
Scotland and Ireland

1999

Scotland, The Highlands

We left home on Thursday, October 14, 1999 from Orlando Airport and after an uneventful trip we arrived in Glasgow Scotland ready for our first day. We picked up our car in the airport. As we were discussing which style to choose, I said to the clerk, "The bigger, the better, as we have the four people and their suitcases. He offered a van for the same price as the car we had paid for. I also asked him if we had walked in off the plane to rent a car, could he have given us a better deal. He said that our rate was half of the best rate he could give us because it lacked insurance, which is 45% of the rate. We could get this in America because it is commonly offered on our charge cards whereas this is unavailable in Europe. We were pleased that we had made a good deal.

The standard transmission cars gave us more options so I became the driver as Doug had not driven a standard car in a long time.

We were bound from Glasgow to Aberfeldy, where our timeshare exchange was. The clerk gave us instruction saying that the hardest part was getting out of the airport. As we headed for our new home, one of our first stops was Sterling where we sought a bank to get some money and a restaurant for some lunch. We tried the ATM machines at the Bank of Scotland and found that they would not respond to our Visa ATM cards. At another bank, we got the same result. Finally we went to a Thomas Cook Bureau de Change and paid an outrageous rate but got some money. We received £110 for \$200 a rate of \$1.81 for which the bank rate was about \$1.65. We saw Sterling Castle as we were entering the city and decided to investigate.

As we walked up toward the castle, we stopped at a quaint restaurant and had some lunch. We asked the young waiter, Michael, what was the most traditional, Scotch item on the menu. He replied haggis, a dish made of mutton and mashed potatoes. We tried some and also ordered the beef and beer stew. Everything was wonderful. Doug had his first (of many) lagers.

We continued up to the castle. Before entering it, there is an information and gift store where they showed a free introduction movie and we picked up our first postcard and a souvenir history book of Scotland for Jim. The movie was but 11 minutes long but in the dark and having only a few hours of sleep on the plane the night before, I almost fell asleep. At the castle our guide presented much of the history of Scotland as he explained about the importance of the Stirling Castle in controlling transportation between the south and north parts of Scotland. He was well versed and spoke with a loud voice so we had little trouble understanding him.

At the castle there was an elaborate display in the kitchen where statues depicted the activities

routinely experienced. I also found the jail of interest because they described the various punishments inflicted upon the disobedient soldiers. The guide explained the use of the various buildings and the nature of the people who had lived there.

That evening we checked into our room and had a quick dinner in the Bistro café near the swimming pool. Afterward, we showered and slept. I went to bed around 8 p.m. and didn't wake up until 9 a.m. the next morning.

Saturday, October 16, 1999

Doug and I went out shopping. We bought coffee and breakfast including bacon, eggs, bananas, rolls and cheese. We also stopped for some sweets and coffee on the way back to the car. At the house we cooked up the breakfast and planned our day. We decided to see Dunkeld, the home of Dougie MacLean, a well-known Scottish folk singer.



Upon arrival in Dunkeld we toured the Church of Scotland, Dunkeld Cathedral. We seemed colder inside the building than outside, probably because it seemed damp within the stone walls. I noticed the flower arrangements were particularly pleasant being large arrangements of colorful and fragrant flowers. There was a beautifully carved pipe organ at the back and statues of important people within the church.

We asked for instructions to Dougie's place and followed them alongside the River Tay to the Taybank Hotel where Dougie had established his house of folk music. We were disappointed that he was in Canada this week and we would not be able to experience him and his music first hand. We asked directions to Ian and Becca's house and the bartender was pleased to provide them even though he did not know their last name. Alas the directions were not very good and we walked quite a ways before we asked the right person who knew where they were. Nevertheless, we had a lovely walking tour of the area and visited Beatrix Potter's Garden established to commemorate the Scottish lady who wrote the children's story, Peter Rabbit.

Finally we found Becca's home but alas, they were not there. We wrote a note and left to drown our sorrows in some scones and tea. Disappointed again, the shopkeeper told us that she had made 65 scones but had sold them all. We settled on shortbread, Scotch pie and Vanilla square, all wonderfully tasty desserts and snacks. I enjoyed the Scotch pie the most as it was a very flavorful mutton meat pie.



