

Europe - A student's playground

By Brandon MacKenzie

Europe, where else can we travel and get a better bang for the buck. A continent bursting at its seams with medieval countries, history we only learn about in textbooks, strange throaty languages, relaxed porn laws, super-human alcohol, cheap youth hostels, kebabs, nude beaches and yes, the Irish. Where else can you fall asleep on a train only to wake up two hours later not only in a different country, but in a different season? Where else can you buy beer out of a coke machine? Where else is porn displayed on the local news channel? Ahh yes, the land of our forefathers, the land of mystique and awe, the land of dreams. We all dream of doing it, of "taking off to Europe for awhile", God knows it motivates some of us to finish school, for some reason graduating is our permission to go. Sure we've earned it.

I couldn't wait, I went a year early, and I'd love to pass on what I experienced to all those who are waiting to go. But before I begin - my first piece of advice is: Do whatever it takes to get to Europe, as you'll never be able to experience the things you can now - in the same capacity - again.

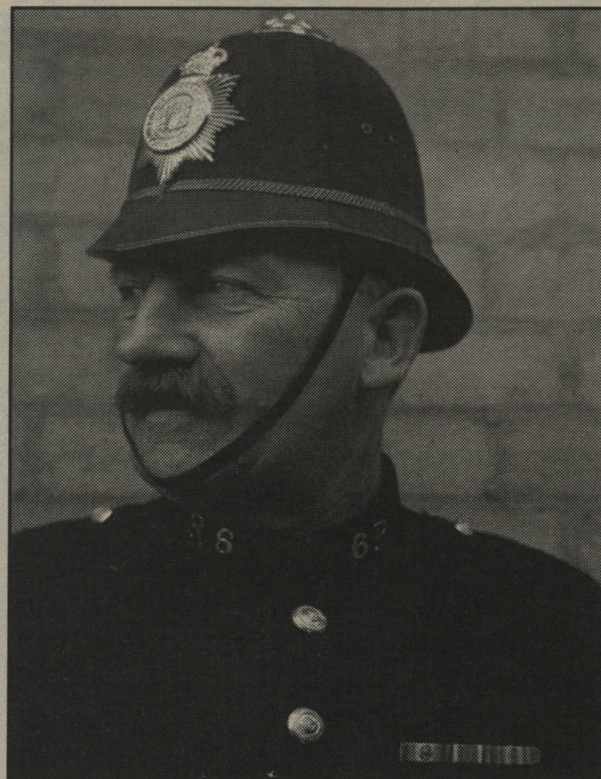
England

As students, we search for cheap tickets to England which all funnel

us to the busiest airport in the world, Heathrow. This place is massive and was quite exciting for me as I'm dazzled by big things. 747's line up nose to tail waiting for their 30 second window to take off. But have no fear, its no problem to navigate through the maze of arrival hallways, just be sure to have that passport at hand and a damn good convincing story when they don't believe you're arriving for travel, but suspect you're trying to suck their immigration system dry.

For all those students who haven't experienced anything more diverse than the time they saw someone from away with blue hair, get ready for a shotgun initiation of multiculturalism - because its time to jump on the underground, better known as the 'tube'. This mass-tran system will be your chariot for your stay in London as it is the cheapest method of travel. Thanks to recent renovations the cars are quite comfy; however, it will only take one day to go mad at the programmed voice, carrying a thick British accent, which constantly reminds you which stop you're at "now arriving - Picadily Circus" or cautioning you to "mind the gap". God how I wanted to smash the speakers, but was mindful of the funny looking police with big tall black hats and beating sticks. Despite their uniforms, they scared the hell out of me.

The tube takes you into London. I hated London. Yes the city has Royalty, parks, the Thames



river, a massive ferris wheel, ridiculous taxis and London Bridge, but the city stinks. Quite literally, it just smells horrible. And the driving on the left side of the road, what the hell is that? I'm sure pedestrian mashing is a qualified sport in London because motorists seem to take pleasure in running down gawcking tourists, who are programmed to look the other way when crossing a street.

Sure London has history and for a first time traveller, this city is pretty cool; but, my advise is to leave - as quickly as you can. Keep in mind here that we are students, aka the budget traveller. The exchange rate in the UK is about 2.4 times our dollar, and everything is the same price or more in pounds - you see, we're talking 9

dollar beers here, or even worst 45 dollar hostel rooms. Run, get out to the smaller towns like Salisbury or Bath, or better yet, buy a 7 pound flight to the mainland somewhere from one of the many super cheap discount airlines and leave the UK to a time when you have money to enjoy it. You most certainly will not have the money now.

This is one important thing that they don't tell you in travel books. While you're there, England seems really great, but once you leave and head to other countries

you quickly learn about how badly you have just been ripped off. I mean we all can love the many jews the country holds, the accent is just so amusing, and the city of London is most certainly an eye opener, but it is impossible to travel in England on a 'Shoestring' budget. You would be lucky if you only spend \$100 dollars a day, or 42 pounds. What you learn later in the trip is that \$100 dollars can last nearly a week in Greece, or buy you a VIP seat at one of the many Casinos in Prague.

Thus I leave you with this: When you get off the plane in Heathrow - get back on another one heading somewhere other than England.

Top 5 Reasons to Visit England:

- British Accent
- Tower of London (the crown jewels)
- Absinthe is legal
- Football (or 'soccer') is fanatical
- Wonderful museum bathrooms

Top 5 Reason to skip England:

- 9 Dollar beers
- Pedestrian mashing in London
- "Please mind the gap" - London Subway
- What the hell is a 'Queue' or 'lift' for that matter?
- The fact that the Canadian dollar is virtually worthless