

Walking and talking

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew talks about the last-moment trip he took to Jeju Island to meet up with one of his oldest and best friends. Plus, in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you about the useful English idiom **to throw a wrench into [someone's] plans**.

Support Culips and take your English to the next level by becoming a Culips Member. To sign up, visit Culips.com.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Have you ever gone on a trip at the drop of a hat suddenly and with no real planning or prep? Well, just last week, one of my closest and oldest friends hit me up, sent me a message, and said, "Hey, I've got the week off, and I'm thinking of going to Jeju Island. Want to meet up for the weekend?" My buddy's from Canada and we first met in elementary school over 30 years ago, believe it or not. He's one of my oldest and best friends, and right now he's living in Shanghai. And he had some time off work, and he decided to spend it on Jeju Island. For listeners who don't know, Jeju Island is a volcanic island off the southern coast of South Korea, and if you're a regular Culips listener, then you'll probably remember Kassy and me chatting about our trips to the island. We've both been there several times. It's an amazing place. I love hanging out on Jeju. And the best part is that it's only an hour's flight away from Seoul. So, when I found out my friend would be chilling in Jeju, I really wanted to go and hang out with him. Before the pandemic, we used to meet up pretty much every year traveling to different places in Asia together. Our last trip was to Japan, but that was way back in 2018. And then, of course, the pandemic happened and with all the restrictions in place that made it very, very hard to travel, we haven't seen each other in person since then. So, I checked my schedule, I talked it over with my wife and I made a last-minute decision to grab a flight to Jeju to catch up with my friend over the weekend.

You're listening to bonus episode number 48 of the Culips English Podcast. I'm your host and your English study buddy Andrew. And in this episode, I'm going to share the story of my short but sweet Jeju Island adventure that happened over the weekend. And then towards the end of the episode, I'm going to teach you about a useful English expression that you'll hear me use while I'm telling the story. Now we've made a transcript for this episode, and we're giving it away to everyone for free, no strings attached. Speaking of useful expressions, that's actually a good one, no strings attached. It means that there are no hidden conditions or catches. So, the transcript then is totally free. There's no strings attached. And you can get it in an interactive version that's great for smartphones, tablets,

or computers. Or you can download it as a PDF. And that's better for printing out. So, to get the transcript, just follow the link in the description or visit our website, which is Culips.com.

OK, let's get to my Jeju Island story. So, after checking my schedule, and realizing that a quick Jeju trip was doable over the weekend, I quickly booked my tickets, got a hotel, and made a very rough travel itinerary. So, I flew out on Friday after work. And by the time I actually made it to Jeju, it was around 10pm at night and slightly raining. Since I was only going for the weekend, I packed the light, and I brought a raincoat, but I didn't bring an umbrella. So, the rain wasn't exactly what I was hoping for. As I left the airport, and I headed to the taxi line, I couldn't believe my eyes. The queue of people waiting for a cab stretched for at least 500 meters. It was nuts! There were so many people at the airport waiting for a taxi, even late at night like that at around 10pm. So, I realized that taking a taxi to the hotel would take forever. And my friend had already been traveling around Jeju for the week, and he had checked into the hotel already and was waiting for me. We planned to grab dinner together, and since it was getting late, and because of the huge taxi line, I kind of was annoyed right from the very start of the trip to be honest. I thought that taking a taxi would be the quickest option, but then once I saw that long taxi queue, it made me realize that it would probably take over an hour just to catch a taxi.

So instead of that, I opened the map app on my phone that I use when I'm checking for a route for public transportation, and I found a bus that would take me almost exactly where I needed to go. Now my app said that the bus was arriving soon. So, I turned around and I saw that the bus was just pulling up to the bus stop. And at that moment I had really good luck. The timing was perfect, and the light at the crosswalk turned green, so I ran across the street, and I just grabbed the bus in time. And 20 minutes later, I was at the hotel, and I was able to finally meet up with my friend. So, I went up to the hotel room and I dropped my bag off. And my friend and I went outside to look around for something to eat. My friend mentioned that he'd already scoped out the neighborhood, he'd already walked around and checked it out. And he found a few restaurants that had good reviews that he

was interested in trying. So, we checked out those places, but unfortunately, they were all closed. Now, Korea's actually famous for its vibrant nightlife and 24-hour restaurants, and sometimes even stores are open 24 hours a day. So, I thought that something would have been open, but I guess that's more common in the big cities. And it seems like after the pandemic, especially, many smaller restaurants have switched to more regular hours, and the late-night scene just isn't the same anymore. I actually could be wrong about that, but it just seems to be what I've noticed. And if you're a Korean listening to this right now, please let me know if you agree or not. To be honest, I'm usually not out too late at night looking for dinner, so maybe I'm not the best person to comment on it.

