

Bonus episode #137 - The adventure before the adventure

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew shares a funny but stressful story about how a hiking trip almost went wrong before it even started. He talks about losing his wallet, missing a subway, and rushing to catch a bus just in time. This real-life story is easy to understand and will help you improve your English while enjoying an exciting adventure.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hey, everyone, welcome to bonus episode number 138* of the Culips English Podcast. How is it going? I hope you're doing well. My name's Andrew, and I'm happy to be back here with you for another episode. If you're new to our bonus series, let me quickly explain what it's all about. So, in this series, I tell you some stories from my everyday life. I'm a Canadian guy, but I live abroad in Seoul, South Korea, and I hope that by listening to these stories, you will be able to improve your English fluency. That's what it's all about. We're here. We're spending some time today listening to English so we can improve our fluency, build our vocabulary, learn about the culture of English-speaking people, and ultimately become better communicators.

So, to accompany this episode, there's an absolutely free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary. You can get that just by clicking the link that we'll put in the description for this episode. And if you are a Culips member, then we're also going to throw in a comprehension quiz and ad-free audio. Now's a great time to become a Culips member if you're not already. In addition to those bonuses that I just told you about, you'll get so much more, including our Fluency Files series, our weekly speaking classes, our helpful study guides, and interactive transcripts for all of our lessons, plus ad-free audio and extra bonuses as well. It's a great day to sign up and become a Culips member and support the work that we do here at Culips. To do that, just visit our website, Culips.com.

OK, so let's get into this week's story, guys. I've got a fun one for you, I think. And to tell you the truth, it's a little bit embarrassing for me to share this story with you because it's about me being a little bit irresponsible. But in the end, everything worked out OK, so I won't spoil any of the details. Let's get started right now. Here we go.

If you've been listening to Culips regularly over the last couple of months, you will have heard me talk about my best friend, Luke, a lot. He was on Culips as a guest to talk about scuba diving. He recently learned how to scuba dive and told us all about that in a

Simplified Speech episode. I also talked about him in one of our bonus episodes from several weeks ago now when I visited Canada. I met up with Luke and we hung out.

To give you a very short synopsis of who Luke is, he's my best friend. He's been my best friend for over 30 years. We grew up together in Canada. Now I live in Seoul, and he lives in Shanghai, so weirdly enough, we both live in Asia these days.

Well, I got a surprise just a little while ago. I got a message from Luke, and this was over the Lunar New Year's break, which happened in late January in Korea here and in other parts of Asia as well. I think it's celebrated in China and Vietnam and maybe even some other Asian countries, the Lunar New Year celebration. So, during the Lunar New Year, we get a lot of time off here. It's a long public holiday here in Korea. It happens for three days, but we actually got four days off and I think in China it's similar.

So somewhat out of the blue, I got a message from Luke asking if I had any free time over the Lunar New Year break and I said, "Why?" And he said, "I'm thinking of coming to Seoul. I want to see your house. I want to spend some time with you and maybe we could even squeeze in a hike." Luke likes hiking. I like hiking. And so obviously I was very excited about this prospect, and I said, "Sure, yeah, I can make some time for you."

Of course, I did have to spend some time with my family as well over the Lunar New Year holiday celebration, but that was really only one day. So, I had a couple of days that I could spend with Luke. So, he said, "OK, I'm looking into it." And we kind of left it at that.

Actually, for the next week or so, I didn't hear anything back from him and I wasn't even sure if he was coming or not until my wife was like, is Luke coming or not? So, I thought I better confirm this with him. Now this was a Thursday, OK, a Thursday and Luke and I were talking about him maybe coming on Friday. So, this was the day before he was set to arrive if he actually were coming. So, I sent him a message. I said, "Did you get your ticket **at all**?" And he said, "Yeah, I'm coming. Whoops. I forgot to tell you. My bad. But I'm coming. And I'll be there Friday night at around 10 PM."

So, this was Thursday morning and I looked at the calendar and was like, if we want to go for a hike, then I'm going to have to squeeze it in probably on Saturday morning because the Lunar New Year holiday would start a little bit later and things get very busy. It's not a good time to travel. And also, like I said, I had some family obligations. So, when I was looking at the calendar, I realized that that week on Saturday would be the best time to go hiking. So, I told that to Luke. He said, "Yeah, no problem. We'll go hiking on Saturday."

