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Moscow is the world's costliest city

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19th June, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Moscow is the world's costliest city

Thinking of moving to another world capital? A new report compiled by the human resources consultancy Mercer suggests you need to think carefully about how costly it is in other parts of the world. Surprisingly, Mercer ranks Moscow as the world's costliest city, with London a close second. This is bad news for students wanting to study in the Russian and English capitals. Mercer gathers information on 143 cities around the globe. Its annual survey measures and compares the costs of more than 200 items, including rent, transportation, food, clothes, household goods and entertainment. This data is invaluable for companies wishing to open offices in far-off lands. A Mercer spokeswoman said: "As companies continue to send employees on expatriate assignments, they must closely monitor changes in the cost of living."

A major theme of the latest survey is how currency movements have changed the rankings of different cities. Mercer stated: "There have been some significant changes in the rankings since last year....These are primarily due to exchange rate fluctuations - in particular the weakening of the U.S. dollar and the strengthening of the euro." Last year, London was ranked fifth, but due to a weak dollar, it has risen three places. Seoul was the third-placed city, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong, both down a place from last year. Asuncion was the cheapest city for expats for the fifth year in a row. The world's most expensive apartments are in Tokyo and the most affordable are in Johannesburg. The dearest fast food is in Copenhagen. Zimbabwe's Harare dropped off the list this year due to its rates of hyperinflation.

WARM-UPS

1. LIVING COSTS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about the cost of living where you live. Are you happy with it? Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

moving / world capitals / human resources / Moscow / bad news / rent / data / currency / exchange rates / US dollar / expatriates / fast food / hyperinflation

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. COST OF LIVING: In pairs / groups, talk about the cost of these things in your town:

- rent
- transportation
- food
- English lessons
- telephone bills
- entry to museums
- clothes
- water

4. CITY LIFE: In pairs / groups, give a score for the items below - what is most important to you about city life? 10 = a must; 1 = no need for it/them

- a. _____ safety
- b. _____ good public transportation
- c. _____ affordable accommodation
- d. _____ parks and trees
- e. _____ no car zones
- f. _____ good refuse collection
- g. _____ near an airport
- h. _____ sports facilities

5. I'M AN EXPAT: Your partner will choose a new city for you to live in (from another part of the world). Walk around the class and talk to the other "expats" about your cities.

6. MOSCOW: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Moscow. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

7. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think living in expensive cities is better than living in the boring, cheap countryside. Students B think the opposite. Change partners often. Share your findings.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Moscow is the world's costliest city for human resource companies. T / F
- b. Students might not be able to afford to study and live in London. T / F
- c. An international price comparison was made between 143 cities. T / F
- d. Expatriates need to write assignments before living overseas. T / F
- e. Changes in exchange rates made cities more expensive to live in. T / F
- f. The dollar has become weaker and the euro stronger recently. T / F
- g. Asuncion was the cheapest city for the fifth consecutive year. T / F
- h. The world's most expensive fast food is in Copenhagen. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| a. moving | reasonably priced |
| b. ranks | keep an eye on |
| c. invaluable | considerable |
| d. expatriate | precious |
| e. monitor | changes |
| f. significant | relocating |
| g. primarily | running |
| h. fluctuations | emigrant |
| i. in a row | is placed |
| j. affordable | for the most part |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. A new report compiled | off lands |
| b. London a close | assignments |
| c. This data is invaluable | due to its rates of hyperinflation |
| d. open offices in far- | fluctuations |
| e. send employees on expatriate | for companies |
| f. currency movements have changed | in a row |
| g. exchange rate | by the human resources consultancy |
| h. down a | the rankings of different cities |
| i. for the fifth year | second |
| j. Harare dropped off the list this year | place from last year |

Moscow is the world's costliest city – 19th June, 2007

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Moscow is the world's costliest city

Thinking of moving to another world _____? A new report compiled by the human resources _____ Mercer suggests you need to think carefully about how _____ it is in other parts of the world. Surprisingly, Mercer ranks Moscow as the world's costliest city, with London a close _____. This is bad news for students wanting to study in the Russian and English capitals. Mercer gathers information on 143 cities around the globe. Its annual survey measures and _____ the costs of more than 200 items, including rent, transportation, food, clothes, household goods and entertainment. This data is _____ for companies wishing to open offices in far-off _____. A Mercer spokeswoman said: "As companies continue to send employees on expatriate assignments, they must _____ monitor changes in the cost of living."

