

It is 4:45 am London time and I am awake again. That's life, I guess.

I thought I would take a moment to describe the flat we're staying in, as it is such a contrast with the flat I had last year. Last year I had a dinky studio in Marylebone, a tiny flat in a tony district. This year, as I have X as a traveling companion for the first couple of weeks, I have a two bedroom in Fitzrovia, a different tony district. Last year the whole flat was 2 metres by 5 metres, plus a small en suite bathroom and a closet. Last year's flat could fit in one of this year's bedrooms. Welcome to comfort!

One can walk (if one knows where one is going) from one flat to the other. Fitzrovia is a lovely neighbourhood, and quite central to everything. Last year I would not have been able to afford such luxurious digs, but this year, thanks to a combination of factors, it is not that far a reach. The pound was much dearer last year, at \$2/£ versus this year's \$1.42/£. Combine that with the fact that the depressed economy has put downward pressure on last year's inflated housing prices and that X is paying half the rent, and you can suddenly find things much more affordable.

Oh, and the fact that after suffering so last year, without a proper place to sit and write or a decent bed to sleep in, I resolved to treat myself a bit better this time around.

The flat, Eliza Court, is on the second storey of a slender brick block with north facing windows which look across the street to the offices of Saatchi & Saatchi, one of the world's largest advertising firms, who were responsible for the YouTube sensation of the flash-mob dance scene at Liverpool train station a few months ago. Just a reminder, in England the floor numbering is off by one compared to the US, as there is first a "ground floor" then the first floor, etc. So, in American terms we are on the third floor.

Each bedroom, at about 3 metres by 4.5 metres, is the size of last year's pad. Add to that a spacious (3 metres x 5.5 metres) reception lounge (living room) and a serviceable and well fitted kitchen alcove and you've got an apartment that is rather posh. A one bedroom flat two storeys above us is currently listed for sale for £380,000, and another one bedroom on the same floor is available to rent for £1,320/month.

Okay, enough about the flat. This is Early May Bank Holiday, or May Day, in the UK, which means it is a three day weekend, and there are many sales and promotions tied to that. For us it means a cheap day at the horse races, which we'll attend on Monday. The city was abuzz last night with a palpable excitement of the long weekend, as large crowds spilled out of many of the more popular establishments. Along James Street in the West End there were entire blocks where the side walks were nearly impassable due to the crowds of people out enjoying the lovely weather and the opportunity to get away with a several days long buzz. We were too tired for that, which somehow doesn't explain why I am sitting here now, at 5:30 in the morning, watching the sunrise reflect off of the sturdy brick block across the street.

>sigh<

Today, Saturday, brings a matinee performance of one of the two shows we pre-booked for this visit. "Andromaque," by Jean Racine, a 17th century French play produced here by Cheek By Jowels productions at Barbican. Other than that we will likely spend the day getting better oriented to the neighbourhood (an obvious need, based on last night's experience).

Tomorrow will bring the Marylebone Green Market, and we will have an opportunity to stock up on some good groceries, meat & cheese. Having a decent kitchen, and a wonderful cook in X, we should eat well at home or afoot this trip. Looking forward to a lunch at the Bidendom this trip, when we go to check out the latest Banksy exhibit later on in the visit. There are worse things than traveling with a foodie!

That's enough for now, must sign off and get cleaned up for the new day. I am too wide awake to sleep any more now, so I'll just embrace the early morning and get about things. Ta!