After our meal we returned to the car and Judy tried on a skirt she had admired in a little shop. It was too big. We drove off, planning to return home but thought we would stop by Becca's again to see if she and Ian had returned. They had gotten my message but were surprised to see us. They welcomed us into their house and gave us the complete tour. It was a thrill to see a genuine Scotch house and we marveled at Becca's Beany Baby collection. Their home is cute and very nicely made. I was impressed by the little water heaters attached to the wall near each shower. This would have been just perfect for us at our old house

where the water tank was so far from the master bedroom. (Please note the pink flamingos in the front yard that we gave them on their trip to Florida.)



We returned from Dunkeld and passed by our home in search of dinner and entertainment. Though Doug had one place in mind from our first trip to town, Sally wanted to see the town and get her own ideas. We drove slowly through the town taking note of the various eateries. As we passed the service station we noted some men in kilts entering a bar and restaurant. Doug and Sally went to check it out while Judy and I waited in the car. When they told us that we should stop

in for a drink, I parked the car and we went inside.



The group we saw were members of a Gaelic choir who had just won first prize in the Aberfeldy sing off. They were so pleased and had the trophy cup filled with Scotch whiskey. Everyone was enjoying a sip from the communal cup. They were so kind that they invited us to take a drink. That was my first (of many) Scotches. We were told that they would be presenting a sample performance so we stayed to hear them and for dinner. I had a steak pie and Judy had Scottish pink trout with almonds. The pastry

that covered my steak pie made the concoction a splendid example of Scottish cooking. We enjoyed the music and the people, particularly their willingness to share themselves and their traditions with us.

Sunday, October 17, 1999

We rose for coffee before leaving for the Stakis Dunkeld House, a Hilton Hotel affiliate where we had "Scottish Breakfast." There were buffets of fresh fruit, cold cereals and hot foods. There was a menu that described each of the local foods and we tried them all. After Doug heard that the "Black Pudding" was made of sheep brains and blood, he did not want to try it! I ignored the explanation and tried it anyway. It was good, tasting like our bread stuffing. We also had "White Pudding" which was brown and was made of sausage. The fried egg was made by cracking a farm-fresh, brown egg in a pot of boiling oil. The poached eggs were made the same way using a pot of boiling water. Doug said the mushrooms were the best he had ever eaten and the porridge was for dessert. I had everything that they served, which was not a surprise to my friends. I can tell you with great honesty that I have enjoyed every minute that I have been eating.

Following breakfast we went to the Church of Scotland, Dunkeld Cathedral, where we toured the premises yesterday. The service was already underway as we entered during the second song. The visiting rector preached a sermon on Failure to Man may be Success to God. He told of the conversion experience of John McQuiver who latter became the president of Princeton University. He also illustrated the success of Mr. Tae whose early research in the radio led to Marconi's completing the discovery. As we were leaving the sanctuary, we asked that a copy be sent to us in the United States. The rector assured us that he would send it. Following the service we met Shirley and Harold, he a retired headmaster and she, his sister, and had a lovely discussion

about the area, the weather and Dunkeld. He was superbly dressed and directed us to visit his tailor in Pitlochery. It seems that every time we ask about clothing or fabrics, we are referred to Pitlochery so we will go tomorrow.



After a brief discussion and review of our touring materials in the car, we decided to go to Glamis Castle (pronounced "glahms"), the home of the Queen Mother, Elizabeth I, the mother of the present queen, Elizabeth II. It was just what Sally wanted. After seeing the historic castle in Stirling, she wanted to see an operating castle with decorated rooms and such. The Glasmis Castle had everything she wanted. We were ushered through the castle by a charming older

lady who was pleased to explain all of the ins and outs of the royalty. She found it somewhat tedious, however, explaining the royal dynasty to Americans who didn't live here. She explained that a Flemish artist painted a picture of Jesus with a large hat on. The gardeners in Holland all wore large hats and he wanted to portray him as a gardener. She did not know why the artist chose to portray him as a gardener. As I examined the painting more closely, I noticed the nail marks in Jesus' hands. I explained to her that Mary, the lady in the picture, thought that Jesus was the gardener and asked about Jesus' body. She seemed interested to know the "rest of the story." As we were leaving I suggested that she read the last part of Matthew where she can find the full story. Our guide also explained a picture of King Nebuchadnezzar showing him with feathers but did not know the rest of the story. Doug filled her in on that one.

Actually, we found the tour of the castle to be quite enjoyable and continued to the restaurant where we stopped for tea and scones, fruit scones to be precise. We had them with butter and freshly-made jam. We also had a raspberry and other berry compote which Judy particularly enjoyed. Oh the food is so wonderful here! Sally remarked that she would be considerably heavier if I were her husband as I so enjoy stopping to feed.

