



# AICE English Language Summer Reading Assignment 2023

## What do I have to do?!

1. Read Blog Examples 1-3. What do you notice about the layout, or structure, of each blog? Who do you think is the intended audience for each blog post and what do you notice about how each writer uses language to reach their intended audience?
2. Create your own blog! Choose a topic for your blog, write a "blog post" (**between 400 and 500 words**) and create a visually appealing "blog." The blog post topics you can choose from are: sports in general or a specific team or sport; music; movies; food; DIY crafts; book and writing blogs; travel; health & fitness; or fashion and beauty.
3. Answer the following questions on a Google Document about your "blog post": Who is your audience? What is the purpose of your blog post? How did you use language to reach your intended audience? Use PEEL and answer in **400-500 words TOTAL**.

## How am I going to do it?!

1. You're going to use Canva to create your "blog post"! Keep reading for instructions on how to create a free Canva account using your student email address.

## WHY DO I EVEN HAVE TO DO THIS?!

1. In this class, you will study numerous genres and analyze them for form (audience + purpose), structure, and language. Not only will you analyze texts on the exam for this class, but you will also be asked to create several original pieces of writing in the style of certain genres based on whatever topics or ideas the University of Cambridge decides. To be prepared for the exam at the end of the year so that you can earn college credit for this class, we begin preparing for it NOW.

**This assignment is due on Friday, August 18th 2023**

1. Go to [Canva](https://canva.com) (canva.com) and click 'Sign Up for Free'

The image shows a browser window displaying the Canva website. The address bar shows 'canva.com'. The navigation menu includes 'Design spotlight', 'Business', 'Education', 'Plans and pricing', and 'Learn'. A search bar contains the text 'Try logo, poster, anything!'. The main heading reads 'What will you design today?' followed by the text 'Canva makes it easy to create professional designs and to share or print them.' Below this is a purple button labeled 'Sign up for free', which is highlighted by a red arrow. To the left of the button is a thumbnail for a 'Monthly Business Sales Report' and to the right is a thumbnail for a 'BRITNEY BEAUTY & SALON' poster. At the bottom, there are three overlapping preview cards: a 'For Sale Newly Listed' real estate card, a 'MARKETING PROPOSAL' card, and another real estate card.

## 2. Sign up with your school google account

### Log in or sign up in seconds

Use your email or another service to continue with Canva (it's free!)



