

PART A

Read Texts 1–2 and answer questions 1–25 in the Question-Answer Book for Part A.

Text 1

Along the Silk Road: In search of my father

1 [1] About me and my blog

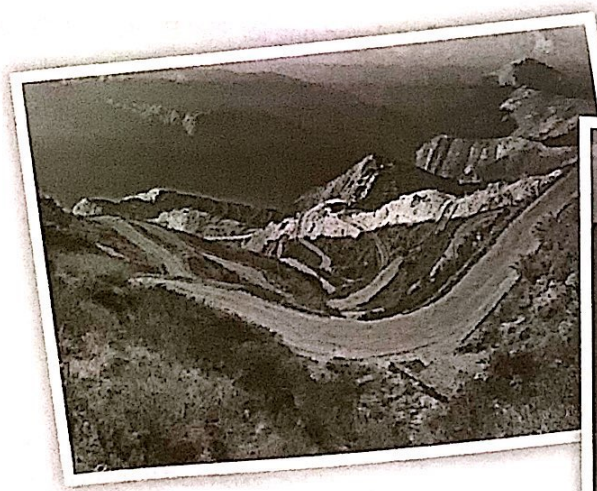
My name's Ray Yeung, I'm 25 years old and I live in Hong Kong. I have no brothers or sisters, and two years ago my mother died. My father left home when I was very young, but I believe he is still alive and is living in Athens. In March this year, I decided to travel along the ancient Silk Road in search of my long-lost father. This is the tale of my trip.

[2] I started my journey in Xi'an, a three-hour flight from Hong Kong. I couldn't resist paying a visit to the terracotta warriors—who knows if I'll ever come here again? And it was really impressive to see the ranks of stone soldiers, each one unique, with subtle differences in dress and expression. Next, I travelled to Dunhuang, where I stocked up on supplies such as food and warm clothing. I wanted to make sure I could be self-sufficient. I'm a bit nervous, to be honest, but also looking forward to the adventures ahead.

[3] By the time I arrived in Mongolia, the weather had turned for the worse. The ground was frozen solid and my hands and feet began to feel numb from the icy wind. My flimsy tent did little to keep me warm and I was running low on food. I began to think about giving up and heading for home. But then I met some local nomads, who invited me to stay with them in their yurt. They had a stove for cooking and heating, and offered me food and milk. Just think—the ancestors of these smiling people were fearsome warriors who conquered countries from Europe to China! I don't speak the same language as my Mongolian friends, but we managed to make ourselves understood despite the language barrier. Their hospitality made me realize that most people are basically decent human beings. Still, I don't want to push my luck and outstay my welcome. Heading off tomorrow.

[4] The Silk Road has taken me from China to the Middle East, and to a different culture and religion. This holy city has a very unique atmosphere, and the people are welcoming and friendly. I managed to get terribly lost this morning—I was naive enough to think I didn't need a map—and a young man, Yusuf, noticed I needed help and I got chatting to him. He told me about his religion, and how the most important thing is to be kind and to have empathy for others. It made me think that wherever we come from, we are really more alike than different.

[5] It took me over a year to find my way to Athens along the Silk Road. I found the city somewhat claustrophobic and noisy after the pristine wilderness of the Silk Road. It has been a difficult, frustrating and exhausting journey—but also amazing. Clutching the piece of paper with a faded address written on it, I found the apartment in Athens and knocked on the door. A kindly old woman answered. She smiled at me, and told me my father had moved on a couple of years before. She thrust a piece of paper into my hand. Another address, and another adventure beckons. The world is my oyster.



