



READING:

1. You are going to read an article about noise. For questions 31-36, choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Noise: traveller's enemy or traveller's friend?

'Passport, boarding pass, phone...' As my taxi zips towards the airport, suddenly a cord of panic pulls tight around my chest. I thrust my hand into one compartment of my handbag, then another. It's not anywhere. My mouth opens, and the words, 'Driver, turn around! Now!' almost spring out. But I swallow them. We're halfway to the airport, and I'm already running late. Surely I can survive one trip without my supply of foam earplugs?

I'm a generally good traveller except for one thing that undoes me every time: noise. Ask me about my absolute worst travel experiences, and I'll tell you the story about that night I spent in a cheap hotel that also happens to be the venue for the most popular Saturday night disco in the area. Elsewhere, there were the chickens that always began crowing at 2 a.m. at a rural retreat (no one, I guess, informed them that they shouldn't get going until dawn). And there was also the deeply discounted hotel room with 'swimming pool view' that I was so pleased with myself for finding. The swimming pool, it turned out, was under renovation. Actively. With power drills. Directly below my window.

In my ideal traveller's world I'd control the volume of everything, like a music producer at a giant mixing board. There would be no blasting television sets hanging above public squares or embedded in taxi seats, no cheesy songs playing in the shops. Loud noise would be completely absent. Everywhere. But no traveller can remain in a perfectly controlled sonic bubble. Not when we're moving through a world in which what constitutes noise has so many different interpretations, including whether noise is ever a bad thing. For sound is relative: one person's noise is another person's music, or expression of happiness.

On one of the first extended trips I ever took, I travelled to an island for Carnival, which is basically like deciding to pitch your tent inside a dance hall for three weeks. At any hour, different kinds of music would float through the air and, without warning, straight into my ear. Neighbours shouted to each other over the din, then turned up the volume on their radios. It was a non-stop celebration, during which I got very little sleep. It was fabulous. The thing is, the noise that wraps a city in Carnival happiness is more than just noise: it's the sound of a human community. To block it out is to risk missing something really fundamental about a place – and the reassuring feeling of being part of something larger than yourself. Noise brings people together. I've learnt this over and over in my travels, but it hasn't been an easy lesson to accept.

I struggle against my instinct to isolate myself in a cocoon of silence. I really don't want to cut myself off from the thrill of human noise. But I don't want to go crazy, either. Nowadays, unwanted – and largely non-human – sounds push and shove travellers from all directions. Cars, subways, construction, jet engines: their clamour seems omnipresent. Yet instead of lowering the volume of everyday living, we seem to layer noise upon noise. The hotel bar jacks up its techno music to counteract the babble in the lobby. The traveller walking along traffic-choked streets retreats into her iPod.

On the plane, I press my foam earplug deep into my ear. As it slowly expands to fill my ear canal, I savour the journey into the bliss of noiselessness. Thank goodness the convenience store at the airport stocks one of travel's most essential items. The headache-inducing whine of the jet engines magically fades away, and I'm once again the master of my private sonic world. To appreciate the comfort of noise, you also need the comfort of silence. I'll unplug when I get to where I'm going.



31 What is the writer doing in the first paragraph?

- A demonstrating how well organised she is
- B explaining why she is in a particular situation
- C describing something that often happens to her
- D showing how important something is to her

32 What do the writer's worst travel experiences tell us about her?

- A She is annoyed when the facilities advertised are not available.
- B She is willing to stay in places that are not particularly luxurious.
- C She tries to plan ahead in order to avoid certain situations.
- D She finds unusual locations especially attractive.

33 What does the writer say about her 'ideal traveller's world'?

- A She realises it isn't actually the best way to travel.
- B She wishes she didn't have to share it with others.
- C She travels in the hope of finding it one day.
- D She knows other people wouldn't like it.

34 What does 'It' refer to in line 24?

- A getting very little sleep
- B the volume on people's radios
- C the non-stop celebration
- D the neighbours shouting

35 What does the writer say about noise in the fifth paragraph?

- A People are born with a need to hear it.
- B People deal with it by creating more of it.
- C It affects people in a number of different ways.
- D Modern life offers effective protection from it.

36 How does the writer feel in the final paragraph?

- A relieved she will not have to hear any noise at her destination
- B grateful to know she can find earplugs wherever she goes
- C pleased she can decide for herself whether to hear things or not
- D glad to be able to choose what music she'll listen to on the flight