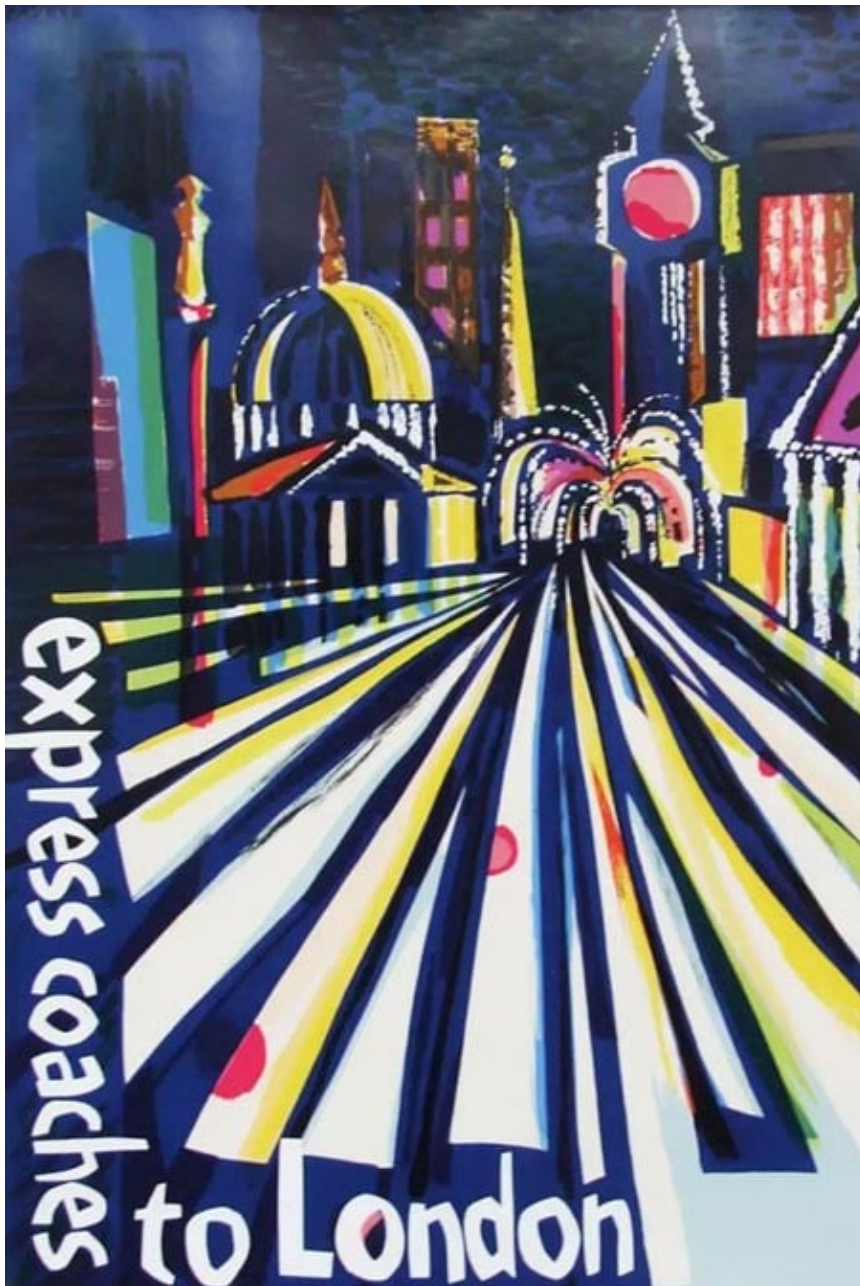


The Number 13: Ondine and Lucien's Great Adventure

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#)



Promotional Travel Poster, Fred Pauker, 1961

Now this is a tale of two very good friends;
They lived on a road made entirely of bends.

And he was called Lucien and she was Ondine,
And one day they thought they would visit the Queen.

But coming to London the Queen wasn't there;
Then somebody said she was doing her hair.
And when she'd done that it was always her nails,
And that's why she'd travelled to Cardiff in Wales.

So Lucien suggested they hire a bus
As going by spaceship was always a fuss.
Ondine was delighted with Lucien's idea,
And travelling by spaceship was also so dear.

Besides it was draughty at high altitude,
And that's why the hostesses spilt all the food.
And sometimes the draught blew the spaceship away,
But nobody cared and you *still* had to pay!

And just this had happened to someone she knew,
And Lucien and she would be paying for two.
And so they agreed they would hire a bus
To save themselves dosh and avoid all the fuss.

The following morning they set off together,
But then came a terrible change in the weather.
It started to rain and it started to pour;
It rained till the water came up through the floor!

"Oh dear," said Ondine (who was starting to fuss)
"We need a big boat not this silly old bus."
"Don't worry," said Lucien, "we don't need a boat:"
"This number 13 is the kind that can float!"

And so they continued their journey to Wales,
The bus's big chassis becoming their sails.
But when they reached Cardiff the Queen wasn't there;
Then somebody said she had finished her hair.

She'd gone back to London in time for her tea,

So now our two heroes returned there by sea.
They buffeted tempests; they nearly capsized;
(Ondine thought the choice of route most unadvised!)

But finally docking at Buckingham Pal,
Now sited inside its own private canal,
They entered the Palace where everyone bowed,
While millions of onlookers cheered in the crowd.

The Queen then invited them both into tea;
She normally charged but for them it was free.
They sat and they peered at the odd-looking cake;
She said it was cheap: "It's the family make."

"But do," said Her Majesty, "eat what you like;"
"I'm off now to try my new exercise bike."
"The cake's from last year so not really that old,"
"I do recommend though avoiding the mould."

Her Majesty rose and adjusting her Crown
Gave each of the footmen an ominous frown.
She winked in the mirror, admiring her hair,
And then gave her nails an appreciative stare.

She turned to the children and bade them farewell,
Her nose in the air from the mildewy smell.
Her guests did their best now to curtsy and bow,
The footmen majestically showing them how.

Then lifting her Orb and her jewel-covered Sceptre,
She swung them around like a modern-day Hector.
She lunged out at scores of invisible foes:
A warrior queen from her head to her toes!

She sauntered away in her ermine-trimmed cape,
The children left speechless, their mouths all agape.
And that was the last that the friends saw the Queen
And where we depart this magnificent scene.

And so our two heroes partook of their tea,
And their great adventure went just as you see.
A story they had to tell children when old,
But only because they avoided the mould!