A _____ theme of the latest survey is how currency movements have changed the _____ of different cities. Mercer stated: "There have been some significant changes in the rankings since last year....These are _____ due to exchange rate _____ - in particular the weakening of the U.S. dollar and the strengthening of the euro." Last year, London was ranked fifth, but due to a weak dollar, it has risen three places. Seoul was the third-placed city, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong, both down a place from last year. Asuncion was the cheapest city for _____ for the fifth year in a row. The world's most expensive apartments are in Tokyo and the most _____ are in Johannesburg. The _____ fast food is in Copenhagen. Zimbabwe's Harare _____ off the list this year due to its rates of hyperinflation.

second
closely
consultancy
invaluable
capital
compares
costly
lands

fluctuations
dearest
rankings
affordable
dropped
major
expats
primarily

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Moscow is the world's costliest city

Thinking of moving to another world capital? A new _____ human resources consultancy Mercer suggests you need to think carefully about _____ other parts of the world. Surprisingly, Mercer ranks Moscow as the world's costliest city, with London _____. This is bad news for students wanting to study in the Russian and English capitals. Mercer gathers information on 143 cities around the globe. Its _____ compares the costs of more than 200 items, including rent, transportation, food, clothes, household goods and entertainment. This data is invaluable for companies wishing to open _____. A Mercer spokeswoman said: "As companies continue to send employees on expatriate assignments, they must _____ the cost of living."

A major theme of the latest survey is _____ have changed the rankings of different cities. Mercer stated: "There have been some _____ the rankings since last year....These are primarily due to exchange rate fluctuations - in particular the weakening of the U.S. dollar and _____ euro." Last year, London was ranked fifth, but due to a weak dollar, it has risen three places. Seoul was the third-placed city, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong, both _____ last year. Asuncion was the cheapest city for expats for the fifth year in a row. The world's most expensive apartments are in Tokyo and the most affordable are in Johannesburg. _____ is in Copenhagen. Zimbabwe's Harare dropped off the list this year due to its rates of hyperinflation.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'capital' and 'city'.

capital	city
----------------	-------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• thinking• surprisingly• bad news• measures• invaluable• monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• movements• significant• strengthening• expats• affordable• dropped
--	---

STUDENT COST OF LIVING SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about LIVING COSTS in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What is the cost of living like where you live?
- c) Have you noticed changes in the costs of living in your town?
- d) Would you like to live in Moscow or London?
- e) Do you think the quality of life is good in cities that have a high cost of living?
- f) Which world capitals would you choose to live in?
- g) What things are reasonably priced where you live?
- h) Do you like moving house/city/country?
- i) Do you think you'd like an expatriate life?
- j) Do you think it is/would be difficult living in a different country?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Are you interested in currency fluctuations?
- c) Do you follow what is happening with the dollar or your own currency?
- d) Would you recommend your city to human resource officers as a good place to live?
- e) What do you think life is/would be like in the world's most expensive cities?
- f) Do you think today's most expensive cities will always be among the world's costliest places to live?
- g) Do you think there are any advantages of living in very expensive cities?
- h) Would you prefer to live in an expensive city or a cheap village in the mountains, far from any city?
- i) Are city people different from country people?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

COST OF LIVING PRESENTATION:

You are a marketing executive for your town. You want people to come and live there. With your partner(s), write down the cost of living in your town for the items in the table. In the next column, explain why these prices are very reasonable.

Item	Cost	Why this is a reasonable price
Rent		
Restaurants		
Transport		
Food		
Water		
Other _____		

- Change partners and give each other feedback on how to make your town sound more affordable and better value for money.
- Make presentations to the class, selling your town.
- Decide on a winner for the best presentation.

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Moscow is the world's costliest city

Thinking of moving to another world capital? A new report (1) _____ by the human resources consultancy Mercer suggests you need to think carefully about how (2) _____ it is in other parts of the world. Surprisingly, Mercer ranks Moscow as the world's costliest city, with London a close (3) _____. This is bad news for students (4) _____ to study in the Russian and English capitals. Mercer gathers information on 143 cities around the globe. Its annual survey measures and compares the costs of more than 200 items, including rent, transportation, food, clothes, (5) _____ goods and entertainment. This data is invaluable for companies wishing to open offices in far-off lands. A Mercer spokeswoman said: "As companies continue to send employees (6) _____ expatriate assignments, they must closely monitor changes in the cost of living."

