

I Traveled to *England* for Under \$1000

by Lisa Jones

Everyone enjoys traveling whether it's for a weekend getaway or a month-long vacation to someplace exotic. When it comes to travel arrangements most of us are not as organized as we would like to be. I remember when I decided to travel through Europe, how frustrated I had become at finding cheap airfare and modest accommodations on a student's budget.

I remember calling up the big airlines and getting prices for a flight that left San Francisco and arrived in London. I could not believe the prices that some of these airlines quoted me. I had just about given up on going on my trip as I thought there was no way for me to be able to afford the airfare.

As luck would have it, I was browsing through the travel section of the paper and came across an ad from this company called Cheap Tickets. They offered airline tickets at about half the price of major airlines and travel agencies. The way that this works is that the airlines have a certain number of tickets on reserve, so Cheap Tickets buys up all of these seats and then sales them to us. When I called up Cheap Tickets I told them the day that I wished to depart to London and return back to the U.S. I got my ticket for about \$600.00. When you call up all you have to do is have a departure and return date and they will quote you a price. A helpful tip is the longer your return date to the U.S, sometimes the cheaper the ticket. The price is not guaranteed until you purchase the ticket. What this means is if I were to call in today and get a quote on a ticket and I did not purchase it right then and there and were to call in the next day the price could be more or less. In some ways, that may be good or bad.

Another cheap way to get to Europe is by being on stand by for a courier service. The way this works is that there are companies who need some kind of parcel or package deliv-

ered in Europe. They will give you a seat in exchange for either your checked luggage or your carry luggage. The down side to this is you don't have the flexibility of when you leave or return. I myself chose to go with Cheap Tickets.

After having my plane tickets taken care of, next came the task of finding lodging. I had a friend who told me that it was not necessary to be concerned with accommodations. He said that when I stepped of the plane in London that there would be people holding up signs begging for me to stay in their place. With that in mind I put myself at ease and decided not to worry about accommodations. After a 10-hour flight I finally landed at Heathrow airport. Feeling jet lag and not-showered I headed through customs in search of the sign holders. As I exited customs it hit me like a uppercut, there were no people holding signs begging for my almighty American dollar. Panic set in, here I was in a foreign country with nowhere to stay. Luckily I had my trusty guide book with me known as the "Travel Bible" to us student travelers, better known as the *Let's Go Europe* travel guidebook. Lets go Europe is a travel guidebook that lists all of the major tourist cites in Europe. It deals with accommodations, currency, and customs of these countries. You can find this handy little book at most bookstores.

With my trusty travel bible in hand I started the hideous task of phoning a list of bed and breakfasts, hostels, and hotels. They all had the same reply, "Sorry we are all booked for the summer." How could that be! Summer just started! It turned out you need to make reservations well in advance, especially when it comes to staying at a hostels.

After about an hour of standing at a phone booth in the middle of Heathrow, I finally found a student bed and breakfast. It was located in the center of London. It was three stops from Lestier square, Piccadilly Circus, and Sho Ho. Now that I had found a place to stay the next task was actually getting there. I had too much luggage to take the Underground so I settled on taking an shuttle from the

Airport in to London, for about L4.00 (\$6.00). When I arrived at the B&B I discovered I was sharing a room with a girl from Germany. We ended up paying L25.00 per person, per night for a room that was originally built to hold one bed not two. The Bathroom was in the hallway and we had to share it with six other people. The price also included a continental breakfast that consisted of tea, toast and cold cereal. I ended up staying at this B&B for about 6 months and did not mind sharing my room with others.

When it comes to transportation London is one of the best places to be. London has the Underground, which is like the subway in New York. The Underground has stops just about at every corner. The price for riding the Underground is very reasonable. For L3.00 you can get an all day pass that will allow you to go to any destination. You can only purchase these passes after 9.00 a.m. Monday through Friday, after the morning rush hour.

What is a trip to London without going on the big, red double-decker Buses? There are bus stops at just about every other corner in London the price for a ticket is based on your destination. The down side on taking the bus is that you are not quite sure when the bus will arrive, not to mention that they are overcrowded. London is also known for its old fashioned black taxis. I suggest you only ride them just so you can say you did that. They are extremely expensive. The upside to them is that all of the taxi drivers who drive the black taxis know London like the back of their hands. If you ever find yourself lost just hail a black Taxi, chances are they can steer you in the right direction, better than anyone else.

As I look back on my journey abroad I must admit it was an unforgettable experience. Just a little bit of advice for all of you adventurous travelers, remember to plan ahead - it could save you lots of time and money. Here is a list of places that I recommend Staying at, and a list of Airfare information.

Hostels

Chelsea Hotel
33-41 Earls Court Square
London SW5
Tel: 0171-244-6892

Bolsover Hotel
20-28 Bolsover Street
London W1D7HJ
Tel: 0171-636-4316

Bed and Breakfast

Hampstead Heath
4 Wellgarth Road
London NW 11 7HR
Tel: 4481-458-9054
Fax 4481-209-0546

Air Fair

The Air Courier Association
1500 W 6th Ave #203
Golden Colorado 80401
Tel:1-800-282-1202

Estimated prices for RT Flights
LONDON ENGLAND \$159-\$279
PARISFRANCE \$200-\$359
ROME ITALY \$159-\$350
MUNICH GERMANY \$318-\$318