

Winter Adventures and festive fun; London Part 2

Saturday arrived after another really great sleep- the Crystal Palace campsite is so incredibly quiet, despite being in so close to the centre of London.

We enjoyed a quick egg bap for breakfast before doing some house keeping- Keefy emptied the loo & refilled the water whilst I did the washing up. By 10.30 we were on the bus- this time we took the 363 to Elephant and Castle and then a short walk to Borough Food Market. Despite living in Croydon for

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just under 40 years, I was supposed to learn that Keith had never been here! When I lived in Croydon I'd often nip on the train to London Bridge and spend a few hours expanding my overdraft here.

Borough market is one of London's oldest and largest food markets- a market has been there since the 12th century. Our first visit of the day ticked all our boxes- food and history and we spent a very happy hour or so perusing the stalls, trying as many samples as possible, buying some British saucisson and English mature soft cheese, and then treating ourselves to a sausage roll and also a portion of haddock and chips - well the stall proclaimed they'd just won an award for 'best fish and chips' so it would be rude not to

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‘check’. They were bloooomin lovely by the way.



Borough Market is a perfect place to visit from Crystal Palace- and is totally dog friendly. It does get busy though.



After our fish and chips it was time for a beer to wash it down, so we popped to nearby favourite of ours, The George- a National Trust owned galleried pub, nestled just off Borough High Street and only 5 minutes walk from London Bridge station.



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Inside the smaller bar there is a very interesting clock – apparently it's one of the only clocks still hung in its original place. It was hung in this bar in 1797!



Fish and chips washed down, we took the short walk to London Bridge and made our way on the underground to Notting Hill Gate. Our destination was The Churchill Arms – one of Instagram's most pictured pubs in London. The reason..



It has over 100 Christmas trees on its exterior and over 12,000 lights. It's not just the Christmas time when it becomes popular to visit. In the springtime it's completely cov-

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ered in over £25,000 worth of flowers!

Another pulling point for us was that it serves very highly recommended Thai food – in fact it was London's very first Thai restaurant in a pub over 30 years ago.

It. Was. Packed.

Properly rammed inside, but as luck would have it, we managed to get a seat at the bar to watch the endless tourists and locals battle their way through. We booked a table for lunch and happily got seated only 30 minutes later.

☒☒ We enjoyed a couple of pints of Fullers Snow Globe whilst we waited and are 90% sure that we spotted Ian McKellan emerge

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from the restaurant.

The meal was absolutely beautiful, we shared a chicken pad Thai and Thai green chicken curry. It was incredible value, just £9 per meal!



As the weather had turned bad, and we managed to get a table in the bar, we enjoyed another pint whilst we waited for it get dark to enjoy the lights outside. As day turned to dusk the bar became even busier, I seriously don't know how everyone fit in!



Around 4pm, we jumped back on the tube and headed further west- to Turnpike Green.

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Our destination was Chiswick House and gardens for their After Dark light display. Sadly by now it was lashing it down but we weren't going to let that dampen our spirits. Scuse the pun.

Chiswick House is a beautifully elegant 18th century villa, with acres of land. Sadly given the weather we weren't visiting the inside - the After Dark trail was an outside event. The first part of the trail was a 4 minute loop of specially commissioned music composed by Sergio Pizzorno from Kasabian, set to a light display by Nick Gray. It was brilliant. We really loved the music, and actually the wet weather gave the whole thing an added atmospheric effect. Aren't we British!

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The trail was a little sparser than others we have done, however enjoyable nonetheless. We especially loved the laser projections over the lake and the large moon.



At the end of the trail there was a handily located marquee with street food and a bar, serving hot mulled wine and mulled cider – or wassail. As we were drenched we took advantage of a spot by the heater and warmed up with a mug of wassail before making the journey back to Westminster on the district line and then picking up the no. 3 bus to Crystal Palace just outside the Houses of Parliament. We were back to Ruby just before 9pm.

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Sunday dawned much dryer than goodness- in fact it was a perfect winter's day- dry, yet cold and crisp with a stunning blue sky. We took our time packing away, but decided to make a couple of stops en route home. We stopped off at Greenwich, parking just off Blackheath common in a free parking spot, and walked down through Greenwich park to Greenwich Market.



Another great place for food lovers- we forced a sausage roll and a scotch egg down whilst browsing and finishing some Christmas shopping off.



After an hour or so we went back to Ruby

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and crossed underneath the Blackwall tunnel towards Hackney, our second stop of the day. We found a free on street car parking space on the road near Sutton House, a National Trust Grade II Tudor Manor House. It's amazing to think that this old building is right in the middle of Residential Hackney. At the moment it has a 'Christmas through the ages' exhibition on which was really interesting; some rooms were set out as they would have been at Christmas in the Tudor times



Some rooms were set out as a Victorian Christmas which is more like the Christmas that we know.



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And finally an 80s Christmas, which is a nod to when squatters took over the house before the National Trust evicted them and took over the house.

The most fascinating fact I learnt was that in the Tudor times turkey was eaten- however the Norfolk turkeys were walked from Norfolk to London, setting off around August!



It was a lovely visit and one to stop at if you're passing- it's right by the start of the M11 but is a pig to get to on public transport from central London.

We had the most wonderful time, despite learning of our friends death the day we ar-

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rived. Christmas in London is just so special and this time we found pockets of areas off the mainstream list of tourist spots which we just loved exploring.

Until next time, which won't be long, as we're heading north for a few days next weekend.

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