Continue with Google



Continue with Facebook



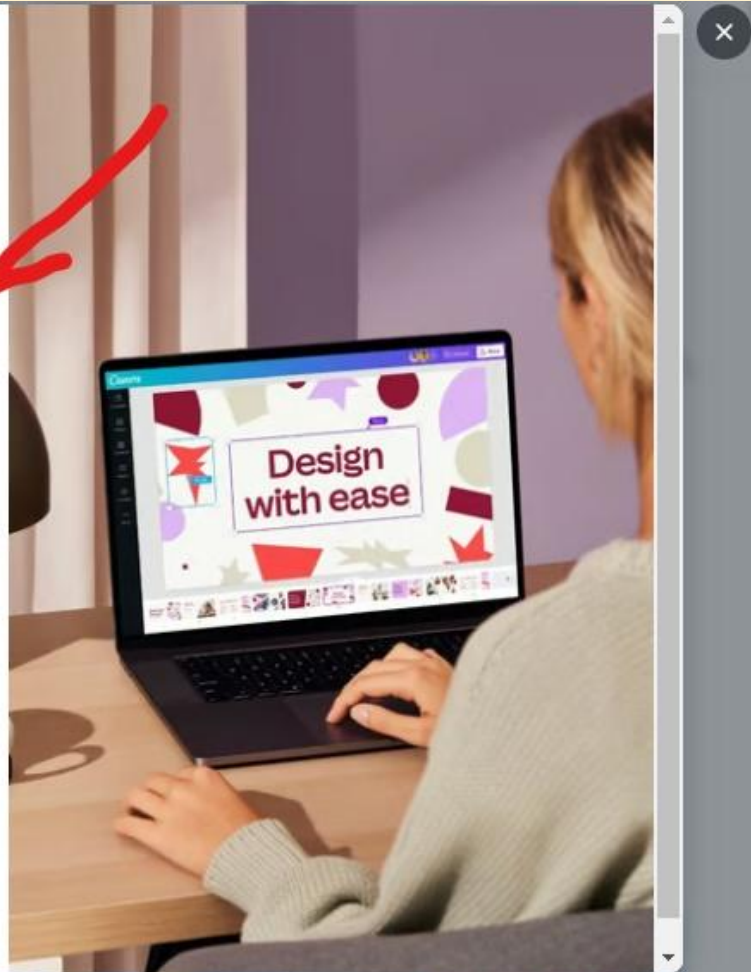
Continue with email

Continue another way

By continuing, you agree to Canva's [Terms of Use](#).  
Read our [Privacy Policy](#).



Sign up with your work email



Sign in with Google

Canva

Choose an account

to continue to [Canva](#)

   
4804 @students.ocps.net


 Use another account

To continue, Google will share your name, email address, language preference, and profile picture with Canva. Before using this app, you can review Canva's [privacy policy](#) and [terms of service](#).

3. Click on your 480 email

## 4. Your home page is all set. Explore templates that can provide a great format for your blog!

The image shows the Canva home page interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Canva logo, menu items like 'Design spotlight', 'Business', 'Education', 'Plans and pricing', and 'Learn', and utility icons for mobile, settings, and notifications. A prominent purple button says 'Create a design'. Below the navigation, a sidebar on the left lists user information ('team', 'Free • 8 1'), a 'Try Canva Pro' button, and navigation options: Home, Projects, Templates, Brand Hub, Apps, Invite members, and Trash. The main content area features a large blue header with the text 'What will you design today?' and a search bar. Below the search bar is a row of ten circular icons representing different design categories: For you, Docs, Whiteboards, Presentations, Social media, Videos, Print products, Websites, and More. Underneath this is a section titled 'You might want to try...' which displays five template thumbnails: 'Design Visual Docs' (Doc), 'Get ideas flowing' (Whiteboard), 'Present with ease' (Presentation (16:9)), 'Play with video' (Video), and 'Create blank (Squa...' (Instagram Post (Squa...)). The bottom of the page shows a URL: <https://www.canva.com/design?create&type=TABQqs5Kbyc&category=tACFajEYU...>

# New to PEEL Writing?

**P** point

**E** evidence

**E** elaboration

**L** linking sentence

## Here is what a PEEL paragraph looks like...

In 'Persepolis', Marjane Satrapi interrogates her conflicted identity during her childhood in post-Revolution Iran through her use of graphic novel form and features to reflect on her personal experiences. Satrapi reflects on her personal experiences growing up while the Islamic Regime consolidated its power as she narrates, "I really didn't know what to think about the veil. Deep down I was very religious but as a family we were very modern and avant-garde." Satrapi's narration creates a juxtaposition between modernism and the religious fundamentalism of the Islamic Republic, which is elucidated by the visual juxtaposition between industrial images such as screws and cogs that represent modernity and traditional religious patterns that symbolise religion. The protagonist Marji is centred between the two juxtaposing backgrounds with only half of her hair covered by a veil. This visual juxtaposition paired with Satrapi's narration reveals how Marji's identity and sense of self are conflicted as a result of her experiences during the new Islamic Regime. Satrapi hence uses the form and features of graphic novels such as juxtaposition to highlight her conflicted identity and reflect on the challenges of growing up in the tumultuous social and political context of post-Revolution Iran.

# EXAMPLE BLOG 1: bleacherreport.com



NBA

NFL

MLB

NHL

Videos

World Football

More

Shows

B/R Kicks

B/R Gaming

B/R Gridiron

Get the App

B/R Shop

Account

## 5 NFL Trades That Should Still Happen Before the 2023 NFL Season

ALEX KAY

MAY 9, 2023



There are only so many ways left for a team to improve its roster now that the NFL draft and initial waves of free agency are in the books. A club could try its luck with one of the few notable veterans lingering on the open market or come to terms with an undrafted free agent, but the best path would be to execute a trade.

Several potential contributors could be available for the right price. Whether they are playing on expiring deals or simply appear to have fallen out of favor, viable veterans appear to be ripe to be traded before the 2023 season begins this fall.

With that in mind, here are five trades that would benefit both sides if they were to occur this offseason.





