Local Secrets Revealed as Brits Fail to Recognise National Treasures

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The UK may be home to some of the world's most significant and interesting sites and places of interest, but a new survey by Mercure hotels shows millions of us are unaware of some of our most fascinating hidden gems, believe fictional places to be real and also confuse many of our most famous attractions with those overseas.

When shown pictures, many Brits confused places such as Brighton Pavilion with the Taj Mahal, Marble Arch with the Arc de Triomphe, St Pauls with the Vatican and thought the Lake District's Derwent Water was in New Zealand

The survey also shows many Brits believe fictional places such as Corrie's Weatherfield, Eastenders' Albert Square, Downton Abbey, Bond's Skyfall and Harry Potter's Platform 9 ¾ Kings Cross are real places in the UK.

However, despite the knowledge gaps, 52% of Brits feel that of all the countries they have visited, The UK has the most places of interest to explore, the next most interesting country being the USA (10%). And the desire to explore the UK is there, 57% of Brits have holidayed most in the UK, compared to the top five other international holiday destinations Spain (14%), France (5%), USA (5%), Italy (3%) and Greece (2%).

Mercure's Jonathan Sheard said: *"Our study showed that 77% of Brits would explore the UK more if they knew more about what was there. That's where our Local Secrets come in. The UK has so many national treasures for people to experience, right here on their doorstep, so we have created the Local Secrets by Mercure website to share some of the UK's most interesting, historical and entertaining attractions that many of us may not have know exist. We want to encourage Brits to explore the wonders on their doorstep and throughout the UK, to stay like a local when they stay with Mercure, not like a tourist, and really uncover some wonderful local secrets and treasures of the UK. With more than 70 hotels in the UK we have the perfect base from which to explore the UK."*

Over 600 local secrets have been identified and shared by Blue Badge Tourist Guides and Mercure Hotels under the headers of Activities & Sights, Culture, Family & Kids, Food & Drink and Heritage & Historic.

When asked about 10 specific historical Local Secrets by Mercure, 55% of Brits had not heard of any of them, let alone visited them. Only 6% of those asked has heard of the Devon Witches Mural which hosted the last witchcraft trials in the UK and only 6% have heard of the Cromwell Clocktower, in Inverness, built on the remains of the fort built by Oliver Cromwell in 1653-8, during his occupation of Scotland.

Although you would think that people from these areas have heard of them…? Apparently not as less than a third of people in York have heard of St Peter's School, which is where Guy Fawkes went to get his education and less than 1 in 7 people from the South West have heard of the Devon Witches Mural. The region that have most visited their local attractions are the people of Midlands, with 16% having visited the Wroxeter Roman City.

Blue Badge Tourist Guide, Sarah Cowling, said: *"We worked with Mercure to uncover and share some wonderful places all around the UK. There are some real treasures in the UK, many that are widely known and much loved, and many more that play a significant part in our recent and ancient history, or simply offer us a real taste of Britain. Our hope is that the Mercure Local Secrets will encourage Brits to explore the wonders on their doorstep from home or hotel."*

The sentiment of 'staying like a local, not like a tourist' has taken hold in the UK, with 69% of Brits wanting the local insight and experience on their travels. Now, with the Mercure Local Secrets, Brits can uncover the local secrets on their doorsteps as they live in and travel around the wonderful British isles.

For more information visit http://www.mercurelocalsecrets.co.uk/

The Local Secrets by Mercure include:

