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The London Tube



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Yvonne: This is 6 Minute English, I'm Yvonne Archer and Alice has kindly joined me for today's programme. Hello Alice.

Alice: Hi Yvonne.

Yvonne: Now Alice, how do you **get around** London?

Alice: Ooh – by bus, bicycle and usually **the Tube**.

Yvonne: Aha, and most people would agree that the London Underground – ‘the Tube’ - is the best way to get around this city. But many people have a **love-hate relationship** with the underground – we either love it or hate it.

Insert 1: Tube announcement

(Ladies and gentlemen)...because of earlier signal failure, the Metropolitan Line has severe delays and Hammersmith & City, Circle and Victoria Lines are all operating with minor delays. We have a good service and operation on all of our other London Underground lines (baby crying).

Alice: Oh dear, more **delays** – that's when the Tube is running late and doesn't come along when we expect it to. And that makes it **unreliable**.

Yvonne: And the thing I hate most is that on a crowded carriage – or compartment - I always have to stand under someone's armpit – and they don't always smell very nice!

Alice: Oh, Yvonne – you poor thing. It's probably because you're not that tall, right?

Yvonne: Anyway, there is a lot to love about the Tube as well. It's reasonably fast, it covers a wide area and it has a long history. Now, it's time for today's question, Alice. During the last financial year, how many kilometres did Tube trains travel? Was it about equal to:

- a) 72 trips to the moon and back
- b) 85 trips to the moon and back or
- c) 90 trips to the moon and back

Alice: Oh, I've got no idea, so I'm going to guess and go for the big one. 90 trips to the moon and back.

Yvonne: Mmmm – a very brave guess! But we'll find out whether you've given us the right answer or not later on. Now, if you live or work in London, or even if you've only ever used the Tube once as a visitor to Britain, you'll probably have an opinion on it.

Alice: Yes, tourists and visitors to London who I've spoken to say they find it quite simple to use and that the map is very good. It's difficult to get lost underground.

Yvonne: Hmm, it is. When our colleague Natalie first arrived in London from Northern Ireland, one thing about the Tube really surprised her.

Insert 2: Natalie

Nobody speaks to each other on the Tube; nobody looks at each other either most of the time. And at first, it was strange being that close to strangers, but you just have to get on with it or you'll not get on the Tube.

Yvonne: So Natalie found it strange to be standing so close to people she didn't know – strangers – because the Tube was so crowded.

Alice: She soon realised that if she didn't '**get on with it**', squeeze into a carriage and travel in cramped conditions at rush hour, she might never go anywhere.

Yvonne: Mm, Natalie was most surprised that people don't really speak to each other on the Tube. And do you know, it's true. We do avoid **eye contact** with other people, but I'm not sure why? But I'm a Londoner, and of course, I think lots of us are quite friendly.

Alice: I think it happens in all big cities. When there are lots of people in small, public places, people avoid eye contact or talking to each other.

Yvonne: Now let's hear from Wang Fei, another of our colleagues. He's from China, but has a much more romantic view of the Tube. Let's listen to part of this rather poetic piece he created about the sounds we hear underground:

Insert 3: Wang Fei

I hear a rumbling noise begin quietly, then grow louder and louder, building up to a noise explosion as the train comes into the station. (*This is South Kensington...*). I hear the beeping sound and the doors open and close. I hear the clacking sound of the track, a constant soundtrack to people silently reading newspapers and books on the train.

Yvonne: Aw, Alice, that might certainly make us feel a little differently about the Tube, don't you think?

Alice: Yes, it often takes fresh eyes to look at something we **take for granted**.

- Yvonne:** That's true. So Wang Fei used quite a few adjectives to describe some of the sounds we heard there as we travel on the Tube. Alice, remind us of a few please.
- Alice:** Sure. Wang Fei describes the sudden, loud sound that we hear as the train arrives at a station as 'a noise explosion'. But first, the train makes a quiet, rumbling noise that grows louder and louder.
- Yvonne:** Mmm, that was lovely, because it's the same word we use to describe the sound our stomachs make when we're hungry. Our stomachs rumble. They make a rumbling sound.
- Alice:** Then there was 'beeping' - that's the sound we hear as the doors open and close on the carriages. And this beeping's really important for blind or **visually impaired** people to know when the doors are open or shut.
- Yvonne:** Yes, because the beeping sound lets them know when it's safe to get on and off the train.
- Alice:** We also heard about the 'clacking' sound – which Wang Fei says is a continuous sound that we hear in the background. So it's like the music in a film; he calls it 'a constant **soundtrack**'.
- Yvonne:** 'A constant soundtrack'. Well, I hope we'll both think about all those things next time we're stuck on a Tube train, Alice.
- Alice:** I hope so.

Yvonne: And before we go, our question! I asked you Alice: during the last financial year, how many kilometres did Tube trains travel, in terms of trips to the moon and back? And your answer was?

Alice: I think I said 90.

Yvonne: Yes, 90 trips to the moon and back.

Alice: Amazing!

Yvonne: Thanks Alice, that was fun! Do join us again soon for more "6 Minute English".

Both: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

get around	travel around
the Tube	the London Underground train system
a love-hate relationship	relationship (often not romantic) where feelings towards someone or something vary from love to hate
delays	when things are later than expected or planned
unreliable	cannot be depended on
get on with it	hurry up or do something you might find difficult
eye contact	to look at someone while they are looking at you
take for granted	don't understand the value of
visually impaired	not able to see properly
soundtrack	music used in or made for a film



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