© 2022 Getty Images

**New York Giants receive: S Budda Baker**

**Arizona Cardinals receive: 2024 second-round pick**

It's hard to fault Budda Baker for wanting to part ways with the Arizona Cardinals, who appear to be headed toward a rough season. They not only executed a major regime change but are also [projected to be without](#) starting quarterback Kyler Murray (ACL) for an extended stretch in 2023.

ESPN's [Adam Schefter](#) reported that the 27-year-old safety requested a trade in February but would be willing to remain in Arizona if the team made him the highest-paid player at his position.

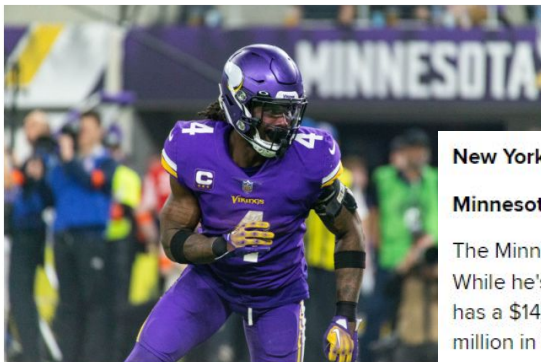
Given the team's lack of contending status and Baker's potentially expiring deal—he's due \$13.1 million in base salary for the upcoming campaign, with a team option for 2024 valued at \$14.2 million—the Cardinals would be better off finding a taker for the 2017 second-rounder.

Baker is well-regarded in league circles not only for his contributions on the field but also for his leadership in the locker room, although the two-time first-team All-Pro has amassed an impressive 650 tackles, 7.5 sacks and seven interceptions over his six NFL seasons. He'd be an ideal acquisition for an up-and-coming organization with championship aspirations.

The New York Giants fit the bill as they seek to build on their NFC Divisional Round appearance last year. They made some nice moves this offseason—including retaining quarterback Daniel Jones and grabbing an elite corner in Deonte Banks with their first-round pick—but still need to bolster the safety position after losing Julian Love in free agency.

Big Blue only have one starter truly set in incumbent Xavier McKinney, who is back following an injury-plagued 2022 campaign. The club inked Bobby McCain after his release from the rival Washington Commanders but still needs more veteran help in the secondary.

If the G-Men can add a premier talent like Baker for a Day 2 pick—a selection the rebuilding Cardinals should be keen to accept—it would give their defense the edge it needs to make a leap.



**New York Jets receive: RB Dalvin Cook**

**Minnesota Vikings receive: 2024 fourth-round pick**

The Minnesota Vikings have a tough decision regarding Dalvin Cook. While he's emerged as an elite running back over the last four years, he has a \$14.1 million cap hit this season, and that number rises to \$15.6 million in 2024.

There have been rumors that Cook may not be a Viking for much longer despite a four-year run in which he tallied over 6,400 yards from scrimmage and scored 46 touchdowns. ESPN's [Adam Schefter](#) recently reported that Cook's "future is in question" and noted that he may not be on Minnesota's roster during the upcoming campaign.

The four-time Pro Bowler is one of the most [expensive](#) players at his position, with only Alvin Kamara and Christian McCaffrey earning more annually. While Cook's contributions are undoubtedly strong, it may be tough for Minnesota to find a taker. Teams haven't been willing to spend big on running backs in the modern NFL, although a club desperate to win during a small championship window may be willing to pony up.

The New York Jets are an ideal match after acquiring Aaron Rodgers from the Green Bay Packers. The future Hall of Fame quarterback is entering his age-40 season and may not have much tread left on his tires, but Gang Green will be hoping to win at least one Lombardi Trophy before his retirement.

Cook could team with up-and-comer Breece Hall to form one of the best backfield tandems in the league, giving New York the additional firepower it needs to take the heat off Rodgers and wear down defenses.

While Cook would be a costly addition and they'd need to clear some cap space, the Jets can't afford to squander the opportunity they have to win it all and should be more than willing to incur the expense.