As we left, we toured the grounds and visited the Italian Garden and the Nature Trail. We were amazed at the splendour of the grounds and appreciated the vast work that goes into its maintenance.

That evening we had dinner at the hotel. The selections were all good. Judy & Sally shared the monk fish, I had a taste. Doug and I got rack of lamb and venison, both of which we split. This was my first taste of venison and it was delicious. Doug said that it was very well prepared. I have thoroughly enjoyed every Scottish delicacy I have tasted.

October 18, 1999

I ran, what I think was 1 ½ miles around the compound today. It was my first cold weather running and cross-country style as the whole complex is on the side of a hill. I was pleased that I made it without much ado. Tomorrow, I will wear gloves. My hands and forearms were the only part of me that was cold.

Today we visited Pitlochary. Everyone we had talked to about clothing, kilts and tartan fabrics had mentioned Pitlochary as the place to purchase so we went there today. On the way we stopped at the Bell's distillery for a tour. Bell's Scotch whiskey is made here. Actually when one refers to Scotch, one generally means a blend of various whiskeys. The distillery that we visited was Blair Atholl. Each distillery makes a unique flavour determined by the water and air that it uses and by the means by which the barley is malted. We viewed the whole process with a very well informed and dedicated guide. After the tour we stopped for sampling. This Scotch was much stronger than the previous Scotch I sampled at the bar with the winning choir. This was more as I imagined, a strong, terpinhydrate (cough syrup) flavor with a spirit that cleared the nose. Though Doug suggests that the preceding example was of better stock, I suggest that it was well watered and therefore reduced in strength.

As we were waiting for the tour to begin, we talked about the area with the clerk who had nothing but us to attend to. She thought we would enjoy a visit to the hydro-electric power plant so we made it our next stop. It seems that the northern half of Scotland is serviced by hydro-electric power. Doug was most interested in the fish ladder, designed so that the salmon could make it upstream to spawn. I liked the turbines and the machinery designed to maintain a constant flow at the optimum angle and velocity. The film that we saw said that this plant was remotely controlled from its sister plant in Clunie. Indeed, there were very few employees visible.

We stopped at a very friendly restaurant where the proprietor served us himself. We had homemade soup and I had steak pie. The desserts served were splendid. I enjoy having Doug along because he also likes to split so that we enjoy twice as many delicacies. He is also very helpful in navigating and planning the day. This relieves me of much of the responsibility so I only have to manage the van without hitting anything. The van is almost as wide as the traffic lanes, much wider than most vehicles on the roads and as all roads are narrow and winding, (except the motorways) one's continuous attention is required.

Finally, we hit the shops. The most expensive shop was examined first, to get ideas and a standard for further purchases. Then we visited a number of more well populated shops where the "tills" were always ringing and the populous did its shopping. Judy bought a jumper for Abbie and a beautiful tartan skirt for herself. She had toyed with the idea of buying a striking, red cape for our cold winter days but put it back. After a while we decided that she really needed it and it was a reasonable value so we went back to collect it. Alas, the shops had closed and we will have to find another, perhaps in Edinburgh. Meanwhile we had a snack in Bruar and drove around the Blair castle. Sally's maiden name is Blair so we surely wanted to get a glimpse of her homestead.

That evening we decided to eat in town. We had cheese and wine at our home before embarking. At the hotel bar we decided on, we met a couple from South Africa, Tom and Agnes. They were following the path of their rugby team in the world championships. They had won in Aberfeldy and were planning to go to Paris for the next playoff. Doug struck up a conversation as we were ordering our dinners and I invited them to join us at our table. We compared countries and talked about our wild animal experiences. They told us that there was a direct flight from Johannesburg to Miami and that the cost was not too great. We discussed the possibilities of such travel and

exchanged business cards. I was surprised how much Tom knew about American politics. As his business was international trade, he kept up on the activities in many countries. Agnes deplored our president's sexual practices when Doug asked them their opinion of President Clinton. Both of us were particularly disturbed about his lying about it. Post-Apartheid politics in South Africa are working out better than expected. Though crime is the highest in the world in their city; the new government has reduced inflation from 15% to 7% in just a few years. Though the poorest are generally hit most by the cutback in services, the economy improves and more are then able to be employed. The transition is the most difficult part. As they talked, I thought that we had been working on our own racial problems for 150 years and are only beginning to see a balance.

