

Episode 18: Los Angeles

Summary

Nick's American friend John talks about the city of Los Angeles, California. He explains the appeal of the city, why he always wanted to move there, and the things you can do in L.A. as a tourist or a local.

Transcript

Nick: Today I'm talking to my friend John about Los Angeles, which is the city that you live in. And you were telling me that you were born in Philadelphia, but you always had this idea of moving to California.

John: Yes, umm, for me and for a lot of Americans and people around the world, California has an allure¹. It has its special own appeal. It has sunshine and warmth, it has beaches, it has a lot of, uhh, outdoor life, umm, outdoor lifestyle and a lot of people of course associate it with the entertainment business. So there's a lot of people that move to California, visit California and live in California because they want to live a dream, whether that's, they're pursuing a dream, or they just like, as I do, feeling like you're living in a dream. You wake up every morning, it's warm, it's sunny. If you're not working, 'Do I go to the pool, do I go to the beach, do I go to the mountains?'

Nick: Sounds great.

John: Yeah.

Nick: So I guess, I mean most Americans still live on the east coast, right? But there is still this kind of wave of people, and it started, what, in the 50s?, when people started to move a lot to the west coast.

John: Yes, you know, there was a big, I guess you could say migration, umm, to the golden state because there was a lot of land and a lot of opportunity and obviously a lot of warmth, so a lot of families just moved there and, umm, my family was always east coast based, but as, literally as far back as I can remember, I was always California-bound, everything fascinated me about it. Seeing it on television,

¹ allure: attraction, charm, fascination

the music of California, umm, surf music and I was a swimmer. Everything about it was just counting down to like, I was old enough to like, move out on my own.

Nick: OK, so how old were you when you finally did it?

John: Well, I was out of university. But I wanted to have ... I wanted to be practical too. I didn't just want to pack my stuff in my car and drive with no money in the bank and no job, although I did move to California with no apartment, no job, but I had a lot of, umm, ambition and a lot of practical planning prior to when I packed up my car. Everything's worked out just like a dream.

Nick: That's also part of it a little bit, like you were talking about this dream or this allure, you know, to go there with nothing but your dreams and to kind of try to find your way, especially if you're an actor or if you're trying to get into that field.

John: Yeah, yeah and it's, I mean it's true, I think. And also because it's the most - in my opinion - by far the most beautiful place in the United States: California. But it's also very expensive, so in a way the people that really want to make it, really want to make their life there, they are willing to² start with nothing and just scramble and scrap³ and work hard, work more than one job, umm, economise and then, uhh, and then make it, and be able to achieve and then sustain a lifestyle that it's worth all the extra money you have to pay to live there, because you have the warmth and the sun and opportunities too. There's obviously also a lot of opportunities to make a living there.

Nick: And so you've got cities (in California) like, I mean there are other famous cities like San Francisco, like San Diego, perhaps to a lesser extent⁴. But you said to me yesterday that you wouldn't want to live anywhere in the United States apart from Los Angeles.

John: Yeah, yeah because for example, in California, you know, San Francisco, it's a lot of people's favourite city. A lot of people in America and a lot of people around the world come to the United States saying that, but to me that's like, it's a compact city, it's like a big city in other countries and it's too cold. And San Diego is beautiful but it's a little bit too far, too relaxed. In Los Angeles you have a good pace of living. It's crazy because of traffic and what not, but, umm, to me there's more energy and more things to do, and more business opportunities as well, so...

Nick: And so when a lot of people who aren't from L.A. go there, one of the things that they're a little bit surprised by or one of the things they realise is this idea that

² willing to: prepared to. They might not really want to do it, but they do it anyway.

³ scrap: to do what you need to do to get by from an underprivileged position.

⁴ to a lesser extent: not as much. The opposite is *to a greater extent*.

there's no real downtown or no real centre, uhh, like a city like New York, for example, and so they get a bit confused or they don't know exactly where to go or how to plan a visit there. And so what would you suggest if someone was coming, what are the things they have to see and do in L.A.?

John: Well, I think a lot of people come to Califor ... to Los Angeles, to see Hollywood. And that's when you mentioned it's a little confusing because if you say, 'Drop me off⁵ on Hollywood Boulevard,' now, I mean, they've made a very obvious - it's almost built so that tourists know they're in Hollywood, whereas before people would be standing at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, saying, 'Where are all the movie stars and where's all the show business stuff?' But it's pretty, umm, it's pretty, uhh, well-planned now and tourist-friendly, but I would say definitely if you're going to come to Los Angeles you have to visit the beach, Santa Monica Pier, which is where there's a big amusement park, but it's also kind of the hub. From there you've got stretches and stretches of beaches and, umm, just walking along the beach, cycling along the beach. Venice Beach is kind of a free-spirited, artsy, kind of Bohemian, kind of weird place, umm, but, umm - and Hollywood itself is some ... if you're going to Hollywood you don't need more than a day at the most, even a few hours, in Hollywood itself. Umm, but downtown Los Angeles, they've really done a good job in the last, I'd say, 10 years of making it a place for people to live. But I would say if you're coming to Los Angeles, don't centre yourself in downtown Los Angeles, 'cause as you said, it's not like other cities where, 'Oh if I'm in the centre of the city I can easily get to places.' When you're in downtown Los Angeles, other than the palm trees, you don't, my opinion is you don't really feel like, 'I'm in California.'

