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SCHOOL LAND



Getting Closer to Great Britain

Before the coronavirus hysteria swept over the world, nothing had seemed to bode ill, as if sunshine were supposed to brighten the notorious greyness of our city with iridescent colours. The easel had already been put in its proper place, and a dazzling pastiche of excitement and delight was on a tip of a magic paintbrush, held by the skilful hands of an artist called life, the palette of whom had been given a zest in the form of such an extraordinary event that could turn the most oppressive dullness into an unmolested vividness - namely, the arrival of English students. This exchange programme has a long history of building bridges between two cultures and providing our pupils with a great opportunity to get acquainted in person with the world which is being crammed into their heads in the course of approximately 10 years. So, it was no surprise that the faces of students, who had flooded the whole space before the gates at the airport, broke into a sparkling smile as they noticed the first party of English students emerging from the green channel.

What followed in the next 9 days was an intensive process of trying to swap different life experience, spanning a number of years, in a period of literally one week. In other words, the impossible was meant to become a daily routine. The families which hosted exchange students prepared lavish spreads almost every day, serving the table with delicacies of the Russian cuisine and making ordinary dinners look like those which are a common sight in our country in the week after the New Year's celebrations. Apart from this treat for gourmands, the English students were offered a rare chance to dive into the Russian culture in a city which is considered to be a Mecca for museum-goers and art connoisseurs. A whipping top was set in motion whirling from the Hermitage to the Russian Museum, from the Peter and Paul Fortress to St Isaac's Cathedral, up and down, back and forth, to and fro. For those who felt overdosed with cultural highlights, sympathising hosts took a pity in the end and decided to swerve in another, sporty, direction, what probably led to the highest turnout of the subjects of Her Majesty at a run-of-the-mill hockey match of the KHL.

As you see, the programme could boast a lot of various types of leisure activities allowing for no time for dilly-dallying. However, even if the latter chanced to happen, the underlying cause of the whole event was never absent from it, meaning that the students constantly engaged themselves into communication resorting to sundry means, be it the body language or painstaking endeavors to formulate a coherent sentence. Many pupils were fortunate in acquiring new acquaintances, which, who knows, may last for a considerable period of time, and hopefully they'll do so. In other words, when our students bade farewell to their English counterparts on the day of departure, over the lounge at the airport hung the atmosphere of sweet sorrowfulness - everyone was downcast as if something of the other-worldly existence had been around for the entire week and then were going to vanish into thin air, and at the same time felt a strange elation realising that a minute particle of that spiritual bond would remain notwithstanding the ruthlessness of distance. The supervening events, which prevented our pupils from embarking on their part of a voyage to the white cliffs of Albion (just a figure of speech since, luckily, nowadays we have a faster means of modern transportation), only proved that in a world where some unforeseen calamity can strike any minute, sustaining an open mind and broadening the outlook is like a bullion of gold; and if all goes well, the prospectors from our school will have their legitimate opportunity to accomplish the postponed part of the programme.

Alexander Sergeevich Kononov

Learning Russian and English

According to our long-established tradition, we give lessons of Russian to our British guests. I teach them some vocabulary that might be very useful during their stay. They learn such words as ВИНЕГРЕТ, ПЕЛЬМЕНИ, БЛИНЫ, КОТЛЕТА, ДИВАН, ПОЛОТЕНЦЕ and many more. My students got really chirpy when we were talking about food as hospitable Russian families usually treat their guests to a variety of traditional dishes. After watching a PPT presentation and learning some new words our guests did a bit of translating from English into Russian. They were good at it and they even managed to make up sentences with Russian words. Then we worked with some Russian idioms and matched them to their English equivalents. For example, делать из мухи слона - to make a mountain out of a molehill, валять дурака - to goof off, вертеться на языке - to be on the tip of one's tongue, глаза разбегаются - to have a wide choice. My British students were a bit shocked by an unexpected dance to Kalinka Malinka as a final highlight of the lesson exemplifying Russian soul and Russian people ready to burst into song and dance.

Regina Aleksandrovna Bashilova



Getting to know the British

As we were waiting for our new friends in front of the arrival gates, we all were a little anxious and nervous to meet our exchange partners from a different country with a different way of thinking, a different mentality, as we call it. From the moment they arrived and we started talking, that feeling disappeared. The first experience at home was very funny. My new friend Ilya was very hungry and I decided to treat him to a traditional Russian dish "Borsch". He ate it very quickly and he really liked it. Ilya liked my pets as well and he played with them very often. We walked my dog together and it was great.

Although at the beginning of the visit Ilya admitted that his Russian was poor, after some time together with us he wasn't confused to speak Russian any longer. He felt very comfortable, I think. He tried to learn more and more words and phrases. He wasn't afraid to say if he didn't like any food and we really appreciated that. For example, he didn't like "Jellied meat» and "Herring under a fur coat", he really liked "Doshirak", "Pelmeny" and "Blini", though.

During the week when English guys were here, all of us were very busy. Our guest visited many popular Russian sights while I was at school. It was difficult to continue our day hanging out with other guests and having fun. Though we were tired at the end of each day, we had a lot of positive emotions and it was very cool. Unfortunately, the world pandemic situation postpones our visit to London, but I truly hope that we will be able to visit England.

Polina Kitayeva



Before Natalie, my exchanger from London, came to Russia, I already knew we had a lot in common as we had started mixing a few months before. We both love hanging out with friends, cooking pasta and shopping. During her visit, we did a lot of sightseeing, window-shopping and real shopping and eating out, of course. She tried some dishes of the Russian cuisine and she really liked it. In general, she enjoyed her time abroad, she is even going to come again in a year.

Asel Amurzakova

Getting to know the British

We had started communicating with my London friend a few months before she came to Russia. I was afraid of this meeting very much because I wasn't sure if we would get on well and understand each other. Everything was OK, though, and we found it easy to talk and were on the same wave. The week passed like a day. We spent most of the time outdoors. We walked around the city and admired the most beautiful places of Saint Petersburg. Fortunately, we had some snow those days and my friend Niya was impressed by the snow most of all. It happened so that Niya's birthday was during her visit to Russia. My family arranged a wonderful tea party with a birthday cake and other treats and congratulated her on the day. Besides, we went to the entertainment park with all her London friends, and had a lot of fun there. All the time we spent together was very useful and pleasant for both of us. We miss each other and are looking forward to our next meeting.

Oksana Osipova



Getting to know the British

My exchange partner was a very nice and funny guy Alec Pullum by name. We immediately found common ground and had a whole week to enjoy. We visited a huge number of different attractions of our wonderful city such as Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood, Kazan Cathedral, Peter and Paul Fortress and many more. I noticed that Alec really liked Saint Petersburg. We also hung out a lot... Our large group of Russian and British students had fun in Maza Park, had a tasty meal in Tokio-City restaurant and walked a lot about the city centre. My parents liked Alec, too. They treated him to Borsch, Pelmeni, Blini and other national Russian dishes. Alec really liked them, especially Borsch, which is a favorite of mine too, he even took a picture of the soup and sent it to his parents. All in all, that was an awesome week for me and Alec, we became good friends and, hopefully, we will meet in London!

Vova Shumsky

