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The Streets Of London

By Steven Cronin

I sat and watched from my seat in a street café on London's Oxford Street as a young man pleaded for loose change from passers by.

Most pretended to be oblivious to the young man's plight and continued their way along one of London's busiest and thriving shopping streets.

Several minutes passed before an elegantly dressed woman took pity on the youth. Digging deep into her pockets she produced a couple of coins and offered them to the poor guy.

As I sipped my coffee and observed the exchange, it puzzled me how two human beings could take such radically different paths on their journey through life.

At what stage of life do some people make the wrong choice and set off on the road to oblivion.

Or maybe our ultimate destiny is already decided and fate has made our decisions for us.

Whatever the truth, the two exchanged smiles as the woman made her merry way and entered a nearby store.

Oxford Street is the shopping hub of London, a wealth of designer stores that can damage even the most affluent of credit cards.

The cosmopolitan capital city of England, London simply oozes history and culture on virtually every street corner.

Its vast multi-ethnic population makes for a tremendously diverse range of shops, bars and restaurants to cover the tastes of most visiting palettes.

London's recent history has been dominated by the suicide bombings during the summer of 2005 and the devastating effects suffered by so many families and friends of the innocent victims.

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If any good came from these tragic events it was the show of strength from the communities, how people bonded together and formed lasting friendships.

But the events demonstrated how vulnerable we all are, even somewhere as prosperous as London.

In today's world where more and more becomes affordable to so many, it's important to remember those not as fortunate as ourselves.

Steven Cronin owns the City Breaks website featuring city break special offers from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. For great offers visit

<http://www.sargas.co.uk>

Experiencing the most of London in just a few days

By Jennifer Bravorski

Day or night, London thrives with life. A city that seems to have never fallen asleep from the time of its first founding, everything that one might want to experience can be found within the city center. "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." The writer Samuel Johnson said this in the 18th century, and it can still be said of today's contemporary London. Naturally, a city that offers all that life can afford needs numerous explorations, but with just a few days, one can experience the rich taste of this flavorful city. To start with, every visitor to London must dab into the city's history, from the first days of its founding to its dark medieval secrets to the monarchy's priceless crown jewels. Next on the menu is the pure pleasure of London's aesthetics; the city's center is full of charming parks and English gardens, narrow streets which unexpectedly disclose the scents of exotic restaurants, and various shops and markets selling from the most tasteful and chic to the most trendy and unconventional. When night hits, it rocks. The drinks pour, the laughs are loud, the beats pump, and the dancing is intense. London is a thriving city, and day and night it keeps its visitors entertained with its history from its first foundations, its city center's physical beauty, and its nightlife, making it a city that never sleeps.

London's history is so rich and so vast, that the highest to the lowest level of history fan will be interested. While London acknowledges its first century Roman founding, it honors Boadicea with a statue near Parliament. Boadicea was the British queen who raised an army and fought back the Romans to London, where she burned the city. Those who find such violent female figures interesting will enjoy museums like Madame Tussauds, a very lifelike wax museum, and the London Dungeon, where the horrors and terrors of medieval London come to life, including a selection of Britain's most infamous women throughout history. The Tower of London houses the crown jewels as well as tales of mysterious prisons for important prisoners. Fusing history and art, the National Portrait Gallery depicts portraits of Britain's most famous people throughout the centuries. The British Museum has one of the largest and best archeological collections of worldwide artifacts, including the Rosetta stone and Lindow Man. Fortunately, while these museums give a good feel for London's past, the visitor does not actually have to deal with the battles, plagues, and fires that London has survived.

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And relishing the calm and beauty of today's civilized London, the visitor can peacefully enjoy London's aesthetic city center. A walk along Oxford Street brings out the consumer in all, while nearby Hyde Park still manages to provide the serenity of the countryside in a city setting. Except, of course, speaker's corner, where people proclaim their message for the world to hear. Northeast of the park is Portobello Market, one of London's many outdoor markets, selling the best in antiques. Between the parks and busy shopping streets are quaint streets of times past, leading to unexpected surprises like central London's Covent Gardens, where flower girls still sell beautiful bouquets. Seeing all this from a bird's eye view gives a comprehensive overview of what lies below, and the London eye shows just that from the center of the center. A free option offering a bird's eye view is Primrose Hill, a small park in the north of London perched on a hill, overlooking the rest of the city. Hunger is bound to strike at some (or many) points of such jam-packed days, and the city's flavors will suit all tastes. From traditional English fare to such exotics as Indian restaurants, which are quickly assimilating and becoming typical London fare, any array of food can be found in between. And what better time to plan the evening out than during mealtime, when feet are resting and stomachs are happy!

The day is done, the eve is planned, and as night approaches, day is just dawning for those that never

sleep. A typical London night out will start at the pub with a group of friends, enjoying the local beers on tap and friendly conversations speckled with bursts of laughter. Of course, if it's a football or rugby night, the atmosphere will be quite serious and concentrated till the winner is known. After whetting the whistle at the pub, many will go on to dance at one of London's countless dance clubs. In such an international city, dancing will include every type of dancing, like techno, trance, hip-hop, Latin, ethnic, and raves. After the drinks and dancing, some late night chow down will soothe the stomach in the countless late night or fast food restaurants lighting up London's night streets.

Experiencing the most of London in a few days is so enjoyable with London's rich history, its delightful walks through its sophisticated and beautiful city center, and ever amazing transformation into a nightlong party. A world-class city aged 2000 years and still growing in popularity, London has aged better than a bottle of good wine. London never reached `a' perfection - it continually recreates perfection for every generation that shares in its life, and that is why no one can ever forget this city.

This article was written by Jennifer Bravorski with support from the Jesmond Dene Hotel, which is a cozy bed and breakfast located in the heart of London. To learn more about how bed and breakfasts can add to your travel experience, please visit

<http://www.jesmonddenehotel.co.uk/>



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