

THE UNEXPECTED JOYS OF LIVING

# Britain

(FROM AN AMERICAN'S POV)



*The Hickson Diaries*



# I N T R O D U C T I O N



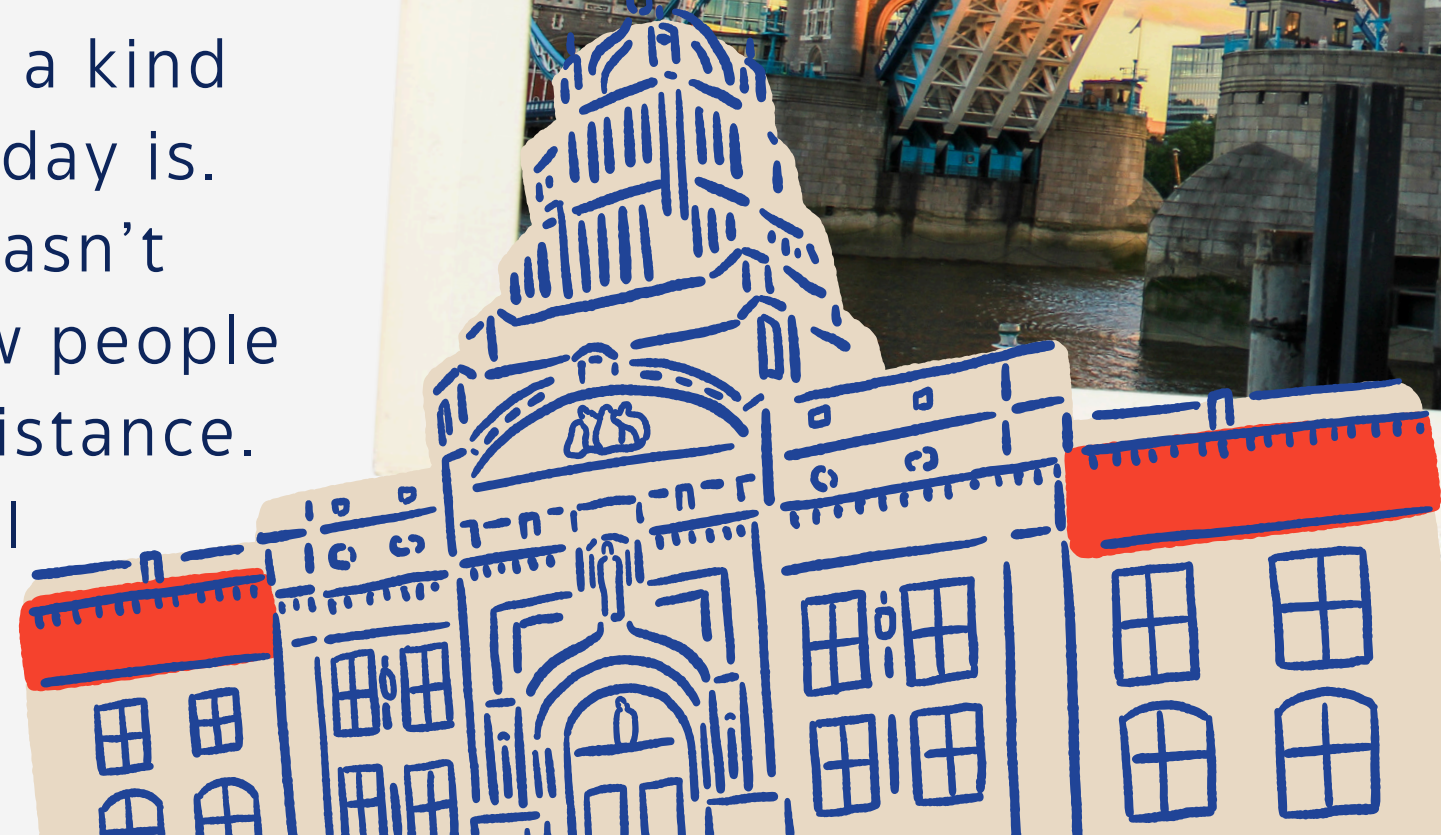
I lived in the US with my British partner for years. So I thought I got it. The dry humor. The tea thing. The whole “saying sorry when someone else bumps into you” culture. I thought I knew what to expect when we finally moved to the UK — I’d already had a front-row seat to British quirks, hadn’t I? But living with a Brit in America... is very different from living in Britain. What I found when I arrived in the UK, it wasn’t just tea and roast dinners — though, yes, there was plenty of each — I found a collection of quiet, unexpected joys. The kind that catch you off guard. The kind that don’t show up in travel guides. The kind that slowly, softly, start to change how you live.





# I Thought I Knew British Life

The first time I got properly caught in British rain — no umbrella, just me and a jacket that wasn't trying hard enough — I braced for drama. Because back in the States, rain is a whole production. Running to shelter. Complaining. Taking it personally, like the sky ruined your plans on purpose. But here? Everyone just kept walking. Like the weather was... just weather. No flinching. No rushing. Just a kind of peaceful acceptance that this is what today is. That moment stayed with me. Because it wasn't just about the rain — it was the shift in how people move through inconvenience. With less resistance. Less urgency. A quiet grace I didn't realize I needed.





