

# Abilità Linguistica in Lingua Inglese (6CFU)

## A.A. 2019/2020

### Part 3 Business and Tourism Articles

#### Read and translate

## *1. What's It Like to Live in Barcelona's Most Famous Gaudí Home? A Bit Inconvenient*

By Raphael Minder, The New York Times

June 29, 2019

BARCELONA, Spain — Every year, more than a million people visit the home of Ana Viladomiu in Barcelona. She does her best to avoid them.

Ms. Viladomiu lives in La Pedrera, the last house built by Antoni Gaudí, the brilliant Catalan architect who died after being hit by a tram in 1926. His works around the city have helped make Barcelona one of Europe's main tourism hubs.

On most days, long lines form outside La Pedrera, whose undulating and uneven stone facade makes it look as if cave dwellings had been carved into a massive rock. Once inside, visitors discover a building with unusual features from bottom to top. The tiled courtyard at the entrance resembles an underwater forest; the roof terrace has chimneys shaped like helmets.

For Ms. Viladomiu, however, living in La Pedrera raises some practical issues, starting with her daily struggle to reach the elevator that leads to her fourth-floor apartment.

“I've found myself many times elbowing my way home, while people shouted at me because they thought I was jumping the ticket queue,” she said recently in an interview in her apartment. “That's not a great situation to be in, especially if you're carrying your shopping bags back home.”

The apartment itself is a whitewashed and airy 350 square meters, or about 3,750 square feet, and is lightly furnished and has large bay windows. She has lived there since the 1980s.



Ms. Viladomiu, 63 and a writer, moved into the building shortly after meeting her husband, who rented one of the apartments before La Pedrera was declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1984.

Gaudí designed the building as a private residence, which was then shared among several tenants.

In 1906, he was commissioned by a wealthy couple — Roser Segimon and her husband, Pere Milà — to build their new home on what was then becoming — and remains — the city's fashionable shopping avenue, Passeig de Gracia.

Gaudí took six years to complete the building, after which the couple kept the main floor for themselves, but rented out the additional space, which had been subdivided into 20 apartments.

Gaudí's building, officially called Casa Milà, became the talk of Barcelona even before it was completed. It was soon dubbed La Pedrera, or the stone quarry, because of its rough-looking facade and asymmetrical shape.

His design was satirized by newspaper cartoonists, and led to some legal feuding, including between Gaudí and the couple. The couple was eventually fined by the city authorities because Gaudí built a house that was larger than allowed by its building permit.

Ms. Segimon, who died in 1964, outlived her husband and sold La Pedrera to a real estate company. Another architect then transformed the top floor, which had been a laundry room, into more rental apartments.

Ms. Viladomiu has one of the few left. In March, she published a book, "[The Last Neighbor](#)," about the history of the building, as well as the experience of occupying an apartment in one of the jewels of Gaudí's Modernist style of architecture.

An added bonus, she said, is that her rent has not risen significantly in over three decades, even as the tourism value of La Pedrera has rocketed.

"Paying what I pay to live in such an extraordinary place in the heart of Barcelona, I would be very silly to move anywhere else," she said, without revealing the exact cost of her rent. Tourists pay 22 euros, or about \$25, to visit La Pedrera, but that includes access to only part of the building, including one of the apartments he designed.

Still, intrepid visitors have sometimes overstepped the boundaries, forcing Ms. Viladomiu to add a barrier outside her apartment, to keep tourists at bay.

Before, she said, "there were people ringing my doorbell constantly, wanting to take a look inside my home."

Occasionally, Ms. Viladomiu opened her front door to strangers. "When I have seen some tourists approach who looked interesting to me, I've shown them my apartment," she said.

Ms. Viladomiu likens her experience to living on the set of "Big Brother," the reality television show, photographed by tourists whenever she steps out onto her balcony and monitored by security cameras and smoke detectors she has sometimes inadvertently set off while cooking her dinner. "But it's of course the 'Big Brother of our World Heritage,'" she added.

Nowadays, Gaudí is at the heart of Barcelona's tourism offering, and efforts are continuing to highlight his works. The most ambitious project concerns his unfinished masterpiece, the "Sagrada Família" basilica, which was only about a quarter built at the time Gaudí died.

This month, the city authorities finally delivered a permit to allow the works to proceed, in a bid to complete the building in 2026, which would coincide with the centenary of Gaudí's death. Two years ago, the first house that Gaudí built in Barcelona "Casa Vicens", was transformed into a museum.

Barcelona's current love affair with Gaudí contrasts with the relative disinterest shown toward his works in the 1980s, when La Pedrera was last put up for sale and struggled to attract a buyer.

