

A trip to remember

2011 - ENGLAND

18 April 2011



Oxford, like Cambridge, is a university town.

STUDENT TOWN

Guess what? I know where all the bikes in England finally end up. In Oxford. Millions of them. Everywhere. Bikes and buses are obviously a student's most cost effective form of travel. The town planned for them so the city's transport system works very well - no cars allowed in the Oxford city centre.

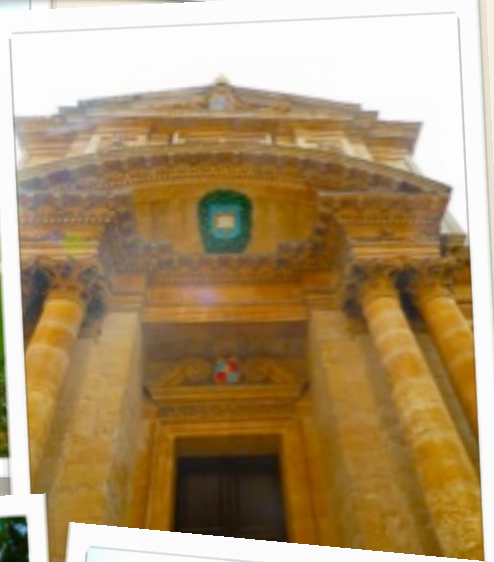
After a celebratory evening meal the night before, we woke up late with Heather feeling decidedly under the weather due to a bit of food poisoning. She lay low while I tried to fix her tyre which had a slow leak. I was not successful so I found where the nearest bicycle shop was via the internet and rode there to find 5 cycle shops within the one block. They were very close by - only 2 kms away. Amazing. Bikes are a way of life in Oxford. When I returned with a new tube Heather was still poorly so while she recouped I rode in to explore Oxford.

I took the bike track along the nearby stream all the way in to the town centre. The weather had improved and the river was busy with scullers and small tour boats. The number of sculling boat storage sheds was extensive. Oxford evidently is well known for its "head of the river" race between the different university faculties. Also on the river were punts and barges where people lived. Many were tied to the bank and I could look down inside them as I passed to see the inhabitants going about their daily life.

CITY CENTRAL

Compared to other places we visited, Oxford appeared extremely busy with tourists. There were many school groups visiting the university precincts. I noticed French and Dutch and Germans. Bikes were everywhere.







TAKE A PICTURE

I was sorry that Heather could not join me because Oxford was truly amazing. The ornate sandstone buildings went on forever and I had trouble knowing which photo angle was best. The place oozed history. There were many small groups with their own individual tour leader holding up a hat or marker so the group would follow. They would stop, the leader would chatter away and point out something special, and then on to the next thing to admire. The entourage would become strung out and weave through other groups. It was like organised mayhem. Then there were the photographers, like me, looking for that special shot. I watched and learned but after a while, the excitement of taking photographs of building after building somehow loses its appeal. They were all very beautiful.

STAY OFF THE GRASS

What really got to me was the fact that nowhere, repeat nowhere, did I see anyone on the grass. There were signs everywhere warning to stay off it. I wondered if there was maybe a law against walking on Oxford grass so the urge to jump the fence did not get the better of me. Likewise most people got off their bikes when they approached the mall. Luckily I did not have Heather with me or we would have gotten into trouble. Heather hates walking when she has a bike. And she loves grass!

Tonight we pack our clothes and hope we are not caught with excess luggage. We sent home almost 1.5kgs of stuff by snail mail - clothes we were not using and some books we had finished reading. We reckon we still have too much weight so will try to hide it inside our coats and handbags. We are worried because we fly with LOT (the Polish airline) and these Poles are very astute. They can smell a contraband hiding foreign Pole a mile off. The surname also gives foreign Poles away too. But we are looking forward to seeing our family very much and joining in the Easter celebrations. Heather will love a centrally warmed house and nice comfortable bed to sleep in for a few days. Poland here we come.

