

THE ROUTEMASTER BUS

William Ewart Gladstone: "The way to see London is from the top of a bus."



A **double-decker bus** is a bus that has two levels or 'decks'. While double-decker long-distance coaches are in widespread use around the world, double-decker city buses are less common. Double-decker buses are popular in some cities of Europe and in parts of Asia, usually in former British colonies. Some double-deckers specialise in short sight-seeing tours for tourists.

I. Read the text and choose the best variant (A, B, C or D) to complete the blanks:

The Routemaster RM model is not the 1. hop-on, hop-off double-decker to have graced the streets of England, but it is the bus most loved by Londoners and tourists 2.

Introduced in 1956, it was designed specifically 3. London and had some pretty advanced design features 4. as a light alloy body to allow for more seats, to try and entice car drivers onto them. The Routemaster gave rise to the double-act of driver and conductor – a familiar pairing described as “the Lennon and McCartney of the road”.

5. 2005 saw the gradual phasing out of the Routemaster, it will be remembered 6. films, TV shows, pop videos, postcards and guide books.

The red double-decker buses in London 7. become an icon of Britain. A particularly iconic example was the Routemaster bus, which had been a staple of the public transport 8. in London for nearly half a century following its introduction in 1956.

9. of cited difficulties accommodating disabled passengers, the last remaining examples in use finally retired in 2005, although Transport for London has 10. two "heritage routes", which will continue using Routemasters on selected parts of routes 9 and 15.

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|--------------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. A single | B only | C unique | D extreme |
| 2. A both | B together | C alike | D same |
| 3. A in | B for | C to | D with |
| 4. A such | B like | C so | D examples |
| 5. A even | B since | C however | D although |
| 6. A by | B in | C through | D due |
| 7. A are | B have | C will | D had |
| 8. A network | B system | C area | D circle |
| 9. A due | B lack | C despite | D because |
| 10. A done | B established | C made | D had |

II. Read the text again and say which of the following sentences are true and which are false:

1. The Routemaster Bus is loved by tourists, but not so much by Londoners.
2. The double decker was introduced in London in 1956.
3. At the beginning, The Routemaster Bus was designed specifically for London.
4. After half a century of loyal service, 2005 has witnessed a gradual phasing out of the iconic double-deckers.
5. There is no route in London using Routemasters at present.

III. Read the following text about **The Future of the Routemaster** and specify the reasons why The Routemaster began to be withdrawn from service:

The last Routemaster was built in 1968 and its successors were taken off the roads only 10 years later. Even though several hundred Routemasters were refurbished in the 1990s, the bus was doomed.

Transport for London says the buses just don't measure up to the needs of passengers any more – they are not wheelchair or pushchair friendly. Also, they cost more to run because a conductor has to be employed as well as the driver, and parts can be expensive and tricky to find. On top of this, travelling on a Routemaster can be dangerous – three people a year, on average, die while getting on or off the open platform.

There are some designers who are trying to take the Routemaster into the 21st century by designing a more modern version. Called the QRM, it has everything a passenger and an operator would want – comfort, accessibility, flat floors throughout, ease of maintenance, a strong lightweight body and low fuel consumption. However there hasn't been much interest in developing the model. One of the main problems is that motor companies don't want to buy a bus tailored to London alone. They want designs that can be sold all over the world.

Answers:

I. 1 – B; 2 – C; 3 – B; 4 – A; 5 – D; 6 – C; 7 – B; 8 – A; 9 – D; 10 – B.

II. 1 – F; 2 – T; 3 – T; 4 – T; 5 – F.

III. Students' oral answers.