

Chatterbox #169 – Andrew's travel nightmare

Episode description

Have you ever gotten the short end of the stick while you were on vacation? Well, Andrew certainly did! Join Andrew and Morag as he tells the story of his vacation nightmare.

Fun fact

Chengdu airport was built in 1939 and today covers well over 9,000,000 square metres! In 2015, more than 42.2 million passengers passed through the airport, making it the fourth busiest in mainland China.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- A perk
- To hit up
- Stars align
- On cloud nine
- One's spidey senses are tingling
- To get the short end of the stick



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: Hey, everyone. I'm Andrew.

Morag: And I'm Morag.

Andrew: And we are back with another episode of Culips.

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Andrew: Hey, Morag. How are you?

Morag: I'm doing pretty darn well. And how are you doing, Andrew?

Andrew: I am doing really well also. You know, I'm really excited these days.

Morag: Yeah? Why?

Andrew: It's my summer vacation in just a couple of days.

Morag: Ooo. It's one of the fun things about being in the education system. You actually have awesome mandated vacation.

Andrew: It is the best **perk**, I think.

Morag: Yes.

Andrew: Yeah. So I'm coming back to Canada.

Morag: Oh, no way.

Andrew: Yeah. I'll be there for almost 6 weeks. It's a really long vacation.

Morag: Wow, that's a lot of time. Are you going to multiple places in Canada, or just going home?

Andrew: I'm going to **hit up** all three of Canada's coasts, actually.

- Morag: Three?
- Andrew: This is really interesting. I'll be on the west coast. I'll be on the north coast.
- Morag: And the American coast, right?
- Andrew: Uh ... yeah. And the American coast. No, I don't think I have time for the USA this trip.
- Morag: OK.
- Andrew: But I'm going west, north, and east. So it'll be great. I'm really looking forward to it.
- Morag: Although have fun in the extreme north with all of the crazy bugs, Andrew.
- Andrew: Mmm ... You know what, I'm going to be above the treeline.
- Morag: Oh.
- Andrew: So I'm, I'm like, really, really north, where we are going to have ... I think it's 21 or 22 hours of daylight every day.
- Morag: That's nuts. I, one time, experienced about 20 hours of darkness, which was really weird.
- Andrew: Oh, crazy.
- Morag: Yeah, that was strange. But I haven't seen the other way around.
- Andrew: Yeah. So one of the things that I'm planning to do is bring my microphone with me. And I'm hoping that I can do some interviews with some of the Canadians that live way up north in the Arctic. I think that would make for a really interesting episode or two. And I think Culips listeners would be, you know, quite intrigued to learn about what life is like way up north. So that is on my schedule. And I'm just hoping I can meet some really cool and fascinating people to interview while I'm travelling.
- Morag: Well, I'm excited for that now.
- Andrew: Yeah. So stay tuned.
- Morag: Sounds awesome, yeah.

Andrew: Stay tuned.

But, today, we're going to actually talk about a trip I took, ah, about 2 months ago now. And, you know, this was a travel nightmare. I have a travel nightmare story to share with you.

Morag: Wow. So this is a very Andrew-vacation-heavy episode, like I see.

Andrew: Yeah, sorry about that.

Morag: It's totally cool. But why was it such a nightmare?

Andrew: Well ...

Morag: And where were you going?

Andrew: Yeah. Let's rewind all the way back to the beginning, OK?

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: This is in ... this happened in May. I had suddenly learned that I had a 4-day long weekend. As most people probably know, I live in Korea now. And in Korea in May there is a holiday called Children's Day. And Children's Day is a national holiday that university workers, like myself, get off. And this was on a Thursday. But the government decided, hey, you know what, let's make the following Friday also a holiday so that people can have a 4-day long weekend.

Morag: That's nice.

Andrew: It was nice, right?

Morag: They don't do that in Canada.

Andrew: No, that never happens.

Morag: No, yeah.

Andrew: So I got the message that it was now a 4-day long weekend. And I thought to myself, well, this is great, I'm going to travel. I'm going to go somewhere in Asia because of this long weekend. And I learned also, at about the same time, that I had a bunch of Canadian friends travelling in Taiwan. So this was perfect. The **stars aligned**, I had extra time off, I had friends in Taiwan. I thought, OK, I'm going to Taiwan to meet my friends.

