Lost in London

By Nihn Huang

The best way to become familiar with a foreign environment, in my opinion, is to lose your way on a walk and manage to get yourself back home. If you want to speed up the process, try jogging, letting your intuition lead the way, and finding your way back without asking for directions. If you’re not an avid runner, don’t worry. In a place like London, things you see along your journey will only make running more interesting than exhausting.

Apparently my urge to explore this charismatic city surpassed my need to recover from jetlag on the very first day I arrived, so I started my new life in London with an evening jog. Knowing our flat was located in the South Kensington area, only a few blocks north of the River Thames, I decided to leave without carrying a map, cell phone, camera, mp3 player, or watch. I almost felt naked. However, that uneasy feeling soon vanished when I started to run, because all my attention was devoted to the exotic atmosphere. There was so much to see that I felt like going on forever.

Jogging in London enables one to see ancient buildings, historical monuments, Richard Roger’s modern architectures, and magnificent landscapes all blended harmoniously into one scene. The city has character, and what you see is guaranteed to be utterly overwhelming.

Each part of London has its own unique style. Yet exactly what makes each specific part of town stand out is beyond description. For those who want to find out, go there and experience it for yourself. I recommend paying attention to the people. Examine their outfits and manners because they portrait the London fashion, art, and culture. You will notice the difference in Canary Wharf, Camden Town, Brick Lane, or Hyde Park, although these are all places within London.

During my journey, I tried to avoid crowds of people so that I could see the most local of locals. London is a very touristy place after all. So I headed towards the south side of the River Thames and ended up in Battersea Park, directly opposite to Chelsea. From there I was able to see the night view of Earl’s Court and other parts of south-west London, the most luxurious residential areas in the city. I also came across a Chinese Buddhist temple founded in the late 19th century by the Ming Dynasty. Being a Chinese-American, I was enthusiastic to discover something that I could relate to. London, with its two millennia of history, is also a city of diversity.

Running along the embankment alone, there was the Science Museum of London, Houses of Parliament, Saint Paul’s Cathedral, Tate Modern, Millennium Bridge, and castles and harbors. It seemed like wherever I would go there was a city landmark. I felt my
temperature rise out of excitement, but the breeze cooled me down. Never was I that fascinated by jogging in my whole life.

I do not remember exactly how long I jogged, but it took me approximately 3 hours to finish the journey. When I finally found my way home, I felt extraordinarily small compared to all the phenomenal things I had seen in that one evening. I felt that there were so many aspects of the culture I needed to learn and experience. I also felt that one should be grateful to what one’s ancestors left behind for one to appreciate. People may have died during wars, but the Tower Bridge has stood firm through all of its perils. Words of wisdom may fade away, but William Shakespeare’s comedies continue to make our lives more colorful than otherwise.

So why spend more money on a tour guide in a place where the living expense is already outrageously high? Jogging allows you to unveil unexpected hidden treasures, to discover surprising subjects at your own pace, and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. My only advice, look both sides when you cross the roads. Vehicles in the United Kingdom operate on the opposite side which makes crossing tricky sometimes.