

England, Scotland, and Ireland

For the appropriate background music, click [here!](#)

Day 1 Heathrow to Lyndhurst (The New Forest)

Upon a noon arrival at Heathrow, we headed south into the countryside. Still missing one of our bags, we were forced to find an address and stall for at least a day if there was to be any hope of reunion.

We found ourselves in Lyndhurst, in the late afternoon, looking for a likely B&B. After driving around town, and getting lost a few times, we pulled into the Burwood Lodge. Spent the next couple of hours discovering the idiosyncrasies of English pubs...they often close from 2pm to 6pm. Or at least stop serving food. Eventually we found a reasonable place that was serving food **The Fox and Hounds**, and had our first dose of jacket potatoes. Upon the advice of our innkeeper, we then walked about one mile down the lane to The Oak Inn where we had a few pints of bitter, then stumbled home for our first night on vacation!

Day 2 More New Forest

After our breakfast (full English for me, vegetarian eggs and toast for Kathy), I discovered that United had secured my luggage, and would deliver it to our lodging sometime that day. We decided to stay put for a second night, and explore the **New Forest**.

We zipped over to the Southampton airport to change our rental car agreement. Upon arrival at Heathrow, Alamo (the Holiday Auto agent) had successfully high pressured me into many redundant insurance coverages, more than tripling our original rental rate. Luckily, they give you 24 hours for buyers remorse, so we removed all the excess coverage, saving about \$300 for a two week rental! Except for the initial hassles our 1.0 liter VW Polo was a great vehicle.

The **New Forest** is supposedly one of the few remaining tracts of virgin forest. In the 16th century (or so) the King had set aside the area as a game preserve, allowing residents to graze livestock and gather dead wood only, with severe penalties for poaching game or timber. By Oregon standards, the trees are pretty sparse and puny, except for a few large oaks, one as old as 600 years. We hiked a few miles, in several areas of the forest, through both ancient oak forests, a mixed forest of very diverse species (actually a kind of botanical reserve) and across open pasture, populated by world famous New Forest ponies. We did run into our first traffic jam here.

As a sad side-note, real estate prices within the New Forest have risen sharply, to where the farmer-class can no longer afford it, and the new owners are letting their grazing/gathering rights lapse, which will eventually lead to a decline in the natural livestock, probably forcing the Forest Council or National Trust to take over to maintain the herd as a tourist attraction.

We drove back to The Oak Inn for dinner, then strolled around Lyndhurst in the evening, sampling a few local brews before returning to our lodgings, reclaiming my luggage, and turning in.



Dartmoor

Day 3 New Forest to Dartmoor to Port Isaac

After a fairly early start, we drove east planning on some exploring in **Dartmoor**, another National Park, featuring innumerable tors,

some standing stone relics, and lots for ponies. We had our only rain while in England for much of the drive, but the sun broke through long enough for us to take a short hike up one of the higher tors, affording some pretty good views of the rolling hills.

Even by this early date, we were recognizing that our plan to circumnavigate the entire island was going to be difficult to accomplish, as the distances and times to travel were much longer than would seem from looking at a large scale map. Given the weather, we decided to press ahead, thinking we'd like to find someplace in **Cornwall**, the southwest-most county in England.

Someone had recommended **Padstow** as a destination, but our *Rough Guide* indicated that it was a pretty tourist oriented place, and after a little reading, we decided that **Port Isaac**

sounded more appealing. As we progressed into Cornwall, we discovered that the Cornwall roads were much narrower and offered more blind curves (mostly due to the overgrown rock walls) than anywhere else in the UK. It's not that they were narrower than elsewhere, but they seemed to be precisely two cars wide, and the oncoming traffic just assumed you knew your cars width exactly. The rear-view mirrors on both sides took their worst beating, as did Kathy's mental state, in Cornwall, as we passed cars with inches to spare at 50 mph and more!

We arrived in **Port Isaac**, and had a momentary panic as we found all the B&Bs either full or not yet open for the season. We drove down the steep hill into the quay, finding the road just got narrower and narrower, until there was just enough space for a single car to squeak through with only slight mirror marking on the building walls. After a forced 2 mile circuit back to the main road, we parked, and started walking, almost immediately stumbling into the open, vacant, and inexpensive **Trethoway** B&B with our room window overlooking the older part of the town and the bay.

