

Introduction

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<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-themes.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- The article that you can listen to in the podcast
- An optional language activity based on the article
- Links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (festivals).

Read the article

Crazy festivals

There are many famous festivals around the world. The Carnivals in Rio de Janeiro and Venice, Munich's Oktoberfest and London's Notting Hill Carnival are three examples.

There are, however, festivals going on somewhere in the world every day of the year. These range from very large events which involve whole cities to local celebrations in tiny villages or neighbourhoods of towns or cities. We have selected a few of the more unusual, colourful festivals from around the world.

Australia Day Cockroach Races: Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

"Racing is simple....the races are held in a circular track and roaches are then let go from an upturned bucket in the middle...first to the edge is a winner. Things are made a little more difficult in the steeplechase events where a circular fence (garden hose) is used to enhance the spectacle and test the roach talent."

Canberra Sled Dog Classic: Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia

Dog sledding is one of the fastest growing sports on the east coast of Australia. As there's no snow (the trail is earth and sand and is smooth and wide with a few hills and turns), the sleds have wheels instead of runners, but the excitement is the same.

Darwin Beer Can Regatta: Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

This local charity event brings together great engineers and great drinkers. Participants construct everything from life-size beer-can

canoes to beer-can Viking warships (complete with fire hoses) during this off-the-wall regatta.

Festival of Snakes, Abruzzo, Italy

"Each year in the tiny hamlet of Cocullo, surrounded by some of Italy's most undomesticated forests, the villagers prove their devotion by getting down and dirty with as many fork-tongued reptiles as they can."

Henley-on-Todd Regatta: Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia

"This multi-event program attracts many local and international participants from the audience who often finish up on world TV news paddling canoes with sand shovels and in land lubber events like filling empty 44 gallon drums with sand. The Henley-on-Todd is run entirely on a volunteer basis by the three Rotary Clubs based in the Alice. The entire proceeds - over a million dollars in the 30 plus years of the event - are allocated to local, national and international humanitarian projects."

International Cherry Pit Spitting Contest: Eau Claire, MI, USA

"A nutritious sport - is there a better way to dispose of the pit once you have eaten the cherry? Entrants eat a cherry and then spit the pit as far as possible on a blacktop surface. The pit that goes the farthest including the roll is the champ."

Interstate Mullet Toss: Pensacola, Florida, USA

"Pensacola locals and tourists alike have been trying to perfect the art of mullet-tossing for more than 15 years. Ok -- so what exactly is a mullet?"

A mullet is a bottom-feeding, saltwater fish that people go nuts about every April. Competitors from far and wide come to the Florida and Alabama border town for this head-to-head competition to see who, while standing on the Florida side, can toss the one and a half pound fish into the Alabama side the farthest. Prizes are awarded and all entries receive a free T-shirt exclaiming, "Dear Ma, thanks for the college education!" More than 300 pounds of mullet are used each year. Sounds like a lot of fish? They are recycled! After contestants throw their fish they must retrieve it, and if it's not too mangled they put it back in the bucket. Other festivities include the Mullet Man Triathlon, Mullet Swing Golf Classic, Ms. Mullet Bikini Contest, a wet T-shirt contest, volleyball, skeet shooting, a keg toss, three bandstands and seven bar stations."

La Tomatina: Bunol, Spain

"The tomato battle is in honor of Saint Luis Beltran, the patron saint of Bunol. Residents and visitors take part in a tomato-throwing battle that decimates more than 88,000 pounds of tomatoes. This wacky event began with a serious aim as a symbolic protest against Franco. But the Tomatina is now firmly entrenched as an amusing way to end the summer."

Mighty Mud Mania: Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

"Children's dreams really do come true in the City of Scottsdale. Children aged 1 to 13, get to participate in a mud race to end all mud races. During the running of the Mighty Mud Obstacle course, several mud pits strategically placed, provide wet and really dirty obstacles as kids compete for the fastest time in each heat. There are also mud puddle pools for the tiny tots, and a mini mud course for those six and younger. In addition, Mighty Mudway features water and mud games. There are also water slides, sandcastle buildings and fun for all ages. Moms and dads, remember to send your kids out with old clothes and shoes that lace up or Velcro closures. And have no fear, Rural Metro Fire Department is on hand to literally hose down the muddy children."

