

Episode 77: Ice Skating

Summary

Wendy talks about her love for ice skating. She talks about the many opportunities she had to skate while living in Switzerland and her search for a skating rink this winter while living in Portugal.

Transcript

Nick: Last time Wendy and I talked about the Winter Olympics, and now we're going to continue a little bit with that theme, talking about the sport that you mentioned that you love last time, which is figure skating or ice skating in general.

Wendy: Yes. Uhh, I really love figure skating. I love watching it and I also love doing it, participating in it as a sport, whenever I can. Although that hasn't been all that easy to do lately.

Nick: Right, so we're going to talk a little bit about our attempts this winter, after we got back from Africa, to find ice skating rinks¹ for you to skate on. Uhh, did you skate when you were a kid?

Wendy: Well, I did roller skating when I was a kid because I grew up in Alabama, in the deep south of the United States, so it's very, very warm weather there. And I suppose it would have been possible to have an ice skating rink because, you know, you can make one indoors and you can keep it cool, umm, if you need to. But my city did not have an ice skating rink so, uhh, I did roller skating and that was actually a big hobby of mine, it was something that I really loved. Both of my parents had been really into roller skating when they were teenagers. They had actually met in a roller skating rink, where my Dad had worked. So they put me into roller skating lessons very early, I think I was four years old when I started learning how to skate. So I loved that, and it wasn't until much later that I skated on ice for the first time. I think the first time was probably in Paris, when I was living in Paris in my early 20s.

Nick: Oh, wow, so really late.

Wendy: I think so, yeah. I can't remember doing it before then.

¹ rinks: arenas where you do ice sports

Nick: That's quite funny because last week you talked about how you used to² watch figure skating at the Winter Olympics when you were a kid but you'd never been on, uhh, on the ice.

Wendy: No.

Nick: And for me it was the exact opposite, which is that, as I said, we didn't really watch or know about the Winter Olympics but there was actually an ice rink very close to my house. And it's gone now, it's a supermarket now, and my parents have actually moved right next to where it used to be. Umm, and so we used to go skating sometimes, yeah, on the ice when I was a kid.

Wendy: OK, yeah, so I missed out on³ that when I was a kid. But when we moved to Switzerland then I made up for lost time. And that's when I got really into skating, because there are a few rinks in Geneva, Switzerland, where we were living. And they also offer classes for adults. So, for a little while, I was taking classes, and, you know, I was an adult, so it was never going to be anything more than a hobby. Like, I'm never going to be anywhere near the level of the Olympians that we're watching, you know, in the Olympics right now. They have to start when they're very, very young, and, you know, train for hours and hours. So I wasn't doing ... I wasn't trying to become a professional or anything like that, but I just enjoyed being out on the ice. And so I was learning a few little tricks and things and, you know, I could skate backwards pretty well, and I could do a couple of turns and things like that. And I really loved it. But then when we moved to Portugal, unfortunately there is no permanent ice rink in Lisbon, so there are some temporary ones that they set up in the winter, mostly around Christmas time, umm, but there are no permanent ones so it's not a year-round thing you can do.

Nick: Right, so to back up a little bit, the thing that makes it really great in Switzerland is firstly that you have these rinks like you mentioned, but because it's a winter country and because the culture is there, you also have a lot of natural ice rinks, or not rinks but opportunities to go skating on ice out, umm, you know, in nature, which is amazing.

Wendy: Yes, that's very true, yes. So there were a couple of times that we went to a lake up in the mountains, umm, which ... it's a very large lake, so it doesn't freeze hard enough for it to be skated on all that often, it's relatively rare. It might happen, you know, once or twice, maybe, in one winter and then some winters it doesn't happen at all. But we went up there, I believe, twice. Umm, we were able to skate on this huge lake and you're just completely out in the open and you can just, you know, skate in a straight line for as long as you want. Umm...

Nick: Yeah, I believe it's the largest lake in Europe or maybe in Switzerland that freezes, that completely can freeze. There's obviously larger lakes like Lake

² used to: did habitually or repeatedly in the past (followed by the infinitive of the verb)

³ missed out on (phrasal verb): to fail to do or experience something that is desired

Geneva but this one which is called Lac de Joux, uhh, does freeze completely, whereas a larger lake has too much water and it can't do it.

Wendy: Yeah, and then there was another place that we went in the far east of Switzerland in a canton called Graubünden, where it's like you're skating on a river. And it's not ... it's not entirely natural because it's not a river that freezes over, but they basically make a path right next to a river and, umm, so they prepare it in such a way that it will freeze and then it feels like you're skating down a river, which is also really fun.

Nick: Yeah, we went especially to do that I think, so we went all the way across Switzerland just to have an opportunity to skate down this, kind of, frozen river, and, yeah, that was amazing.

Wendy: Yeah, yeah, so I loved that, but, you know, I also enjoyed just going to the rinks, and some of them were outdoors, which is really nice. As long as it's a nice day, then I really prefer skating outdoors if possible, so I really appreciated being able to do that when we were living in Geneva.

Nick: Right, so that's the kind of *status quo*⁴ that existed for us at that time, and now we've moved to Portugal, which is not at all a winter country. It's a warm, summer country. Umm, and so now it's a kind of *wasteland*⁵ as far as ice skating goes, unfortunately.

Wendy: Yeah, I think that's probably a safe thing to say, yeah.

Nick: So like you said, they set up some rinks during, uhh, Christmas or at Christmas markets, so we went to try to skate at one of those, but it was a bit of a disaster.