We moved in, then hiked a short route including a portion of the **Southwest Walk** (a trail that follows the entire Cornwall coast), had an excellent dinner on the quay, visited a few more pubs for ale, then climbed back up the hill to our room.



Traffic Jam / New Forest

We spend a few minutes re-looking at the map, counting days, putting post-its on various map locations, with the end result of exacerbating our fears about over-committing our agenda.

Day 4 Port Isaac to Libanus - Brecon Beacon

After another pretty early start, we immediately canceled our plans to visit **Tintagel Castle**, the supposed home of the King Arthur legend, and drove northeast towards **Exmoor** and then on to **Wales**. **Exmoor**, largely similar to Dartmoor, was a short stop, for a three mile hike over the moors among the ponies.

We pressed on to **Abergavenny** (Wales), where knowing that the upcoming weekend was a bank holiday and that we might run into lodging difficulties, we stopped at the Visitor Center, where we made a reservation for the **Black Boar Inn** in **Libanus** (near **Brecon**) and picked up some free maps and brochures. Another hour of driving, and we arrived at our lodging, after the longest driving day of our trip, a little over 300 miles.

We drove into **Brecon**, where we walked around for an hour, seeing our first larger city, complete with familiar signs of poverty, decay and the lot. We ended up having Indian food, then returned to our lodging, where we had a few more pints, took in a lot of second-hand tobacco smoke, then turned in.

Day 5 Libanus to Betts-y-coed Snowdonia

First thing, we called a few B&Bs in northern Wales, scoring a room on our second try at the **Mount Garmon Hotel**.

We did a morning hike up to the top of **Pen-y-Fan**, the highest point in the area. The trail was simply a long traverse across sheep pasture, arriving at the summit, to be greeted by an incredible gale of warm wind from the west. After only a few moments on the summit, we clambered off the rocky summit, finding shelter from the wind on the return trail. The soft bog made the downhill much nicer for those of us with clunky knees.

After getting back to the car, we proceeded north passed huge abandoned shale mines to **Betws-y-coed**, which is the largest town in the **Snowdonia** area, probably the most popular park in Wales. The town had four of five outfitter stores, selling climbing gear, sleeping bags, etc and the streets were full of young people.

We checked into the hotel, walked around town for an hour or so, then settled on the **Pont y Pant Inn** for dinner, on the advice of a local shopkeeper. We ended up sitting next to a Welsh couple on holiday for the weekend, learning quite a bit about his life as a lorry driver and her fucia garden.



Port Isaac / Southwest Walk

Day 6 Snowdonia to Glasgow

Our initial plan was to travel back into England's **Lake District** and spend the night. As we approached the area, Kathy poured over the various guide books, discovering what we thought would be the least crowded lake (It was Sunday night of a three day weekend). After accidentally exploring some small back roads, we found the **Haweswater** (lake), finding cars parked along the side of the road for at least a mile approaching the trailhead. So, we parked, hiked about two miles along the lake, sat and watched caravans (RVs) and coaches (tour buses) fight through the narrow road remaining along all the parked cars, and threw up our hands and headed towards **Scotland**.

We found ourselves in **Glasgow**, and through sheer luck, found ourselves sitting in traffic right next to the Information Center, which was able to provide a city map, and reserve a room for us at the **Victorian Hotel**. We stashed our car in a car park, and we walked the four blocks to the hotel. The rate of **£48** for two was a little steeper than we'd paid so far, but it was already evening, and we sort of expected higher rates in the city.

We walked from the hotel to the older part of town, where we were told we could expect to find some music and food. We went to **Molly Malone's** which, although a very old establishment, seemed a little more fake, with lots of obvious reproductions, antiqued paint, etc. The **Guinness** was fine, as were the appetizers we ordered. When we went to order dinner, we found the kitchen was closed (at only 8pm), so we strolled outside, ending up at a terrible pizza place. We returned to Molly Malone's for the live music. Probably one of the most distressing parts of our trip was the widespread drinking of **Budweiser** and **Miller Genuine Draft** by all the young people, despite the huge selection of good beer, and despite the similar price! The two musicians were pretty good, but they spent more time playing Van Morrison and the Beatles than anything approaching traditional music, so we called it a night after one set.

