LISTENING 1

W: Coming back from a holiday can be depressing when you have to deal with the extra weight you gained. It sits there like an unwanted souvenir and is a constant reminder of the exotic food you enjoyed while on holiday. Why does it happen? Well, basically, when people are on holiday they eat out more, cook less, and engage in less physical exercise. It's a treacherous combination guaranteed to pile on the pounds. But let's face it – when we're on holiday, we like to indulge ourselves, don't we? We even make excuses to pig out more – 'It's not every day I find myself in Paris,' or 'You can't find pastries as good as these back home.

People gain the most weight in countries where the food is of high quality. This then encourages them to eat more and try new food, as they are confident it will taste great. It's like a vicious circle – because you eat, you then want to eat more. Sea travellers and those on all-inclusive package holidays in general fare the worst. Cruises offer unlimited buffets, which usually add a couple of kilos at least. All-inclusive holidays tend to include buffets for breakfast and evening meals in the price. This encourages people to take advantage of the unlimited food they don't have to pay extra for. There's something about a freebie that appeals to us all, even if it isn't exactly 'free' because we've already paid for it. There are people, though, who actually lose weight when they're on holiday. That's because they have more active holidays, participating in sports activities such as cycling and hiking. The high cost of food in some destinations can also prevent overeating. But beyond spending your annual holiday trekking up mountains, the only way to avoid an increase in weight is to exercise self-control. Don't go overboard, stick to the same number of meals as you have at home, exercise as usual if possible and skip meals if you aren't hungry. Of course, there's an opposing point of view that says sample everything on offer and save the body insecurities for when you return home. We all like to think that we have earned the right to go crazy with food once we start our holidays. Diets are for when we get home. After all, how else can you really experience a destination if you don't sample the local food?

LISTENING 2

Luxury vacations are incredible, yes, but they are not always possible. Perhaps you don't have the time or the money for such an adventure. In that case, you can take a vacation in your own city. Many of us do not view where we live as a place to be a tourist, but it's a great way to explore, and there are other benefits, too. Before I get to the benefits, let me give you some ideas on how to be a tourist in your own town. One way is to join a guided tour. I know, it sounds crazy, right? But if your city offers tours, it's an excellent way to see a part of your city you might not have visited otherwise. And you'll likely learn about your city's history, too. Here's an example: I live in New York City, and a few years ago, I decided to take a tour of my own neighborhood in upper Manhattan. The guide took us to the Dyckman Farmhouse, the last Dutch Farmhouse in Manhattan, and the Little Red Lighthouse, one of the few remaining lighthouses in New York City. We also had a traditional Dominican meal at a local restaurant. At first, I felt a little silly walking on my neighborhood streets in a large group with a name tag on, but by the end of the day, I was so glad I went. I learned a lot about the history of my neighborhood, and I met some real tourists from Portugal, including a woman named Magda. When I look back on my experience, I think: If I hadn't gone, Magda and I wouldn't be friends today. If your town doesn't offer tours, you can come up with ideas by buying a guidebook or consulting an online guide for your city. Choose a few touristy areas to explore—or pick any area in your city—and go for a walk. Bring your camera and take pictures like a tourist would. You'd be amazed how rewarding it is to see where you live through a different lens. Another way to do this is to travel in a way you don't usually travel around town. Take a bus on streets you normally walk and enjoy the view from the window. Or ride a bike or walk on streets you normally drive. You may find beauty in something you didn't notice before or even find an entirely new place you didn't know existed. It can be thrilling to discover a hidden park or new to-you restaurant in your area. Now, what are the benefits of being a tourist in your own city? I've mentioned a couple of advantages already. You save money and time that you might not have for a vacation to another place. You can be a tourist for a day and get excited by new sights and sounds without the expense of a big trip. Another advantage is meeting new people, whether it's the local tour guide or tourists from other places. Even if you don't form a lasting friendship like I did, talking to people from other parts of your country, or from around the world, can open your mind. You may learn local history, too. And finally, a benefit I haven't mentioned, is the fact that you're reducing your carbon footprint. There's a global push to cut down on the negative impact travel has on the environment. When exploring local areas, you are not using many resources to get to another place, and if your exploration includes local shops and restaurants, you're helping the local economy as well. So, what are you waiting for? Put on a comfortable pair of shoes, grab your camera or phone, and be an adventurous tourist in your own backyard!