

■ TRAVELLING

Land of Saints and Angels

No one told me that England was going to be so stressful. You hear about cars driving down the left hand side of the road, and you think, "How hard can it be?"



Natasha Regehr
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But there is nothing at all intuitive about the streets of York. You cannot pull a u-turn or go around the block if you find yourself suddenly going the wrong way on a pedestrian-only cobblestone street the width of a sidewalk, and you don't have a hope of deducing your whereabouts in a land without maps or street signs.

So what do you do? You smile feebly and say a tearful "Yes" when an angelic pedestrian taps on your window and says, "Excuse me, love, are you lost?" You tell her all about your day, and she says, "Now don't you worry. I'll help you." Then you follow her directions until you're lost again, at which time another angelic pedestrian arrives to point you in the right direction again. The gentleman at the parking lot says he's been expecting you, and you can park right over there, and you can enter the cathedral by the back door, because you're in the choir, and you belong.

Yes, the cathedral. We took a rather stressful route, but found our way to York Minster at last, and spent hours singing and touring and wandering through the spectacular vaulted spaces, lit by 50-foot tall stained glass windows dating as far back as the 11th century. Then we climbed the tiny, spiral stone staircase to the choir room, donned our robes, and had a quick crash course in Anglican liturgy. The candles were lit, the 30-foot organ pipes sounded, and Evensong began; and there we were, this little group of musicians from Canada, singing Psalms in a building that has housed thousands of people's songs and prayers for over ten centuries.

Truly, England is the land of saints and angels; but you don't need to go to a cathedral to find them. There are plenty assisting bewildered tourists on the streets of York.

Natasha Regehr is a member of the Peterborough Singers, and will be sending updates during the choir's stay in York Minster, U.K.