

World cities turn their streets over to walkers and cyclists

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Which countries are these cities in?

1. Vancouver _____
2. Berlin _____
3. Minneapolis _____
4. Budapest _____
5. Adelaide _____
6. Bogotá _____

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

pedestrian

temporarily

residential

exhaust

lockdown

1. If something happens _____, it only happens for a limited period of time. (para 1)
2. _____ is when people are not allowed to leave their homes. (para 1)
3. The _____ on a vehicle is the pipe that carries gases out of the engine. (para 2)
4. A _____ is someone who is walking, especially in a town or city, instead of driving or riding. (para 2)
5. In a _____ street, most of the buildings are houses where people live. (para 2)

guidance

essential workers

alternative

lane

congestion

6. A _____ is one of the parts that a wide road or motorway is divided into. (para 3)
7. _____ is when a place is crowded with people or vehicles so that it is difficult to move around. (para 4)
8. An _____ is something you can choose instead of something else. (para 6)
9. _____ is advice about what you should do or how you should behave. (para 9)
10. _____ do jobs that society cannot live without, even during a crisis, for example doctors, rubbish collectors and supermarket workers. (para 10)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. Which city is planning to close 74 miles of roads?
2. Which city has experienced a 40% increase in the number of people using parks?
3. By what percentage has bus use reduced in Budapest during the lockdown?
4. Which city has suggested 130km of temporary bike lanes?
5. By what percentage has traffic on main roads reduced in London during the lockdown?
6. How many people die each year in the UK because of air pollution?

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Laura Laker

11 April, 2020

- 1 Some cities around the world are temporarily closing roads to cars and only allowing people on foot and on bikes to use them. They are doing this to allow key workers to travel easily to work and to keep people in coronavirus lockdown healthy and active. Many city parks are closed to prevent the spread of coronavirus, and this is limiting people's access to outdoor space. Traffic has dropped around the world, but there are more speeding drivers, which is a danger to people walking and cycling.
- 2 Air pollution, including from car exhausts, can be particularly dangerous for people with Covid-19. With narrow pavements full of pedestrians and miles of empty roads, lower speed limits, closing residential streets to prevent so many drivers using them, introducing emergency cycleways and building more footpaths are some possible solutions.
- 3 In Philadelphia, they closed 4.7 miles of a wide riverside road to cars on 20 March, after footpaths became full of residents seeking their daily exercise. Minneapolis has closed part of its riverfront parkways to cars. Denver has introduced pop-up cycling and walking lanes to help people socially distance while exercising. Oakland is planning to close 74 miles of roads – 10% of the city's total – to cars.
- 4 In Vancouver, Canada, Stanley Park is now for cycling and walking only to prevent congestion and stop visitors arriving by car and parking dangerously, after a 40% increase in park users. In Winnipeg, four streets are for cycling and walking only from 8am to 8pm daily, and in Calgary, traffic lanes are only for cycling.
- 5 Budapest has experienced a reduction in bus use by almost 90%, with a 50% reduction in road traffic. They have now planned a cycling network on main roads. Sydney, Perth and Adelaide in Australia, Chapel Hill in the US and Calgary in Canada are some of the cities that have made pedestrian crossings automatic in some districts so that people do not have to press a button.
- 6 In Berlin, several streets have new, wide bike lanes instead of some car lanes. Bogotá has replaced 35km of traffic lanes with new emergency bike lanes as an alternative to people using public transport. In late March, 130km of temporary bike lanes were suggested in Mexico City. In the meantime, a 1.7km temporary lane, running from 8am to 7pm, has been installed on a major road.
- 7 But in the UK, things are very different. In London, traffic has reduced by 63% on main roads. But, they say that emergency bike routes on the city's main roads would not protect cyclists without complex junction improvements. This would require builders to travel during lockdown.
- 8 Hackney is the first part of the UK openly planning to temporarily close some of its streets while still allowing emergency vehicles and residents to use them. Councillor Jon Burke said pedestrians stepping into the road to socially distance from one another are in danger from speeding drivers. "We are running around making sure people have enough food, but we aren't doing something about the 40,000 people that are dying each year because of air pollution," he says. "We haven't got weeks to deliver it. We need to deliver it now because this crisis is happening now."
- 9 Dr Rachel Aldred, of the University of Westminster, says the UK could learn from other countries. "It feels like other countries are treating cycling as a proper mode of transport. Here, there's no guidance from the government. I think if they can do it in Bogotá, which is a very complicated city with a lot of problems, you could imagine London doing something similar," she said.
- 10 Transport engineer Brian Deegan says 20mph streets, bikes for key workers and emergency cycle routes would help essential workers.

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4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Many cities around the world are ... | a. ... are in danger from speeding drivers. |
| 2. They are doing this to ... | b. ... would mean builders having to travel during lockdown. |
| 3. Pedestrians stepping into the road to socially distance ... | c. ... closing streets to cars. |
| 4. In London, emergency cycle lanes would not be possible ... | d. ... could learn a lot from other countries. |
| 5. Work on junctions ... | e. ... without complex work to improve junctions. |
| 6. Dr Rachel Aldred believes that the UK ... | f. ... allow more space for pedestrians and cyclists. |

5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- users a increase 40% in park
- prevent coronavirus the to spread of
- cities world around some the
- public alternative as transport using people to an
- from air exhausts car pollution
- reduction traffic a in 50% road

6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. air | a. vehicle |
| 2. bike | b. street |
| 3. emergency | c. exhaust |
| 4. speed | d. lane |
| 5. residential | e. limit |
| 6. car | f. pollution |

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7 Word-building

Complete the table with words from the text.

	verb	noun
1.	guide	
2.	solve	
3.	improve	
4.	cross	
5.	build	(person)
6.	pollute	

8 Discussion

Should all traffic be banned from city centres in future? Why? Why not?