Nick: That's really interesting. I remember being in Hollywood once, years and years ago and I was quite young and I, you know, I just didn't really have that much of an idea, but I think one of the Star Wars prequel movies was coming out and I said, 'Oh OK, I'll go and see that, I'm in L.A., see a movie, you know, that's something.' And I saw, 'There's a movie theatre across the street.' I didn't realise that it was the - is it the Mann's Chinese theatre, it's a very famous one?

John: Yeah.

Nick: So when I went the next day, there was a huge line, there was all these people dressed up in Star Wars gear⁶ and everything like that. It was quite funny because I just thought I would go and slip in⁷ and see a movie but I had to wait in this big line. Umm, so OK we've got these tourist things that you were mentioning,

⁵ drop me off (phrasal verb: to drop off): to take someone by car/taxi to their destination, where they get out of the car but the driver continues; the opposite of pick me up.

⁶ gear: special clothing or equipment

⁷ slip in (phrasal verb): to go in quickly and quietly without being noticed

but if you have a spare weekend for yourself in Los Angeles, what kind of things would you like to do.

John: Well actually, a lot of people that live in Los Angeles, for the weekend, they'll go to the mountains. See that's the great thing about, about Southern California is that you could theoretically, you could swim, you could go to the beach and go to the mountains on the same day. You could swim, in theory, in the Pacific Ocean, and ski the same day. Umm, so a lot of people on the weekend, they'll drive up to the mountains and ski. Or just drive up to the mountains, or drive to the wine country. There's, uhh, wine countries where you can go and you can enjoy wine, and vineyards, but there's wine country - that's an expression - there's wine country in San Diego county⁸, and heading up north an hour or so. And even just driving, if you drive along the coast highway, umm, between Los Angeles and San Francisco, it's just a beautiful view, so, umm...

Nick: Yeah, that's one of the most famous roadways in America, isn't it? It's just ... you're right on top of the cliffs, and right near the ocean and everything.

John: Yeah, and it's almost like its own tour. I mean, it really is almost, it is its own tour. Umm, and so a lot of people do these weekend getaways⁹ and that's the beauty of living where I live is that you can go on a Friday night or a Saturday morning, come back Sunday evening and you still feel that you've gotten¹⁰ away and seen a different part of the state, a different part of the world. Umm, and then one thing that you can always do when you visit California even if you can get like you mentioned going to a ... seeing people dressed up at a movie, you can get tickets, usually free tickets, to watch a taping of a show, so you get to see behind the scenes, maybe see the stars, you know.

Nick: Alright, like yourself, thank you very much John.

John: I'm working on it!

⁸ county: an administrative district, smaller than a state. Note that the first syllable has a different vowel sound from *country* despite having the same spelling (the first syllable of *county* is pronounced like *count*).

⁹ weekend getaways: short trips where you leave the city and try to relax and refresh

¹⁰ gotten: past participle of *get* in American English for use with the present perfect (get/got/gotten). In British English, the past participle is the same as the simple past (get/got/got).

Comprehension Questions

1. When did John move to California?
2. What doesn't John like about San Francisco?
3. What two things does John say you can do on the same day if you live in Los Angeles?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. The wealthiest 1% of Americans have _____ richer and richer in the last few years.
2. She wanted the job so much that she said she was _____ work on weekends.
3. That team doesn't have as much size or talent as their opponents, but they always _____ their way to victory. They play with a lot of passion and energy.
4. I'm leaving for my holiday on Sunday and my best friend agreed to _____ at the airport.
5. If you live in a busy and hectic city like London or New York, you might need to take some _____ every now and then to escape the city.
6. I can't go straight from the gym to dinner. First I need to go home and drop off my gym _____ and have a shower.
7. I'm late for the meeting but hopefully I'll be able to just _____ and no one will notice.
8. Madrid, and Barcelona _____, can get very hot in summer.
9. The _____ of the spice trade is why Portugal began exploring the Indian Ocean in the late 15th century.
10. The closest train station is in the next _____, so it's quite far away.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Would you like to live in Los Angeles? Why or why not?
2. John loves the weather in Los Angeles. Would you move somewhere primarily for the weather? Why or why not?
3. Are you interested in the Hollywood aspect of L.A.? Why or why not?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. He moved to Los Angeles after he finished university, but he had wanted to move there from an even younger age.
2. He says it's too cold in San Francisco.
3. He says you can swim in the ocean and ski on the same day.

Exercises

1. gotten
2. willing to
3. scrap
4. drop me off
5. weekend getaways
6. gear
7. slip in
8. to a lesser extent
9. allure
10. county