So, you may be wondering—why London? And because I’ll wax philosophic on the topic at a later time, I present to you, without any further delay, this blog in my preferred method of communication—a list.

**Top ten favorite London moments (in no particular order):**

**Tate Modern:** Although the Tate Modern is relatively new to the museum scene, I think it must be one of the most accomplished (and in my opinion the most well-arranged) collections of modern art I’ve ever seen. With an entire section devoted to to Cubism and Futurism and another to Surrealism, the range of artist, subject and medium is diverse but entirely palpable. Some of my favorite works/rooms in the permanent collection included the Russian Soviet propaganda posters, LA-inspired artist Ed Ruscha’s room, Matisse’s *The Snail*, and the works of Paul Klee, Joan Miro, Warhol, Lichtenstein and Rodin’s sculpture *The Kiss*. I also went to the Pop Life temporary exhibition, where I was able to see more Warhol as well as artists Warhol inspired. Incredibly interesting exhibit, though I much preferred the replica of Keith Haring’s Pop Shop to Paul Koons’ room of self-subject pornography. Oh, to be a modern artist…

**The London Bridges:** While the tube (the Underground) stop for my hostel was London Bridge (the original currently resides in Lake Havasu City, AZ), some of my most memorable moments were walks across the Millennium Bridge, the Spice Girls movie-inspired photo shoot on the Tower Bridge, and the late night conversation with Rachel on the Waterloo Bridge.

**Double-Decker Bus Tour:** Cheesy, albeit incredibly informative, I could not give a higher recommendation to such a touristy experience. Although the ride can put a large dent in the pounds in your wallet, we got to see places in London and hear stories about them that I never would have been able to alone (or by foot). The only thing I regret was not taking the entire tour!

**Tower of London/Crown Jewels/Beefeater tour:** One of the most historically significant locations in London, I couldn’t help but be completely enthralled with British history and the monarchy. One of the safest places in Europe, the Tower is the location of the Crown Jewels and coronation attire. The history within the Tower (Anne Boleyn was beheaded *here*, Lady Jane Grey *there*) as well as the jewels themselves are completely surreal to anyone with no concept of monarchy (ahem, me). Plus, the Beefeaters have great outfits and have great stories to tell.

**Leicester Square** (aka…when I saw George Clooney): When searching for theater tickets, I literally stumbled upon barricades and a crown of people gathering around the Odeon movie theater, one of a half dozen in Leicester Square mid-London. It was the London premiere of Men Who Stare at Goats, starring George Clooney, who had three movie premieres in London that week for the London Film Festival. Naturally I joined them, got out my camera, found a great spot and got George’s John Hancock (well, he only signs his initials). But he also asked me why it was so cold in London, to which I replied “I don’t know, I’m from California.” He was very tan, and talked just like you’d imagine. Sigh. Although this native Californian didn’t have celebrity spotting on her European agenda, it was certainly an exciting part of the trip to London.

**Eating as the Brits do:** For some reason, after expecting the absolute worst, I LOVED the food in London. Maybe its because at least once a day I had Indian food, or maybe I just enjoyed the stereotypical British cuisine like fish and chips, mushy peas and Cornish pasties. Plus, there are Wagamama restaurants on practically every street! I never had a bad meal in London. Just a few overpriced ones. And don’t forget…they have cider, too. I’ll take the Strongbow on tap, thanks.

**Window (and regular) shopping on Oxford Street and Harrod’s department store**: For some reason (probably because I was born American) I feel most at home in a city when I shop in it, even if I don’t buy anything. I just find consumer culture fascinating, and the variances in fashions, prices and stores seems to give me a good inclination about the people who live and shop there. My favorite experience was Harrod’s department store, which is basically a mall of luxuries and served as my idea of a “museum of consumption.” I think Claire and I spent a few hours exploring the store and another hour just in the gourmet food hall.

**Living in history**: The Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square, St. Paul’s Cathedral…all with incredible historical relevance located within a short walk of each other. There wasn’t a block or street I walked down that didn’t remind me of my small place in such a grand and expansive history. Long live the Queen.

**London as the hub of British culture**: Maybe I’ve read *Harry Potter* a few too many times, or all the *Love, Actually* has gotten to my head, but for some reason, England and America have a cultural connection, and that connection had me stopping and taking pictures every five minutes. Big Ben urged me to search out Peter Pan and follow him past the second star on the right and straight on til morning. Buckingham Palace, 10 Downing Street, Notting Hill, King’s Cross Station and Abbey Road – a I’d hit a veritable British cultural jackpot! London felt like one giant scavenger hunt, and who doesn’t love a scavenger hunt?

**Unfinished business:** There was no way I could possibly see and do everything I wanted while I was in London (even though I extended my original five days to eight), it was also one of the only cities where I had to do no research to know exactly what I wanted to go see. As the days crept nearer and nearer to my departure, only one thought stuck in my head, and that was ‘Don’t worry, you’ll be back.’ And for the first time in a month, I realized not only would I visit again, but London ranks high on the list of cities I’d seriously consider living. And I have to admit, I’ve never had a more obvious love at first sight.