

Travel

POSTCARD FROM . . .

LONDON

In a smart Mayfair street, a few doors down from Claridge's, look up from the polished shopfronts of Jo Malone and Aspinall of London and you see two discreet blue plaques. High above eye-level, they would be easy to miss – but tell the story of the building's long history and of a bizarre musical coincidence.

London's historic buildings are dotted with such plaques, installed by English Heritage to commemorate famous past residents. The one on the right – at number 25 Brook St – reveals it to be the home of George Frederic Handel for 36 years until his death in 1759. Next door at number 23, a flat upstairs was occupied by another very different musical talent: Jimi Hendrix.

Both properties were later converted into offices but, after lengthy restoration, Handel's house was opened to the public as a museum in 2001. Last month Hendrix's flat finally followed suit, and now the two homes make up what could be the world's most contrasting musical museum.

We enter by Handel's front door at number 25 – the two houses are now linked internally – and climb the stairs to the new exhibition space devoted to Hendrix. There are biographical displays, the opening chords of "Purple Haze" playing on a



loop from a video, and Hendrix's left-handed Epiphone FT79 guitar in a Perspex case.

It's a useful primer on the life of the rock star but the real attraction is next door, where his attic flat has been recreated in painstaking detail. The bedroom is dominated by a red bed with a shawl-canopy, with peacock and ostrich feathers on the mantelpiece, and a Bang & Olufsen record player. A teapot sits on a tray, a scallop-shell ashtray on a bedside table. It is as if Hendrix has just walked out.

He shared the Brook Street flat with his then girlfriend, 20-year-old Kathy

Etchingham. She now lives in Australia, so when the museum staff recreated the flat, they showed it to her via Skype to check its authenticity. "All wrong," she apparently told them – "much too untidy". Despite his reputation as a wild man of rock, his years in the US army had left Hendrix obsessively tidy, down to a penchant for plumped cushions and hospital corners. Etchingham also revealed his favourite pastimes to include playing with his Scalextric set or watching the soap opera *Coronation Street*.

The couple set up home in the flat in July 1968, paying £30 a week. They bought homewares at John Lewis on Oxford Street, just like any other couple back then or today. But there was much partying too, with Hendrix inviting round whomever he had been playing with that night. He would also regularly blow the cones in their Lowther speakers; Kathy kept having to traipse down to Bromley to get them repaired. In the end, the factory would just send the parts over in a taxi. The kitchen remained little used; instead steak and chips and bottles of Mateus rosé were brought up from Mr Love, the restaurant downstairs.

Handel's home next door could scarcely be more of a contrast. It is a lesson in Georgian interiors: antiques

and lead-grey walls. Handel's bed, also red, is a colossal four-poster. Hendrix apparently got a kick out of the fact that Handel had been his neighbour. Though unfamiliar with the composer until coming to live here, when he was introduced to *Messiah* he headed out to buy it on vinyl and later claimed the composer as an influence. Another room has a display showing the albums that were played on the flat's turntable; remnants of Hendrix's own record collection are due to come on loan later this year.

Hendrix grew up in Seattle and later lived in Tennessee and New York, but the Brook Street flat came at a key time, spanning the release of his most celebrated album, *Electric Ladyland*. As his fame spread, he gave numerous interviews from the flat. But the following year, back in the US, amid growing crowds and Hendrix mania, the couple split up. Etchingham moved to suburban Chiswick; a year later, Hendrix was dead, after an overdose in a Notting Hill hotel. That knowledge gives an inescapable poignancy to the flat, where Hendrix seems to have enjoyed the happiest chapter of his life in what he called "my first real home of my own".

Juliet Kinsman

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Handel & Hendrix in London (handelhendrix.org) at 25 Brook St is open from 11am to 6pm daily except Sunday, when it opens at midday. Adult entry costs £10

The land of the free

Haiti | Long beset by corruption, colonial rule and natural disasters, the nation is at last beginning to attract adventurous travellers. By *Emma Thomson*

We were pacing along a russet mud track when a Creole call went up: "Gade! Blan yo se sou pye!" ("Look! The whites are on foot!") A gaggle of kids appeared from behind a fence of cacti, pointing at us in delight and slapping each other on the back as laughs erupted from between their bright-white teeth.

