



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



London drought.....and all we get is rain!

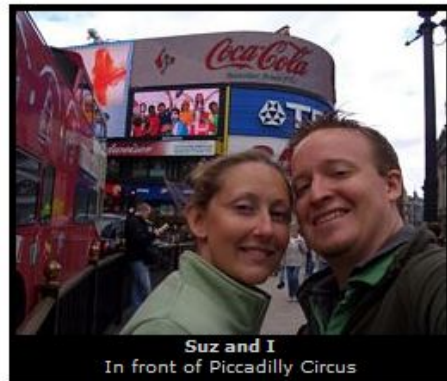
by Amaru & Suzanne, May 22nd 2006

Well, finally we reached London, it feels like it was a week ago that we left Kuala Lumpur and both of us were exhausted to say the least....

OK, so this blog is written by me, Suz, instead of Amaru (so I apologise in advance if it is not as witty or "in-depth" as he would make it).

The plane from Vienna to London finally touched town at Heathrow, after having to circle the city for around 30mins in a holding pattern. It was great actually, we'd never been that close to the city from the air - and being night time, we were able to make out quite clearly several landmarks including Piccadilly circus, the London Eye, Tower Bridge etc.... Spectacular.

Immigration at Heathrow was the opposite here - the line for EU people was about 50 people long... quite different to the 5 or so in front of me in the "foreigners" line. Although we ended up coming out at the same time due to the interview styled questions they asked me (whereas Amaru just has to show his passport!!!) Bugger!



Suz and I
In front of Piccadilly Circus



Sunny?
it seems like it might start to clear a bit

Ok, so now all that lay ahead was the journey to my friend Kate's place, where we were going to be staying that night. Bear in mind that we were reaching close to 48 hours without any sleep by this stage. We caught the tube into the city then swapped to the Northern Line to reach our destination at Kentish Town. This took about an hour all up from the airport to Kentish Town. Kate's direction to her place were pretty good - however she failed to let us know if we were to turn right or left upon exiting the station.... luckily we were approached by some helpful English chaps who put us in the right direction. So, by 11:30pm, we arrived at our destination, had a quick catch up with Kate and Arpad, then we finally made it to bed after one of the longest days in our lives.

The next morning was a scheduled sleep in for us both. Upon arising some time in the early afternoon, we decided we both felt well enough to head into town to check it out. Both of us had been to London before (I had lived here for a year, and had also visited 12 months ago, and it had only been 2 years since Amaru was here last) so we didn't feel compelled to have to see all the tourist sights again. Our trip to London was more about catching up with friends and hanging out.... needless to say, we had a good time exploring a bit of the city again. We caught the tube into Leicester Square (first stop was a cream cheese bagel...yes, it's still all about the food!) before strolling about the streets...Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus, Soho etc.... nothing much had changed. I showed Amaru the building I used to work in too - which unfortunately has now closed down, and is in a state of shambles. All this walking around though deserved a reward, so luckily there was a pub on every corner where we were able to quench our thirst....not that we stopped at every one of them - I just meant that we had plenty of them to choose from!!



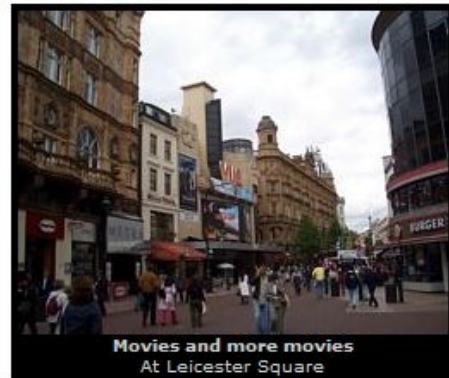
Beer stop
We found an Ale trail....



Leicester Square
We start our exploring...

