

# EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs | 2 grand-boys

## Adapting to city life

Adapting to the fast-paced rhythm of city life is not without its hiccups. With five visits to London under our belts, certain areas have become more familiar while others remain unexplored.

The lack of familiarity with street names, suburban layout, and the complexities of train and bus schedules can induce a measure of stress—something Maddi and Deakin also contend with, though their resilience shines through. Heather, I, and Blayze, despite occasionally pulling in different directions, continue to function as a cohesive unit. Ultimately, we have overcome our challenges, resulting in a sense of relief. Through our experiences, Blayze has gained valuable insights into navigation and problem-solving.

Our approach encompasses a blend of traditional maps, schedules, and modern technology. The Solis wifi/power bank has been a consistent saviour over our near-decade of ownership, proving indispensable. Our iPhones have taken on a more prominent role compared to the past, particularly with apps like WhatsApp. Our laptop sees sporadic use, reserved mainly for composing blogs, Facebook posts, emails, and Google research. The limitations of technology become apparent when battery life dwindles—a lesson learned firsthand, sometimes at inconvenient times, even for Maddi and Deakin.

Relying on the goodwill of locals remains a reliable fallback, as most individuals display remarkable willingness to offer assistance.

London's public transportation system's efficiency has not escaped our notice. Vital for the city's functioning, trains and buses provide a backbone for its sprawling expanse. Congestion-based fees for vehicles entering during peak hours serve as an incentive for residents to embrace public transit—an acknowledgment of the system's pivotal role.



## A Grey Day

Our weather has not improved much. Sprinkling down and grey skies. We walked to the local station — getting to know our way now and disturbingly we have two days of train strikes coming up!

The major interest for today was to see the Winston Churchill War Rooms. It is a fascinating place under the streets of Whitehall. Apparently it used to be a store room and Churchill famously said he would control the war from there.

Blayze and myself had the pleasure of investigating this place while Siggy wandered the streets nearby. We saw all the rooms. Well mostly, until we were directed to leave because of some emergency - air raid like sirens and all, and people trying to find exits only to be turned around to another exit. Quiet and orderly we emerged no worse for wear finding Siggy perplexed about what the heck had happened. We saw a fire engine outside the building but still don't know what the issue was. Anyway before that occurred we read, viewed and listened to a great deal of information about Churchill and this establishment.

Blayze was particularly interested in seeing what they had in the gift shop. We missed that because of our untimely exit.



In the meantime Siggy walked down to the Horse Guards area and saw the changing of the guard. He then walked around to have a closer look at Big Ben. A rather brash local grey squirrel provided him with a moment of sheer joy as it came right up to him to lick his finger in search of food. Cheeky thing.

We had intended to visit China Town but instead boarded the hop-on hop-off bus and had a very great view of the city sights. Despite the cool conditions we sat in the upper, uncovered level. Blayze particularly enjoyed this - a real highlight. Being up so high gave us a particularly good view of the passing parade - pedestrians, vehicles, statues, monuments, buildings and gardens. I was getting cold and tired so we decided to call it a day. Home via train for a warm shower and home cooked meal.



Maddi and Deakin spent the day at London Zoo - a brave choice I thought as it was about an hour and a half journey by train. They came back suitably impressed but particularly tired. Maddi finally got to see her otters and meerkats.

Tomorrow is a train strike so this will tax us as we plan to travel into the city by bus, visit the Imperial War Museum and then take the ferry to Greenwich and visit the Observatory and Museum before heading home by bus again.





Blayze and the Ford Anglia at the Harry Potter shop





**“Success is going from failure to failure without the loss of enthusiasm.”**

**“Politics is like waking up in the morning. You never know who’s head you will find on the pillow.”**

**Winston Churchill**



