

The Amazing London Drama Trip

The Anglophone section has offered us 2nd drama students an amazing opportunity to visit London and its theatres for four precious days. And what days they were!

On Tuesday the 3rd of February, we all met up at the Gare Part-Dieu at 8.30 am... As we got on, spirits were very high and the occasional "Gosh, I'm so excited!" was normal. In fact, we were so impatient that at 11.30 am we decided to have lunch, even though most of us had had a breakfast only 4 hours ago. Louise showed us, slightly hysterically, her huge bag filled with junk food, and warned us not to eat it all on the train. So it was in a very good mood that we arrived at King's Cross, all ready to bruise the pavements of London.

The London tube, I soon discovered, is a very clean and efficient subway system. I had mentally prepared myself to navigate throughout London in a subway a bit like in Paris but I was very pleasantly surprised, and relieved. We quickly dumped out belongings in the Blue Daws Hotel right next to Paddington Station, which is the classic British hotel, with its carpet floors and peculiar showers and its delicious English breakfast.

We then hopped on the tube and visited the "touristic" London: Big Ben, the Parliament, the House of Lords, Buckingham Palace.... The flag was up on Buckingham Palace, so the Queen might have seen us!

When we arrived at Leicester Square, Tom gave us some free time to hang around and eat something before seeing the play Shakespeare in Love in the Noel Coward Theatre, the first play of our trip. Needless to say, we went rampaging in London to find a cosy and cheap place to eat. But first we went to visit the M&Ms World, with I was especially anxious to see, being their #1 fan. Maïana, Louise, Maëlle and I went to eat in a Chinese restaurant, which has absolutely delicious, even though we were actually looking for a fish and chips, before wandering around a bit and coming back to set off to see the play.

Shakespeare in Love was terrific, and I'm pretty sure everyone agrees with me. The story, the setting, the jokes and the humour were impossible not to like. So first day and first night in London went really well. And so went the second day, where we woke up to the mouth-watering smell of eggs and bacon. After a hearty breakfast, we set across the city to get to the National Theatre, where a backstage tour was planned, and coincidentally where our 2nd play was set. The backstage tour was really fun and instructive, and our guide was very dynamic. I'm quite at awe at the number of sound and light technicians and builders and stage-setters there are just for one play, even if the guide kept stressing the point that the play we would see tonight, Treasure Island, was a really big production, and that the set took ages to put in place. After the tour, feeling slightly giddy with anticipation for tonight's play, we set off for Camdem Market, which turned out to be my favourite place in London. Camdem Market (and more generally Camdem Town) is the centre of London's punk and goth and alternative culture. We started by eating at the Camdem Food Court, where you can find street



food of any nationality: French, Dutch, Peruvian, Turkish, Mexican... The list can go on and on. And then it was time to shop.

Camdem Market is an eccentric maze filled with vintage clothes shop, hippy stalls some really random shops, like Cyborg, a clothes shop whose main theme is entirely devoted to robots. A gigantic statue of a robot at the front, robot dummies, really loud robotic music and violent lights: I didn't last long in there, obviously.

Unfortunately, all good things come to an end, and this was the case. We had planned (well, Tom and Mr. Cadden had planned) to go visit the TATE Modern but after seeing a random mirror that surely held a deep and meaningful message that I, as a simple mortal, surely could not grasp, I decided that modern art really wasn't my cup of tea. After an hour, we made our way to Picadilly Circus, which I found really cool. Yet again, as we quested to find a fish and chips, Louise and Anais decided to go eat at McDonalds instead. What a disappointment! After eating, we made our way to the National Theatre.



Treasure Island has received very mixed opinions in our class. Personally, I found it fantastic: even if the story was a bit weak at some times, the scenery was constantly changing and reshaping itself under our very eyes. We naturally knew how it was done because of the backstage tour, but it was still wonderous to see.

Thursday was also filled with action. After a strong English breakfast, we went to find the London Film Museum, where there was an exhibition on the James Bond vehicules that made my brother drool with envy when I told him. The vehicules were awesome and futuristic. One of my favorite vehicules was the crocodile mini-submarine that Bond uses in Octopussy (1983). We then proceeded to eat lunch at Covent Garden. Louise and Maëlle found a jacket potatoe food truck, which made them wild with happiness.



After all that, we went to the oldest theatre of London, the Drury Lane Royal Theatre for the second backstage tour. Although it was different from the first one, it wasn't less pleasant. The theatre has two different royal wings because once, the King and the Prince broke into a fistfight in the hall. Talk about ruining your reputation as a monarch! They decided to split them up, so they creating a side for the King and a side for the Prince. The two guide kept changing costumes and personalities, which was funny, and we even got a sneak peek of a rehearsal for Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

We went back to Picadilly after that to go shopping, because Tom gave us free time to go rampaging in Oxford Street. Needless to say, most of the girls came back laden down with bags full of clothes. I came back with a huge back filled with food. But not just food, British (junk) food: Terry's Chocolate Oranges, Flakes, Twisters, Cadbury chocolates, Celebrations, Nerds and water biscuits... I had to carry that weight all the way to the Apollo Victoria, where the much-awaited for Wicked was played. Mr Cadden had always insisted on the glory of Wicked,

so we had very high expectations. We were not disappointed: the singing, dancing, costumes and special humour made this a very good show, even though at some points the music was really loud! So we came back to the Blue Daws hotel exhausted but in high spirits.

Friday morning was not like the other mornings, because the air was thickening with nostalgia. I could not help but think that this would be the last English breakfast I'd eat in a long time. Everyone packed their things away and dumped it in our room, and then we walked up to Hyde Park, towards the Natural History museum. On the way we stopped by the Victoria and Albert memorial, where we took a great picture under the sunny blue skies of London.

The Natural History turned out to be very decent. In fact, it was really instructive and entertaining. The only drawback were the swarms of little children shrieking as they tried to invade the museum. Bus-



loads of them were deposited in front of the museum, and they made a lot of noise.

We came back to the hotel through Hyde park, and then took our suitcases through the tube (which isn't very convenient), to the King's Cross Eurostar lounge, which looked a lot like an airport lounge, and then we were off! Except a few technical problems in the Gare du Nord involving an oblivious student who forgot the time in a Burger King toilet (and I will not name that student for the person's reputation, aren't I nice?), everything went rather smoothly. And as our parents came to pick us up at Gare Part-Dieu, we all knew it was the end of our epic London adventure.

- Carolina Leroy