And Luke said he wanted to go to Taebaeksan. Taebaek is the name of the city where I lived when I first came to Korea way, way, way back when. I came to Korea for the first time in 2008. So that's a long time now. I haven't lived in Korea that whole entire length. I have lived in Korea for a long time, but not that whole time. But when I first came to Korea, that is the place where I lived. And it's got a really amazing mountain there called Taebaek Mountain. So, I was totally up for this. I thought this would be great. I'll get to go back and visit my original Korean hometown and check it out and do this wonderful hike as well.

So, I had to **get the wheels in motion** for this hiking trip right away. The first thing I did was secure transportation. Seoul to Taebaek is quite a long trip, actually. If you're taking the train, it's over four hours. If you're on the bus, it's a bit faster, maybe three and a half hours. But it's a mountain road. So, taking the train is actually more comfortable because that mountain road is curvy and windy as you work your way up to Taebaek, which is more in the mountains than Seoul is. The Saturday morning train tickets were sold out, but there were some tickets left for Sunday afternoon so we could come back to Seoul on Sunday afternoon on the train. So, we were just in Taebaek for a little bit over 24 hours.

And I won't tell you too much about the trip, actually. I'll save that for another episode. Even though it was a short trip, we did a lot of stuff, and it was so cool to go back and see where I first lived in Korea like all that time ago. In fact, it felt like, to a pretty big extent, that I had time traveled and gone back in time. Because Seoul is a really modern city. It's always changing, always evolving, very dynamic in that way. However, Taebaek is like one of those small little places **nestled** in the mountains in Korea, where, of course, things

change. But for the most part, they stay the same. And I noticed that it was like traveling back in time. So many things were the same as they were when I lived there so many years ago. And so that was crazy just to see the **old haunts**.

"Old haunts" is an expression we use to talk about old places where we used to spend time, usually back in our youth. And when I first came to Korea in 2008, I wasn't exactly super young, but I was still in my mid-20s. So that was cool to see the old haunts again. I saw the restaurant where I first tried Korean barbecue for the first time. I saw another restaurant where I actually learned to read the Korean language for the first time because they had these little paper menus at that restaurant. And instead of ordering with the server, you would just write your order on this little piece of paper and then hand that to the server. So, of course, when you're new in a foreign country and a new culture, learning about the items on a menu at the restaurant is super important. So, I took one of those little paper menus home with me, and I learned about what every food item was, and I learned to read the Korean language that way. So, I saw that restaurant where I first learned how to read Korean. I saw my old apartment, and yeah, we did some other stuff as well.

So, it was a really fun time in Taebaek, and I'll tell you some more details about that in a different episode. But what I want to focus on now was the chaotic morning that Luke and I had getting to the bus station to ride our 6:30 bus, to catch that bus.

So, as I said, Luke was set to arrive on Friday at around 10 p.m. And so, by the time you get from the airport to our house, it takes over an hour. So, he didn't get into Seoul until 11 p.m., and then we ate some food together and just hung out and chatted for a little while. And then probably by the time we actually went to bed, it was around 1 a.m., which didn't leave us much time for sleeping. Maybe a big mistake. I'm not sure.

Now, guys, usually the way Luke and I travel is we're very last minute, **go with the flow**, not too much advanced planning at all. But I think as I get a little bit older, I really am not such a fan of that travel style anymore. So, I like to be a little bit more organized now when

I travel. And yeah, in the end, even though I tried to do some planning, still ended up being a pretty chaotic trip and kind of a go with the flow trip. So maybe I still have some things to work on in this regard. But I did really try my best.

As soon as I confirmed that Luke and I actually were going on this hiking trip, I found the route that we needed to take on the mountain. It's a national park, and it's a big park, and it's the winter. And Taebaek is high up in the mountains, so I figured there would be lots of snow. So, I wanted to make sure that we knew exactly which trails we were going to take so we could be safe in that regard. So, I planned in the route that we are going to take.

