

## Strange Cities around the World

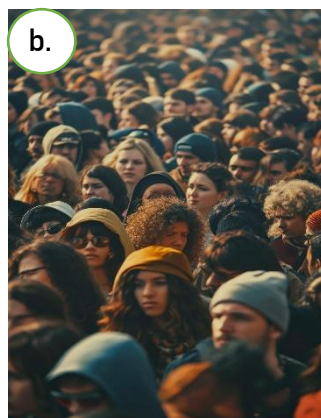
### Warm up

- What do you think of the city you live in? Is there anything unusual about it?
- Do you prefer big cities or small towns? Why?
- What's the weirdest city or town you have ever been to?
- What's your favourite city you have ever visited and why?
- If you could visit any city for a week, which city would you visit and why?
- Have you ever been to a city that you thought was overrated? What was your experience?
- What is the most dangerous city in your country? Are there any neighbourhoods in your city that could be considered unsafe?



### 1. Match the words in the box to the pictures below

harbour *g.*      skyscraper *d.*      metro *h.*      pollution *a.*  
 crowd *b.*      traffic jam *c.*      shopping mall *e.*      ATM *f.*





2. Common adjectives in English often have multiple synonyms. Match the common adjective on the left to three synonyms on the right.

a) Beautiful

- 1) *picturesque*
- 2) *breath-taking*
- 3) *gorgeous*

b) Big

- 1) *large*
- 2) *huge*
- 3) *massive*

c) Small

- 1) *tiny*
- 2) *little*
- 3) *minuscule*

d) Ugly

- 1) *unattractive*
- 2) *hideous*
- 3) *unpleasant*

e) Amazing

- 1) *terrific*
- 2) *wonderful*
- 3) *astounding*

f) Relaxing

- 1) *peaceful*
- 2) *serene*
- 3) *calm*

g) Disgusting

- 1) *nasty*
- 2) *gross*
- 3) *revolting*

Synonyms

- huge
- hideous
- breath-taking
- revolting
- unpleasant
- large
- picturesque
- wonderful
- unattractive
- tiny
- little
- peaceful
- astonishing
- terrific
- serene
- gross
- calm
- minuscule
- massive
- gorgeous
- nasty




3. Read the description of different areas of Berlin from a local. Complete the description using a word from exercise 2 (multiple answers are possible).

"I live in Berlin, I was born and raised here, but I grew up on the outskirts of the city in a suburb called Neustaaken, but now I live in the city centre. The population of Berlin is approximately 3.5 million, so it's a *large/huge/massive* city. I love Berlin, I think it's a *fantastic/terrific/astonishing* city, but it's not for everyone, particularly the city centre. In my opinion the best neighbourhood for a night out is Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg is the artsy area of Berlin, there is a lot of graffiti, lots of great bars, it's just got a very unique vibe. It used to be a popular area for students to live, but now it's too expensive for most students. It's a lot of fun, but it has a big problem with drugs, crime, and homelessness. There is a lot of rubbish on the streets, and sometimes it smells like sewage. Honestly in some parts it can get pretty *gross/revolting/nasty*, last week in Kreuzberg I saw a man throw a whole trash bin out of his window onto the street. But luckily I don't live in Kreuzberg, I live in a neighbourhood called Prenzlauer Berg, which is a bit more fancy than Kreuzberg, and has a lot of absolutely *gorgeous/ breath-taking/picturesque* buildings and parks, it's so nice that sometimes I just walk around for hours. I love it here, but it's so expensive that I can only afford a *tiny/minuscule/little* apartment, it's about 30 square meters. Also sometimes I miss living in Neustaaken, it was so much quieter and more *serene/peaceful/calm* there. On the other hand I used to live on the main street in Neustaaken and it was really *unpleasant/unattractive/hideous*, just grey concrete and depressing buildings, a lot of warehouses and factories."



If you had to choose between living in Neustaaken, Kreuzberg, and Prenzlauer Berg, which would you choose and why? Discuss with a partner.

 4. Based on the description of Berlin, match adjectives in the box below with one of the three areas discussed above (some words can be used for more than one area).

run down	upmarket	affordable	posh	bustling
affluent	trendy	scenic	dull	industrial


Kreuzberg

Prenzlauer Berg

Neustaaken

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.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....



 5. Think of 3 areas in the city you live in and write a text describing all 3. What are they like, what do you like and dislike about them, and would you like to live there? Try to use some of the vocabulary you have learned so far,

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6. In pairs read about some of the strangest cities, towns, and villages around the world and describe what you read to your partner.

### Student A

Miyake-jima is a city on a volcanic island near Japan, also known as “Gas Mask City”. The island is infamous for its harsh living conditions due to the active volcano. Since a massive eruption in 2000, the island has been continuously exposed to high levels of toxic sulfur dioxide gas, making it one of the most unique inhabited places on Earth.