Morag: Sounds like a good plan. I mean, what could go wrong?

Andrew: Yeah, off to a good start, right?

Morag: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: Off to a good start.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: So, yeah, I went to the airport. And I was getting ready to board my plane, everything was cool. I actually ... I made the national news.

Morag: What?

Andrew: While I was in the airport, I got interviewed. That was really cool. That was a fun experience.

Morag: Wow.

Andrew: While I was waiting for my airplane, I was playing chess. And I beat the highest-ranked player I've ever beaten, by a long shot. I beat a really good player. So I was just **on cloud nine**. I was so happy. Everything was going really well. But then things started to turn around.

Morag: Mmm. I don't like the sound of this.

Andrew: So the first problem was that my flight leaving Seoul was delayed by 4 hours.

Morag: Mmm, that's not a small delay.

Andrew: No, not a small delay.

Morag: OK, all right. So what happened next?

Andrew: Well, I had to make a connecting flight in China, in Chengdu in China to go on to Taipei. So I was going to fly from Seoul to Chengdu, Chengdu to Taipei. And I had 5 hours in between the two flights. So, hey, not a problem, delayed by 4 hours but I have 5 hours. It's all good.

And, you know, I don't stress about things like this. There's nothing I can do to control the flight, so whatever. I wasn't worried. I just sat in the airport, got on my plane, and then flew to Chengdu.

But, I don't know, it must have been ... We landed in Chengdu and by the time I got into the airport I just looked at my phone, I was curious, what time is it? And my plane was supposed to leave in, like, 2 minutes.

Morag: Oh, no.

- Andrew: And I thought, ah, OK, well, there's obviously no way I'm going to catch this plane. And, yeah, I talked to some of the airline staff and the plane had gone. So I missed my plane in Chengdu, which was the start of my first headache, my first real problem. Because when you travel in China, you need a visa.
- Morag: Oh, right. I did know that.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. But ... well, as a Canadian I need a visa.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: But I didn't have a visa because I wasn't planning to go to China, I was just planning to go to Taiwan. So getting through the security was a bit of a problem to try and get into the airport so I could figure out my ticket situation.
- Morag: Oh.
- Andrew: But, finally, in the end, I got through, they let me through. And I went to the ticket booth to figure out what I was going to do. And so I talked to the ticket counter staff and they told me that they had no flights to Taipei for the next 2-and-a-half days.
- Morag: Excuse me?
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: How ... but ... uh ...
- Andrew: Because of the extra-long weekend in Korea, many people were flying.
- Morag: Oh.
- Andrew: And I believe this was also a holiday in China too.
- Morag: OK.
- Andrew: I know my Canadian friends that were travelling in Taiwan, they're actually all living in China now. So that's why they were travelling. So big holiday for China, big holiday for Korea. There's no flights. And so I was like, why ... I couldn't believe it.
- Morag: Well, so it wasn't that there ... the flights didn't exist, there were just no seats on them?
- Andrew: There was no seats, there was nothing ... yeah.

- Morag: OK.
- Andrew: I asked to go on standby.
- Morag: No, nothing?
- Andrew: No, nothing.
- Morag: Oh, my God.
- Andrew: "Can you send me to Shanghai and then Taipei?" No.
- Morag: No. Oh, my God.
- Andrew: "Can you send me to Tokyo, Taipei?" No.
- Morag: Did you just have to take a ticket back to Seoul?
- Andrew: Yeah. So that's what I said, you know, I'm just going to pack it up. It's just unfortunate but I don't want to stay in Chengdu for 2 days and then go to Taipei for just a couple of hours. I only have 3 days. So I'll just cut my losses, you can send me back to Seoul. They said, OK, no problem, we have a flight in 2 hours, you can go back to Seoul.
- Morag: Ugh.
- Andrew: So I was like, OK, whatever, that's fine. So I waited 2 hours and then I went to make my way through the border security, through immigration. And immigration in China took a very, very long time looking at my passport. They thought something was up. I could tell. I had ... **My spidey senses were tingling**. This is weird.
- And so they're looking at it. And, you know, I'm trying to casually explain what's happening. And they called ... like, the border lady called over some other guys, and they're all looking around and talking in Chinese.
- Morag: What?
- Andrew: But, eventually, after maybe 10 minutes they let me go through. And I was like OK, cool, going back home.
- Morag: So you didn't get taken into a little room, or searched, or anything?
- Andrew: Well, just you wait.
- Morag: Oh, OK.