### Cleveland Browns receive: RB Cordarrelle Patterson

### Atlanta Falcons receive: 2024 seventh-round pick

The Atlanta Falcons have plenty of capable running backs and not enough touches to go around. After the team invested the 2023 No. 8 overall pick in Bijan Robinson and returned Tyler Allgeier following his breakout 1,000-yard rookie campaign, Cordarrelle Patterson could see his role severely diminished.

While Patterson rejuvenated his career after signing with the Falcons in 2021, the dynamic back could be best utilized as a trade chip this offseason. He still has a good bit of value following a two-year stretch in which he racked up nearly 2,000 yards from scrimmage and scored a whopping 19 touchdowns.

Although he's entering his age-32 season, Patterson showed he still has plenty left in the tank after punching in a career-high eight scores on the ground last year over 13 games. Despite these contributions, it's tough to envision a scenario in which the 10-year veteran gets enough volume to justify his \$5.5 million cap hit in 2023.

Enter the Cleveland Browns, a team that declined to retain Kareem Hunt—its primary pass-catcher out of the backfield—following the expiration of his contract. The Browns have a clear need for a versatile threat like Patterson to round out their offense after losing a player who contributed 2,847 yards from scrimmage and 23 touchdowns over the last four years.

Patterson would be a strong complement to leading tailback Nick Chubb, who is coming off a career-best 1,525 rushing-yard season, and unproven backup Jerome Ford, Cleveland's fifth-round pick in 2022 who saw just eight totes as a rookie.

Since Patterson is a realistic cut candidate for the Falcons, offering a seventh-round pick should be enough to get this deal done.



**Las Vegas Raiders receive: CB Ahkello Witherspoon**

**Pittsburgh Steelers receive: 2024 sixth-round pick**

The Pittsburgh Steelers overhauled the cornerback position this offseason, signing veterans Patrick Peterson and Chandon Sullivan on the open market and selecting Joey Porter Jr. and Cory Trice Jr. in the draft. These acquisitions have resulted in a logjam that could leave a serviceable veteran in Ahkello Witherspoon as the odd man out.

Witherspoon landed with the Steelers at the start of the 2021 campaign via trade. The 28-year-old has seen sporadic action in Pittsburgh, participating in just 13 games—starting seven of them—over the last two seasons. Injuries limited him to just four appearances last year, although he did earn a respectable [75.9 PFF grade](#) as recently as the 2021 campaign.

The Las Vegas Raiders would be a good fit for Witherspoon. The team has a lack of talented veterans in its secondary, with Duke Shelley and David Long Jr. currently projected to be the two starters on the outside. The club did use a fourth-round pick to draft Jakorian Bennett, but it will want to grab at least one more experienced defensive back before training camp begins.

While the team has some free-agent options it could still explore, Witherspoon may be the best choice given his relatively cheap cost—he has a \$5.5 million cap hit in 2023, the final year of his current deal—age and experience, as he's 28 years old and heading into his seventh NFL season.

If the 2017 third-round pick is available for a Day 3 selection—a reasonable return given his expiring contract and likely lack of playing time if he were to remain in Pittsburgh—the Raiders should capitalize and make the move to bolster their cornerbacks room.



### Seattle Seahawks receive: Edge Chase Young

Washington Commanders receive: **2024 second-round pick, conditional 2025 second-round pick**

The Seattle Seahawks were a popular candidate in mock drafts to address their edge-rushing needs with at least one of their two first-round picks this year. While they ultimately decided against securing a pass-rusher until Day 2, when they selected Derick Hall at No. 37 overall, the team still needs another good edge defender to push it over the top.

Chase Young could be the ideal trade candidate for Seattle after the Washington Commanders declined to pick up his fifth-year option. The No. 2 overall pick in 2020 entered the league red-hot—earning Defensive Rookie of the Year honors after collecting 7.5 sacks—but has since had his career derailed by a devastating knee injury that cost him nearly half of the 2021 campaign and all but three games in 2022.

While Young has accumulated only 1.5 sacks over the 12 games he has appeared in since his rookie season, he still has plenty of upside if he can return to form. Although the Commanders weren't willing to make a pricy bet on his recovery—a move likely influenced by the club having recently allocated a hefty amount of resources toward a pair of defensive linemen in Jonathan Allen and Daron Payne, coupled with a looming decision to make regarding Montez Sweat—a club like Seattle could benefit from rolling the dice.