Going it alone or in a group: A journey along the Silk Road

By Sandra Wilcox

- 1 [1] The Silk Road—a series of interconnecting roads from China to Europe—has been travelled for centuries by traders, invading hordes and, more recently, tourists. The idea of travelling along this route is often romanticized, and indeed it does offer some unique experiences and breathtaking scenery, and so is still a trip well worth taking. Here, we look at two options for travelling along this legendary route.
- 5 [2] So you want to travel the Silk Road. What's the best way to do it: as an independent traveller, or with an organized tour? A lot of your decision comes down to practicalities. Simon Jennings, an independent traveller, explains his choice. 'I had plenty of time, and I'm happy to step outside my comfort zone. I was prepared to spend up to four months hitchhiking along the route and camping on the way.' Warning: This won't be easy. Tourist traps do not exist in Central Asia: you probably won't meet anyone that speaks English. 'In fact,' adds
- 10 Simon, 'it would be a good idea to learn some basic Russian before you set off.' However, if you want to set your own schedule and have a more authentic experience of the Silk Road, you won't be disappointed.
- [3] There are many reasons to opt for an organized package: perhaps you have limited time, don't speak any Russian, have dietary requirements such as gluten-free or simply don't want to spend hours hitchhiking. Alice Chua opted for a package tour when she travelled along the Silk Road last year. 'Most tour operators have years
- 15 of experience, high safety standards and plan their tours ethically, often allowing you to offset your carbon emissions,' she explains. 'Plus, if you're a solo traveller like me, you can join a group tour and meet new people.'
- [4] Whichever option you choose, you'll need to set aside a decent amount of time to really make the most of what the Silk Road has to offer. I'd say the minimum is 10 days: this would allow you to visit Kazakhstan and Baikonur, reaching remote areas that few visitors ever see. At Baikonur, you can even see a rocket launch at the
- 20 Russian space centre. You can expect to pay around \$25,000 for this tour.
- [5] For the ultimate experience though, allow 80 days, to travel from Xi'an in China all the way to Istanbul in Turkey. You'll get to see Xi'an's terracotta warriors, Buddhist cave art in the Mogao Caves, and glaciers at Ala Archa Canyon. The price is a hefty \$100,000, but it will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

END OF READING PASSAGES

PART B1

Read Text 3–6 and answer questions 26–49 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B1.

Text 3

Seaview Hotel, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong ★★★★★

A really cosy and comfortable stay

- 1 [1] I was a bit hesitant before I checked into this hotel because it was quite cheap compared to some of the other places I looked at. However, I was pleasantly surprised! The hotel is very modern and trendy and my room, although a bit cramped, was immaculately clean and fairly stylish, with a nice bright bathroom.
- 5 [2] I had a really comfortable stay here: the air-conditioning worked well, which was a relief because it was really hot when I visited. And the rooms were well sound-proofed, so I slept really well.
- [3] There are some amazing views from the rooftop bar, though sadly my room faced another high-rise block. If I had known, I would have paid a bit more for a room with a sea view.
- [4] On the downside, the location wasn't great for me. I didn't realise that Wong Chuk Hang is not the centre of things. I needed to take a 10-minute walk to the closest MTR station—Wong Chuk Hang—which is part of the South Island Line. The ride will take around 15 minutes to reach the city centre. It seemed like a long way away from Central and Tsim Sha Tsui! Still, I'd definitely stay here again.
- 10

Posted by: SavvyTraveller

Helpful votes: 24

Text 4

Seaview Hotel, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong ★★★★★

Some nice extras

- 1 [1] I was attracted to this hotel by the reasonable price, and the photos of the sophisticated modern rooms on the hotel's website.
- [2] This hotel is good value for money, and we really appreciated the free breakfast and snacks of fruit and biscuits—this saved us a lot of money. Hong Kong can be extortionate!
- 5 [3] I was disappointed though that there was no swimming pool, or at least a sauna. I'd be happy to pay a little extra to use facilities such as these when I'm on holiday. My wife was happy with their beauty salon though. She got her nails polished and found the lady there very friendly and professional.
- [4] I travel on business quite a lot, and I spoke to the hotel manager about discounts for return customers, but it was like talking to a brick wall. He explained that there was no loyalty reward scheme. What a shame! I would probably come back here in a few months' time if this were introduced.
- 10

