PAU Practice Examination (Catalunya)

A Different Guided Tour

Guided tours are not a new phenomenon. In every major tourist city, you can see groups of sightseers hurriedly following a guide who invariably carries a colourful umbrella or wears an easily visible hat to ensure that no one becomes lost. They see the highlights of the city which, in London, means Buckingham Palace to The Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge and, possibly, The London Eye. In Rome, they go from the Coliseum to the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps, all happily taking the same photos and eating at the same restaurants. The only other customers are, like themselves, visitors from overseas, as locals know they can eat better food much more cheaply elsewhere.

Of course, such tours are popular because most people want to see the same iconic sights and take photographs of themselves in front of the same building or tower as everyone else and don’t mind the crowds. However, new tour companies are springing up. Not everyone wants to be herded around the sights, following a leader who is difficult to hear and who is probably repeating facts that could be quickly found online. They want to go where the locals go, eat where the locals eat and discover hidden secrets rather than famous landmarks. These new tours are often run by locals who talk about how the city has shaped their own lives and why they consider it to be their home.

Here are two examples of the kinds of tours on offer. Most people who visit Iceland want to see the geysers, black sand beaches and waterfalls and follow up the sightseeing by floating in a thermal pool. As an alternative, one company is offering tours of the capital Reykjavik which focus on the economic crash in 2008 that led to all three of the country’s main banks going bankrupt. The “crash tour” was created several years later and is led by a business journalist who explains how the crash happened, what happened to the people who caused it and the effects it had on ordinary Icelanders. It is a fascinating tour, not only for those with an interest in finance, but for anyone who wants to find out about the country and its people. Why not take a day off from visiting Iceland’s amazing natural wonders and spend some time in Reykjavik? The tour is free for children, but probably not very interesting for them.

In Prague, where the main square and Charles Bridge can become almost impassable in the summer owing to the large numbers of visitors, you can book a tour of some of the city’s less visited spots, all of which are led by people who have, at one time or another, been homeless. The guides include a member of the secret police under communism, a former violinist with the Prague Philharmonic and a successful businessman who lost everything. As they guide their small groups around the city, they tell their own stories as well as point out interesting places unknown to most visitors.

Such tours are available all over the world and, while popular, they do not attract sufficient numbers of tourists to transform the areas they visit. Instead, the visitors blend into the neighbourhoods they visit and perhaps receive a better and more realistic understanding of the city they are visiting.

sightseer: turista
local: resident / residente
to spring up: sorgir / surgir
to herd: amuntegar-se / amontonarse
to shape: influir en
to blend: barrejar-se / mezclarse
PART 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct.
[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. What does the writer NOT say about guided tours?
   a) They can be found all over the world.
   b) They have been around for some time.
   c) It’s easy for tourists to get lost on them.
   d) The guides look similar wherever you are.

2. What do the writer’s examples of London and Italy tell you about his or her opinion of guided tours?
   a) The lunch stops are overpriced.
   b) The people on them lack imagination.
   c) The customers are often dissatisfied.
   d) They don’t visit the most interesting sights.

3. Why are new types of tours starting?
   a) Traditional guided tours are becoming less popular.
   b) Some people prefer to stay away from the main tourist sights.
   c) Traditional tour guides aren’t very good at their job.
   d) Famous tourist sights are becoming too crowded for tour groups.

4. Which of these is NOT mentioned as an advantage of alternative tours?
   a) You have a chance to meet people who actually live in the city.
   b) You visit places that most tourists have never heard of.
   c) They include a visit into people’s homes to see how they live.
   d) The guides give personal information as well as facts.

5. The “crash tour” in Iceland …
   a) is led by someone with detailed knowledge of finance.
   b) combines the country’s landscapes with a tour of Reykjavík.
   c) includes meetings with people involved in the crash.
   d) was first offered in 2008.

6. According to the writer, who would the “crash tour” be good for?
   a) Only people who have a good knowledge of finance.
   b) Families with children.
   c) People who aren’t interested in visiting other parts of Iceland.
   d) People who are interested in Iceland and Icelanders.

7. If you take the tour in Prague, you can be sure that …
   a) you will be led by someone who is currently homeless.
   b) your group won’t be made up of a large number of people.
   c) the group leader will be someone who has had an interesting job.
   d) you will see the main square and Charles Bridge.

8. In the final paragraph, the writer …
   a) wonders why the tours aren’t more popular.
   b) says that going on a tour can change people in some way.
   c) questions the choice of some of the neighbourhoods visited.
   d) worries about the tours’ effects on the areas they visit.
PART 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words. [4 points]

1. “Guided city tours should not go into residential areas.” Do you agree with this statement? Write an opinion essay.

2. The advantages and disadvantages of joining a guided tour. Write a for and against essay.
A DIFFERENT GUIDED TOUR

Answers

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. d
7. b
8. b