

## Why England is a rare dry treat

The poet who said, "Oh, to be in England, now that spring is here," has caused many a gullible traveller to spend a soggy holiday cursing him, while spending large portions of the vacation budget on brollies, wellies and see-through plastic hats.

As one who has learned from bitter experience to ignore such romantic rhetoric, I was well armed with books, sweaters, waterproof shoes and my full duty-free allowance on a recent visit to my native land. There are, after all, ways of keeping warm even in damp, 10-degree weather.

When I arrived, the forecasters were promising a warm, dry day and they were half right; it was dry. But even British stoics had to admit there was a decided nip in the air. An amazingly intricate weather report, featuring complicated diagrams of air flows and ridges of high pressure gave a guardedly optimistic look for the following day.

In any event, we were treated to nine days of non-stop sunshine. Assorted relatives dropped by for visits and enjoyed the unprecedented pleasure of sitting outside on the patio. My small nieces, having removed every stitch of clothing, cooled themselves off gleefully with the rarely used garden hose.

Some aspects of life had changed very little. After 15 years in Canada, I find the quaint tradition of closing shops for lunch difficult to readjust to, while the peculiar British custom of "early closing" is enough to induce apoplexy in the most mild-mannered tourists.

Each town or village has one day in the week in which all shops are open only in the morning. Since most visitors tend to be unaware of this curious custom, they invariably arrive at a charming village, filled with delectable shops, only to discover it's early-closing day



### KATE'S CORNER

Kate Gilderdale

and they can't get inside.

Driving there is not for the faint-hearted. Roads are often small and winding, with cars parked on both sides, because a lot of houses don't have garages.

I may have been flying Air Canada, but events on the journey had a distinct air of that cheerful inefficiency for which Britons are justly famous. We were travelling on a brand new jumbo jet and I'd just settled down comfortably when someone claimed I was in the wrong seat. It turned out we'd both been assigned the same one.

At her request, I agreed to move and the stewardess went off to remedy the problem, eventually returning triumphantly with a ticket for a seat in row 30. When we got to where row 30 should have been, we discovered it didn't exist on this shiny new plane. "It's a new plane," explained the stewardess desperately. "I'll be back in a minute."

Meanwhile, I passed the time of day with other would-be inhabitants of the mythical row 30. The airline's version of musical chairs continued for some time before everyone was permanently seated; we could only hope that the pilot was more familiar with the new plane than the computer and ground staff appeared to be.

Still, it set the mood for a holiday in the green, pleasant, but sometimes disorganized land that is England. And if the sun doesn't shine on my next visit, at least I'll be able to hone my conversational skills on the perennial British topic of conversation — the lousy, miserable weather.



Sandi Langford and Rene Brachet pose for a wedding photograph in Bouchet France, where the couple were wed April 22. In attendance were the bride's parents, Herb and Carole Langford of Stouffville, the bride's grandparents, Ralph and Doris Gallienne of Richmond Hill, maid of honor Cindy (Beaven) Morley, formerly of Stouffville and her husband Paul of Barrie, the bride's aunt, Shelagh Tague of Bolton and her uncle Michael Mills of Etobicoke. The happy couple honeymooned in Spain.

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