



Get away for... THE WEEKEND!

Wander through charming Cambridge and enjoy the historic surroundings of this major centre of learning

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

Poet, Rupert Brooke, had inspired my visit to The Orchard Tea Garden in Grantchester, near Cambridge, where tables and chairs are spread out among apple trees. Brooke lodged at Orchard House while studying at Cambridge, spending his days reading, writing, bathing in the River Cam and enjoying exuberant discussions with scholarly friends. He called this place Arcadia – and I could see why.

I'd never visited Cambridge before, but knew that its streets brimmed with history and learning. Maybe over a few days I could absorb enough knowledge to help me do better at our local pub quiz...

The Cambridge Cherry Hinton Caravan and Motorhome Club campsite is on the edge of the city and about 10 minutes' walk from a bus stop with frequent buses. Contrary to expectation, not everyone in

Cambridge cycles and we found that the roads were busy and often gridlocked. Purchasing Day Rider tickets made our trip more relaxing and we set out to get our money's worth.

Our first hop off the bus was by the Botanic Garden. We'd bought our tickets online and, after a stormy night, had received a message that the gardens might close if the wind strengthened. At the ticket office we were told, "If we get three gusts over 40mph in 30 minutes we'll close."

Anxious to see the gardens, I set off at a pace. Passing the fountain, I noticed the water jets were being whipped horizontally. "Do you think that's more than 40mph?" I worriedly asked my partner, Anthony.

In the Japanese garden, gnarled cherry trees were blooming and the wind whistled through the stands of thick bamboo so that >



Why?... To pick up trivia and knowledge
just by walking through Cambridge's streets and
sitting in its cafés and pubs



MAIN The view across the River Cam from The Backs

FAR LEFT Watching the punting from Magdalene
Bridge can be entertaining

BELOW LEFT Trinity College was founded by Henry
VIII and his statue sits above the entrance gate

BELOW RIGHT Statues and year-round colour made
our visit to the gardens at Anglesey Abbey special



US AND OUR 'VAN



Carol Kubicki...

and her husband, Anthony, use their Devon Tempest to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring the historical and natural environments



2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our third blue campervan and we have called them all the 'Blue Bus'

they cracked and creaked around us. The meandering craggy paths around the colourful flowers in the rock garden soon slowed us down as I stopped to check the names of those that caught my eye. Already I was learning things!

Using our Day Rider tickets again, we arrived at the Ascension Parish Burial Ground, billed as the 'brainiest cemetery'. In the changing light of sunshine and blustery showers, as we walked under the thick archway of yew trees, with toppling gravestones on either side of us, it had a Gothic aura.

Around the chapel, we picked our way among stones almost hidden in a flourishing meadow. Someone had recently left flowers at the simple gravestone of the famous philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, while the headstones for Charles Darwin's son and wife were neglected. Abandoning looking for famous names, I focused on enjoying the space and discovering unsung heroes. It was the grave for Mavis Kemp, killed in action in a test flight in 1944 at just 22 years old, that I will remember.

Over two days we caught buses and pounded the pavements, alleys and green spaces of Cambridge with no real plan, finding links with clever people around every corner and, step by step, increasing

my trivia knowledge.

We peered into the Eagle where, in 1953, Francis Crick announced that he, James Watson and colleagues had cracked the double-helix structure of DNA, a pivotal moment in science. Nearby, the Corpus Clock – unveiled by Professor Stephen Hawking – was slightly creepy and it was useless as a timepiece.

We stood in front of the off-shoot of Isaac Newton's apple tree outside Trinity College and gazed at magnificent college buildings. Each college seemed to have an even more ornate and glorious gatehouse than the last, but the evening sunshine catching the glittering gateway of Christ's College was hard to beat.


When we needed one there was always a café to rest in and, during the rain showers, colonnades under which to shelter.

We admired the attractive and unusual Round Church, browsed the outdoor market and joined young people hanging out along the walls around King's College once the sun returned.

On our meanderings we found some of Cambridge's Dinky Doors; tiny doors set at the height of a two-year-old. We had a map of these fun and intricate treasures. Hidden between two telephone boxes near the market was a miniature teleportation


INFORMATION

For what else to see and do in Cambridge

 visitcambridge.org




We didn't find all the Dinky Doors, but you can by downloading the tour (charged)

 dinkydoors.co.uk

The Orchard Tea Garden has a good-size car park, but there is a parking charge

 theorchardteagarden.co.uk

If you are interested in visiting Cambridge University Botanic Garden

 botanic.cam.ac.uk



Must do... Have tea and scones at the Orchard Tea Garden in Grantchester

machine. On Cambridge's Downing Street we spotted a mini version of Number 10's famous door.

At Reality Checkpoint, in the middle of Parker's Piece, was another door. If I had been shorter it might have taken me to an alternative reality! Reality Checkpoint is a crossroads of paths marked by a cast iron lamp post in a green space or 'piece'. This spot, where cyclists and walkers constantly pass by, is packed with kinetic energy and I learnt how risky bending down to see a Dinky Door on a lamp post is!

We strolled behind colleges along The Backs for a fantastic view across meadows to King's College Chapel. We stopped to watch the punts on the River Cam from the steep Garret Hostel Bridge (affectionately known as 'orgasm bridge' by relieved cyclists when they reach the apex). Taking a punt under the many Cambridge bridges is popular but, having enquired as to the price, we were quoted £65 for a short trip; way over our budget.

