Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2016**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passage for use with **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

You may annotate this Insert and use the blank spaces for planning. The Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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Read the passage carefully, and then answer **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

In this magazine article, a journalist finds out more about holiday lifestyle swops and what one company organising them offers its customers.

Home-from-Home Holidays

'Holiday anywhere from an elegant townhouse in a city to a quaint stone cottage in a rural location,' reads the advertisement. 'For free!'

Well, nearly…

'Home-from-Home Holidays are revolutionising vacations amongst eco-trendy travellers in search of authenticity and ways to save money,' continues the claim. 'Simply register your details and dates, and when you aren't using your home, someone else can' – along with your DVD collection, the contents of your freezer, even your raincoat if the weather turns, it seems. In the meantime you can be 'relaxing on holiday yourself', while family or friends drop in on your guests to guide them through their weekly itinerary and show them how to use your washing machine. 'Visitors sign up for a slice of your life.' You get to experience theirs in return. 'It's an all-inclusive holiday, at a fraction of the cost of a hotel stay, with someone looking after your own property while you're away.' Tempted? I'm not sure.

Of course, property-swop sites and schemes where holiday-makers rent direct from owners have existed for years. Travel agents and holiday companies inevitably grumble. To everyone else they make sense. Homefromhome.com has taken the holiday swop model further still though. Their online scheme, for a 'modest fee', matches homeowners across continents and covers almost every aspect of holidaying. Hosts leave guests a planned schedule, enough food for the week, plus necessary equipment and travel arrangements for activities in their area. They also arrange for someone local to act as a tour guide each day. This new kind of holiday is becoming increasingly popular – a chance to see the real country, warts and all – and save the planet at the same time.

'Conventional tourism is unsustainable and irresponsible,' continues the online advertisement. 'Tourism has an obvious impact on people and the environment. Tourists staying in hotels use on average 50% more water, food and energy per day than any local inhabitants. The construction of large resorts, out of keeping with the landscape, wipes out swathes of countryside in some areas, whilst others miss out on visitors altogether. If you live like a local in dwellings that exist already, there's no need to create or waste any more.'

'We've met great people who just want to share their homes, possessions and the things they love to do', affirms one happy customer on the company's website. 'It's a cool, innovative way to holiday without exploitation and fits in with my outlook on life. The family we swopped with really enjoyed cycling round the routes we'd planned for them. We chatted with their neighbour who explained how to use the fresh local ingredients provided for us.'

'Anyone can register their accommodation, however humble or basic,' explains the same website. 'Being a guide requires no formal qualification. It's easy to nominate tour guides for your guests. Taking a private tour with a knowledgeable local person creates real, memorable experiences.'

Forum-user Daveytree agrees: 'Our guide was the property owner's father and knew lots of people locally. Every restaurant owner and stall holder we went to said hello. It was a great way to sample the best local delicacies and bag a bargain.'

But not everyone's happy. Another post describes how one mother abandoned her inexperienced guide and the 'luxury' accommodation provided, saying it was not up to her family's expectations. 'Fellow travellers we met afterwards suggested places to eat and shops to visit. That's far better than someone's brother recommending his family restaurant just down the road,' she advises. 'The online description said the guide spoke our language. Apart from some learned phrases and how much things cost, that description didn't seem to be accurate.'

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‘All this is why conventional travel agents are still in business,’ reminds Frank Mann of Travelair. ‘In an ideal world, perhaps tourists could trust that everyone in the shiny, new chat-space for global explorers has their best interests at heart. The truth is though, we probably don’t even know their real names, never mind their motives for visiting our home. Adventures into the unknown might not turn out to be the holiday experience we had in mind either. Travel agents source and check both hotel rooms and self-catering options. They insure you if something goes wrong. They can pre-arrange safe, regulated transport and often offer trips to local attractions for very reasonable prices.’

But with complaints about travel companies louder than ever, perhaps Home-from-Home Holidays are worth a try?

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