Also, in the winter on the mountains here in Korea, the paths get very icy. So, you need to buy some crampons that you can put over your hiking boots so that you can make sure that you're safe for walking on the trail and you won't slip on the ice and fall over. And to tell you the truth, I did slip and fall one time. But I was OK. I just fell in some soft, powdery snow. But the trail is really icy, so I'm glad that we got those crampons.

And so yeah, I went online, I ordered those crampons, I ordered some hiking sticks as well so that we could use these.... Hiking poles, I guess is a better word to use, hiking poles, so that we could use those walking up the trails in the snowy mountains. And what else did I do? I packed everything in advance. Like I said, this kind of one day trip, usually at the last moment, I'd wake up to do this kind of thing and just maybe shove some clothes into my bag, quickly get dressed and go out the door. That would be good enough for me. But for this trip, I planned in advance. I got some snacks for us. I made sure that my water bottle was filled and ready to go. Everything was set out and ready in advance. So pretty much all I had to do was wake up and we were good to go.

And of course, Luke had to get his stuff together, but we got everything set. We set it by our front door. We set our alarms for maybe 5am, I believe. And I had also researched when is the very last subway that we need to catch in order so that we can make that 6:30am bus without missing it. And I calculated that that was at 5:47am. So, I told Luke, "OK, let's wake up at 5am. We'll have some coffee. I bought some breakfast for us." So, I

had the breakfast all laid out, some bread and some yogurt and cereal. Have a coffee. Have a breakfast. We'll make sure that we're on that train by 5:47am. We're going to arrive at the terminal before and we'll get on our bus. If we're tired, we can go back to sleep on the bus and then arrive in Taebaek, do our hike, and go from there.

So, our alarms go off at 5am. We wake up. We're both tired, but hey, that's what you get for only sleeping for four hours or so. I made some coffee. We had a coffee. We ate our breakfast, and it was almost time to go and catch the subway. So, I told Luke, "OK, let's go. We have three minutes. We got to go and let's **get on** our coats. Let's get out the door. We have to leave my house in three minutes from now or else we won't get to the subway station in time. We'll miss the subway. We'll miss the bus!"

So, Luke got on his coat, got his stuff, and he went outside my front door and was waiting for me there. And I went, I got on my coat. I grabbed my bag, and everything was set and ready for us, right? And then I was just leaving my front door and I was checking for my wallet. Where's my wallet? And it wasn't in my back pocket. So, I was like, "Oh, OK, I forgot my wallet. I got to go back and grab my wallet." So, I went, and I looked in the regular spot where I put my wallet. My wallet's not there. I checked my coat pockets. "Where's my wallet?" My wallet's not there. So now I'm freaking out.

I look at my watch. I have two minutes. We have to leave the house in two minutes. I have two minutes to find my wallet or we're going to miss the subway. So frantically, I'm looking all around. I'm trying to look in my bedroom, but of course, my wife is still sleeping. So, I'm trying not to wake her up and it's dark out. So, I have my phone flashlight and I'm looking on my desk, and I'm looking on the floor, and I'm looking in my drawers, and I'm looking in some other pants that I wore the other day. Like, I'm just looking all over for my wallet. Can't find it.

Obviously, on this kind of trip, you need a wallet. It's something that I would feel very uncomfortable leaving behind for this kind of thing. Of course, I guess I could maybe try to pay for everything just with my phone. Probably that would have been OK, but I would

have felt pretty uncomfortable leaving my wallet behind. And yeah, who knows? In a small town, can you pay with your phone for everything at every restaurant and store? I don't know. So, I was freaking out, literally freaking out. "Where's my wallet? Where's my wallet? Where's my wallet?" And I'm trying to be quiet. I'm trying not to wake my wife up. I tell Luke he's outside in the front yard, outside the front door. "I can't find my wallet, man. Can you look in the bag?"

Because he had my backpack too, actually. He was holding my backpack. I was like, "Maybe I put it in the backpack. Look through the backpack." So, he's going through my backpack. He's taking all the stuff out of my bag, **rifling through it**. And to "rifle through something" means to look through it quickly. So, he's rifling through my bag. I'm freaking out, looking in my house. "Where's my wallet? Where's my wallet?" Can't find it.