For nearly two weeks I had been exploring Haiti, ticking off what are emerging as the must-see sites for the trickle of adventurous tourists beginning to travel to the country. I sought out voodoo flags and dolls inside Port-au-Prince's central market, the Marché en Fer. I wandered among the faded French colonial architecture of Jacmel on the southern coast and was led on horseback up to the Unesco-listed Citadelle Laferrière, a colossal mountain-top fortress completed in 1820.

But still, it had felt like I was being kept at arm's length, isolated in the cocoon of a tour group. So I had joined a trek run by Expedition Ayiti – a grass-roots organisation that leads hikes through the little-visited Central Plateau and the mountains of the south, which rise to 2,680m. And the chuckles of these children seemed proof that the barrier was finally being lowered.

It's easy to understand why smiles aren't as easily offered in the main towns. While the Dominican Republic, which occupies the eastern side of the island of Hispaniola, has developed a thriving tourist economy, Haiti, on the western side of the same island, has been beset by poverty, political corruption and natural disasters. Haiti was a French colony for almost 200 years, with plantations staffed by slaves shipped from Africa. Following the French Revolution, they overthrew the colonists and won independence in 1804 in the most important slave rebellion in history.

France, however, refused to recognise Haiti's independence and sought reparations for the loss of its land, a demand delivered by a fleet of warships. Fearing attack, Haiti agreed to pay Fr150m, which left the new nation laden with huge debts. The corrupt rule of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, president from 1957 to 1971, and that of his son Jean-Claude, emptied the public purse further. Then, on January 12 2010, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck at Léogâne – 25 miles from Port-au-Prince – reducing the capital to rubble, claiming about 200,000 lives and leaving an estimated 1.5m displaced.

Austin Taylor, a teacher from Indianapolis, Indiana, was in Haiti at the time, about to depart on a motorbike tour of the country. He abandoned his plans and spent the next 11 days volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, the US-based housing NGO. "Lots of foreigners headed to Haiti to volunteer after the

earthquake, but from what I saw it seemed what Haitians needed most in the long term was the chance to earn money," he says. Unsure what to do, he came to live for five weeks with Gerald Joseph, a school principal from the town of Pignon in Haiti's Central Plateau who had also been working with the NGO. "At that point every visitor to Haiti was involved in aid work. They stayed in compounds and didn't experience the culture like I could during those five weeks." Believing Haiti had a landscape and culture that could be ideal for adventurous, community-based tourism, Taylor and Joseph devised a plan



for a trekking company, using the lattice of footpaths that wind between villages. It would create jobs for local guides, and the hikers would stay in villagers' homes along the way. Expedition Ayiti took its first guests in 2012 but remains tiny, with only 30 guests so far booked for this year.

On the first morning of our hike we rose early, pulled on our boots and set off west from Pignon. We passed the town's rum factory, an open-sided tin-roof shack where locals bring their sugar cane to boil down into alcohol. The sweet smell of molasses hung in the air.

After 12 miles – four or five hours' walking – we reached our first night's stop, the village of Lamarre. The local pastor, Hones Declerus, greeted Taylor warmly: "How is your father? Mother?" School had just broken up for the Christmas holidays and – wishing to give us more space than there would be in his home – Declerus had set up a camp bed in each of the classrooms. French posters of the skeletal and digestive systems hung above my mattress. Moths and flies smashed into the battery-operated light placed on the table as we settled down to a dinner of rice and beans. In between mouthfuls I asked Declerus how the village deals with the money received from Expedition Ayiti – \$45 per tourist per night. "We put it all in a shared bank account and grow it," he said. "Right now, we're saving to buy 25 goats."

The following day was shorter – a six-mile hike to Gran Latanier and the

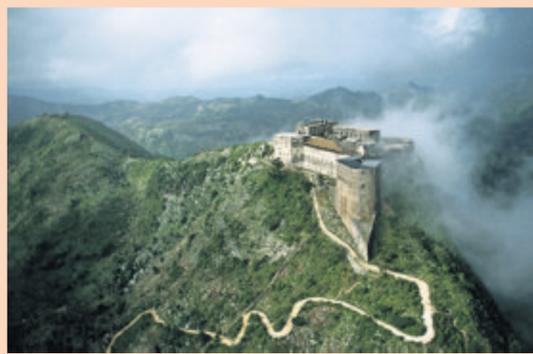


From above: trekking across the Haiti's Central Plateau; nieces of Lormeus Clotère braiding hair in Gran Latanier; the Citadelle Laferrière, a Unesco world heritage site

