

2011 - IRELAND

7 June 2011



Waterford

GPS

We brought our GPS from Australia - purchased in Germany 2 years ago. On the whole it's been a real savior, helping us to navigate through a maze of city streets or around confusing rural B roads in England, Scotland and Ireland (and central Europe too in 2009). But it has also given us some real shocks when we least expect it such as when we ask it to do something simple - to go from one large city to another - or cut through the lack of road signage. This little rotter has urged us to go some very strange places. We have learned therefore to have a road map handy and take little steps rather than rely on it to take us any great distance.

We decided to take a leisurely trip to Waterford today primarily to visit the Waterford Crystal factory - which we were told not to miss. So we set out for Waterford via Wexford. Without noticing where we were going we simply enjoyed driving slowly through countryside roads. We hit the coastline and marveled at the way the road hugged the edge of the hill down down down to a little village. And then the shock. "Board ferry". What? What ferry? Sure enough - over the water it came towards us. We found the entrance and boarded the ferry (while swearing at our GPS). How the hell did it get us here? We alighted, drove down the road a bit and on into Waterford minus E5.

Waterford's Reginald Tower is Ireland's oldest complete building and has served as an arsenal, a prison and a mint. As a key fortification we were surprised how small it was and how easily it could be missed - we only realised what it was when we looked up and read a plaque.



Ferry crossing point - Ballyhack to Passage



Waterford's main street

Famous crystal glass





Remains of the old walls can still be seen in Waterford



Waterford Crystal clock

WATERFORD CRYSTAL

Even the Nowak's have heard of Waterford Crystal. We went on a very informative tour of this famous factory. We were shown the whole process from design to finishing. The business has had a checkered past. It was established in 1783 only to be closed down 68 years later due to punitive taxes. Eventually it was resurrected by a Czech artisan early last century but in 2009 this icon suffered badly in the recent economic crisis and is today in touch-and-go mode. It's a real pity because the glass blowing, cutting and sculpting skills we saw in our tour were truly amazing. We marveled at the many examples of trophies and momentos on display - some for the up and coming London Olympic Games and for sports awards all over the world. It is a tour we really enjoyed and we hope that the business survives as it is quite unique. There are, apparently, subsidiaries all over the world.

WATERFORD TOWN

Waterford (yet another name that has been recycled in Australia), was founded by the Vikings who turned it into a booming trading port where

travelers passing through were charged "nose money". It was given that name because default resulted in a nose being cut off! Eventually (as was the case in many towns in this part of Ireland) Cromwell arrived and after some early resistance he eventually broke through the defenses and ransacked its castle and exported the catholics he did not slaughter as slaves to USA. Today Waterford is one of Ireland's biggest cities.

Waterford, like many of the towns we have seen in this area, is full of colorful, tightly packed buildings. It is not picture-postcard perfect, but interesting and full of life. We parked and walked around. We thought the car park on the sea shore, blocking the view from the shops across to the inlet, was very bad planning. Worse still, the view to the other side of the inlet consists of what looked like industrial sites. We tried to enjoy our walk but rain drove us back to the car and off home. Tomorrow we aim to have a rest day in our little cottage by the sea. On Thursday we will head to Newbridge to the second part of our home exchange.

There are a wealth of things to see from our base at Morriscastle - the beaches, the mountains, the rolling green hills, the little villages, the narrow alleyways, the historical centres, the ramparts and castles and of course - the hedges.



Narrow Waterford alleyway



2012 London Olympic Games trophy



Skilled artisan - glass carving



2012 London Olympic Games trophy

