

The Thin Red Line; preparing to travel to the USA post pandemic.

It's no secret how much Keith and I adore our trips to the USA, and we both heartily agree that we have missed these trips tremendously during these past 2 years of the pandemic. We plan ahead sometimes two years at a time and when the pandemic hit, like everyone our travel plans were halted, we were grounded and our meticulously planned itineraries filed away- too painful to refer back to until travel looked more possible.

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For us this was back in Sept 2021, places were opening up slowly and we dared to take a peek on the BA websites for flights to USA for the following Easter. Little did we know, the pandemic was still not over and perhaps our eagerness to get back travelling over-rode our sensible sides, but the long and the short of it was we booked flights and then Omnicron arrived and USA changed travel requirements to mean we needed to test 24 hours before departure (maybe no big deal for some but we both work in schools) and we've since spent the last 4 months worried about whether we'd actually get to USE our flights!

This meant a different run up period. Everything that had to be booked was booked with

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24 hour notice period to cancel for free (almost all on Booking.com). If things didn't offer that option, then we just didn't book it. We didn't get our Esta visas until the absolute latest possible date and we didn't change our currency until after we knew we'd be going (once in London!) All these jobs we'd normally delight in doing weeks in advance. We've also taken a daily LFT for the last 3 weeks- no exceptions and taken EXTREME caution around people as our area have had not one but two spikes in cases of Covid.

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We ordered with trepidation our entry tests from chronomics – a supervised video lateral test- which may I add was one of the single most terrifying things we've ever done- the virtual waiting room was unclear where you were in the queue and we sat completely clueless as to whether it was working for 50 mins before a chap dropped into our phone screen to watch us take our tests- and then- after 15 VERY long minutes, we proudly but numbly took pictures of our negative tests, uploaded them to the chronomics site, and received a certificate to gain entry into the USA. We were going to America!

3 hours later (an hour of which was spent Keith driving and me frantically booking tickets for attractions!) and we pulled up at This-

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the Hotel T5 (after a false start at a nearby incorrect hotel- whoops!) at Heathrow, left the van and caught the tube into London for the afternoon. We were still 100 % numb with shock.



Our whistle stop London itinerary included:

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- A traditional pre long haul pint at the Hoop and Toy followed by lunch at Pierino's in South Kensington. This has become a tradition for us and it was just exceptional to be back doing our thing!



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- a lovely walk through Knightsbridge, past Buckingham Palace and St James Palace INSERT



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- A visit to the Jewel Tower at Westminster,
the only (other than Westminster Hall) re-
maining part of the old Westminster Palace.