Andrew: So, finally, my plane is about to leave. And just when I'm about to walk into whatever that tunnel is that connects you to the plane, a security guard comes running up and says, "Sir, you have to come with me." So he took me back to the security area and put me in a little room. And then many, many border guards came into the room.

Morag: What?

Andrew: There was so many people around. There was maybe 10 guards and I really didn't know what was going on. I was a little confused because ... Yeah, I didn't do anything wrong.

And so I was just trying to explain the situation to them. But, yeah, there was some miscommunication or something. And, finally, the lady from the airline who had helped me, she was called.

Morag: Oh.

Andrew: And I was like, oh, I'm saved, OK, she can explain to them what is happening. So she explained to them but, yeah, the situation got a little more tense. And a higher-ranking order official came into the room and he asked for my ticket to Seoul and then he ripped it up.

Morag: What?

Andrew: And so I thought, OK, I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying in Chengdu today.

Morag: Oh, my God.

Andrew: Yeah. So I know this is already a long story. But, to cut it short, I had to stay in Chengdu for the next 2-and-a-half days.

Morag: Two-and-a-half days?

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: Because they ... What did they think you were doing?

Andrew: I don't know, maybe they thought I came in with some drugs, and made a quick drop and then was trying to go back home, I don't know.

Morag: Oh, OK. That makes some sense.

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: I don't know. I guess, I guess I just ... I assume that every airport will profile people, you know, just as a matter of course.

- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: And I just ... It's strange to me to think of a place that would check you out and be, like, hmm, that guy is super sketchy. We got to take him down.
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah. I don't really understand. I guess there is a law in China that states if you are just coming in on a transit visa, which is technically a non-visa, then you have to transfer through another country before returning home.
- Morag: Oh.
- Andrew: So because I wasn't going through, I guess, technically, a second country, I had violated Chinese law.
- Morag: Right.
- Andrew: And so that's why they forced me to go to Taiwan.
- Morag: Right.
- Andrew: So at this point I was pretty upset, not necessarily with the Chinese border officials but with the airline. Because, first of all, this whole mess was their problem. It was a beautiful sunny day. There was no weather-related delay. It was an airline problem that caused the delay, which caused me to miss my flight. And, also, they could have given me a heads up and said this was not something I could do, like, to go back to Seoul and put me through all of that experience.
- Morag: Right? Ugh.
- Andrew: So I was upset with the airline. And so they apologized by paying for my ticket and for my hotel in Chengdu. So ...
- Morag: Well, that seems like the least they could do.
- Andrew: Yeah. So, anyways, I had a very weird experience in Chengdu. I'll spare you the details. But I was out in the middle of nowhere. I was, like, in this weird area. I wasn't expecting to go China, so I had nothing prepared.
- Morag: Oh, no.
- Andrew: But, you know, I'm always down for an adventure. And it was good. I ended up having a really weird supper with a Chinese family.
- It was fun.
- Morag: Yeah, it still kind of sounds like you **got the short end of that stick**.

- Andrew: Yeah. But the worst part to me was, finally, 2-and-a-half days later. I made it to Taipei and I loved it. I wasn't really that angry with the whole situation until I arrived in Taipei and I realized how awesome of a city it is. Because I just wanted, all of a sudden, to do everything in Taipei. I wanted to eat all the food and see all the sites. But I had no time. I only had 16 hours in Taipei before I had to go back to the airport and fly back to Korea. So ...
- Morag: Aw. My God, that's just insult to injury.
- Andrew: Yeah. So Taipei, I will be back one day. And, this time, I won't fly through China.
- Morag: Well, at least you're near-ish by. I'm sure you can do it again.
- Andrew: You know, I'm really curious about our listeners. I'm sure some of them have some travel nightmare stories, probably some that are even worse, maybe even much worse than mine.
- Morag: Mmm.
- Andrew: So if you out there have a bad travel story, please, send it to me. I'm really curious and I would love to read it. You can get in contact with us through our Facebook page, which is facebook.com/Culipspodcast or, of course, our website, which can be found at Culips.com
- Hey, Morag, thanks for listening to my story. I know I chewed your ear off but ...
- Morag: It was an interesting one. I'm happy to have heard it.
- Andrew: Cool. Well, have a great day. And, hey, we'll talk to you next time.
- Morag: OK. Bye.
- Andrew: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

A perk

As a noun, **perk** has two related meanings. The first meaning of **perk** is something you receive from a job in addition to your wage or salary. The thing you receive can be an object or some sort of benefit. For example, if you work at a clothing store, you might get an item of free clothing or the ability to buy clothing at a discount—either one would be a **perk** of the job.

