

LONDON

12/2023

Für die SchülerInnen der 7. Klassen ging es vom 4. bis 11. Dezember 2023 gemeinsam mit ihren KVs und Lehrer*innen Prof. Feinig, Prof. Hammer, Prof. Kriehuber, Prof. Barbas und Prof. Schicker ins vorweihnachtliche London. Einen Einblick in die Erlebnisse der fröhlichen Reisegruppe gewährt Mariann Retter, 7br, in ihrem *London diary*:

Monday, 4th December:

The first impression of London was less than positive, with unpleasant turbulence during the landing of our flight that left the majority of the plane screaming. Although we did get some delightful videos of that, it did leave us a bit shaken up when we finally exited the plane and got to explore the airport a bit. We all had extensive plans for the week we were to spend here, although most of us chose our first London adventure to be a quick trip to the first local McDonalds we could find. It was still relatively early in the day when we arrived, just before noon, and after another bus ride we went to see Cambridge. Cambridge is a prestigious university, and although we did not enter the premises themselves, we got our shoes and pants undoubtedly muddy while walking around the local parks and restaurants. Everything was a bit more expensive than we were used to, and there were some starting struggles with the mental conversion of Pound Sterling to Euro, but by the end of the week, we all managed. Monday ended with us meeting our host families and getting to spend our first night in the outskirts of London.

(Rumours about one host family having their children sleep under the sink and next to the shower are not to be taken seriously.)

Tuesday, 5th December:

Tuesday started with the famous London morning rush. We had a travel card for the week which we were to scan at the entrance of the bus or underground station and which allowed us to take advantage of the full extent of London's public transport system. Absolutely no cards were lost during the trip and all traveling students did so very much legally. We had English lessons in a small community centre from Tuesday to Friday, and we were split into four groups. Of course, everyone was late the first day, including our teachers. Over the course of the week, we would be talking about each other's cultures (with honourable mentions of "Baby Jesus brings us presents" to explain the Christkindl and "The evil winter spirits hit us with branches and twigs while occasionally screaming and traditionally wearing scary wooden masks" as a stand in for the Krampusse) and play games to help us improve our conversation skills. Our teachers had organized a river cruise on the Thames for the afternoon, where we not only drove under Tower bridge but also saw it open in real time. The tour ended when we arrived at the Elizabeth Tower (otherwise known for housing the giant "Big Ben" bell) and the Palace of Westminster. We spent quite a lot of our time at a small Christkindlmarkt, making fun of the broken German that was written on their stands. After it had gotten dark, we also went to see Buckingham

Palace, which didn't impress us quite as much as the aforementioned buildings. (In the words of some: "Schönbrunn ist aber größer.")

Wednesday, 6th December:

Wednesday started off quite similarly to Tuesday, with everyone arriving late. Our group had a good laugh about it with our teacher. After the English lessons, we went to see the Prime Meridian. We then excitedly waited for about 10 minutes for a big red ball to crawl up the observatory's spire, only to then fall once again. We were later informed by our host mother that this was indeed quite the attraction, so I will say that we greatly enjoyed standing in front of the gate, unable to actually get in. We then made our way over to one of the many food markets we visited, and even saw some wild parrots on the way there. Apparently, London has quite the substantial population of local parrots, due to old nobles who had them imported as pets, and then just let them run free once they had grown bored of them. The food market was great fun with high prices, with a variety of fast foods and healthier options available. (Healthy in this case meaning strawberries covered in chocolate. Berries are indeed healthy.) We rounded off our second full day in London with a visit to the truly giant business district and a couple hours of shopping in and around Piccadilly Circus. There was also a small group of us that went to see the musical version of The Lion King afterwards, which was a highly recommendable experience.

Thursday, 7th December:

Thursday's afternoon plans gave us the option to choose between the Millennium Wheel and the London Dungeon, which were both a lot of fun. While the Millennium Wheel group returned with a bunch of new pictures, the London Dungeon group returned with frightening stories of Professor Schicker's "intense" screams. The evening was once again spent at Piccadilly Circus, where we got to hear the delightful tunes of a very out-of-tune clock made to look like a Swiss Village, and got into a very long line for a very big M&M store.

Friday, 8th December:

On Friday we went to visit another food market, which I sadly can't say all that much about because me and my partner both got lost and ended up walking around the same area for quite some time, but I am sure it was still fun if you didn't end up lost. After that, we went to see the Shard (a very tall skyscraper) and the Millennium Bridge, which brought us directly to St. Paul's

Cathedral. The plan was for us to look around the church for a bit before continuing our way, but we were denied entry after going through all the security procedures because our group was "too big". We did not see a lot of people in the church though. Still, this day takes up the majority of the photos made and videos taken, because we went to both the British Museum and an amusement park in Hyde Park called "WINTER WONDERLAND". Both attractions were great fun, with big groups of students often deciding to take the same rides and even our professors joining into the fun.

Saturday, 9th December:

Saturday did not go as planned. Our teachers had planned a trip into the Natural History Museum, but had failed to account for the unending mass of local visitors, which would have resulted in a three-hour wait. We instead decided to go into the Science Museum, which had some very insightful exhibits about the history of medicine and aerodynamics, as well as space exploration. My group went home a bit early that day because we weren't feeling too well. From what I have gathered, a portion of the remaining group went to Piccadilly Circus again, while another portion went to visit Tower Bridge.

Sunday, 10th December:

Sunday was our last full day in London. We had a tour of the Chelsea Stadium, where we had very nice guides (I believe ours was named Paul) and sang praises to our local Austrian teams, of which he had never heard of. We got to see what's behind the scenes, quite possibly every room in the stadium, and jerseys that had been worn by prominent players. From the changing rooms to the training areas, it was a fun and insightful activity, and we got to keep our badges at the end. My class then visited one last food market with amazing food and jewellery stands, while the students from 7cs went to see the exciting match between FC Fulham and West Ham United, which Fulham won 5-0.

Monday, 11th December:

On Monday we woke up very early at about 2 a.m. Our guest family brought us to the bus stop and said their farewells. We watched as the other families also said their goodbyes, some even shedding tears. The bus ride to the airport was uneventful, with the majority of us simply falling back to sleep. When we finally arrived at the airport, we had another hour to kill, which we mostly spent on buying last minute souvenirs or drinks for the flight. Our plane flew right past the rising sun, making for some gorgeous final pictures of London, and then we were on our way home. In Klagenfurt, we entered the bus that would bring us back to our school at about 10 a.m. and ended up arriving back at Graz at around midday. It did seem like we had caught a sickness before flying back, because less than half the class showed up the next day. :-)