

Summary

Rob's excited about going on holiday, especially as he got really cheap flights – or so he thought. Feifei's about to spoil his fun when she spots a hidden cost that he can't avoid. At least it's a good excuse to learn a new piece of authentic English.

Transcript

Feifei

Hello I'm Feifei and welcome to The English We Speak.

Rob

And hello, I'm Rob.

Feifei

You're looking pleased with yourself, Rob.

Rob

I am. I've just booked these dirt cheap – I mean really cheap – flights to Ibiza!

Feifei

Wonderful!

Rob

Look at the price - 20 pounds return! That means extra money to spend on food, drink and partying.

Feifei

Let's have a look... hold on. The basic price is 20 pounds, but look at the tax you have to pay on top. One hundred pounds!

Rob

Eh? Let me see. You're right. Grrr, I hate paying tax.

Feifei

I guess you could say it's a necessary evil.

Rob

Hmm, you could say that – if you mean it's something bad that can't be avoided, and you have to accept it in order to achieve a good result.

Feifei

That's exactly what I meant, Rob. If it can't be avoided, like paying tax on a plane ticket, then it's a necessary evil. Let's hear some examples, shall we?

Examples

For me, exams are a necessary evil – you have to do them to get a place at university.

Sitting in traffic for hours is a necessary evil if I want to drive to the seaside on a public holiday!

I hate running, but having to exercise is a necessary evil if I want to stay fit and healthy.

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're finding out about the phrase 'a necessary evil'. It describes something that you have to accept in order to achieve something else. And Rob, that tax on your plane ticket is unavoidable – not so cheap now, is it?

Rob

No. Less money for eating, drinking and partying.

Feifei

Can you get a refund? Stay at home and eat, drink and party?

Rob

I could but if I stayed at home, there's another necessary evil I have to deal with.

Feifei

What's that?

Rob

I'll have to spend more time with you.

Feifei

Hmm! What time is your flight exactly?

Rob

Did I say something wrong?

Feifei

Bye.

Rob

Bye.