A **perk** doesn't always relate to jobs, however. The second meaning of **perk** is very similar. It is an extra benefit or advantage, but can relate to any situation. For example, if you have a roommate who likes to cook, getting your dinner made for you is a **perk** of having that roommate.

So, a **perk** can mean anything nice that comes in addition to job or a given situation.

Here are a couple more examples with both meanings of a **perk**:

Josh:	Emma, you're late!
Emma:	Sorry, Josh. I got held up at work.
Josh:	Was there some emergency?
Emma:	Well, not really. It's just that everyone in my group had a few beers before the day was through. I'm sorry, I was just having fun chatting!
Josh:	You can drink around your boss?
Emma:	Yeah! There are fridges with free beer at my office.
Josh:	Free beer—that's a crazy perk .

Matt:	Hey, Stephanie, how do you like your new apartment?
Stephanie:	It's not bad. I'm kinda sad about my room, though. It's the smallest in the apartment. I'm talking tiny!
Matt:	Does it have any good qualities that offset the size?
Stephanie:	It gets the afternoon sun, which is a perk for me, but that's about it!

To hit up

To hit up is an informal phrasal verb that can be used in many situations. In general, **to hit up** refers to visiting a person or location, usually to acquire something needed.

For example, if you need to take out money, you might say that you need **to hit up** a bank. Or you might want **to hit up** a pharmacy if you have an upset stomach and need something to calm it.

However, **to hit up** can also mean simply to visit, without the need to acquire something. For example, in this episode Andrew mentions planning **to hit up** all three of Canada's coasts. By this he means that he is going to visit all three coasts, and not that there is anything he needs to acquire there.

Even though there are two ways of using **to hit up**, whether it's being used in the sense of simply visiting or if it's being used in the sense of visiting with a need to acquire something, the meaning is usually implied, not directly stated.

Here are a couple more examples with both senses of **to hit up**:

Patty:	Neil, are you ready to go?
Neil:	Almost! If I could just find my toothpaste, I'd be all packed.
Patty:	Well, hurry up, we're going to be late for the train!
Neil:	OK, OK. I can leave now as long as we hit up a pharmacy once we arrive. I can't live without brushing my teeth!

Liz:	What do you want to do tonight?
Adam:	Go out?
Liz:	Yeah, but where? There's Sarah's party, your brother's dinner thing, and that show we wanted to go to.
Adam:	Do you think we could hit up all three?
Liz:	I guess so. If we went to the dinner first, then the show, then Sarah's last, we might be able to do it.
Adam:	It's a plan!

Stars align

When the **stars align** is a phrase that is used to talk about when everything comes together to make an unlikely event or situation possible. Usually we talk about the **stars aligning** when the unlikely event or situation is lucky or favourable.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that the **stars aligned** because he had time off when his friends were visiting Taiwan. This is a lucky, rare occurrence because both Andrew and his friends are usually working in different countries, and they happened to have the same time for vacation! In other words, because Andrew found himself in the fortunate and rare situation that he was able to travel with his friends, he said that the **stars aligned**.

So, when you find yourself in an unlikely and happy circumstance, you can say that the **stars aligned** for you!

Here are a couple more examples with **stars align**:

Kurt:	Hey, Eve, how's the job hunt coming?
Eve:	Fantastically!
Kurt:	Wow, what happened?
Eve:	Well, I got an interview for my dream job a month ago. They said they really liked me, but they hired another person. I was so sad about it.
Kurt:	But I thought you said the job hunt was going well?
Eve:	Just wait! Two days ago, I got a call from the company. They had a new position open up, and they offered it to me! It's just as cool a position and it pays even more.
Kurt:	That's so lucky. It sounds like the stars aligned for you!

