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Monarch Traveler: Allowing Adventure

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Nowak et al.: Monarch Traveler: Allowing Adventure

Monarch Traveler

Maymester 2023

*Allowing
Adventure*



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Editor's Letter

An overseas voyage with a singular purpose, my long-awaited return to London came with 13 angels. Cherubs, students, novice travelers, floated and followed over a dark ocean. Love and curiosity sustained them, their souls glittered in each cobblestone click and powdered tea time. I became their guide, their mentor in many ways, but not of geography or knowledge, but of the self. To find oneself through travel, to dine alone, sing street fashion, and dazzle a solitary dawn, in them a world inside a world bloomed. The experience transcended time, mirroring my past life in their future, once passenger, now captain docked at the shoreline, awaiting the next adventure. - Professor Alicia DeFonzo

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CULTIVATING NOW

BY KATIE NOWAK

Life is speaking...

...are you listening?



Basking in the soft morning sun spilling into the café through the 10-foot windows, I sip my coffee and listen to the light clinking of cups on saucers. I hold my cutlery delicately, taking small bites of the full English spread I am having for breakfast, which consists of fluffy eggs and fluffier pastries. It's so good, I could go back for seconds, thirds. But I do not, because in this café I feel like the kind of woman who defaults to matching her lingerie and layering her scents based on the season. The kind of woman who, knowing she will return to this café, does not get a second helping, but instead savors her first.

When I arrived in London, I waded through a cold damp fog which dulled the already-muted gray and beige blocky towers in the industrial outskirts. “You don't come to London if you want sunny skies,” the coach driver calls over his shoulder. But in fact, the clouds parted soon after I arrived in the beautifully Romanesque heart of the city.

Here, I quickly noticed the way people walk with purpose, checking their watches with a flare and breaking their stride for no man, car, or act of God. Countless languages, accents, and dialects circle the air, mingling amongst each other. Teen girls blow bubbles in the street. Two women sit outside a café speaking in French about a third woman they know (and don't very much care for).

When I first check into my hotel, a man in the lobby props a ladder catty corner to a jettison edge, with only the middle, and not either arm, actually touching wall. He runs his rag in the nooks of the ornate ceiling



carvings, before shuffling the ladder down a few paces and leaning it precariously onto an archway which just barely touches to top of the ladder. He resumes.

Everything here feels that way—intentional, deliberate. It is the opposite of me—messy and rushed: the kind of woman who does not even own matching lingerie and who lost her map during her first tube ride. The kind of woman who goes through a whole day without really participating in any of it, too busy mentally reciting to-do lists and rehearsing arguments. Absent. But sitting in the café, pouring exactly one and a half packets of sugar into my coffee, I feel as though perhaps I, too, could be someone who pays attention.



The city breathes. It feels that you could almost stand still and allow the excitement to sniff you out and grab you by the ascot. But I do not stand still. I immediately take to exploring on my own, and almost as quickly, get lost. Tube stations closing, coach lines transfers, and my near-dead phone snuff out my original confidence for navigating central London. I decide to stick to the streets.

I wander aimlessly, enjoying the typical European-style architecture. I end up strolling through the markets of Covent Gardens, looking at the hand-sewn tote bags and artisan bird feeders. A string quartet plays in a nearby courtyard, allowing the romantic music to bounce off the surrounding brick walls. Suddenly, a vendor tells us we have to leave. “The King’s coming,” he says. “The what?” I say as the guards usher us towards a rapidly forming crowd.



We wait amongst the murmurs, unsure of which direction to look and exactly what we are looking for. Men with large cameras and important-looking people preen at themselves and their equipment. All of us, the plebeians, the police, and the preeners, wait. The gates to St. Paul’s church open as the 11:00 bells ring, and out comes, in fact, the recently Crowned King Charles with his wife, Queen Camilla.

They stroll through the markets, chatting with the vendors and shaking hands. When he and his entourage of security leave, I am itching to ask the vendors about it. “The King was quite genuine, not snobbish at all,” says one. “This wasn’t announced anywhere, you’re very lucky,” says another.