Songkran Festival, Thailand

What better way to celebrate the "start of the return of rains" than with a country-wide water fight? Thais celebrate their festival officially from April 13th until April 15th. These three days

represent the last day of the old year, the day of transition, and the first day of the New Year. These are days of cleaning the houses and the body, days of merry making, and renewal. Nothing evil has to be taken into the New Year. Formerly one sprinkled or spilled a bit of scented water over the hands or shoulders of elders and friends to ask them forgiveness for coarse or wicked speaking. But in modern times these traditions, which still are held in family celebrations, are hidden behind water battles fought out for days in the streets of every town and city over the country.

The New Straits Times Million Ringgit Charity Duck Race: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Thirteen years ago, Eric Schechter and his friends were brainstorming to find new ways of raising money for local charities when they came up with the idea of rubber duck races. The event, crazy as it may sound, involves racing "cool" rubber ducks down a local waterway and having members of the community "adopt" the ducks for a chance to win valuable donated prizes, possibly even \$1 million bucks.

Wife Carrying World Championships: Sonkajarvi, Finland

"The idea of the Wife Carrying Competition is Sonkajarvi's very own and, in spite of its humorous aspects, it has deep roots in the local history. In the late 1800's there was in the area a brigand called Rosvo-Ronkainen, who is said to have accepted in his troops only those men who proved their worth on a challenging track. In those days, it was also a common practice to steal women from the neighbouring villages."

World Bog Snorkeling Championships and Mountain Bike Bog Leaping: Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales

"It's the muckiest dip you've ever taken! Swim two lengths of a bog wearing a snorkel, or jump on a mountain bike and leap the bogs over a 20-mile course. If bog snorkeling's your game, get ready to flounder your way through 120 yards of peat bog in the quickest possible time. Your attire? A snorkel and flippers, of course. Uhhh - and maybe some swim trunks. And you can't use any conventional swimming strokes. This battle of wills in a dirty, smelly, wet Welsh peat bog trench is not for the faint of heart! If you'd rather be

above the bog (though there's no guarantee you won't end up in it), try taking your mountain bike through 20 miles of boggy terrain, in the bog-leaping event. It's your chance to show off your

bike-in-a-bog maneuvering abilities! Following your adventures, kind folks are on hand to hose you down. Goodness knows, you'll need it! Happy bogging!"

After reading

Exercise 1

In the box are the names of the 13 places mentioned in the article. Below is one question about each place. Can you match the names to the questions?

Abruzzo	Alice Springs	Brisbane	Bunol	Canberra	Scottsdale
Darwin	Eau Claire	Kuala Lumpur	Llanwrtyd Wells	Pensacola	Sonkajarvi
Thailand					

1. Where are animals thrown?
2. Where are boats propelled in any unusual manner?
3. Where are the racing craft made of unusual material?
4. Where do insects compete against each other?
5. Where do lots of young people get very dirty?
6. Where do most people get wet?
7. Where is it not as cold as it usually is for this type of racing?
8. Where is part of something eaten and the other part spat out?
9. Where is there an event that began a long time ago as a test of merit?
10. Where is there an event that started with a serious purpose but has turned into a fun party?
11. Where do people race children's toys?
12. Where is there religious worship involving animals?
13. Where would you not get so dirty if you were a good rider (or lucky)?

More activities on this topic

You'll find links to all the following activities connected to the theme of festivals at:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-themes-festivals.htm>

- **Word games:** There are two word games: **Party idioms** jigsaw puzzle and **Carnival** wordsquare.
- **Poem: Night's Mardi Gras.** In this poem Edward J. Wheeler compares the night to the Mardi Gras, where nothing is quite what it seems ...
- **Trivia:** Everything you (n)ever wanted to know about festivals.
- There is also a festival-related cartoon and some carefully selected external links.

Answers to comprehension activity: 1. Pensacola; 2. Alice Springs; 3. Darwin; 4. Brisbane; 5. Scottsdale; 6. Thailand; 7. Canberra; 8. Eau Claire; 9. Sonkajarvi; 10. Bunol; 11. Kuala Lumpur; 12. Abruzzo; 13. Llanwrtyd Wells