For more appropriate background music, click [here](#)!

Day 7 Glasgow to Applecross

We left Glasgow behind after recovering our rental car, heading towards the Scottish Highlands. We were feeling like we had caught up with our idealistic itinerary somewhat, so we decided to slow our juggernaut a little.

We felt so flush with time that we stopped to tour **Eilean Dunan Castle**, which is a privately restored and occupied relic from the 12th century, when Edward I was conquering everything in the name of England.

We drove on, selecting **Applecross** as our next stop, solely on the recommendation from an English friend at home. Applecross is isolated on its own peninsula, accessible only via two very long and very windy mountain roads. The road was a single track with small turnouts to allow passing, which



Pen y Fen / Brecon Beacon

was slow enough. They were also re-paving the road so we had to wait while the asphalt spreader passed between turnouts before they graciously let us pass. We finally got to Applecross, pulling into the first B&B sign we saw, the **Farm Manager's B&B**. The teenagers working on their car indicated we could find the landlord over at the (only) pub, where sure enough, he was watching soccer on TV.

Donald abandoned his pint and *wee* dram long enough to show us the room, explaining the other rooms were occupied by the paving crew, and that the whole house shared the one bath. Our room was cozy, but pretty rundown, with an incredibly lumpy bed, crooked floor and worn carpet. As we eventually discovered, our most memorable experiences were in the least luxurious places, with the most unpretentious hosts.

We took a long hike up and down the lane along the bay, then return to the **Applecross Inn** (which was the pub) for an excellent meal. We sat near some English folks that had come over the long tortuous road just for dinner, so I guess the Inn was well known. We repeated our accustomed pattern of a few more pints, then walked across the lane to our room, where we spent a pleasant night, except for a short interruption when the paving crew (and girlfriends) arrived home, in a jubilant state.

Day 8 Applecross to Portree - Isle of Skye

We awoke to yet one more beautiful sunny morning, and had a nice breakfast prepared by our host Donald. We forced him to talk a little more about life in Applecross, his job, etc. and found him to be pretty interesting under his hermit facade. This was our first exposure to a shower system found in many accommodations, where a wall mounted electrical unit is inside the shower, with several versions of valves and knobs. It's apparently an instantaneous water heater and pressure increaser. This one was the first of many that just didn't work correctly. The temperature selector was broken off, and the unit delivered either scalding or freezing water, so your shower consisted of dancing in and out of the stream while the temperature went through a bearable range!

We left via the other mountain road (not being re-paved) and headed for the new bridge across to the **Isle of Skye**. We were both running low on clean clothes, so we were somewhat pleased to have someone standing next to the toll both for the bridge hand us a flyer about a Laundromat just ahead. We pulled in, and spent an hour or two doing laundry while watching the BBC's idea of soap operas on TV. Much spicier than ours.

We then drove on to just south of **Portree**, where we turned onto a side road, probing for a remote B&B. We found one (of two) with a vacancy, moved in, then took a three mile hike out on the peninsula to where we had an excellent view across the bay to Portree. It felt slight awkward to hike right by private homes, but the UK has a right to access for walkers, that basically allows (or even encourages) one to hike anywhere, as long as you don't mess with things or *worry* the sheep. The homeowners we disturbed were all quite helpful in directing us to the best paths and sandiest beaches. Apparently this right to access is under some threats from new selfish owners (many Americans), large mechanized farms, and the like.

We returned to the B&B, took a nap, then off to Portree for dinner and beers. We found an excellent vegetarian restaurant after exploring town. They are building a fancy arena for the Highland Games on the edge of town, made of open rock walls and towers to look like an ancient Roman arena. We then retired to a pub for a few ales, then back the few miles to bed.

Day 9 Portree to Ardvaser - Isle of Skye

Ate breakfast with an American couple from Chicago. She was a travel agent, so they came for just a few days. She mentioned that on her first attempt to drive in England, she had smashed into a parked car on the way out of the rental yard... We drove north, past the **Old Man or Storr** (rock

formation), got stopped by a small herd of shaggy Scot cattle, stopped at **Kilt Rock**, then drove the length of Skye to **Ardvasar** on the southern peninsula where the ferry lands. We searched briefly for the ideal B&B and settled on a nice private home overlooking the Sound of Sleat, **Home Leigh**. We then spent several hours at the **Clan Donald Center**, which features a ruined castle, magnificent gardens, and a museum. Unfortunately, the research library was closed, so I didn't get to look up my roots.

