

Listening 1

The Middle East and Africa's Sahel region are some of the hottest places in the world.

Temperatures can easily reach 45 degrees Celsius in the shade. But step inside a traditional building in Burkina Faso, and it's a much more pleasant 30 degrees or less. That's because the thick walls help keep it cool. They are made of mud, which is earth mixed with water. More and more people in the region, however, are living in concrete houses, which get very hot and need expensive air conditioning. Why is this? Well, one reason is because mud houses can be dangerous to live in. Heavy rain can make the walls fall down. Another reason is that traditional buildings are difficult to take care of. Compared to concrete houses, traditional houses need a lot of work to keep them strong, and this takes time and money. A third reason is that many farmers are moving to cities, and most houses there are concrete. Climate change is making things worse. Hot places are becoming even hotter, and the weather conditions are becoming worse. There are longer times of no rain or very heavy rain. Making cement – the main part of concrete – is another problem. It has a big carbon footprint, and it takes up a lot of resources, too. In Morocco, for example, all the sand in some beaches has been taken away to make concrete. What's the solution, then? One way could be to use both mud and concrete. Adding a small amount of cement into mud makes stronger walls. We can also design buildings with natural ways of cooling. Wider roofs, for example, help keep buildings cool. Francis Kéré, an architect from Burkina Faso, designed a college using traditional walls to keep it cool. Perhaps designs like Kéré's point the way to a cooler and better future.

Listening 2

In 2022, the average mathematics score for fourth and eighth graders in the United States was one of the lowest in the past ten years. It is perhaps one of the effects of the 2020 global pandemic, when many students had to learn online instead of in a classroom. This change in environment made it more difficult to do class activities, and teachers had to find new ways of teaching the subject. According to teacher and researcher Frances Anderson, math is a visual and communicative subject. In addition to a screen, teachers may need to use gestures, draw diagrams, or show actual objects in their lesson. These help students better understand the problem and solution. With online learning, however, the lesson can only be on a computer screen, so students don't get the full learning experience. In a classroom, it's also easier to talk about math. Teachers can check students' understanding and explain any ideas that they are having difficulty with. Students can also ask one another questions and learn from each other. But in an online classroom, only one person can speak at a time, so there is a lot less interaction. So how can students improve their math grades? In Anderson's opinion, one way is to spend more time on math in a meaningful way. She believes students should be given more math experiences, especially ones that are connected to their everyday lives. For example, by solving real-life math problems in class. Parents can also help make their child excited about math by getting them to use math to plan the week's shopping, or to explain sports teams' scores. Most importantly, teachers and parents should develop a growth mindset

in students – by encouraging them to learn from their mistakes and keep trying. This way, students are more likely to enjoy and get better at the subject

Listening 3

Narrator: Caroline

Caroline: We aim to do around 15 kilometres a day, but that depends whether it's flat or there are hills. If it's flat, we tend to go further because we don't get so tired. We didn't get very far last holiday, though. Martin gave me with a new pair of boots for my birthday and they really gave me problems. The right one was too tight and the left one was too loose. In the end, I had to borrow a pair from one of the guests at the hotel, but they were really uncomfortable.

Narrator: Rob

Rob: My girlfriend and I live in a big city. It does us both good to go somewhere and escape all the pollution, for example the mountains. The peace and quiet is so good for us too, as we've both got stressful jobs. We don't do a lot when we get there – we just sit around on the balcony, breathe in the clean air and look at the views. Our favourite time is watching the sun set while we're having dinner.

Narrator: Fiona

Fiona: My husband Charles and I love trying the local food when we're abroad. So, when we were at a restaurant on holiday last year, we ordered the cheeseboard and tried lots of different ones. We left two rather lovely-looking little round yellow ones to the end. We both started eating, but they tasted awful. Anyway, we managed to swallow them and then we asked the waiter about what we'd just eaten. He explained that the cheese is a national dish. They make the cheese and then put it in the stomach of a dead sheep for six months! I'm not sure we'll eat it again.

Narrator: Mark

Mark: I studied modern languages at university, so I love going to places where I can use them. But that didn't work on my last holiday. We'd rented a villa on Gran Canaria, in Spain. When we arrived, we introduced ourselves to our neighbours on either side. One side were British and the others were from Athens, which was a shame, as I don't speak Greek. It actually got worse, because in every restaurant and bar we went to, the staff were all from the UK.

Narrator: Keisha

Keisha: I like going to museums and art galleries when I go on holiday with my friend Lisa, but we were very disappointed when we went to Florence last year. We knew that museums and galleries shut on Mondays in Italy, so we'd decided to stay from Tuesday to Sunday. But we didn't realise that the art gallery we wanted to visit had been badly damaged in floods after the river level rose and water got into the basement. Apparently, all the repairs will be finished in the autumn, so we'll have to go back again then.

Narrator: Pete

Pete: I guess we do about 80 kilometres a day, on average. Last holiday we went to the Swiss Alps and we had a great time until the last day. First, Simon got a flat tyre, and then, when we were at the top of a mountain, with snow all around us, my wheel hit some ice and I fell face-first into the snow.