October 19, 1999

Today I rose early and ran 2 miles, four times around. I was surprised that all of the street lights were not on and there were some places so dark I ran right off the road. By the second time around, I had my bearings without having to actually see the road. After the third loop I took off my sweat shirt. Four times was not too bad, when we return from Edinburgh I think I'll try five.

Its about a two hour drive and after we start off, I begin to feel tired. Since there is still a long way to go, I let Judy drive when we get to the motorway. I had no trouble falling asleep in the back while she took over with Doug. We stayed at the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh, a beautiful, luxury hotel, the likes of which Judy would like to become accustomed. After checking in, the ladies left to go shopping while Doug and I visited the international headquarters of BlackRock's international division. Here, a dozen young men and ladies chart the course of worldwide investments for both PNC trust customers and other mutual fund customers throughout the United States. After our briefing and questions answered, we joined Peter Tait, the head of investment management and a young lady who also was and investment analyst. They took us to a delightful lunch at Martin's, a small, out-of-the-way restaurant that catered to the particular needs of businessmen. I particularly liked how the proprietor asked us our time schedule as he was seating us. We had to meet the ladies at 2 p.m. so he scheduled the luncheon to conclude at that time.



That afternoon, we met Fred-Foy, his wife, Cecily and their two boys, Jesse and Jacob. Jesse is in eighth grade and Jacob is in third. We progressed immediately to the Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh's landmark tourist attraction. Perched on the hill, overlooking the Firth of Forth, an estuary, the castle commanded the waterway and served as protection for the Scottish Royalty in times of war. With its natural cliffs, thick walls and multiple layers of protection, the only way for the enemy to enter is by stealth (which happened twice). We heard about each of the areas of the castle and particularly about the Crown Jewels of Scotland which are exhibited here. After the regular lecture, our guide took me aside to answer my questions about the royal lineage.

Afterward, we warmed up with coffee and scones in the hotel lobby and had our first real

opportunity to become acquainted. Fred-Foy is studying at Edinburgh University while his wife home-schools their two children. I asked how physics was taught, somewhat in jest, and found that they had arranged fencing lessons for the boys. Jacob was anxious to demonstrate the en-guard position in an imaginary duel with Doug. Both boys were exceptionally well-behaved. I had some trouble making my computer modem work as (foolishly) I had thought that all telephone sockets were the same and in the UK the standard is different. I had purchase a converter at the Tandy (Radio Shack) store and they were concerned that it would not work properly without a cross-over wire. After searching my luggage, I found that I did not have the access number for AOL and that I could not directly dial a toll-free number from my room, so alas, my computer was still not able to be connected.

We had a fantastic dinner at a restaurant where we were the guests of PNC Bank and the entire staff was available to wait on us. There were few other guests in the house. The food was exquisite.

Following dinner, we visited Fred-Foy and his family at their flat. They graciously supplied the AOL access number and allowed me to plug into his telephone line, even though all telephone use is metered in the UK. It took only a few minutes to download the bridge results so that Judy could prepare them for the next newspaper edition. We will fax them internationally so that the publicity does not miss a beat. While there, Jacob, the younger son, was interested in games on my computer. As my laptop is my work computer its only game was Bridge. I showed him how to play two hands and he was thrilled to learn the game. I told him only once how to count his points and on the second hand he counted them without hesitation. I referred them to ACBL.org for a download of Easy Bridge, the ACBL's step by step, interactive bridge educational program. I hope that they try it and let me know how they are progressing. We had a wonderful time together and will continue to be friends, even though they are "across the pond."

October 20, 1999

Our last day in Edinburgh began at the weaving exhibit we saw yesterday on the way to the castle. Right outside the walls, they have an operating modern tartan weaving mill and exhibits including one in which you have the opportunity to operate a hand weaver yourself. We were fascinated by the whole procedure and I was curious to know how something like hair became yarn and then cloth.

We walked down to the queen's holiday palace about a mile down the road but did not have time for much more than a peek inside.

The highlight of our day and indeed the City of Edinburgh was "The Phantom of the Opera." We saw the show performed, professionally at the theatre during its Wednesday matinee. The music and theatrics were superb, all of us enjoyed it immensely.

On the way home we stopped for dinner at a tavern on the way and I had my second serving of venison. Having waited 48 years for my first I thought I'd better "strike while the iron was hot." It too was very good and the vegetables were also nicely cooked, not too well done. We were told

that they were grown locally.