Soon, I have a better grasp of public transportation, but I find myself preferring the things I find on the street. One day, as I’m exploring, a man runs past, holding a large flag that dances in his wake. “It’s Eritrea’s Independence Day” he calls out after me, “Google it!” Soon after, a line of cars, buses, and bikes pour through the street, adorned with the same red, blue and green flag. The procession honks and cheers. They wave to me and I to them, and I allow the seemingly endless stream to pass before I continue.

I see another man with a flag. But this one is different—it is the flag of Syria. “Do you know this flag?” he asks me when he notices me observing it. I did. He begins telling me about the war, stories which echoed those I’d heard from my own Syrian friends back home. I listen until he suddenly stops.

“Follow me,” he says, “I have a gift for you.”

Ignoring my mother’s horrified voice in my head, I follow him down a narrow street until we reach a car. He pops the trunk and roots around an old shopping bag before producing two knitted scarves, each designed to look like the Syrian flag. I tie one around my purse and he puts one around my head. “You are our ambassador now,” he says, handing me a water bottle from his trunk, “when you go back to America, you will be an ambassador of Syria.”

In the final days of my visit, I visit the National Gallery, where there is an exhibit I find particularly moving—one which features Saint Francis of Assisi, and a prayer of his which reminds me of my youth. When I emerge from the museum with tear-stained cheeks, I notice a street artist sketching Mona Lisa on the sidewalk with chalk. If I were more eloquent, I would have asked what the significance is of leaning into art’s impermanence. But I am not and, utterly entranced, can only manage “Why?”



He looks at me and nods “There’s more connection with people,” he says, and I am not sure what he means.

“Does it hurt?” I ask, motioning to the chalk splayed on the pavement, “to watch it go?”

“I would be lying if I said it wasn’t painful, but I’ve learned over the years to let things go,” he shrugs. “I hope it will inspire people... with art, you go somewhere else for a while, and when you come back, everything looks a little bit different.”

When I return home, things are, more or less, as I left them. But they don’t feel that way. Scarf still tied to my purse, and precisely one and a half packets of sugar in my coffee, I feel that, perhaps, I am slightly more the kind of woman who lives in the beautiful, exciting, bizarre *now*.



The Jazz Lover's Must-see: Upstairs at Ronnie's

By Keri Parker

Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club is a historic staple in the London Jazz scene. Set in the sprawling streets of SoHo, the club subtly calls for attention with its saxophone sporting neon sign. The downstairs boasts a big room catered for booming music, and is the more popular and well-known part of Ronnie's. At the top of a dark and narrow stairway, waits Upstairs at Ronnie's. Upstairs hosts a variety of shows that capture the lively and ever-changing music scene in London. From local musicians, to sets showcasing Afro-Caribbean music, there seems to always be something new to discover.

Ronnie's sets the mood with a classy bar and lounge setup. The dark wood bar, velvety maroon seating and warm mood lighting help to cultivate a sultry mood. Intimate tables set away from the stage are perfect for a late-night drink with a partner, and larger cozy alcoves towards the front are well suited for a group. The waitstaff is very friendly and efficient, supplementing the sophisticated nature of the spot. Of course, drinks are always flowing, and the small menu gives an elevated feel to the whole night. The Espresso Martini is a staple at Ronnie's, and their menu gives three different iterations to choose from. For non-drinkers, there is also a list of drinks sans alcohol that has plenty of fun and exciting options to spice up your night. As for food, there is an array of options, from small plates to full on meals, along with vegetarian and vegan safe dishes. The potato and vegan mozzarella small plate is a great choice for a starter or mid-show snack.

