IELTS Speaking topic – Home and hometown #3

This is a sample response for IELTS Speaking Part 2 and 3. In addition to the model answer there are highlighted words and phrases. Teal is for vocabulary relating to this topic, yellow is for generally useful words and phrases.

IELTS Speaking Part 2

Describe a house or an apartment you had to stay in temporarily
You should say:

- what the place was
- how long and why you had to stay there
- if there was anything unusual about it

and say if you enjoyed your stay.

Model answer

Once I had to go on a business trip to a nearby town. The company I was working for at the time arranged a flat for me that I would be sharing with two other employees who had been staying there on a semi-regular basis. It was a nice, three bedroom flat with a spacious living room and a well-equipped kitchen. It was located in the centre of this town and the floor-to-ceiling windows of the living room overlooked the city square.

One thing that stuck in my mind after the trip is how unusually nice and well-furnished the apartment was. The town itself was unimpressive, most young people had long moved to the bigger neighbouring city so the place was slowly decaying, figuratively speaking. This really contrasted with the place we had to stay it which felt like a five star hotel and I know it for a fact that our company bought it for a laughably low sum of money. Anyway, I profoundly enjoyed my time there and would gladly go there again given the chance.

IELTS Speaking Part 3

Owning a home

Both flats are houses getting more expensive nowadays. Do you think this trend will continue? Why/why not?
I'm guessing that there are many socioeconomic factors at play here. As many of us know, economy is largely cyclical, following the simply pattern of crashing, recovering and booming between larger crises. Usually later in the cycle we see prices go unreasonably high to the point where property becomes unattainable for the majority of buyers. This is normally followed by a housing crash, when real estate sees its estimated market value plummet. We have seen it before in 2008 and we are very likely to see it again in the future. Therefore, short-term the trend is likely to reverse, but eventually we will see the same patterns emerge one after another, the cycle repeating over and over again.

What are some of the benefits of owning a home rather than renting it? Are there any disadvantages?
Having a place that you can call your own offers a number of benefits. First and foremost, it's the sense of security. If your house is paid off, come what may, you will not end up homeless. Secondly, if you rent a place the landlord will inevitable have a list of dos and don'ts, and sometimes they can make little sense. Some limitations can be understandable, like you are not allowed to have a cat or a dog because of the fur and the mess they can leave.

Others can sound quite ==dystopian== - for instance, forbidding you to have anyone over for a visit. Anyway, the limitations of a rented place can really ==get under your skin==.

The disadvantages of home ownership mainly stem from the entry price. I mean, buying a place, even on mortgage, is a financially ==audacious== decision in the current economy. You have to have a high-paid job that you are sure you will still have in 10-15 years from now on. Another possible disadvantage is that once you buy a place you are going to be stuck in that area for quite a while. Some dread such territorial commitment, and understandably so.

What role does location play in the value of a property?

Location is probably the biggest factor of property valuation. Land in the city centre has always been one of the most sought-after assets. There is plenty of reasons for that. First of all, living in the city centre is convenient. Since most businesses and big companies are dotted around it, which makes it much easier to find a job that you can simply walk to instead of having lengthy commutes from the suburbs or the outskirts. Secondly, it is very prestigious to live there. The architecture tends to be much nicer and older housing is normally of much higher quality. Finally, a place in the centre is an appreciating asset. As the city grows and expands the price of flats located in the more desirable locations goes up as ==commute== times slowly increase.

Contrastingly, a flat on the outskirts of a town or a city is going to be much more affordable for exactly the same reasons. There is another factor to keep in mind - population density. It tends to be much higher as greedy construction companies try to get as much money as they can from the land they build on. You end up with ==overpopulated== districts, full of people who barely know each other. The ==feeling of community== is difficult to foster at this scale so as a result you feel surrounded by people you barely know.

Home today

How can the place a person lives in can affect their mood or productivity?

This can influence one's performance both positively and negatively. A good example of the latter is a ==cluttered== workspace. It will inevitably be a source of constant distraction, ==hampering== productivity and leading to frustration as a result. We might not even realise this, but the subconscious side affects us just as much as the things we are aware of. Another case of negative impact is when a person has to live with others. Such ==cohabitation== can get in the way of focus and concentration, especially if your flat mate is the noisy type.

Examples of positive influence include working in the fresh air - and whether it's outside or in well-ventilated indoor areas does not seem to make much difference. Exposure to sun light ==does wonders== to one's desire to work as well. This can be ==attributed to== vitamin D that we get from the sun. Finally, a quiet environment tend to be more ==conducive to== working fruitfully.

Has technology changed homes for the better of for the worse?

