

A capital break for lads – no shopping

Weekend Break

by Ian Cross

TRIP to London is a good way for lad and Dad to focus on the important things in life.

Star Wars, football, Lord of the Rings – and definitely no shopping.

In under three hours GNER whisked us from Northallerton to London Kings Cross where a one day tube pass gave Dad the freedom of central London for £5.10 with accompanying Jack (aged seven) going free.

On the south bank of the Thames near Westminster Bridge, County Hall hosts the Star Wars exhibition featuring props and models from all six films.

Darth Vader and Storm Troopers wandered by menacingly for terrific photos and the highlight was the training school where would-be Jedi apprentices can help save the galaxy.

Back in the real world, the pier beneath the nearby London Eye is the berth for RIB voyages.

A 50 minute trip starts sedately, highlighting the history and architecture of the Thames. But from Tower Bridge the twin engines blast into action, an exhilarating experience as the boat bounces off the waves, banking at a severe angle, twisting and turning at high speed.



RIB VOYAGES: An exhilarating way to see the riverside sights

Within walking distance of Kings Cross, the Premier Travel Inn, proved an ideal base. Unlimited breakfast is good value at £7.50 for adults and free for kids.

Well nourished, we set off for day two and the nearby British Library where the plaza offers refreshments, artwork and live entertainment. Inside, the Treasures of the British Library exhibition features interactive displays and historic writings, including the moving final journal entry of Scott of the Antarctic: "for God's sake, look after our people".

A game of footy in Kensington Gardens cleared the cobwebs before an evening at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

It was worth arriving early to mingle with the hobbits as Middle-earth took shape. Seven is probably a minimum age as there were some scary parts – especially when the orcs ran rampant in the stalls!

The special effects proved stunning and the amazing revolving and rising stage swiftly transforms meadow to wood and mountain to cave as the brave hobbits battle against orcs, nazguls and a very nasty spider!

Compacting three books into a three hour play is a considerable challenge but Tolkien fans and theatre lovers alike will find the result stunning. A terrific finale to a memorable break.

●GNER advance return fares, booked online, between North East stations and London start from £22 Standard Class or £72 First Class. Book via www.gner.co.uk, call 08457 225225 or visit any staffed station. Hotel: www.premiertravelinn.com.

Attractions: Lord of the Rings: £15 to £50. www.lot.com. Boat trip: £26/£16. www.londonribvoyages.com. Star Wars: £16.50/£12.50 www.starwars-theexhibition.com. British Library: free www.bl.uk.