If the Seahawks were willing to ship Washington a second-rounder in 2024 and a conditional pick the following year that would be another second-rounder if Young hits a certain playing-time threshold in 2023, it should be enough for the Commanders to part ways with a player they may not even be able to afford when he hits the open market next spring. The move would be contingent on Seattle clearing some cap space as well, a path the Seahawks should have no issue exploring given Young's potential.

# EXAMPLE BLOG 2: pinchofyum.com/blog

♥ OUR RECIPES, YOUR INBOX. SIGN UP →



pinch of yum

HOME

ABOUT

RECIPES

START HERE



PINCH OF YUM > SPRING BUCKET LIST > ANNOUNCING THE SPRING BUCKET LIST

## Announcing the Spring Bucket List

*Introducing the Pinch of Yum Spring Bucket List! Jump feet-first into a happy, colorful, fresh eating season by making these flavor-packed recipes and entering yourself to win fun prizes!*

*spring bucket list*



HI! I'M LINDSAY.  
*nice to meet you!*

731



# Announcing the Spring Bucket List

Introducing the Pinch of Yum Spring Bucket List! Jump feet-first into a happy, colorful, fresh eating season by making these flavor-packed recipes and entering yourself to win fun prizes!

## spring bucket list



STRAWBERRY WHITE CHOCOLATE COOKIES



LEMON CHICKEN SOUP WITH ORZO



PISTACHIO LOAF



CHOPPED SALAD PIZZA



SHARE FOOD WITH A FRIEND



CRUNCHY ROLL BOWLS



COCONUT CURRY SALMON



CARROT CAKE COFFEE CAKE



BAKED CHICKEN MEATBALLS



HI! I'M LINDSAY.  
*nice to meet you!*

I'm a former 4th grade teacher, now full time blogger. My husband Bjork and I live in Minnesota. Favorite things include my camera, lake days, and dark chocolate.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### FOLLOW US



*signup*

### FOR EMAIL UPDATES

Get a Free eCookbook with our top 25 recipes.

GO

Here it is – the 2023 Pinch of Yum Spring Bucket List!

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR THE SPRING BUCKET LIST

- [Print the Spring Bucket List PDF](#)
- [What is the Spring Bucket List?](#)
- [What are the recipes and prizes?](#)
- [How to enter the giveaways](#)
- [More FAQs](#)

## HOW TO PRINT THE SPRING BUCKET LIST

You can find the printable Spring Bucket List [here](#)!

---

## WHAT IS THE SPRING BUCKET LIST?

The Spring Bucket List is a collection of 8 recipes that I consider must-makes for spring! These are some of our tried and true, most popular, come back to it every year favorite recipes.

You can cook your way through this list just for fun, AND, if you want, you can enter to win prizes!

How it works:

- Make one recipe and enter for an individual prize;
- OR complete the entire bucket list (all 8 recipes plus sharing a meal with a friend) and enter to win our grand prize of \$1,000 cash!

*(Full details on giveaways can be found [here](#).)*

---



# WHAT ARE THE RECIPES AND PRIZES?

This is the full list of all 8 recipes on the Spring Bucket List!



## 1: CHOPPED SALAD PIZZA

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 2: CARROT CAKE COFFEE CAKE

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 3: COCONUT CURRY SALMON

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 4: LEMON CHICKEN SOUP WITH ORZO

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 5: BEST ANYTIME BAKED CHICKEN MEATBALLS

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 6: STRAWBERRY WHITE CHOCOLATE COOKIES

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 7: PISTACHIO LOAF

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 8: CRUNCHY ROLL BOWLS

Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway

## 9: SHARE FOOD WITH A FRIEND

This one is new! The goal is to add a bit of sunshine to someone's day by bringing them a meal or treat.

A few ideas could be:

- Donate to a food-related organization. We love the work that [World Central Kitchen](#) does!
- Grab coffee with a friend or family member.
- Bring cookies to a neighbor.
- Share a meal with someone going through a hard season.
- Have friends over for dinner.

This does not need to be a Pinch of Yum recipe. Just be sure to send a photo of whatever you do. If you make a donation to a food-related organization, you can email us the receipt and blur out the donation amount or any other personal info!

