

Transcript - Advanced Episode "City Layouts"

Hey everyone, welcome to another advanced podcast episode. I hope you're all doing well. I hope you're having a good day. I hope that you're motivated and inspired to practice your English, and of course these advanced episodes are the perfect way to do that. Remember that the goal with these episodes should be to eventually understand everything that I'm saying without using the transcript.

I know that's going to be a little bit hard the first time you listen to the episode, but that's why you have the transcript, and that's why you can use the repetition method that I always talk about, where you can listen as many times as you need with or without the transcript, to get you to that point where you can eventually understand everything without reading. Okay? So, just stick with it. I know it's hard, but this is a great way to help you practice and actually reach the level where you can understand native speakers when they're speaking fast. Okay?

Alright, in today's advanced episode, we're going to talk about city layouts. So, what is the layout of a city? That just means the way that the city is organized and structured, okay. So, that's what I'm referring to when I say the city layout. So, we're going to talk about the layout of the two cities where I've spent most of my last years: San Diego, California and Guadalajara, Mexico.

And I'll compare the different layouts in those two cities. And this is always an interesting topic, because when people go to new cities, when they travel to other countries, they're usually pretty surprised about how cities are structured in those other countries, because it can oftentimes be different from what they're used to. So, hopefully this will be interesting for you.

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And of course, if you like this podcast and you like this membership, please share it with anyone else you know who could find it useful, anyone else who's learning English? Alright, let's get started.

Alright, so let's talk about the layouts of the cities of Guadalajara and San Diego. So, I'm going to start with Guadalajara because this is the city layout that most of you are going to be more familiar with. I don't know where you're all from, but I can guess that the layout of most of your cities is probably more similar to the layout of cities in Mexico.

And of course, not every city has the same layout, obviously. But there's kind of the same central idea to these different layouts that is a common theme throughout most of the world because most of the world is a lot older than the United States is in terms of our cities and in terms of how old the buildings are, the streets are and the organization of the cities is. And so, that's why I'm saying that most of you are probably more familiar with the Guadalajara layout of cities.

And really what I'm talking about here is that it's a very centric type of layout. What I mean by that is that everything revolves around the middle part of the city,

where downtown is. It's right in the middle, and there's like a circle all around it. Everything expands out from that middle point.

So, that's how it is in Guadalajara, and that's how it is in many cities in Mexico, cities in Spain, for example, because the Spaniards are the ones who colonized Mexico, and a lot of other places throughout the world. Like I said, I'm sure a lot of your cities kind of have this type of theme, where everything revolves around the middle of the city. That's definitely the most important area, and that's probably where the most expensive houses are, and things like that. And then everything expands outwards from that.

And of course, the downtown area is a grid. What I mean by that is that the streets run north and south and east and west and create small square blocks. And in English, we use the word "block" to refer to one square part of a neighborhood, right? So, that's one block. And so, the downtown area is a grid, like in most downtown areas, I think. They usually have some type of grid pattern.

And the downtown area in Guadalajara is very important. So, a lot of people have to go there. A lot of people go there many times throughout the month, throughout the year. It's a necessary thing that they have to do. There are so many businesses that are concentrated downtown, so many things that you might want to buy there because it's cheaper, it's a better price, there's more variety, whatever it may be. There are a lot of reasons for people to go downtown. And so, everyone is going to the center of the city in the morning, and then returning back more to the outer parts of the city in the evening.

So, it's kind of like that, and the city is a big circle. And around this circle, there is one type of highway, which isn't really a highway, but it's kind of like that, and it goes around the outside the periphery of the city. And that's a structure that a lot of you might be familiar with, where you don't have highways intersecting the city. And that's something that we see in Guadalajara. There aren't highways that run through the city, just one around in a circle on the outside of it.

And there are a lot of roundabouts in the city, meaning those circular areas where cars go in a circle instead of a normal intersection, and they have to exit at one of the different exits around the circle. That's something that's really common in Guadalajara. There are roundabouts all over the place. And for foreigners that aren't accustomed to this, it can be very hard to use because you don't know exactly what the rules are, how to use them, who has the right of way, etc.

In English, when we say "the right of way," we're talking about who has priority when you're driving, and there are two streets, and one car's coming from one area, another car's coming from another area, and you don't know who has to go first, right, who has the right of way. And so, that can be very confusing.

There are a lot of confusing streets in general that have weird rules and things that you wouldn't expect normally in the US, at least from an American perspective. I found that a lot of the streets there are pretty confusing. They're not very intuitive.

And another thing that you can notice is that the streets are more narrow than in the United States, for example, and there aren't as many lanes. And that's probably the same wherever you're living, right? Most places do not have streets that are as wide and as many lanes as in cities in the US. So, that's pretty common for most places outside the US.

And when it comes to where people live, a lot of times people live far from downtown because that's the cheapest area, and there aren't as many residential neighborhoods that are affordable near the middle of the city. And I think that's the same for a lot of places throughout the world. When I talk to students in different countries, they tell me that it's really hard to buy a house anywhere near the center part of the city... at least a good house. Right?

