

TRAVEL

Where in the World is Kristi Kelly?

Kristi Kelly
Contributor

London... kinda like New York City, but with a rock star attitude! After living in France, and exploring countries with first languages other than English, you better believe that I was ecstatic about my trip to the UK. I could read street signs with ease, I didn't need to study or rehearse simple key phrases like "yes" and "thank you" - and best of all, I could stock up on English reading material!!!! I never appreciated going into a bookstore so much in my life! So maybe I looked a little obsessive in purchasing something like 10 books, two magazines and 3 newspapers... anyhow, in some small way, I felt like I was coming a little closer to home.

London itself, is huge! Chalked full history, heritage buildings and monuments set the tone of the city itself however, modern day influences, fad-trends, and flamboyant passions all come together to mesh nicely, giving London an attitude like no other. You feel "cool", just being there. The artistic flare breathes throughout the city streets, and you see advertisements for every possible type of event; musicals, theatre performances, concerts and films. Both day and night, London's city center is bustling with thousands of movers and shakers... just doing their thing.

Everyone and everything is always moving, and its that buzzing excitement that makes London such a spectacular place to be.

So as you can imagine, my list of things to see was a mile long! Where to begin, what to do, what to eat... what to drink and where!? For any of you looking to travel Europe... the book "Europe on a Shoestring" is fab-u-lous. Not only does it tell you how to get to see everything that you need, it will highlight what is worth-seeing (and what's a tourist trap) - as well as some amazing detailed directions, great (cheap) places to eat, and what to try. Cheap, cheap, cheap - because the British pound will seriously give you a heart-attack, and no, I am not kidding. Think of this... you buy a bottle of water, great, 1.5 British pounds, gee, that's cheap!? Ummm... try 3.60 Canadian dollars (for freaking water!!!!) - and that is at the lower end of the spectrum! Burger King, a meal starts at 6 British pounds... so doing the math, at an exchange of almost 2.4 to the Canadian dollar (*cough - \$14.40 - cough*)... enough said.

So, after you recover from the shock of how incredibly broke you actually are, you can move on with



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The Legendary Big Ben

your adventure. There literally is something for everyone! I had to make my way to Buckingham Palace. I mean, really - you see it on television as this beautifully magnificent palace, with glorious gardens, and of course Royal Family! Man... what a let down in real life. Not only is Buckingham Palace smaller than I expected, it is surrounded by freaking concrete! Not even pretty concrete at that. And as I gripped the bars of the palace gate peering in desperately to catch a glimpse of a royal guard, I was sadly informed that the Royal Family wasn't even there!! So... my plans of actually meeting... then obviously marrying Prince William, were shot to hell *siiiiiiigh*, maybe next time.

To boost my spirits, I hopped on a trademark red, double-decker bus and proceeded on with my sightseeing. London Bridge, London Tower, Big Ben, the Old Globe Theatre, St. James Gate, and The London Eye all were amazing sights to see... however one warning. Double-decker buses + being on the top level + crazy London bus drivers whizzing around the city = an interesting combination of whip-lash and motion sickness.

Now, you can't be in the UK, and not be drawn in by the remarkably noticeable "social" culture. Come 5 p.m., the work day is over... and the night life honestly begins. Pubs and taverns are so full that people (still in

full work attire) are flowing into the streets where there are tables conveniently set up - drinking tall, frosty pints and sharing in jovial conversations of the days events. Undoubtedly, the Soho District, London's "social central" is by fair the trendiest and wildest place to be - somehow, me and my unwashed jeans, North Face fleece and un-showered traveling look managed to fit in quite nicely.

As night approaches, so does a whole new face to the streets of London - Piccadilly Circus, lit brightly as day is just as jammed packed as ever with crowds of anxious club hoppers and party chasers. Seeing as this is also the injunction where five major roadways meet, if you so choose to cross the street, run. Literally. If you think Island drivers are bad, imagine them on the other side of the road. London drivers stop for no one.

It's hard not to be swept up into the fun loving, social, trendy scene of this city. This in itself can lead to excessive drinking, a substantial increase in comedic/social cursing and poor fashion choices. It's hard not to love this city... and if you can handle (and manage) the price that comes along with this adventure, then it will undoubtedly be an experience you will never forget.

