

• **Learn new words and improve your vocabulary**

Gloomy /'glu:mi/ = dark, sad and depressing

Cosy /'kəʊzi/ or cozy = warm and comfortable – snug

Getaway /'getəweɪ/ = a short holiday

Birch /bɜ:tʃ/ = trees or shrubs of the genus Betula

Slate-grey /,sleɪt'greɪ/ = a dark grey colour (Slate = ardesia)

Steamy /'sti:mi/ = filled with steam; hot and humid

Cheeky /'tʃi:ki/ = something done without planning, something enjoyable, slightly extravagant

• **Listen to the recording and answer the questions:**

1. Justin Rowlatt

a. wanted to celebrate New Year with his wife

b. decided on a trip to Chernobyl to please his wife

c. was fed up with cold weather

d. wanted to surprise his wife and take the children on holiday

2. Justin Rowlatt's wife wanted to spend New Year

a. in a sunny place

b. in an unplanned, rather self-indulgent way.

c. with her husband and children

d. abroad on an organized trip

3. T/F/NG a friend of Justin Rowlatt's was celebrating his birthday

4. the word "bloke" is British slang for an individual and refers to:

a. a woman

b. a man

c. a man or a woman

d. a guy

e. a chap

• **Which idioms are about happiness (H) and which express gloominess (G) or being unwell (U):**

happiness (H)	gloominess (G)	being unwell (U)
Get a kick out of something H	down in the mouth G	look a bit green around the gills U
Have a whale of a time H	having the blues G	under the weather U
Pleased as Punch H	be out of sorts G	off colour U
full of beans H	have a face like a wet weekend G	feel like death warmed up U
happy as Larry H	doom and gloom G	feel a bit rough U
thrilled to bits H		

look a bit green around the gills **U** down in the mouth **G** under the weather **U** having the blues **G** Get a
 kick out of something **H** be out of sorts **G** Have a whale of a time **H** Pleased as Punch **H** full
 of beans **H** off colour **U** happy as Larry **H** have a face like a wet weekend **G** feel like death
 warmed up **U** thrilled to bits **H** feel a bit rough **U** doom and gloom **G**

*January's the most popular month for booking a holiday and with the weather getting colder and the days **gloomier** it's easy to see why many people think about getting away from it all; a week in the sun perhaps, a city break, a few days somewhere nice and **cosy**. To celebrate the New Year Justin Rowlatt chose an unusual destination for a romantic **getaway** with his wife*

The road runs straight and black into the gloom of the snowy **birch** forest. It is -5C (23F), the sky is **slate-grey** and we're in a **steamy** minibus full of strangers. Not very romantic you're thinking, and I haven't yet told you where we're going.

My wife, Bee, had suggested a **cheeky** New Year break. Just the two of us, no kids. "Surprise me," she'd said.

Then I met a **bloke** at a friend's 50th. He told me how much he and his girlfriend had enjoyed a trip to Chernobyl - that's right, the place where a nuclear power station blew up in the 1980s, causing the worst nuclear disaster in history.

"Don't worry," my new friend declared, a large glass of wine in his hand. "It's safe now."

Well, she'd said she'd like something memorable...

- **Learn new words and improve your vocabulary:**

Sputter /'spʌt ə/ = speak with difficulty and make short sounds; utter in an excited or confused manner.

Gale /geɪl/ = a strong wind; a loud outburst

Frown /fraʊn/ = make the forehead wrinkle and the eyebrows move down (as a sign of disapproval)

Plume /plu:m / = a soft, fluffy feather; A mass of material that resembles a long feather

Sievert /'si:vət/ = the standard unit for measuring the effect of radiation,

Eerie ('iəri) = strange and frightening.; weird, scary

- **Listen to the recording and fill in the missing words**

- **Listen to the recording and answer this question: "If you have "second thoughts" you:**

- a. **might change your mind** b. have no hesitation or concern c. **get cold feet** d. are very sensible

I booked the flights and a tour of the huge exclusion zone created when the Soviet authorities evacuated the **300,000 residents**. It was only when I told a couple of female friends my plan that I began to **have second thoughts**. "You're not serious!" they **sputtered**, between **gales of laughter**.

Bee was certainly surprised at the departure gate when she finally discovered **our destination**. "Really? Chernobyl?" she'd asked, with a **frown**.

On the plane she did concede that it would be interesting, but she was anxious - **and with good reason**.

Like me, she remembered how the radioactive **plume** had spread across Europe to the UK, it contained **400 times** the radioactive material produced **by the bombing** of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

A day later we boarded **the tour bus**. Our guide, Anastasia, produced a Geiger counter to measure the radiation level. **It showed 0.23 microsieverts** an hour in the centre of Kiev - less than London. "It will be even lower in the zone," she assured us. It didn't feel safe, though. Soldiers armed with Kalashnikovs inspect your documents **at the two checkpoints** on the main road and, once inside, it is **eerily** empty.

- **Learn new words and improve your vocabulary:**

Kindergarten /'kɪndə, ɡɑ:t(ə)n/ = a school for children below the age of compulsory education; a nursery school.

Wrecked /r ɛkt/ = destroyed in an accident

Shutter /'ʃʌtə/ = 1. a device for opening and closing the aperture of a camera lens - 2. A screen for a window.

Spooky /'spu:kɪ/ = scary, frightening, eerie and suggesting the presence of ghosts

Chilly /'tʃɪli/ = Cool or cold enough to cause discomfort. Feeling cold, often to the point of shivering.

