

The York Minster.

I couldn't visit York Minster without telling you about it. What is a minster? It's the name of a major cathedral that used to be associated with a monastery, and considered the most important building representing the church in a large area. So, okay, it's a cathedral. But, you know what, it's a treat to visit. The city of York is what I call 'the complete package', which means that it has everything that you could want. If you check out york.com, you will see what I mean. It is about as historical as anywhere could ever be, it's a thriving center of education, it has all the facilities and entertainment of a city, but is clean and rural at the same time. York was a strategic political center for hundreds of years. It was founded by the Romans; they called it Eboracum. They used this point as a stepping stone on the way to Scotland. Well, as you know, they didn't manage much in Scotland, but York became fortified and busy. Then, after the Roman Empire fell, Vikings took over. York didn't avoid the Norman invasion either, but became a center of prosperity and trade from then on. When you are there, you can sense the history. It is all around you. The well preserved wall around the center of the city is a great reminder of the Roman presence. In fact there are even remains of Roman shrines to Jupiter and Mars. The cathedral started as far back as the Romans, but obviously not as a cathedral. The Roman buildings which were recently uncovered under the cathedral were stations for some of the 5000 legionaries. With each invasion and different people groups taking over, it was added to. It has survived fires, destruction through invasion, and the civil war. Oh, and you should see it now. It is a Gothic beauty. I walked around it with my sister, and we silently soaked it all in. I know that you don't need to know all of the vocabulary about cathedrals, but a few words are common in conversation. The nave is the large, often central part of the church. There are towers on some, spires on others, with spires looking like cones with a point. In the York Minster there is a crypt, underground, where tombs are kept. You can't go to York without admiring the Rose Window either, which is a spectacular circular stained glass window in the cathedral. I have seen a lot of cathedrals during my travels, but I would say that this should be in the top three of 'must sees' when traveling in Europe.

Grammar notes.

Expressions: a must-see, to soak it in, as far back as.

1. The 'must-see' in that town is the central park; you shouldn't miss it.
2. We stayed at the gallery, and silently soaked in the art.
3. My grandmother can remember as far back as the Second World War.