THE WAYFARER

By Dawn M. Wayand

Getting Around - London's Transport Museum

It is safe to say that we all use some sort of transportation to get from Point A to Point B, but imagine not having a car or truck and having to rely solely on a horse and buggy, a train or a doubledecker bus for transportation.

I'm not much of a non-art museum person, but I gave the Museum of Transport in London a shot just because the Tube in London is such a big deal and I was glad that I did. This museum gives you a hands-on experience of the evolution of London's transportation system since the 1800's. This is not in pictures, folks. This is a collection of two centuries worth of "real life" vehicles that you can touch - some of which you can crawl inside. Vehicles such as the Omnibus, the steam locomotive, the knife board horsebus, London's first trolleybus and the Feltham tram are among the attractions as well as more modern public transport vehicles.

In addition, you can drive a Tube simulator, which makes you feel like you are actually driving a tram in the metro tunnel. You can also see how the Victorians traveled as well as learn about how the steam trains used to once run underground.

An actual lifesize model of a Tube tunnel is set up showing, through models, how the Tube was built. The experience is difficult to put into words as museums sometimes carry the reputation of being 'boring', but this one is full hands-on, with Interactive KidZones and an in-house cafe. The museum is open daily from 10-6pm and Fridays from 11-6pm. The last admission is at 5:15pm.

The museum is closed December 24-26. The cost is about $10 USD for adults.

Destination Facts

Food Known For: Fish N' Chips, Bangers N' Mash, Shepherd's Pie

Currency: Great British Pound

Language: English

Nearby Daytrips: Salisbury, Stonehenge, Bath

British Pubs: More Than a Pint Stop

Believe it or not, there is an alternative to paying for high-priced meals in upscale touristy restaurants or eating Asian food, steak, or even worse, the "common" McDonald's while in London! Pubs are a great way to try authentic English dishes.

Pub is short for "public house". People come to pubs to talk. You can get lots of advice and information on entertainment, public gossip and make some interesting acquaintances and friends at pubs. My search for

authentic English cuisine took me to The Essex Serpent near the Covent Gardens. Pubs start packing in between 3 and 4 pm with people drinking, smoking and chatting about anything to anyone - even perfect strangers. Upstairs was a room with seven tables and a 30-minute wait, but the friendly staff made the wait worthwhile by letting me sample different English Ales and giving me recommendations on local things to do around London during my visit.

That evening I tried the Bangers N' Mash. In England, the bangers (sausage) can be cooked in a variety of different ways. Their special that night was Cider Bangers N' Mash. Their mashed potatoes were a little drier than the ones we typically serve in the States, but were still good. The sausage tasted very tangy because of the cider, but was very good. Both were topped with a beef and onion gravy. It was very different but very good. I think it's what gives English food it's own character.

If you want to get into the British environment, but not quite ready to jump in "head-first", The Essex Serpent would be a good place to start. You can have a little dinner, let the friendly staff make you feel welcome, and then when you're ready, give the pub downstairs a shot!

The Essex Serpent
6 King Street, Covent Garden, London
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Travel Fact

From what I've heard many times and have experienced myself over the course of all my trips to London, the best and cheapest British food can be found in pubs. On the weekends, expect pubs to be packed with people enjoying pints of beer and talking up a storm! Grab your grub early or you may be either fishing for a table or finding yourself at a pricey, lesser authentic quality establishment.