Eventually, Caixa de Catalunya, a bank, paid 900 million pesetas, equivalent to \$6.2 million, to buy the building in 1986. The bank's foundation then renovated La Pedrera and opened it to tourists, while offering to pay off the tenants to move out.

In addition to Ms. Viladomiu, a few other tenants also refused the foundation's offer. Two of them still reside in the building, but they would not be interviewed.

Gaudí included features in La Pedrera that were novelties at the time, like an elevator and running water in each apartment. La Pedrera was also one of the first houses in Barcelona to have an underground garage, with 16 spaces where residents could park either their motor vehicle or their horse carriage. The garage has now become an auditorium.

But Ms. Viladomiu also pointed out some aspects of Gaudí's design that showed how he prioritized aesthetics, including his extensive use of curved surfaces.

"You can almost forget installing a bookshelf, because there isn't a single straight wall here," she said. "Gaudí had very clear ideas and a very strong personality, which you just have to respect in order to live here."

## **2. Why Americans pay more for lunch than Britons do.**

*Even when they are buying the same sandwich*

Sep 7th 2019, The Economist



This summer Pret A Manger, purveyor of sandwiches to desk-workers in the white-collar cities of the West, added lobster rolls to its menu. In Britain they cost £5.99 (\$7.31); in America \$9.99. In both countries they are filled with lobster from Maine, along with cucumber, mayonnaise and more. Rent and labour cost about the same in London as in downtown New York or Boston. Neither sticker price includes sales tax. Yet a Pret lobster roll in America is a third pricier than in Britain, even though the lobster comes from nearer by.

This Pret price gap is not limited to lobster rolls. According to data gathered by *The Economist* on the dozen Pret sandwiches that are most similar in the two countries, the American ones cost on average 74% more (see chart). An egg sandwich in New York costs \$4.99 to London's £1.79, more than double. A tuna baguette costs two-thirds more. The price mismatch is intriguing—the more so for *The Economist*, which publishes the Big Mac index, a cross-country comparison of burger prices, which shows a 43% transatlantic disparity.

Menu pricing starts with a simple rule, says John Buchanan of the consulting arm of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, a restaurant group: take the cost of ingredients and multiply by three. Then ask yourself how much customers would expect to pay for a dish of this type, and how much they would expect to pay for it from you. A Pret lobster roll and one from a fancy seafood restaurant are quite different propositions. Lastly, check what the competition charges. “Only a small part of this decision is what I would call scientific,” says Mr Buchanan. “A lot has to do with a subjective judgment of what the market will bear.”

The lunch market is local. New Yorkers do not care about prices in London. And they—alongside Bostonians and Washingtonians—are used to their local high prices, for reasons that include bigger portions (though not at Pret) and tipping habits. Londoners are keener on sandwich lunches, which means stiffer competition in that part of the market.

Often lunch prices vary by neighbourhood. Jd Wetherspoon, a British pub chain, prides itself on low prices, but allows them to differ by branch. In 2017 the *Financial Times* found that the most expensive Spoons charged over 40% more than the cheapest one. They also vary by time: many restaurants charge more for dinner than for lunch. Perceptions of value for money are relative not absolute. For Pret's lobster rolls, it's a case of claws and effect.

# *The Bahamas' Big Need Is Tourists, It Says*

The 700-island nation is in mourning after the devastation of Hurricane Dorian. But with the country dependent upon tourism, travel officials say that many hotels and resorts are open and eager for visitors.

Frances Robles, The New York Times

Sept. 17, 2019



The first sign that something is amiss at the Atlantis resort on Paradise Island comes before even stepping inside: The Bahamian flag perched on the roof is flying at half-staff.

The nation's flags, even the one above the luxury 3,800-room water park and hotel, have been lowered in honor of the 51 people who died in the first days of September in [Hurricane Dorian](#), a category 5 storm that [obliterated Great Abaco Island](#) and

flooded a good part of Grand Bahama. But even as hotels donate money and Delta Air Lines and cruise ships evacuate survivors and deliver relief supplies, the travel industry in the Bahamas is desperate to convey the message that the natural disaster, as terrible as it was, occurred 100 miles from Nassau, its top tourism destination.

This nation in mourning is also a nation dependent upon tourism. The Bahamas needs its tourists back.

“I struggled with that coming here,” said Samantha Ping, of Kentucky, who visited the Atlantis resort last weekend with her husband, who was attending a conference. “I am going to be laying by the pool, while people an island away are struggling for food and water?”

