



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

GLOSSARY

vacation rental – a home that one can pay to stay in for a short period of time, usually during one's vacation

* They bought a second home on the beach so they can stay there in the summer and use it as a vacation rental during the rest of the year.

to book – to make a reservation; to make arrangements to use or have something at a particular time in the future

* Please book one nonsmoking room with a queen-sized bed for next Thursday.

pet-friendly – willing to accommodate people who live or travel with animals, normally dogs and cats

* This is such a pet-friendly hotel where dogs can swim in the pool and there is dog food in each room!

kid-friendly – willing to accommodate people who live or travel with children, offering special features and services that children need and like

* Do you know of any good kid-friendly restaurants in town that have toys for kids to play with, small silverware, and cups that don't spill?

to sleep – to have places for a certain number of people to sleep

* With one queen bed and two twin beds, this house sleeps four people comfortably.

amenity – a characteristic that makes something more comfortable, enjoyable, and attractive

* This retirement center has many nice amenities, including an entertainment room, a swimming pool, and exercise equipment.

to have the run of the place – to be able to do whatever one wants in a particular place without being supervised, controlled, or observed

* When Tanya's parents went away for the weekend, she was really happy to have the run of the place, until she realized she would have to clean up the mess before they came back home.

adjoining – adjacent; next to something else, sharing a wall

* In this hotel suite, each bedroom has an adjoining bathroom.

proximity – nearness; closeness; a short distance to something

* I really like this apartment because of its proximity to work, but the other apartment has a better view and a bigger kitchen.



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

last-minute – without advance notice; happening immediately before something else happens

* There has been a last-minute change in the schedule, so we're meeting at 4:00 instead of 2:30.

low season – the time of year when there are few customers, low demand, and few sales

* Our company sells swimsuits and beach balls, so the winter months are our low season.

home away from home – a place other than one's home where one feels very comfortable and relaxed

* Jackie is a workaholic who treats her office as a home away from home.

scarce – not common; rare; difficult to find or obtain

* Large wild animals are becoming scarcer as we continue cutting down forests.

affordable – inexpensive; with a low price that one can pay easily

* Trent dreams of owning a sports car, but for now he has to drive a more affordable car.

cleaning fee – money paid to cover the cost of cleaning an apartment or home, especially when one moves in or moves out

* Everyone who moves into this apartment building has to pay a \$300 cleaning fee that covers the cost of cleaning the rooms, washing the carpets, and painting all the walls.

refundable deposit – a large amount of money that one pays when moving into an apartment or home with the expectation of getting that money back unless one damages the building, in which case the money needed to make repairs is subtracted from the amount paid back

* They paid a \$500 security deposit when they moved in, but their dog caused \$200 of damage to the wood floors, so they only got \$300 back when they moved out.

too good to be true – something that appears to be very good and favorable, but actually has problems or disadvantages

* If anyone says you can become a millionaire by working just five hours per week, the offer is probably too good to be true.



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

fine print – the very small type at the end of a legal agreement that is difficult to read and often filled with important pieces of information that make the agreement less attractive or less fair

* Getting this credit card sounds like a great opportunity, but if you read the fine print, you'll see that you have to pay \$100 per year just to have the card, and 20% interest on the balance.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Marnie mean when she says, "Before I booked this unit...."
 - a) Before I read about this vacation rental in a guidebook....
 - b) Before I made a reservation for this vacation rental....
 - c) Before I wrote about this vacation rental in my book....
 2. According to Marnie, why is this vacation unit a good deal?
 - a) Because it is next to a lot of other vacation rentals.
 - b) Because it is one of only a few rentals near the beach.
 - c) Because it is really far from the nearest town.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to sleep

The verb "to sleep," in this podcast, means to have places for a certain number of people to sleep: "A queen bed is designed to sleep two adults, but when we were kids, my five brothers and sisters all slept in one queen bed." The phrase "sleep tight" is said to children before they fall asleep: "Sleep tight, Pedro. I'll see you in the morning." The phrase "to sleep like a log" or "to sleep like a baby" means to sleep very well: "Our new mattress is so comfortable! I slept like a log." Finally, the phrase "to not be able to sleep a wink" means to be unable to sleep at all: "The neighbors had a loud party all night and I couldn't sleep a wink!"

scarce

In this podcast, the word "scarce" means not common, rare, or difficult to find or obtain: "In our economics class, we learned that when goods are scarce, they become more expensive." Or, "Local fresh fruits are really scarce in the winter." The phrase "to make (oneself) scarce" means to leave a place, often because it is uncomfortable to be there: "Mom and Dad are really mad at you. You should try to make yourself scarce for the next few hours until they forget about what



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

you’ve done.” Finally, the word “scarcely” means hardly or barely: “We had scarcely recovered from the last storm when another storm came that was even stronger than the first one.” Or, “I could scarcely believe what I was hearing.”