As for the performance set-up, this varies from show to show. This portion of Ronnie's is suited for more intimate and personal shows, and crowd interaction can be expected. The stage is set directly in front of the bar, as the upstairs functions on table service. The seats best suited for the show would be in the first room; here is essentially a front row seat to the show. However, if you're looking to chat up a date, seats toward the back are better equipped for conversation. Tickets are best bought in advance to guarantee a spot upstairs- but, seating is first come first served. Planning to arrive about thirty minutes prior to showtime, allows for ample wiggle room for



Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club
47 Frith Street
Soho
London
W1D 4HT

tube delays, drink ordering, and an instagram post to show off this funky spot. Though, if planning isn't your thing, tickets can be purchased at the door, as well as late seating given away if reservations do not show.

Upstairs at Ronnie Scott's jazz club is a sophisticated spot for the music lover- or anyone who craves a sultry atmosphere coupled with great drinks. Here you can find a break from the booming club music that SoHo is so well known for, and enjoy an evening filled with blissful and smooth jazz.

A TASTE OF NIGHTLIFE

BY KATIE NOWAK

THE NIGHTLIFE IN LONDON IS WORLD-RENOWNED—AND FOR GOOD REASON. WITH SO MANY OPTIONS, IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE YOUR STANDARD NEIGHBORHOOD PUB FROM THE TRULY UNIQUE WATERING HOLES. WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR UNCONVENTIONAL ENTERTAINMENT OR EXOTIC BREWS, HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST FASCINATING BARS IN LONDON.

The Last Tuesday Society & Absinthe Parlour

Looking to try one of the world's most potent liquors? Perhaps you're a fan of the peculiar. The Last Tuesday Society & Absinthe Parlour accommodates even the strangest of appetites. Taxidermied animals and provocative artwork covers every inch of wall. The dimly-lit pub encourages you to linger, taking in its mysterious ambiance. It serves a wide variety of cocktails, including their signature absinthe drinks which are available in mouthwatering mixed drink as well as the traditional manor of serving—the way it was enjoyed by the likes of Van Gogh and Picasso. At 66% alcohol-content, no wonder why it has often been called an elixir! Need more freak? Feeling brave? Head down the spiral staircase to find a museum of the strangest and most diverse collection of curiosities—magic, pleasure, power, pain—pick your poison, if you dare.



Ballie Ballerson

Nowak et al.: Monarch Traveler: Allowing Adventure

Play time is not just for kids anymore—and neither are ball pits! Boasting over one million balls (don't worry, the balls are regularly sanitized!), Ballie Ballerson brings back childhood nostalgia with a sophisticated edge. The nightclub serves their specialty drink—glow-in-the-dark cocktails in pouches that resemble Capri Sun. Past the “This started out as a joke” custom neon sign, clubbers have their choice of various dance floors to bust down on and ball pits to sink into. Different areas have their own color scheme and ambiance, which makes it a temptingly Instagram-able location. The night club plays a mix of today's hottest tracks and throwback hits that keeps you feeling nostalgic all night long.



The Cellar Door

The drama cannot, and shall not, be confined to the stage. In fact, it simply moves down the street! Located right outside the Lyceum Theatre, The Cellar Door hosts nightly performances including musicians, magicians, drag performers, and burlesque dancers. Once an ancient roman toilet, this bar has been transformed into is chic and sexy hotspot which still maintains a vintage essence (think 30's dive bar).

Nestled under the busy sidewalk, down an enticing set of stairs, the small venue feels intimate and exclusive, allowing performers to interact with patrons. As one of the few bars in the area which stays open until 1 AM, spirits stay high (and spirits are served) long after London goes to bed. Rumor has it, the bathroom is directly behind the stage, so when you emerge afterwards, the whole audience applauds!



How to let go of
the reins of diet
culture and
actually enjoy
food while
traveling

NEWPORT
COURT WC2
新港園
CITY OF WESTMINSTER 西敏市

FOOD IS FOOD IS FOOD

STEPPING onto a busy street in London for the first time was overwhelming to say the least. Restaurants of every kind lined the street, and my eyes caught dimly lit pubs intermingled with fancy chinese restaurants and swanky coffee shops. The sun reflected off shiny signage, and the street was saturated and bright in color. Perfect weather punctuated the sight even further. It was shocking how people milled about, not stopping in awe to take in the scene laid in front of them. I was eager, and also very, very intimidated.

