

Holidays

During a trip to London, **TRISTAN NICHOLS** decided to avoid the usual shopping and tourist haunts to seek out a stroll with a difference – a veritable magical mystery tour...



ICONIC IMAGE: A Beatles tour of London wouldn't be complete without a trip to Abbey Road Studios and its famous crossing, right, featured on the album cover *Abbey Road*. Above: A plaque tells visitors why a property is important



Walking in footsteps of the Fab Four is capital

WHEN you're in need of help, magical mystery tours at the weekend can rekindle your spirit of adventure and awaken your soul.

And if you've had a hard day's night, and been working what seems like eight days a week, it's worth considering getting away for the weekend.

So while many people visit London to go shopping or visit the countless attractions on offer, it's worth considering this day trip-per.

Okay, I'll stop the puns now.

If you're a fan of The Beatles, and fancy a wander, why not walk in the footsteps of the Fab Four?

During my trip to the country's capital I booked myself onto one of London Walks' Beatles Walks tours taking in many of the most famous areas where Beatlemania struck a chord with the nation's heart.

Now I know what you're thinking... London? Beatles?!

Why not go to Liverpool – i.e. their birthplace?

Good point. However, much of the band's life was based in London with the four moving from Liverpool in a bid to further their careers.

On this particular tour, named the 'In My Life' walk, I was amazed realising that many of the areas of London I have previously strolled through and past, were in fact backdrops to some of the Fab Four's most famous exploits.

Marlyebone Station, which I have visited on countless occasions, was the setting for many of the early scenes in the film 'A Hard Day's Night'.

A short distance away is Marylebone Register Office where Paul and Ringo married their sweethearts in the 1960s.



ABOVE: The Beatles are seen running up this street in the beginning of the film *A Hard Day's Night*

LEFT: Tour guide Richard Porter in front of a property in Montagu Square, London, where John Lennon and Yoko Ono lived

The site also recently played host to the recent wedding of Paul and partner Nancy Shevell.

A short distance away in Montagu Square is the flat which Ringo owned

and leased out to John and Yoko in the late 1960s.

The flat became famous in its own right as the site where the couple were photographed nude for the 'two virgins' album cover.

It's also believed that Paul wrote 'Eleanor Rigby' here.

And just a few streets away from here is The Beatles' former Apple office, and the house where Paul wrote the first chords of 'Yesterday'.

For a passer-by, as I have been until now, many of these sites are simply soul-less buildings, now lived in by normal people like you or me.

But it's only when someone points out the small circular blue plaques fixed to the front of the properties that you realise what once lay within.

The plaques act as guides to visitors, offering a small snippet of information on the site's history.

Of course, a Beatles tour of London wouldn't be complete without a trip to Abbey Road Studios and its famous crossing – featured on the album cover *Abbey Road*.

The site is now what it was then, I'm sure – pretty unspectacular.

Saying that, though, there is a buzz around the place.

As it's on a busy main road the traffic is relentless – even when people are trying to re-enact the famous album cover shot – and the only truly colourful aspect of the scene is the graffiti written all over the walls of the studio's front entrance.

Even so, the site is a chapel to music fans with some of the finest albums and artists in the land having captured moments of beauty here.

It's only really when you take part in a tour like this that you realise just how important and incredible The Beatles were for this country – and indeed how loved they are even today.

So as I walk away from the hustle and bustle of the big smoke with my ticket to ride, I have to say: I feel fine.

TRAVEL facts

BEATLES WALKS: LONDON Walks offer more than 100 walks around the capital throughout the week.

There are at least three Beatles-themed tours, but the firm also offers historic, ghostly and Olympic walks. Visit www.walks.com for further details.

TRAVEL: FIRST Great Western offers 30 direct trains a day between Plymouth and London, including the overnight sleeper service.

Prices start from £13.50 each way between Plymouth and Paddington. All fares and timetable information are on our website www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

ACCOMMODATION: ONE ALDWYCH YOU'd be hard-pressed to find a better-placed award-winning hotel in central London.

One Aldwych boasts luxury at an affordable rate, and comfort in abundance.

The hotel is situated right in the middle of London in Covent Garden, between the City and the West End.

It's within walking distance of 15 theatres; shopping; the financial district; art galleries (Tate Modern, Somerset House, National Gallery, the South Bank); the London Eye and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre making it a perfect home from home for many of London's attractions.

Its much talked-about restaurant, Axis at One Aldwych, is also worth a booking in its own right with high-quality food and a lovely ambience.

Rooms at One Aldwych are priced from £239 plus VAT per room per night.

They boast complementary wireless broadband in every room; Bowers & Wilkins iPod docking stations; Bang & Olufsen televisions; and fresh fruit and flowers daily.

For further information, call One Aldwych (London WC2B 4BZ) on 0207 3001000 or visit www.onealdwych.com.