After examining the intricate wooden Mathematical Bridge, we picked up the two-mile riverside path to Grantchester. After Sheep's Green bathing area and Paradise Local Nature Reserve, where inviting paths wind by the River Cam, you are out of the city and in waterside

meadows of cows with the gentle sound of punts and occasional quacking of ducks filling the air.

We headed straight for the idyll of the Orchard Tea Garden, which first began serving tea and scones at the end of the nineteenth century. I read that Rupert Brooke's erudite friends, known as the Grantchester Group, included the author, Virginia Woolf, the economist, John Maynard Keynes, and Wittgenstein (whose grave we had found), who liked to arrive on horseback or canoe.

Dragging myself away from the delightful orchard, we sauntered through the pretty village with its thatched cottages and visited the picturesque church which had information about film locations used in the ITV detective series, *Grantchester*.

Back in Cambridge, we stumbled upon a Greek café in the charming pedestrianised curve of Rose Crescent. The Gardenia is a Cambridge institution that transported us straight back to our wonderful trip to Greece. We ordered a light lunch and Greek beer but, as is often the Greek way, our plates arrived piled with delicious food which was almost (but not quite) more than we could manage.

Continuing to get value for money from our Day Rider, the bus took us the three ➤

ESSENTIALS

HOW LONG

Three nights

WHEN

We visited in early May. The campsite is open all year, but a sunny spring day is best for visiting the Orchard Tea Garden

HOW MUCH


Fuel Average 34mpg (484 miles, from home in Lancashire-Cambridge return).....**£84**
 Site fees.....**£80.59**
 Entrance fees Two adults: Cambridge University Botanic Garden. One non-National Trust member: Anglesey Abbey. Dinky Doors Tour download.....**£29.60**
 Bus fares Two adult day tickets on two days.....**£18**
TOTAL.....£212.19




BELOW The Mathematical Bridge was built in 1749

TOP TIPS

The number 4 Cambridge to Cambourne bus stops at the Cambridge American Cemetery and a Cambridge Day Rider ticket covers this journey. The buses run every 30 minutes during weekdays and Saturdays (hourly on Sundays) and you can enjoy either about 20 minutes or 50 minutes at the cemetery before the next bus comes along. There is also parking here, too

 abmc.gov/Cambridge

RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes can be reached on the guided busway that connects Cambridge, Huntingdon and St Ives – but this is outside the Cambridge Day Rider ticket area

 rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/fen-drayton-lakes

If you want to soak up the atmosphere of The Orchard Tea Garden and Rupert Brooke's time there, the novel *The Great Lover* by Jill Dawson is a good read





Must see... The magnificent fifteenth century King's College Chapel

miles to the huge American Cemetery and Memorial, the only US WWII cemetery in the UK. We arrived just as the chapel bells were tolling the hour.

I listened while looking along the three rectangular pools reflecting the wall carved with over 5,000 names of missing combatants. From the chapel, curved rows of crosses and Stars of David, marking 3,811 graves, fan out into the distance, their numbers sobering and humbling.

On our way to Cambridge from our home in Lancashire we'd visited Fen Drayton Lakes, a RSPB reserve about 19 miles northwest of the campsite. Be prepared for one-and-a-half miles of bumpy road with some evil speed bumps to get to here.

Relieved to be parked, we walked around pools surrounded by craggy barked trees that I learnt are crack willow. Blossom fell from the hawthorn, showering us like confetti. The sun made the water sparkle as a pair of geese steered a safe course for their three goslings.

We also drove to Anglesey Abbey, a thirteenth century abbey that, after dissolution, became a handsome private residence with an ecclesiastical look. The National Trust gardeners work hard on the 100-acre grounds to provide year-round interest and I came away with inspiration

for our own handkerchief-sized plot.

As well as an area of colourful tulips, in the winter garden, Himalayan silver birch, with dazzling white bark, emerged from a sea of tiny blue tulips and deep crimson bergenia in a triumph of garden design.

Beyond the formal gardens, deckchairs, benches and tables had been placed on lawns and in woodland glades to encourage picnics and relaxing.

I don't think Anthony will wear his bottle-green jacket at a National Trust property again. Whilst taking photographs in the abbey's gardens, I noticed that Anthony had been approached by an American man on a mobility scooter. Mistaking my partner for staff, the American asked, "Where can I find the tulip garden?" Mere pointing wasn't enough for this customer and Anthony helpfully sought out an accessible route, even moving a barrier so the man could avoid the steps. Racing away, the American shouted a thanks – but he didn't offer a tip!

I left Cambridge knowing much more about flowers, Rupert Brooke, Cambridge's colleges and the people who studied and taught there. I'll probably still not win a pub quiz any time soon, but I do hope that I might be able to show off my new-found knowledge somewhere. **MM**

ABOVE King's College was founded by Henry VI; he wanted the chapel to be without equal

THE CAMPSITE

Cambridge Cherry Hinton Caravan and Motorhome Club Site, Lime Kiln Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 8NQ

☎ 01223 244088

🌐 camc.com

📅 All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £24.60

ALTERNATIVE

PREMIER PARK 2022 Highfield Farm, Long Road, Comberton, Cambridge CB23 7DG

☎ 01223 262308

🌐 highfieldfarmtouringpark.co.uk

📅 1 March – 31 October

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £23.50