Posted by: RoadWarrior123

Helpful votes: 10

Text 5

Urban chic arrives in Wong Chuk Hang

Terry Kwah stays at the Seaview Hotel

- 1 [1] Opened in late 2017, the Seaview Hotel is an example of how a building can be transformed. This former warehouse in—let’s face it—what used to be a pretty nondescript part of the city, is now a glamorous urban hotel packed full of features the modern traveller needs: free wifi throughout, Apple TV, and charging stations in every room for all your electronic devices.
- 5 [2] The interior is sleek and urban, mixing steel, marble and a palette of cool greys. Rooms come in four different sizes, with price tags ranging from \$800 to \$2,000 per night. Some rooms have stunning views across Aberdeen Harbour, and guests will also appreciate the rooftop bar (which, when I visited at lunchtime, could definitely have done with more shade, or why not put some sun loungers up there?). The hotel also offers complimentary breakfast, a fitness centre with treadmills and weights, a beauty salon and a self-service laundry room.
- 10 [3] For those who appreciate mod-cons at a reasonable price, the Seaview will be hard to beat.

Text 6

SEAVIEW HOTEL

PROPOSAL TO MANAGEMENT: 08 September

by Alice Poon

1 Background

The purpose of this proposal is to highlight key issues customers have told us about. By addressing these concerns, we can continue to serve our customers' needs and improve the reputation of the hotel going forward.

Feedback and proposals

5 I _____

- Some guests have complained that they did not realise their room would not have a sea view (since all the photos on our website show sea views).
- Some guests are disappointed with the location of the hotel.
- We need to whip the website into shape. We must make it clear that not all rooms have sea views, and that guests can pay extra to reserve a sea-view room. Also, make it absolutely clear that we are not a city-centre hotel. We should consider rewriting some parts of the website text.

10 II _____

- Some guests have expressed disappointment that we do not have a swimming pool or sauna.
- There is no additional room in the hotel for a swimming pool, therefore there is little we can do to address this complaint.
- We could consider installing a sauna or steam room in the health suite changing rooms. We have room, and the cost would be minimal. We could easily cover expenses by charging guests \$100 each to use this facility.

15 III _____

- Some customers are reluctant to return if we do not offer discounts for loyal customers.
- We should research how many of our customers are return customers, and find out what reward schemes other hotels offer. We could introduce a ten per cent discount for return customers, starting next month.

20 IV _____

- The rooftop bar is a real suntrap, which has its pros and cons.
- Provide sun loungers so that sun-worshippers can enjoy the sunshine on the terrace.
- Also provide more seating areas under shade/umbrellas for those less keen on the sun.

END OF READING PASSAGES

PART B2

Read Texts 7–8 and answer questions 50–71 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B2.

Text 7

A life without limits

1 [1] Karen Darke must have wondered what excitement her future life could possibly hold when, aged 21, she was paralysed from the chest down. Climbing a cliff above the sea in Scotland, she fell 10 metres and broke her neck. When she woke up in hospital, the doctors told her she would never walk again.

[2] The doctors were right in their bleak prognosis: Karen has never walked since. But they probably couldn't
5 have predicted the adventures Karen would go on to have. Sitting on a bicycle she pedals with her arms, Karen, who is from Halifax in Northern England, has cycled along the Silk Road and along the length of Japan. She has climbed Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, and has crossed Greenland's ice caps on sit-skis, propelling herself using only her arms, over a distance of 372 miles. Since then, she has become a full-time athlete and won a silver medal in the London Paralympics in 2012. In 2016, she won the gold medal at the Rio Paralympics, becoming
10 the hand-cycling champion.

[3] Karen has never let her physical disability limit her and is constantly seeking out new challenges and places to explore. Her latest goal is to hand-cycle on seven continents, a challenge dubbed Quest 79 (Karen won the 79th Paralympic medal for Great Britain), all the while raising money for charity. During this trip around the world, Karen's aims are to meet new people and inspire others to find their 'inner gold': that thing in life that puts a
15 smile on your face and keeps you reaching further. It's a goal that the average able-bodied person would balk at, so what gives Karen the inner strength to keep pushing herself?