We drove back to the B&B, then walked back to town, discovering an amazing little site. Appearing as simply a herb sales booth, a path led up to a privately constructed garden walk, including a gorgeous view of Sleat, many wildflowers and lots of herbs. The middle aged hippies responsible for the enterprise talked with us awhile, describing their off-grid lifestyle and 30 year effort at building their little niche.

Then on to the **Ardvasar Hotel** for a good dinner, and more than a few pints, then to bed.

Day 10 Ardvasar to Loch Tummel

After a less than wonderful breakfast, we caught the first ferry to **Maillag**, and headed east, eventually ending up at the **Loch Tummel Inn**, on the loch of the same name. We grimaced at the *L28* each, but settled in anyway, mainly because of the room, the view, and the ambiance. The owner directed on a rather long hike to a mountain loch above the inn, and we spent a few hours climbing through pasture followed by the typical UK forest.- one or two species of even age trees planted in tidy rows without any messy underbrush or noisy wildlife.

Having been completely bared centuries ago, most forests are stark squares of neatly planted trees on otherwise barren hillsides, with the occasional clear-cut standing out. I suppose it might be sustainable, but it sure looks bad!

We finally found the claimed loch, which was very picturesque, complete with a fly-fisherman, whose catch was apparently on the menu when we returned to the Inn for dinner (and beers!).

Day 11 Loch Tummel to Sunderlund

We had tried repeatedly to contact a friend's Mum, without much luck. We continued on, none the less, making a lunch stop in **Craster**, visiting **Dunstanburgh Castle**. We finally made contact, getting instructions to the house. We drove beyond **Sunderland**, looking for a B&B, but after wandering urban blight for a few hours, we gave up. We eventually found the house of our friend's Mum, and she offered to put us up, which we gratefully accepted. She also laid out a huge array of snacks and sweets for afternoon tea, which served as a more than adequate dinner. We proceeded to drink too much, while exchanging tales of childbirth and golf.



Highland Cattle / Isle of Skye



Dunstanburgh Castle / Caster

Day 12 Sunderland to Dreby

We had a nice simple breakfast, said farewell, and motored on to south, lamenting the looming end of our visit to England and Scotland.

Our next target was the **Yorkshire Dales**, for no better reason than I was a big **James Herriot** fan. On the way, upon our hosts advice, we stopped for lunch in **York** walking around the walled city and touring the famous Minster.

We drove on, stumbling around a bit, looking for a B&B, when a teensy sign was spotted on a rock wall, and we veered into the **Little Gate Farm B&B**. Our first impression was it was a little too rustic (low ceilings, sloped floors, one bath for the entire house (with no shower)), but we took it anyway.



Little Gate Farm / Yorkshire Dales

We backtracked a few miles to a local cricket match, consisting of what appears to be the entire town's male population in white outfits, doing something that made *no sense*. After reading a paragraph in one of the guide books it made enough sense to at least enjoy. After a quick pint, we went back to the B&B where the farmer (just can't remember his name!) answered all my questions about cricket. We spent a few minutes admiring their menagerie of ducks, doves, parrots, quail, cats, scotty dogs, cows, and sheep, then drove of the **Grassington**, the nearest town and hub for the **Dales National Park**.

We followed another of those wonderful footpaths across pastures, over fences, and along a river, till hunger drove forced us into the town square, where we found a good meal, and of course a few good pints. Then is was a short few miles to bed.

Day 12 Dreby to Monsal Head

After a wonderful breakfast cooked by Wendy (the farmer's wife), we packed the car, then stopped to admire the caged work dogs. The farmer brought out the five Border Collies (for the sheep) and the Spaniel (for hunts) one by one. Each was even tempered and well behaved. After asking about how well they worked, the farmer said, "ah well, its a grand Sunday" and proceeded to give us a little demo of his oldest dog **Meg** doing a little



Meg working / Yorkshire Dales

work. We walked down the lane, he opened the pasture gate, and Meg proceeded to round up the 100 or so sheep with only the direction received through whistling. Although she was limping badly on a lame leg, once she got into the pasture, she seemed to recover completely. She proceeded to deal with one aggressive ewe, lots of frightened lambs, and moved the whole herd up the driveway into the barnyard. Great show!

