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[Nice little travel article about Henley](#)

Author

Topic

Baby Blue

Where am I going?



Posted - 15/01/2009 : 15:50:25

Hope you enjoy reading this! Unfortunately the person who wrote this wasn't a Dusty fan It's still an interesting read



<http://www.independenttraveler.com/tripreports/tripreports.cfm?ID=359>

January 15, 2009

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Time on the Thames

Name: Megan B. Send Us Your Trip Report

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Date of Trip: 6/2006

Destination: Europe

I arrived in Henley-on-Thames in a 14-passenger minibus crammed with 23 people's luggage.

On a trip to England with the women's crew team for two regattas, we were split between two homes to stay for the ten days we were there. Called "landladies," women in the community volunteer their family homes to take in foreign crews for the Henley Women's and Henley Royal regattas. It's a fairly common occurrence during late June and early July when the town's limited amount of hotels and B&Bs fill to capacity with regatta spectators.

Our first weekend in England the team rowed in the Reading Amateur Regatta. The town of Reading sits at the point where the rivers Thames and Kennet meet. Reading flourished as a cloth-making town but declined from the early 17th century to the beginning of the 19th century. The town is now a working class area, heavy on industry.

Although a local warned us about the safety of the neighborhood, a walk down the Thames path showed nothing but well-kept homes, restaurants, and hotels. People sailed mini-yachts and barges alike up and down the river, which is itself a greenish-blue and home to scores of swans and ducks.

If you took either Boston's Beacon Hill or Philadelphia's Main Line and put them on the river and filled them with Georgian architecture, you'd have Henley-on-Thames. Stately, sprawling homes dot the banks of the Thames, and Georgian row homes stand in neat lines along the streets.

I passed a wonderful birthday watching our girls win a race at the Reading Amateur Regatta before eating dinner at the Flowerpot, a recently remodeled hotel and restaurant in Henley. It offers both traditional and modern cuisine and a divine chocolate puddle dessert involving brownies, chocolate ganache and vanilla ice cream.

There are plenty of food options in Henley, from pubs to tearooms to restaurants, but for dining with a view, choose Angel on the Bridge pub. The back deck, offering pub fare, sits right on the bank of the Thames and provides idyllic scenes full of swans and passing motorboats, canoes, and sculls.

Also situated along the riverbank are several private rowing clubs, including the exclusive Leander Club which counts British rowing heroes Sirs Matthew Pinsent and Steven Redgrave as members. Pinsent frequently can be found in the club, relaxing with other rowers and guests.

If you're up for shopping, be prepared to spend your money. Not only do currency rates favor the pound, prices reflect the wealth of the town. While the clothing styles tend to skew to older generations, the town does offer younger styles in shops like Monsoon and Deep. I packed for a typical English June and instead got a typical Florida June, so in one hour in one store (Deep) on three items, I spent 77 quid (approximately \$150 at the time). But it was no small comfort I then had stylish clothes to combat the weather. There are also plenty of bookshops, cooking stores, gourmet food shops and even a well-stocked toy store, Bagatelle's.

The Henley Women's Regatta, our second regatta of the trip, sponsored a reception for participating crews at the River & Rowing Museum. Opened in 1997 by Queen Elizabeth II, the Schwarzenbach International Rowing Gallery, which was recently reopened after a major redisplay, tells the history of international rowing in an eye-catching and extremely informative

way.

One of the highlights of the new gallery is the "In the Cox's Seat" interactive exhibit, giving visitors a unique, 360 degree experience of what it is like to take part in a race at the world famous Henley Royal Regatta. Other parts of the exhibit include models of 1700s Artic whaleboats, elaborate Venetian gondolas, coastal lifeboats that pulled people from the North Sea and the gold medal boat from the '96 Atlanta Olympic Games.

Visitors from all over the world come to Henley for the regattas. The women's regatta features crews from all over the world that race on the third weekend in June. The preliminaries for the senior events (collegiate and club crews) and the junior events happen on the Friday followed by senior semis and finals races on the Saturday and Sunday.

The Royal regatta occurs over five days in late June and early July and dates from the reign of Victoria. It's one of the country's premier racing events. There are several enclosures in addition to plenty of space along the riverbank to watch the races. The fanciest and most exclusive is the Steward's Enclosure. Spectators gain entrance by means of an invitation from a member of the Leander Club. The women wear hats and skirts or dresses to the knee while suits and rowing blazers are the norm for the men. There are no dress codes for general spectators in other enclosures or on the bank. Consumption of Pimm's, an alcoholic lemonade garnished with fruits is also equal opportunity. Up to 100 races a day go off, often at intervals of every five minutes.

Beyond the regattas, Henley can be canvassed in a day or two, but it is fairly centrally located to other attractions. You can take the train virtually everywhere, but a change at Twyford is necessary for any trip. Stonehenge and the town of Bath can be seen in one day if driving. London is an hour away by train and Oxford is one and a half hours. I managed day trips to Bath, Windsor, Oxford and London all by train. The train schedules are easy to figure out and the rail lines are extensive. One thing to bear in mind is the cost. Fares are cheaper when you buy together in groups of three or more, called a GroupSave.

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