

## A city with so many stories to tell... HADS tour of St Albans 2023

It had been blisteringly hot, so we packed our summer clothes for our visit to St Albans in June 2023. Our driver, Cathy, turned up with the mini coach and we all piled in. Our first stop was Hughenden Manor, which was the former home of Benjamin Disraeli. It was also known as a top-secret map-making facility during WW2 so there was plenty to see and explore.



The church at Hughenden.

It wasn't far from there to our hotel, the Premier Inn at Bricket Wood, but what was happening to the Sun? We found out the next day when we woke to a distinctly chilly St Albans!! However, we had a full programme for the day and set off on our guided walking tour of the city. We were fortunate to have a brilliant tour guide who seemed to know everything about the city and the cathedral. He was informative and entertaining and we had time for lunch and a bit of shopping before our next tour.

Now we were to enjoy the glories of St Alban's cathedral. There were some fantastic tapestries to see, as well as some wall paintings. They were faded, but with modern technology they were brought startlingly to life with colours as vivid as they must once have been. Then it was back to the hotel for a pause before dinner.



*The Medieval painting brought to life*

The next day was Roman Day looking at the Roman city of *Verulamium*. St Albans was a very important Roman settlement and our first visit was to the museum, which houses a wonderful

collection of Roman artefacts and mosaics. We were sharing our visit with a group of schoolchildren who were obviously enjoying it as much as we were. Of course, every museum has a shop and this one had some particularly glorious jewellery!

The café in the park was a brilliant venue for lunch before we set off to walk to the remains of the Roman city wall. Our group photo here was taken by a very enthusiastic young man who rode up on his motor-bike, took the photos and rode off!



*The Roman Wall*

In the afternoon we walked over to the Roman Theatre where preparations were being made to begin the summer season of performances. The Sun was out, it warmed up and we sat overlooking this ancient site which was being used, once again, for entertainment.



*The Roman Theatre*

All too soon we reached the last full day of our tour. Suddenly it was hot and sunny again and we were off to Hatfield House, the childhood home of Elizabeth 1. It was fabulous, and we were seeing it at its best! The furnishings inside the house are breathtaking, and we all took the

opportunity to walk in the extensive grounds to enjoy the gardens. And...we almost went to a wedding by mistake! An Indian couple were having their celebration in the building overlooking the knot garden and the bride turned up in this fabulous car.



Our last day gave us the opportunity to explore St Albans for one final morning. Several of us found our way back to Verulamium Park, enjoying walking around the lake and watching the wildlife. Some explored the St Albans Museum and Art Gallery where you can have tea and cake in the Old Courtroom before finding the toilets in the prison cells!

Driving home, we all agreed that it had been a fabulous trip...certainly one of the best! Thanks are due to our lovely driver, Cathy, who coped expertly with the Friday afternoon traffic, and to Don who masterminded the whole programme, ably assisted by the social committee. As usual, on the way home we started to think about our next trip.

Watch this space...

Edwina Cole  
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