Now, in all of this chaos and commotion, my wife woke up and she heard that we were looking for the wallet and she started looking in the bedroom as well. And she found the wallet. She's like, "I found it!" I was like, "OK!!" It fell on the floor somehow. And it was like near the bed, under the bed. So, she picked it up off the floor, gave it to me. I was like, "We got it. Let's go!"

So, I run out with Luke and we're quickly shoving stuff back into my backpack to get ready. And I'm like, "We got to run." So, we just started running, sprinting for the subway station. And we're getting down into the subway station. And you can see on the TV, there's a TV that shows you when the train is approaching, the subway train. And we could see that it was just pulling into the station.

So, we're like running down the stairs as fast as we can. We scan our traffic cards to get into the subway. We're running down the stairs to the subway. And I can hear the door like ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. It makes this ringing sound as the door's about to close, just as we're getting off the stairs. And I can see the sliding glass doors closing to the train. And oh, we were making a jump for it, a run for it. And we didn't make it.

Now, this was so early in the morning that I thought maybe the train operator would be kind and just open the door for us again. So, I was trying to see like, where is the train operator looking as he hits that door-close button? There's got to be some cameras or mirrors around, right? So, they can see that they're not closing the door on somebody. So, I was like, "Open the door, open the door!" But it didn't work. The train took off and we missed the train.

After all that planning, all that preparation, the firm deadline, we missed the train, and it was completely and totally my fault. So, I felt really bad about that. So, I was like, "Oh my gosh, Luke, I can't believe. I cannot." I literally could not believe that this happened. I was so surprised. To be honest with you, this is something that maybe would happen more to Luke than to me. Like there's been a few times in our lives where we've traveled together, and he's lost his wallet. But I think this was the first time that I had lost my wallet as we were traveling together. So, I apologize. I felt so bad.

I sat down on the bench and Luke sat beside me. We were both kind of out of breath from running all the way to the station. And I just double checked on my phone, like, can we wait for the next train and still make the bus? And no, it was impossible. We were going to miss the bus if we waited for the next train. So, we had no other option but to take a taxi.

So, we had to go out of the train station. That kind of sucked. We paid for a subway fare and didn't ride it. Not a big deal. And we went outside, and I was looking on my map. Where's the area that we have to go to catch a taxi? Because the roads in Seoul are crazy. And sometimes if you're on the wrong side of the street, it's difficult for the taxi to do a U-turn and turn around. It's **a big ordeal**. So, I was looking on my map, finding where we need to go to catch a taxi.

And we went outside and we're waiting on the side of the road. This chilly winter morning, still like, yeah, before 6 a.m. And I used the taxi app. You can call a taxi just with an app here in Korea. But to be honest with you guys, I rarely ride taxis. Maybe once a year or so. So, as I opened the taxi app to call a taxi, it said, "Oh, your payment information is out of

date." I guess my credit card had expired since the last time I used the app. So that was annoying too.

I had to **fumble around** in the cold early morning, take my gloves off, and I'm putting in my new credit card information and trying to do things as quickly as possible. I just felt super stressed trying to do everything as quickly as possible. But Luke was like, "Just chill out. It'll be OK. Take your time. Just get your credit card entered into the app and get it all sorted out." So, I was like, "Phewww." I took a deep breath. I settled down. I entered my credit card information. We called the taxi.

The taxi came and picked us up right away, which is amazing. Here in Korea things are super-fast like that. Maybe in Canada, we would have been out of luck, would have missed our bus. But the taxi came within just a couple of minutes, took us to the bus terminal, and we arrived about 10 minutes before the bus was set to depart.

So, it was a crazy, chaotic morning. It wasn't supposed to be like that at all. I tried my best to avoid that situation. But in the end, that's the kind of situation we had. And **in the midst of** all of that chaos, I actually forgot the hiking poles that I had bought for our trip. So, we didn't have any hiking poles on the trip, which, yeah, maybe is one of the reasons why I fell over when we were hiking. Probably if I had had that hiking pole, then I would have been OK. But I did remember to bring the crampons at least. That was OK. And everything else. It was just the hiking poles that I forgot.

