

Special Feature

American Visitors

Some friends from America visited us recently. They travel overseas infrequently and therefore took a fresh and amused interest in 'Englishness'. They taught us to take ourselves less seriously!

For example they wanted to know: "*Where are all the zebras at a zebra crossing?*"



Mine's a Double

Americans tend to have beds the size of football pitches and to them a 'double bed' is a tiny thing, not really suited to the spread-out-and-be-comfortable American taste. So they came with a certain amount of trepidation. They were astonished when they found English 'doubles' much bigger than they expected. Mind you, a 'California king sized bed' is so big that few English people could fit one in their sitting room, never mind the bedroom!

Americans ask for things by brand name, which perplexes most English people. One waiter was confused by the request for; "*Stolly & tonic*", which means Stolichnaya vodka and tonic. "*I'll have a Bells & water*" (jingle bells? church

bells?) no, they mean Bells Whisky with water.

Talking of bells, they observed a group of people in London who were dancing with handkerchiefs and bells on their legs. The sign beside them said: 'Dancers from Boston'. Our friends assumed it was a group of fellow Americans doing some daft dance-only to be told by us that what they observed was Morris dancing, from Boston in Lincolnshire (not Massachusetts).

Spotted Dick?

Then there was the whole matter of food, how we describe it and how we eat it. We had a hilarious dinner one evening when they ended up with a great deal more cutlery than they knew what to do with, because they only eat with one hand, and therefore never use two utensils when one will do. We attempted to teach the two-handed eating pattern of English people, which they found completely flummoxing.

Then we had the food quiz: "What do you think 'toad in the hole' is"? "*A frog trapped with no legs*", was their response. "What about 'bubble and squeak', "*champagne and mouse*" is what they thought it could be. The mere suggestion that 'spotted dick' was a pudding, had them collapsing with laughter.

On our last trip to the USA, we photographed a sign which announced in gigantic letters 'ANTIQUES MADE EVERY DAY'. So, Americans may find the English quaint, cute and funny but they have some daft expressions too!

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