

London and the Best of Southern England

We recently returned from a trip to England and became simply enchanted with the Heart of England with its many villages. The name of the area is called the Cotswold region. At times I felt we were in a time machine returning to a place in time where history was encased in one of the best medieval castle in the world, Warwick Castle. It was here in the 15th century that King Edward IV was imprisoned. We toured two beautiful manor houses, Blenheim Palace, where Sir Winston Churchill was born, and Hampton Court with all of its 1,000 rooms. This is where King Henry VIII lived with his many wives. We will never forget our tour of the British Museum with the famous Rosetta Stone dating before the Egyptian era. It was the Rosetta Stone that enabled archeologists to fully understand the hieroglyphs of that period.

One of our travelers, Amy Carpenter, who had never traveled abroad, said it so well. *"When the airplane touched down at Heathrow Airport in London I literally cried. I have followed the monarch as long as I can remember. I have read extensively on the history of the kings and queens of England. Often I would daydream of what it was like to be from a royal family. The dream came true when I traveled there with Wayne and Valerie and a great group of travelers from Someday Travel. It was enjoyable. I gained a terrific amount of knowledge about the history and it tied together all the years of my reading on the monarchy. It was more than I could have imagined. I loved the experience!"*



When Someday Travel leads a tour, we strive to create an environment of fun and camaraderie. A connection for all of our trips is created between us and our travelers (we personally travel with every group we lead). It's by design that we want our groups to feel like they are stepping into a unique travel

experience for a short time in another country. It's a connection that we have all chosen to go on this journey together so let's enjoy it. And our England group did! We stayed at the historic Queens hotel in Cheltenham located in the Cotswold's Region. We were actually met by a doorman dressed in a top hat and black waist coat with tails. He welcomed us and let us know that formal tea was served every afternoon in the parlor with clotted cream and scones with jam.

There was also a lovely grand piano sitting in the lobby and one of the travelers bought a song book filled with English songs. One evening after a group of us had returned from dinner, Jeannie Nordstrom surprised us all by sitting down and began to play song after song. Ten of us gathered around her and sang for an hour ending with "Hail to the Queen".

Another traveler expressed her experience this way. *"You were great hosts from start to finish. Anyone who is interested in traveling, but hesitates because of not having someone to travel with, Someday Travel Tours is the answer. You are welcomed into a group and feel part of it. You don't have to spend hours on trip planning because Valerie and Wayne do all the work. I was able to sit back and enjoy a hassle free, worry free trip what could be better."*

On our first day of touring we visited Stonehenge. It is one of the most famous and recognizable sites in the world. The first Stonehenge was simple, just a circular ditch and bank which occurred about 5000 years ago. In about 2500 BC the first stones had started to arrive which marked the beginning of over 800 years of construction and alterations. When we came into this site of the stones in a circular pattern, I was in awe. There they were, just sitting in the middle of a field. It is beyond comprehension how they were created. We had an excellent guide who not only shared the history of the area and its civilization, but also shared that there is an energy force that runs through the earth's meridian and crosses diagonally through Stonehenge. To illustrate this, she handed each of us two thin metal rods and demonstrated the force to us. We all held onto the L shaped metal rods, stepped into this field of energy, and the metal rods would move on their own, crossing each other as we moved across this "energy line". Even the skeptics in the group could not prevent it from occurring. It was one of those "wow" moments for us all.

We visited the birthplace of England's most noted playwrights, William Shakespeare. It is located in Stratford Upon Avon which sits on the banks of the river Avon. His wife was Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years older than him and they had three children. He left her after six years and went to London to become an actor. Anne lived in a spacious twelve-room "cottage" which has an extensive garden. While there is very little known about her, her home is open to the public. Some of our group attended a Shakespeare play in an enclosed theater patterned after the Globe theater in London, where Shakespeare preformed his plays. The streets and buildings in Stratford reminded me of the streets in a Harry Potter movie. Come to find out, some of the scenes were actually filmed in Stratford.

One can't go to England without being immersed in the Royal Family. On our tour in London we toured the Tower of London, saw the Crown Jewels, visited St. Paul's Cathedral, walked in Westminster Abbey and of course Buckingham Palace. The Palace area was filled with tourists waiting to see the "Changing of the Guards". After that, our guide led us to an open area and said the Queen's band would soon be seen marching down the street, practicing for the Queen's Birthday. Sure



enough, we soon heard the drums, then we saw the bright red coats and tall black furry hats, and the band marched within 20 feet of our position. At that point, nothing could have been more British. It really was impressive. While we didn't see the Queen, the band and the horse guards practicing for her upcoming birthday celebration gave us a real sense of England and the Monarchy. The Queen's Birthday (and King's) is celebrated twice, once on the actual day and once in late May or early June (June 8 this year). King VIII, whose birthday was in the dead of winter, decided it was too cold to celebrate his birthday then so moved it to when the weather was nicer and people could join in the parade. So it has become a tradition and every year in the spring the Queen enjoys an outdoor celebration of her birthday.

If you are interested in viewing our photos and reading our daily blog on this trip, you are encouraged to go to our web site www.somedaytravel.com and click on "Blogs". We will also be presenting in October at the Fond du Lac Public Library on this trip. We are also available to speak at clubs and organizations on any of the many trips we have led.