

3 VISITOR CENTRES

UNIT MENU

Grammar: comparative and superlative forms

Vocabulary: visitor information centres (VICs), adjectives

Professional skills: dealing with enquiries

Case study: improve a service

Aims and objectives

In this lesson students will:

- study vocabulary relating to VICs
- read an article on the changing role of VICs
- discuss main attractions in their local area

Listening

VISITOR INFORMATION AROUND THE WORLD

Exercise 1, page 24

Introduce Visitor Information Centres as the focus of the lesson and play the recording, before eliciting the countries the speakers are from. Check vocabulary, e.g. *backpacker, parade, branch*.

Speaker 1 is from Spain.

Speaker 2 is from China.

Audio script Track 3.1, Exercise 1, page 120

1

Spain has a highly developed tourist industry that offers a wide variety of services to all travellers for all ages and budgets – backpackers on low budgets, experienced travellers on cultural visits to heritage sites, as well as family holidaymakers in beach resorts. There are 'oficinas de turismo', or tourist offices, in all major towns and resorts. And we give information on accommodation, restaurants and of course places to visit and things to do. We also give out town plans, details about leisure activities and festivals like the carnival here in Tenerife, las Fallas in Valencia, or the Easter parades in Seville or Granada. Larger cities around the world usually have a Spanish National Tourist Office and you can also visit the official website at www.spain.info. I think Spanish people are naturally open and welcoming to visitors, so the best information comes from the locals themselves.

2

On the Chinese mainland, there are still not many official Tourist Information Offices. My advice to visitors to China is that they should be careful of travel companies who say they are 'official' organizations. This is because they are often only

private travel agents. If you need information on China, the China National Tourism Administration has branches in most countries in the world. They are also called China National Tourist Offices. Off the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau have their own professional tourism agencies. At the Hong Kong Tourism Board where I work, and at The Macau Government Tourism Office, we offer free information, maps and advice. And you'll find there are Visitor Information Centres in the airports, both in Macau and Hong Kong. Macau has its own Business Tourism Centre, too.

Exercise 2, page 24

Allow time for students to read the information before listening again and encourage them to compare answers in pairs before going through them with the class. Discuss the similarities with their own country/ies (and the host country if different).

- 1 There are tourist offices in all ~~beach resorts~~ **major towns and resorts** in Spain.
- 2 They give advice on places to stay, eating out, and things to see and do e.g. ~~sports events~~ **festivals** (in Tenerife, Valencia, Seville and Granada).
- 3 The speaker thinks the ~~Tourist Offices~~ **locals/local people** usually give the best information.
- 4 There are ~~lots of~~ **not many** Visitor Information Centres on the Chinese mainland.
- 5 Some Chinese ~~VICs~~ **travel companies** say they are 'official' organizations (but they are not).
- 6 Huan thinks the Hong Kong and Macau tourism boards ~~don't~~ **provide** helpful advice.

Vocabulary

VICS

Exercise 3, page 24

Students match the words and definitions, checking answers with a partner before class feedback. If your students are thinking of taking the LCCI Level 1 Certificate in Spoken English for Tourism, remind them they must be able to describe a variety of ways in which people travel, e.g. by bus.

1 e 2 d 3 a 4 f 5 c 6 b

Exercise 4, page 24

Refer students to the list of information and services, and ask them to add another three items to the list. Allow time for them to discuss their idea in pairs before opening the discussion to the class. Build up a list of extra ideas on the board, adding extras as useful.

Suggested answers

- museums, art galleries, cultural heritage and historic sites, entertainment centres, (theatres and cinemas), cathedrals and places of religious worship
- fire service, doctor/health clinic, dentist, embassies and consulates, garage mechanics
- banks and money exchange, embassies and consulates, walking and bus tours, day trips, e.g. boat and bus trips, local markets, festivals and sports events

Additional services might be: booking accommodation at local hotels and B&Bs; currency exchange; maps and guide information for walking or driving tours in the area.

Reading

THE ROLE OF VICs

Exercise 5, page 25

Focus students' attention on the photo and elicit what it shows before asking students to read the article. Allow time for students to compare answers with a partner before eliciting ideas from the class. Check on potentially new vocabulary, e.g. *diversify*, *interactive*, *promote*.

- 1 The Tourist Board in Scotland have found that 50% of visitors to VICs are Scottish and not 'tourists'. So all kinds of travellers use visitor centres including hotel guests, residents and day-trippers.
- 2 Some hoteliers think VICs are unnecessary because visitors can get information from hotel reception, a taxi driver, or shop assistant. They can also get online information using a laptop or mobile device in hotels with Wi-Fi connections. It costs a lot of public money to run these centres.
- 3 VICs are still useful because they promote tourism to all kinds of tourist. They encourage visitors to see local sights and attractions, and go to festivals or sports events. Many visitors prefer face-to-face contact with staff in a VIC.