But anyways, my friend and I, we were out late at night that night, trying to find a place to eat for dinner. And finally, at around 10:30 or so we ended up stumbling across a barbecue restaurant that served grilled black pig, which is a local specialty of Jeju Island. And the doors were open, there were customers in there eating, everything was good, so we decided to give it a shot. And it turned out to be a fantastic choice. The food was delicious. And we had a great meal while catching up and chatting about his trip so far. And it was the perfect way to start our Jeju Island adventure.

So, our itinerary for the trip had just two main goals. The first goal was hiking up Hallasan, which is the highest mountain on Jeju Island, and in fact in all of South Korea. And the second goal was just to hang out and spend time together. When you're with an old friend that you haven't seen in ages, it doesn't really matter what you do, you could be doing anything and it's always a blast. So, we planned to hike up Hallasan on Saturday. And although my friend and I we aren't expert hikers, it is something that we enjoy doing and we've done it together in the past. During that Japan trip that I mentioned earlier in 2018, during that trip we actually hiked up Mount Fuji. And we've done some other hikes together throughout Korea, and Taiwan, and of course, Canada. And personally, I've also hiked Hallasan at least three or four times before, so I knew what we were getting into. Now the weather wasn't fantastic when I arrived in Jeju, but it was supposed to clear up overnight, and the forecast said that the next morning would be gorgeous. So, we agreed that hiking

up the mountain would be a fantastic way to spend our day. The mountain is just a little bit under 2000 meters tall. And the hike is around 20 kilometers round trip. So, it's not easy, but it's not too intense at the same time.

Actually, we decided that we were going to go hiking a little earlier in the week. I think it was around Wednesday or Thursday. And when I told my wife this plan, she asked me if we had made a reservation to go hiking. And I answered, "No. Why would I do that? Why do you need a reservation?" I guess somewhat recently, there's been a reservation system implemented on Hallasan and now you need to make a reservation before you can hike up the mountain. When I had hiked up Hallasan previously, you didn't need to do that. So, this was something new. And I suddenly freaked out a little bit like, "Oh my god, I didn't make a reservation. What happens if we can't do this? That would be such a bummer because it would be so fun to hike up the mountain." So, I went to the reservation website and tried to book a spot for Saturday. And of course, there were no spots left. And I told my friend at that time that we probably need a new plan, since all the slots were full for the one day that we could actually do the hike. But I didn't give up, I kept trying to make a reservation throughout Wednesday and Thursday. And finally on Thursday evening, a slot opened up. I guess maybe somebody canceled? I don't know exactly what happened, but I was able to make a reservation to go hiking on Hallasan on Saturday, on Thursday night. So, it was perfect timing.

So, we had our reservation in place. And our plan for the day was to hike up the mighty Hallasan on Saturday. So, while we were eating dinner, we discussed exactly what our schedule was going to be like for the next day. And my friend mentioned at that time that he needed to get a PCR COVID test before we went on our hike. So, as I mentioned earlier, my buddy lives in Shanghai, and to go back there, he would need proof of a negative test before he would be allowed to board his flight. So, this was great! It kind of threw a wrench in our plans to be honest, because Hallasan is a serious mountain, and it takes a long time to climb, and we were only able to reserve a later start time in the day at 10am. And there's this rule on the mountain, that you must leave the peak of the mountain

by 2pm. So, I was worried that OK, the next day, we're gonna have to wake up, and we're gonna have to go to the hospital to get a PCR COVID test for him. Maybe the hospital won't open until 9am. And then we'll finish, who knows, let's say 10am. And then we'll get to the mountain by 11am. And we're going to have to run up the mountain to get down in time. And I was worried that the timing just might not work out. So, at the restaurant there, we both pulled out our phones and started doing some Googling and looking for a hospital that would open earlier in the morning. So, we could go and get the PCR test. And I didn't feel very confident about us being able to find a solution to this problem. But it turns out that there was a testing station at the airport that's open seven days a week, 365 days a year, opening at 7am. So yes, thank you to the airport for having this little clinic setup right there. So that was a huge relief, because when we were thinking about our schedule for the next day, we thought like, oh, yeah, we could go to the testing center by maybe 8am, we could complete the test and make it to the start of the hiking trail by 10am, just in time for our reservation.

So, our worries were out of the way, we felt relieved, we got everything sorted out, and we finished up our meal. And then after our meal, we went to a nearby supermarket to buy some snacks and supplies for our hike the next morning. In case you're curious what we brought with us on our hike, we bought some water, of course, we got some cookies, chocolate bars, and two local specialties peanuts from a little island off the coast of Jeju-do, which is called U-do. And then we also got a variety of oranges that are grown on Jeju called hallbong. So, we got some oranges, got some peanuts and some other snacks. And we were all geared up for the hike. Actually, one of my favorite things about doing a hike like this is that you get to pig out a little bit and eat some junk food, and it's kind of OK, because you can say like, "I need the energy for the hike." So yeah, we did get some junk food, but we got the peanuts and the oranges and the healthy snacks as well, and we were ready to go. So, we went back to our hotel to get some rest for the big day of hiking ahead of us. And originally, we were planning to just go to sleep right away, so that we could be nice and rested and refreshed for the hike the next morning. But that didn't really end up happening.

