

**ANNA BYDŽOVSKÁ AND JANA ZURYNKOVÁ,** both now maturity students, were winners in the 2024 Travel Award competition at the Gymnázium Boženy Němcové, Hradec Králové. They received Kc 15,000 between them. Here they discuss their six day visit to the UK in July with the competition's head judge **JULIAN WILDE.**



*Anna and Jana at the Radcliffe Camera, Oxford*

**Julian :** *How did you feel when you learned you had won the travel award?*

**Anna:** I think we were both thrilled and a bit in disbelief. The chance to visit cities like Oxford and Cambridge felt like a perfect opportunity to dive into the literary and architectural history we love. So yes, we were very excited and also grateful.

**Which places did you plan to visit, and for how long?**

**Jana:** We flew to London and then spent two nights in Cambridge and two in Oxford. After that we made a short visit to London at the end. Both Cambridge and Oxford have an incredible mix of historical and architectural beauty which we were so excited to experience.

**How did the expected costs of the trip work out?**

**Anna:** Well, the budget was mostly on track, although we ended up spending a bit more on food. Airbnb helped us save on accommodation, and we loved staying in local people's houses.

**What did you think about the UK transport systems?**



**Jana:** We travelled mostly by buses since it was the cheapest option for us. The transport between cities, was efficient and easy and in Oxford we took a double-decker bus which was fun since we don't have them in the Czech Republic.

**Where and when did you speak the most English?**

**Anna:** We spoke the most English in cafés and during guided tours in Oxford and Cambridge. We also used English at our accommodation.

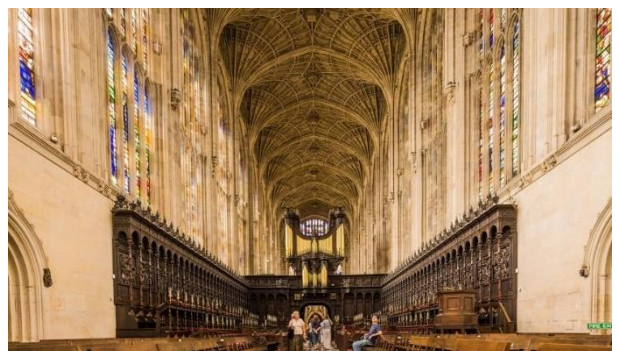
Overall this whole trip was a wonderful opportunity to practise our English, understanding, listening and speaking.

**Did you find English people welcoming?**

**Jana:** Yes, absolutely. Everyone we met from our Airbnb hosts to people at museums and café. Our alumni tour guides too were warm and welcoming which made us feel comfortable throughout the trip.

**What was the favourite place you visited, and why?**

**Anna:** Cambridge was my favorite. The peaceful atmosphere along the River Cam, combined with the grand architecture of King's College Chapel, left a lasting impression. I loved this city and I would love to come back and visit it again in the future.





**Jana:** For me, it was Oxford. The stunning Gothic architecture of the colleges, mixed with the literary history of writers like Tolkien and Lewis, made it unforgettable. I love literature and Oxford was full of literary history so I enjoyed staying there and exploring the city so much.

*What was your best experience?*

**Anna:** Walking through the courtyards of the colleges in Oxford and imagining all the great minds that once studied there was incredible.

**Jana:** Same, I think this was the highlight of the trip for both of us.

*And your worst experience?*

**Jana:** Well, our worst experience was navigating in London on the last day and trying not to get lost. It was so crowded and chaotic compared to the calm of Oxford and Cambridge. It took a bit of adjusting and we had to use online maps frequently in order to get to the right places.



*What surprised you the most about England?*

**Anna:** We were surprised by how green and scenic the universities were. The calm, almost serene atmosphere of the college gardens in both Oxford and Cambridge felt a way different from what we expected in academic cities which are known worldwide.

*How did you benefit from the trip, and how much did you improve your English?*

**Anna:** I think I can speak for both of us when I say that the trip gave us an amazing opportunity to get to know British academic and cultural history better - we are so glad we had a chance to go.



Many thanks to Pavel Adámek the organiser at Gybon, the BCSA for funding us and to Julian Wilde, Milena-Grenfell Baines and Johana Macková who formed the panel of judges.

Speaking English throughout helped us improve our fluency and confidence. We enjoyed sharing our experiences with a half- hour presentation in English to our classmates this term.