And I think in Guadalajara, there are some neighborhoods that are pretty bad around downtown and houses are pretty cheap. And that's not what I'm referring to when I talk about nice residential areas. Right? So, if you want to live in a nice residential area with a lot of space and maybe a front yard, a garage, all that kind of stuff, and you want to have a place where it's safe for your kids, and things like that, most of those places are probably going to be a little bit farther from downtown. You're not going to have a lot of options near downtown that are really affordable.

And I'm not saying downtown is the nicest part of the city. It's definitely not. However, like most places around the world, the trend is that the closer you are to the center of the city, the more expensive it is, and the less space you have. There isn't a lot of space for nice residential areas. So, that's just not that common.

Alright, let's talk about the layout of San Diego. So, San Diego has a layout that in some ways is the exact opposite of Guadalajara in the sense that it's not centric. So, not everything revolves around the downtown area. And notice that we use the word "downtown" in American English instead of the word "city center." That's not something that most people say. We don't say, "I went to the city center." We say, "I went downtown."

And that kind of shows you this point that we don't think of downtown as the center of the city and the center of all life in the city. That's not really what we think when we think of downtown. We just kind of think of it as another neighborhood. Of course, it's very important, and that's probably where the largest concentration of businesses is. But it's not the center of everyone's life. Right?

I might go to downtown three or four times a year and that's just for fun. It's not because I have to go there. So, you can completely avoid downtown for the most part unless you work there. And you're not really missing anything. You don't have to go downtown for most things, and so it's not that necessary. Of course, downtown San Diego is a grid structure, just like in Guadalajara, and just like in other cities. So, that's one thing that's the same, of course.

And one thing that's really different, one of the things that's the most striking to people when they come to the US and they see this... by the way, the word "striking" refers to something that's very shocking or surprising to people... so, one thing that's very striking for people when they come here is that they see that there are highways everywhere. So, highways intersect or cities here.

So, in San Diego, we probably have like eight or nine different highways that intersect the city and that come together at different points where there are exchanges between highways, and you can get off one highway and on another highway, and go from east to west and then north to south. And everything's really easy, and everything is structured in a way that if you have a car, it's very easy to get around the city.

It's not like in Guadalajara where it's very hard to cross from one end of the city to the other because there isn't a very fast way to do that. There aren't highways that

intersect the city, and so you're kind of forced to go on some streets that aren't as big and have traffic lights, of course, that cause you to stop a lot, and it takes a long time to go a short distance. Whereas in San Diego, you can go a pretty long distance in a short amount of time, and that's something that's really nice.

And of course, cars are really important in the US. Practically everyone drives, and so we need these highways. And it just facilitates everything. It makes it easy to get around. That's one of the best things about cities in the US. So, the only bad part is that during rush hour, of course, these highways are jam packed with traffic, of course. But other than that, the rest of the day is very convenient when it comes to getting around the city because of these highways.

And we almost have no roundabouts. That's not a thing that we have in San Diego. I think there are a few that I've seen, but they aren't very common. And most people wouldn't even know how to use them if they went up to them. They would get pretty nervous because it's like, "I don't know what to do here." You know... "What's the rule?" So, I don't think that that's a very common thing here or in most of our cities in the US.

And streets, like I mentioned, are very wide with multiple lanes. So, a lot of people, when they come here for the first time when they travel to the US, they feel like they have so much space, because there's so much space between cars, and the lanes are very wide and you just feel freer when you're driving here. And there's also more space when it comes to parking lots. There's more space between each car.

Everything is bigger, and there are more lanes, always, when you go in one direction. Usually, there are multiple lanes going in that direction. A lot of times highways have many lanes. There are certain parts, certain stretches of that highway that have tons of lanes, right, they have like seven lanes going in one direction for certain stretches of that highway. And that's something that's really surprising to foreigners when they come here.

And one other thing that's really different here is that there are residential areas everywhere. And when I say residential areas, I don't just mean like houses that are really close together or apartments or things like that. I'm not referring to that. What I mean is suburban-style residential areas with a front yard, a lawn, a garage and space... a backyard, all of that... the things that you see in the movies, right, when you see American houses.

Those types of neighborhoods are everywhere. They're all over the city. It's not like you have to go really far away from downtown in order to find those areas. No. They're all over the city. They're everywhere. That's the normal type of neighborhood that people are accustomed to in the US.

So, that's not limited to areas that are far from downtown. That's everywhere. You can find those areas around downtown... of course, not right in the middle of downtown. Downtown is not supposed to look like that. It's supposed to be a very commercial area with apartments and then just businesses, right? But I'm talking about around downtown, just like five minutes from downtown, or whatever, you see these residential areas.

And some of them are nicer than others, of course. Some of them are not very good. However, you see these suburban style houses and front yards and all of that all

around the city. So, that's something that is very normal here. You can live in any part of the city and live in a neighborhood like that.

Alright, well, I think that's all for today. I hope this episode was interesting for you, and I hope you learned a little bit about the layouts of the cities where I've lived. And I hope it was good practice for your listening. Remember to use the transcript and listen as many times as you need until you can eventually understand everything that I'm saying without using the transcript.

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