

# THE POND HOPPER



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TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL TO THE U.K. & IRELAND FOR INDEPENDENT AND GROUP TRAVELERS

AUTUMN / WINTER 2009

## Travel Memories... the Vacation that Never Ends

**T**he way you wear your hat, the way you sip your tea, the memory of all that, no they can't take that away from me." George and Ira Gershwin knew what they were talking about when they wrote that song! Memories cannot be taken away from us... and this is one of the most amazing aspects of travel.

As the owner of a travel planning company, the most rewarding part of my business is to receive positive client feedback because their experiences will not only stay in their memories for a lifetime, they will morph into wonderful stories that will be shared with friends and family. Sharing those memories are the gifts we give others in addition to, for example, the miniature-sized Big Ben candy dispenser.

As a child, I was particularly lucky! I had a father who worked for a major airline in a position which allowed him (and our family) to travel... a lot! Although we frequently flew stand-by, more often than not, this meant last minute boarding and hence "suffering" through first-class flights! It also meant staying in some very nice hotels. And, although I remember the nice flights and hotels, what I remember most is how we, as a family, were lucky enough to travel the world, and create memories! And today, the most precious of those memories are

the wonderful stories we still recall.

I remember the funny looking taxicabs on the wrong side of the road in London. I recall drinking champagne passed out to the entire audience by the theatre at a



*An 11-year old Anne Marie with her brother, John, and two Yeoman Warders, Tower of London, circa 1979.*

West End London's 1,000th performance of 'Oliver!'. Our family still laughs today at how my, then, 14-year old brother (pictured above) killed mosquitoes on the ceiling in a Parador hotel in Spain, leaving Van's® shoe prints all over that ceiling. (It looked like Fred Astaire had donned John's shoes and performed his famous ceiling dance up there! It's shameful today to admit we dirtied the hotel's ceiling, I know... but it still cracks us all up!) I recall olive tree after olive tree driving throughout Spain - they seemed to go on

forever. Trips to tropical Maui, cultural Mexico, friendly Denmark, and visiting family in Canada are imprinted forever in my mind and recalled with great affection.

I have shared these delightful memories with my husband and many of my friends. And, should I ever have children, those memories will be passed on to them, hopefully before they retrace these steps of mine.

It is often not the locations themselves that create these incredible travel memories, but the experiences we are able to have while there. Removing ourselves from our everyday environment is so beneficial, and allowing memories to become a part of who we are is invaluable.

Whether you choose to travel to the British Isles, Ireland, Europe, the South Pole, or Timbuktu, embrace the opportunity to go! Because not only will you most likely experience a wonderful trip, you will be creating memories for yourself, your family, and your friends that are irreplaceable and last a lifetime.

For more information about creating your British and Irish memories, call:

*Across the Pond Vacations* and let us help you begin the journey of a lifetime.

**Tel. 310-791-6101**

[info@atpvacations.com](mailto:info@atpvacations.com)  
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## Hampton Court Ghost Tours

**B**eginning October 31, 2009 and running through March 7, 2010, Hampton Court Palace will hold Ghost Tours every Friday and Sunday evening (7:30pm).

The Palace dates back to the 15th century and was once home to King Henry VIII. The best known haunting at Hampton Court is by Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife. She was reported to have broken free from her guards and ran to her husband to plead for her life. The guards dragged her back and she was executed. To this day, a woman in white can be seen floating down the Haunted Gallery. Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife, who died in childbirth, is said to walk through the cobbled courtyard carrying a lighted taper. And, Sibell Penn, nurse to Prince Edward, Henry's only son, died in 1562 and was buried in Hampton Church. When the church was pulled down in 1829 her remains were disturbed and legend has it she returned to the rooms she once lived in.

Experience the unique atmosphere of Henry VIII's State Apartments, including the infamous Haunted Gallery, and creep through the deserted courtyards - if you dare! For more information, contact:

**Across the Pond Vacations**  
**310-791-6101**  
[info@atpvacations.com](mailto:info@atpvacations.com)

## Ask the Experts: Travel Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

**W**e get a lot of questions here, at Across the Pond Vacations, about everything from driving on the left side of the road to understanding Scottish accents. Not only are we happy to answer these questions, we'd like to share some of these answers with you! So, from our staff experts, enjoy these FAQs and Travel Tips!

