

READING 2

For questions 1-5 you must choose which of the paragraphs below (A – F) fit into the numbered gaps in the following magazine article. There is one extra paragraph that you do not need. The first is an example.

Los Angeles: Drive another day in the City of Angels by Sanjiv Bhattacharya (Adapted from The Independent August 31/2013)

Twenty seconds. No, ten. That's how long it takes before the rapping starts. The kid's maybe 18 or 19, his name's Deshawn and he clocks me as soon as I get on the bus. "Hey, wassup man! You going to the beach?" His big dorky smile suggests he doesn't realise we're complete strangers. He's tapping his feet and nodding.

0. G

But not today – today, I've decided, after 12 years in this city, to try to get about without a car for a change. LA Tourism has launched a "Car Free in LA" campaign promoting new bikeways and tailored itineraries to help visitors explore various neighbourhoods.

I'm setting myself my own test, however: I want to see if I can make a loop around the city via some landmark spots. I've got my Tap card – a kind of Oyster for LA, only not quite as universal. I'm ready to go. So far, I'm loving it. It sounds daft, but the novelty of getting a 330 bus from the end of my street in Mid-City is kind of thrilling. In LA, the bus is another country – an almost exclusively non-white world, mostly Hispanic and low income, with Spanish language TV up at the front. Incredibly, many of my friends have never ridden the bus and don't intend to.

1.

But now that I'm on one again, I remember how much I miss them. I came from a car-less life in Shoreditch, east London, of hopping around on public transport. And though I moaned about the delays and what have you, I miss rubbing shoulders with my fellow man, feeling closer to the life and motion of a city.

2.

I get off at Venice Beach, the home of ageing musclemen, tourist traps and rollerbladers. If you want a view of the water and beach life, Santa Monica's the place for that, only a couple of miles up the coast. So I figure, hey – why not rent a bike from Perry's rental in Venice, enjoy a touristy ride along the beach and then drop the bike off at Perry's in Santa Monica? Before I know it, I'm in a convoy of tourists pedalling down the coast, wind in my hair. Oh the beach – I really ought to come out here more often.

My next destination, however, is an altogether stiffer challenge, not just physically, but psychologically: Hotel Bel-Air. It's an unspoken assumption in LA that if you don't drive it's because you can't afford it. And this hits home in the rich neighborhoods where buses don't go and sidewalks have disappeared. Bel-Air is a cocooned idyll of wealth and birdsong up in the canyons, a good mile from the bus crowd. It takes me two buses and a humbling march past all the mansions in the blazing heat to get there.

3.

Never mind, I'm in the Hotel Bel-Air now – I must be the only person to have ever arrived here on foot. Yes, a \$30 cocktail would be lovely, thank you. And a stupendous meal at Wolfgang Puck's. Why, yes, I'll take the suite tonight. (And other things that bus passengers never say.)

The next morning I realise I've bitten off much more than I can chew. Griffith Park is a lovely spot, with terrific views, but murder to get to without wheels. Buses quickly lose their allure when you're waiting for ages at one sun baked bus stop after another. And then I'm hiking up hills in the merciless heat. I do this hike all the time with the dogs, but of course I drive much of the way and I have my sanctuary waiting for me when I'm finished.

4.

I bounce back down the hill to jump on the first bus heading south. Take me away from these canyons and billionaire neighbourhoods – I don't want to trudge through empty streets searching for the shade of trees like a stray dog. Take me to the concrete jungle and skyscrapers, the only place in LA where being car-less makes sense.

Finally, I arrive Downtown at Union Station. It reminds me in some ways of the Delhi Metro.

5.

- A Traffic is alienation – we email ourselves around a grid system like Tron and witness our fellow travellers only through panes of glass. On the buses, there's camaraderie. Noticing the newbie flapping his bus map, several passengers volunteer to help me out. If only I spoke Spanish, I'd understand what they were on about.
- B This gorgeous Art Deco building is the only travel hub in Los Angeles – here at last are swarms of commuters, pouring up and down escalators, flowing through various tunnels. So what if the underground's still new and strangely barren with scant advertising on the walls? I'll take it. That's the thing about tunnels. They're always in the shade.
- C I've always loved having my own car. The pleasure of driving down the freeway in LA with the top down and the wind blowing through my hair is priceless. I can't imagine not owning my own transportation and even more so in a city like LA.
- D This time, it's just me, the canyons and the sound of my wheezing. But a kind of tunnel vision sets in and I can't stop. I head to Rattlesnake Park where I'm hoping to kayak south on a recently opened stretch of the LA River. Alas, my plan is thwarted – the kayaking company is shut. Still, it's all about finishing now – making the loop, just to say I did it
- E Often, I'm the only pedestrian in sight. The only other people I see are the occasional gardener or construction worker, who watch bemused as I trudge past, sweating and

huffing. "Hey buddy, need a ride?" they call out, laughing. I arrive with aching calves, a clinging shirt and a burned neck. You don't think to pack sunscreen and water when you're driving.

- F I've only taken it occasionally, and it always feels like an adventure – I never know what the fare is, or what number to get. While you could ask most New Yorkers how to get from Midtown to Brooklyn on the subway, Angelenos are hopeless. Here, there are public transit people and there are drivers, and – ugly though it sounds – they're practically split by socio-economics, culture, class and even race. All those barriers that public transport breaks down so effectively in other cities are magnified here. Buses are practically taboo.

- G And this is all before 11 in the morning. Normally, I'd be pulling out of my drive in a 2007 Honda, just me alone in an air-conditioned capsule, joining a jostling stream of other capsules, listening to public radio and wondering whether to take the freeway.