CULTURE NOTE

A “vacation rental” is a “fully furnished” (with all basic furniture and equipment) home or apartment. It normally includes sofas, beds, tables, and chairs, as well as “appliances” (refrigerators, coffee makers, microwaves, etc.), “cleaning supplies” (brooms, mops, cleansers) and basic “toiletries” (things needed in the bathroom, like towels, toilet paper, and soap). The kitchen normally has pots, pans, dishes, and silverware, as well as cooking oil and maybe some “spices” (dried seeds and leaves used to flavor foods). Renters need to bring their own food to cook with, but almost everything else is provided.

Most vacation rentals also provide entertainment, such as CDs, DVDs, video games, or books. A kid-friendly vacation rental may provide toys for children. If the home is in an area with many “bicycle paths” (special roads only for bicycles, not for cars), it may provide bicycles.

Because vacation rentals usually are not part of a large “complex” (a group of related buildings), the guests are responsible for many of the services that are provided in a traditional hotel. For examples, there is no “maid service” (cleaning services) in a vacation rental and renters are supposed to “clean up after themselves” (clean up the mess one makes) throughout their “stay” (the period of time when one is at the vacation rental). Professional cleaners clean the home once the renters leave, but the renters may be asked to put their towels and/or “sheets” (bedding) into the washing machine before they leave.

If something breaks, guests are supposed to call the owner or “property management company” (a company that takes care of the property, especially when the owners live far away), but unfortunately there is often a “delay” (a period of time spent waiting) before things are repaired.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – b



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 655: Staying in a Vacation Rental.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 655. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com – eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will make your life a little happier, a little brighter, a little longer.

This episode is called “Staying in a Vacation Rental.” This is when you go on vacation but you don't stay in a hotel, you stay in someone else's house or apartment. Of course, you pay them money to do that. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

George: I'm kind of nervous staying in a vacation rental for the first time.

Marnie: Don't worry. Before I booked this unit, I checked it out thoroughly. It's pet-friendly and kid-friendly, and it sleeps six, so it'll be perfect for the whole family.

George: But there won't be the same amenities or services as a hotel.

Marnie: We won't need any of those. Just think, we'll have the run of the place and there are no adjoining units. The proximity to town is great and I got a last-minute price that's even lower than their low season rate.

George: Everything sounds good, but...

Marnie: It'll be our home away from home. Units this close to the beach are scarce, and this one is really affordable.

George: A little too affordable, if you ask me. You said that it's just \$60 a night?

Marnie: That's right.

George: Are there any taxes or cleaning fees?



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

Marnie: I didn't ask about that.

George: Do they require a refundable deposit?

Marnie: I didn't check that either.

George: Then maybe it's too good to be true. Before we get too excited, let's go read the fine print.

[end of dialogue]

George says to his wife Marnie at the beginning of the dialogue, "I'm kind of nervous," meaning I'm a little nervous – "I'm kind of nervous," that's an informal way of saying a little bit. He's kind of nervous staying in a vacation rental for the first time. A "vacation rental" is a home, condominium, or apartment that you rent; it could also be a room in someone's house. You rent it for a short period of time just like a hotel room, although usually you have a kitchen and it's more like a regular house. Vacation rentals have become very popular. People rent out their houses or their apartments to people who are visiting that area. I've stayed in vacation rentals many times, and really find it much better than staying in a hotel, and often even a little cheaper.

Marnie says to George, "Don't worry. Before I booked this unit, I checked it out thoroughly." "To book" (book) as a verb means to make a reservation, to call or email or write someone and say I want to stay in your hotel or your vacation rental for this day through this day. "To book" means to reserve. Marnie says, "Before I booked this unit," meaning this vacation rental – sometimes a unit refers to an apartment or a condominium that is also a vacation rental, or just a regular rental. Marnie says she "checked it out," meaning she investigated it, she checked it out thoroughly. "It's pet-friendly and kid-friendly." "Pet-friendly" is a place where you can take your dog or your cat, or perhaps your pig or goat if you have those as pets, and you can bring them with you on vacation. If you bring a cow with you, for example, you don't have to pay for milk, so that's something to think about! Pet-friendly, then, is a hotel or a vacation rental where you can bring your favorite pet, like a snake. "Kid-friendly" is a place where you can bring another kind of animal, small children, so that is also an advantage if you have small children. If you don't, then, it might be a disadvantage if you are staying next door to the place with the small children, but let's get back to the dialogue. This place that Marnie found is pet-friendly and kid-friendly and it "sleeps six," meaning six people can sleep in this unit; there are six beds or beds big enough to fit six people. She says it's perfect for the whole family – for our entire family, for everyone



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

George says, “But there won’t be the same amenities or services as a hotel.” An “amenity” (amenity) is some characteristic that makes something more comfortable or more enjoyable. You may go to a hotel that also has a pool and a spa, that would be a hotel with extra amenities, nice things that will make your stay more comfortable.

