I know that feeling! But enjoy it while it lasts. They grow up so quickly.
Donna: Yeah, I will!

Nathan: Do you have any plans for the weekend?
Lily: I've been so busy this week that I'm just looking forward to **mellowing down** on the weekend. I'll probably just relax and maybe watch a movie or something. What about you?
Nathan: My daughter has a soccer tournament in Vancouver. So I'll be busy supporting her.
Lily: Sounds great! Enjoy your time in Vancouver.
Nathan: Thanks, I will.

Hard to say

We use the expression **hard to say**, when something is difficult to predict. In this episode, Harp and Andrew mention that it is **hard to say** how the Canadian weather will be in October. Some years the weather is beautiful, and other years it is already winter by October. So, in other words, it is difficult to predict how the weather will be in October.

When something is difficult to predict or is unclear, we can describe it by saying that it is **hard to say**. For example, it is **hard to say** what the price of gas will be like a year from now. This is because there are many factors that determine the price of gas, which makes it difficult to predict its cost.

So if a prediction is difficult to make, you can say that it is **hard to say**.

Here are a couple more examples with **hard to say**:

Harvey: I heard that management is going to make a big announcement at the staff meeting.

Nina: I heard that rumor too. What do you think they'll announce?

Harvey: It's **hard to say**. Maybe it will be something related to opening a second office? I know the company has been considering doing that for quite a while.

Nina: Yeah. I really have no clue what it will be.

Harvey: We'll just have to wait and find out!

Randy: Maybe we should bring our rain coats to the park. Do you think it'll rain during the picnic?

Kevin: That's **hard to say**. It looks pretty nice outside right now but I did hear on the weather report that it might rain this afternoon.

Randy: I guess we'd better bring them just in case.

Kevin: Yeah, good idea.

Let's just put/say it that way

We can use the expression ***let's just put/say it that way*** when we want to be polite and want to avoid sharing too many details about why we don't like something. In this episode, Harp uses this expression when she talks about the idea of travelling across Canada on a bus. Instead of going into a lot of detail about why she wouldn't ride a bus across the country, she simply says, "I wouldn't personally take the bus across Canada. **Let's just say it that way.**" This communicates that she has strong negative feelings about taking the bus but wants to be polite and doesn't want to share all the details with her listeners.

So, when you want to avoid sharing a lot of details about a negative situation or something you don't like, you can remain polite but still express your disapproval by using the expression ***let's just put/say it that way***.

You can use either verb, *to put* or *to say*, without changing the meaning of this expression.

Here are a couple more examples with ***let's just put/say it that way***:

Ron: I ate at the new steakhouse downtown last night.
Lisa: How was it?
Ron: Well, not great. **Let's just put it that way.**
Lisa: That's too bad. I was really hoping that place would be good.
Ron: Yeah. I won't be returning any time soon.

Jill: I'm looking for a new babysitter. Do you have any recommendations?
Hank: My wife and I are actually looking for a babysitter too.
Jill: Oh really? What happened to your last one? She didn't do a good job?
Hank: She wasn't the most trustworthy person I've ever met. **Let's just say it that way.**
Jill: Oh no!
Hank: Anyways, if we manage to find a good sitter, I'll let you know.
Jill: Thanks! I'd appreciate that.

Craigslist and Kijiji

Craigslist and **Kijiji** are two popular websites for buying and selling things. In Western Canada, **Craigslist** is more popular than **Kijiji**. In Eastern Canada, it's the opposite and **Kijiji** is more popular than **Craigslist**.

Both websites are free to use and allow users to post classified ads when they want to sell or buy something. You can also find many other types of postings on both websites, including job listings, ride shares, and community information.

In this episode, Andrew and Harp suggest looking on **Kijiji** or **Craigslist** if you need to find a ride share in Canada. Sometimes you can find rides as cheap as \$20 between Toronto and Montreal. This can be a very affordable way to travel.

So, next time you need to sell some old furniture or look for a new job, check out **Kijiji** or **Craigslist**. You might just be able to find what you're looking for.

Here are a couple more examples with **Craigslist** and **Kijiji**:

Rita: Could you do me a favour?

Seth: Maybe. What is it?

Rita: I just bought a couch off of **Craigslist** and I need a friend to help me move it into my apartment. If you help me out, I'll buy us pizza afterward.

Seth: OK, sure. No problem. I'm happy to help.

Kim: I got a new washer and dryer last week and I want to sell my old ones. Do you know anyone who is interested in buying a used washer and dryer set?

Julian: Off the top of my head? No. You should just put up an ad on **Kijiji**.

Kim: Oh yeah! That's a great idea, I hadn't thought of that.

Julian: You'll probably sell them quite quickly. The site is popular.

Kim: I hope so!

“Kumbaya”

In this episode, Andrew mentions the song “**Kumbaya**” when he talks about camping. In the 1920s, “**Kumbaya**” was a very popular sing-along song at scout camps and children’s camps. Because of this, “**Kumbaya**” is considered a classic song to sing while sitting around a camp fire. If you search for “**Kumbaya**” on YouTube, you can find many videos of people sitting around a campfire singing the song.

Although experts are not 100% certain, the song was probably created by slaves of African origin who lived in the American South in the 1800s. The word **kumbaya** is thought to be an expression from the Gullah creole language meaning *come by here*.

Here’s one more example with the song title “**Kumbaya**”:

Victoria: How was your camping trip?

Olga: It was great! We did a lot of fishing and hiking, and even had a campfire at night.

Victoria: Sounds awesome! Did you sing “**Kumbaya**”?

Olga: No, no. I didn’t bring my guitar. But we had a great time anyways.

Quiz

1. **Something that provides a lot of value compared to the price you pay for it can be described as providing lots of what?**
 - a) pop for your payola
 - b) bang for your buck
 - c) stash for your cash
 - d) thrills for your bills

2. **What does it mean if you are tight on something (like time, space, or money)?**
 - a) You have a lot of that thing.
 - b) You do not have a lot of that thing.
 - c) You have too much of that thing.
 - d) You have none of that thing.

3. **When do people usually sing the song “Kumbaya”?**
 - a) while rock-climbing
 - b) while birdwatching
 - c) while hiking
 - d) while camping

4. **Which expression describes a budget that is small and tight?**
 - a) a belt budget
 - b) a bleeding budget
 - c) a shoestring budget
 - d) a rail-thin budget

5. **Which phrasal verb means to become relaxed and calm?**
 - a) to mellow down
 - b) to mellow up
 - c) to mellow in
 - d) to mellow about

6. In what kind of situation do we use the expression *hard to say*?
- a) when talking about the past
 - b) when making a predication
 - c) when disagreeing
 - d) when interrupting
7. What does *to build up something* mean?
- a) to sell something
 - b) to make something
 - c) to collect something
 - d) to rescue something
8. If you were an outdoors person, which activity would you probably not like?
- a) camping
 - b) hiking
 - c) canoeing
 - d) watching TV
9. Which expression can you use when you think of a thought or idea suddenly or without warning?
- a) to pop into your head
 - b) to peep into your head
 - c) to peer into your head
 - d) to peek into your head

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.b 3.d 4.c 5.a 6.b 7.c 8.d 9.a

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