October 21, 1999

The last day touring with our friends in central Scotland was spent on our way to Inverness where there was an exhibition of working sheep dogs. A middle aged man who was a shepherd held a one hour demonstration of the various whistles that he used to call his dogs. Each dog had a unique set of whistle commands which told him to go left or right, to stop, to walk and to walk faster. We were amazed that the man could remember the command for each dog as there were eight of them ranging from 5 ½ months to ten years of age. He showed us the various trials that they went through in the competitions. He had each of the dogs go to a different point in the yard and lie down. They were in a line with about 10 feet between them. He had one of his dogs drive the sheep through a slalom course established by the lying dogs. Later he had a dog herd a flock of three geese through a course of pails. Finally he showed us how to shear the sheep and Doug, Judy and I tried our hands. (He told me that I did it well.) As sheep shearers earn about 80 pence per sheep, I think I'll keep my day job.

Afterward we went to lunch at a restaurant with a beautiful view of the mountains and the lake which was set aside for canoeing and skiing. There were people in canoes even though the temperature was barely above 40 and the wind velocity made it feel quite cold. I was wearing my undershirt, long-sleeved knit shirt, heavy sweater, jacket, scarf and overcoat and I was not too warm.

On our way home we stopped in Pitlochery to pick up the cloak that Judy selected the other day before the shops had closed.

In the evening we went to a duplicate bridge game that met in our hotel. There were 7 ½ tables playing of which half of the participants were men and the other half women, all were older than us. No convention cards are used and no alerts are made. We were the only visitors. Everyone was very well dressed, most men wore ties and jackets. Everyone was very congenial and wished us well as we continued our holiday. We did well in the beginning but each of us made a few mistakes as the game progressed. We enjoyed coffee, tea and cookies at half time. We had a great time.

October 22, 1999

We set off at 7:15 this morning so that we would arrive at the Glasgow airport in time to send Doug and Sally off. I suggested that we check on the time that reception opened and found that they didn't start until 7:30. We explained that we had to leave now to catch the plane and that we would leave the key in our door, charge the bill to my credit card. It seemed okay though there was no alternative.

Travel to Glasgow was uneventful except for a stand-still traffic delay that resulted in us arriving on time instead of early. We said a good-bye to our friends and continued on to Holyhead to catch the ferry to Dublin, Ireland. We stopped on the way for breakfast, to finally fill the gas tank and to

get some dinner. We became concerned when we found that we had about 40 minutes to make the 40 minute journey leaving no time to get lost, traffic delays and to drop off the car. Alas, en route we were delayed in traffic and arrived about five minutes late. Judy was to drop off the car if I found that we could still board the ship. Our prayers were answered, the ship had arrived late and would depart about 45 minutes late, we had plenty of time. To our surprise, there was no Avis drop-off place in Holyhead as we had expected. Nevertheless, a ship steward took the keys and rental folder and said that he would see that Avis received it in the morning.

All in all, this was a bit of a wasted day. I would have preferred to cross from Scotland to Belfast but we expect that picking up the car in Northern Ireland and dropping in the Republic of Ireland, a different country, would cause international difficulties, hence our long distance car travel.

Ireland

October 23, 1999

This morning we slept in late. Our hotel was in a very noisy area where the festivities did not end until 4 in the morning. Judy said that she was happy that we would only be there one night. We checked out and left our luggage in the storage room while we visited Dublin, the city center. Our first stop was the tourist information center where we waited about three hours to book a bed and breakfast for this evening and we also arranged the rest of the trip. The time was not wasted as all of the information one could seek was available there. It was my general plan to stay two more nights in Dublin, two nights in the southeast and two nights in the southwest before our flight left from the Shannon airport in the west. This plan would give us a good overview of the area without having to change homes every day. As I was reading one of the tour books, it suggested that the best horseback vacation was in the Southeast so we booked a bed and breakfast there for two nights. If it rains on the first day, we can try the horses the next day. On the other day we will visit the Waterford Crystal factory. Rob had enjoyed his last horse trip so much I hope that he will also enjoy this opportunity. One of our friends recommended the Cliffs of Mohre so highly that I arranged for our Southwest homestead to be located right there. All bookings were done right at the tourist information center so the process was quite efficient.

We ate brunch at an Italian restaurant. I had not had a particle of pasta for the past two weeks and was beginning to suffer symptoms of withdrawal. Fettuccini carbonara looked good for me and for £1 they add some chicken to boot! Judy had penne pasta with the seafood sauce. I had some and it too was very good. Prices are nominally about the same here as in the UK but the Irish £ is \$1.40 vs. about \$1.70 for the UK £ hence we find things about 18% less expensive here.