Exercise 6, page 25

Students read the article again, completing the sentences. With a weaker class, students could work in pairs to do this. Round up by eliciting the answers. Check on pronunciation as needed.

1 VICs 2 Tourist 3 promote 4 advice
5 technology 6 sights 7 events
8 face-to-face 9 enquiries 10 ambassadors

Speaking

LOCAL INFORMATION

Exercise 7, page 25

Students work in pairs to discuss their own region before sharing their ideas with the class. Compile a list of aspects which might be surprising on the board and use this as an opportunity to promote greater understanding of regional differences.

Suggested answers

opening times, national holidays, driving on the other side of the road, the local language, cost of public transport, eating times, entertainment, types of food, fashion, people in the street, etc.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

If students are in a different country to their own, ask them to work in pairs to think of five popular attractions in the local area and to discuss what they have found surprising about the region.

RESEARCH
YOUR LOCAL AREA

Go through the task with the class. In a subsequent lesson, allow time for students to present their findings either in groups or to the class.

Homework suggestions

- Students write an article for a travel magazine or website, giving information on the information services available in their own country (100–150 words).
- Students write a blog article about their own region's attractions and what visitors find surprising, using ideas discussed in Exercise 7 (100–150 words).

BHUTAN

Aims and objectives

In this lesson students will:

- read an article about Bhutan
- study the comparative and superlative forms
- discuss the best and worst aspects of their own country

Reading

BHUTAN – THE HAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

FACT FILE

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked country situated at the end of the Himalayan mountain range sharing borders with India and China. It has an area of around 38,500 km².

Exercise 1, page 26

Focus students' attention on the map and photos before asking students to discuss in pairs what they know about Bhutan. During class feedback, elicit ideas and find out if anyone has visited Bhutan. Add in useful vocabulary from the suggested answers.

Suggested answers

- I think Bhutan is an isolated/remote/quiet/unique/unusual country.
- Its landscape is spectacular/beautiful/amazing.
- Its culture is mystical/religious/old-fashioned/unique/not very modern.
- Bhutanese people look friendly/quiet/happy/traditional/old-fashioned/don't look very modern.
- Their clothes are traditional/old-fashioned/distinct/unique/unusual/aren't very modern.

Exercise 2, page 26

Refer students to the article's title and elicit a few ideas as to why it might be the happiest place on earth. Students then read the article and match the sentences halves, comparing answers in pairs before checking them as a class. Check on potentially new vocabulary, e.g. *isolated*, *navigate*, *prevent*.

1 c 2 d 3 a 4 b

Exercise 3, page 26

Ask students if they would be interested in living and working in Bhutan, and why/why not.

Suggested answer

I would like to visit Bhutan because it looks beautiful and very peaceful, but I wouldn't like to live and work there. I prefer living in bigger cities with more shops, facilities, nightlife, etc. Bhutan is land-locked, it doesn't have a sea, and I enjoy going to the beach in

my country. Finally, I don't think Bhutanese food is very varied.

Grammar

COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS

Exercise 4, page 27

Focus students' attention on the Grammar box. Allow them time to read through the information and ask any questions before underlining examples of superlative forms in the article. This could be done as a class.

- Bhutan may not be one of the richest countries in the world, it is officially one of the happiest.
- one of the world's youngest heads of states
- one of the most spectacular but also one of the scariest airports

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Refer students to page 113 of the Grammar reference and go through the information explaining the comparative and superlative forms. Highlight the different forms (short, long and irregular) and draw attention to the other cases mentioned, as well as spelling. Allow time to discuss the examples given and any questions students might have. Provide additional examples as needed.

Exercise 5, page 27

Tell students they are going to read about modern Bhutan and ask them to complete the texts using the words given. Allow time for them to compare answers with a partner before going through them. Check vocabulary, e.g. *influences*, *unique*, *preserve*.

1 modern 2 friendlier 3 important 4 bigger
5 traditional 6 longer 7 happiest 8 best

Exercise 6, page 27

Students complete the sentences using the comparative or superlative form of the adjectives as needed. Encourage students to compare answers in pairs before eliciting ideas from the class. Check on spelling and revise the rules of form as needed.

1 more modern 2 most spectacular
3 happier than 4 good as 5 spicier than
6 noisier than 7 shorter/than 8 the tiniest

Exercise 7, page 27

Ask students to think about differences between their own country and Bhutan, and to write six sentences using the comparative. Monitor and help as needed. After students have compared ideas with a partner, elicit some ideas from the class, writing them on the board.