Grimly /'grɪmli/ = in a very serious, gloomy, or depressing manner;

Heyday /'heɪdeɪ/ = the period of a person's or thing's greatest success, popularity, activity, or vigour. Peak

Sweeping /'swi:pɪŋ/ = extending or performed in a long, continuous curve; broad, vast, spacious

Wobble /'wɒb(ə)l/ = move or cause to move unsteadily from side to side; rock, sway

Iron Curtain = 1946-1989, the border between Western Europe and the communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Stark /stɑ:k/ = severe or bare in appearance; sharply defined, clear, uninviting – complete, absolute, total

- **Listen to the recording and correct the 10 mistakes in the text**

- **Listen to the recording and answer the T/F/NG questions:**

1. T/F/NG: Anastasia had put on an extraordinary video showing how Russians really live

2. T/F/NG: trees have started growing all over the vast central square

The first stop is a **kindergarten** just a few kilometres from the reactor that blue / **blew** up, Reactor 4. Dolls have been placed artfully on the **wrecked** beds by / **by** previous visitors - you just click the **shutter** and select a **spooky** filter. Bee is **chilly** as we explore the abandoned building, but she is nearly / **clearly** fascinated. And the town of Pripyat, built for the Chernobyl workers, is even more **grimly** spectacular.

On the bus Anastasia had put on an extraordinary video of its **heyday**: **soaring** tower blocks, **sweeping** boulevards and green lawns / **lawns** all in super-saturated 80s / **70s** colour.

Piling / **Smiling** residents **wobble** by on bicycles. "It was a model town," she tells us. "Foreign visitors would be brought here to see what life could be like the other side of the **iron curtain**."

Now it is a ghost town, **stark** monochrome in winter, the Soviet Union's Pompeii.

The vast central square is slowly being reclaimed by the florist / **forest**. Trees have punched up through the concrete and asphalt. The huge apartment buildings **stare** out dead-eyed.

Anastasia points out the pine / **sign** that still stands on one of them: "Let the atom be a worker, knot / **not** a soldier," it reads.

- **Learn new words and improve your vocabulary:**
 - Creepy** /'kri:pi/ = causing an unpleasant feeling of fear; frightening, scaring, terrifying, hair-raising, chilling
 - Belie** [bi'laɪ] = give a false idea or impression of (something); misrepresent
 - Wreckage** /'rɛkɪdʒ/ = the remains of something that has been badly damaged or destroyed, wreck, debris
 - Long-Haul Flight** = Any flight longer than seven hours
 - Long haul** /'lɒŋ.hɔ:l/ = a journey over a long distance, esp one involving the transport of goods; a lengthy job: if you say that a task or a journey is a *long haul*, you mean that it takes a long time and a lot of effort.
 - Crude** /kru:d/ = unrefined: *crude oil* - rough or primitive. Lacking taste, refinement, knowledge, or skill
 - Mislead** /mɪs'li:d/ = cause (someone) to have a wrong idea or impression, deceive, misinform
 - Tackle** /'tæk(ə)l/ = make efforts to deal with a problem, confront- try to take the ball from an opponent, intercept
 - Commodify** /kə'mɒdɪfaɪ/ = turn into or treat as a commodity or objects of trade (especially something that has a value which is not just financial) - make commercial
 - Flurry** /'flʌrɪ/ = a light shower of snow, a sudden gust of wind - sudden commotion, excitement, confusion
- **Listen to the recording and fill in the missing words**
- **Listen to the recording again and answer the T/F/NG questions:**
 1. T/F/NG: the creepy images make the risk seem greater than it is.
 2. T/F/NG: there is a monument dedicated to the firefighters who died putting out the fire at Chernobyl
 3. T/F/NG: The monument is also dedicated to the Chernobyl liquidators that cleaned up after the accident
 4. T/F/NG: Bee and Justin are horrified when they see that radioactivity phone stickers are on sale at the kiosk

We take the obligatory picture in front of the **big wheel** in the derelict amusement park.

But Anastasia's Geiger counter shows the **creepy** images **belie** the real risk.

The **wreckage** of Reactor 4 is now encased in a **1.7bn USD** new "sarcophagus", designed to contain radiation for 100 years while the plant is dismantled.

Even here on the viewing platform, 300m away **from the giant structure** - yes, there is a viewing platform - the reading is just 0.95 microsieverts per hour. You are exposed **to more than two an hour** on the average **long-haul flight**.

We stop by a monument to the **firemen** who died during the clean up after the accident. It is a **crude** concrete sculpture, but it is obvious that for Anastasia this is the heart **of the visit**.

These heroes died horrific deaths, she tells us, **mised** by the Soviet authorities about the real dangers they were **tackling**.

It is evening by the time **we get through** the last checkpoint. Bee and I buy hot tea from a souvenir kiosk and joke about how they're **commodifying** the disaster with radioactivity phone stickers and **fridge magnets** with photos of the ruins of Reactor 4.

"So what did you think?" I ask nervously.

A **flurry** of snow **swirls** around us. Bee takes a slow sip **at her steaming tea**.

"You know what?" she says, obviously enjoying the moment. "I think this visit has been a reminder of just how **resilient** nature can be."

She stares meaningfully at me. **There is a long pause** and then we both laugh.

I lean over and kiss her.