Wendy: It was, yes, because that one that we tried was not actually real ice. So it was a synthetic ice rink, and I don't know what material it is, it's some kind of plastic or rubber or something that you skate on. And so we got there and I had brought my own skates, because it really makes a difference what kind of skates you're using. And usually, if you rent the skates at the skating rink, they're not very good quality at all and they don't sharpen them often enough and so it's much more difficult to skate on them and especially difficult if you're trying to do any kinds of tricks or anything. So I brought my own skates, and they told me, 'No, you can't use your skates because they're not made for this particular type of surface that we're using.' So I was annoyed with that, but I thought, 'OK, I understand, it's probably true that, you know, you can't use these type of skates on this thing that isn't really ice.' And so I took their skates and, the moment I stepped out on the rink, like, my feet just, like, went out from under me and it was impossible to skate.

⁴ *status quo* (Latin): existing situation

⁵ *wasteland*: a barren land where nothing grows. In this example Nick is using it metaphorically to say that there is no skating in Portugal.

Like, I think I made it around maybe two laps⁶ of this tiny little rink and then I just gave up because it was impossible. And you had the same experience.

Nick: Yeah, I just couldn't even move on this stuff. Umm, and then we went to Berlin, and there were Christmas markets there, and they had some real ice rinks.

Wendy: Yeah, so Berlin, obviously, it's much colder weather than it is in Lisbon. And so they were outdoors but it was cold enough that they could have an actual ice rink outdoors. Still temporary, and still part of, you know, this temporary Christmas market. Uhh, so we went to one of those but I didn't have my skates with me, because, you know, I didn't bring my skates to Berlin on this short trip. And so I had to use the rental skates. So they weren't very good quality, and the ice was also not very good quality. It was actually really bumpy. So all I could do was, you know, skate around in circles. I wasn't able to skate backwards or to do, to practice any of the things that I had learned when I had been taking lessons before in Geneva. So I was a bit annoyed with that as well.

Nick: And then a couple of weeks after that, as the winter progressed, we went to Rome for a few days to see a friend who we hadn't seen for a long time. And then it turned out that there was a rink there as well, another temporary rink set up during the winter.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm. And I had researched that beforehand⁷, because by that time I had gotten obsessed with trying to find a place where I could skate. And so I saw that there was one in Rome and that time I did actually bring my skates with me on this four-day trip to Rome. And, so I went and skated there and it was great. It was a really good rink, especially for a temporary one. I thought that the surface was really well maintained and it was outdoors which of course was a lot of fun. Uhh, the first time I went there it rained but I didn't mind, I just kept skating in the rain.

Nick: Well, you were the only one there, so it was great. You had the whole rink to yourself.

Wendy: I did, which was awesome because then you're able to go whichever way you want to. You don't have to keep going in the same direction as everyone else and you just have lots of room to practice different things, so that was a lot of fun. And then we went back the next day and we met up with some friends and their kids who we'd never met before and, uhh, then we all skated together and so, yeah, I finally got my ice skating fix⁸ for the year and that's going to have to hold me over⁹ for quite a while, I think.

⁶ laps: full turns around the track or area (used in several sports)

⁷ beforehand: in advance, ahead of time

⁸ fix: dose or amount of something that is needed or desired

⁹ hold me over: satisfy me for now

Nick: Yeah, so now the winter is almost over, so we're definitely done for this year, and we'll see what kind of adventures we have next year trying to find ice for you to skate on.

Wendy: Yep, stay tuned¹⁰. I'm going to do some more explorations and, uhh, I'm hopeful I can find something.

¹⁰ stay tuned: keep watching/listening (especially used on TV and radio)

Comprehension Questions

1. Why didn't Wendy go ice skating when she was a kid?
2. How did Wendy improve her skating while she was living in Geneva?
3. What were the two things Wendy didn't like about skating at a Christmas market in Berlin?

Exercises

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

1. I need to get my coffee _____ as soon as I wake up in the morning. Without it, I can't function.
2. She goes swimming at the pool three times a week. In each session, she swims 50 _____.
3. His favourite band played several concerts in his hometown but he was on a business trip at the time so he _____ seeing them.
4. I won't have time to eat lunch today so I'll have a big breakfast and hope that it will _____ until dinner.
5. We'll announce more details about our new project next week, so _____ for more information.
6. In order to encourage kids to play ice hockey, the city is building three new ice _____ in the next two years.
7. She read the rules of the game _____, so that way she knew what to expect when it came time to play.
8. The _____ has existed for decades. I think it's time for some changes but the old guard will resist.
9. I _____ take the bus to school every morning, but then one day I decided to walk instead and I've walked to school every day since.
10. Britain is a _____ for wine cultivation, because the weather just isn't warm enough.

Discussion Questions

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

1. Have you ever been ice skating? If so, did you like it? If not, would you like to try it?
2. Which of the two outdoor skating experiences that Nick and Wendy mentioned would you prefer: skating on a frozen lake or skating down a frozen river? Why?
3. Wendy said her parents met at a roller skating rink. Do you know how your parents met?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. Because there wasn't an ice rink in her city. She did roller skating instead.
2. She took lessons at an ice rink in Geneva and learned how to skate backwards and do some other tricks.
3. That the ice was bumpy and that she had to use rental skates which weren't good quality.

Exercises

1. fix
2. laps
3. missed out on
4. hold me over
5. stay tuned
6. rinks
7. beforehand
8. status quo
9. used to
10. wasteland