

AD-FREE

Simplified Speech #173 – Kassy’s European summer

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Kassy discuss Kassy’s plans for the summer. Kassy and her husband are going to Europe to volunteer at an Eco Lodge in Scotland. Tune in to find out all the details!

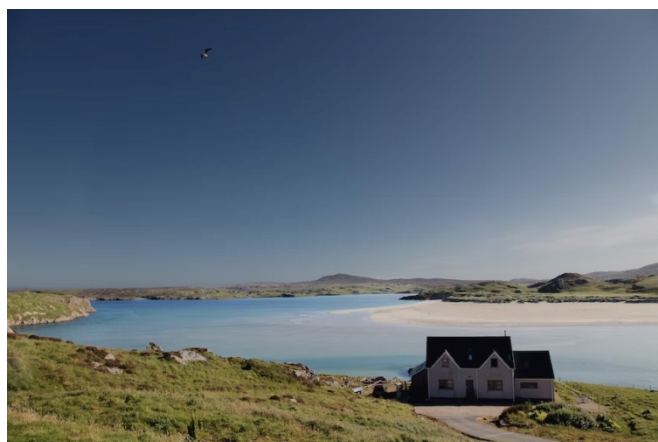
Simplified Speech is a Culips series that features two native English speakers having clear and natural conversations about fascinating topics. These episodes are designed to help you improve your English listening and speaking skills in a fun and exciting way.

Fun fact

An interesting aspect of volunteering abroad is that it often offers an immersive language learning experience. Volunteers often improve their language skills and cultural understanding by interacting with hosts and fellow volunteers in foreign countries.

Expressions included in the study guide

- The sky is the limit
- To stick out
- To be in the same boat
- To play by ear
- Hustle and bustle
- On the flip side



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the DetailedExplanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Simplified Speech episode 173, Kassy's European summer. Featuring, Andrew and Kassy. Hey, everyone, it's Andrew here, and I'll be joined by Kassy in just a moment, we're going to be talking about her upcoming summer vacation plans. She's got some good plans coming up, I gotta say, I'm a little bit jealous of her amazing summer. We'll get to that in just a moment, you'll hear and learn all about it. But before we do, I have one quick announcement about our brand-new Discord server that I want to share with you.

So, we recently launched our Discord server, and we already have over 600 people who have joined us there. And it is really amazing. I've been enjoying reading everyone's posts, and have loved seeing how diverse our listeners are. We have listeners, from all walks of life, from all over the world, with all sorts of different hobbies and interests. But the one thing that we all share in common is our passion for learning English and, at least in my case, more like my passion for teaching English. But anyways, we're all there. And we're practicing and improving our English together, we've been having just really interesting conversations on Discord. And I've been so pleased to see that many people are practicing their English speaking on Discord as well hopping into the voice chat rooms. And even I have been doing that from time to time. It's a lot of fun. And I really want to encourage you to come check us out on Discord.

So to join, all you have to do is follow the link from the Culips Dashboard. So just log into your Culips account and you'll see the link there right in the middle of your screen. Download the discord app, make a username, log in, and you'll be able to join us on Discord. It's totally free of course to join. And we do have a special members-only area on Discord for you as well. And we're planning to have some special members-only content.

So if you have any suggestions about what kind of special activities you'd like us to do there for our member community, then just leave us a comment on Discord and we'll definitely consider it. Guys, Culips wouldn't exist without you as members so we really do want to make sure that we show our appreciation for you by giving you something a little bit special on Discord. So yeah, if you haven't already, please join us there. And we'll see you on the Discord. So, now let's get started with this episode. I hope you enjoy it. Here we go.

Kassy, let's get started with our main topic of conversation for today, which is your upcoming volunteer experience that you're going to be doing this summer. I told you before we started recording that I didn't want to talk about this with you at all, so that I can hear this story fresh for the first time while we are recording here on Culips. So really, I have no idea about what you're going to be doing. And I'm happy that I can finally get to hear all the details right now. I'm dying to know. So Kassy, could you kind of break it down for us and tell us about your upcoming volunteer experience that you'll be doing what's going on exactly?

