



Unit 27 Less is more

Before you read

The reading is about a group of people who chose an unusual way to travel to an environmental conference in Japan. Think about these questions. How do you usually travel? Do you think the way you travel causes too much pollution?

Read the article

The Climate Train

In December 1997, thousands of scientists and other interested people traveled to Kyoto for an international conference on climate and pollution. Months before the conference, most of these people began making airplane reservations. But one English scientist named Ben Matthews thought, "Airplanes make a lot of pollution . . . Is it right to travel on airplanes so that we can talk about ways to make less pollution?" Ben believes that in order to make less pollution, all people—even scientists—need to change the way they live. He decided to set an example.

Ben began to plan a trip to Kyoto that made less pollution than an airplane trip. Other people joined him until there were 36 people from 14 countries ready to travel by land and sea to Kyoto. The group called itself "the Climate Train."

Planning the Climate Train trip was very complicated. Ben and his fellow travelers had to carefully choose a route, check schedules, buy tickets, and arrange overnight stays in some towns—all in many different languages. They also had to get visas for every country they traveled through.

The Climate Train group left England on November 7. They didn't have all of the visas or tickets, but they had to get to the Kyoto conference by December 1. They took many different trains through Brussels, Berlin, Moscow, and Beijing to Tianjin on the coast of China.

The group worked a lot during their travels, but they also found some time to have fun. In Russia, they talked to other travelers and danced to Russian pop music. And they bought different kinds of food for sale at the Chinese border, even though they didn't know what they were buying because almost none of them spoke Chinese. One of the packages a traveler bought was full of chicken feet. Even the Chinese travelers weren't interested in tasting those!

From Tianjin, they traveled for two nights on a ferry to Kobe, Japan. Most of the group got seasick, so they couldn't work or have fun. But they all felt better when they saw the large group of journalists waiting for them at the dock in Kobe.

After talking with the journalists, most of the Climate Train travelers continued their journey to Kyoto on bicycles. It took the bicyclists three days to ride the 80 kilometers from Kobe to Kyoto.

At the conference, the Climate Train travelers talked with many people about their journey. They explained that they were glad they had traveled over land and sea, because they showed the world that people can travel long distances in ways that make much less pollution than flying. And they hoped that other travelers would follow their example. If more travelers choose trains and ferries, the world's climate will be healthier, and travelers will appreciate the world's different countries and cultures more.

Source: Adapted from "Report of the Climate Train" on <http://www.chooseclimate.org/climatetrain/>, as appears in *Northstar: Focus on Reading and Writing, Basic/Low Intermediate, 2nd ed.* by Natasha Haugnes and Beth Maher, Longman



Build your reading skills: Identifying main ideas

Read the article again. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is the main reason that the Climate Train group traveled by land?
 - a. to make less pollution
 - b. to save money
 - c. to learn about other cultures
2. What did the group do during their trip?
 - a. worked hard
 - b. had fun
 - c. both a and b
3. What do the Climate Train travelers hope that other people will do?
 - a. spend more time traveling
 - b. travel by land and sea instead of by air
 - c. go to more international conferences

Check your comprehension

Read the sentences. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false) after each statement. Correct the false statements.

1. Ben Matthews believes that airplanes make less pollution than trains and ferries.

F; they make more pollution _____

2. All the people who went to the Kyoto Conference traveled on the Climate Train.

3. The Climate Train travelers enjoyed meeting other travelers on the trains.

4. The Climate Train travelers didn't like talking to journalists about their trip.

5. The Climate Train trip was not successful in showing that there are ways for people to travel without creating very much pollution.
