Headline: Visit Oxford for educating experience

Deckhead: English city home to renowned university, beautiful spires

Education is synonymous with Oxford. This historic city is home to one of the most renowned universities worldwide and the oldest of its kind in the English-speaking world.

The origins of the University of Oxford date to the 13th century, making it a sparkling wonder in knowledge and learning. It also is a popular tourist attraction. Located less than an hour by train northwest of London, this esteemed academic institution attracts travelers eager to absorb its aura.

Many of the university’s 38 colleges open their doors to nonstudents daily for a few hours, giving them the opportunity to witness the ancient quadrangles, chapels and dining halls. Guided tours are available and several colleges play host to evensong services, including Christ Church, with its celebrated Cathedral Choir.

Ashmolean is the world’s oldest public museum and home to school’s impressive collection of art and archaeology. Artifacts date from 8000 B.C. to present day. This diverse trove represents most of the world’s greatest civilizations. Admission is free.

Oxford is more than an old, college town. Known as the “city of dreaming spires,” a nickname coined by Victorian poet Matthew Arnold to recognize Oxford’s enchanting skyline of towers and church spheres, it has inspired countless writers and poets for centuries.

Oxford also provided several iconic locations for the “Harry Potter” films, including New College, whose cloisters were featured in “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire” and Christ Church College – home of a magnificent Tudor dining hall that inspired Hogwarts’ Great Hall.

The best views of the city can be found from Carfax Tower, measuring only 74 feet in height. No building in central Oxford can be taller than this famous edifice, which is all the remains of a 12th-century church. Visitors climb 99 steps to its apex and view Oxford’s stately skyline and landmarks.

The city’s most recognizable landmarks are located at Cobbled Radcliffe Square. Honey-hued buildings include Bodleian Library, the Christopher Wren-designed Sheldonian Theatre and the Hertford College Bridge, often referred to as Oxford’s “Bridge of Sighs.” The circular-shaped Radcliffe Camera Library resides in the heart of the square.

Oxford Covered Market has everything from household goods to haberdashery. More than 250 years old, it’s an ideal place to taste street food from all parts of the world, as well as local fare like mackerel pâté, crispy whitebait, caperberries and Oxford blue cheese.

Have a pint in the Old Bookbinders Ale House or The Bear Inn, Oxford’s oldest pub, dating to 1242. Sit in the same seats that acclaimed writers C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien once occupied at the Eagle and Child.

Visitors should hire a traditional Oxford punt from Salter’s Steamers boathouse near Folly Bridge to view Oxford and Christ Church meadow from a different angle. “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” originated as a story told on a boating trip that began at Folly Bridge, and the Thames riverside is lined with college rowing clubs and inviting old pubs.

Oxford is a beacon of higher education, but some things are better learned outside the classroom.

Cutline: STORIED STRUCTURE – The Radcliffe Camera Library sits in the center of Radcliffe Square at the University of Oxford. Image: Andrei Nekrassov. Adobe Stock.