



DESCRIBING PLACES

Descriptions of places can be found in travel brochures, letters, articles and stories. They can be written in formal or informal style. It depends on whom we address it to and how we want to present the description.



FORMAL STYLE

Formal style is impersonal. We frequently use passive voice, particles, and complex sentences. We don't describe our feelings and emotions. We don't use sort forms of verbs.

Compare two descriptions of Angel Falls.



If you fancy an adventurous holiday with a mixture of romance and mystery you should visit Angel Falls, the tallest waterfall in the world. Angel Falls is located in the Guyana highlands, one of five topographical regions of Venezuela.

The falls are named after Jimmy Angel, an adventurous bush pilot from Missouri, however the Natives in Venezuela had known about the "Salto Angel" since the beginning of time.

Being one of Venezuela's top tourist attractions, Angel Falls, even today are complicated to reach. In order to visit the falls adventurous tourists must begin their travels from one of the small villages surrounding the falls. Of these the ones most used for expeditions to the falls are Canaima, Kavak and Kamarata. Even with these villages being the closest to the falls and the National Park it is still a few days trek to Angel Falls.

If you decide to visit this unique and breathtaking place, you should book your holiday from June to December, when the rivers are deep enough for the wooden boats used by guides.

Each aspect of the description should be presented in a separate paragraph



When we write about a building, the main body of the work should include:

- a paragraph on historical facts using past tense (when was it build, why, who build it)
- a paragraph on the exterior using present tense (grounds, gardens)
- a paragraph on the interior using present tense (furniture, rooms)

To give a vivid picture of described place and create a mood and an atmosphere we can use all our senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch).

- *When you can almost taste the salt in the air, then you know you are close to the beach.*
- *In the morning you can watch the sunrise straight from your hotel room.*
- *The sound of waves is calming and relaxing.*
- *When walking down the streets in this old town you can smell the mixture of morning coffee with freshly baked bread.*
- *The texture of the sand is so smooth, that our beaches are*
- *the most favourite in the whole region.*

Present tense is used to describe a place for tourist brochures or a magazine. Past tense is used to describe a visit to a place/building. We give factual information about places/buildings using present tense.

E.g. *I visited Croatia last year. Croatia is situated by Mediterranean Sea.*



INFORMAL STYLE

Informal style is personal. We use colloquial language, idioms, short forms. We can write about our feelings and emotions.

Notice the use of tenses in both descriptions.

NOTES

STRUCTURE INTRODUCTION

- you give brief information about the name and location of the place or building and you give reasons for choosing to describe it.

MAIN BODY

- you give general and specific information about the place/building

You should proceed from general to specific information.

CONCLUSION

- you express your feelings, about described place/building or your recommendation.

Sometimes when we wander around the world we find places that we can't forget. So get up from your comfortable armchair and travel with me to a beautiful place called Angel Falls.

I have just arrived in a small South American village. It took me only ten minutes to get everything organized and I am already sitting in a van that will take us to our desired destination. The nature passing behind the windows is unique and breathtaking. I can feel the fresh air in my hair and the local scents are playing with my senses.

I know right away we have reached our destination. The roar of water is coming from behind the trees. I am walking with expectations. Decibels are increasing. I am slowly cutting away from the path and I am holding my breath. Finally the forest is opening and I am standing in front of one of the cascades. The water is hurling down with an incredible speed. I am walking up and up and always new cascades are appearing in front of me.

The whole waterfall is created from tenths of smaller waterfalls, from small streams to great drifts, all ending in a foamy river. I can't hear a word. The feeling of amazement and awe is overwhelming. Glittering drops are covering my skin. Time has stopped and I don't want to leave. The whirl of water is hypnotizing.

It is time to leave. Everyday life is waiting. I will never forget this little adventure of mine.

INVOLVING THE READER

SENSES



EXPRESSIVITY

metaphor, personification, expressive vocabulary



FEELINGS



Narrative techniques can be used to describe place or building. We can use:

- our senses to describe surroundings
- ask rhetorical questions
- use direct speech
- use quotation
- create mystery, suspense, anticipation
- address the reader

To join sentences we can use various different structures. We can use w-words and participles.

• *The Tower is the oldest building in the city. The Tower is on the south coast. Situated on the south coast, The Tower is the oldest building in the city.*

• *The old part of town is full of small restaurants. You have to go and see it. You have to go and see the old part of town, which is full of small restaurants.*

• *The wax museum is the most visited place of this town. You can get t small miniatures of famous people there.*

The wax museum, where you can get miniatures of famous people, is the most visited place of this town.

• *The National Gallery has the most unique and valuable paintings. It very popular place for tourists.*

With its unique and valuable paintings, The National Gallery is a very popular place for tourists.