A major theme of the (7) _____ survey is how currency movements have changed the rankings of different cities. Mercer stated: "There have been some (8) _____ changes in the rankings since last year...These are primarily due to exchange rate fluctuations - in particular the weakening of the U.S. dollar and the strengthening of the euro." Last year, London was ranked fifth, but due to a weak dollar, it has (9) _____ three places. Seoul was the third-placed city, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong, both down a place from last year. Asuncion was the cheapest city for (10) _____ for the fifth year in a (11) _____. The world's most expensive apartments are in Tokyo and the most affordable are in Johannesburg. The dearest fast food is in Copenhagen. Zimbabwe's Harare dropped off the list this year (12) _____ to its rates of hyperinflation.

1. (a) complained (b) compiled (c) complied (d) crumpled
2. (a) costly (b) costs (c) costliness (d) cost
3. (a) last (b) minute (c) first (d) second
4. (a) wanted (b) wants (c) wanting (d) want
5. (a) homework (b) housework (c) household (d) house
6. (a) on (b) in (c) by (d) with
7. (a) later (b) latest (c) late (d) lately
8. (a) significantly (b) signal (c) signify (d) significant
9. (a) rose (b) risen (c) driven (d) drove
10. (a) expats (b) experts (c) ex-bosses (d) exports
11. (a) rowed (b) rowing (c) row (d) column
12. (a) so (b) because (c) dew (d) due

WRITING:

Write about living costs for 10 minutes. Correct your partner’s paper.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about the costs of living in Moscow and London. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. COST OF LIVING: Make a poster on different world capitals. Find out how living costs vary in each place. Show your posters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all find out about similar animals or things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the cost of living in your town. Describe what you think it'll be like twenty years from now.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to a Muscovite or Londoner. Ask them three questions about what it's like living in such an expensive city. Give them three suggestions about how they can stretch their money. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. F e. T f. T g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. moving	relocating
b. ranks	is placed
c. invaluable	precious
d. expatriate	emigrant
e. monitor	keep an eye on
f. significant	considerable
g. primarily	for the most part
h. fluctuations	changes
i. in a row	running
j. affordable	reasonably priced

PHRASE MATCH:

a. A new report compiled	by the human resources consultancy
b. London a close	second
c. This data is invaluable	for companies
d. open offices in far-	off lands
e. send employees on expatriate	assignments
f. currency movements have changed	the rankings of different cities
g. exchange rate	fluctuations
h. down a	place from last year
i. for the fifth year	in a row
j. Harare dropped off the list this year	due to its rates of hyperinflation

GAP FILL:

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Thinking of moving to another world **capital**? A new report compiled by the human resources **consultancy** Mercer suggests you need to think carefully about how **costly** it is in other parts of the world. Surprisingly, Mercer ranks Moscow as the world's costliest city, with London a close **second**. This is bad news for students wanting to study in the Russian and English capitals. Mercer gathers information on 143 cities around the globe. Its annual survey measures and **compares** the costs of more than 200 items, including rent, transportation, food, clothes, household goods and entertainment. This data is **invaluable** for companies wishing to open offices in far-off **lands**. A Mercer spokeswoman said: "As companies continue to send employees on expatriate assignments, they must **closely** monitor changes in the cost of living."

A **major** theme of the latest survey is how currency movements have changed the **rankings** of different cities. Mercer stated: "There have been some significant changes in the rankings since last year....These are **primarily** due to exchange rate **fluctuations** - in particular the weakening of the U.S. dollar and the strengthening of the euro." Last year, London was ranked fifth, but due to a weak dollar, it has risen three places. Seoul was the third-placed city, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong, both down a place from last year. Asuncion was the cheapest city for **expats** for the fifth year in a row. The world's most expensive apartments are in Tokyo and the most **affordable** are in Johannesburg. The **dearest** fast food is in Copenhagen. Zimbabwe's Harare **dropped** off the list this year due to its rates of hyperinflation.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - b 2 - a 3 - d 4 - c 5 - c 6 - a 7 - b 8 - d 9 - b 10 - a 11 - c 12 - d