So, when traveling to London for the first time, I was not sure what to expect. When *eating* in London, I was not sure what to expect. My methods of reference all involve the perceived ‘healthiness’ of food I hadn’t even tried yet. Diet culture is rampant in the States, taking away one’s autonomy over their own appetite, blurring the lines of what is actually good for you. I knew the food in London would be different, but what kind of different? Would it be plainer? Spicier? Greasy or clean? *Healthy or unhealthy?* But, what if they didn’t have to be either?

Traveling comes with the territory of budget concerns. So, the first stop was a London staple, Pret-a-Manger. The shop had colorful ready to go food, flaky pastries, and a rich variety of coffees that boasted reasonable prices on the menu. After an exhausting day



travel (I can check an international flight off of my bucket list!) I gravitated towards a Korean inspired grain bowl. The chicken was sprinkled with black sesame seeds, and was surrounded by a rainbow of vegetables, which was all settled on a bed of quinoa. It seems silly

to remember such a simple meal from a takeaway chain so vividly. But, when I made myself comfortable on the lawn of the nearby Kensington Gardens, surrounded by new friends and an unmistakable feeling of excitement, this meal set the tone for the entire trip.



Comparison will always be part of the human condition. Going into this trip, I could feel the ever-nagging presence of it at the borders of my mind. Worrying about what to pack, how I'll look in photos, it's all *exhausting*. How does one take advantage of every opportunity travel has to offer, without cornering themselves with critical thoughts about their body?

My first dinner in London was a genuine Thai place, dubbed Rosa's Thai. The small restaurant that I managed to pass by several times, was nestled a little further back from the street, radiating a warm homey glow into the early evening. Inside, the waitstaff tucked me away at a back table, awarding me the private and quiet I desperately craved for my first evening abroad. A glossy red menu listed a wide array of dishes I'd never heard of before, and I could feel my stomach shifting in hunger. My first move was to check the calorie counts on each item, to find something that isn't too much, isn't too little. Come to find, the only numbers on the menu were the prices. This was jarring to say the least, considering *everything* in the States displays the calorie amount loud and proud next to nearly any menu item. Here,

I just had to pick based on what I was craving. With a small smile, inspired by this oddly freeing turn of events, I ordered as I pleased: the summer spring rolls, and chili basil chicken.

The spring rolls arrived at the table filled with crunchy fresh vegetables, wrapped in perfectly chewy rice paper, and were topped off with a salty-sweet peanut sauce. Upon first bite, I couldn't help but breathe a tiny sigh; this is exactly what I wanted. With two rolls all to myself, I was content for the remaining wait on the entree, and was the wait ever worth it. The steam from the plate drifted through the air as it was gently set on the table in front of me. Bright green and red peppers were scattered throughout the piled high chicken pieces that rested on the plate. Scooping a small amount of pillowy rice onto my spoon, I then topped it with the course in front of me. Gently chewing, I took in every note of spice and seasoning that graced my tastebuds. Warmness settled across my stomach as I slouched back in the chair with contentment. This euphoria might not be so hard to get used to. And get used to it, I did. Most of the restaurants in London carried the same trend of not

outwardly displaying calories counts. No ‘skinny’ sections or ‘healthy’ alternate menus. Even if there were a few, the hustle and bustle of the city did not lend itself to deep consideration of the menus of each place I visited. Food was just food, meant to be experienced and used to fuel the body. This afforded me just the boost I needed to jump head first into eating my way through London.