Suggested answers

- My country is bigger than Bhutan.
- The city where I live is noisier than Thimphu.
- The landscape in Bhutan is more beautiful than in my region.
- Bhutan is in the Himalayas so it's higher than my country – my country is flatter.
- The architecture is older and more interesting than where I live.
- The clothes are more modern here – they aren't as traditional as Bhutanese clothes.
- I think the Bhutanese look more relaxed than the people here.
- I'm sure the nightlife in my city is better than in Thimphu.
- Tourists have to pay a higher tax in Bhutan than in my country.
- The tourism industry here is more developed than in Bhutan.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Students work in small groups and discuss whose country or region is: *the hottest, the biggest, the wettest, the most mountainous, the most populated*, etc. See if they can think of ten superlatives relating to their group members' countries/regions.

Speaking

THE BEST AND THE WORST

Exercise 8, page 27

Focus students' attention on the topics given in the box and check that they understand what they refer to. Students then work in pairs and compile a list of the best and worst aspects of their country. It may be useful to set a time, e.g. five minutes for this before students join another pair and compare ideas. Round up by eliciting answers from each group. Note ideas on the board for error correction if needed.

Students' own answers. They should use the words in the box.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Students think of a country, noting five things they know about using words and phrases from the box. They then work in pairs and take turns to read out their ideas. Their partner has to guess the country. If they guess incorrectly, they can ask five further questions before their final guess.

RESEARCH COMPARING COUNTRIES

Go through the task with the class. In a subsequent lesson, allow time for students to present their findings either in groups or to the class.

Homework suggestions

- Students write ten sentences comparing their own country with their host country or another country of their choice.
- Students write a short article for a travel guide, giving information on the best and worst aspects of their country (100–150 words). They should use ideas from Exercise 8 and also the comparative and superlatives forms where possible.

Photocopiable notes 3.1 (page 113)
Comparatives and superlatives (Matching activity page 114)

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES

Aims and objectives

In this lesson students will:

- learn about the typical enquiries Edinburgh's VIC deals with
- focus on the professional skill of dealing with enquiries
- study vocabulary dealing with numbers in enquiries

Listening

TYPICAL ENQUIRIES

FACT FILE

Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland, and is famous for its historic and cultural attractions, stunning architecture, arts festivals, e.g. the Edinburgh International Festival and cultural events, e.g. the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Exercise 1, page 28

Focus students' attention on the photo and ask what it shows and what country it is in. Find out who has been to Edinburgh and elicit what students know about the Scottish city.

Students' own answers. These could include The Edinburgh Fringe Festival in summer and Edinburgh Castle, which is the second most visited tourist sight in the UK after the Tower of London.

Exercise 2, page 28

Tell students they are going to listen to the manager of Edinburgh's VisitScotland Information Centre and give them time to read the information. After listening allow time for students to compare answers in pairs before going through them with the class.

1 thousands 2 month 3 maps 4 discounts

Audio script Track 3.2, Exercise 2, page 120

About five million people visit the Edinburgh region annually, and we get thousands of enquiries each month. We are here to help with information on city attractions, local events and short breaks in other destinations in Scotland. You can also buy gifts and souvenirs here. And we can book a hotel or B&B for you. The most common questions we get are: 'Can I have a map of the

city?' and 'What are the local attractions?' Visitors can get a free map here and information about all the city's attractions. You can also buy the Edinburgh Pass here, which is a sightseeing pass that includes discounts on more than 30 attractions, as well as bus tours and city buses. The pass also includes special offers for restaurants, cafés, shops and tours. It's not only tourists visiting the city who come to us. A lot of local people also contact us for information about the holidays and breaks in the rest of Scotland and the UK.

Reading

EDINBURGH BUS TOURS

Exercise 3, page 28

Students read the article and decide if the statements are true or false, discussing answers with a partner before class feedback. Check vocabulary, e.g. *inspiring, commentary, hop-on*.

- 1 T
- 2 F – eight languages
- 3 F – It's a 24-hour service.
- 4 T – The Horrible History channel

Listening

TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES

Exercise 4, page 29

Explain to students they are going to listen to a phone enquiry and give them time to read the adverts before listening. Allow time for students to compare answers in pairs before checking them as a class.

1 15 minutes 2 all day 3 60 minutes 4 £15
5 90 6 noon 7 £9 8 half price/£4.50

Audio script Track 3.3, Exercise 4, page 120

A = VIC Assistant, C = Caller

A Visit Scotland Information Centre. Paula speaking. How can I help you?

