

Bonus episode #078 - Home alone

Episode description

In this bonus episode, Andrew shares his experience of spending a week alone at home while his wife was away in Japan. He also discusses their reunion and the amazing gifts she brought back for him. Tune in to hear all the details!

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello everyone, my name is Andrew and you're listening to the Culips English Podcast. This is our bonus series, and we are on episode number 78 of the bonus series. So, thank you for clicking play and joining me today for another English study session. If you're new here and you're not sure what our bonus episode series is about, well, it's pretty simple. I just tell you some stories from my everyday life and I hope by tuning in and listening to these stories you can improve your English fluency, build your English vocabulary, and also your knowledge of the culture of English-speaking people.

There's a free transcript and vocabulary glossary that you can get just by clicking the link in the description for this episode. And we also have a Discord community where Culips listeners from around the world can connect and practice English with each other. You can also find the link to join our Discord, which by the way is completely free to join, that link is also in the description for this episode.

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In last week's bonus episode, I made a promise that I couldn't keep. I promised to tell you two stories, but I only had time to tell you one. And the story that I wasn't able to tell you

because I ran out of time, was about my wife visiting Japan for a week, and because she visited Japan for a week, that means I was home alone for a week. So, in this week's episode then I'm going to tell you that story of being home alone. Without any further ado, let's get started. Here we go. Enjoy the story.

One of the cool things about living in Seoul is that it's not too far to go to many different countries. You can visit a lot of places pretty easily. You could fly to Japan, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, hey, even Russia within just a few hours.

In many ways, Seoul is a hub for Northeast Asia and a gateway to Southeast Asia. And these days, the number one top destination for Korean travelers is Japan. There are tons of Korean people visiting Japan these days. Of course, everybody knows that during the pandemic, travel restrictions were in place, and it was very, very difficult to travel around. But now that all of the travel restrictions have been lifted, well, so many people are taking the opportunity to travel abroad and to visit many places. And at least for Koreans, Japan is the number one go-to destination.

And I think there are several reasons for that. Like I said, obviously geography, proximity, it's very easy to get to. And despite the fact that they're very different countries, there are also some cultural similarities between the two. And at least for people in Korea going to Japan, it's quite cheap these days. It's very affordable because of the currency difference between the Korean won and the Japanese yen.

Now, I know we have many Japanese listeners, so it's probably the opposite for people in Japan who want to come to Korea to visit, unfortunately. But for people in Korea who are going to Japan, it's really quite affordable these days to do so.

So, for all of these reasons, so many Korean people are visiting Japan. I know out of the people in my social circle, many of my friends and acquaintances have recently visited the country and among the students that I work with, so many of them have visited Japan recently.

And so, because of this, my wife suggested that we visit Japan as well. And I thought, hey, great idea. It's an interesting country. It's very close. And I've been there a few times and always really enjoyed my stay. So, I said, yeah, let's do it. I would love to go to Japan.

The only problem is my wife wanted to go before the end of the year. She had some **vacation days that she had to use up** before the end of the calendar year. But when I looked at my schedule, unfortunately, I didn't have any openings where I could visit Japan before the end of the year. I mean, I guess I could go on the weekend for a very, very quick trip, but prices for flights are more expensive on the weekend, hotels are more expensive on the weekend.

And it's also pretty **draining**, you know, even though the flight is only a couple of hours long to go to the airport, take a flight, and then you arrive at an airport and go through security, pick up your bag, take the bus to the hotel, and then sight see and do activities all day and then do the same thing coming back. Going to the airport, going through security, getting your bag, taking the airport train, oh, it just sounded exhausting to do on a weekend trip.

So, because of this, I told my wife, you know what, I don't think I can go until next year at the earliest. But she said, well, if I don't go, then my vacation days are a waste. So, I suggested that she just go by herself and enjoy a solo trip to Japan. And my wife is very independent and has done a lot of traveling by herself in the past before we got married. And so, she agreed with the idea. She thought it was good. And she decided to go by herself to Japan.

Now of course, I really wanted to join her and was jealous that I couldn't go on this trip with her. But at the same time, I thought it was a good opportunity for her to go and take advantage of the low airplane fares and the good currency conversion, etc. etc. So, she bought her tickets, she planned her trip, and a couple of weeks ago, she went to Japan.