# Rediscovering Walking

I used to drive to pick up a coffee. A single lemon. Mail. If I couldn't park within 20 feet of the front door, it was a bad day. But in the UK, I started walking. To the shops. To the pub. Through the neighborhoods with no destination in mind. And something in me slowed down. Walking became a kind of therapy. A place where thoughts stretched out. Where errands turned into rituals. Where silence wasn't awkward — it was welcome. I stopped measuring time by how much I could get done. And started measuring it by how present I could be inside of it.





# The Calm of Trains and Stillness

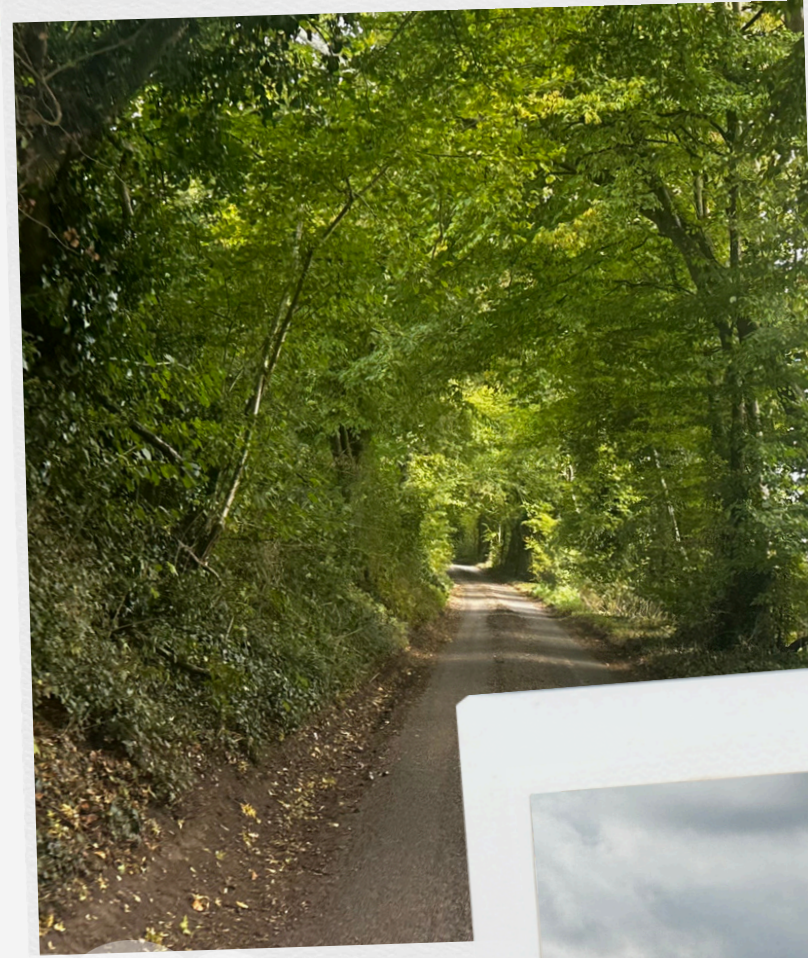
Public transport in the US taught me one thing: be angry and be loud about it. So when my train here got delayed, I was ready to spiral. But everyone else? Calm. Unfazed. Just sipping tea from flasks and checking the clouds like philosophers. There's a quiet resilience in that – not passive, but patient. And somewhere in that long, cold wait, I found something else: stillness. No one was rushing. No one was performing urgency. They were just... there. And for once, I didn't feel like I had to fill the silence.





# Green in the Middle of It All

What truly surprised me — maybe more than anything — was how much green there is here. Even in cities. Especially in cities. It's like every corner, every alley, every impossibly small front garden is trying to remind you: you are part of something older. Something softer. I found myself wandering into parks tucked between high streets. Little patches of trees and grass, wedged between buses and buildings, offering these unexpected pauses in the day. Not performative nature. Not perfectly curated. Just there. Wild, a little muddy, a bit overgrown — and absolutely what I needed.







# Gardens I Admire (But Don't Tend)

And then there are the gardens. I love to notice the incredible variety and color spilling out from other people's gardens all over town. Roses climbing fences, bursts of bright tulips, lavender lining a walkway, even the quiet resilience of ferns in shaded corners. Gardens that feel like living paintings — full of personality, whimsy, and a kind of effortless beauty. I'm not a gardener myself — I don't have a green thumb, and that's fine. Because I get to enjoy these gardens as a kind of gift, a joyful backdrop to spring days, without any of the work. They brighten up the neighborhood and my mood. Just looking at them — the colors, the shapes, the way they change with the seasons — it's like a small daily miracle.



