

From Brighton with Love

It is Paris, not Brighton, that is dubbed the city of romance. Brighton is an English seaside town where many pensioners live. Brighton is also visited by day-trippers from London. Every summer, young people from all over the world flock to Brighton to study English. Many nationalities come together in classrooms, cultural and sporting events, and nights out on the town, so it is no surprise that some students fall in love with each other.

Emmi's story

My friend Nina wanted to brush up her English before going to upper secondary school. She read about English courses in Brighton and asked me to go with her. Mum agreed to pay for the trip, so I said yes.

The tourist websites say Brighton is “a beautiful seaside town with big city attractions and a great beach life”. And it was beautiful – especially the seafront and the little alleyways with shops. The shopkeepers called us “love” and “sweetie”. That made us feel very welcome. English people were very friendly – if we took out the map, someone would come and help us. We didn’t have a “great beach life” because it rained a lot.

I met Philippe, a good-looking French boy, on my second week in Brighton. According to the programme we were supposed to play beach volleyball in the evening, but there was a sudden downpour. So we went to the bowling alley. A group of boys was bowling next to us. One boy was wearing a University of Madrid T-shirt. He had dark eyes and a gorgeous smile. Nina wanted to talk to him but she didn’t know what to say.

Then, one boy in the group sent his bowling ball down our lane by mistake. He said sorry, but we didn’t mind. Now we were talking. They were studying English like us so we had a lot to talk about. Francesco, the terrible bowler, was from Italy; Carlos, Nina’s heartthrob, was from Spain; and Philippe was from France.

They were fun to be with. We caught a couple of movies together, we ate fish and chips on the pier – delicious! – and we even played football in the park. Philippe was the world’s worst goalkeeper because he didn’t want to get his clothes dirty.

Nina and Carlos became an item, and Philippe was always flirting with me. He was cute but also a bit full of himself. He said everything in France was better than it was in Brighton – the food, the fashions, the beaches, the weather, the language, even the ice-creams we bought on the seafront. It was annoying. And he didn’t ask me anything about Finland.

On the other hand, he was very romantic and it was nice hearing all those compliments. There was a disco for language-school students on the last night and Philippe was my date. He danced well. We kissed and said that we’d keep in touch, but I knew it was only a holiday fling.

Back in Finland I got a couple of texts from Philippe. He invited me to visit him in France. I didn’t answer. It was nice meeting him in Brighton, but I wasn’t interested in visiting him in Rennes.