



Ondřej Malý, 18, was one of the winners of the 2024 Travel Award at the Gymnázium Boženy Němcové, Hradec Králové. Here he discusses his week-long visit to the UK in July with the competition's head judge **Julian Wilde**

How did you feel when you learned you had won a travel award?

I was overwhelmed when I found out that I was the winner. I thought my text was decent, but I also knew the competition was fierce. Whilst writing my submission, I got very excited about the possibility of visiting Great Britain. I immediately booked a hotel and bought tickets to make sure they wouldn't sell out.

Which places did you plan to visit?

I wanted to see the city of London and, perhaps even more importantly, Portsmouth. That was what I was most excited about - the port, the ships, and the ocean.

How did the expected costs work out?

Pretty well, I would say. I spent more on transport because some things went wrong along the way, which I didn't expect. The food was quite cheap because I tried to be as cost-effective as possible. Overall, had the transport been cheaper, I probably would have been able to stay within my 15,000 Kc budget.

Where and when did you speak the most English?

When I was chatting with interesting people. About 70% of all my conversations were with people I met. Some were at the hotel, and some were on a bench while I was



eating my beans-on-toast for lunch. I met some fascinating people and even shared my social media with a few, so we can stay in touch.

What was your favorite place you visited and why?

My favourite part of the trip was visiting Portsmouth. The coastline was beautiful: the pier with the Ferris wheel looked like something out of a movie. The town hall was beautiful too. I also loved most of the famous London landmarks. I think the Royal Courts of Justice was the most striking landmark in the city.

Did you find English people welcoming?

Yes, absolutely. I don't think I met a single rude person while staying in Great Britain. From the cashiers to the homeless, everyone was super kind and nice. I knew Brits were famous for being polite, but I didn't expect them to be this welcoming.

What was your best experience?

Seeing the Atlantic Ocean while visiting Portsmouth. The sun was shining, the beach was almost empty, and I was listening to music



about the wonders of life. And there it was – the vast ocean. It was overwhelmingly beautiful. I sat down and watched the waves for a while. Just an hour later, I had the best conversation with one of the people I met on the trip.

What was your worst experience?



Probably getting lost in the wetland forest near Heathrow Airport. Google Maps failed me, and I somehow went off track and ended up stuck in the wetlands. I tried to cross the forest, but it wasn't possible. I had to turn back and walk around the entire area. I finally reached the metro station around 7 p.m., extremely tired. I had drunk all my water and eaten all my food. I was thirsty and hungry, with my boots were soaked with muddy water, my clothes wet.

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

The biggest benefit was probably meeting new people, hearing their stories, and sharing mine with them. I also learned how to

travel on my own, how to save money on things like food, and how to handle accidents and misfortune while travelling.

My English certainly improved considerably, but after ten days of speaking English, I was very happy to be able to use Czech as my main language again !

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