Our overall experience at the Little Gate Farm was undoubtedly the highlight of our entire trip. The farmer and his wife were straight out of a Herriot short story. Their dialect, their wonderful interaction, their farm... all storybook! They had been tenants on the **Duke of Devonshire's** land for 30 years, and although they had few material possessions, and had to operate the B&B to make ends meet, they exuded a true love of life and each other that was just wonderful! Make sure you stay at this farm if you're ever in the Yorkshire area: **Little Gate Farm, Drebley, Barden Skipton, North Yorkshire/ Mrs. Wendy Stott/01756-720200**. We reluctantly left, heading for **Derbyshire** and the **Peak district**, hoping we could somewhere duplicate the experience of the last 24 hours.

We arrived in the Peak District, and checked into the **Cliff House at Monsal Head**. We were the only guests in a three story Inn, and we got

the room with the best view of the nearby dale. We walked across the street and did a nice 3 1/2 mile hike across the valley, then down into it, and back up along the river. Had a nice dinner and pints at the **Monsal Head Inn**.

Upon returning to the B&B, we discovered we had a longer trip to London to catch our flight than we expected, so the owners graciously offered to serve breakfast an hour earlier for our benefit.

For more appropriate background music, click [here!](#)

Day 13 Monsal Head to Brae, Ireland

Up at the crack of dawn (actually, dawn was around 5am, so that's not quite true!). Anyway, a good breakfast, followed by a drive straight to Heathrow for our flight to **Dublin**.

Upon arrival in Dublin, we promptly repeated our distasteful experience with the rental car company, this time **Thrifty**. Another hard sell for the insurance, with a claim that the agreement between the credit card companies and Irish car rental firms had just expired. My choice was insurance for a **IRL5000** deposit. Needless to say, I didn't have the cash. After writing down the agent's name, and muttering off to wait for the shuttle, a few minutes passed and the agent (Sinead) found me and plead forgiveness for being misinformed about the agreement with MC and Visa. So, we re-wrote the agreement (a total of five times!) and we motored off in our **Citroen 106**, which was not *nearly* as nice as the **Polo**.

Our first discovery was that there are almost **no** street signs in Dublin. We had planned to stay in the city for the first night, but between driving aimlessly for miles and not seeing any B&Bs, we decided to head south. The guidebook mentioned **Brae** as having a lot of accommodation, so we went there, looking for vacancy signs, finally opting for the **Brae Head Hotel**. It was reasonably priced, and might have been a really nice place 50 years ago. It was run down...no, it was seedy.

Brae is a little like **Coney Island**. Lots of carnival rides, litter, weird sights. We walked up and down the beach, trying to find a pub with the expected traditional music, and finally found the only planned music right next to our hotel. We sat and waited while the bar filled with older folks, thinking that this must be old style music. Well, two guitar players set up and started doing American country music sung by **Elvis** impersonators! This was enhanced with a synthesizer producing polka rhythms. Needless to say, we left after a few songs...

Day 14 Brae to Killorgin

After another shower with one of those *dysfunctional* wall units, we had breakfast, and drove south into the **Wicklow Mountains**. We took a five mile walk along a river, past a ruin where **St. Kevin** had set up camp, climbed up on a ridge, and eventually discovered the correct logging road to get us back to the car. We bought a guide to farmhouse B&Bs at the visitor center and headed south.

Kathy found a B&B in our guide described as a restored Castle, so we headed into the **Wexford** region, and easily found our target. It was actually a newer structure that had been added on to the original castle, which was in pretty good condition. Although it was a working farm, we never met the owners, but found it pleasant, though more like a hotel than our last farmhouse (in the Yorkshire Dales).

