**Travelling**

- Do you like to travel?

- Yes, I do. Besides, I want to say that I can not imagine my life without travelling. Modern means of communication make the world a small place. Now it is possible to visit many countries and meet people of all nations. Today travelling is a way of life for some people. Moreover, in the past travelling was a specific driving force of human development. For example, the rudiments of mathematics were brought to Europe from Bagdad in the 13th century. In the past travelling was extremely dangerous, but it did not stop explorers to investigate our planet.

- Do you travel much?

- No, to my regret I do not travel much. Although I am fond of seeing new places and meeting different people, I can do it only once a year.

- What countries have you visited?

- I have visited Great Britain.

- When did you visit Great Britain?

- I visited Great Britain last year.

- What can you tell us about your journey?

- Last summer my classmates and I went to Great Britain for a holiday. We lived in the host-families in the suburbs of London. We went to London every day by the 12 o'clock train. We didn't go to England only for pleasure. We were learning English there. We had classes of English five days a week three hours a day. Our English teacher gave us classes of English at school. And when the classes were over her assistant took us round London and showed us the sights.

- Did you see a lot of places of interest?

- We took most of our stay there. We had never been to London before, but we knew a lot about its places of interest such as the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Tower of London, the Houses of Parliament, Nelson's Column.

- What impressed you most of all there in London?

- I was greatly impressed by Changing the Guard. It is London's most popular spectacle. It takes place in the forecourt of Buckingham and lasts about 30 minutes. Every day a lot of people come to the palace to see it.

- What did do at the weekends?

- At the weekends we were looking around all day long. We went to Hampton Court, the residence of Henry VIII, Windsor Castle, the residence of Elizabeth II. We went to Rochester. There we visited Dickens's museum and a medieval castle. I was greatly impressed by Hampton Court. Henry VIII liked his palace on the Thames very much. We also could feel its beauty as we walked around the magnificent building. Every corner captured our hearts. Beneath the colonnade in Clock Court was the entrance to the king's apartments, restored to their full glory after the fire of 1986. History was vividly seen there.

- What other London places of interest did you like?

- I liked the Tower of London and St Paul's Cathedral.

- What do you know about them?

- St. Paul's Cathedral is Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece. The construction of the Cathedral lasted for 34 years. It is crowned by the dome. Inside the Dome are scenes from the life of St. Paul. Here too is the famous Whispering Gallery. There are many memorials in the Cathedral including those to the heroes such as Wellington and Nelson. As for the Tower of London, it is connected with many important events in English history. It has served as citadel, palace, prison, mint, menagerie. Now it is a museum. The White Tower was built in 1078 by William the Conqueror to protect the city. The Tower is famous for its illustrious prisoners. Many great people lost their heads on the executioner's block. The Tower is guarded by the Yeoman Warders popularly known as 'Beefeaters', clad in their traditional Tudor uniforms.

- What do you know about British cultural life?

- I can make some general comments on British cultural life. First of all I want to say that English culture, enriched by the contributions of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, dominates in the cultural life of the United Kingdom. Widespread changes in the United Kingdom's cultural life occurred after 1945. The most remarkable was perhaps the emergence first of Liverpool and then of London in the 1960s as the world centres of popular culture. The "Beatles" were only the first and best-known of the many British rock music groups to win the world. British clothing designers for a time led the world as innovators of new styles of dress for both men and women, and the brightly coloured outfits sold in Carnaby Street and King's Road shops briefly became symbols of Britain.

- Does the British government support the arts?

- As far as I know, during the postwar period, successive governments shifted their policies toward the arts. The independent Arts Council, formed in 1946, supports many kinds of contemporary creative and performing arts. This support has supplemented the great expansion of the cultural market, mainly commercial, and of audiences and viewers for the arts generally.

- Were you happy there in London?

- Yes, of course. I was very happy there. I liked my host-family very much.

- What are usual meals in England?

- The usual meals in England are breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner. Breakfast is generally a bigger meal than that on the Continent, though some English prefer a continental breakfast of rolls, butter and coffee. It is said that the traditional English breakfast is porridge. But it is not so. They do not like porridge. They think that their guests from the Continent like it and serve it to them every morning. English people like corn flakes or cereals with milk and honey, bacon and eggs, marmalade with buttered toast, and tea or coffee.

- What do English people have for lunch?

- They have lunch at one o'clock. At lunch time in a London cafe or restaurant it is possible to find a mutton chop, or steak and chips, fish and chips, and something of the like, then a fruit to follow.

- Do all English have their famous five o'clock tea?

- No, not all of them. It is the privilege of the conference participants or the representatives of some leisure classes who take it as a kind of social activity with a chat and a cup of tea with pastries or a cake.

- What do English have for dinner?

- Dinner time throughout England is seven o'clock p.m. For some families dinner is the biggest meal of the day. But for others midday meal is the chief one of the day while in the evening they have a much simpler supper - an omelette, or sausages, or a glass of milk.

- Is British food specific?