[4] 'Karen doesn't see herself as limited physically,' says Tina Warner, a sports journalist who has written several articles about Karen. 'She sees what she wants to achieve in her mind and then sets about making a plan to achieve it. It's an attitude that we'd all do well to adopt, whether able-bodied or disabled.'

20 [5] Ahead of the 2016 Paralympics, as part of her seven continents challenge, Karen and her team cycled 1,240 km through the forests of Patagonia, South America, battling rain, wind and gravel roads. Karen had the support of her team, yet no one could suffer the hardships for her: getting up at the crack of dawn, cycling for hours every day through the wilderness, wobbling up steep hills and camping at night. Yet this 'getting back to basics' aspect of Karen's adventures is what she enjoys the most, despite the many difficulties along the way, both mental and
25 physical. Karen has described the Patagonia trip as a brutal yet transformative experience that reset both her body and mind. Before the trip, she had booked a surgery to repair a damaged shoulder. By the end of the trip, incredibly, she no longer needed it.

[6] Based on her personal story and adventures of overcoming challenges, Karen has recently developed a training programme called 'Adventure Mindset Programme' to empower people to take on challenges and
30 overcome setbacks. 'I'm constantly amazed by what can be achieved if we set our heart and mind to it,' says Karen. 'It's all about finding belief, confidence, motivation and commitment. And of course, friends. Then there are no limits.'

Text 8

1 [1] Last year, I read a book about a British athlete called Karen Darke, a Paralympic champion. The book told
how, in 2016, Karen completed a 1,240 km trip across Patagonia. I felt a shiver run down my spine. I asked
myself 'Why can't I do something like this? Karen can do it, so surely I can. I am a healthy young fella.' I
5 researched the terrain and buying supplies. Then I set off on the journey. Alone.

[2] As I set off from Puerto Montt in Chile I wondered whether I had bitten off more than I could chew. I had
done plenty of training on my bike in preparation, but nothing could prepare me for the long hours in the saddle,
the bumpy, gravelly roads and the dirt. My skin, coated with sun cream, was quickly covered in mud from the
road and dust thrown up by trucks passing by. This was not going to be a walk in the park.

10 [3] The climb up to Coyhaique, about halfway through my trip, was exhausting. I berated myself for not having
trained more. More than once, I got off my bike and pushed. I reached the top of that climb in a daze, and cried
with exhaustion and relief. That night, I checked into a simple hostel and was blown away by the warmth and
hospitality of the owner, who constantly topped up my glass and plate, pointing at my belly as if imploring me
to gain a few pounds overnight. She was concerned for me, and I was grateful for that—it had been a few weeks
15 since I had had any genuine human contact.

[4] Passing the halfway point was a massive achievement, both physically and mentally. And somehow the trip
began to seem easier. The wilderness began to take on an added beauty, as if everything was in high definition. I
passed huge trees, jaw-dropping vistas across valleys, and wondered at leaves that were the brightest green I had
ever seen. And a lot of the time, I was completely alone. Then the trucks would thunder past again, and shower
20 me with fumes and dirt, just as I was tucking into a sandwich.

[5] During the second half of the trip, it rained almost constantly. Sleeping in a tent every night, I never really got
properly dry, and I was often damp and uncomfortable. But then the sun would come out and warm my back, or
I would find a chocolate bar at the bottom of my bag, and it would make my day. Karen must have experienced
something similar. In her book, she says that 'journeys like this make you aware of the essence of what we need
25 in life: water, food and rest.'

[6] I will never forget my trip and what it taught me. Now, when things are tough and life feels overwhelming, I
walk up into the hills and look out across Hong Kong. Alone, I remind myself that nature is beautiful, and I stop
and take a breath and remember that it's the simple things that make us happy.

By Jason Long



END OF READING PASSAGES