

The Trip, Part 2

Whew! Once we regrouped and cancelled our itinerary, even though we got hosed by an insurance company, hotel, airlines, and Travelocity, we continued with our trip. Even though we shaved off a bunch of nights, we still went forward.

We rebooked our plane trip. The earliest we could leave was Sunday. So we did. Then my son, Ivan had points from all his travels and we got a Hotel called, The Green in Dublin which is located by St. Stephen's Green Park. So we planned on staying there for a couple nights. Then we rebooked our next hotel in Galway called The Western for 3 days. We had to take out our Cork destination, which was a bummer, but we needed to give each place more than 2 days. We booked our last leap of the trip in Dublin at the Maldron Hotel Kevin. It was located right across the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral. We had our new itinerary set. We also planned to take trains to and from Dublin to Galway and did most of our trip within walking distance.

I had arranged a cat sitter for our kitty, Diana. We had family arranged to drop/pick us off/up at the airport. We paid all of our bills. We told the neighbors to keep watch over the house. Snow was still on the ground but the roads were relatively clear and drive-able. So far, we have a green light to go.

We went to the airport giving us time to check in and go through TSA. When we arrived at the airport, we didn't have a line to check in. Also, we decided not to take a checked bag, only a carryon due to what happened on the previous times we were at the airport. We told the Delta staff what happened to us. She was great and suggested we write to Delta about this... (I did). Maybe I'll post that to my website. We went through TSA flawlessly. We walked to the gate and noticed we still had plenty of time to get a bite to eat. We did. Once you're past the TSA, you have access to food, heat, and plenty of bathrooms. Our plane was ready. No de-icing was needed.

The aircraft we took was an Airbus 330-302. It was quite comfortable. We didn't get to pick our seats because of the cancellations imposed on us earlier. However, Chael and I had a middle row to ourselves. The seats were comfortable. The flight attendants and crew was top notch. We had pillows and blankets. Also, there was more than one movie to select from included in the flight. Food was edible and quite good. Drinks were complimentary. We were going to Amsterdam first and then we'll take a KLM commuter plane to Dublin. I was concerned about the only one hour layover in Amsterdam, but let it go. We've already been through so much. What I've noticed so far, is that people are pretty helpful. Not everyone, but

it was my experience as I navigated this travel, people look out for one another and engage positively.

I was able to sleep 2 hours on a 9 ½ hour flight. Once we touched down in Amsterdam, we had no idea where to go. So we asked a KLM pilot that I saw and she pointed me in the right direction. I was worried about passport check, but it turns out that Amsterdam had their shit together and passport check was right before the gate. I, of course was in one of the last to get on a bus from the gate due to my “economy” ticket. My carryon was too big so they checked it through to Dublin.

We loaded ourselves on multiple buses that took us out to our plane. We boarded the plane. It was completely full. The plane trip was efficient. They gave us all a sandwich and a drink. I was surprised by that since it was a short flight that we’d get anything. But cool on KLM.

We landed in Dublin, and I had to quietly say, “Woohoo! We made it!” The Dublin airport was definitely “old school”. It was a little run down. We went through customs the old fashioned way. Our Customs Officer was delightful. We told her we were there for a vacation and she asked what places in Ireland did we plan for and we explained the difficulty we had, but we were staying in Dublin and Galway. She lit up and said, “You’ll love Galway.” Once we passed Customs, we entered a kind of cool light show of some of Ireland’s landscape.

Then I had to pick up my carryon at the carousel due to KLM’s capacity for only smaller bags from the commuter plane. It took a while, but we used the facilities and drank some water. Then, we exited the airport towards the taxi queue. A man directed us which taxi to enter. He was Romanian. He asked if we wanted to drive through the neighborhoods on our way towards The Green Hotel. We agreed to that. It was a nice drive. He was like a tour guide. I loved it. We were able to check right into our hotel.

The Green Hotel! Wow! It was really an incredible. The staff was all from other countries. It was truly an International representation living and working in Dublin. Everything was eco-friendly, updated, clean, and comfortable. The linens were top notch. The bed was comfortable. We had to figure out how things worked, like the lights, shower, what switch to turn to turn on electricity to open plug-ins. It took a moment, but we figured it out. We took a little nap and then took off adventuring. They have a wonderful breakfast and a bar. It’s very swanky.

While in Dublin for the first two nights and days we went to the Whelan and watched this band called Imar play traditional Irish music. They originate out of Scotland, but were all trained in Irish traditional music. It was fantastic. It was within walking distance of The Green. We also

visited St. Stephen's Green Park, Grafton St., side streets from there where we found Phil Lynnott's (Thin Lizzy bassist) bronze statue which is located next to Bruxelle's. Across from him, was a hole in the wall place called, McDaid's. We met a local named Mick. It is a local watering hole. We also visited Temple Bar, but did not "party" there. We were told it was a place for youngsters. However, it was great to see the sights within walking distance. We did visit the Dublinia, Dublin Castle, Trinity College, St. Patrick's, Christchurch, while accidentally finding other little gems. I loved being able to take tons of photos.

