

B35 OUR DIVERSION TO IRONBRIDGE GORGE

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

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The beauty of having a loose schedule is the flexibility it gives for diversions. In planning the trip to Great Britain we came across a chapter in "Rick Steve's ENGLAND" that recommended a side trip to the Ironbridge Gorge in the Severn River valley.



The main attraction in this picture book English town is a bridge that signaled the beginning of the industrial revolution. Rick Steve says this area was, in its day, an equivalent of our Silicon Valley. In 1779, to reflect that forward-looking attitude, a bridge was commissioned to be erected out of a radical new building material...iron.

Previous bridges were built out of stone or wood so the engineers, not yet knowing iron's strength or durability, designed it with the specs of a wood bridge. Overkill probably wasn't a word in use then but it best describes the strength of the finished product that is still serviceable after 232 years.





The iron bridge has drawn the attention of engineers, construction workers and artists world wide. The footpaths, once used by horses dragging ore boats up the Severn, today are filled with tourists, bicyclers and ubiquitous camera bugs that take the time to drive off the beaten path.

Now might be a good time to address the reactions our California licensed MG has drawn during our time in Europe. Here you see a man peering cautiously at our Mighty Girl. Before speaking with him I could anticipate two conversation streams. One is: "I used to own one of these and (choose one) my wife made me sell it when the kids came; my boss suggested it didn't present a serious enough impression to clients; I wish I'd never sold it." The other stream and the most popular: "I always wanted one but never had the money. Now that I have the money, they don't make them any more."



We are the constant recipients of attention from vehicles and pedestrians. Passing cars toot the horn and offer a "thumbs up". Oncoming cars flash their headlights and give a wave. Kids point, jump up and down and wave frantically. Men and women will stop, stare and follow us as we pass. Tourists quick with a camera snap our picture as we drive by.

Louise always proffers a big smile and waves to young and old alike, giving the impression that she is having the greatest time in the world. Little do they know she has just applied another layer of sun-screen to her parched hands and is just drying them in the top-down slipstream.



After a quick lunch we stuck the MG in first gear for the long climb out of the gorge and aimed the nose in the direction of Stratford Upon Avon. Our first stop on entering the town limits was a visit to the home of the bard himself. We are bound and determined to get a whiff of British culture during this trip.

Dame Louise and Sir Raymond of Woodland Hills