1. **Mercure Bradford Bankfield Hotel - Shipley Glen Tramway:**Travel in style to the top of a steep hill in a 1895 tram, the oldest working cable tramway in Britain. Journey from the children's man made Adventure Park in Robert's Park through the woods to a completely natural adventure park on top of the breezy moor, with boulders and rocks to climb on, caves to explore and rolling grassland to picnic on – oh! and there is a sweetie shop at the top too!!
2. **Mercure Leeds Parkway Hotel - Cottage Road Cinema:** The first ever moving images were shot on Leeds Bridge in 1888 by Louis Le Prince, so, as the 'home of the movies' why not go see a film? The Cottage Road Cinema has been continuously showing films since 1912 and is one of the oldest cinemas in the country. Cosy, comfy seats, swooshy screen curtains, an interval and a lady selling ice creams from a tray – perfect!
3. **Mercure Leicester, The Grand Hotel - Jewry Wall:** The massive Jewry Wall is the largest Roman edifice of a civil, non military, nature remaining in Britain. It was never lost, but its purpose was forgotten. In fact, it was part of the Roman bath house. To one side is the excellent Jewry Wall Museum, and on the other is St. Nicholas, Leicester`s oldest church.
4. **Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel - Prince Albert Mural:** Visit the fantastic mural on the side wall of the Prince Albert Pub in North Laine which depicts departed musical legends of the 20th and 21st centuries by local graffiti artists Sinna One and Req. On this same wall you can also see Banky's "Kissing Policemen" and football legend George Best.
5. **Mercure Cardiff Holland House Hotel and Spa - Flatholm Island:** One of a remote pair of islands in middle of the Bristol Channel, Flatholm is an excellent day out away from the hustle and bustle of the city, just 5 miles from the Welsh shore. Flatholm crackles with history – it was a gun emplacement in both World Wars, a cholera hospital, a smugglers' haunt and it saw the first radio transmission over sea (to Cardiff) by Marconi in 1897.
6. **Mercure Brandon Hall Hotel and Spa - Brandon Marsh:**Working to secure a future for many important habitats and species, which might otherwise be lost. Further wetland enhancement continues, creating the largest area of reedbed habitat in the West Midlands, securing a future for the bittern, one of the UK's most endangered birds. While at the same time, maintaining some of the last remaining ancient woodland habitats left in Warwickshire. Also looking after water voles and other populations. A center for wildlife conservation.
7. **Mercure Exeter Southgate Hotel - Cakeadoodledo Café:** Fifty yards from the door of Exeter Cathedral, amid the serenity of the Cathedral Close lies cupcake heaven in Devon. Started by author of Cupcake Magic, Kate Shirazi, Cakeadoodledo is all about beautiful cakes. Beautiful and local cakes and food, to boot, where the only thing that isn't made in the café is the bread which hails from a distance of 300 metres away. They send their cakes by courier and supply customers from Aberdeen to the Isle of Wight.
8. **Mercure Hythe Imperial Hotel & Spa - Capel-le-Ferne- Battle of Britain Memorial:** 16 minutes by car, travelling up to the M20 and eastwards in the direction of Dover, and you reach Capel-le-Ferne and the Battle of Britain Memorial – A unique place of pilgrimage on England's iconic white cliffs. The Battle of Britain, which helped change the course of history led Sir Winston Churchill to utter, perhaps, his most famous words "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few"
9. **Mercure London Bloomsbury - The Cartoon Museum:**Founded by a group of cartoonists, collectors and lovers of the art form in 2006, the museum is dedicated to collecting, exhibiting, promoting and preserving the best of British cartoon art. The three main galleries display original artwork from British cartoons and comics, past and present. The Cartoon Museum Shop stocks more than 900 books on the history of cartoons and comic-strips, graphic novels and children's books, and a wide range of cards, posters, prints and cartoon-related novelty gifts.
10. **Mercure London Bridge Hotel - Cross Bones Graveyard:** An eerie and fascinating memorial to the 'Winchester Geese', the prostitutes licensed by the Bishop of Winchester to work on his land and buried here in an unconsecrated paupers' graveyard behind Borough High Street. At one end of Cross Bones, enclosed by London Underground hoardings, a large rusty gate is decorated with flowers, toys, jewellery, ribbons and feathers.
11. **Mercure Peebles Barony Castle Hotel - Grounds of the Hotel:** Wander round the 25 acres of land surrounding this hotel, which was once a 16 century tower house. The baronets Murray were granted land by charter of James V1 for supporting colonists in Nova Scotia. Be amazed at the *Polish Map of Scotland* a topographic map of Scotland's mountains, glens, lochs and islands, clearly visible on the ground below the viewing platforms. This large three-dimensional, outdoor concrete scale model of Scotland was constructed by polish officers in recognition of Scottish hospitality during WW2, when the house was a military college for Polish Officers.
12. **Mercure Newbury Elcot Park Hotel - Butts Brewery:** The Butts Brewery, just seven miles from here in Great Shefford, is one of just a handful of breweries in the UK producing totally organic beer. It was also the first new brewery in Berkshire for 70 years. You can buy beer direct from the brewery (phone first) or sample it in local pubs. One pub that usually has Butts is The Blackbird at Bagnor, adjacent to that great little theatre The Watermill. Cheers.
13. **Mercure Oxford Eastgate Hotel - Alice in Wonderland Treacle Well:** At the west end of St Margaret's Church, Binsey, around 1.5 miles (2.4 km) northwest of Oxford, stands St Margaret's

Well, immortalized in Lewis Carroll's book Alice in Wonderland as the Treacle Well. This is the well from which St Frideswide, the mythical founder of Oxford, took water to cure blindness.