At the Dublinia, we discovered that Dublin was a Viking settlement. It makes sense since the River Liffey makes for good access to have ports, trade, merchants, etc. There is St. Michael's Tower at the top of a winding staircase where you can view Dublin in a 360 degree view. It has a cute gift shop and you can get a tour of Christchurch along with the Dublinia tour.

The Dublin Castle was under reparations. The Chester Beatty Library was right next door. They have a cute café with wonderful food and a gift shop too. There was an Art Exhibit featuring Papyrus Biblical Texts.

We also went to The Brazen Head. It was quite the trek from our hotel, but only because we walked all over the place. It's a really cool place and supposedly the oldest pub in Dublin. A taxi driver told us that it wasn't really the oldest place but didn't offer us the name of the actual one. We also walked by a place called, Tailor's Hall and the door man said, "Come on in and take a load off." So we did. Nice place. It was downstairs.

Another place we had dinner at was called the Sinnott's Bar in Dublin. It is a sports bar and serves the most excellent food. We met a girl named, Eve. She is from Galway and was a true Galway Girl with black hair and blue eyes. She was delightful. She told us that she was moving to Valencia. We shared with her that our son got married there. I had probably the best meal I had in Ireland there. Most of the food we had was good, but this was over the top delicious.

I've probably got some of my visits out of order and I haven't shared about every place we visited in the 2 1/2 days after landing. We did some pub crawling for certain and everyone we met was pretty incredible.

So we planned on going to Galway the next morning around 11:00 ish. We got up and ate breakfast, then packed our bags and headed to check out. We had the hotel call a taxi since we had our carry-ons and didn't want to walk all the way to Hueston Train Station with them. It was a short ride, but worth it. We got to the train station and bought our tickets with the return one being open. We had 15 minutes to get to our platform for boarding. Ours was the last

one, but we made it. The conductor helped us find a non-reserved seat. The ride was exceptional. There weren't many folks traveling that day, so it was relatively quiet. They have restrooms and places to put your luggage. There were places to plug your devices in and tables you could use your laptops. The landscape was mostly beautiful with small town connections. Once we arrived in Galway at Ceannt Station, it was easy to find The Western Hotel. It took us 5 minutes to walk there. It's not far from Eyre Square Park. Galway is a smallish city and spread out some. We did a ton of walking there too.

The Western Hotel has a Georgian Front. It's old, quaint, has many steps and floors with fire doors. It's almost like a maze. Our room was small, but comfortable. We had a nice wardrobe where we could put our clothes and bags. They had a teapot and teas and coffees. The Bar and Restaurant is Fabulous. We ate and drank there numerous times. Megan, Vida and Shane were some of the staff we introduced ourselves too. Nice folks. If we go to Galway again, we're staying there. It was convenient and we could walk to plenty of the sights, pubs, bars, and shopping.

We went to Fibber Maggee's as suggested by Mick from Dublin. He says that they pour a good pint. We went in and met Caroline and Brian as well as other patrons. We sat at the bar and I ordered wine. Chael got a Guinness. Brian offered us an American sandwich. Both of them had a thick Irish Brogue. It was difficult to understand them, but I got the gist of it. They made me laugh. What fun people.

We went to The Quay's a couple times where we saw exceptional music. We met a guy named, Adrian. He and Chael hit it off. He was visiting from Dublin. The Music was my absolute favorite. I am not much of a beer drinker and I can only handle a couple shots of Jameson before I am blotto. Billy and the Kids played a couple times we went out. Once with their "drummer", fiddle player and guitar/singer and once just with the guitar and fiddle. They loved American music and put their Irish flair into the song representations. Then another night we saw Kyle with a "C" and Ray. Good times. Galway is a college town with a smattering of tourists.

On one of our many walks, we met a pair of buskers called, "All of Eden". Wow! Excellent musicians. And they were adorable to boot. If you read this and get the chance, look them up. I posted a short of them to my Facebook page.

We decided to check out Salthill Road to find the Salt Hills which is a drive (but we walked) from the Latin Quarter of Galway. Salthill Road borders Galway Bay. You can find numerous memorials erected commemorating those lost in the Great Famines. The country had vowed

once they gained their independence to never have hunger again, nor allow another country to take over and force them back into indentured servitude. It seems they were the victims of genocidal rule. Even today, they aren't that fond of the Brits. Though, like many countries, we've all been witnessed to, or experienced directly what people do to one another...sometimes it's really unpleasant and downright cruel. Well, Chael and I walked and walked for hours trying to find the Salt Hills part of Galway. We were told it was a 30 minute walk. Well, it was 30 minutes from our hotel to the start of Salthill Rd. Anyway, after 8 ½ miles of walking, I was starting to get shin splints. So we made it to the end of one of the beaches and walked back. I had to take a nap after that.