After lunch we walked down the shopping street, Grattan Street, lined with many shops and filled with humanity. We walked inside St. Stevens Green Park, established in 1377 by act of congress. We saw many ducks and birds and people feeding them. As we continued walking, we viewed the Leinster House where the Irish Parliament meets and then we toured the National Museum. The National Museum has much more of its displays portraying the early times, prehistoric and through the Norman period than it has in its recent history. I guess I see things differently, though North America was around in prehistoric times, we tend to begin our history in 1700 when our country began population by Europeans. It makes sense to

start Irish history when the country was populated by Europeans also but that is much earlier. I am most interested in the quest for independence, a process that began just 150 years ago. The museum communicates the process via enlarged pictures with explanations supplemented by cases of mannequins dressed in the outfit of the period. I found it unduly biased in the supplementation to the Irish cause. For example, I would have appreciated a mannequin dressed in the Black and Tan outfit.

From there we went to pick up the car, collect our bags and locate our new home, north of the city, near the airport. We selected a quaint bed and breakfast with a triple room so that Rob will join us in our room this one night. The city is well booked this weekend because the Rugby World Cup Quarter-finals are taking place this weekend here. I asked our hostess about further travel adventures and a nice place for an Irish dinner while Judy took a brief nap. Judy was pleased with the Bed & Breakfast that we selected. The room was large, well furnished and immaculately clean. Our hostess was accommodating and friendly. B & B's are an inexpensive and convenient way to travel. For £ 18 per person per night, one gets a spacious, clean room and a good Irish breakfast whereas one pays £ 75 for a hotel room without breakfast.

After a dinner of lamb chops and tiramisu we sped off to the Abbey Theatre in downtown Dublin to see "Dolly West's Kitchen." This was the perfect play for us as it portrayed a home in Donegal during World War II. Donegal is in the Republic of Ireland, near the border of Northern Ireland. Tension has always been great between the Irish and the British and one of the players is a British soldier on leave. The show is a caricature of Irish life at that time showing a few days in the lives of a dysfunctional family. (Who doesn't have one.) We enjoyed talking to some Irish people next to Judy about Irish life and about their pending trip to New York City.

October 24, 1999



We went to the airport to pick up Rob. His flight landed a few minutes early and his trip was uneventful. We went to Malahide, near the airport to visit the castle. We got there at about 10 but it did not open until 11. We saw

the youngsters assembling for their football (soccer) game and a few young men were running on the track near the garden. All would have been well except that it started to rain and there was no place for us to take shelter except under a maple tree which was only partially effective. Fortunately, the rain stopped shortly and it was a nice day thereafter. We needed the brief shower to remind us of how blessed we were to have nice weather. The castle was pretty good. It had furnishings that were 500 years old and portraits of the family that had owned it for 800 years. There was a production quality, sound-system recorded lecture that was played in each room as you entered. I thought it was better than a talking lady because everyone could hear and the musical accompaniment set the period.

I had hoped to visit the Fry Model Railroad museum after the castle but it did not open until 2 p.m. so we passed that in favour of Glendalough, a place of natural beauty. Two lakes and an ancient monastery are located in the mountains south of Dublin. The lakes are fed by springs and waterfalls. Though Judy had previously told me that she did not like hiking, I think she made an exception here because it made time for her to chat with Rob. He took many pictures of the surroundings. As we returned to the city we passed directly over the intervening mountains. After we passed over the stark mountains, we stopped for a nice steak dinner and a visit to the ATM for some cash as our B & B did not take credit cards. On the way home, Rob fell asleep in the car. He had said that he was so tired, he could sleep on top of a bus.

October 25, 1999

We went on to South-central Ireland and Rob started driving. This was his first experience driving on the left. I thought it wise to start on the motorway where there were few decisions to make. Though he drives too close to the edge of the street and too close to the car in front, our travel was uneventful and I had a chance to look at the scenery myself. On the way to Bansha we stopped for lunch at a nice pub in the town of Horse and Jockey. We had prime rib that was good and really hit the spot. Rob likes to eat regularly like me. Judy doesn't care about eating as long as she doesn't get the shakes.