Residents and visitors must always carry gas masks in case of sudden spikes in sulfur levels, and warning sirens are regularly used to alert the population when the air becomes too dangerous to breathe. Despite these extreme conditions, a small community continues to live on Miyake-jima. Adventurous travelers can visit and experience the haunting yet beautiful landscapes, abandoned buildings, and the surreal sight of people putting on gas masks as part of everyday life.



Venice, often called The Sinking City, is a picturesque floating metropolis built on over 100 islands in Italy. Famous for its canals, bridges, and renaissance architecture, Venice is a hub of art, history, and culture.

However, the city faces a growing crisis due to rising sea levels and unstable land, leading to frequent flooding. In the last hundred years the city has collectively sunk by 30 centimeters. The city has implemented a system of flood barriers to slow the sinking, but property damage due to flooding is common, and the problem is only likely to get worse. Despite these challenges, Venice remains a serene and magical destination, attracting millions of visitors each year.

### Student B

Auroville, often called *The City of Dawn*, is an experimental tiny town in India. Founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (the unofficial mayor of the town), Auroville was envisioned as an international utopia where people from all over the world could live in peace, with very few rules and no government.

Auroville is a pioneer in environmental conservation, reforestation, organic farming, renewable energy, and eco-friendly architecture. Once a barren land, it has been transformed into a gorgeous green landscape through decades of environmental efforts. Over 3,000 residents from more than 60 countries call Auroville home. The town has no currency, and instead uses a unique economic system where residents contribute their work to the community and use an internal credit system.



Whittier is a small town in Alaska with a unique feature—all of its residents live in a single building! Whittier's residents live in Begich Towers, a massive, 14-story former military complex built in the 1950s. The building itself is quite unattractive, but the Alaskan landscape around it is truly breath-taking. The building isn't just an apartment complex; it also houses a post office, a police station, a grocery store, a church, a school, and even a medical clinic. This means that residents rarely have to leave the building, especially during the harsh Alaskan winters.

Whittier was originally built as a military outpost during World War II due to its strategic location. After the military left, the town remained, but with limited infrastructure. The remote location and extreme weather conditions, with strong winds and heavy snowfall, make it more practical for the community to live in one large, self-sufficient building.



With your partner, discuss which of the 4 cities you would most like to live in, and which you would least like you live in, and why.




7. You are going to watch a video about an unusual town. The video contains the words in the box. Use the words to complete the sentences.

snowmobile	tropics	remote	coal	trade route
gradually	fern	avalanche	inhospitable	mines

- a) The Silk Road was an important *trade route* connecting Asia and Europe.
- b) The rain *gradually* stopped, and the sun began to come out.
- c) The hikers turned back when they heard there was a risk of an *avalanche*.
- d) A small *fern* was growing between the rocks near the waterfall.
- e) Many people dream of moving to the *tropics* for the warm weather and beautiful beaches.
- f) We rode a *snowmobile* across the frozen lake to reach the cabin.
- g) In the past, many families heated their homes with *coal* instead of gas or electricity.
- h) The desert is beautiful, but its extreme heat makes it an *inhospitable* place to live.
- i) The old gold *mines* were closed years ago, but tourists still visit them.
- j) The village was so *remote* that it didn't even have a proper road.

 8. Watch the video [Svalbard - The Northernmost Town on Earth<sup>1</sup>](#) and answer the questions.

- a) Why do so many people have snowmobiles on Svalbard? *Because there are very few roads.*
- b) Why do you have to travel with a gun if you leave the town? *Because of polar bears*
- c) How long does the longest night last in Svalbard? *From October to February*
- d) Why was coal so important to Svalbard, and why is there so much of it there? *It was the central industry, and because 60 million years ago it was in the tropics, and that caused a build up of coal*
- e) How is Svalbard's economy changing? *It's moving towards research and tourism*
- f) Why might Svalbard become important to global trade in the future? *Global warming means trade routes in the north that were previously impassable may become passable, and Svalbard is in a good position for that.*
- g) Would you like to live in Svalbard? Why or why not?

 9. Optional online task / homework: choose one of the cities or towns and watch the video (click on the link or search for the title on YouTube). Then make a short presentation describing the city to your class.

- a) Gurgaon, India's privately owned city  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD0bR7JXI6k>
- b) Kowloon: Hong Kong's 'City of Darkness'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1wSj9X2igA>
- c) Coober Pedy, Australia's hidden underground town  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQRa7BubjSY>
- d) Inside Slab City: America's Last Lawless Town  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0QO-0B5m28>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NhIRwCq428>