

July 2, 2014

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The London Pass: Discovering Hidden Secrets

Posted: 05/20/2014 12:31 pm EDT | Updated: 05/20/2014 12:59 pm EDT

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Would you like to hear how I forgot to make a reservation to visit the Tower of London, where the entrance fee is £19.5, but skipped to the front of a two block-long line (avoiding a three-hour wait), and didn't have to pay a cent? I brought my amazing, world-shaking, life-saving London Pass which let me come anytime, without notice, and to jump the line when I got there.

Everybody knows the Tower of London. But how about the Canal Museum? Ever

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heard of it? I hadn't. I was flipping through the pages of the London Pass guidebook, the essential guide that doubles the value of the London Pass, when I spotted a photo of an ancient, two-story warehouse perched on the banks of the River Thames. Hmm, that looks pretty cool, I thought. And it was cool. Back in the day, before railroads criss-crossed the land, the Canal Museum was an ice house, where the thousands of cargoes of ice that canal boats carried to London were stored. In those days, canals formed London's most important trade routes.



How about Kew Palace, inside Kew Gardens? Who knew that this elegant gem, tucked inside England's first national garden, was where mad King George III lazed away the summers, sipping tea and listening to crickets chirping among the garden's rare plants. And there it is in the book, described to a T and shown on the handy inset map, south of the Thames River. How about the Handel House Museum, or the Courtauld Gallery, or All Hallows by the Tower, London's oldest church, founded in 675 A.D.? Ever heard of them?



With the London Pass, you'll discover them and other hidden treasures, with free entry to every one, plus hefty discounts on cafe lunches, museum shop purchases, books, postcards, and audio tour rentals. Looking for a specific museum? Keep the pocket-size guide in your bag and search the directory. Organized by location and category, it makes it easy to flip through the pages, letting something catch your fancy. Color coded pages sort the subjects. For example, red for historic buildings (Wellington Arch), lime green for galleries (Queen's Gallery), blue for museums (Florence Nightingale Museum), and powder blue for cruises

and guided walks (the Lord's Cricket Grounds).



Each attraction is described in detail and in three languages (English, French and German), with a service sidebar showing a thumbnail map and listing the closest bus routes and streets, subway stops, visiting hours, street address and the phone number. You won't need it to enter any of London's "National Museums," the British Museum, and the National Gallery, for instance. But showing your pass when you visit one of these institutions may provide a

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discount on books, meals, audio tours or gift shop items. The guide was so complete, I stopped using the guidebook I'd brought from home.



A one day adult Pass is £49. For two, three or six days, the pass costs £68, £73 and £97. That's not cheap; is a pass worth purchasing? That depends on what you want to see and how much you can do in a day. Compare those prices with the single ticket price at these top-rated favorite attractions: Westminster Abbey: £18, the Churchill War Rooms: £14.95. Windsor Castle: £17.75. And the London Bridge Experience: £24. If those are on your wish list, visit the website and look at all the options. The easiest way to buy a pass, and plan ahead, is to order yours off the Internet. Or buy when you arrive at Heathrow or Gatwick Airports, at most London train stations, or at the sales office in London, at 11a Charing Cross Rd., near Leicester Square.

Last month I visited London again, for the umpteenth time. Over the years I've seen the Changing of the Guards, and I've pressed my face against the metal fence around Buckingham Palace more than once. I've spent hours in the British Museum, and more hours in the National Gallery, looking at one of the world's great collections of fine art. So go ahead, toss all your other guidebooks out the window and explore London the smart way. Now I'm moving on. I've discovered the London Pass.

To find everything you need to know about the London Pass, go to www.londonpass.com.



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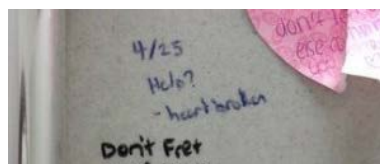
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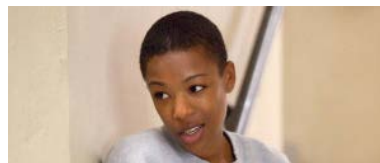
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