

England

FRIENDSHIP TOUR PUTS BAHRAIN IN THE SPOTLIGHT BEFORE FAMILY TRAGEDY FORCES ALI TO TAKE A BREAK

About England

England, a country of 51 million people, comprises the southern half of the island of Great Britain. There is Scotland to the north; Wales and the Irish Sea to the west; the North Sea to the east; and the English Channel to the south.



When To Visit

April to September are the best months, and this is, unsurprisingly, when most sights are open.

Visa Requirements

Citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa do not need a visa for stays in the UK up to 6 months. Citizens of the European Union don't need a visa to enter and may live and work here freely.

Getting There

London's Heathrow and Gatwick are the main airports. You can get a coach or ferry from mainland Europe, or a train through the Channel Tunnel.



Bahrain Connection

From 1861, when a treaty was signed with Britain, until independence in 1971, Bahrain was virtually a British protectorate. The countries continue to have strong ties. Most European expatriates living in Bahrain today are English.



By James Davis

WELCOMING ALI MUSHAIMA AND THE REST of the Friendship Tour team to England has been a real pleasure for me. As a travel photographer, I have been around more than a fair bit, but until 1999, when I was first invited by Ali to shoot pictures for his annual travel publication *Visitor's Complete Guide to Bahrain*, I knew very little about the island country, let alone visit it.

Since that time, I have been to Bahrain several times, and have enjoyed excellent hospitality and made many friends there. Ali has been to England many times before, but the Friendship Tour was the perfect way to join him in spreading his message amongst my fellow Englishmen.

There was ample opportunity for that, primarily through a press conference held at the Bahrain embassy in London. Assistant Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Kha-



The clock on London's iconic Big Ben. The figures on the clock face are about 2 feet long and the copper minute hand is 14 ft. long.

lifa, Bahrain's former ambassador to the UK who was on a visit at the time, changed his diary to not just attend but also give a speech. He spoke about the Bahrain Formula-1 race and how the Friend-

PAGE OPPOSITE:
The Houses of
Parliament in
London.



Tourists outside
Westminster
Abbey in London.

Travel Tip
Table service in English pubs is extremely rare. You should head for the bar to place your order.





Outside the Bahrain Embassy in London. From left, Naeif Al Thnayan Al Saoud, Charge d'Affaires Abdulla Abdullatif, Ali Mushaima, Foreign Affairs Under Secretary and former Bahrain Ambassador to the UK Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Gulf Air's UK General Manager Rohan Alce, Maher Al Mussalem and his son.

ship Tour team was trying to put the country on the tourism map.

The news conference was also attended by Gulf Air's manager to the UK Rohan Alce who also spoke of the airline's role as the main sponsor of the Bahrain Grand Prix.

There was more opportunity to promote the country at The Grove, a very exclusive hotel set amid 300 acres of parks and gardens. While it was converted into a contemporary country estate only as late as 2003, The Grove's history goes back to the 14th century. Set in 300 acres of Hertfordshire parkland and open countryside, it was the former home of the Earls of Clarendon.

The Grove brings together the very best of 21st century living with all that makes a country estate so beguiling and attractive: the peace of the countryside, a personal welcome, a sense of sanctuary and refuge. A place set apart with its own character, feel and style. Gardens, lawns, landscaped grounds,





The magnificent exterior of The Grove with its ornamental canal and gardens.



Ali with ex-Bahrain resident Aine Mangan, also formerly with The Grove.



Ali, third from left, at the London home of top Bahrain executive Sholto Hedderwick, right. Others in the picture are Tony Cherry and his wife Rose, Trish Hedderwick with son Robert standing behind her, and Kate Mitchell.

woodland walks, spacious rooms, dedicated staff, superb food and wine.

The Grove is cosmopolitan because it offers exciting contemporary design, professional, thoughtful service, magnificent sporting and leisure facilities and an atmosphere that is informal, unstuffy and relaxed.

One of the most exciting features of The Grove is the stunning 18-hole championship golf course de-



signed by the highly acclaimed designer Kyle Phillips. Rated as one of the top 120 courses in Great Britain and Ireland by *Golf Monthly* magazine, it was selected to host the 2006 American Express World Golf Championship. The event brings the world's 64 leading golfers, including Tiger Woods, Vijay Singh, Ernie Els, Sergio Garcia and Colin Montgomerie, together for the first time in the UK.

Visiting The Grove and its wonderful facilities was





The Grove's golf course was rated as one of the top 120 courses in Great Britain and Ireland by *Golf Monthly* magazine.



a high point for everyone involved with the Friendship Tour, but soon after followed a low one when news came that Ali's father had suddenly passed away in Bahrain. The tour was put on hold while Ali rushed back to Bahrain for the funeral and to be with his family during a very difficult time.

Very bravely, Ali decided he had to keep up with his commitments and would continue with the tour after a week.

The Mitsubishi had been parked at Heathrow while Ali was in Bahrain, and was waiting for him when he got back. He visited the Tourism Ireland office in London, and the Irish officials kindly agreed to re-schedule his dates for his visit. We decided that we, along with writer Kate Mitchell, would meet again in Dublin where we would have an extended stay.

For now, though, Ali and co-adventurer Petra Beuchert, were headed for Scotland.