*Prize: \$250 gift card to Williams Sonoma, Nordic Ware, DeLallo, ALDI, or Caraway*

## HOW TO ENTER THE GIVEAWAYS

### How To Enter Individual Recipe Giveaways

- 1 Take a photo of your completed recipe and email it to [bucketlist@pinchofyum.com](mailto:bucketlist@pinchofyum.com). Put the name of the recipe in the subject line. That's it!
- 2 For a bonus entry, after you've sent a photo, leave a rating on the recipe! Please use the same email address for both entries so we can count you twice.

### How To Enter for The Grand Prize

- 1 Send an email to [bucketlist@pinchofyum.com](mailto:bucketlist@pinchofyum.com) with the words "grand prize" in the subject line. Include your photos of each of the completed recipes as well as your photo of sharing a meal with a friend. That's it!

### Entry Deadlines

We will be accepting entries from March 20th – April 11th.

**Submissions will close on April 11th at 11:59 pm CST.**

---

## OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS

### What if I want to make dietary modifications to a recipe?

Make your subs and swaps, no problem! Send us the photo like usual. If you leave a review, it's super helpful if you note what you changed about the recipe (used shredded jackfruit instead of shredded chicken, for example) in case others might want to do the same!

### Can I share my recipe photo multiple times for more entries?

The only way to get a **bonus** entry is to leave a review on the recipe itself! As long as you use the same email address for both entries, that will count as two entries.

I would LOVE to see your recipe photos on Instagram as well – if you tag @pinchofyum, I should be able to find them!

### Can I enter the individual giveaways *and* the grand prize?

Yes!

### Do I need to make all of the recipes *and* share a meal with a friend in order to be eligible for the grand prize?

Yes!

### Do I need to make a Pinch of Yum recipe when I share a meal with a friend?

It does not need to be a Pinch of Yum recipe! Just be sure to snap a photo so we can count it as an entry.

### How old do I have to be to participate?

To be entered to win a prize, you will need to be 18 years or older.

### Do I need to live in the U.S. to win?

Individual prizes are limited to U.S. residents.

The grand prize can be won by anyone worldwide.

### How will winners be chosen?

By emailing your completed recipe image to us, you are entered to win the prize associated with that recipe. A bonus entry is counted when you leave a rating for the recipe on the blog.

Winners will be selected at random from individual recipe entries (combining email entries with rating entries). We do not choose based on photo quality or any other characteristics of your entry – they are chosen at random!

Once a winner is selected, each individual will have the option to choose the gift card they'd like to receive (Caraway, ALDI, DeLallo, Nordic Ware, and Williams Sonoma).

### Can I win multiple prizes?

One prize per winner is allowed.

If your name is selected for a prize, a member of our team will contact you on April 12th through the email address used for your entry.

Individual prizes will be shipped to the selected winners (based in the US), and the grand prize cash will be delivered via PayPal.

---

We're so ready and very excited to kick off such a happy season and get some of these tried-and-true recipes in your kitchen!

I will be making these recipes on Instagram throughout the next 4-ish weeks as we run this Spring Bucket List challenge, so be sure to check stories, reels, and highlights on Instagram to see the recipes up close and personal in my kitchen! You can follow along [here](#).

And as you're making the recipes, if you have questions, feel free to drop a comment on the recipe post or email our team at [hello@pinchofyum.com](mailto:hello@pinchofyum.com)!

Happy spring cooking!

FILED UNDER: **SPRING BUCKET LIST**

MARCH 20, 2023



**Favorite Browned Butter  
Chocolate Chip Cookies**

PREV

**Carrot Cake Coffee Cake**



NEXT



#### NICE TO MEET YOU!

I'm Lindsay and I ♥ FOOD. I used to be a teacher, and now making food and writing about it online is my full-time job. I love talking with people about food, and I'm so glad you're here.

Did you make a recipe? Tag [@pinchofyum](#) on Instagram so we can find you!