Of course, the ever famous Chinatown of London was on the list of must-visit places. Here, I divulged in hand-pulled spring onion noodles, brightly colored pork filled bao buns, and my first ever wheel cake. Desserts are as challenging as any- sugary sweetness that's been painted as dangerous by diet culture. The shop was quite literally a sliver in the wall of stores and restaurants that decorated Chinatown, but that did not evade my keen ability to seek out a “little somethin’ sweet” post meal. Sweet, syrupy notes in the air caught my attention, and led me to a small glass case tucked away in the cubby that was the wheel cake shop. I went simple, a vanilla custard flavored cake, that reminded me of my favorite kind of donut. An easy three pound bill and a short walk to Covent Garden street market later, I found myself enjoying my first bite while perched on the edge of a boxy planter (classy, I know). Again, euphoric, satisfied happiness stretched itself over and around me. I generally lean away from the notion of perfection, but this moment was damn near.

These memories stand as defining moments of my time abroad in London, and as defining moments in the long process of learning to let myself just *enjoy* food. Each meal, snack, “a little somethin’ sweet”, is an opportunity to widen and stretch the extraordinary experience and privilege that comes with traveling abroad. I know I came out of this stint abroad much fuller (intellectually *and* appetite wise!) than if I hadn’t just given the space for food to just be food again. I took the liberty to enjoy one last meal in London before hopping onto a train to the airport, as the fish and chips joint around the corner was practically shouting my name at this point. Taking the fork from the rolled up napkin, I looked down at the plate in front of me: this is just what I wanted.



WHEN IN LONDON

By Lauren Wolf

As the sun begins to set, which is one of the best times to visit, and radiant beams of yellow and orange dance across the sky, the opportunity to take many perfect pictures arises. London is so much brighter. Down below, the cars look like ants as they trudge slowly through traffic. As the sun dips beneath the horizon, the city transforms as an array of lights pop on like stars do in the sky. They twinkle, bringing the city to life. The sight is stunning, making it hard to look away from for even a moment.

160 meters in the air and located on the top floor of the Fenchurch Street building, Sky Garden is one of the few places with a magnificent view of London's skyline. 35 floors up, the flourishing garden provides nature induced peace. Despite the many bustling people standing along the full walls of windows, the open space gives off a calm feeling. One wall has large, brown benches to sit and let the view really soak in.

The only noises that resonate are from the two British restaurants and bars surrounding the vibrant green plants: quiet chattering, the random clinks of glasses, and silverware hitting against plates. The restaurant's hours vary from opening as early as 8:30am to closing as late as 10:30pm, serving a variety of mouthwatering meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Both bars

serve a variety of alcoholic beverages bursting with flavor to enjoy, such as cocktails.

Entrance into Sky Garden is free so long as tickets are booked online. A reservation at one of the restaurants also allows access. Without either of these, there is a small price to get in.

There is no time limit to explore the gorgeous views. London's architecture is distinctive, as every building looks different so it never gets boring to look around. There is an overwhelming feeling of awe as one's eyes wander over the many unique buildings and famous sights. On one side is St. Paul's Cathedral and the London Eye, while on another side is the Tower of London and Tower Bridge. There is also a side with a balcony that gives a fascinating view of Thames River. Due to its height, the Eiffel Tower can also be seen in the distance!

Along with food and views, Sky Garden has musical nights where different genres of music are played by a resident DJ, including jazz, funk and soul, and pop. People can dance and get into the feel of the music, having a fun time and letting loose. Another event held is called "Yoga at Sky Garden". These sessions are very tranquil and held in the morning, providing a fresh view of London.

Exploring the city from the ground is one thing, but from so high up it's breathtaking!

Magical Lesson

By Cheyenne Goodman

With the gentle grass gracing the space in between my fingers and the shimmering sun sitting on my body, I closed my eyes in Kensington Gardens' lush open fields. It was the first time bugs hummed instead of bickered, and the grass was velvet—not bladed. The clouds were distracted by other areas of the world. London's nature was more welcoming than anywhere in the United States. I'd imagine finding an accepting group of wise witches--those who had studied and perfected their craft.

