



1 SPEAKING

- a**  Work in pairs and discuss the questions together.
- 1 Tell each other about a place you know or have visited that you think is very special.
 - 2 What makes it special – the land, the buildings, the people, something else?
 - 3 What advice would you give to someone who's planning to go to this place?

2 VOCABULARY: Words to describe places

- a** Match adjectives 1–5 in **bold** to definitions a–e.
- I was brought up in a very ¹**isolated** part of Scotland. My parents have a small farm in a valley that's completely ²**enclosed** by hills. Often during my childhood in the mornings there was fog and mist that made the valley seem like a mysterious and magical place – a ³**mystical** and ⁴**enchanted** world of my own. I know this land very well, but still today I find it completely ⁵**captivating**.
- ☐ seems to have a hidden or unknown quality
 - ☐ gets your attention because it's pleasant and attractive
 - ☐ not near other cities or villages
 - ☐ completely surrounded by something
 - ☐ seems to be affected by magic
- b**  Think of a place or different places that you can describe using the adjectives in 2a. Tell your partner about these places.

3 READING

- a** Look at the picture below of a landscape in Ecuador. Work together and make a list of adjectives to describe it. Use some of the adjectives from 2a if they are suitable and think of extra ones.






BETTER READING: IDENTIFYING THE WRITER'S AIM

Quickly reading a text for key language can give you an idea of what the writer is trying to communicate.

- 1 Scan the text on page 45. Can you find any of the adjectives you discussed in 3a? What other adjectives can you find?
- 2 What do you think Natasha, the writer, is aiming to do in this article?
 - a tell an interesting story about her holiday
 - b give a clear description of a place and person

- b** Read the text on page 45 and answer the questions. Would you like to ... ?
- 1 visit Vilcabamba – Why / Why not?
 - 2 meet Teresa – Why / Why not?
- c** Read the text on page 45 again and answer the questions.
- 1 What's Vilcabamba famous for?
 - 2 What's special about the landscape?
 - 3 What makes it seem like a healthy place to live?
 - 4 What recent changes have taken place in Vilcabamba?
 - 5 How easy was it for Natasha to get to know Teresa?
 - 6 What do we learn about Teresa's personality?

4 SPEAKING

- a**  Work in pairs. Think of a town in your country which is popular with tourists. Why is it popular?
- b**  Work in pairs. Read the role cards. Student A, begin the conversation by trying to get to know Student B.
- c**  Work in different pairs – Student As together and Student Bs together. Answer the questions.
- 1 Student As: How easy was it to get to know your old person?
 - 2 Students Bs: How sincere was the tourist you spoke to?



The valley that *lives forever*

Every month *Slow Trip Magazine* invites readers to send in a report for our Somewhere Special ... feature. This month we hear from Natasha.

Natasha

Somewhere Special ...

Vilcabamba

The village of Vilcabamba in southern Ecuador became world-famous for a very particular reason: longevity. It has been said that the inhabitants could live up to the age of between 130 and 140. But to my mind, that isn't what makes Vilcabamba special. I spent 10 days there last June and found its natural beauty completely captivating.

As a child, I often dreamed of a mystical, magical place that was completely cut off from the rest of the world – a kind of enchanted land. Vilcabamba and the valley it lies in is that place for me. For a long time, Vilcabamba was difficult to get to, so it was quite isolated. The valley is surrounded by the Andes mountains. Not only are they beautiful but they also give a sense of being enclosed – a feeling of safety. The town is about 1,500 metres above sea level, so the air feels fresh and clean. The whole time I was there I felt as if I had escaped from the loud, busy, dirty reality of the twenty-first century.

The climate of Vilcabamba is very mild – it's like spring all year round – and the soil is rich. Everything grows so well there. The landscape is very green and fresh and alive. I've never been anywhere that feels as healthy, and it's easy to see why people believe that this is the 'Valley of Longevity'.

I don't know for how much longer Vilcabamba will continue to be a special place. It has become a very popular spot for people from North America and Europe to retire to. They may well think that by moving to Vilcabamba they might live longer, but I can imagine that the cheap cost of living is really what draws them there – as well as the natural beauty and the relaxed and slow pace of life.

About a quarter of the population is now made up of foreigners. These new arrivals are building new houses and communities, and they also expect the usual conveniences of modern life. This means Vilcabamba is getting bigger and the way of living will certainly change dramatically. In a few years' time, it will have become a completely different place. But for now, it is still somewhere special for me.

Someone Special ...

Teresa

When I was in Vilcabamba, I got to know Teresa. It wasn't easy. For three days we sat next to each other on a bench in the central plaza. It was only on the fourth day that she acknowledged me and returned my greeting.

She told me that in the beginning she thought I was just another young tourist in a hurry through life. But she was impressed by the fact I could speak Spanish and that, like her, I enjoyed just sitting in the sunshine and watching the world go by. On the fifth day I bought a quimbolitos (a sweet steamed cake made from cornflour) to share with her. That's when we really became friends.

Teresa told me she was 93 years old. She didn't look much over 75 to me, and she still had excellent mobility. 'Walking – that's the answer – I walk everywhere. You have to keep moving in life,' she said.

I asked her if she planned to live to 130. She looked me in the eye and said, 'Of course, at the age of 130 I'll be doing exactly what I'm doing now!' Then she laughed and said, 'But never believe what people from Vilcabamba tell you. We love to make up stories.'

I asked her whether the stories of people living to 130 were really true. 'Who knows?' she replied. 'Fifty years ago when this place became famous for longevity, I was in my forties. I wasn't interested in old people back then!'



Teresa