C Hello! Is that the Edinburgh tourist office?

A Yes, that's right. Can I help you?

C Yes, we'd like some information about tours.

A Sorry, do you mean the guided tours or the bus tours?

C I don't know. Can you tell me about both?

A Certainly. There are four bus tours. They are hop-on hop-off services.

C I see. Which is the best tour?

A Well, the most popular one is the City Sightseeing Tour. It leaves from Waverley Bridge, outside Waverley train station every 15 minutes. You can get off the bus at any of the stops along

the way, visit the sights and then get back on another tour bus.

C When does the service operate?

A It's a 24-hour service so the ticket is valid on all the tour buses all day.

C How long is the tour?

A If you stay on the bus, it's approximately 60 minutes.

C Sounds like a good idea. How much does it cost?

A Adult tickets cost £15, senior citizen and student tickets cost £13 and for children under sixteen tickets are £6.

C And the guided tours?

A There are several guided walking tours. A popular one is the tour of the old town. It starts here from the Tourist Information Centre on Princes Street and lasts about 90 minutes. Tours start at 10 a.m., noon, 2.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. every day in summer. The cost is £9 for adults. It's half price for children under eight and senior citizens.

C I think we'll go on the bus tour this afternoon.

A Right. You can buy the tickets from the driver on the bus, or the ticket seller on Waverley Bridge.

C Great! Many thanks for your help.

A You're welcome. Would you like anything else?

C No thanks.

A Thank you for calling the centre. Goodbye.

Professional skills

DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES

Exercise 5, page 29

Focus students' attention on the expressions in the Professional skills box and highlight the different functions. Students then listen to the enquiry again, completing the expressions and checking their answers with audio script 3.3 on page 120.

1 How can 2 do you mean 3 Certainly
4 welcome 5 for calling

Vocabulary

NUMBERS IN ENQUIRIES

Exercise 6, page 29

Students match the questions and answers, comparing ideas with a partner. Go through the answers with the class before students practise saying them in their pairs. Elicit the pronunciation of all the numbers, checking they are said correctly.

1 c 2 d 3 a 4 b 5 e

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Ask students to work in pairs and either give each student a brochure or information on a tour (preferably from the local area) or ask them to make up their own information on a tour in their region. Students then take turns to ask each other questions to find out the following about their partner's tour: *price, discounts available, start time, length of tour, key attractions seen, etc.*

Speaking

DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES

Exercise 7, page 29

Put students into pairs and allot roles A and B. Allow time for students to prepare. With a weaker class, As and Bs could prepare in pairs before returning to their original partners. Monitor the conversations, note good language use and other points to mention during feedback.

See Pairwork files.

Homework suggestions

- Students write a short article for a blog site or tourism website about a city in their country (or one they know well) and the tours available there (100–150 words). Remind them to use the text in Exercise 2 as a model and to mention key attractions.
- Students write a short dialogue between two people where an enquiry is being dealt with (150–200 words). Remind students to use expressions introduced in the Professional skills box and in a subsequent class ask them to practise their conversations in pairs before selecting a few to be roleplayed to the class.

Photocopiable notes 3.2 (page 113)
What do you say/do? (Card activity page 115)

CASE STUDY

IMPROVE A SERVICE

CASE STUDY MENU

Refer students to the lesson's aims and objectives before focusing on the photos and eliciting what they show (a mountain range/the Canadian Rockies, a coniferous forest, a river and a train).

Mystery shopper

Exercise 1, page 30

Check students understand what a *mystery shopper* and *consumer* are before reading the text. Allow time for students to discuss their answers in pairs before opening the discussion up to the class. Add in and discuss suggested answers not brought up by students.

Suggested answers

- 1 Students might want to talk about the ethics of this method. They might have experience of mystery shoppers in their organizations they want to talk about.
- 2 Other ways to investigate quality: user 'exit' surveys, staff surveys, customer feedback forms, manager's walkabout, record of complaints and follow-up action, keeping emails from customers about the service, hiring consultants to evaluate the service, e.g. the website.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Students discuss in pairs/small groups if they would like to be a mystery shopper, deciding which shops or places they would want to be a mystery shopper in and why/why not.

Albertville Visitors Bureau

Exercise 2, page 30

Explain what Albertville Visitors Bureau does and tell students they are going to listen to some mystery shopper feedback. Ask students to make notes on the three aspects given and allow them time to discuss answers with a partner before eliciting ideas from the class. Check vocabulary, e.g. *knowledgeable*, *abandoned*, *well-decorated*.

