

The Passport blog

A tour of London street survival

04 July 2012 | By Andy Jarosz



The Lavish surroundings of Berkeley Square in Mayfair, London's most exclusive neighborhood. (Oliver Strewe / LPI)

On a typical London walking tour, you do not expect to hear about That buildings are used as Brothels, That places for homeless people are squats and doorways That Considered are great places to sleep - but this was no ordinary visit.

Our guide Vinny (WHO did not give his surname) was leading an Unseen Tour of Mayfair, London's most exclusive neighborhood. Unlike most of the surrounding population, he literally lived on these streets for years, and in a little over an hour he showed us a very different side to Mayfair's glamorous.

The Unseen Tours of London are coordinated by the Sock Mob, a network of volunteers working with London's homeless population, and led by WHO Trained guides are or have been homeless. Each guide takes groups around "their district" of London and mixes personal stories of life on the street with interesting anecdotes and trivia about the neighborhood.

I thought I Knew Mayfair well but Vinny shared many stories with our group were both surprising and That entertaining. He took us to what is reputed to be London's most haunted houses (in the Lavish surroundings of Berkeley Square), he of toll us about the world's first telephone call, the which was made from Brown's Hotel, and just off Bond Street he pointed out a little -known piece of graffiti by Britain's most Celebrated street artist, Banksy. But it was Vinny's insights into the world of the homeless That really struck a chord. He stopped at a few of the many empty buildings (there are around 100 000 in London) That homeless people try to enter in the winter months to survive the cold nights. He also shared his own experiences of life on the street; it was particularly distressing to hear about the abuse he suffered from occasional passers by.

While Unseen Tours offer valuable employment to the guides, there are far more Reasons to support the enterprise than merely Helping a good cause. By sharing these stories of survival, the guides offer visitors a chance to experience the city from a very unusual perspective. Having seen the Brothels next door to the fancy Restaurants and the squatters 'homes alongside the millionaires' mansions, I for one, will never see through the same eyes Mayfair again.

Web link

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/blog/20120627-a-tour-of-london-street-survival>