I selected this B & B because the guide said that it was the best equestrian vacation in all of Ireland. My disappointment must have shown when our host told us that they don't do horses this late in the year. Nevertheless, she was quick to arrange a horse trip for us at the Caher Equestrian Facility. Our guides were two young ladies who showed us how to get on, to hold the reins and to walk the horses. After we had accomplished that, they showed us how to post and trot. Our trip

was mostly on a horse trail in a park nearby. The ride was nice and scenery was beautiful. There was a lake with two swans on it and the trail went by pastures with cattle. After a dinner of trout and duck, we retired for the night.

October 26, 1999



We had a splendid Irish breakfast this morning with sausages, bacon, cooked tomato, fried egg, porridge and coffee. Everything they said about breakfast being so special truly was. Our host helped us with directions to Waterford and gave us the scenic route through the "Vee." The Vee is an area between two mountains where you see all of the farm lands laid out before you and you can see three counties of cattle and sheep interrupted by houses. Continuing over the mountain one takes in breathtaking vistas over the Irish Sea at the south border of the country. We travel east toward Waterford, the home of the famous crystal factory where we went on a tour and saw the glass being made. The term "cut glass" has a new meaning for me. The painstaking process of glass cutting was explained and demonstrated for us. Of course, at the end is the gift shop. Everything was quite expensive there. Judy had a business card for a place in Dingle where the stuff was supposed to be less expensive. We head for that area tomorrow.

Dinner was so good last night we decided to go back to the same place. It is well known for its steaks so I had one. Most important was the chocolate gateau. It was just wonderful.

27 October 1999

We set out early for the west. Before we left, I asked our host what the context of the song, "It's a long, long way to Tipperary" was. She didn't know even though she lived in Tipperary County, however another guest knew that it was a British army song referring to their location in France in World War I.

Today was a very interesting journey for me. Our first stop was in Cobh (pronounced Cobe). This is the final port of call for the Titanic, the place from which most Irish immigrants emigrated to the US and Canada, and from which many were "transported" to Australia for their crimes (most of which were political) in the early days. There was a fascinating museum that portrayed the squalid conditions that the emigrants endured, on their way to American or to their graves. Many died during the journey from disease.

We progressed from the squalor of the mid 1800's to the lavish Transatlantic cruises of the early 20th century when the Titanic made its maiden voyage. Built in Belfast, Ireland, it was billed as unsinkable. A handbill said, "God, himself could not sink the Titanic." The museum showed the opulent facilities for the first class passengers and third class or steerage conditions were far better than 1850.



Later, during World War I, a German submarine launched a torpedo to sink the cruise ship, the Lusitania, off the coast of Cobh where many perished because its sinking was so quick. When the ship turned on its side, it was not possible to launch the life boats. Due to the quick work of the telegraph department, a flotilla of tenders came to rescue the many passengers that were in the cold waters. I asked, "why did the submarine sink a passenger vessel? Didn't the captain know not to waste his torpedos on a civilian ship?" The answer given was that it was the war, the ship was at fault for attempting to sail at that time. It still seems quite senseless to me.



Just north of Cobh is the city of Cork and to the northwest, is Blarney Castle. We visited the castle where one walks up many stairs to the top to lie down on the upper floor, tilt one's head back and kiss the Blarney Stone. We all did it and took pictures to show our accomplishment. The tour books state that this is the biggest tourist trap in all of Ireland, yet thousands come to kiss the stone. There is nothing special about

Blarney Castle, out of the thousands of castles in Ireland. And there was no "stone" until the tourists asked for it so that some tour guide picked one out. There is no basis for the Blarney Stone kissing in fact nor in fiction. But why knock it, it brings in the pounds. Actually, the walk around the castle is fun and with all of the hype it was a good experience.

We continued on to Killarney for dinner and to find a B & B for the night.

28 October 1999

Blarney Castle



Rob read about the Gap of Dunloe in our Discover Ireland book and wanted to see it. We set off early to do the Gap. Upon arrival, he offered us a horse-drawn carriage ride. Our horse's name was Thomas. The driver was 60+ years of

age and had grown up in this area, living here all of his life.

Thomas, the horse, understood Gaelic so all commands were in his language. Our driver had learned Gaelic and English simultaneously as a youngster. The gap is a scenic drive with spring-fed lakes between the mountains. At about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way, our driver told us that this was the basic trip at the agreed price £36 but for £50 Thomas would take us the rest of the way. We agreed and he jumped out of the carriage to help Thomas take us to the top. We took many pictures because our surroundings were so beautiful. Afterward, we stopped for coffee and scones before setting off for the Dingle Peninsula.