Ms. Ping found a solution that would both ease her conscience and save her vacation: She took the trip and used her free time at Atlantis to make sandwiches for storm survivors. Atlantis offered up a sizable donation and one of its kitchens to [World Central Kitchen](#), a relief organization that delivers hot food and sandwiches in disasters around the world. It is slow season in the Bahamas, so while small groups of people lingered at the swim-up bar, and a few managed to wrestle up enough people to play volleyball at the pool, a bustling kitchen inside prepared meals for a disaster that seemed a million miles away.

“Me and six other girls made 5,000 turkey sandwiches and 5,000 tuna sandwiches,” said Christine Stramiello, a waitress from New Jersey who arrived at the Atlantis resort just days after the hurricane hit for a three-week vacation. “I would feel so guilty if I came here and didn't help.”

Ms. Ping and Ms. Stramiello are among the thousands of people who had already booked vacations to the Bahamas and were left with the unpleasant choice of whether to cancel their trips or travel knowing tragedy had struck. Travelers called and emailed hotels to find out whether it was safe. Was the power on? Would evacuees be sharing the hotels with tourists?

Many travelers were scared off and scuttled their plans. Hotels across the 700 islands that make up the Bahamas have seen “double-digit and triple-digit” cancellations, the tourism ministry said — even those located nowhere close to the destruction. In response, the ministry released a map showing that of the 16 touristic islands in the Bahamas, 14 are “open for business.” Popular destinations like Eleuthera, Exuma and Bimini were also unaffected by the storm.

“If a hurricane would hit Jacksonville in Florida, it wouldn’t mean that you wouldn’t go on vacation to Miami or Fort Lauderdale,” said Dionisio J. D’Aguilar, the Minister of Tourism and Aviation. “That’s the analogy we are making. Unfortunately, people are geographically challenged.”

The 700 islands that make up the Bahamas are of varying sizes and stretch over 750 miles. Hurricane Dorian knocked the power out on Nassau for a few hours, but left no damage.

Mr. D’Aguilar acknowledged that some people, like Ms. Ping, know that places like Nassau fared well in the storm, but they still feel that it is “inappropriate in a time of tragedy and calamity” to vacation there.

The opposite is true, he said.

“More than ever we need you to come on vacation,” he said. “That’s the only way we can help our brothers and sisters in the north.”

While still trying to strike the balance needed for a period of solace, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is in the midst of a “soft launch” campaign that tries to push the idea that the country — most of it, anyway — is open for business.

Some 4 million people visited the Bahamas the first six months of this year, contributing to roughly half the country’s gross domestic product. About 20 percent of those travelers visited Abaco and Grand Bahama.

Abaco, which had just launched direct flights from Charlotte, Atlanta, Miami and Fort Lauderdale, was struck particularly hard. Nearly 300,000 tourists had visited there from January to July this year, but that business is now shut down for the foreseeable future.

Bahamas is bracing for a huge hit to its national economy, just at a point when it needs an influx of cash.

“If they don’t come, we are not going to have revenue to rebuild,” said Ellison “Tommy” Thompson, the deputy director general at the tourism ministry. “We really need them to come, stay an extra day and spend an extra \$50.”

He has been spreading the word on social media and in media interviews, and the country will continue a “Fly Away” advertising campaign begun earlier this year that features the singer Lenny Kravitz. Once the hurricane season is over, more aggressive promotion, including billboards and train station advertising, is also planned.

“We are sensitive to the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters lost everything,” Mr. Thompson said. “But we’ve got to be firm. We are the Ministry of Tourism. Our job is to attract visitors to the Bahamas. It might sound cold, but if we don’t have visitors coming in, everybody is going to suffer.”

Benjamin Davis, the general manager of the Warwick Hotel on Paradise Island, said the hotel has seen about 8 percent of its bookings cancelled.

“We have had people calling to ask if we are going to be open in January 2020,” he said. When Dorian struck, Warwick never closed.

He walked around the property, where a group of women were celebrating a 40th birthday party and a waiter showed off his chops as a singer.

A few miles away in downtown Nassau, where the cruise ships dock, tourists shopped for trinkets, oblivious to the disaster. Cruise ships have continued to sail to Nassau, although Freeport is no longer available for disembarking.

Pam Smith, a retired nurse from Long Island, N.Y., said it was a difficult decision to go forward with her vacation plans. She realized that her tourist dollars were needed not just by the government, but also by hotel workers who have taken in relatives who lost their homes.

“At first, it’s like, ‘What am I doing here, when people are coming here to Nassau to stay in shelters?’” she said. “Do I really want to be here when such a tragedy happened in another part of the Bahamas? But look at all these people working here. They need us here.”