So, it was a chaotic start to the trip. But once we got on the bus and the bus took off, then we were able to relax and catch some Z's, catch some sleep. And a few hours later, then we arrived in Taebaek and started the hiking trip in earnest.

Well, everybody, I think I'm going to leave it at here for today. I've been rambling on and on and on. Like I said, I have some other fun stories to share with you, and I'll do that in a future episode about the remaining time that Luke and I spent in Taebaek and the other time that we spent here in Seoul together as well. That was a really fun time, and we got

up to lots of adventures.

So, I want to say thank you for listening all the way to the end of this episode. Great job on getting in an English study session with Culips today. Now, before I let you go, I have to share this week's completion code with you. You can share the completion code in the comments for this episode on our Instagram, YouTube, or Discord. And that will signal to me and to our entire Culips community that you finished studying with this lesson. You listened all the way to the end.

So, the completion code for this week will be: Wallet. Wallet, because I foolishly and stupidly misplaced my wallet, and that made us miss the subway and almost miss our bus. So go, go, go. You have your homework for this week. Leave a comment with that completion code "Wallet." Don't forget there's a free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary for this episode. Check those resources out. They're awesome study tools. You can get them just by clicking the link in the description for this episode, and Culips members also get the comprehension quiz and ad-free audio.

Well, everyone, that is it for me for now. Please take care. Have a great week up ahead, and I'll catch you in the next Culips episode. Bye-bye.

Glossary

1. **At all** is used to add politeness or emphasis to a question. Andrew used it when asking Luke if he had bought his ticket, making the question sound softer and more casual. *Example: Did you get a chance to review my email at all before the meeting?*
2. **Get the wheels in motion** means to start making preparations or taking steps toward a goal. Andrew used this when talking about organizing his hiking trip with Luke, highlighting that he needed to quickly arrange transportation and gear. *Example: We need to get the wheels in motion if we want to finish planning the party by next week.*
3. **Nestled** means being tucked away in a cozy or protected spot. Andrew used it to describe Taebaek, a small town in the mountains of Korea, emphasizing how it felt untouched by time compared to Seoul. *Example: The little cottage was nestled in a quiet valley, surrounded by colorful autumn leaves.*
4. **Old haunts** refers to places someone used to visit frequently in the past. Andrew used it to describe locations in Taebaek that brought back memories from when he first lived in Korea. *Example: When I visited my hometown, I stopped by my old haunts, including my favorite pizza place from high school.*
5. **Go with the flow** means to be flexible and adapt to situations as they happen. Andrew used this phrase to describe his usual travel style with Luke, where they didn't plan much in advance and made decisions spontaneously. *Example: We didn't have a set schedule for our road trip, so we just went with the flow and stopped wherever looked interesting.*
6. **Get on** means to put on clothing or accessories. Andrew used it when talking about putting on his coat before leaving the house to catch the subway. *Example: I need to get on my jacket before we go outside because it's freezing.*
7. **Rifling through** means searching quickly and messily for something. Andrew used it when describing how Luke frantically looked through the backpack to find Andrew's missing wallet. *Example: She was rifling through her purse, trying to find her ringing phone before it stopped.*

8. **A big ordeal** means a complicated or stressful situation that takes a lot of effort to deal with. Andrew used it when explaining how difficult it can be to catch a taxi in Seoul if you're on the wrong side of the street. *Example: Getting a visa was a big ordeal, requiring endless paperwork and long waits at the embassy.*
9. **Fumble around** means to handle something in a clumsy or uncoordinated way. Andrew used this phrase when talking about entering his credit card details into a taxi app while rushing in the cold. *Example: He fumbled around for his house keys in the dark, dropping them twice before finally unlocking the door.*
10. **In the midst of** means being in the middle of something, whether physically or situationally. Andrew used it when describing the chaos of searching for his wallet while trying not to wake his wife. *Example: In the midst of cooking dinner, the power suddenly went out, leaving us in total darkness.*

* Andrew misspoke here. This is actually episode 137.

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima