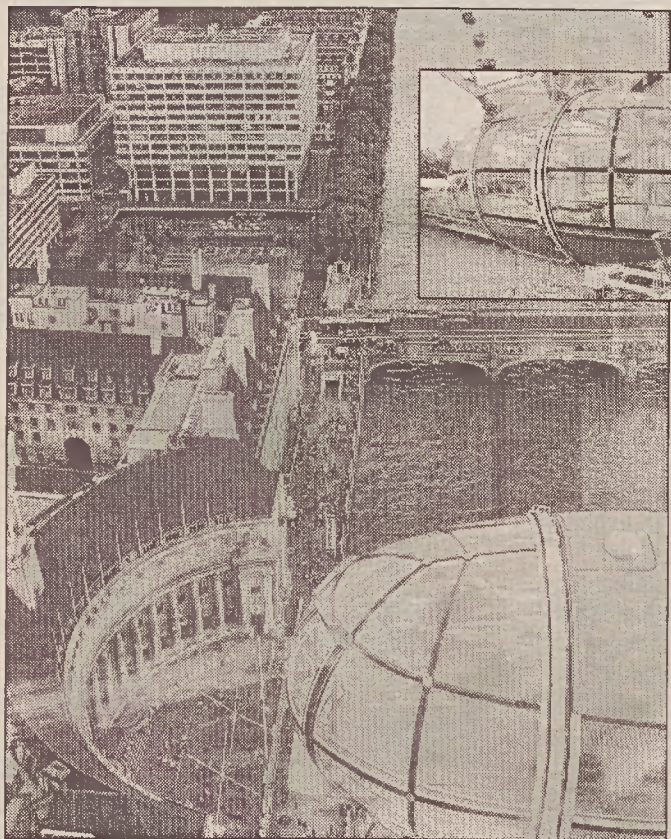


an unforgettable summer holiday



The London Eye offers a breathtaking view of the city.

world's most cosmopolitan cities, London offers plenty of great dining options. Among our favorites were Balans, a popular string of cafés that feature good food at reasonable prices; Bertorelli, a fine Italian restaurant in Soho; and Mezzo, easily the

hippest eatery I've ever patronized. (A small combo played blue-eyed soul and funk all evening at Mezzo — much to the delight of diners and more than a few dancers in the aisle).

London's gay nightlife is outstanding. Heaven, a subterranean party palace, was sizzling with shirtless men on multiple floors dancing to world-class DJs. Shadow Lounge also earned top marks. This small but ultra fashionable cocktail bar turned into a deep house disco at the stroke of midnight — and the staff was beyond gorgeous. The cruisy Admiral Duncan was the pub of choice to share a pint with your old mates and make plenty of new ones.

As for the Pride march and festival, it was definitely the high point of the trip. An estimated 70,000 revelers trekked from the Thames to Hyde Park where a sea of dance tents, vendors and porta-johns filled the landscape around a mammoth stage. A num-

ber of the U.K.'s biggest pop acts — including Blue, Liberty X and The Cheeky Girls — performed. Surprisingly, there was almost no political speech from the main stage; we were told that this is typical of such events.

One British custom made the Pride festival memorable from any we had attended before: Within hours the park was buried in trash. We knew that it was socially acceptable to throw litter on the ground — cleaning crews across the city are dispatched each night to remove it — but it was still odd to see folks drop garbage on the ground with impunity. It was even more strange to do it yourself — precipitated by the fact that there were no garbage cans.

Hence forward throwing food wrappers on the ground while dancing to cheesy europop will evoke memories of my incredible summer holiday. Anyone who has the good fortune to attend London Pride 2004, set for July 3, can anticipate a similar

host of treasurable experiences.

Caveat: Now that you're jazzed for your London getaway, here's the lone drawback: The exchange rate isn't ideal — one pound is worth about \$1.60 these days. (For the math challenged this means one would have to exchange \$800 to pocket 500 pounds) But, as we established in the beginning, we're



Approximately 70,000 partied in Hyde Park at London Pride 2003.

splurging on this vacation, so a bit of excess is acceptable.

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