We headed back to Kate's place in the late afternoon where I finally got to catch up properly with her and to fill her in on all the latest goss from home. When Arpad arrived home from work, the four of us headed out for the night. From their place we walked to Primrose Hill where we stopped en-route for a drink or two, before arriving at our dining destination. We ended up going to a Thai restaurant (just for something completely different!) and the food was delicious as always.... The rain continued outside (oh, did we mention that it had been raining since we arrived?) but this didn't stop us from continuing on the night going from pub to pub on the way home (all in the name of research though!) The laws have recently changed here in London - pubs no longer close at 11pm which is good news - we didn't know about this before arriving here.

Next morning started with a traditional English fry-up... or a plate of cholesterol as others would say. YUM! The four of us then set off for a walk to Camden markets, about 10-15 mins down the road. For those of you who do not know what Camden is like, it is a huge suburb containing many different markets.... "interesting" people, and lots of yummy smelling food stalls.... of which we only sampled the doughnut one. Our walk then continued down the road through Belsize Park and onto Hamstead (the really posh area) in search of cute pubs. We eventually hit our destination - a really old pub in Holly Bush (across the road from where Jamie Oliver used to live - he apparently had to move though as too many drunk people would leave the pub and ring his bell asking for a fry-up on their way home!)



Movies and more movies
At Leicester Square

After catching the bus back to Kate's place, it was time to pack up our stuff once again, say goodbye, and move on to our next destination. We were now heading south down to Surrey (south of London) to stay with my friends Steve and Sue. So we made our way to Victoria Station via the tube and here got tickets on the overland train to Surrey. This trip is usually only about 20min but our train was stopped on the tracks midway for ages. We were told that there had been a fatality along the line and delays were to be expected due to this (not sure if this was true or just an excuse for the delay). Finally after an hour we made it to our stop. A quick walk up the road from the station (and one of the prettiest streets I've ever seen I must say) and we're at Steve and Sue's place. They were hosting a friends birthday party that night, so we joined in the celebrations... eating Steve's wonderfully cooked grilled sausages (never trust a vegetarian to cook you sausages) and playing Buzz on the PlayStation 2 till all hours of the night. We won the last game!

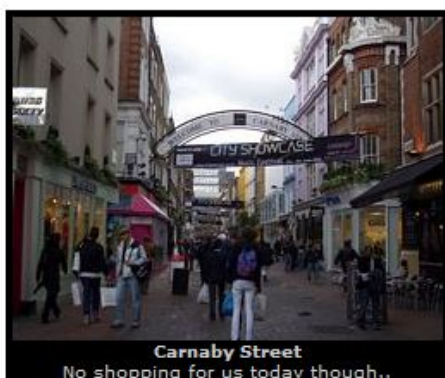


Now that's a weird statue....
Different!

The next morning we woke up to more rain (apparently London is in the middle of a drought.... funny.... it hasn't stopped raining since we got here!) Due to the rain, and our laziness, we decided on a day at home to vege out.... that, and it was just too darn cold to be outside. So the four of us - Steve, Sue, Amaru and I, spent the day indoors, catching up, watching the crap that is UK TV and sampling Sue's wonderful cooking.

Our last day here in London was pretty much the same as the day before..... still raining. We were thinking of going in to town (both Steve and Sue were working), but the thought of getting wet and being miserably cold kept us indoors. I'm starting to wonder now how it is that I survived living here all those years ago!!

So, as you can see, we didn't really see much of London on this trip - but we weren't dissapointed about this... the rest has done us good and we've recovered our tired legs and sore feet.... which are now ready to take on Portugal. Tomorrow is an early 5am rise for us, where we head to Heathrow to fly out. Thanks to Kate, Arpad, Steve and Sue for letting us stay with you.... it's been fun seeing you all again.



Carnaby Street
No shopping for us today though..



Liberty
A very interesting looking building



Soho
One of the more seedy sidestreets of Soho...



English Pub
Traditional British beers...and other beer



Suz and Kate
The girls are enjoying their ciders...



The boys and their beers...
Showing off the beer they are drinking



Camden Markets
One of the famous markets in London...



Camden Lock
The food section.....yes!



How about some donuts?
Ok....if I have to



Jamie Olivers house...
....or at least it used to be.





The fireplace
Just to prove how cold it was in London.



Steve and the Suz's
Managed to get a photo taken of them

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