**Q: How do I tip when I'm the United Kingdom or Ireland?**

**A:** A vague subject, indeed! Well, tipping overseas is definitely different than here in the U.S. (or Canada). In a pub or bar, you don't tip the publican (bartender). However, you may wish to offer to buy him/her a drink, which will certainly be appreciated, even if it's not accepted at the time. If it is accepted, the barkeep might take the tip in the form of cash to "have one later," which will generally be for half a pint of beer, or a small measure of spirits. In restaurants, sometimes the tip is included in the bill, sometimes it's not. Check your tab. If the tip is included in the bill, tipping above this amount is not necessary. If a service charge is not included in the bill, anywhere from 10% to 20% percent, depending upon service, is standard. Taxi drivers will gratefully accept your "rounding up" to tip them. For example, if the cab fare is £9.20, paying £10.00 total is acceptable. In Ireland, it is not customary to tip a percentage of the total bill in a restaurant, but a few small coins is generally considered quite polite. Like most of Europe, it is common to round up to the nearest note (i.e., paying €30 for a bill of €26).

**Q: I'm nervous about driving on the left side of the road. What can I expect?**

**A:** When you book your travel with Across the Pond Vacations, we always make sure you receive our "Rules of the Road" papers to ensure you are relatively well-versed on what to do before you get behind the wheel... in the right side of the car. We do not recommend having a car in major cities, such as London, Dublin, or Edinburgh. This should eliminate driving in heavy traffic. We also recommend you rent a car with automatic transmission,



and a GPS system. However, the majority of our clients have said that after the first 20 - 30 minutes on the road, they acclimate and can relax a bit. Renting a car is one of the best ways to get around the country, allowing you the freedom to come and go as you please.

**Q: Where can I exchange my money? Do I need foreign currency for when I get to my destination?**

**A:** To answer the last question first, yes, we do recommend having some foreign currency in hand prior to your departure from the U.S. (or Canada). This way, you can purchase any necessary items at the airport upon arrival, pay for a taxi if necessary, or tip the porter at the hotel. To answer the first part of the question, the best place to exchange money will depend upon what your bank offers. Most people pay for their more expensive items using a credit or debit card. (You may wish to find out what your bank's foreign transaction fees are.) However, when you need to pay cash, find out the exchange rate your bank offers (if they exchange currency) for cash and travelers' checks. Alternatively, there are companies that will exchange your Dollars into Pounds or Euros, such as Travelex (www.travelex.com). While companies such as Travelex may not have the best exchange rates, they do tend to be better than exchanging money at the airport.

**Q: I've heard we cannot touch the stones at Stonehenge. Is this true?**

**A:** It is true - with an exception. Due to vandalism that appeared at the site and on the stones in the past, English Heritage (who manage Stonehenge) had to put a rope up around Stonehenge to prevent people from bringing potential harm to the

monument. So, you can literally walk around the stones, but cannot touch them. However, there are ways around this. Special sunrise and sunset bookings can be made in advance through Across the Pond Vacations so that you are able to have a more personal experience here. Give us a call; we'd be happy to arrange this for your travels.

### **Travel Tips:**

1. Take advantage of local markets and events. This will give you a wonderful feel for truly being in the country, not just a tourist.
2. Embrace the country's traditions and customs. Sure, it's different from home... that's the point. If a particular custom or practice seems awkward or strange to you, accept it and realize this is all part of the experience. Go with the flow and remember that you are a guest in this foreign country.
3. Invest in a money belt (or similar). No matter where you travel, theft is an unhappy reality. Thieves are becoming even trickier, so having a secure place to keep your money, passport, etc., is imperative.
4. Prior to departure, photocopy all of your travel documents, travelers' checks, etc., and give them to someone that you can *absolutely* trust. That way, if something does go missing, a phone call home will help you regain your losses faster.
5. Afraid you'll forget something in the hotel safe? Here's a neat little trick. Lock up one of the shoes (or other items) you'll wear on your plane trip home in the safe. That way, you won't get far without the 2nd shoe (or other item) without checking the hotel safe before you leave.