Witchcraft, a spiritual practice, has been heavily ridiculed, invalidated, and incorrectly discussed in the Western world. This term is often confused with Wicca, a culturally appropriate religion, because of misinformation and Wiccans believing their practice is true witchcraft. Wicca is characterized by the worship of a male and female goddess, karmic rules, and freedom. Growing up in a Christian dominated town, there was no mentor to teach me magic. Wiccans were present in my hometown, but I was isolated due to practicing witchcraft unrelated to their deities. I practiced alone, bogged down with misconceptions from my peers, loneliness, and a battle with my faith. Prior to the trip, I questioned my own beliefs, yet it was magic itself that brought me to London. The city is known around the world for its influence on New Age spirituality, so my eagerness for community blossomed as soon as I researched. I planned each

day, memorized street names, and meticulously repeated conversations in my head in fear that I'd wasted my time on this journey.

No amount of research can equate to one day in London. The urban city does not clash with the wild daisies that spring out of cobblestone. Instead, the worn neo gothic buildings felt as essential as the trees themselves. My desire to meet real witches overcame the initial rush of being overwhelmed in a big city. I read my map countless times to ensure that around the corner of an elegant beige building was the first hint of magic. It was a bookstore that arose in 2003

called Treadwell's. The shelves were made out of strong wood, filled with books with a variety of spiritualism: Hoodoo, Santeria, Wicca, and many more. I was an hour early for my booked tarot reading. Despite its padded cobalt couch, a sense of eeriness bestowed upon me. Each book seemed interesting, however, nothing latched onto my interest. I initially avoided talking to any of the workers.

A tarot reader, Rob, guided me into a room that contained a wooden table, two chairs, a faintly dim lamp, and a deck of cards which separated us. Tarot is used to access the divine or take a look of someones' subconscious.





Most importantly, it is sacred between the reader and customer. Rob lightened the dim room with his laughter and cheerful personality. His detailed and thorough explanation on the cards chosen displayed the wealth of knowledge I was looking for. The tarot spoke about death, self-esteem, and change. No swords, the suite of air and the mind were present. This means that logic is not critical to face an issue. Rob recommended releasing self doubt as I am proficient.

Rob was not Wiccan, but the other worker at the bookstore considered herself one. When I discussed exchanging knowledge, she gave me helpful online resources and stated it was too personal for her to disclose. This roadblock was disheartening. Although I was fully accepting of her reasons, this revelation struck me as a rejection. It was easily exciting to find real-life witches, but secrecy continued to be present. I've spent most of my life communicating my spirituality on forums while craving for in-person community. Once met with a sustainable witch community, there was no possibility to access it within a week. I reminded myself that there were more niche stores revolving around the occult and spiritualism. Each shop was more intriguing than the previous, but none of these contained a spark

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to light my heart's flame.

A store I didn't intend on finding was *Mysteries*: a metaphysical crystal store. Ethically sourced crystals lined the store's windows, walls, and shelves. The variety ranged from raw crystals, tumbled, carved, and cabochon cut stones. This store did have a religion attached to itself. There was no weight of ancient book wisdom, cauldrons, or statues. *Mysteries'* energy was more playful and airy than *Treadwell's*, and I felt more at ease talking to the locals about their practices. *Mysteries* provided a sense of hope that London was home to many minority religions and faiths—all of which are welcomed. It was a pleasant detour; however, I was determined to visit the oldest witchcraft store in London.

Perpendicular to the British Museum, the *Atlantis Bookshop* was displayed on the front window in a small whimsical font on a turquoise building. The *Atlantis Bookshop* was a place for witches to practice their magic before Britain legalized the practice in the 20th century. Geraldine Beskin, one of the owners, allowed me to walk into the basement and discover the past, 18

to walk into the basement and discover the past, present, and future of modern witchcraft. Notably, the smell of frankincense circulated as the basement revealed relics, a table, and a coffee machine. Beskin explained how the basement used to be used for rituals and is currently used for metaphysical group events. Her welcoming voice invited me to ask about her opinions on British Traditional Wicca and American Wicca. We had a conversation that revolved around modern witchcraft. The future holds a community no longer separated by an ocean but united by the internet. For the first time, I felt like achieving my initial goal was a failure. I couldn't keep London in my pocket and felt hollow.