Like I said earlier, we're really good friends, and we haven't seen each other for ages, and we had lots to catch up on. So, when we got back to the hotel room, we didn't go to bed right away, but we just stayed up and were hanging out for a little while longer and chatting and watching some videos on our phone, and you know, just doing things that friends do. Well, a little while longer turned out to be most of the night. And when we finally said like, "Oh my gosh, it's getting late. We need to go to bed!" At that point, it was already past four in the morning. And then my friend and I were like, "Should we really go to sleep? Like if we go to sleep now and we have to wake up in only a couple of hours, we'll probably feel even worse, like we'll be super groggy, and it will be difficult to wake up and get going on our hiking trip." And we were both like, "Ugh what should we do? This was kind of stupid of us to stay up this late in the first place." And at that point, we just decided to stay up all night to not get any sleep. We were both, you know, feeling pretty energetic, I guess to be up that late at night anyways. So that's what we decided to do.

We had some coffee, we stayed up all night, and in the morning, when the clinic was open, then we took a taxi from our hotel to the airport, so my friends could get the PCR test, and get ready for his trip back home to Shanghai. So, we arrived at the airport, we got the test out of the way, and by the time everything was finished there doing that it was already past nine in the morning. And then we took a taxi to the trailhead, because taking a bus would have taken too long. So, we took a taxi. And we arrived, our timing was perfect, we arrived right at 10:02 in the morning, just in time to start the hike for our 10am reservation.

Now as the weather forecast predicted, the weather was gorgeous that morning, and we had an amazing hike up the mountain. To be honest with you, the first 75% of the hike wasn't really too challenging. The trail's well maintained, there's wooden boardwalks, and there's steps. So, it wasn't so bad. We passed through the beautiful nature on the mountain, and we even spotted a deer, which I think in English we call a roe deer. And maybe in Korean, it's called a *noru*, I think. I am not 100% sure though, because it was pretty camouflaged in the forest. But we did see it, which is cool because you don't see

wildlife in South Korea too often, especially larger mammals like a deer. So, I was really happy to see that deer in the forest there from the side of the trail. That was a special treat. So yes, we made it up most of the mountain with no problems. And before the final leg of the journey, we stopped at a rest station for a little break. We had some snacks, drank some water, and got ready for the final ascent to the top of the mountain. So, the final 25% of the hike was a lot more challenging than the first part, and the path was a lot steeper and rockier. And the rain from the previous day made the trail quite slippery. But despite this, we did make it to the top and once we got to the top, the weather actually turned pretty bad. It got windy and cold, and it was really, really cloudy. We didn't spend too much time at the summit, and we started our descent nearly right away because there was nothing to see at the top. Like, it was so cloudy, unfortunately, that we couldn't see anything, which is a real shame, because the view from the top of the mountain is gorgeous. And I wanted to show that to my friend, but we were right in the middle of a cloud, and we couldn't see anything, essentially. So, we just fueled up with some snacks quickly and then made our way down the mountain again.

Descending, the mountain was terrible. It was much harder going down than it was going up. It was slow, and the path was steep, and wet, and rocky. But we made it! It ended up taking about I guess five and a half hours round trip. And during that time, we covered 1200 meters of climbing, and the total hike was around 18 kilometers long. So, when we arrived at the bottom of the mountain, you can imagine that we felt pretty good for having completed the hike. And we were happy to get out of the cold and the wind. And most importantly, we were happy that we could go back to our hotel and take a nap because we were quite tired. So, we took a bus back to where our hotel was. And we were in one of those situations where we were really hungry and really tired at the same time, and we debated while we were riding the bus, what should we do? Should we eat first and then take a nap? Or should we take a nap first and then eat? And we ended up deciding to sleep first and then eat. I guess we were more exhausted than we were hungry. So, we went to our hotel, and we took a nap until about 8pm and after waking up we just went out to a restaurant in the neighborhood, had a simple dinner, and then retired early.