Kassy: Sure. So, this isn't a typical volunteer experience that you might imagine in your head where it's all selfless for example, maybe a Peace Corps trip or something through a church. I'm volunteering specifically for kind of a, like a bartering reason. My husband and I are traveling to Europe this summer. And listeners probably know Europe is amazing, but very expensive. So, we wanted to try to stay longer but we didn't want to go, you know, crazy over budget. So, I'd heard of these programs where you can volunteer your time for a few hours a day and in turn, you can stay at that place that you volunteer at for free room and board. So free housing and meals.

Andrew: That sounds like a pretty good deal. So, you work for a couple of hours a day and in return for your labour and your work, you get to stay for free and eat for free at an Eco Lodge?

Kassy: Yeah, exactly. So, the place where I'm staying is this cool Eco Lodge in Scotland. But the programs that I'm most familiar with, there's three programs, there's one called WWOOFing, there's one called Workaway and there's one called Worldpackers. WWOOFing is probably the most famous and that is where you work pretty much exclusively in organic farms around the world, maybe you help pick fruit or milk cows or something like that. But the other two I mentioned Workaway and Worldpackers, these are kind of interesting because you can find volunteer positions in a bunch of different sectors. You could work in a hostel, you know, checking in other guests, and cleaning bedsheets and things like that. You could work in, I don't know, some sort of construction thing where you help somebody renovate their place that they want to eventually bring guests in for. You could work at a campsite, you could work in an Airbnb, or in the kitchens of somebody's small restaurant in a tiny village. Yeah, **the sky's the limit**.

Andrew: That's really cool. It sounds like a really interesting experience. And I'm happy that you're doing this Kassy sounds like something that I should have done when I was younger and didn't do, so, it's cool that you are getting to do this experience now. Is there a reason why you chose Scotland over some other European country?

Kassy: No, it was kind of, honestly, spur of the moment, we planned to go to certain countries in Europe. And we're kind of planning this last minute. And I knew there were a few countries that I'd love to try to volunteer in. But the competition with other people who want to do this is quite high, especially in July. So, I just applied to a few places that **stuck out** to me that I liked their web page and the host's seemed very kind and nice. And the one that I ended up getting was in Scotland, and I'm super excited. That was one of my favourite ones, so luckily, we did get the one I wanted. But if we ended up in Germany or Italy, which I also applied to, we would have gone there.

Andrew: Have you ever been to Scotland before? Or will this be your first time visiting there?

Kassy: Yeah, I have not. My sister lived there for six months as an exchange student, but I was working in Korea at the time I couldn't visit. So, I'm very excited to have my own Scottish adventure.

Andrew: And what about this Eco Lodge that you will be staying at? Could you explain that a little bit more like? I've heard this phrase before Eco Lodge, but I'm not exactly sure 100% what that means, and maybe some of our listeners are **in the same boat** as me. What does it mean? What kind of place is an Eco Lodge?

Kassy: Yeah, I don't know too, too much about it yet. But I do know that the people that run it is a family and the lands are their estate that they've owned for, you know, hundreds of years. This family has lived there for generations. But in the recent, I don't know, couple of decades, they've turned their estate into a wetland specifically for wildlife and beavers, which we're becoming extinct in Scotland, I guess due to hunting of something of the sort. So, yes, they have like, wild beavers and pigs and cows, which is super cute. And they also have some lodges and yurts that they invite guests to come stay at like an Airbnb opportunity in the wetlands. So my husband and I will be helping to prepare the lodging for guests that come and stay.

Andrew: OK, so do you know exactly what kind of work that you're gonna have to be doing? Like, I imagine you'll kind of be like a hotel cleaning person or maid? Is that the kind of responsibilities that you think you'll have? Or will you be taking care of some of the farm animals as well?

