

TALK TOURISM OLYMPICS 2012 TOUR

by Rob Woodford

Last month the Partners and Guides of 'London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours' enjoyed a fantastic day with 'Talk Tourism' on an 'Olympic 2012 Tour'. Our presentation which included the highlights of Stratford, which really enhanced our appreciation of this historic part of London, was skilfully overseen by City of London Guide Ian Kirby, who made our experience factual, but also fun and entertaining. Readers might like to consider this option for a family treat, and the day long Tour represents excellent value; this is how we enjoyed Ian's well thought out, and well put together, product:

Our group of 9 (including DAC subscribers Jim Rainbird, Ann Watkins and LBCST Director Brian With) met up at the Offices of 'Talk Tourism' at The Grove near Stratford Broadway, before we made the short walk to Stratford Library where we were shown a huge model of East London revealing the Olympic Park with its road and rail connections. We then moved off to Pudding Mill Lane to the site of Joseph Bazalgette's Victorian sewer outflow. This area will be the athlete's 'warm up' area. Bazalgette was the engineer responsible for the construction of the sewer network through the Victoria Embankment which once sent waste matter out to 'smelly Stratford'! If you did not already know that, then there is another reason to sign up for the next Cabguide Course! This course is run by The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and you can contact The Clerk, Mary Whitworth, on 01494 765922 or E-mail: clerk@chcd.fsnet.co.uk for more details – the next course begins in the autumn.

The picture shows where we moved to next; the south-west corner of the Olympic Stadium, and what a magnificent spectacle this is starting to look now that the floodlights had been added to the structure. It is still difficult to appreciate that as many as 25,000 spectators will be sitting below ground in a bowl, while the other 55,000 will be above ground. But our next point of call was very special, we went up to the V.I.P Viewing Gallery at 'Holden Point', a residential tower for sheltered housing and because of this access is strictly controlled. From here you get an absolutely fantastic view of the Olympic Site, coupled with panoramic views of the rest of the London skyline. It is not surprising that Her Majesty The Queen had such an enjoyable visit to this viewpoint. Ian's team just roll off the many facts and figures from the initial Olympic bid right through to the expected legacy from the 30th Olympiad.



I do not know whether the royal party got the chance to enjoy the next part of our tour – lunch at the 'Caribbean Scene' restaurant! It is all included in the ticket price, and you can eat as much as you like – and we did! It's a fabulous menu, and caters for all tastes, a nice way to relax before heading off to the afternoons attractions.

We had a Tour of Old Stratford Town Hall, a stunning piece of architecture both externally and internally, and also houses the bust of Kier Hardie, the very first elected Member of

Parliament for the Labour Party, winning the seat of West Ham South in 1892. This of course was long before the boroughs of West Ham and East Ham were unified to create Newham.

Another highlight was a visit to view the English Protestant Martyrs Memorial. This fine 19th century terracotta study was erected to remember those who were burnt at the stake under the reign of Queen 'bloody' Mary in 1556. This was a period of time in English history when you certainly did want to be batting for the right team!

Ian's style of guiding by the way is full of useful anecdotes and humour. He is great company and we at LBCST fully endorse this latest visitor attraction option for London. Contact 'Talk-Tourism' at Stratford Advice Centre, 107-109 The Grove, Stratford, London E15 1HP, or call 020 3137 1109 or email ian.kirby@talk-tourism.co.uk or visit their website www.talk-tourism.co.uk

COUNTING DOWN TO THE OLYMPICS

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will open on 27 July 2012. Beating strong competition from Paris, New York, Moscow and Madrid, London was awarded the Games on 6 July 2005.

The focus of the London 2012 Games will be the Olympic Park in east London. Up to 180,000 spectators a day will enter the Park to enjoy the Games.

The main venues include an 80,000 seat Olympic Stadium, Velodrome as well as Fencing, Hockey, Handball and Basketball arenas.

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