

2011 - IRELAND

31 May 2011



Lower Lough Erne

There is 250,000 miles of dry stone walls in Ireland - enough to go around the world 10 times!!

THE IRISH

We have crossed between British Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic a number of times over the last couple of days. The transitions were so subtle we almost did not realise we were in another country except for - speed signs (miles or kilometers), town signs (mostly in Irish Gaelic in the south) and petrol prices (Euro or Stirling). The people talk in the same lyrical way and house designs are essentially the same. The Irish don't talk much about their neighbors although I have heard jokes about northern explosive experts and southerners who can't add up.

The Irish pride themselves on having as many whisky distilleries as the Scots but the Irish have something the Scots do not - Guinness.

UPPER LOUGH ERNE

The road along the lake was described as a geographical wonder. The marshlands support a wide diversity of bird life but unfortunately the best views are evidently from a boat which we did not have. We enjoyed the drive through the country however.



Our trip around Ireland so far



Crom Castle ruins

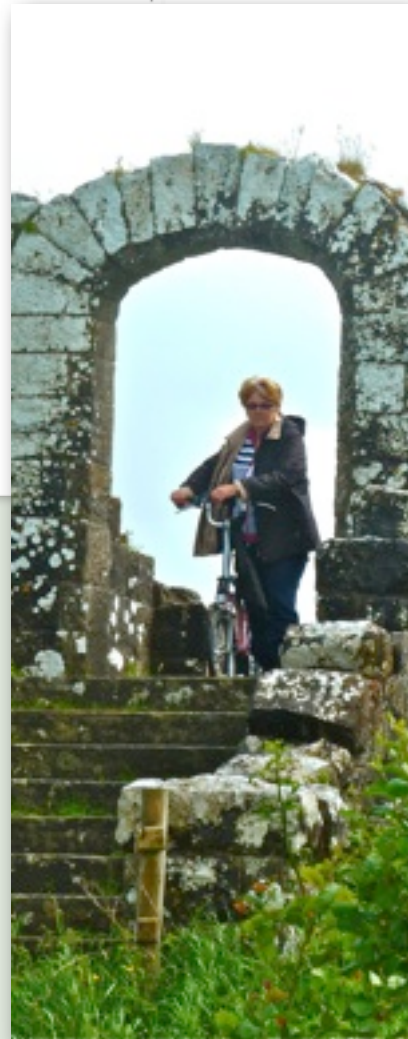
CROM CASTLE

The extensive grounds of the estate were worth exploring - they were part of a thriving community until WWI. The weather looked reasonable so we decided to give it a go by bike. We made the 3 hour walk into a 20 minute bike ride. The early 13th century castle was destroyed by a fire and is now in ruins but the original walled garden and a number of other buildings are still intact. The new palace is currently occupied by the resident earl and his family and was out of bounds to the public. We enjoyed our short ride and topped off our exercise with a hot chocolate in the estate cafe and lunch in the car overlooking the waterway.

DROGHEDA B&B

Since we needed to be near Dublin to drop the car off tomorrow we decided to stop at Drogheda - a town with a long history which we might be able to spend a little time in early tomorrow morning. Our B&B host was amazing. When he found out that we needed to ring the hire company to change our drop-off point and then ring our house swap couple, he rang the numbers, gave us his phone and let us call for free.

The Irish sport of road bowling is where a cast iron ball is thrown along a road. The winner is the one who takes the least amount of throws to get the ball from the start to the finish.



Framed by history



Great to ride again



The new Crom Palace