Kassy: Yeah, I have no idea. I probably won't be doing too much crazy work because they don't know us super well, they don't know what we're, like, good at. I've never done farm stuff. So, I'm **playing it by ear** now. This is my first time doing something like this. So, I'm hoping it goes well, I read a review of a girl who was there last month who really enjoyed it. And based on that, and yeah, just going for it. The site that I use to find this opportunity, it's called Worldpackers. And what's cool about this site is yeah you could look

through the profiles of each person giving the jobs and then you can also look through all of the reviews they've received from people that have volunteered for them in the past and you could message those past volunteers and ask them questions like, "Did you communicate well with this person? How was the housing? Was it a good fit for you?" So I have not messaged yet, but I think this kind of site is so great for a way to travel on a budget, and then also experience something really local compared to just, you know, visiting tourist sites in the countries that you're visiting.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. It sounds like a really interesting way to get to know that country really closely and have a totally different experience than you would if you were just a tourist staying in a hotel and visiting the local attractions, right? That's really cool. Give you a really inside look into the country, I think.

Kassy: Yeah. What else is cool? Let's see, ah, you can search by times. So, if you know, you only have two weeks that you can spend doing this volunteer kind of thing, then you could search, I only want to find locations that are accepting applicants who can stay two weeks minimum or maybe even a few days. Or you can find long term positions, maybe you took off work or college for the summer. And you know, you want to go volunteer on a farm or in a hostel in one city for several weeks to a few months. You could search for that, too. There are some opportunities that they really want you to come for long periods of time so that they can train you once and then you know, let you go independently.

Andrew: Right. Yeah, that's awesome. So, do you know how many hours a day you'll be volunteering, like, I imagine that you're not going to be putting in 40-hour work weeks? Or else there'd be really no reason to go, right? Like you're going to a foreign country, you want to have some time to do some sightseeing, and to experience life outside of the Eco Lodge. Will you just be like kind of working in the morning, and then you'll have the afternoons and evenings free to yourself that sort of, setup?

Kassy: Yeah, I think most places are about 20 hours a week, so four or five hours a day. And usually, it's like maybe eight to one or an evening shift. And then two days off a week, so that we can go travel further. And then the cool part about this place is it's a wetland. So, there's probably dozens of really cool hiking and walking trails that we can go on after we've finished our shift during the day.

Andrew: Make sure you bring some good boots with you. I feel like in Scotland, in the wetlands, you might need some rain boots there with you. Do you have like a bucket list of things that you want to do while you're in Europe?

Kassy: Yeah, I want to eat so much food. We're doing a short jaunt to Italy, which I've never been to. But whenever I think of Italy, I think of amazing pastas and wine and gelato. And I can't wait.

Andrew: Yeah, oh my God, you're lucky. I'm jealous already of this, kind of, this trip that you're going to be doing. Kassy, before we wrap up here, I just want you to project into the future and imagine yourself, you know, working, volunteering at the Eco Lodge and I'm thinking of the potential benefits and potential downsides to this kind of travel experience. What do you think some of the benefits you'll experience are going to be?

Kassy: I think the benefits are that we can, like I said before, get really immersed in that one part of this new country I've never visited and meet a real local family. For me, it's not super important because I speak English. But for my husband, he's excited to speak English and hear different accents he's never heard before, like the Scottish accent so different than mine. It's gonna be crazy. So, I think listeners who wanted to do this opportunity, they could move to a country and volunteer to practice their English or practice their Spanish if they want to go volunteer in Spain. It's really cool. In terms of difficulties, we planned our trip around this. So, I'm hoping everything goes well and there's no conflict between our host but you never know until it happens, right? So always plan for contingencies like if something goes wrong, make sure you have a backup just in case.

Andrew: Well, we are crossing our fingers that of course that doesn't happen. And Kassy, over the next couple of months, you're going to be gone and you're not going to be able to record with us while you are away in Scotland. So, actually, listeners, we are working really hard to prepare a lot of episodes in advance so that you'll be able to hear Kassy throughout the summer. But I think it's good for you to take a little break and just focus on your travel and having a good time and making some nice memories while you're in Europe, Kassy. So, we all hope that you have a wonderful experience, and we can't wait to hear about it when you get back. Can you promise to tell us all about it when you return?

Kassy: Tell you all about it.