On my last night of my trip, I calculated if I truly developed. It wasn't until me and another fellow traveler left a bar that I remembered Rob's input to stop listening to my mind. The tube was closing eastbound, so we rushed to get onto one of the last tubes of the night. Exhausted, the girl I traveled with had tears hanging on the ledge of her lower eyelashes. I started to tear up as well, not because of disappointment, but because the unplanned events—including the tube—were the most fun and adventurous moments. I was no longer bound by time or expectation. Visiting each shop was an exploration of London's diverse mentality, and the community I witnessed was thriving. Therefore, I could thrive.

Learning to stop thinking and caring about the small details widened my perception of London. In essence, I needed to stop criticizing myself. The only way for me to understand this lesson was traveling to London and getting stuck in my own head. During the tarot reading, Rob said, "We die everyday and become a new person every time we wake up." Wisdom isn't about the forced or painful deaths that bring grief and loss, but the good deaths that bring a new understanding of life.



LONDON'S LOVE LETTER TO THE OCEAN

By Cheyenne Goodman

STRIKING blue hues, an underground bunker, and mysterious vaults surround the aquarium's entrance. The viewer is drenched in darkness as white and pale blue lights lead the way to the shark walk. Adults and children stare in bewilderment: two creatures swim above and below themselves as they travel through a world unlike land. Two manta rays flap their fins as oceanic angels blessing each traveler. SEA LIFE Centre London Aquarium is not a typical aquarium designed for private investors; rather it is an art installation meant to express the diverse beauty of the ocean.

As the viewer continues to explore, a breeze of icy air can make the back of someone's neck rise at the Polar Adventure region, and the temperature increases in the Conservation Cove to provide a summery warm feeling. These unique features playfully engage with the audience. The pastel lights shift from vibrant neon to dim, soothing grays. The ambience sounds shift between exhibits from light oceanic waves to a plethora of

croaks and splashes that further exemplify the relaxing music of natural marine biomes.

Scales, feathers, and claws can be seen at SEA LIFE. Rainforest Adventure has the most diverse group of animals: tiny ruby ants crawl above dirt mountains, crocodiles calmly lay under their heat lamps, and frogs ribbit in excitement. Aquatic birds can be observed as suave, well-natured penguins in Polar Adventure. Colorful starfish, sea anemones, and crabs can be petted at the Rockpool Explorer. Big or small. Thin or wide. These animal actors know they are the main actors and would gladly approach humans to say hello!

Some exhibits contain projections of animals. Most notably, the beluga whales are not present. However, SEA LIFE has the first beluga whale sanctuary for two whales: Little Grey and Little. Sustainable. Efficient. Entertaining. The emphasis on conservation is marked on every attraction. Benches made out of trash, wooden utensils, and recycled art contextualizes the SEA LIFE's

objective to provide retrospection through entertainment.

As the Earth's health continues to decline to uncertainty and marine life becomes scarce, SEA LIFE Centre London Aquarium provides a critical yet immersive experience to discover how London is trying to combat climate change. Installation art has shown to provoke emotions unlike other visual arts. This aquarium closely replicates an artistic installation by the design of the sounds, lights, and healthy animals to provide the best possible environment for people to be well-informed about every marine biome. Unlike other aquariums, London sends its love out by honoring its own body of water, the Thames river, in its own section, and an ethical shark walk is not common in other marine attractions. Art is created to express human desire. Every amusing fish demonstrates London's wish to preserve natural waters in this once in a lifetime aquarium.