This is probably ==a point of contention==, but I would prefer to focus on the positive development the technology has made possible. There is thing thing called "smart home" and it has pretty much revolutionised household management. What it does is it controls pretty much everything around the house. It adjusts the temperature in every room through thermostat and keeps the desired level of humidity. It controls water heater and radiators and it can even shut the water system down if it detects a leak.

The system keeps track of your groceries in the fridge and it is able to order the food you are ==running low on==. It is every housekeeper's dream come true! Installing and setting it up can be rather costly, but it pays for itself in the

long run because you can delegate most things you previously had to worry about yourself. This frees up a lot of time, which is admittedly more valuable than money.

How important it is for people to feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood or community? How does one achieve that?
It has to be a fundamental piece of happiness. Nobody wants to feel like a stranger at their own home. Spirit of camaraderie, mutual trust and respect is what makes communities thrive. It is easy to say what makes people feel better, but more tricky to understand how to get there. First of all, it is more likely when the community is reasonably sized. A neighbourhood with 500 people living there is unlikely to reach reasonable levels of social cohesion. Feeling of friendliness and solidarity is fostered in smaller communities. Secondly, likely-minded people gravitate towards each other in a natural way. Governments of various countries had numerous attempts to create such environments artificially, making smaller towns of engineers and scientists and generally such undertakings were fairly successful.

Home and hometown vocabulary

Arrange (v) - to organise something or to agree to something beforehand. *We have arranged a visit to our grandparents next week*
Call your own - to have something that belongs to you or at least feel that way. *After so many years I can finally call this country my own home*
Landlord (n) - a person who owns a flat or a house and rents it out to others
Commute (n) - a journey to work or place of study and back that happens every working day. *My commute is forty minutes long and it is mostly highway driving, so it is not that stressful*
Overpopulated (adj) - with too many people living in a particular place or area
Feeling of community - feeling that you are a part of the group you live in the same area, that you can trust each other and are ready to come to help if needed
Cluttered (adj) - full of unnecessary things, to the point where it gets in your way or makes it hard to find something that you need. *My desktop is very cluttered - I wish I had time to organise it properly*
Cohabitation (n) - to live together, to share a flat or other living space
Conducive to something - creating better environment for something to be easier or more pleasant. *A quiet room can be very conducive to being more productive*
Camaraderie (n) - feeling of friendliness, joviality, merriment. *John's student years had camaraderie and genuine lust for knowledge*
Social cohesion - the degree to which individuals within a society are bound together and cooperate to achieve shared goals and values. It is characterized by the sense of belonging and connectedness among individuals and groups.

General vocabulary

Overlook (v) - (here) about windows or a building - facing something e.g. a park or an industrial site. *The windows of our bedroom overlook a small park*
Stuck in one's mind - something memorable, something you can remember vividly. *The advice my father gave me about building my own business really stuck in my mind*
Long (adv) - something that happened a long time ago. *For three years with the company I had to do practically nothing and got paid well for that. Sadly, those days are long gone.*
Given the chance - provided the opportunity. *I would have completed the project in half the time, given the chance*

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At play - affecting, influencing something. *One major thing at play in this situation is that we have less than an hour to come up with a solution*

Unattainable (adj) - extremely difficult or impossible to get

Plummet (v) - to drop suddenly. *The stock prices plummeted in March 2020 when the coronavirus announcement became official*

Come what may - no matter what. *Come what may, I am moving out of my parents house by the end of the week*

Dystopian (adj) - so terrible that it can be hard to believe it is real. *The dystopian pictures of people not having enough money to cover basic needs despite working two jobs.*

Get under one's skin - (here) to irritate somebody. *Francis really got under my skin with his constant remarks about my poor academic performance*

Audacious (adj) - daring and brave, often unreasonably so. *Most of his audacious attempts at courting Jane failed, but eventually she gave in to his advances*

Hamper (v) - to slow down, to get in the way of something. *Having short attention span was really hampering his learning process*

Do wonders - something that does wonders is extremely effective at achieving a goal. *Regular sleep schedule does wonder to one's quality of life and productivity*

Attribute something to something - to connect two things as one affecting the other or vice versa. *Meteorologists attribute increased magnetic activity to climate change*

Point of contention - a claim or idea that leads to many argument. A thing people can't agree upon. *The ever-increasing environmental regulations have always been a point of contention*

Run low on something - to have very little or nothing left. *I'm running low on money, it would be cool if you lent me some!*

Delegate (v) - to make somebody else do a particular task, either because they are more professional or less busy

Foster (v) - to create environment for something to flourish and develop