# Festivals and Traditions in Britain

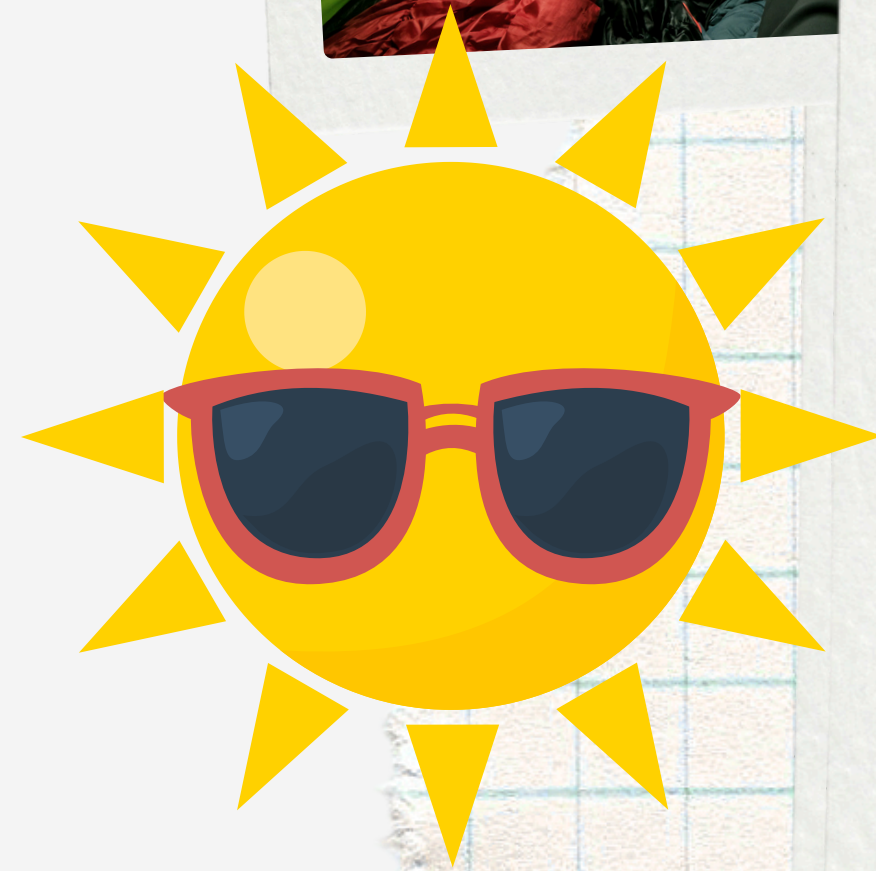
Britain celebrates many traditions that reflect its long history and cultural mix. Major events include Bonfire Night (November 5), which commemorates the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and Notting Hill Carnival in London, which celebrates Caribbean culture. The Highland Games in Scotland feature bagpipes, kilts, and athletic competitions, while the Eisteddfod festivals in Wales celebrate literature, music, and performance.





# Insanely Long Summer Days

And then there are the summer evenings. Insanely long summer days that stretch on and on, like the daylight itself has decided to give you extra time. Dinner finishes and the sky is still glowing with soft gold and pink. You step outside and the world feels suspended in that perfect, slow moment before dusk. It's not just light — it's a feeling. A gentle invitation to pause and breathe. To walk a little longer, talk a little more, just be. Those endless hours remind me that time can stretch, that life doesn't always have to rush.





# History That's Still Breathing

Living here, I started noticing how history isn't just preserved in glass cases — it's lived in. The church on the corner. The uneven cobblestones. The pub where they ask if you want your usual after the second visit. Where I'm from, we tear things down when they get old. Build something bigger. Cleaner. Faster. But here, things are allowed to age. Not just buildings — people, too. There's a deep respect for time and what it shapes. And walking through these places, you feel it — this quiet reminder that life isn't something to rush through. It's something to belong to.





# The Quiet That Heals You

And then there's the quiet. No giant billboards yelling at me. No speakers blaring inside supermarkets. No chirpy customer service voices asking if I've found everything okay before I've even taken off my coat. At first, it felt... empty. Like something was missing. But then I realized what it was: peace. British life doesn't demand your attention every second. It gives you space to listen — to yourself, to the wind, to whatever your brain is trying to work through in the middle of the day. And honestly? That silence healed a part of me I didn't know was tired.





# The Countryside Reset

Some days, when it all gets too much — the noise in my head, the buzz of the city, the ache of wanting control — I take a train and walk. Just me, a pair of muddy boots, and a map I won't follow. And I find myself in a field.

Maybe a village. **Definitely sheep.** And the countryside just holds you. Not with answers. Not with drama. Just space. Space to be small. To be quiet. To be enough.





# CLOSING REFLECTIONS



I didn't expect any of this. I thought I knew British life because I'd lived alongside it. But living in it —being shaped by it — has been something else entirely. And now? I can't imagine life without these small, quiet joys. Because they're not just extras. They're the story. The moments that stretch time. That soften the edges. That make the everyday feel like enough.



# What's Your Unexpected Joy?

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