

Taxi! - reading

Greece

Well, my parents went on holiday to Crete last year. They got there very early in the morning so that the taxi ride from the airport to their hotel was in the dark. They were just beginning to doze off in the back seat when they were thrown violently to one side as the taxi swerved across the road. Suddenly wide-awake they could just make out in the weak headlights the tail of a rabbit as it zigzagged in panic. Thinking that the taxi driver was swerving to avoid the petrified animal my mother was rather taken aback when the driver turned round smacking his lips and cried 'Rabbit! I love the rabbit! My wife cook for me!'

Colombia

Before I met my boyfriend he got a job teaching in Colombia. You can imagine that he was a bit worried about it, all those horror stories about drug gangs and guns, but he was also looking forward to it. Of course his first view of Bogota was from the taxi window on the way from the airport. The taxi driver was fascinated that he had come from England and wanted to try out his English. But when he heard that his passenger came from London he threw both arms up in the air with horror: 'London! Is terrible! Is full of hooligans!'

Vietnam

A friend of mine lived in Hanoi for a few years. Taxis there were very cheap and she used them a lot. One night a taxi driver suggested he didn't put the meter on and offered a cheaper price for the journey. Too tired to argue she agreed. But just as the taxi was about to turn the final corner a man opened the door and jumped in beside her! She thought he wanted a ride so she decided to get out. But the man wouldn't let her pay and started shouting angrily at the driver. To my friend's horror he then started hitting the driver around the head. Rather frightened she got out the car and ran down the road. Only later did she find out that the taxi driver had been caught stealing from his company and they didn't want him to get away with it.

The USA

Well, imagine how my sister felt when she went off for the first time to New York for a business trip. After a few days she was still amazed at how friendly everyone was to her until she took a taxi back to her hotel one night. First she gave just the name of the hotel, but when asked she said the address too. Then she was asked how to get there but of course she hadn't a clue. Imagine how frightened she was when he started ranting and raving at her for not knowing the way. She said it was awful.

The UK

A friend of a friend was in London for a conference. He took a cab and there were no problems: the driver knew the way and was very cheerful. The problem started when he realised he had stupidly left his laptop on the back seat! He called the company up and, in a panic, went straightaway to their Lost and Found office (and missing some of the conference as a result). He was over the moon to find the laptop waiting for him, and then very surprised that it was one of 2,900 left in taxis over the past six months!

Tunisia

Well, my brother took a Mediterranean cruise one summer and had a day in Tunis. He spent most of the afternoon in the Medina buying presents when he suddenly realised he'd completely lost track of time and there was only half an hour before the ship left the port. There had been loads of yellow taxis in the centre so he wasn't too bothered until he stood on the pavement and waited for one to appear - and of course there wasn't a single one in sight! Nothing! Frantic, he questioned a passer-by who explained that the cost for the taxi ride goes up in the evening so the taxi drivers disappear until they can charge higher prices! Luckily for my brother the man then offered to give him a lift and he caught the boat in the nick of time!