# EXAMPLE BLOG 3: [heyciara.com/blog/](https://heyciara.com/blog/)

HEYCiARA

HOME

ABOUT

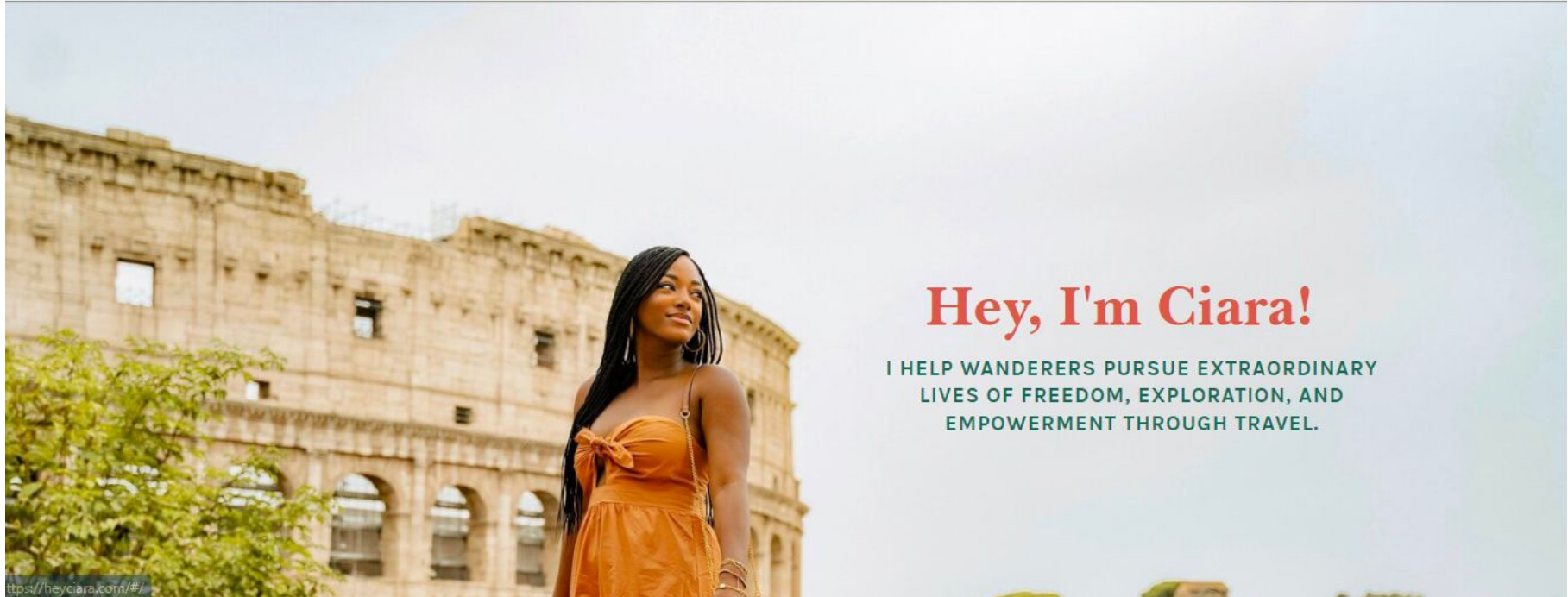
TRAVEL

BLOG

PORTFOLIO

SHOP

CONTACT



## Hey, I'm Ciara!

I HELP WANDERERS PURSUE EXTRAORDINARY  
LIVES OF FREEDOM, EXPLORATION, AND  
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TRAVEL.

HEY  
CiARA  
travel · freedom



*Welcome to the*

## HeyCiara Blog

I'm here to help you pursue your travel dreams by providing the resources I wish I had in the beginning.

**WHEN YOU TRAVEL, I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE AFRAID. I WANT YOU TO HAVE ENOUGH RESOURCES THAT EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN ISN'T SO SCARY.**

*xxxx Ciara*

SEARCH THE BLOG...



# An Unforgettable Experience In The Sahara Desert | Morocco



My two-week trip through Morocco did not disappoint. Every aspect of the landscapes, people, & culture left me in awe, wanting more. However, one particular experience during my Morocco Highlights tour stood out the most:



An unforgettable night in the Sahara Desert.

## THE JOURNEY TO THE SAHARA

The journey to the Sahara was a long one, but I knew it'd be worth it. After stepping into the only non-muslim permitting mosque in Casablanca and shopping in the maze-like Medina in Fes, our tour group made our way south to Midelt. Situated in the high plains between the middle & high atlas mountains, this stop allowed us to witness the Berber way of life. It was the perfect way to break up our 2-day drive just before arriving in Merzouga, a small town that sits right at the edge of the Sahara.