Now I won't tell you exactly what she got up to in Japan because that's not my story to tell. That's her story to tell. And I know that she went to a few different places. She went to

Osaka and Kyoto and Nara, which is famous for having all of the deer run through the city. It's really a pretty cool place. I visited there myself and if you don't know about Nara, then you should Google it and check it out because the little mini deer that run throughout the city are really cute and it's quite the sight to see.

But while she was doing all of the sightseeing and traveling in those places, I was here alone in Seoul to **hold down the fort** and take care of the house. So, all in all, she was gone for six days. And like I said, during those six days I was working, but since getting married, this is the first time that we've been away from each other.

And many people asked me while she was gone, like, "Andrew, are you OK? Can you survive without your wife?" And I said, "Yeah, no problem." Like during the time she was away, it was quite funny because I think my mother-in-law called me every day just to check in and see how I was doing. I guess she thought that I really depend on my wife for, you know, cooking and cleaning and just surviving in general. Maybe my mother-in-law thinks that I don't have any survival skills on my own. But it was kind of her to call and check in. But of course, I lived by myself for many, many years before meeting my wife and I enjoy cooking, so I had no problems at all living alone.

And I love my wife, she's my best friend and we always enjoy our time together. But that being said, it's always nice to have a little free time and a little independence. We have this expression in English as well: **absence makes the heart grow fonder**. And when you're away from each other, then you miss each other. And when you reconnect and are reunited again, then it's almost like you fall in love all over again. So, although while she was gone, I missed her, I did enjoy my time home alone as well.

And you may be wondering what I got up to, but to be honest, I didn't really get up to anything too interesting. I had to work every day while she was gone, and the one weekend day that I did have was when I went to my friend's wedding that I told you about in a recent Culips bonus episode. So, to be honest, my day-to-day didn't really change that much, but you know, when you're by yourself, you can live the way that you like. I could play any music that I like, and I could pump up the volume a little bit, and I wouldn't have

to worry about bothering my wife who is maybe working or, you know, wanting to watch TV or something like that. And I could eat whatever I wanted to eat. I didn't have to consult with my wife about what our dinner plan was going to be and find something that would make her happy, I could just eat whatever I wanted.

So, the first few days of that were really fun and just a nice **change of pace**, but soon enough, **the novelty wore off** and I started missing my wife and wanted her to come back soon. Now before she left, I gave my wife a mission. I asked her to visit some record stores in Osaka that I'm familiar with to pick up a couple of vinyl records for me that are really hard to find here in Korea and to bring them back for me.

As many listeners know, I'm a huge music fan, and these days I'm really enjoying listening to vinyl records, and I especially love many Japanese artists. So, I gave my wife a shopping list and I said, "Hey, if you have time, can you stop at these record stores?" And I found a few that were really close to her hotel, and I said, "Can you pick up one or two of these LPs and bring them back for me?" And she said, "Okay, sure, if I have time."

And now, of course, I didn't know what was in stock exactly at these, you know, used record stores, so I wrote her a list of like 10 or 12 different records, and I said, "If you get a chance, just bring me back one or two, and I'll give you some money for them."

Well, when my wife finally did come back, she said, "Andrew, you're going to have to come and meet me at the train station where the airport train lets off because my bags are really heavy." And so, I thought, "OK, she did a ton of shopping, and that's why her bags are heavy." But of course, I didn't think that she would have bought every record that I asked for, but my lovely wife, that's exactly what she did. I had this huge shopping list of records that I wanted her to buy, and I thought that she would only get like one or two of them, but she came back with her suitcase, absolutely jam-packed full of records for me.

And as you might imagine, those are really heavy and a little bit awkward to carry. So, I was so thankful. It was almost like Christmas day while I was going through all the records that she brought me back here, and maybe I'll have to take a picture of them sometime

soon and post it on our Instagram and our Discord for you all to see the big haul that I got. But it was amazing. I felt like Christmas came early for me this year, having all of these wonderful new records to listen to. And on top of that, she brought back a lot of delicious snacks and candy, and we've been enjoying some of these Japanese jelly candies that look like fruit. Like there's one that's like a grape jelly that looks like a grape and tastes like a grape, and I was joking with her like, "We should just eat grapes instead of eating these candies." But they're pretty cool and pretty delicious.