After moving our bags in, we headed to Wexford, hoping once again, to find the famous Irish music. We strolled around Wexford, settling in at the **Wren's Nest Pub** for what might have been our best dinner of the trip. Bar food had been pretty much the same everywhere, but somehow, these people managed to make it taste a little better and combine it with side dishes besides chips. After a few Guinness pints, a uillian piper, guitar player, accordion/concertina player, and drummer sat down in the corner booth and just started talking and playing, as if no one else was there. They played until midnight (exactly), and got up and left as quickly as they had arrived. They bought all their own drinks and appeared to get nothing in return for their efforts. It was excellent entertainment!

We drove the few miles back to the castle, and called it a night.

Day 15 Killiane Castle to Killorgin

After an excellent breakfast, we headed west, heading for nowhere specific. Still smarting from our over scheduled earlier two weeks we decided to aim all the way to the **Dingle Peninsula** for the day, and made it to **Killorgin** before calling it quits. The guidebook described Killorgin as a *creation* of the tourist industry, so figured they'd certainly have nightly music. We drove a few laps, and finally picked out B&B in a private home just outside of town.

We walked back to town, having a pint in each pub, slowly discovering that no one had music on a weeknight. The one pub that had a sign out claimed the musician had called in sick. We picked up a brochure in one of the pubs that mentioned music at a country pub nearby, so we walked back to get the car and drove six miles out, just to be told they had canceled as well...

We gave up and figured we had to settle for watching the election debates on the TV in yet another pub. We turned in, somewhat disappointed with our music-luck so far (one for three!).

Day 16 Killorglin to Doolin

We headed out onto the Dingle Peninsula, and decided on a nice long hike recommended by a book we had brought from the States. We drove up to **Anascaul Lake**, put on our boots, and immediately failed to find the described trailhead. Instead we walked up a long abandoned farm road, which was claimed to intersect the trail a few miles up the valley. It did intersect the trail, at least in the direction from where we were supposed to have come. The other direction was less clear, but after a feeble effort at finding the trail, we decided that the topography was pretty straight forward and that we ought to be able to catch the trail by striking out over the bog.

We continued over the bog, eventually arriving at a cliff along which the trail was supposed to follow, but there wasn't much there. We had seen boot prints all over, so it seemed others had had the same problem as us. We eventually started back down the mountain on the most obvious of the many poor trails, most which were made by sheep, not human travelers. We arrived at a fence with no stile, so we followed the fence to a corner, where it dropped straight down the hillside. We ended up *climbing* down along the fence, using the fence almost as a ladder. Arriving at another horizontal fence, we were forced a few hundred yards along it, before a downed section allowed us to begin yet another steep drop, this time through thick ferns and berries. We eventually came out at the bottom, on the opposite side of the lake from the car, and proceeded to finish the circumnavigation of the lake that the trail was supposed to accomplish., only having to get a little wet crossing the lake outlet. We promptly *threw* the guide book into the trunk where it stayed for the rest of the trip!



Anascaul Lake

We got back in the car and headed for **Doolin** in **County Clare**. The guidebook warned us that Doolin, although starting out as a musicians *Mecca*, had turned a little bit tourist oriented. Nonetheless, we pulled into the small town, which consisted of exactly three pubs, two restaurants, three shops and half a dozen or so B&Bs. We picked one out, for no good reason, and were greeted warmly by the owner John. Although his accent was pretty heavy, he did manage to tell us his life story, and where the good music was to be found.

We strolled over to **O'Connors Pub**, had dinner, then drank Guinness till the music started. The bar filled up with tourists speaking all languages, and the musicians showed up about 9:30. The collection of banjo, penny whistle, accordion, and guitar played in the same manner as the musicians in Wexford...lots of talking amongst themselves, a piece, more talking. They played till midnight (precisely, once again), and the overall experience was wonderful, to be improved only by perhaps a little less cigarette smoke.

Day 17 Doolin



Inisheer / Aran Islands

Having enjoyed the music so thoroughly, we decided to remain another day in Doolin. After a nice breakfast and a little more conversation with John, we drove to the dock and caught the ferry for the 20 minute ride to **Inisheer**, the inner **Aran Island**. Although we were warned by another ferry passenger that the island was just shops and B&Bs, we found very few of either. Perhaps tourist season hadn't really gotten into full swing.