At Dingle we did our last shopping, picking up a nativity set from Ireland as we considered the stores. Continuing through the Conner Pass, we stopped at a view point to see the sheep perched on the sides of the hills as we surveyed the entire valley and ocean views simultaneously. We continued on to the Cliffs of Moher.

One of my clients had said that this last stop was her favourite. A waitress in Dublin had told us that we were saving the best for last. We drove frantically to get to the view point before the sun had set. En route, we took the ferry trip across the Shannon River. I had previously counted out my money so that we would have enough to pay for our last B & B (who did not take credit cards). I was four pounds short. I asked the shopkeeper in Dingle to do us a special favour and charge us £4.40 and give us £4 change back. I know that it is not permitted but she was so kind, she accommodated us. I had just the right amount. As we approached the ferry, we all said a prayer that the ferry would take our credit card. The conductor said, "Cash only, £8." I suggested that Rob set out his hat and beg. I had heard that beggars make about £75 per day. Judy suggested that I look for Americans who would change \$12 into £8, a better idea. God works in wonderful ways. I asked the lady in the car in front of us where she was from and she said, "Colorado." She gladly changed the money for us even though I could only proffer \$11.40 and 10 pence.



We arrived in perfect time. The sun was well above the horizon and cast a pretty yellow hue on the cliffs. Photos were snapping like the Miss America Pageant. Judy and Rob were each looking for the best angle and lighting as the sun was setting lower and lower. Indeed, the sight was spectacular. Alas, as we were leaving, Rob checked his camera and decided that his film was not advancing. None of the photos he had taken today had been recorded, including the Cliffs of Mohre. Judy offered to get doubles of her film on those rolls but he had learned a lesson, the hard way.

Returning to our B & B for the evening, our hostess was eager to usher us to our rooms and to recommend the Shamrock Inn for dinner. We set out for our “Last Supper” of fish and chips, steakburger with bacon, fried mushrooms, sautéed mushrooms and strawberry cake. Rob and I shared a Guinness. When it was time for the bill, with pleading in my eyes, I asked, “you take credit cards, right?” She said yes and we were relieved.

29 October 1999

We had a minor problem after breakfast this morning. I had preserved exactly the amount needed to pay our bill as I had figured it by subtracting the deposit. Our host said that she did not receive the deposit and considered the first night (which was cancelled) as forfeited. She did not take credit cards and I had no pounds. After she called Dublin Tourism to see what to do, she confirmed this result. I offered her \$7, what I estimated to be roughly equivalent to the £5.40 difference and it had to be.

Our trip to the airport was uneventful. We filled up the tank after considering the various prices of gas along the way. I dropped off the family and then the car. We dropped off the VAT recovery forms in the international departure lounge as there was no attendant. The sign said to drop them in the box and they would be processed. I can only hope that it is the case. An amazing thing happened on our flight home. Our son, Rob, received his ticket separately from us, I bought it on the internet whereas our tickets were purchased through the travel agent a few months earlier. Incredible as it may seem, his seat was right next to ours, we were three across in the centre aisle. Our flights were on time and comfortable and we arrived on time in Orlando for Triple E Transportation to pick us up. We had a great trip and a good time.

A summary of our Scotland experiences:

1. Sterling Castle
2. Church of Scotland, Dunkeld Cathedral
3. Dougey's Bar, The Tayside Inn

4. Ian and Becca's home
5. Gaelic choir meets us at the bar
6. Scottish breakfast at Stakis Hotel
7. Dunkeld Cathedral church service
8. Glamis Castle
9. Bell's Distillery
10. Hydro-electric dam
11. Pitlochery woolen shopping
12. Dinner with the South African couple in a bar
13. BlackRock staff meeting at Edinburgh
14. Edinburgh Castle
15. An evening with Fred-foye's family
16. Wool factory tour
17. Phantom of the Opera theatre
18. Inverarry Working Sheep Dogs demonstration
19. Duplicate Bridge in Scotland at Moness Country Club
20. Ferry trip to Ireland

A summary of our Ireland experiences:

1. Dublin shopping street
2. National Museum
3. Irish Theatre: Dolly West's Kitchen
4. Malahide Castle
5. Glendalough lakes and monastery

6. Bansha horseback riding
7. The Vee mountain view and seaside views
8. Waterford Crystal factory tour
9. Queenstown (Cobh) Museum of Shipping
10. Blarney Castle
11. The Gap at Dunloe
12. Dingle Peninsula
13. The Cliffs of Moher

[Return to Travel](#)