And she even brought me back also a bottle of Japanese whiskey, a fancy bottle of whiskey from Japan. So, I'm going to save that for a special occasion, I suppose, but I felt like such a lucky guy to have all of these presents given to me by my wife when she came back from her trip.

And so now that my wife's home, we've just been hanging out together, and it's been wonderful to listen to her stories and to look at her pictures and at the same time listen to the new records that she brought. But it made me jealous, and I would like to visit Japan as soon as I get an opportunity to. And I'm curious for our Japanese listeners if you guys notice a huge **uptick in tourists** visiting your country because my wife said that there were just so many foreign tourists everywhere, and I even read on the news these days that there are so many tourists visiting Mount Fuji that is almost impossible to hike the mountain because there are just too many visitors.

You know, Japan's always been a top tourist destination for travelers from around the world, but I guess probably because of the lower currency conversion for many currencies I think, and also because of that desire to visit a place after COVID. Like I could imagine, you know, maybe you're from Europe or something and visiting Japan is a very kind of bucket list trip for you. It's like something that you can't do very easily because it's so far away, but it's a place that many people are interested in visiting. And then if you didn't do it before COVID and then COVID hit, you'd be like, "Oh, as soon as COVID's finished, I have **to bite the bullet**. I have to go and do this once in a lifetime trip that I want to do." Because I think we all learned during COVID that we can't **take things for granted** or we shouldn't take things for granted because as the old saying goes, **you don't know what**

you got till it's gone, right? We didn't know how nice it was to have the freedom to travel anytime, anywhere, whenever we wanted until that freedom was gone, and we couldn't do that.

So, I think probably so many people were like, I want to go to Japan and then COVID hit, and you couldn't go. So, during that time, many, many people were like, as soon as COVID's finished, I'm going, that's it. I'm gonna take that trip that I've always dreamed of doing. And so, I think there's a little bit of that going on as well. And the end result is like my wife said, there were just so, so many foreign tourists in Japan that it was really surprising to her.

But I would be interested to hear from our Japanese listeners as well. If you guys notice a huge uptick in the amount of tourists in your country this year. Anyways, listening to my wife's stories really made me jealous and put a little of that **travel bug** into me as well. So, I think as soon as I get some free time and an opportunity to visit, then I definitely want to do that. And going alone would be great. Don't get me wrong. But I think I'd much rather go with my wife than leave her home alone.

So that's it, that's all for this week's episode everyone. Thank you for listening and congratulations on completing another English study session with me today. And while you are listening to this episode, you may have heard some expressions or vocabulary that you don't know. I've prepared a glossary for you to check out some of those expressions that I think are important for you to know. And you can find the glossary just by clicking the link to the transcript in the description for this episode. And if you're a Culips member, well, guys, I'm going to make a comprehension quiz for you. And I'll put the link to that comprehension quiz in the members-only channel on our Discord. So, I'm going to go now, but I hope you have a great week ahead. Take care. Happy English studies as always. And I'll catch you next time. Bye bye!

Glossary

1. **Hold down the fort:** To take care of a place or situation, especially in someone's absence.
2. **Use up vacation days:** To spend all the days allocated for vacation, usually within a specific time frame.
3. **Draining:** Very tiring.
4. **Absence makes the heart grow fonder:** An idiom suggesting that being apart from someone makes you like them more.
5. **Change of pace:** A variation in one's routine or activities.
6. **The novelty wore off:** The initial excitement or interest in something new has faded.
7. **Bite the bullet:** To start a challenging or unpleasant task that has been delayed or avoided.
8. **Take things for granted:** To not appreciate or value something because it is common or easily available.
9. **You don't know what you got till it's gone:** An idiom meaning you only fully appreciate something after you've lost it.
10. **Travel bug:** A strong desire to travel and explore new places.
11. **Uptick in tourists:** An increase in the number of tourists.

Episode credits

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