

Our trip to London

Wednesday, April 8th 2011: It was the D-day. We had been waiting for month this day. At last, we were going to London. We all gathered at 6:10 AM at the lycée. We were all really excited, but still a little bit asleep. We went to London by bus then by train. The journey was very convivial, we all played together, we sang...

At St Pancras, M. Simon welcomed us and we took the tube to the Lycée Français. There, Mr Zane presented the programme of the week before M. Simon showed us the lycée. The programme looked varied and interesting.

After that, we went to the natural history museum unfortunately for about just one hour. What a pity! It was too short to discover this huge museum. Then we walked to Hyde Park. There, we made a short pause, when we could enjoy oh this sunny day. We saw the Royal Albert Hall and Prince Albert Memorial on the way.

We spend our first evening in our host families with our exchange partners. In fact, I did not have any exchange partners. I was hosting by a family who had 2 children who study in the lycée: Emily who was 2 years younger than me, and Christian who was 2 years older than me. Christian has made the exchange with Epinal when he was younger.

All the family was very friendly with. Though they all speak French, they tried to talk to me in English. But when I was alone with the children, they spoke with me in French...

I had a very beautiful "shed" into the garden where there were my room and a bathroom, which I was alone to use.

Saturday 9th: There wasn't any programme for this weekend. As I said before, I did not really have an exchange partner. Furthermore during this weekend, Emily and Christian were not at home. That's why my host family suggested me to spend the weekend with another exchange partner. I accepted, and in the morning, the father drove me to Fabrice's home. I was a little scared to see him driving on the left. The French exchange partner of Fabrice was Maxime. We spent our morning to play XBOX. After the lunch, Fabrice's mother drove us to Hyde Park. There, we met some other exchange partners. After we enjoyed the sun and played football, we went to Westfield, a huge shopping center.

We had dinner into a pizzeria. We were nearly all the French and English who made the exchange. It was very friendly.

It was very late when we decided to go back to home. We didn't have luck, and we missed our train, and we had to wait about 50 minutes. Fortunately, it reminded one more train after, it was the last.

Sunday 10th: After a good night, we went to a park next to the Fabrice's home. That's where I learned how to skateboard. We spent a funny time. After we ate at home, we decided to go one more time to Hyde Park. This time, we went to it with Pierre and his partner. The afternoon in Hyde Park was quite the same as the Saturday's afternoon.

After this beautiful weekend, I had to go back to my "host" home by myself. To do that, I had to take the tube, then the bus. The only instructions I had was a text message. Fortunately, I found the

way quite easily. I met for the first time Christian, the eldest child of my host families. He had spent few days in something that I think we could compare to the “scouts” we had in France. He was very kind with me.

Monday 11th: We visited the parliament. To go in, the security was very strict, probably as much as an airport. Then we had a picnic in a park on the bank of the River Thames.

In the afternoon, we saw Westminster Abbey, Whitehall with Downing Street and Trafalgar Square. We visited the National Gallery for more than an hour before going to Covent Garden for a little shopping. A lot of us went to the Starbucks to drink and eat something. I bought a polo shirt. Once we came back to lycée, I took the tube with Christian. I was tired of this long day, but I tried to help the family to cook the dinner.

Tuesday 12th: Tuesday was the day of the Jack the Ripper Tour in Whitechapel which is the East End. It was M. Simon who made that tour. Indeed, he’s crazy about Jack, and he was very interesting to listen to him. We also saw Brick Lane.

We had lunch at the lycée with the exchange partners. Then we took the tube to the Tower of London, which we could just see it because we did not have enough time, then we crossed Tower Bridge and walked along the south Bank where we saw City Hall, Shakespeare’s theatre, the Globe and finally, the Tate Modern where we spent only about 30 minutes. Afterwards, we crossed the Millennium Bridge from which we had a splendid view of St Paul’s Cathedral.

Wednesday 13th: It was a special morning: the mother of my host family decided to cook a typical English breakfast. On the menu, there were some scrambled eggs, bacons, roasted toast and thee. But she confessed to me that it was probably the first time that she was eating the “typical British breakfast”.

Once I was full, I could go to the daily meeting place at the lycée. Then, we went to Westminster Pier near the London Eye, where we got on a Thames Clipper to go to Docklands. A game was organized around Canary Wharf. We had to ask someone the name of one of the skyscrapers, and took a picture with a man worn a suit. It was quite funny.

After a quick picnic we “sailed” to Greenwich where the Maritime Museum and the Observatory are. Unfortunately, the Cutty Sark was closed. Back in town, we went to Harrod’s in Knightbridge. I did not buy anything. We finished this day with the visit of the Science Museum in Kensington.

Thursday 14th: Mr Zane took us to Neasden, in the North-West of London to visit a Hindu Temple. The trip was the longest we did in London. Indeed, it was very far from the center, and those neighborhoods were so different! We all were living in upper-class flat or house, and when we saw houses which seem to be poor, with dirty gardens. We could see the contrast of the different part of London. At the Hindu Temple we attended a religious ceremony. That was another new experience. On our way back to the station, we caught sight of Wembley Stadium and stopped at a huge supermarket, Tesco. It was one of the funniest steps of our journey.

For our afternoon in London we first went to Green Park, Buckingham Palace and Carlton Gardens (General De Gaulle’s headquarter) then to Picadilly Circus and Leicester Square where we did our last shopping... My principal challenge at this moment was to spend all my coins I had. I came back home, and had the last dinner with the family.

Friday 15th: I had to say goodbye to the family and the kittens, and I thanked them. We all were very disappointed to have to leave London. One week was not enough to discover all London and our exchange partner. Unfortunately, we could not stay anymore, we had to come back. I was a lucky boy this day; I was “randomly” picked by a custom officer to be searched; I had to pack my case again at St Pancras. That’s not my best memory of the trip...

Today, I try to keep contacts with the Kendrick, my host family. Christian sat exams just after I came back, but I don’t know if he passed them. The trip was very enriching, but as I said before, too short. Two weeks would be better, but we didn’t have the choice! However, I have a lot of very good memories of this trip to London. I hope I would meet again some Londoner we knew during it (and it probably will), and of course, I would go back to London!