

The Benefits of Addventure in Learning

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I first attended an Addventure in Learning course two years ago in Llandudno. I have enjoyed every course but this one included one of the highlights, going down a copper mine. I have attended six courses, two on ecology, two on literature, one on music and one on history, and have found all of them well run with quality tuition. We receive background information on the course a few weeks in advance. This is in Braille, large print or tape/CD. For the literature course we are given a reading list and guidance concerning where to obtain the books in our preferred format.

On arrival, we have an introductory lecture. This works best when the lecturer gets everyone to introduce themselves briefly and explain what they expect to gain from the course. This helps to build up the rapport between tutor and students and promotes a good dialogue for future discussion. Usually we have two lectures, one in the morning and one in the evening. The afternoon usually involves an outside visit.

On our two literature courses based in Stoke-on-Trent (one entitled 'What of England Now' and one on the novels of Arnold Bennett) we had guided tours of potteries, a country house and the sights featured in Bennett's books.

On the music course we visited a museum and toured the props and costumes department of the Royal Northern School of Music's opera company.

On the course studying Georgian London we visited Goldsmiths Hall, The Foundling Hospital and Kensington Palace. Such visits rely on good liaison with the venue, so we are able to have guided tours suitable for visually impaired visitors. This means being able to touch furniture and other exhibits and, in the potteries, learning about the manufacturing process and the goods produced.

The evening lecture is informal. For last year's ecology course in Suffolk we had a bat walk and a talk on rural life. For the Georgian history course, we had a talk on costume (with exhibits) and a talk on Georgian music.

On the final morning we have a session in which students can give their feedback and give constructive criticism on how it could have been improved and suggest subjects for future courses.

The courses are not only of academic benefit, but have an important social function. Many visually impaired people live alone and these courses are a good chance to get to know people, to discuss the course, life in general and living with a visual impairment. I have made friends through these courses and I have also become a Trustee of the Charity, which has helped to build my selfconfidence. This, as a self-employed person living alone, can be difficult to sustain. I have benefitted greatly from attending Addventure in Learning courses.