WORK SECOND, ME FIRST

By Lauren Wolf





unique. Diverse. Every single person that passes by looks or speaks differently. Every single structure standing in the garden or the park has an incomparable aspect to it that is found to be eye-catching. The bright green grass is nicely cut with people spread out relaxing, soaking in the sun. Trees reach from above, their leaves providing patches of shade that dance across the ground every time the breeze blows. The wide concrete path seems never ending, leading to the magnificent Kensington Palace. Joggers and bikers pass by silently, no loud noises disrupt the calmness. Right across from the palace is the Round Pond. It's swarming with many types of birds: bright white swans, ducks with their babies, and pigeons. The water shimmers in the light. A variety of well-behaved dogs trot by next to their owners, no leash attached to them. The gardens are peaceful, the flowers providing a sweet smell in the air that pleases nostrils. The main concrete path breaks off into a few smaller paths with less people roaming them. Lots of fields surround the paths, vibrant yellow flowers covering them so the grass isn't visible. This park is one of many that can be found in London, providing those who explore it a sense of serenity and natural beauty. With an open mind, these details are easily perceivable.

To put it simply, I am a workaholic. I rarely go out to have fun, and when I do it's because my friends drag me out, telling me I need a break. Despite having a great time with them, my mind is constantly plagued with stress and anxiety. Work. School. Volunteering. Obligations at home to help out my family. Managing money and bills. I'm constantly overwhelmed, staying up late every night to keep myself on top of everything. It's the same cycle everyday: eat, work, sleep, repeat. This uneventful lifestyle and the constant flow of negative emotions has taken a toll on my mental state. I'm already sleep deprived, wishing

that caffeine would suddenly begin working on me. When people ask me how I am, I always respond with "tired" rather than "good". Preoccupied with tasks, I rarely go outside, giving me a pale look.

My family and friends began to notice that I was putting work before myself, so they sat me down and told me that I needed to do what was best for me before anything else. When the opportunity to travel to London appeared before me, I seized it.

Seven days. That's how long I stayed in London. Although this was my first time traveling outside of the United States, and my first time going on a vacation in six years, I was more excited than nervous. I left all of my stress and worries back home and decided that I was going to focus solely on myself and living in the moment. "When in London!" was the little saying I repeated in my head. My first day was spent wandering slowly throughout the Kensington Gardens, which I found to be a much needed experience as it calmed my whole body and I felt at peace with myself for the first time in a while. I felt more aware of my surroundings as I took in the beauty of the park and gardens. It was absolutely breathtaking! The air was fresh and the sky was clear, the sun beaming down on me and giving me the vitamin C my body craved. Although I was jet lagged, I spent a solid five hours there. At some point I sat in the grass and just people watched, amazed by how many different people I saw. It seemed like I heard a variety of languages rather than just British accents, which is what I was originally expecting. I ended up going back quite a lot throughout the week, relishing in the vibrancy before my eyes.

Along with enjoying nature, I visited some well-known locations that were on my "must see while in London". I took an uber boat along the River Thames, passing the London Eye

The architecture of the buildings along the river were a balance between ancient and modern, yet the Tower of London still stuck out boldly. Exploring the history throughout the Tower of London, while also trying not to fall down the slim spiral staircases, was mind opening as I learned a lot and only worried about seeing everything I wanted to before the building closed for the day. I also went to Big Ben, craning my neck towards the sky to see the towering clock. On another day I visited the British Museum, learning more history and viewing different styles used throughout the generations and cultures. My artistic side had me awe-struck over pieces of art in the National Gallery. Food-wise, I decided to jump out of my comfort zone and try new things that my picky self would never imagine eating. This included the traditional fish and chips, which satisfied my palette more than was expected. I got a cute, small London themed tattoo, as a symbol and reminder to myself that putting myself before my work is worth it. Surprisingly enough, I even found myself indulging in the London drinking culture - something I never allowed myself to partake in back at home. The more time spent for myself, the more of a grip I got towards my reality and inner self.

My time abroad in London gave me the chance to let loose and value myself. I realized that by focusing on just work, I was missing out on so much, including the beauty that constantly surrounds me.

Now back home, I find myself willingly taking breaks and recognizing when my mind needs to rest. My head feels clearer and overall my mentality is positive. Although I can't change the amount of work I have, I can find a healthy balance. There is always a way to make time for myself.

