

7 Rob's return from New York

Walter: Hi Rob. Nice to see you. So there you are again, back from the US. How are you feeling? Any jet lag?

Rob: Jet lag? Oh yeah, New York is indeed in a very different time zone. When it's 4.51 in New York, it's already 9.51 in London.

Walter: So they are five hours behind us?

Rob: That's right. My family and I have just jumped five time zones. When we took our plane this morning, it was seven o'clock in New York and 12 o'clock in London, and now, after a seven-hours flight, here in London, it's seven in the evening. But for me, it feels like it's two in the afternoon.

Walter: So you're not tired at all, and you will go to bed very late?

Rob: Yes. My parents said that I should try and get to bed at eleven, London time, but I don't know if I can do that.

Walter: I see, but if you get to bed so late, you will find it difficult to get up early for school.

Rob: True. Well, we'll see.

Walter: But anyway, how was New York? Don't they call it "the city that never sleeps"?

Rob: Yeah, that's right. I think the motto comes from a famous song about New York, but it is true, the city seems so be awake 24 hours every day of the week. You see, the subway – that's what they call the Tube in New York – never really closes. So you can take a ride any time you want. And there are many businesses and restaurants that are also open 24 hours a day.

Walter: I see. So it's not like London?

Rob: Not at all. Another big difference is that there are so many skyscrapers. I mean, here in London, we've got some very tall and modern buildings, but in New York, well, at least in Manhattan, all the buildings seem to be skyscrapers, with the Empire State Building being 443 metres high. There's not even one building in London that high, is there?

Walter: Not really, I think the Shard is about 310 metres high and has got 71 floors.

Rob: Not too bad, but the Empire State Building has got 102, and there are 1,872 steps to the top. Did you know that there are competitions in which people run races up the Empire State Building? Well, I'm glad that we could take the elevator – or the lift, as they say in America. But it was a great sight. The weather was just fantastic and we could see all of Central Park and all the streets. You know, New York's system of streets is not like that of London. In London, the roads are laid out all messy and chaotic because the city grew over time. But New York's streets were carefully designed and planned, so they are all very regular and straight. And only a few of them have real names. Most streets in New York have numbers like 34th Street or 5th Avenue.

Walter: But what about Broadway? That's also a street, isn't it?

Rob: Oh yeah, it is. A very long one too. Actually, it's the longest one in New York. There you find lots of big theatres, showing all sorts of musicals and plays. It's great! In fact, on our last night we went to see a production of *West Side Story*.

Walter: *West Side Story*? Never heard of it.

Rob: Well, it's a musical about two street gangs in New York, the Jets and the Sharks. They hate each other, but one day, the leader of the Sharks falls in love with a girl from the other side.

Walter: So it's a love story then, how boring.

Rob: Oh no, there's more to it. Much more. At the end, the two lovers, Bernardo and Maria, both die, so it's very sad and tragic. And there are fights

too. It's not boring at all. We all liked it, except my little brother. He liked the story, but he didn't like the music.

Walter: All right then. And what else did you do?

Rob: We went for a picnic in Central Park, with some really nice bagels and hot dogs. Very American, and we tried to play some baseball. It's a bit like cricket, but hitting the ball is not as easy as it looks.

Walter: Did you visit Ground Zero?

Rob: No, we didn't. It's not that we didn't want to, but there was so little time, and we all wanted to see Ellis Island, you know the island in New York where millions of immigrants landed before they were allowed to enter the USA. Actually, there was a computer and we found out that about one hundred years ago, some members of my dad's family went through Ellis Island as immigrants. My dad had not known this, so that came as surprise. But it was really interesting.

Walter: Wow, that's amazing!