If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to call Across the Pond Vacations for help. We'd be delighted to answer any questions you may have!

Wishing you every joy on your travels,



*Anne Marie Clarke*

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## Auntie Mabel's Corner



Hello to you, my darling poppets! Auntie Mabel here again. In this issue of The Pond Hopper, I have a special treat for you - my recipe for Shepherd's Pie!

This yummy English meat "pie" dates back to 1791 (as 'Cottage Pie'). It was derived when the potato was being introduced as an edible crop affordable to the poor (most of whom lived in *cottages*). In early cookbooks, the dish was a means of using leftover roasted meat of any kind, and the pie dish was lined with mashed potato as well as having a mashed potato "crust" on top. The term 'Shepherds Pie' did not actually appear until the 1870's, and since then, it has been used somewhat synonymously with 'Cottage Pie' regardless of whether the principal ingredient was beef or mutton. But just to keep things straight, 'Cottage Pie' contains beef. 'Shepherds Pie' contains lamb or mutton. Now, on to the recipe.

Warm up your oven to around 400°F. Let's start with the meat:

- 1 lb. ground beef (Cottage Pie) or ground lamb (Shepherd's Pie)
- 1 large brown onion, chopped
- ½ cup frozen peas
- 1 t. English mustard
- 1 c. beef bouillon
- 2 - 3 dashes of Worcestershire sauce

Brown the ground beef or lamb. Once that's done, remove the meat from the pan and set it aside, but keep the meat juices in the pan. Sauté the onion until it's tender and slightly brown. Then, add your meat, bouillon, mustard and Worcestershire sauce to the pan with the onions in it. Cover and simmer it all together for about 20 minutes. Add the frozen peas to the mixture, cover and simmer for another 20 minutes. Put this meat mixture in a 9"x13" baking pan and set aside to cool.

For the potato mixture, you'll need:

- 1-½ pounds of peeled, boiled russet potatoes (you can boil these in a separate pot whilst working on your meat mixture)
- 1 stick butter
- 2 ounces grated cheddar cheese
- ¼ - ½ c. whole milk

Drain the peeled, cooked potatoes and mash them together with ½ the stick of butter, the cheese and the milk. Place "dots" of potatoes, evenly, every inch or so on top of the meat mixture. Run a fork along the potatoes lightly so that the potato mixture covers the meat, without mixing it *into* the meat. With the remaining half a stick of butter, place "dots" of butter evenly distributed over your potato mixture so that it cooks into the top of the potatoes. Bake for approximately 20 - 30 minutes at 400°F, or until potato crust is golden brown. Serve with a pint of ale (maybe toast to your Auntie Mabel) and enjoy!

## Free Money? Yes!

### Can We Interest You in \$100?

Refer a friend to Across the Pond Vacations by December 31st. If they book their British and/or Irish vacation with us, we'll send you \$100!

*Offer valid through December 31, 2009. Booking must take place (and non-refundable deposit received from client) by December 31, 2009. Referral fee of \$100 paid to referrer if party traveling is at least 2 people. \$100.00 is maximum payable amount to referrer, regardless of maximum party size. Only one referral fee paid to referrer per person. Other restrictions may apply.*

## QUIZ TIME FOR THE ANGLOPHILE

1. What is the tallest mountain in the United Kingdom?
  - Snowdon
  - Bleaklow Head
  - Mardon Down
  - Ben Nevis
2. Does the Republic of Ireland include the whole of the island called Ireland?
  - Yes
  - No
3. What is Prince Charles' wife, Camilla Parker Bowles', official title?
  - Princess of England
  - Lady of Spain
  - Duchess of Cornwall
  - Duchess of Gloucestershire
4. What is Queen Elizabeth II's full name?
  - Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor
  - Elizabeth of Windsor
  - Elizabeth Mary Tudor
  - Elizabeth Rose Alexandra Tudor
5. Ireland is one of the largest exporters of software-related goods and services in the world.
  - True
  - False
6. What currency is used in Scotland?
  - British Pound
  - Scottish Crown
  - Euro
  - Gaelic Jigger
7. What is the oldest (still inhabited) castle in England?
  - Buckingham Palace
  - Berkeley Castle
  - Windsor Castle
  - Balmoral Castle
8. How old was King Henry VIII when he died, and who was his wife at the time?
  - 35, Catherine Parr
  - 45, Catherine Howard
  - 55, Anne Boleyn
  - 55, Catherine Parr

