

London – a nice place to live in?



After a long morning at the Tower of London Petra and Dieter Braun and their English friend, Bill Grant, stood and watched the traffic on the River Thames.

'Can we go somewhere on one of those boats?' Petra asked.

'We can either go to Greenwich or to Westminster,' said Bill. 'Let's go and have a look at the timetable.'

'The next boat to Westminster leaves at 1.15,' said Dieter, 'and the boat to Greenwich leaves at 1.30. Which way do we want to go, Bill?'

'It'll be more interesting to go past the docks to Greenwich, I think,' said Bill.

There was a queue for the boat but when it arrived there were enough seats for everybody.

Petra looked at Tower Bridge and said, 'What a pity it won't open for us.'

'No, of course not,' said Bill. 'It only opens for big ships or for the Queen, and you don't look at all like her I'm afraid.'

They saw all kinds of ships and cranes on both sides of the river but some of the docks were empty. 'It's funny,' Bill said. 'London is still the largest port in Britain, but these days a lot of the docks aren't so busy. The huge lorries that carry the modern containers are difficult to drive through the narrow East End streets. It's easier to fetch the containers from docks nearer the sea.'

They went past more docks before they arrived at Greenwich and got off the boat. Bill knew what to show them and where to go. First they went into the museum and then they had a look inside the Cutty Sark, an old sailing-ship that carried tea from India about seventy years ago. After that they walked up the hill behind the museum. From the top they saw the tall

buildings of the City to their left and to their right the Thames on its way to the sea. Dieter wanted to stay longer, but Bill said, 'It's time to go now, I'm afraid. Come on.' 'Hey, Bill!' called Petra. 'Are you sure you know how to get back? The boats leave from over there.'

'This way,' Bill shouted. 'We don't want to see the same things twice.'

He led them into a little tunnel, and when they came out again they were on the other

side of the Thames. From there he took them by bus through the East End of London, past dirty factories, small shops, old houses and tall blocks of flats. There were no tourists with cameras here, but they saw a lot of coloured people.

'There are more coloured people here than Londoners,' said Petra.

'Well,' said Bill, 'a lot of them are Londoners whose parents came from places like the West Indies, Africa or India.'

As the bus went on slowly through the busy East End traffic, Dieter said, 'Such a lot of children in the streets look really poor.'

'Yes, and how dirty all the buildings and streets look here, don't they?' said Petra. 'And there's so much rubbish.'

'London is like a lot of other big cities,' Bill answered. 'The well-off¹ people live in nice houses in the suburbs², but the poorer people live in crowded places like the East End.'

Suddenly they were out of the East End and the bus took them past the offices and banks of the City, past the big and expensive shops in Oxford Street, and then to Victoria Station. As they got on a fast bus to Windsor, Petra said, 'London is an interesting place to visit but I think a small town like Windsor is much nicer to live in.'

'Perhaps. But we can't all live in small towns,' answered Bill. 'So it's important to make big cities nice to live in, too. Don't you agree?'

¹ well off – vermögend, wohlhabend

² suburb - Vorort

	

I. True or false

1. A lot of tourists visit the East End.
2. London is the biggest port in England.
3. The London docks are in Greenwich.
4. Oxford Street is a shopping street.
5. All the coloured people are Londoners as well.
6. Most of the coloured people are Londoners as well.
7. The docks are on both sides of the Thames.
8. You can't see the high buildings in the City from Greenwich.
9. The boat to Westminster is earlier than the boat to Greenwich.
10. They went back to the city by bus.

II. Answer the questions

1. Where had Petra, Dieter, and Bill spent the morning?

2. When does Tower Bridge usually open?

3. Why are the docks not as busy as they used to be?

5. What did the kids do in Greenwich?

6. What is the Cutty Sark?

7. Why did the kids go through the tunnel?

8. What did the kids see on their way through the East End?

9. Why would Petra prefer to live in a small town like Windsor?