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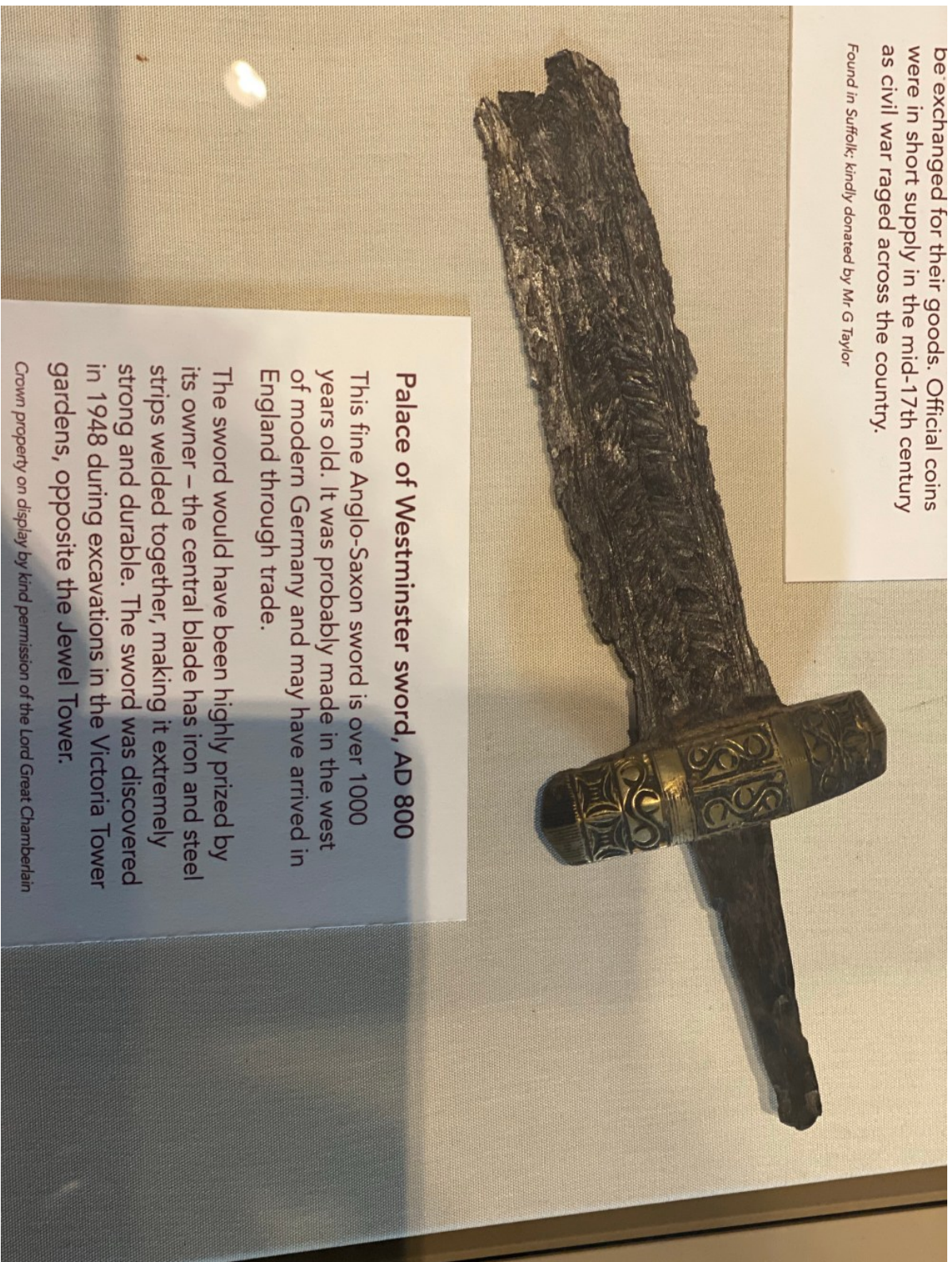
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be exchanged for their goods. Official coins were in short supply in the mid-17th century as civil war raged across the country.

Found in Suffolk; kindly donated by Mr. G Taylor

Palace of Westminster sword, AD 800

This fine Anglo-Saxon sword is over 1000 years old. It was probably made in the west of modern Germany and may have arrived in England through trade.

The sword would have been highly prized by its owner – the central blade has iron and steel strips welded together, making it extremely strong and durable. The sword was discovered in 1948 during excavations in the Victoria Tower gardens, opposite the Jewel Tower.

Crown property on display by kind permission of the Lord Great Chamberlain

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- A trip into Westminster Hall to admire the phenomenal hammer beam wooden roof- the largest and oldest in Europe- dating from 1090. Just beautiful

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- A t guided tour into the Houses of Commons and the House of Lords. The later three were part of a free tour pre arranged with our MP and it was absolutely excellent.
- a quick drink with Keefy's dad who happened to be in London to see a choir performance.

Considering we fit all of the above in 6 hours, by 7pm we were exhausted and made the journey back to our airport hotel in time to spend a lovely hour at the hotel bar overlooking terminal 5 and the runway- and the only reason we book this hotel as it's dated and the food there is awful!

After a restful nights sleep- our first in some

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time! – we spent a lazy morning at the hotel
before making our way to the airport.



Bag drop was very busy – BA have had technical problems along with staff shortage – something which was a recurring theme throughout the day and meant the majority

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of our day was spent queuing, but we managed to eat and have a couple of drinks, before boarding our Dreamliner to Atlanta.



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Our itinerary for this trip is...

Atlanta, Chattanooga, Lynchburg (Jack Daniel-
s), Nashville, Memphis, Graceland, Natchez on
Mississippi River, New Orleans and then Pen-
sacola Beach in FL.

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It's still not sunk in that we're here! But we
look forward to sharing our journey with you
on here.

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📍 HARTSFIELD-JACKSON ATLANTA INTERNAT...

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Stayed tuned... adventures await!

Until next time

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