

Courier

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The Pilgrims' pilgrimage

THE FIRST-EVER Faith Travel Association Product Development Trip was a two-part journey in England and Massachusetts. The trip offered the opportunity for tour operators to experience destinations related to the Pilgrims, who set sail on the *Mayflower* in 1620, and it offered a preview of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary in 2020 of this historical journey.

Following the footsteps of the Pilgrims

BY KAY SAFFARI

Like most Americans, I have heard the story of the Pilgrims and their *Mayflower* journey since my kindergarten days, but as I landed in England for the *Mayflower* 400 tour, I realized that I really didn't know many details about the Pilgrims.

Luckily, this trip—sponsored by Emma Tatlow of U.S. Connections and organized by Keith Somers of Select Travel Services—was about to increase my Pilgrim knowledge exponentially, leaving me in awe of the courage and determination of this small group of people, so dedicated to their religious beliefs that they were willing to leave all they knew behind for a life in an unknown land—twice!

Although we visited 13 cities on the English leg of the tour, I focus here on the cities directly related to the Pilgrim story, from their origins to their departure for the New World.

Babworth

Here we visited the unassuming country church where Richard Clyfton, named church rector in 1586, shared his radical ideas from the pulpit and

drew worshippers from neighboring villages who walked for miles to hear him. Standing on the very path where the villagers once walked with our guide Sue Allan (in period attire), we were able to imagine their determination to hear Clyfton's controversial sermons.

Because Clyfton deviated from the Church of England's teachings, he was removed as pastor in 1605. He and other like-minded church members chose to "separate" from the church, thus becoming the Separatists and sparking the Pilgrim movement.

Scrooby

The Separatists began gathering and worshipping in 1606 at Scrooby Manor, where Pilgrim Father William Brewster lived. All that remains today of this once-glorious 500-acre property is the brick home built in 1493, but Scrooby Manor is significant to Pilgrim history because it was here that they planned their escape to Holland in search of religious freedom.

Boston

In 1607 the Separatists walked 60 miles to the port of Boston, where they had arranged to sail to Holland. Instead, they were betrayed, arrested and held at the Guildhall for a month. We toured the well-preserved rooms of the Boston Guildhall, built in the 1390s, including the tiny cells where the Pilgrims were imprisoned and the courtroom where they were tried.

Southampton

After 12 years in Holland, and ready to start anew in the New World,

the Pilgrims spent two weeks in Southampton gathering provisions prior to their departure.

We visited two historical buildings here: Tudor House, a restored 900-year-old home and the city's most important building, and nearby St. Michael's Church, built in 1070 and still in use today.

Despite the prominence of these two very old sites, Southampton had a more modern feel overall. That's because 80 percent of the port city's buildings were destroyed by German bombing raids during World War II.

Plymouth

The *Mayflower* set sail from Plymouth in 1620 with 102 Pilgrims onboard, and the *Mayflower* Steps, a columned archway right by the water, memorialized this departure point. We all wanted a photo of where the voyage began.

During our tour of Plymouth, we visited many places from the Pilgrim days: St. Andrew's Church, a Puritan church that welcomed the Separatists for worship; New Street, the oldest street in Plymouth; and the historical Barbican area.

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Faith, family, fellowship . . . found in Plymouth

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAMI RISK

You're seeking religious expression, so you take your family and your belongings and board a wooden ship for a journey to an unknown world ... and it's 400 years ago.

Now try to comprehend what the native Wampanoag people, who'd lived in that world for thousands of years, must have thought when they encountered a new people—the Pilgrims—exploring the land they had farmed and hunted. It's hard to imagine—to really know what they felt.

Fortunately, there are historians and tourism professionals who are passionate about sharing the story of what took place in the harbors of Massachusetts back then. And, thanks to trip sponsor Gail Arndt with Tour Trends and tour host Rowena Drinkhouse with Reformation Tours and many others, I got to experience this inspiring place and people firsthand.



A hearty feast

As with any journey, you want to be sure you begin on a full stomach, and who could turn down a hearty feast from Hearth 'n Kettle, located in Historic Plymouth. We gathered here the first evening to enjoy a meal together and talk about our journey for the next couple of days.



A historical walking tour

The following day, Leo the Miller from the Jenney Museum, took us on a guided

stroll. Starting from the Plimoth Grist Mill, we walked along Town Brook, stopping every so often to learn about the significance of this little waterway and the interaction it created between the Pilgrims and the native Wampanoag people. We also learned of water power, land division and the beginnings of self-rule and civil government for a new nation.



Step back in time

Next up was the nation's oldest continuously operating public museum, Pilgrim Hall Museum. It offers not only the story of the Pilgrims, but also that of the Wampanoag people. I could have spent hours reading and studying the artifacts and collections of the families who embarked on this journey, as well as the effect they had on the native people and the complexity of that relationship that still exists today. Pretty powerful stuff.



Mixing in a little modern

And when you're ready for a break, it's an easy walk down to the harbor to hop aboard a Captain John Whale Watching and Fishing Tours excursion. This longtime NTA member offers a variety of options, such as whale watching, deep sea fishing and sunset tours or setting sail on the *Pilgrim Belle* paddlewheeler

for a harbor tour, which is exactly what we did.

The bonus, though, was that our hosts arranged for a Wampanoag guide, Darius, to be with us. Darius described the topographical features of the region. He spoke of how his ancestors inhabited the land for thousands of years and how in the 1620s they taught the Pilgrims what and when to plant, ultimately leading to the first Thanksgiving.



Plimoth Plantation:

A living history museum

There's something magical about this place. It could be the talented people at the NTA-member attraction, who give each visitor an authentic experience. Or it could be the strategy of the organization and its partners to make sure that travelers have the opportunity to learn the perspective of both the newcomers and the natives. It could just be that they are incredible at preserving history.

Whatever the reason, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to explore this attraction. One of my favorite parts was the Wampanoag Homesite. The native people who staff this exhibit are incredibly knowledgeable of the history and culture of the people who have inhabited the area for thousands of years. But they will also speak to you about their modern culture, and that's pretty cool.

That was just the beginning of my journey. To read my full article about the Plymouth 400 celebration, be sure to check out the upcoming *FTA Trip Planner*, available on NTAonline.com.

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