

■ TRAVELING

Delays can be thrilling

“Please meet at the bus on the tick of the hour,” instructed the tour guide.



Natasha Regehr
TRAVELING

I was doing well. I was on time for breakfast for the first time all week, and ready to leave for our bus tour a full half hour ahead of time.

I strolled back to my room, donned some warmer clothes, repacked my bag, and arrived at the bus at 7:58, only to find everyone else sitting primly in their seats and the tour guide clucking and counting heads. In my opinion, 7:58 is well before “the tick of the hour.” I was downright early. Oh, these Brits and their excessive punctuality!

After two hours of driving through the English countryside, we stopped at a lovely little country village, where I ate my first real scone with jam and Devonshire cream. The gardens were delightful, and I’m pretty sure I saw Miss Marple. I popped into a shop or two, but had to hurry on, because the bus driver was cordially insistent that we meet again “right on the tick of the hour.”

Being the punctual girl that I am, I returned a full five minutes early, settled in for another few hours of dozing, and watched the tour guide cluck and count. Then we waited. And waited. Eventually, an uneasy voice took over the intercom and announced, with great trepidation, that there was something wrong with the oil pressure, and our departure would be delayed.

He was mortified. I was thrilled.

I meandered through all the little stone-walled footpaths I had skirted in my earlier efforts to make a beeline to the bus. I took pretty photos and sighed happily. Now this was a vacation!

The delay lengthened, as did the tour guide’s agonized apologies. My day just kept on getting better. I scoured all of the cute little shops I’d skipped, then wandered along the riverside, listening to the sheep bleating on the dales.

When we finally pulled in to our residence at 7:16 p.m., the guide thanked us profusely for being such “seasoned travelers,” and we grinned casually and thanked him back. These Brits may be efficient, but it takes a bunch of Canadians to show them how to enjoy a good bus breakdown on a country road in July.

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