One thing I noticed was that Galway has a "smell"...not a bad one...but it smells like burnt up gun powder or that of a firework that has been lit and there's a sulfur type odor. I asked Meg at the bar what it was. She said that it might be turf (sod/peat). However, I noticed some of the old fireplaces were burning wood with coal. There were bins that contained coal. I saw on a couple occasions people shoveling coal into the fireplace. I think that I smelled that.

We went on one tour from Galway that was headed to Cong village, Connemara, Kylemore Abbey, a Gothic church and the countryside by a couple of loughs where there were hillsides, lots of sheep and really melancholic historical remnants of the Famines of Ireland. Everywhere we looked we saw something quite amazing followed by our wonderful storyteller and driver, Ken. He was great. It was very picturesque. I enjoyed this trip immensely. I wanted to go to the Aran Islands, but read that this time of year was rather rough due to weather and after our experience getting to Ireland, due to weather; we decided to only do the bus tour. Next time, we'll do others. Had we had unlimited money and time, we would have definitely done this. But also, we would have extended our trip to a month.

That evening, we went to the Thirteen Pub and had a wonderful meal and the best wine I had experienced in Ireland. It was really windy and cold outside. We watched some music at our hotel bar at The Western. They were playing traditional music. A bunch of locals just show up and then start playing. The next day we had food at a little breakfast cafeteria. It was affordable and delicious. Then we walked all over the place, had food at another Pub, and went to the Quays where we saw our "guys" playing again.

The next morning we got up and ate at our hotel, settled our bill, and went to the train station. I had to buy a couple pairs of socks due to not packing enough. I had washed my underwear which dried quickly. We were a couple of rough around the edges Americans smelling our clothes to see what was clean enough to wear. LOL. We easily got on board the train and

discovered that it was a lot busier to leave on a weekend (Saturday), so we had to look for an open seat.

The trip was much fuller. Then a Dad and Daughter got on with us during a stop, so Chael and I moved next to one another so they can sit together. There was an awkward silence until I noticed the daughter's shirt and asked about it. "It was from the series, Stranger Things", she told me. After that, we engaged in a dialogue with her father. We asked about school, what she likes and dislikes. We spoke to her father about where he lives. He lives right by the Maldron Hotel, Kevin where we were staying next. Ken was his name, and Grace, hers.

There is a "thing" about engaging in conversation with the Irish. They respect your privacy and will not interfere with your business unless invited. Once you break the ice, they will be your very best friend, offer support and help, and give you their opinion on what to do and where to go ensuring you get the "best" of what Ireland has to offer.

We made it Hueston Station. It was so full and I needed to use the restroom. "Toilets" is what they term them. Then we picked up a taxi to our hotel. We arrived early, so we had them hold our bags so we could get some food at their restaurant. It was decent. Then we checked into our room for a moment and got organized. I asked about laundry and discovered it to be too expensive, so I did a little more hand-washing clothing. We kind of had a down day where we picked up toiletries and items at a pharmacy. We did walk all over the place.

On this return stay in Dublin we went all over some more. We went to O'Connell St., The Norsemen, O'Neil's, The Porter House (it's haunted), Lundy's Foot, Goose on the Loose, An Italian place, a place we picked up fish and chips...it's a blur now. I'll try to come up with the name and a story to go with it. However, I took photos of everything. Everything was interesting. People were extremely kind.

At O'Neil's we watched a soccer game. We hung out with locals. It's an old place and burns coal too. Beer was so much cheaper. They have music upstairs in a ballroom and a smoking place outside in the back. There are stained glass panes and wonderful old photos documenting the pub and its patrons. It had a music store in it at one time. The bartender was Irish. This place was close to the Parnell St. district.

At Lundy's Foot, we had food. It was reasonable given it was close to the Temple Bar district and the food was really good. We met a couple from Nottingham who were celebrating the wife's birthday. Nice people. This is where we dropped the ball and didn't take a photo with our new friends.

We did go back to The Landmark and Whelan's. What a fun place. We met a bunch of guys from Scotland at Whelan's. They were all in their early 20's and maybe even a couple younger than that. I got some of their names amongst the loud music. I spoke to one named, Jack. He was really curious about the States. One of the kids' Dads shows up and gets us all a Baby Guinness. That was exceptional. He looked like an old rocker (probably was) that looked slightly like David Geldof. Chael asks Jack, "Does your Dad live in Dublin?" He answers, "Nah, he only comes here to get pissed!" OMG! We busted out laughing. We certainly didn't expect that answer. I laughed so hard. At the Landmark, there was one guy playing guitar and singing. Chael did a harmony with him. It was an old Faces' song title, Oolala. I recorded it and it was pretty good. How we got home that night was incredible. However, we had some time and previous experience to figure out our bearings.