Things you need to know before visiting Tulum



## ARRIVING TO MERZOUGA

We arrived to remote Merzouga midday after driving through massive gorges and lush green valleys. We dropped our bags off at a hotel overlooking the desert, packed small overnight bags, and set off for the experience we'd all been waiting for - a night camping the Sahara. I remember asking all 9 members of our group what they were looking forward to most and the majority admitted that they expected our desert trek to be the highlight of the trip. I couldn't help but feel the same amount of excitement for what was to come.

Before jumping on our camels, we prepped ourselves for the elements by wrapping scarves around our heads in traditional Berber style and fueling up with some Moroccan mint tea. We walked out onto the sand to meet the camels who'd be carrying us through the dunes. Since this was my first time seeing a camel in real life, I was completely taken aback at just how tall these animals were. They seemed calm & confident, which helped ease some of the fear a few people in our group had. One by one, our Berber guides helped us get mounted on top of our camels. We were told to hold on tightly as the camels abruptly rose from the ground to an upright position. As I sat atop my camel's hump, I could hardly believe that this was real life. Woah! I was seriously about to ride a camel!



25 TIPS TO STAY SAFE AS A SOLO  
FEMALE

## WANNA BE PEN PALS?

Sign up to stay current on all my latest tips, tricks, photos, and lists.

**SUBSCRIBE**



## RIDING CAMELS THROUGH THE DESERT

Up then down, was the continuous motion as we set off into bright orange dunes as far as the eye could see. There was not a single soul or building in sight. Other than the squeals we'd occasionally release as the galloping camels jolted our bodies, you couldn't hear a sound. The desert was completely silent. Despite the silence of the Sahara, I was overwhelmed by the power of the dunes that towered around us. We all expressed how surreal the experience was in the moment. I began to tear up as we rode into sunset and our shadows silently dance along the seas of sand.



## DRUMS UNDER THE SKY

We arrived at our desert camp at dusk and our guides helped us off of the camels. We quickly realized that the 2-hour camel ride would leave us sore for the next few days, but we all agreed it was worth it. The ride was unforgettable! Before getting settled in our tents, we ran to the top of a nearby dune to take in the views during the last bit of light. After only several days, it was like we forgot that we started this trip as strangers. We were cracking inside jokes, rolling in the sand, and snapping photos. I sunk my hands into the powder-like sand and thanked the universe for gifting me these new friends to share this experience with. We headed back down to the desert camp and the first order of business was Moroccan mint tea, of course. We looked at each other in the eye, clinked our glasses, and gushed about the fact that we were spending the night in the Sahara together. We sipped on our tea as the desert guide served us a traditional Tagine. This was the best Tagine of our trip, and I think the extraordinary setting had something to do with it.

## SLEEPING UNDER THE STARS

After eating, we all gathered around a campfire for some traditional Berber music. It was just us, the warmth of the fire, and the sound of drums underneath the night sky. We danced, we sang, and we rejoiced under the starlight. Millions of tiny stars filled the pitch-black sky. It felt like we were in a dream. We all decided to scrap the tents and sleep outside right under the stars. If there was any place made for sleeping outdoors, this was it.

## FINAL MOMENTS IN THE SAHARA

We awoke at a silent 6 am to prepare for our trek back into Merzouga. With sore bums, we jumped back onto our camels with the hopes of witnessing a miraculous sunrise. Unfortunately, the fog prevented us from doing so but that didn't make our last moments in the Sahara any less magical. I sat on my camel, looking out into the sand, absorbing the calm, and trying to soak in the entire experience. In fact, I decided to demount my camel and stay in the dunes a bit longer as the rest of my group continued on. I stood completely alone surrounded by sand for nearly an hour, trying to process what exactly my eyes were seeing. Being out there in complete solitude was nearly too much to handle. It was both powerful and humbling.

My feet sank with each step as I finally made my way back to the hotel to meet up with the rest of my group. I took one last look around at the magnificent mountains of sand that surrounded me and I felt an immense amount of gratitude. This would be my last moment in the Sahara desert, but I knew that the experience would be imprinted in my mind forever.

