IELTS-Style Speaking Test Questions and Answers

Buildings & Architecture

Part 1

1) What types of buildings are there where you live?
In the town, there are lots of Victorian houses constructed from locally made bricks and some modern shops and offices. We certainly don't have any high-rise apartments or skyscrapers in the area.

2) Are there any monuments in your hometown?
The most famous monument is a clock tower called the Albert Clock in memory of Prince Albert the husband of Queen Victoria. There's also a war memorial in the park.

3) Do you like to visit historic buildings?
Yes, I particularly enjoy visiting old manor houses and I'm lucky that there are several interesting ones in the area where I live. I also like looking around old ruins both in my own country and abroad.

4) What are the landmarks in your hometown?
I'd say that there are three – a church with a tall steeple, a six-storey office block that's an ugly monstrosity, and a hill that used to have an old castle on it.

5) Have you ever visited a famous structure?
When I was in Australia, I went to the Sydney Opera House. It's the most stunning piece of architecture I've ever seen and such an iconic building.
Part 2

Describe a style of architecture that you like.
You should say:
• what style it is
• what it looks like
• where you can see it
and explain why you like this style.

I like many different styles of architecture but my favourite is probably Art Deco. The exterior of buildings designed in this style generally looks symmetrical. They’re not at all ornate, in fact, you’d say they were quite plain. Yet I find them so beautiful, with elegant lines and simple shapes.

The façade is often decorated with geometric patterns created from straight lines or from stylised designs based on plants, animals and sunrays like you see on Art Deco furniture, jewellery and other artefacts of the 1920s and 1930s when the style was developed. The most popular building material was concrete but glazed brick was also used.

Architects designed Art Deco houses, public buildings and commercial buildings and most of them are still standing today. During the 20s and 30s, many cinemas were built in towns and cities across the country. Lots of them closed down when new multiplex movie theatres were constructed. Some fell into disrepair and had to be demolished but others have been renovated for use as shops and their Art Deco features preserved. There is one in my town which is now a night club.

Although it’s long past its heyday, Art Deco has remained popular as a design style and you can sometimes see it in modern buildings. For example, the new bus station in my town has many Art Deco features, in particular, the style of the windows, the shape and symmetry of the building and the decoration around the large clock set in the wall.

For people who are real fans of Art Deco architecture, I recommend that they visit the town of Napier in New Zealand because almost every building is Art Deco. It’s an amazing place. They have tour guides to show you around and tell you about the history of the town. Sadly it was destroyed in an earthquake in 1931 and completely rebuild in the architectural style of the day – Art Deco. I don’t think there is anywhere else in the world like it and I’m sure that it was my visit there that really got me interested in this beautiful architectural style.
Part 3

1) What kinds of people like to visit historic buildings?
In my country, people of all ages and from many different backgrounds enjoy looking around historic buildings. At the weekends and during school holidays they are popular with families who visit for a day out. Many old manor houses have extensive grounds which are ideal for the kids to run around and play in.

Lots of historic sites offer educational tours and activities for schools as they are the perfect place to learn about how people lived in the past. So, most historic houses get school trips visiting. Old castles are particularly popular with school kids.

Another common group of visitors is retired people because they have plenty of time for leisure activities. I think they are attracted by the tearooms as much all the interesting things there are to look at and learn about as most historic houses have one and they always serve delicious cakes.

Finally, I mustn’t forget the tourists. For the most famous historic buildings, they are the largest group of visitors.

2) Do you think it's worth the money to preserve old buildings?
That’s such a difficult question to answer. It costs millions of pounds to preserve historic buildings and there are many other important things that the money could be spent on. I suppose it depends where the money comes from.

I think it’s true to say that most of the money spent on restoring and maintaining the old properties in my country comes from donations, entrance fees and charitable funds. People want to visit historic buildings and are happy to pay for them to be looked after. If the government was responsible for their upkeep, it would be more difficult to justify the huge costs involved.

Of course, historic properties are part of our heritage and that’s important preserve. They also attract a large number of overseas tourists who contribute a significant amount to our economy.

So, weighing it up, I’d have to say that I do think it’s worth the money to preserve old buildings.
3) How have buildings changed in the past few years?
As far as houses are concerned, there are 3 main differences that I can think of. First, it's now common to see three-storey homes on new housing estates which you never used to get and there are not so many bungalows being built. This is because there is less building land available than, say, twenty years ago.

Second, new houses are more eco-friendly, with better insulation and improved double glazing to make them more energy efficient.

Third, there are new rules concerning things like the width of doors and the height of switches so that new properties are wheelchair friendly.

With regard to public buildings and commercial buildings, the development of stronger building materials and new construction techniques means that architects are beginning to design more Futuristic buildings.

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Buildings & Architecture Vocabulary for IELTS

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www.ieltsjacky.com/buildings-vocabulary.html