- Previously everything people ate was home-made, and prepared in the traditional way. Nowadays produced food is replacing the slow, careful preparation of fresh vegetables and other ingredients. Canteens, cafeterias and even many restaurants serve course meals instead of individually prepared dishes for each customer. As far as I know British restaurants have not always been famous for their good food. Too often they offered fried food and chips with everything. But now healthy food is in fashion and so is international cooking.

- Where have the British taken food ideas from?

- The British have taken food ideas from all over the world. They can eat Chinese, Indian, French, Italian and Greek food in any big city, and in London there is a fantastic variety of restaurants.

- Do the British often go to the restaurants?

- Most British families go to the restaurants only on special occasions, like birthdays, or wedding anniversaries. The restaurant's best customers are business people, who meet in them to talk business in a relaxed atmosphere away from the telephone. For visitors to London, eating out can be fun. In some restaurants the menu and decor are just like they were in Queen Victoria's day, a hundred years ago.

- Where can visitors to London go to have special London feeling?

- If visitors to London want special London feeling, they should go to the "Ritz" in Piccadilly for tea any afternoon at about half past four. Or they can try England's favourite food - chips and fish. They can take it away and eat where they like - in the park, on the bus or while walking down the street. That's what Londoners do!

- Have you ever travelled by air?

- Yes, I have. It happened a year ago when we went to Great Britain. We got to London by air. On the appointed day we went to the airport by car. Soon we boarded the big air-liner. When we took off the voice informed us about the altitude we were flying. The flight took us more than three hours. Time passed quickly. The plane arrived at the airport in time.

- Have you ever used any other way of travelling?

- Certainly. There are different ways of travelling. I have travelled by train, car, and boat. When I travelled by car or train a blurred image of the countryside always smeared the window. It is a peculiar feature of our time not to use legs but to move about in cars, trains, jets, from a very early age. Today people travel hundred of miles every day.

- What kind of travelling do your parents prefer?

- My parents prefer to travel by coach, that is why of all the available tours they choose coach tours. Such tours are not expensive and my parents like them very much. Coach tours give a chance to do a lot of sightseeing and have a good rest at the same time. Last year my parents bought a coach tour. They enjoyed the tour very much. During the ten-day holiday they visited Germany, the Netherlands and France. There was no trouble with the luggage because it was taken care of at every night stop. Moreover hotels were carefully selected and booked in advance. My parents recollect this tour even a year later.

- What role does tourism play in the present day society?

- I think, it is very useful to visit different countries and get familiar with different cultures. People today are travelling far more than they ever used to. Some people think that tourists damage either the districts or cultural and historical places they visit. Certainly, it is a sufficient reason for tourism to be stopped. Others consider that today tourism has been elevated to a kind of religious ritual which is gradually exhausting our planet. Moreover, when people travel at high speeds they live in the future because they spend most of their time awaiting the arrival at some other place, and the present stops to be a reality. One should remember that travelling at high speed is a means not an end in itself.

- Did people travel much in the historical past?

- In the past people did not travel so much as we do today. Tourism is the phenomenon of the 20th century. In the past people set sail in search of new land and trade routes. The period of extensive travelling in called the Age of Discovery.

- Is it possible to date the beginning of the Age of Discovery?

- Some historians think that the Age of Discovery, which opened the world to European shipping, began around 1419 when Portugal's Prince Henry, known as "the Navigator", established a maritime training centre on his country's Atlantic coast.

- What were the consequences of the Age of Discovery for the peoples of Africa?

- They were disastrous. Africa had a slave trade. In 1434 Portuguese adventurers brought the first black slaves to Lisbon. As Europe's transatlantic colonies grew in importance, so did the need for manual labour. It is supposed that as many as 10 million slaves were transported to the New World, perhaps 5 million of them in the 18th century. Nearly two million more died aboard the crowded prison ships that carried slaves to work the sugar fields of the Caribbean or the cotton plantations of the American South.

- Was the Age of Discovery damaging to the New World?

- Native Americans were victimized by colonialism: millions died of imported diseases like smallpox, which their immune systems could not handle. The conquistadors ruthlessly suppressed the cultures of Aztecs of Mexico and Incas of Peru.

- Did the cultures of the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru give anything to the world?

- They made a lasting and invaluable contribution to world cuisine. Tomatoes, potatoes, corn and peppers, tobacco, and many other delicacies, came to us from the New World.

- What do you know about the native inhabitants of the New World?

- Before Columbus set foot on the shores of the New World on 12 October 1492, the Mayans lived around the great cities and temples their ancestors had built in the south-eastern Mexico. It is a well established fact that the Maya civilization reached its zenith during the Classical period, from about AD 250 to 900. After AD 900 it began to decay, perhaps owing to stresses in the social structure, overpopulation, and deforestation." A number of important cities emerged in the late Classic period. The inhabitants of the cities were building striking stone architectural monuments, but their scientific and artistic achievements were not remarkable. Their economies remained underdeveloped. By the time of the Spanish conquest, the Maya civilization was in decline, yet they resisted subjugation longer than either the Aztecs of Mexico or the Incas of Peru. Spain ruled Central America for about 300 years. The Mayans maintained their autonomy only 1697. Unfortunately, disease and the social disruption brought with the Spanish conquest annihilated a large part of the native population during the 16th century.