14. **Mercure Stratford upon Avon Shakespeare Hotel - The Fleece Inn:** This is a very old building from the time of Chaucer in the 1300s – a pub since around 1500. The last descendant of the owners' family died not long ago and it is known not only for Morris dancing and folk music, but also for asparagus auctions, where a visitor can buy 'a round of 'gras'. Children probably remember best the witch marks in front of the fireplaces.
15. **Mercure Box Hill Hotel - St Martha's Church:** Only accessible on foot, the half-mile climb from the car park is sufficient to keep the amazing views of up to eight counties from the top of St Martha's Hill a real local secret. E H Shephard, the artist who illustrated the Winnie-the-Pooh books frequented the spot and one of his drawings is in the church.

http://www.mercurelocalsecrets.co.uk/

Key Stats and Results |

When asked, 'which of the following do you think are real towns/cities/places of interest in the UK?' more than 2,000 Brits answered as follows:

- Warwick Castle – 79% real in UK – REAL UK

- Isles of Scilly – 75% real in UK – REAL UK

- The Giant's Causeway – 75% real in UK - REAL UK

- Blenheim Palace – 73% real in UK - REAL UK

- The Needles – 64% real in UK - REAL UK

- Baker Street – 64% real in UK - REAL UK

- Wookey Hole – 58% real in UK - REAL UK

- The Jurassic coast – 57% real in UK - REAL UK

- Fingals Cave – 47% real in UK - REAL UK

- Little Venice – 36% real in UK - REAL UK

- Bamburgh Beach – 31% real in UK - REAL UK

- Kelevedon Hatch Secret Nuclear Bunker – 26% real in UK - REAL UK

- Durdle Door – 25% real in UK - REAL UK

- Gosford Park – 19% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- The Dalmatian Coast – 14% real in UK – NOT UK

- Hundred acres wood – 13% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Pemberley - 13% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Albert Square – 13% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Downton Abbey – 12% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Platform 9 ¾ Kings Cross – 11% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Bidean Nam Bian mountain range – 7% real in UK - REAL UK

- Weatherfield – 6% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Skyfall castle – 5% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- Wayne Manor – 3% real in UK – FICTIONAL

- None of the above are real in the UK – 7%

When shown pictures and asked to identify the landmark by multiple choice, more than 2,000 Brits answered as follows:

- Blackpool Tower – 86% correct / 12% Eiffel Tower / 2% other

- Brighton Pavilion – 66% correct / 30% Taj Mahal / 4% other

- Canterbury Cathedral – 82% correct / 15% Notre Dame / 2% other

- Derwent Water – 66% correct / 23% New Zealand / 11% other

- Hadrian's Wall – 84% correct / 14% Great Wall of China / 2% other

- Loch Ness – 87% correct / 8% Lake Garda / 3% other

- Marble Arch – 63% correct / 35% Arch de Triumph / 2% other

- Minak Theatre – 47% correct / 43% Greek amplitheatre / 10% other

- Portmerion – 62% correct / 29% Oberhofen Castle, Switzerland / 9% other

- Scottish Exhibition Centre – 54% correct / 44% Sydney Opera House / 2% other

- Seilebost Beach, Outer Hebrides – 59% correct / 20% The Whitsundays / 21% other

- Mount Snowden – 74% correct / 18% Pyrenees / 7% other

- St Michael's Mount – 69% correct / 23% Normandy island / 7% other

- St Paul's Cathedral – 65% correct / 28% The Vatican / 6% other

Full regional stats and results are available on request.

Notes to Editors: About Mercure:

Mercure is the midscale non-standardized brand of Accor, the world's leading hotel operator with 3,700 hotels and 180,000 employees in 92 countries. Mercure hotels share common quality standards and are driven by passionate hoteliers. Whether they are located in major city centers, by the seaside or in mountain resorts, each establishment offers an authentic experience for both business and leisure travelers. The Mercure network spans 711 hotels in 52 countries around the globe, represents a real alternative to standardized or independent hotels, and combines the power of an international network with professional and digital expertise. For more information, visithttp://www.mercure.com.

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