

Beyond the tracks

Connecting cultures by Rail



The story behind the journey...

This project came to light with the objectives of connecting cultures and building confidence by Rail. The day started with a Travel with Confidence workshop at Portsmouth & Southsea Station followed by a rail journey to London and a visit to the British Museum and surroundings area. The intended outcomes included increasing confidence, reducing transport inequality, encouraging sustainable travel and strengthening relationships between the railway and diverse communities.

Who?

- 7 families
- 18 participants
- 9 adults
- 9 children (4 to 16 yrs old)
- 5 African heritage communities (Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Zambia & Zimbabwe).



And the journey begins

The group started off at Portsmouth and Southsea Station and was curious to know more about the different train operators, the Travel with Confidence programme and partners Hampshire Community Rail Partnership works with. The children enjoyed the Rail safety awareness and tips.



The British Museum

Travelling together demonstrated how Rail can open doors to new experiences, opportunities and places that may be out of reach for many. The visit to the British Museum added another dimension to the journey, connecting travel with culture, education and the opportunity to explore the history and heritage of different communities.



London

More than a day out..

Families had the opportunity to explore London and it's iconic landmarks, taking in the sight and experiencing the energy of what the vibrant city can offer to visitors. For some participants it was their first time in London. The day was about more than reaching a destination but rather to explore, share food, socialise, enjoy some shopping and experience London as a family and group.



Feedback



"What a fantastic day travelling from Portsmouth into the heart of London; visiting a national treasure. Saw so much and learnt so much. It does need more than a day to explore all it offers. Thank you soo much 🙏" - Kiki

"I have been planning a visit to the London museums for about 2 years now. But not able to pull it off yet. Then I planned again for this summer. Yet, not sorted out the logistics. Then this trip came up. It was quite immersive for me. Standing there in awe, soaking in the wonder of seeing real objects from millennia ago, teasing the history and imagining how the peoples of those ears came up with such technology. I spent time with the middle eastern folks - summerians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, kannanites, amorites, Hittites, hebrews Saw how they lived. As a history buff, I have to go back again for a full day immersive experience. It also felt good to go out on a day trip to the capital without being limited by costs. And spending time with my community of various ages." - Amara



"I got really excited to go on the train with friends and also meeting new people. The African gallery we visited was interesting and I got to learn some of the things from my country (Ivory Coast). We also got to stroll around London and play at the park."- Mylah, 9.

"I am incredibly grateful for the generous sponsorship that allowed me to experience the vibrant history and culture of London firsthand. From exploring iconic landmarks to immersing myself in the local atmosphere, every moment of this tour was both inspiring and unforgettable. Thank you so much for this remarkable opportunity and for creating memories that I will cherish for a lifetime." - Chilufya



"The rich cultural experience that me and the rest of the group had was something new for me. It was very diverse and rich in history and made me reflect on the past, présent and future of our world. I would not have had the experience to do this without this opportunity. I am thankful to Charlene for organising this event and making it such a positive experience." - L. M



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This trip was more than visiting London. It was about opening up new opportunities to families. It was a first time visiting London for 3 participants. It was also the first time visiting the British Museum for 15 people out of 18. Children and adults found travelling together, a positive experience to connect and share. It was also an opportunity to discover how easy it can be to reach a new destination by train.

The journey also created opportunities for families to spend meaningful time together, build connections within their community and experience something new side by side. Participants returned home with new memories, new cultural experiences and a greater understanding of what could be reached by rail.

For some, London is no longer somewhere that requires an organised trip to make it possible. It is now somewhere they know they can reach.

This was more than a day out. It was an opportunity to remove a financial barrier, open access to culture and show families that the railway can connect them to places, experiences and opportunities they may previously have thought were out of reach.

A big thank you to Community Rail Network who funded this project, South Western Railway for supporting the Travel with Confidence programme and providing travel authorisation which allow people to truly experience the railway.

Charlene Arrondeau – Community Rail Officer, Hampshire Community Rail Partnership



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