

Background

Learn while you travel

How do you spend your time while you commute to work? Do you read a book? Check your emails? Think about what's for dinner? Now commuters in Israel are learning about Albert Einstein and other university subjects as they travel to work.

A passenger is buying her ticket at Modi'in station. As the man in the ticket office gives her the ticket, she asks for the carriage with the lecture. The man in the ticket office isn't surprised by the question. She quickly walks to platform ten and gets on the eight o'clock train with the crowds of other commuters. They are all taking the train to Tel Aviv Central station, but this morning some of them are also going to learn about the life of Einstein.

As the train leaves the station and reaches one hundred kilometers per hour, Professor Hanoach Gutfreund begins a lecture in a carriage of office workers who, this morning, are also students. It's the idea of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Twice a month, passengers can listen to university lectures on a range of subjects. It's free for anyone with a train ticket, but there are only sixty seats and carriage three is always full. All the lectures are about science. For example, this month there are going to be lectures on the environment and how the brain works.

The journey from Modi'in to Tel Aviv takes twenty-five minutes and it isn't easy to give the lecture in this time.

The train stops at different stations and passengers get on and get off the train. At one point, a ticket collector comes through the carriage and checks tickets. At the station for the airport, two young people with surfboards and backpacks leave the carriage. They are going to catch a flight to the Philippines for a surfing holiday. One of them says: 'I never expected this on the train. It's interesting, but I have to get off.'

As the train finally arrives at Tel Aviv Central, Professor Gutfreund finishes. There's no time for questions. As passengers leave most of them are positive about the experience:

'It's a great idea,' says one man. 'Every morning I go to work by train and so next time I hope there's another lecture.'

Rina Levy, a 72-year-old, caught the Modi'in train especially to hear the lecture. 'I really enjoyed it,' she said. 'I attend university lectures a lot, but this was really different. I'll come again, and bring lots of people.'

Only one passenger – a student going to university for the day – was less positive: 'I don't know if it's the best way to learn.'

But, in general, Professor Gutfreund says the response to the lectures is always good. Recently, one lady didn't get off at her station because she did not want to miss the end of the talk. Unfortunately these student-commuters aren't going to receive a qualification for attending the lectures, but at least the journey feels shorter!

Exercises

1 Discuss as a class.

- 1 Which type of transport do you prefer: car, aeroplane, boat, train, bicycle?
- 2 How do you spend your time on long journeys?

2 Read the text quickly and answer these questions.

- 1 What type of transport is the text about?
- 2 What are people doing on the journey?

3 Read this conversation at the train station in the text. Complete the conversation with words and information from the first half of the text.

Passenger: Good morning. I'd like a return ticket to ¹*Tel Aviv Central Station* and I also want information about the lectures. How often are they?

Ticket office: They're ²_____.

Passenger: Is there one this morning?

Ticket office: Yes, it leaves at ³_____.

Passenger: Do you know what the lecture is?

Ticket office: Yes, it's about the ⁴_____.

Passenger: Sounds fascinating. So I'd like a return ticket and how much is the ticket for the lecture?

Ticket office: It's ⁵_____ because you're buying a return ticket.

Passenger: Great! Which platform does the train leave from?

Ticket office: Platform ⁶_____. And you need to go to carriage ⁷_____.

4 Read the second half of the text and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The lecture lasts for less than half an hour.
- 2 Some passengers don't stay for the whole lecture.
- 3 The passengers can ask questions at the end.
- 4 Everyone thinks the lectures are a great idea.
- 5 Some passengers are interested in more lectures.
- 6 You can get a qualification after these lectures.

5 These verbs collocate with nouns in the text. Find the nouns and write them here. Some verbs have more than one noun.

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|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 spend <u>time</u> | 5 stop at _____ | 9 go by _____ |
| 2 take _____ | 6 arrive at _____ | 10 attend _____ |
| 3 leave _____ | 7 miss _____ | |
| 4 catch _____ | 8 get on/get off _____ | |

6 Replace the words in bold in these sentences with a verb from 5.

- 1 I like to **travel** by train. It's my favourite. go
- 2 For my job I have to **be at** a lot of meetings and conferences. _____
- 3 Run! We have to **get** this flight because there isn't another one today. _____
- 4 Our train was late so we nearly **didn't catch** the flight! _____
- 5 I don't want to wait for a bus. Let's **go in** a taxi to the hotel. _____
- 6 The next train to London will **depart** from platform eight. _____

7 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.

8 Discuss as a class.

- 1 Would you enjoy lectures on your journey to work?
- 2 Which subjects would you like to hear lectures on?
- 3 What else could make your journey to work more interesting?