*Answers: 1. Ben Nevis, in Scotland 2. No 3. Duchess of Cornwall 4. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor 5. True 6. British Pound 7. Berkeley Castle 8. 55, Catherine Parr*

# SEASONAL HIGHLIGHT TOUR

## Scotland - On Sale Now!

### Plan Now to Don Your Kilt for Springtime in Scotland

That's right... it's time to dust off that kilt and get ready for Springtime in Scotland! You'll travel, independently, through Eastern Scotland, admiring its beautiful countryside and allowing its cities to inspire and amaze you. With exciting events, wonderful wildlife, amazing attractions and activities, delicious food and drink, and of course, the greatest golf going, there's just so much to see and do in Scotland! From castle hopping to clay pigeon shooting and whisky tasting, you won't want to miss out on encountering the lovely Scottish people and their hearty and true way of life!

**Day 1** - Depart on your overnight flight to Edinburgh, Scotland.

**Day 2** - Meet and greet at Edinburgh airport with transfer to Edinburgh hotel. Afternoon and evening at leisure. Overnight at 4-star centrally located Edinburgh hotel.

**Day 3** - Full Scottish breakfast, then to Rosslyn Chapel. Afternoon guided walking tour of The Real Mary King's Close (underground tour of old Edinburgh), including visit and drink at Megget's Cellar. Overnight at Edinburgh 4-star hotel.

**Day 4** - Full Scottish breakfast, then visit Royal Yacht Britannia, Palace of Holyrood House and Edinburgh Castle. Overnight at Edinburgh 4-star hotel.

**Day 5** - Full Scottish breakfast. Collect rental car and head north to St. Andrew's, home of golf and Scotland's oldest university. (Advise us if you wish to golf.)

Visit to St. Andrew's Castle. Overnight at 5-star St. Andrew's Hotel.

**Day 6** - Full Scottish breakfast. Drive north to Dundee, Scotland's City of Discovery. Visit Glamis Castle, then north to Aberdeen. Overnight at 5-star Aberdeen hotel.

**Day 7** - Full Scottish breakfast, then explore Aberdeen. Drive to Balmoral Castle (open from late March to late July, only). Take a walk through the woods of Craig Gowan hill. Overnight at 5-star Aberdeen hotel.

**Day 8** - Full Scottish breakfast. Drive from Aberdeen to Inverness, stopping along the way at Cawdor Castle. Visit Castle Urquhart's ruins and take a cruise along the famous Loch Ness. Overnight at 4-star Inverness hotel.

**Day 9** - Full Scottish breakfast. Visit Culloden Battlefield. Next, it's clay pigeon shooting in the woods for a sporting and hearty afternoon. Overnight at 4-star Inverness hotel.

**Day 10** - Full Scottish breakfast. Full-day driver-guide (luxury car) at your service to take you on a Whisky Trail tour. Guide will make suggestions based on your desires for completing the day. Overnight at 4-



Castle Urquhart Ruins

star Inverness hotel.

**Day 11** - Full Scottish breakfast. Drive on to Glasgow to take in its history and arts. Overnight at 4-star centrally located Glasgow hotel.

**Day 12** - Full Scottish breakfast. Full day in Glasgow on your own to explore at will. (We will happily make recommendations for the area.) Get in that last minute shopping!

**Day 13** - Full Scottish breakfast. Return rental car to Glasgow airport and bid a fond "Beannachd Leat" (or in English "Farewell") to Bonnie Scotland.

**13 days starting from  
\$3,495/per person**

**That's \$150 off the regular price!**

**\*\* SALE ENDS NOV. 30<sup>TH</sup> 2009 \*\***  
Double Occupancy, Land Only, Other Restrictions Apply

**For additional information, please visit:**

**[www.atpvacations.com](http://www.atpvacations.com)  
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