Centre 1:

- a sent the information within 48 hours; assistant answered the phone well and was friendly and knowledgeable

- b assistant smiled and was friendly
- c centre clean and well decorated

Centre 2:

- a did not respond to two emails; assistant told the caller to consult the website or go to the office; no standard way to answer the phone
- b assistants ignored the visitor at first and then offered leaflets
- c paper and boxes on the floor and the paint on the walls was old and dirty

Audio script Track 3.4, Exercise 2, pages 120–121

As part of the study, I telephoned, sent an email enquiry and made a personal visit to the visitor centres. My email asked for a list of places to stay in the area. The first centre replied with the information within 48 hours but the second centre didn't answer me. I sent the email again but still did not get a reply. In the next test, I phoned to ask about things to see and do in the area. I waited more than five rings for both centres to answer the phone. There was no standard practice for answering the telephone in the centres. In one, the assistant gave the name of the centre and her name at the start of the call. This assistant was friendly, polite and knowledgeable. The assistant in the other centre was less professional and told me to consult the website or visit the office in person for information. The second centre also put me on hold for five minutes without explanation, and I abandoned the call. In the third test, I visited the centres in person. The staff welcome in the first centre was excellent – the assistant smiled, made eye contact and was well informed. The assistants in the other centre ignored me when I went in. When I asked for information, they gave me leaflets. The first centre was clean, well decorated and organized. But there was a lot of paper and boxes on the floor in the second one I visited, and the paint on the walls was old and dirty.

Customer feedback

Exercise 3, page 30

Students read the customer feedback and answer the questions, comparing ideas in pairs before class feedback. Check vocabulary, e.g. *ramp*, *adapted*, *special needs*, *frustrating*.

1

- poor access to the centres for people in wheelchairs
- no signs outside with the opening hours and the centres don't open at lunch-time and on Sundays

2

- The bureau could build ramps and widen the doorways to improve access.
- The bureau could improve signs (signage) and extend opening hours.

Website evaluation

Exercise 4, page 31

Elicit the meaning of *evaluation* before the situation. Ask students to read the report and decide which options are the best ones. Allow them time to discuss their ideas in pairs before the discussion is opened to the class. Check vocabulary, e.g. *decline*, *indication*, *forums* and add in any suggested ideas not brought up.

Suggested answers

- A new online service for people who want to book accommodation is a good idea. Online video tours are also a good service but could be expensive to produce. It is, however, possible that some people might find it hard to make bookings and find information online if they don't know how to use a computer.
- PDFs of maps and information reduce the cost of providing maps and leaflets as people can print them at home.
- Interactive forums are also a good way to get feedback from users but there will be a cost involved in maintaining and monitoring the forum as well as responding to the comments.
- Closing a centre and introducing digital kiosks means visitors lose the 'human' contact with the centres, and some staff could lose their jobs. It is also possible that some people might find it hard to operate the digital kiosks, or that people don't get information and help when the kiosks are not working.

TASK

Exercise 5, page 31

Decide whether to put students into pairs or groups before going through the task with the class. Check that students understand what they must do and the information they need to read. You might wish to set a limit of preparation time, e.g. 15 minutes. Pre-teach *compile* and *priorities*, and elicit the meaning of *essential* and *desirable*. Monitor and help as needed throughout the task. Ask students to decide who is going to present their decisions to the class from each pair/group. Round up by discussing the top priorities and the best ideas presented.

See Pairwork files.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Essential improvements (Low cost)

Staff training: the centre managers to offer all staff training to improve the customer service in the centres. Training to include:

- standard practice for answering the telephone
- responding within 48 hours to all email enquiries
- welcoming and helping visitors to the centre.

Desirable improvements (Low cost)

Website: add printable PDF versions of maps and information to the website.

Essential improvements (High cost)

Physical adaptations: it is essential for a public service to adapt all the centres for wheelchair and disabled access. This includes wider doors, ramps and disabled toilets.

Formal email

Exercise 6, page 31

Refer students to the emails on page 99 of the Writing Bank and go through the points given above the examples. Then discuss as a class what opening and closing would be the most appropriate for their email. Recommend a word limit of 150–200 words. With a weaker class, it might help if students prepare their email in pairs. Make sure students start writing in class and if time is limited ask them to complete their emails for homework.

UNIT 3: KEY WORDS

Highlight the key words box and elicit definitions for a selection of the words as well as parts of speech. Check on syllable stress, parts of speech and pronunciation as needed. Suggest students use the DVD-ROM Mini-dictionary for further self-study.

Homework suggestions

- Students write a short report summarizing the decisions their management team made for the task in Exercise 5 and which are the priorities and why (150–200 words).
- Students write a sentence for each of the key words given for the unit (15 sentences), using a variety of structures and language from the unit where possible.