BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Side quest

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Feifei
Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, where we explain phrases and expressions used by fluent English speakers so that you can use them too. I'm Feifei, and here comes…

Phil
… I'm Phil. How are you doing, Feifei?

Feifei
Where were you?

Phil
Sorry, I just went shopping to buy something for dinner. I say I went to buy something for dinner, but then I ended up on a side quest and bought a load of records.

Feifei
And got back here late, I see. I would be annoyed but actually that expression 'side quest' would be a good one to learn.

Phil
Ok, yeah good idea. To explain this one, we have to talk about video games. In many games, you have a main quest. That's the main thing that you have to do in the game. A side quest is not the main thing that you have to do. It's something else that you can do, that's often short and fun.

Feifei
Right, that's in a video game, but in your shopping trip today. Your main quest was to buy something for dinner. But then you got distracted by something more fun and went to buy records. That was your side quest.

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Phil
Yes, that's right. We can use 'side quest' to talk about things that you do aren't the most important thing you do. And yes, they're often something that you enjoy doing.

Feifei
Well, I'm glad you had fun! Let's hear some other people using 'side quest'.

Examples
We've always wanted to visit Belfast for the scenery but there were just these beautiful museums that we found on a side quest wandering around the city.

I was on my way to a concert and I had loads of free time so I went on a bit of a side quest to a bookshop.

I had loads of things to prepare for a presentation at work but then I realised the printers were out of ink so I went on a bit of a side quest to try and get that fixed first.

Feifei
We've been learning the expression 'side quest' to describe something you do, that's less important than your main task.

Phil
Yes, we have quite a few expressions where we use the 'word' side to talk about something less important. A side dish is something that you eat, that goes with the main ingredient. A side hustle is a job that you do, that's not as important as your main job and it might give you a side income.

Feifei
OK. That's it for this programme but join us next time to make sure that your English learning is more than just a side quest.

Phil
See you then!

Feifei
Bye bye!

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