Emma Thomson; Getty Images

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Emma Thomson was a guest of Expedition Ayiti (expeditionayiti.org), which offers a seven-day hike through the interior from \$1,300 per person, including accommodation, meals, transport and a guide. American Airlines (aa.com) operates a direct flight from Miami to Cap-Haïtien from about \$400 return.



marine-blue house of our host, Lormeus Clotère. His plastic dining table groaned under a spread of boiled plantain, chicken legs and *pikliz* (a spicy coleslaw). We spent the afternoon learning to play dominoes (a Haitian obsession) and watching Clotère's nieces take turns braiding each other's hair.

On the last day, we had barely walked two miles when we were met by Charles Gerbeir, a 60-year-old father of eight and our final host. He'd risen at 4am and walked 12 miles so he could accompany us over the mountains to his village, Ran. We followed him through head-height flaxen grasses, paused on the cusp of the mountain to enjoy the cool wind, sweet as iced water, then descended to his cement house, which stands in the shadow of a red Digicel telecommunications tower. He takes care of the compound in return for a small wage, but survives mostly on his garden, which is filled with crops and pigs. "I'm always happy to share my house," he told us.

Early the next morning, we hitched rides on the back of motorbikes towards Pignon and then hailed a *tap tap* (a shared taxi), bound for Cap-Haïtien. Chickens dangled by their ankles from the side, the ground was visible through the floor of the vehicle, farmers and villagers were shoehorned in. We all watched silently as the Citadelle flashed in and out of view, partially obscured by palm trees. The last time I'd seen it was from an air-conditioned minibus, but I knew that this – hot, cramped, authentic – was the experience I'd remember.

ON LOCATION

THE NIGHT MANAGER

The series: In this six-part Anglo-US adaptation of John le Carré's spy novel, British former soldier Jonathan Pine (Tom Hiddleston) is recruited by intelligence officer Angela Burr (Olivia Colman) to infiltrate the inner circle of arms dealer Richard Roper (Hugh Laurie), where he stumbles into a web of murky alliances between the arms trade and intelligence agencies.

On location: Co-produced by the BBC, AMC and production company The Ink Factory, the budget was rumoured to be £3m per episode – and it's not hard to see where the money went, as the action skips from one glamorous location to the next. In the first episode Pine is a night manager at a luxury hotel in Cairo, although filming took place at Marrakech's five-star Es Saadi resort.

Burr recruits Pine while he is working at another five-star hotel, in Zermatt, the Swiss resort famed for views of the Matterhorn. The Hotel Meisters is fictional but some exterior shots were filmed at the Riffelalp, an exclusive mountain-top



Tom Hiddleston in a hotel scene

hotel (riffelalp.com) reached via the Gornergrat railway. Burr's interview with Pine was shot in the beautiful dining room of the Chalet Hotel Schöneegg ([schonegg.ch](http://schoneegg.ch)).

Pine relocates to a remote cottage on Devon's Hartland Peninsula to establish his alter ego. Filming took place in and around the village of Hartland, and features the Anchor Inn (theanchorinnhartland.co.uk). There are shots of Pine running the Southwest Coast Path and cooling off under a waterfall at Blegberry.

The action switches to Mallorca, where Roper is entertaining guests at his hilltop retreat La Fortaleza, a former fortress converted into a lair worthy of any Bond villain. During a meal at the photogenic Cas Patro March (+34 971 639 137), perched on the cliffs above Cala Deià, Pine foils a staged kidnapping of Roper's son, thus winning his trust.

Where to stay: La Fortaleza is a private residence and not available to rent but for similar opulence and views of the Tramuntana mountains, stay at La Residencia (Belmond.com /la-residencia-mallorca), formerly owned by Sir Richard Branson. In Marrakech, the cast and crew stayed at the Es Saadi resort (essaadi.com), where luxury suites, villas, restaurants and a hammam are all set in manicured gardens.

The Devon cottage that Pine uses as his base is Blackpool Mill Cottage, available to rent from Lady Stucleay, owner of nearby Hartland Abbey (hartlandabbey.com).

Jonathan O'Connor

'The Night Manager' is showing on the BBC in the UK, and TV3 in New Zealand; it launches in the US on AMC on April 19