We did see a guy named, ZAR at Grafton St. He played his guitar in his lap. I bought his album (CD). He was amazed that anyone would do that. I am so glad I did because it's excellent. I shared it with my family. They loved it. I also posted a performance on my Facebook channel.

We did some more walking around Stephen's Green Park, other streets, Stephen's Green Inside Mall where I bought a couple of warm shirts because it was super cold. There weren't many public facilities unless you paid for them, but you can always go to a Pub and use theirs. We went back to McDaid's and we went to another sports bar that was downstairs in the Green area.

When we came home on the eve of before my birthday after walking and "drinking" all over the place, a group of Brits were partying at the Maldron. Eric and Franchessa were the names of the two I can remember. Her sister was there and I think a guy named, Brian. There was a guy earlier from Guatemala. We started yacking. So Chael gets the idea to take photos with everyone we met...yeah, the day before we were to leave. If we ever do this again, it will be a "must do". We closed the place down. Our bartender took a group photo of us. Happy times!

The next day, my birthday, I felt a bit hungover. We had breakfast at our Hotel, Maldron. It was really good, but I was trying to hold it together after a night on the town. My constitution doesn't always do well with alcohol. We saw a handful of our party goers there. We had a down day until the afternoon when we went to an Italian place. I had GF pizza. It was good, but I couldn't eat all of it. Then we walked. It was raining pretty hard and our umbrella was not the best. We met some kids from the Netherlands. They asked if we knew a Dutch song. Nope. Then I said, "Teach one to us." They couldn't even come up with the "notes" and they showed the song in Dutch but the kid put his fingers over the words so I couldn't help him. I

asked them to play the song on their phone. Yeah, I am unsure they understood me. It was funny.

Chael and I went to a Music Store called, Some Neck. It was really cool. They had vintage guitars and instruments that famous people have borrowed or rented when they came to Dublin to play. There were hundreds of signed posters thanking the place for assisting them. Then we went to a tiny hole in the wall Pub nearby. I had a Smithwick's and Chael, a Guinness.

Of course, St. Patrick's Cathedral as well as other Cathedrals was gracing the landscape and I took a lot of photos. I took videos of birds and bridges, buildings, doors, parks, ornamental features of the buildings and iconic spots. I truly captured an immense amount.

We came home and relaxed early that evening. We needed to get up early and get to the airport. Next time I won't come home the day after my birthday. It seemed like I took part in a Triathlon. I was exhausted.

Our taxi arrived on time. We showed up at the airport and no one from KLM was working yet. We waited in line for 30 minutes and someone arrived. I checked my carryon to Portland. We got through TSA and Customs flawlessly. The view from the plane was beautiful. The clouds cleared and I could actually see how green it was from above. I loved it. We were delayed to get into Amsterdam due to a medical emergency from one of the passengers. However, Delta knew we were a bit late. We ran through the airport to the gate the Flight attendant told us to go and made it well before take-off. I was singing, Run, Run Rudolf like that scene from Home Alone. I love that you can do passport check at the gates in Amsterdam. That was the first for me to experience International flying be this efficient.

Once on our Delta flight, we were relieved. The comfort is good, even in economy. The food was excellent. They were very helpful and courteous. They had a wonderful selection of movies and television series. I loved this movie called, "Could you ever forgive me?" Melissa McCarthy was the actress. It was written by Jeff Whitty.

Once we landed in Portland, going through Customs was much easier this time than when we came back from Valencia years back. I loved that they blended old school with new school. This would be difficult however, if one were confined to a wheel chair or had a disability. I hope they make special arrangements for those that need it. I am sure they had it covered, but it was like a maze to get there.

We were picked up by Chael's sister, Karen. We were so glad to see her. Even driving home, we could see remnants of the snow and the homeless camps along the freeways. I did notice some people in fluorescent vests cleaning things up. Man, Portland, we can do better. We have done better. We just need to Triage the place.

Dublin and Galway had homeless too, but not to the degree we have in Portland. I noticed more in Galway, but that's because of the neighborhood. They are everywhere. Rents in Dublin are ridiculous. They are in Portland too. I don't know about Galway, but there were plenty sleeping in the doorways of shops that had closed for the evening with most of them being young. I can't imagine how bad it is in other places that aren't developed.

So, that's it in a nutshell. Our whirlwind trip to Ireland was shortened, but it was worth it. I am grateful I took a lot of photos and recorded a bunch of video and music. Now it's back to the grindstone. I've been practicing and organizing my life. I would certainly do this again provided I can work it out financially. If you are younger and reading this, my advice to you is; travel. Talk to people. Listen. We are all connected.

Ciao for Now!

Love, Tina