Marnie says, “We won’t need any of those (any of those amenities). Just think, we’ll have the run of the place and there are no adjoining units.” “To have the run of the place” is a phrase meaning to be able to do whatever you want because no one is watching you – no one is observing you. In this case, Marnie says they’ll have the vacation rental; they’ll be the only people there so they’ll have the run of the place and there are no adjoining units. “Adjoining” (adjoining) means next to something; we might also say “adjacent.” It usually means, when we’re talking about a condominium or an apartment, that you don’t have anyone who shares a wall; that is, that your wall is the same as the wall for the unit next to you. Marnie says, “The proximity to town is great.” “Proximity” means closeness, nearness. It’s a short distance from town, meaning the main town wherever they’re staying. She says and she got a last-minute price that’s even lower than their low season rate. The phrase “last-minute” means without any advance notice. In this case, it means something you do right at the very last moment, right before you’re about to do something else or right before something else happens. So, you may call two days before you are going to leave and ask if you can book the vacation rental; that would be doing things at the last minute. Buying your girlfriend a present for Valentine’s Day on February 13th is also doing things at the last minute so don’t wait gentlemen!

Marnie says they got a rate – a price, even lower than their low season rate. “Low season” is the time of year when there are few customers, there aren’t very many people traveling to that area. Minnesota’s low season would be in the wintertime; because it’s so cold no one would want to go there. The low season for other places will depend upon the weather and other things.

George says, “Everything sounds good, but...” Marnie interrupts him and says, “It’ll be our home away from home.” This vacation rental will be our home away from home, meaning it will feel just like home; you will feel very comfortable there. She says, “Units this close to the beach are scarce, and this one is really affordable.” Something that is “scarce” (scarce) is something that is rare, not common, difficult to find. There are other meanings of “scarce,” take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. We also have some additional explanations of the word “sleep,” which you will find in the guide as well.



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

Marnie says this vacation unit – this vacation rental is very affordable. Something that is “affordable” has a low price; it’s inexpensive, it doesn’t cost a lot of money. George says, “A little too affordable, if you ask me,” meaning maybe the price is so low because it isn’t very good quality. He’s worried about how good the unit is, and he is, we might say, suspicious; he has doubts about why the price is so low. He says, “You said that it’s just \$60 a night?” Marnie says, “That’s right (that’s correct).” George says, “Are there any taxes or cleaning fees?” A “cleaning fee” (fee) is money that you pay in addition to your rent, meaning extra, to have the rental unit cleaned when you are done. Many people who have vacation rentals will charge you a fee to stay there each night plus a cleaning fee, which might be \$25, it might be \$100; you have to ask.

Marnie says she didn’t ask about cleaning fees or taxes. George then asks, “Do they require a refundable deposit?” A “deposit,” in this case, is money that you give to someone in case something goes wrong, in case you break something. That way they have some money from you in case you pay for it at least they have your deposit. If you don’t break anything, then you get your deposit back when you leave. A “refundable deposit” means that let’s say I decide to book a unit for June and it is currently February. Well, I decide that in March I don’t want to go but I have already given them a \$500 deposit. A refundable deposit is one which they say, “Okay, no problem. You cancelled, we’ll give you your money back.” Some places may have a nonrefundable deposit, meaning if you cancel, especially if you cancel, say, a month or two weeks before the date that you are supposed to arrive you do not get your deposit back.

Marnie didn’t check about a refundable deposit. George then says, “Then maybe it’s too good to be true.” “To be too good to be true” means it appears to be very good, but there are some problems with it that are not immediately obvious; there are some disadvantages. If someone says they will sell you their car for \$100 and the car is new, that’s too good to be true; there’s probably something else wrong here that should make you be a little suspicious. George says, “Before we get too excited, let’s go read the fine print.” “Fine (fine) print” refers to typically the legal language in a contract or agreement; sometimes it is printed in a very small size – a very small font size. We call that fine print when it’s printed very small so you can almost not read it – you can barely read it. You may see an advertisement in the newspaper that says that you can buy a new television for \$50, but then if you look at the bottom of the advertisement in very small print – in very small size lettering – it will say, well, only if you also buy a \$25,000 car. That would be an example of reading the fine print to get all of the details of this offer or this sale.



ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

Our scripts are not too good to be true; they're just as good as you may think. That's because they're written by Dr. Lucy Tse.



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ESL Podcast 655 – Staying in a Vacation Rental

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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