Dave:	Hey, Becca, you're really early to work today.
Becca:	Well, my bike got a flat tire.
Dave:	That's awful. But, wait, shouldn't that make you late?
Becca:	Despite the bad start, the stars aligned for me! My friend was driving in her truck along the same road and gave me a lift to work with my bike.

On cloud nine

Saying someone is **on cloud nine** is an informal way of expressing that they are extremely happy. If someone is **on cloud nine** they are not a little happy, or even very happy, they are elated, euphoric, overjoyed. As this saying means that someone is exceptionally happy, it is commonly used when talking about emotions surrounding significant events— like a graduation, promotion, or engagement.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that he was **on cloud nine** after he beat the highest-ranked chess player he's ever beaten. As it was such a memorable, meaningful event, it makes sense that Andrew would be **on cloud nine**! So, if something happens in your life that makes you feel tremendously happy, you can say that you're **on cloud nine**.

Here's one more example with **on cloud nine**:

Catherine:	How was the phone call with your brother?
David:	It was good! He's doing really well right now.
Catherine:	That's great to hear. What's new with him?
David:	He got a new job and a new girlfriend in the last week—he's on cloud nine !

One's spidey senses are tingling

The phrase that Andrew uses in this episode, that **his spidey senses were tingling**, is primarily a reference to the comic book hero Spiderman. However, the phrase has become a recognisable, but uncommon, saying of its own.

When **your spidey senses are tingling**, you have a feeling of foreboding that something bad is going to happen. In other words, you sense that something is wrong, suspicious, or dangerous.

Here's one more example with **one's spidey senses are tingling**:

Rebecca:	I don't like the crowd at this party. I think we should leave.
Harold:	Yeah, my spidey senses are tingling , too. Those guys seem really angry, like they might get in a fight.
Rebecca:	I'm glad you agree—let's get out of here!

To get the short end of the stick

We talk about someone **getting the short end of the stick** when they experience the negative consequences of a situation. This is a strange saying to picture, but it will make more sense if you can understand this image. Imagine that a certain situation is a stick. The stick has a bad, or a “short,” end. If you reach out, grab for the stick, and accidentally grab its short end, then you will experience the negative possibilities of that situation.

There are two key aspects of this expression. The first is that suffering the bad effects of the situation is implied to be by chance. So, **getting the short end of the stick** isn't the fault of the person who gets it. The second key aspect is that there is also the implication that other people in the same situation did not experience the bad effects.

In this episode, Morag mentions that Andrew **got the short end of the stick** during his trip to Taiwan. She says this because all of Andrew's troubles resulted from situations that he could not control. Additionally, there were many people who travelled through that airport that same day with no troubles. Andrew was simply very unlucky compared to everyone else; he **got the short end of the stick**!

Here are a couple more examples with *to get the short end of the stick*:

Allen:	Hey, Caitlin, are you enjoying your new office?
Caitlin:	Not at all! I really got the short end of the stick .
Allen:	Why do you say that?
Caitlin:	All the other temporary offices have windows, but mine does not, and the other offices are literally twice the size of my office.
Allen:	Oh dear, what bad luck!

Stephen:	How are you feeling, Anna?
Anna:	I'm doing better, thanks for asking. I'm so tired of having a cold, though. I've been sick with a cold for at least a week in each of the past 3 months. It's crazy! I went to the doctor because I was worried something might be really wrong, but he says I'm just unlucky to keep coming into contact with new cold viruses.
Stephen:	Wow, it sounds like you got the short end of the stick this cold season.

Quiz

1. What happens when the stars align?

- a) an unlucky and unlikely situation occurs
- b) a lucky and unlikely situation occurs
- c) a lucky but common situation occurs
- d) a new constellation is formed

2. In its simplest meaning, to hit up means:

- a) to visit
- b) to acquire
- c) to leave
- d) to stay

3. If your spidey senses are tingling, you feel you're in what kind of situation?

- a) lucky
- b) safe
- c) suspicious
- d) ordinary

4. If you are on cloud nine, what are you feeling?

- a) mild happiness
- b) extreme happiness
- c) mild sadness
- d) extreme sadness

5. True or false: When you get the short end of the stick, you are lucky and something unexpectedly good happens to you.

- a) true
- b) false

6. What is a perk?

- a) a drawback or weakness
- b) a strength or ability
- c) a feeling or mood
- d) a bonus or benefit

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.a 3.c 4.b 5.b 6.d

Episode credits

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