Andrew: OK, so we've decided to keep our conversation going for a little bit longer for all of our members, just to say thanks for your support everyone. Of course, we really do appreciate it. And Kassy, let's see here, I've got some, just some short, fun, rapid fire questions for you. And question number one. I know you said earlier that you don't know exactly what you'll be doing when you're volunteering at the Eco Lodge. But can you think of one chore or one task that you'd rather avoid?

Kassy: Probably can't avoid it, but I imagine since we're helping prepare lodges, I'll probably have to clean toilets. It'll be fine.

Andrew: Cleaning the toilets? Yeah, I think everybody would probably avoid doing that if possible, absolutely. OK question number two. What would happen if you arrived at the Eco Lodge only to find that it was completely off grid and there was no internet at all? Do you think you could survive in that situation? Would an offline summer be doable for you?

Kassy: Honestly, I think I'd be OK. I think my husband might die. But one reason I wanted to do this was to get away from the **hustle and bustle** of the crazy Bangkok city and kind of get more in touch with nature again for a few weeks.

Andrew: Yeah, you'd totally be fine. I think as long as you pre-loaded your Kindle with many books, if you didn't pre-download them, and then you had no books on your Kindle loaded to read, then maybe that would be well, it could be a good opportunity to reread some of the books that you had read in the past. But yeah, I know that you're a bookworm, Kassy, so without the internet connection to download some ebooks might be difficult, right?

Kassy: I'll have to scrounge them up from the lodge. Do you have anything to read?

Andrew: Let's see. Final bonus question is, if you had to choose between working the morning shift, or working the night shift, which shift would you prefer to work at the lodge?

Kassy: That's a good question. Actually, I'd kind of like a mixture because if I work the morning shift, I'd have the rest of the day to go hiking and stuff. However, **on the flip side**, if I got afternoon or evening that I could wake up early morning and see you know, the wetlands in the dawn hours, which would also be super cool, but I probably wouldn't do that often, so mostly morning, I think.

Andrew: Mostly morning. Nice. Yeah, I think that's what I would prefer as well get your chores and your tasks out of the way and then you can use the rest of the day to go explore and have some adventures.

All right, Kassy. Well, that will bring us to the end of today's bonus content and thank you everybody for listening. Talk to you next time, bye!

Kassy: See ya!

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time, bye!

Detailed Explanations

The sky is the limit

Idiomatic phrase

When describing all the different volunteer jobs offered by Workaway and Worldpackers, Kassy says, “The sky is the limit.” **The sky is the limit** is an expression that means that there are no limits, and the possibilities and opportunities are endless. By saying the sky is the limit, Kassy means that there’s a wide range of options and countless job opportunities you can do through these platforms.

The idea behind this expression is based on the fact that the sky is big and seemingly endless. We use the expression the sky is the limit to say that nothing is impossible, and there are no limits or boundaries to what you can do or achieve.

The sky is the limit is a powerful expression, and it’s often used to encourage and motivate people to dream big and aim high. It’s a positive phrase that can be applied to various areas of life: personal goals, careers, business, etc. For example, when it comes to learning English, you have so many choices: you can take classes, use online apps, or practice with native speakers. The sky is the limit! In other words, there are limitless ways you can learn and improve your English skills.

Here are a couple more examples with **the sky is the limit**:

James: I’ve been thinking about changing my career. I don’t feel like my current job is right for me.

Erica: So, what would you like to do instead?

James: I was considering graphic design.

Erica: Great idea! With graphic design skills, **the sky is the limit** in terms of job opportunities and career growth.

Sandra: I’d really like to start my own business, but I’m not sure if I can do that.

Paul: Are you serious? With your determination, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit, **the sky is the limit** for what you can achieve. Go for it!

To stick out

Phrasal Verb

When talking about applying for the volunteering program, Kassy says, “I just applied to a few places that stuck out to me.” **To stick out** means to be noticeable. If someone or something sticks out, it means they are different from the rest.