Anyway, we spent four hours walking around most of the island, exploring the myriad of tiny lanes, a ruined fort, and several once churches. Of course the obligatory Guinness, and a simple lunch at the only visible pub. Inisheer is a limestone lump, so everything was built of limestone, and the fields were extra tiny, averaging 1/4 acre or so, each with its stone walls. Every house in the village had a border collie sleeping on top of each house's fence! Each had a small garden with nothing but potatoes and the occasional carrot as well.

Returned on the only ferry scheduled, arriving home in time to take a short nap, do some laundry, and for Kathy to do a little shopping. We returned to O'Connors once again, claimed a prime table, ordered dinner, then waited for the expected music. Once again we were treated to more good traditional music, by a different collection of musicians, this time two violins and two bazoakis (an eight stringed lute-like instrument). Again, at midnight they turned to pumpkins.

Day 18 Doolin to Galway

After such good luck, we were contemplating yet another day in Doolin, but in the end, we decided that maybe this was the *trap* part of *tourist trap*, so we pressed on towards **Galway**. We took the ferry across the **River Shannon** at **Talbert** to save the drive through **Limerick**, and arrived in Galway in time for lunch. We discovered that Galway suffered from the same lack of signs as Dublin, and drove in circles repeatedly, simply looking for a Laundromat mentioned in a guide. After drying some wet clothes (L3.50 for 1\2 load), we had lunch, then started looking for a B&B. After circling town a few more times, we picked out a plain place, just 'cause it appeared in front of us, and it was within walking distance of the heart of town.

We walked into town and went to several pubs, asking about music and having a pint, and finally ended up at **An Pucan** which provided yet more good entertainment. Although the group was electrified, mainly to overcome the noisy crowd, they still played traditional material. The cigarette smoke was especially bad!

Day 19 Galway to Dublin

We slept in a bit, both because we had an easy drive to Dublin, and because breakfast was available a little later. We headed east, regretting our vacation was nearly over. We diverted off the main road to visit **Lough Ree**. We drove down quite a few narrow lanes, ending up in barnyards, reversing, and finding the next poorly marked intersection. We finally arrived at a small boat ramp where we stood in the strong wind for a few minutes, looking at the chopping water and petting the local collie.

After the hectic experience racing to Heathrow the week earlier, we decided to stay closer to Dublin airport, so we went to the airport, then started towards town. After a few loops and circles, we stopped at a small row house B&B, and claimed the entire ground floor suite for the same price we'd grown accustomed to for a single room. The owner said a lot of his guests liked the arrangement because they could repack their luggage with all the floor space.

We walked from the B&B to the **Dublin Botanical Gardens**, where we strolled around for several hours, looking at all the interesting exotic plants and beautiful gardens. Probably the most impressive plant was the *Victoria Water Lily*, grown from seed each year, which produces 2 meter circular leaves with a 15 cm vertical lip--looking just like a cheap injection molded kiddie pool, except green instead of blue! An individual leaf could reputedly support 200 pounds! There were about 10 of these floating on a Koi pond in one of their ornate greenhouses.

We walked home, then headed downtown for the evening. We had a nice dinner (probably the nicest since Wexford) at a hotel, along with a pint of Guinness and soccer on the TV. We then started exploring all the pubs our guidebook recommended for music, only to find that all of them were featuring jazz, or blues, or rock&roll. Not that any of it was bad, but we didn't come all the way to Ireland for anything but traditional stuff. After a long walk, and moving the car once, we went into **Whelan's Pub**, which had a sign claiming the music was already in progress. Not seeing any, we started to think we might actually not have any luck, in Ireland largest cities, of all places!

Kathy asked the barman and found that there were *two* Whelan's; the bar and the theater. We rushed around the corner, paid our first cover charge of the trip, and squeezed into the smoke filled room to hear a great collection of musicians along with a vocal soloist. We missed the first hour of the concert, and if we'd have known, we would have come early to get a seat! As seen everywhere else, the musicians retired at a time that caused the encore to finish at precisely midnight...there *must* be some sort of law about music ending at twelve!

Anyway, we happily made our way back to the B&B.

Day 20 Dublin to Medford

Unlike all our other lodging, we made our own breakfast (in our own kitchen!) and headed for the airport, with sadness that the vacation was ending while feeling at least a little good to be getting home to work on the garden, respond to fire calls, and see obnoxious patients in the middle of the night.

It was an uneventful trip, three airplanes, two long layovers, and jetlag...