**Rome wasn’t built in a day: Phrases with place names**

[**https://dictionaryblog.cambridge.org/2021/02/03/rome-wasnt-built-in-a-day-phrases-with-place-names/**](https://dictionaryblog.cambridge.org/2021/02/03/rome-wasnt-built-in-a-day-phrases-with-place-names/)

At the end of last year, there was a post about phrases containing people’s names, which generated quite a lot of interest. I hope you will also enjoy this post about phrases based on place names.

I will start with adjectives from countries. People say [**It’s all Greek to me**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/it-s-all-greek-to-me) when they don’t understand something at all. Similarly, in British English, we sometimes describe language we can’t understand as [**double Dutch**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/double-dutch):

*I looked at the contract, but it’s all Greek to me.*

*The terms they used sounded like double Dutch to me.*

Other phrases with ‘Dutch’ include [**go Dutch**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/go-dutch), which means to share the cost of something – usually a meal. [**Dutch courage**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dutch-courage) is a humorous way of describing the confidence that an alcoholic drink can give you:

*We decided to go Dutch on our first date.*

*He needed a bit of Dutch courage before he asked her out.*

We use the phrase [**play**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/play#cald4-1-2)[**Russian roulette**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/russian-roulette) in a figurative way to describe taking a dangerous and reckless risk. On a more pleasant note, an [**Indian summer**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/indian-summer) is a period of warm weather that follows colder autumn weather, in countries where the autumn is usually rather cold:

*The government is playing Russian roulette with the country’s future.*

*Let’s make the most of this Indian summer.*

One slightly old-fashioned phrase that contains the name of a country rather than the adjective is [**not for all the tea in China**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/would-not-do-sth-for-all-the-tea-in-china)**.** This emphasizes that nothing could persuade you to do something:

*I wouldn’t take that job for all the tea in China!*

Let’s move on to cities now. There are several phrases containing the word ‘Rome’. [**Rome wasn’t built in a day**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/rome-wasn-t-built-in-a-day) means that it often takes a long time to achieve worthwhile things. [**When in Rome, do as the Romans do**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/when-in-rome-do-as-the-romans-do) means that if you are in a different place, especially a different country, you should behave in the same way as the local people, and if you accuse someone of [**fiddling while Rome burns**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fiddle-while-rome-burns), you mean that they are doing unimportant things when they should be dealing with a serious problem.

*I only have 50 Twitter followers at the moment, but Rome wasn’t built in a day.*

*She accused officials of fiddling while Rome burns.*

In British English, if a group of people [**sends someone to Coventry**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/send-sb-to-coventry), they refuse to speak to them. Brits also use the phrase [**carry/take coals to Newcastle**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carry-take-coals-to-newcastle) to describe providing something that someone already has a lot of (Newcastle was a prominent mining area):

*His colleagues sent him to Coventry for working during the strike.*

*Selling cheese to the French is like carrying coals to Newcastle.*