The next day we woke up feeling great. And thankfully, we had no soreness at all from the hike. But our flights weren't until the evening, so I was flying out at 9pm and my friend was flying out at 10pm. So, we had a whole day in front of us in Jeju City, which is the place where we were staying. So, we checked out of our hotel, and we just wandered around the city exploring, walking along the waterfront, visiting the market in the city, and eating delicious food. And at around 5pm, we decided to walk from the city center to the airport along the Jeju Olle Trail. And the Olle Trail is this beautiful network of paths that go all over Jeju Island, as far as I know. I haven't walked all of them, but I think it's a pretty extensive trail network across the island. So, we decided to take that Olle trail to the airport, instead of just waiting around killing a few hours in the city. And I think we made an amazing decision because the scenery alongside the trail was breathtaking. And we saw an absolutely stunning sunset, and it made the walk absolutely worth it. We ended up arriving at the airport around 8pm, just in time for our flights.

And when all was said and done, I ended up walking over 50,000 steps in less than just 48 hours. I had a great time catching up with my friend during our short but sweet time together on Jeju Island, and as we said goodbye to each other we promised not to let another four years pass without hanging out together. And although it was kind of a lightning trip without any real plans or preparation really, other than just planning to hike the mountain, it was a total success. And to be honest, I think it was a fantastic trip and that it was really, really short, but it felt like ages. Felt like I was gone for two weeks even though it was only two days. When I arrived back home last night I caught up with my wife. I told her about all the fun that we had had on Jeju before hopping into bed and getting a good night's sleep.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

So, for this week's vocabulary lesson, I'm going to teach you about a great idiom that English speakers use often when we want to talk about a problem or a disruption in our

plans. The idiom is to throw a wrench into someone's plan. To throw a wrench into someone's plan. Now, you might be wondering what this means. So, a wrench is a tool that we use for tightening or loosening nuts and bolts. But in this idiom, it's not used in that sense of the word. It's used figuratively, to represent a problem or an obstacle. So, when someone says that something threw a wrench in their plans, well, then it means that there was an unexpected issue, or a challenge that made it difficult for them to carry out those plans. And a little bit earlier, when I was telling you the story about hiking up Halla Mountain, I told you that before my friend and I could do the hike, he had to get a PCR COVID test, which just really complicated our schedule for the next day. So, in that case, the PCR test threw a wrench in our plans because it threatened our hike start time, and it made it so that we might miss out on actually being able to do the hike. You know what? I want to play that part of the episode for you a couple of more times so you can hear again, how I use that expression in a really natural way. So, let's rewind the audio, go back, and listen a couple of more times. Here we go.

My buddy lives in Shanghai and to go back there, he would need proof of a negative test before he would be allowed to board his flight. So, this was great! It kind of threw a wrench in our plans to be honest because Hallasan is a serious mountain. It kind of threw a wrench in our plans to be honest. It kind of threw a wrench in our plans to be honest.

So, this expression can be used to describe disruptions or complications to plans, projects or events. And I think it's best if we just listen to some examples so you can hear how English speakers use this idiom in a natural way. I've got three example sentences prepared for us. So, let's take a listen to those examples now. Here we go with the first one.

Example sentence number one.

The heavy rain threw a wrench into their outdoor wedding plans, forcing them to find a last-minute indoor venue.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example sentence, we hear about a couple who had to change their wedding plans at the last moment. They originally planned to have an outdoor wedding, but the heavy rain threw a wrench into their plans. And because of that, they had to scramble and find a last-minute indoor venue.

Example sentence number two.

The traffic jam threw a wrench in our plan to make it to the beach before noon.

Let's break this example sentence down. So, in this sentence, we hear about some friends I guess and they're going to the beach, they plan to make it to the beach before noon, but a traffic jam threw a wrench in that plan, OK? So they are driving along to go to the beach, la-la-la let's go to the beach. And then suddenly, traffic jam! Terrible! Their plans got really delayed. So, in this kind of situation, we can say that the traffic jam threw a wrench in their plans to make it to the beach before noon.

Example sentence number three.

I was almost finished with my presentation, but then my coworker threw a wrench into my plans by pointing out a major error in my data.

Let's break this final example sentence down. So, in that sentence, we hear the speaker say that he was almost finished with the presentation that he was preparing for work. And you know, when you're almost finished doing a big project like that, you feel pretty good, right? But then one of his coworkers came over and took a look and pointed out that the data that was in his presentation file was all wrong, there was a big error in it. So, his

coworker threw a wrench into his plans, meaning that finishing the presentation, that process was now interrupted and delayed, and the speaker is going to have to go back and start everything over again to make sure that the data is correct.

So that brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode. I hope you enjoyed listening to it and I hope you can use this study session as a good starting point for an awesome week of English learning for the week ahead going forward. Remember, if you need any help with that, we have hundreds of lessons on our website that you can use to improve your English fluency. And if you sign up and become a Culips member, then you can get the helpful study guides and full transcripts for all of them. And you'll also get some other amazing bonuses as well. So, to learn all about it and to sign up and become a member, just visit our website Culips.com. So, take care. Have a great week and I'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode and I'll talk to you all then, goodbye!

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Pexels.com