If something, like a wallet, sticks out of your pocket, it means that a part of the wallet isn't inside the pocket, so it can be easily seen. When used figuratively, this expression means that something or someone is noticeable due to their appearance or behaviour. For example, if a candidate got a job because he stuck out, it means there was something special about him that made him different from the other candidates.

In this episode, to stick out is used in a positive way. It means that a few places Kassy applied to were different in a good way; there was something about them that she liked. However, to stick out can also be used in a negative way. For instance, if someone is wearing a casual outfit at a formal event, they stick out because they're dressed inappropriately. There's a phrase that expresses this idea very vividly: “to stick out like a sore thumb.” It means that a person is noticeable in a bad way.

Here are a couple more examples with **to stick out**:

Evan: How did the wedding dress shopping go?

Alice: I tried on several dresses, but nothing really **stuck out to me**.

Evan: Don't worry, there's plenty of time. Your perfect dress is waiting for you somewhere out there!

Ted: Do you have any plans for tonight?

Lily: I'm going to my salsa class. Do you want to come with me?

Ted: I don't think so. I'm a terrible dancer; I'll **stick out like a sore thumb** there.

Lily: Oh, come on! Don't be silly. You can't be that bad. How about you just watch this time? You can always join if you feel like it.

Ted: OK.

To be in the same boat

Idiom

To be in the same boat means to be in the same position or situation, usually difficult or unpleasant. If two or more people are in the same boat, they're sharing the same experience, problem, or challenge. When we say we're in the same boat, it means we understand each other, because we're all dealing with the same thing.

When asking Kassy to describe an Eco Lodge, because he isn't sure what it is, Andrew says, "maybe some of our listeners are in the same boat as me." What Andrew means is that some listeners, like him, don't know what an Eco Lodge is and could use an explanation as well.

The expression to be in the same boat is often used to show support and understanding. It's like saying "You're not alone in this". You'll often hear the phrase "we are all in the same boat." For example, during the pandemic, we were all in the same boat, dealing with the uncertainty and challenges, sharing the same experience.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be in the same boat**:

Kyle: Is everything OK? You've been acting weird all day.

Ellen: I can't believe we have to work on the weekend again. I barely have time for my kids and my husband!

Kyle: Look, I know how you feel. **We're all in the same boat.** We'll get through this together. Let's focus on finishing the project now, OK?

Miranda: I don't know if I can do a presentation today. I just found out that the CEO is going to be there! I freeze when I see him.

Matt: I totally get it. I'm **in the same boat as you.** I get really nervous when I have to give presentations. I just try not to look at all these people, and it helps.

Miranda: I need to calm down. Can we go over my slides together?

Matt: Sure, no problem.

To play it by ear

Idiom

To play it by ear means to act spontaneously as the situation develops without preparing for it or having a plan. If someone plays it by ear, it means that they improvise and make decisions based on how things happen.

When Andrew asks Kassy if she knows exactly what work she is going to do, she replies by saying, “I’m playing it by ear.” She means that she doesn’t have a plan and is going to act according to the situation, depending on what happens when she gets there.

This expression comes from music where it means to play a musical instrument without using sheet music and reading the notes. When used metaphorically, to play it by ear means to rely on your instincts, rather than following a plan.

A similar expression you might have heard is “to go with the flow”, which essentially means the same. For example, someone might say, “I’m not going to make any plans for tonight, I’m just going to go with the flow.” It means they’re going to act spontaneously and improvise.

Here are a couple more examples with **to play by ear**:

Adam: When are you guys going to Paris?

Becky: We’re leaving next week.

Adam: Nice! Have you planned your trip already?

Becky: Not really. We’re **playing it by ear** this time. We’ll figure it out when we get there.

Ashley: When did you say your interview for the newspaper is?

Sid: It’s tomorrow.

Ashley: Do you already know what they’re going to ask?

Sid: No idea! I guess I’ll have to **play it by ear**.

Hustle and bustle

Phrase

Hustle and bustle is a phrase we use to describe a busy and noisy environment or a lot of activity happening around us. The word “hustle” means to move quickly, to rush around to complete tasks. The word “bustle” refers to the noise and constant movement that usually happens in a busy place.

