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FACILITY DRILL

Blog - 2017 - August

River Walk

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River Walk

We recently went on a day's visit to see the river at Richmond. This town is the opposite end of London to where we live, and the river is younger, narrower and more pleasant than in the city and the Thames estuary. The day was sunny and mild but the forecast was rain by the beginning of the afternoon. So we set out reasonably early to make the most of the dry morning. The train goes from Waterloo Station on a circuit to Richmond and the other stations, ending up once again at Waterloo. So it was quite novel to be sitting on a train leaving Waterloo, with the announcer's voice telling us that we were on a train to that same station. At least we did know the reason, but it might have been a tad confusing for a visitor or tourist. On arrival we took a bus to the river bridge, so that we did not waste any of the few sunny hours walking down the long high street.

We took a short walk down the shady side of the river, then back again and over the bridge towards the main town. We wanted to be on the sunny side of the river and going towards a small park, where we planned to eat our sandwiches on a warm seat watching the peaceful sparkling river flowing gently by. As we approached the park there were spots of rain. By the time we got there, the rain was heavier and so we had to find a seat under a big tree. The drops and splats of water had no trouble finding a few openings between the branches and soon we were sitting in a row under several umbrellas, despite our hope that the tree would be our protective canopy. The rain collecting from the nearby paths began trickling over the muddy grass in a growing rivulet flowing down to the river's edge. The surface of the Thames was now pitted and mottled with a covering of ripples from the raindrops. We saw several canal boats going along the river, some owners unconcerned by the rain and others sheltered from it, as they were safely under cover in their cabins.

In the distance the sky was bright in patches, between the dark rainclouds. Quite quickly the weather cleared and we made our way back to the bridge in the dry, with warm breezes and even a bit more sun. We took a walk in the other direction as far as Richmond Lock. We ascended the lock stairs and crossed the river on high, looking down on the giant metal lock gates which are held aloft and which are tilted and lowered when required. This lock is used to control the water levels up river, to provide a stable environment by reducing the effect of the rise and fall of the tides in order to maintain a navigable depth of water at all times.

We crossed Richmond Bridge again, wandered into the busy town with its noisy traffic and made our way to the station. Once more we got on a train coming from and going to Waterloo Station. We were soon settled in our comfortable seats, watching the downpour cascading off the train roof and seeing some flashes of lightning and cracks of thunder. The hurrying crowds and busy atmosphere on the main concourse were quite a contrast to the quiet river, and the green and pleasant surroundings of Richmond. The weather was clear again when we arrived at our station and we were once again in green and quiet surroundings. Once home, the last job of the day was to download all the photos, retracing all our steps and wanderings. Another successful jaunt to be relived via the photos, when the dark and cold of winter make going out and about less appealing. The river scene would be quite a picture in winter, with snow and ice, so perhaps that is one for the bucket list, but avoiding the slippery waterside edges, and including some time in the shops to warm up. (683 words)