

OXFORD ONLINE ENGLISH. VACATIONS. TRANSCRIPT

1. How to Give Basic Information About Your Vacation

Begin your answer by saying where you went, who with and how long for.

On vacation

For example:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks.
I went to Thailand with a group of friends for ten days.
My girlfriend and I went to Rome for a long weekend.

A long weekend means you go for three or four days, usually Friday-Monday or Saturday-Monday, maybe because there's a public holiday on the Monday.

2. How to Describe What You Did On Vacation

What do you like doing on holiday? Do you prefer a more active holiday, maybe with lots of adventure sports and activities, or would you rather do something more cultural?

Or, maybe you just like relaxing on the beach. Whatever you prefer, it's good if you can say something about how you spent your time on holiday.

Let's look at some examples and some good vocabulary for you to use:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks. Mostly, we went hiking in the hills and mountains nearby. We also just hung out in the village, playing cards and eating.

Do you like hiking? Hiking means going for longer walks, often in the hills or the mountains.

Hiking on holiday

If you hang out, you spend time without having any particular goal. If you say we just hung out in the village, you mean that you spent time there in a relaxed way.

Let's look at our second example:

I went to Thailand with a group of friends for ten days. We did some sightseeing in Bangkok: the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and so on. Then we hit the beaches in Krabi for some sun, swimming and cocktails!

Sightseeing means visiting the famous places in a city. You can go sightseeing or do sightseeing.

For example, if you go sightseeing in Paris, you'd probably visit the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Notre Dame and so on.

Saying we hit the beaches is a very informal way of saying we went to the beaches.

You could also say we hit the bars or we hit the clubs. Using hit suggests you're going somewhere to party and have a good time, so you probably wouldn't use it with other places.

Let's do one more example together:

My boyfriend and I went to Rome for a long weekend. We went on a walking tour of the centre and the Vatican. Mostly, we went to restaurants and cafes and sampled as much of the local cuisine as we could fit in our stomachs!

If you go on a tour, for example a walking tour, you pay for a guide. Often, tours are in big groups. Do you prefer to go on a tour with a guide, or do you like to explore by yourself?

Sample means to try many different things. We sampled as much of the local cuisine as we could means that we tried many different dishes.

3. How to Describe Where You Went on Vacation

Can you think of three adjectives to describe where you went for your last vacation?

Here, try to avoid general adjectives like nice or good. Try to find specific adjectives. Your answer will be more interesting!

Let's look at an example:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks. We stayed in a very nice village surrounded by nice mountain scenery.

Do you see what we mean? Saying nice doesn't say much. This isn't a very good example. How could you make it better?

Here's one way to improve it:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks. We stayed in a very **picturesque**, **sleepy** village surrounded by some **dramatic** mountain scenery.

What do you think dramatic scenery means?

It means the mountains were very impressive and beautiful.

Picturesque is another way to say 'beautiful'. If something is picturesque, it's beautiful like a painting. You can use picturesque to talk about scenery and places.

Picturesque landscape on vacation

Sleepy means that the village was very quiet and peaceful.

You can see that using more specific adjectives like picturesque, sleepy or dramatic makes your answer more interesting and expressive.

Of course, you'll need different language to talk about different places. Let's look at another example:

I went to Thailand with a group of friends for ten days. Bangkok is a very **cosmopolitan** place but it could be a little **overwhelming** because there was so much going on! Then we went to Krabi, which has some **stunning** beaches.

Do you know the meaning of the key words in this answer?

Cosmopolitan describes a city which has many different people and cultures mixed together.

Overwhelming describes something which is very intense. For example, a city can be overwhelming if there are lots of people, noises, sights and smells all around you. There's so much to take in that you don't know where to look!

Stunning means 'very beautiful'.

Let's do one more example together:

My girlfriend and I went to Rome for a long weekend. It's a **fascinating** place but it's quite **touristy**, too. The best thing was the food, which was **out of this world**.

Here, we used the adjectives fascinating, touristy and out of this world. Could you explain what these mean?

Fascinating means 'very interesting'.

Touristy describes a place where tourism has grown too much. Often, if you describe a place as touristy, you mean that it's lost some of its original atmosphere.

Finally, if you describe something as out of this world, you mean it's really good and you enjoyed it very much.

4. How to Describe What You Liked or Disliked

What's the best vacation you've ever had? What about the worst vacation you've ever been on?

What made these holidays so good or so bad?

Let's see how you can talk about the positives and negatives of your holiday. Here's our first example:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks. It was relaxing but by the end I was getting quite bored.

This is good, but it's always better to add a reason if you can:

I went to the countryside with my family for a couple of weeks. It was relaxing but by the end I was getting quite bored, because each day was pretty similar.

What does that mean, each day was pretty similar? Do you know?

It means that you did the same kind of things each day, so there wasn't much variety from one day to the next.

Let's look at our next example:

I went to Thailand with a group of friends for ten days. I loved Krabi, because it was like nowhere I'd ever been before. I wasn't so keen on Bangkok. It's a cool place but it's a bit big and noisy for my tastes.

Saying it was like nowhere I'd ever been before means that the place you went to was really unique.

You can use I wasn't so keen on... to talk about something you didn't like very much in the past. For example:

I wasn't so keen on the food in the hotel.
I wasn't so keen on the museums - I didn't think they were very interesting.

Adding for my tastes after you give your opinion shows that this is just your perspective. You would use it after you give a negative opinion, to soften your idea slightly. For example:

It's a nice area, but it's too developed and touristy for my tastes.

Adding for my tastes makes this sound slightly softer and less direct.

Okay, let's do one more example together:

My girlfriend and I went to Rome for a long weekend. I think I liked the general atmosphere most of all. Walking around the little streets in the centre felt like being in an old film. I wish it had been less crowded, though.

Here, you can use the phrase I liked ... most of all to talk about your favourite thing from your vacation.

Use I wish plus the past perfect (had done) to talk about something in the past which you would change if you could. For example:

I wish we'd had more time to explore the city.
I wish we hadn't stayed in that awful hotel.

5. Making a Longer Answer

To make a longer answer, you need to:

Say where you went, who with, and for how long.

Say what you did.

Describe the place.

Talk about what you liked and disliked.

Let's do an example using language from the lesson:

I went to Thailand with a group of friends for ten days. We did some sightseeing in Bangkok: the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and so on. Then we hit the beaches in Krabi for some sun, swimming and cocktails! Bangkok is a very cosmopolitan place but it could be a little overwhelming because there was so much going on! Krabi has some stunning beaches, and I loved it there, because it was like nowhere I'd ever been before. On the other hand, I wasn't so keen on Bangkok. It's a cool place but it's a bit big and noisy for my tastes.

Do you see how using simple phrases and ideas, you can build a full, clear, detailed answer? We've added some linking words, but otherwise this is only using language you've seen in this lesson.

Let's do one more example. This time, we'll use original ideas:

I went to Siberia by myself for three weeks. I travelled around, did some hiking and camping, and explored the countryside. I was near Lake Baikal, which is a huge lake with mountains and villages dotted around the sides. It was beautiful in a wild way, and the emptiness gave me a real feeling of isolation and solitude. I liked the people I met—everyone was so open and welcoming. On the other hand, even though it was summer, the nights were so cold! I wish I'd taken a warmer sleeping bag.

This time, I'm using different ideas and some different language, but I'm still following the same structure.