We often use hustle and bustle to describe a lively, busy, and sometimes overwhelming atmosphere of a big city: a lot of cars, people, and loud noises. It can also be used to describe other busy places, such as shopping centers, markets, or festivals.

The expression with the opposite meaning is “peace and quiet.” You might sometimes hear these two phrases used together, when comparing the busy city life to the quiet and peaceful life of the countryside.

In this episode, Kassy talks about her reasons for participating in the volunteering program. Kassy mentions that she wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of the crazy Bangkok city. This means she wants to escape the busy and noisy atmosphere of Bangkok, and enjoy the peace and quiet of the wetlands.

Here are a couple more examples with **hustle and bustle**:

Alan: How was your weekend?

Chloe: It was lovely! We stayed in a cozy cabin in the countryside and enjoyed the peace and quiet of nature.

Alan: I could use a break from the **hustle and bustle** of the city myself. Would you recommend going there?

Chloe: Absolutely! You’ll love it there.

Luke: So, what time is your flight?

Beth: It’s at 11am, but I’m probably going to leave a bit earlier just in case.

Luke: Personally, I try to spend as little time as possible at airports.

Beth: Really? I love the **hustle and bustle** of airports. It’s always fun watching travelers from around the world.

On the flip side

Phrase, informal

On the flip side is an expression we use to talk about the opposite aspect of a situation. On the flip side means the same thing as “on the other hand”, but on the flip side is more informal. This phrase is usually used to talk about a less good side of something, a negative aspect of it.

“To flip” means to turn, for example, you can flip a coin to see the other side of it. There’s a similar expression “the flip side of the coin”, which means a different way of looking at the situation, the opposite aspect of it.

In this episode, Kassy uses this expression when comparing the benefits of doing morning shifts as opposed to evening shifts. She says, “on the flip side, I could wake up early morning and see the wetlands in the dawn hours.” By using this phrase, she provides a different way of looking at doing evening shifts over morning shifts.

On the flip side can be useful in situations where you need to compare the pros and cons of something. For example, working from home has a lot of advantages, but on the flip side, it can make it harder to balance work and personal life.

Here are a couple more examples with **on the flip side**:

Claire: I can’t wait to get a car! Public transport is so unreliable.

Billy: Yeah, driving your own car is definitely more convenient. **On the flip side**, using public transportation can save you from traffic, parking troubles, and the expenses of owning a car.

Claire: You only say that because you haven’t been using it for years! You get stuck in traffic on a bus too, you know.

April: I love shopping at the mall, but it can be so tiring sometimes.

Colin: Totally! I buy clothes and shoes online these days.

April: I enjoy online shopping too. **On the flip side**, I often order the wrong size, so I end up returning a lot of stuff. It’s a bit frustrating.

Colin: Yeah, that’s one downside to online shopping, all right.

Quiz

1. If your friend told you that a painting they saw in a gallery stuck out to them, they mean that _____.
 - a) they didn't get a chance to see it
 - b) it was stuck to the wall
 - c) it was inappropriate
 - d) it was different from the rest of the paintings

2. The phrase "We're all in the same boat" is NOT used when _____.
 - a) people share the same problem
 - b) people don't like each other
 - c) people understand each other
 - d) people want to support each other

3. If you choose to make decisions spontaneously instead of following a plan, you're _____.
 - a) playing by your ear
 - b) playing it with ear
 - c) playing it by ear
 - d) playing through ear

4. Which of the following places is NOT likely to be full of hustle and bustle?
 - a) library
 - b) market
 - c) big city
 - d) train station

5. True or false? "On the flip side" and "on the other hand" are opposites.
 - a) True
 - b) False

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Would you be interested in doing a similar volunteering experience as Kassy? Where would you go?
2. Do you believe that the sky is the limit when it comes to achieving your goals?
3. Can you think of a situation where someone or something really stuck out to you? What made them so different?
4. Do you usually play it by ear or do you prefer following a plan?
5. Do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of busy places, or do you prefer a more peaceful and quiet environment?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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