

2011 - IRELAND

14 June 2011

LEG 10
14 DAYS IN IRELAND
(DRIVING ALONG THE
SOUTH AND WESTERN
COASTS BY VAN)



Driving South to County Tipperary

BUS RIDE

After packing our clothes the night before, we rose early to lovely sunshine. Maybe, just maybe, the weather has turned. Originally Pauric and Nora were going to take us to pick up our van near the airport but their car broke down so we had to implement Plan B. So, after some final house cleaning, we walked to the bus station and caught the coach to the airport.

Our place in Newbridge has been wonderful and relaxing. It's the sort of area we would have simply driven past without stopping had it not been for our house swap. But, after 4 days of traveling around the area using the house as a base, we realise why people are attracted to County Kildare. It has a quality feel about it - lush green, beautifully manicured pastures, clean waterways, superior tourist attractions, gorgeously winding county lanes and lots of stately homes (both old and newly built). Pity about the hedges. Ironically the bus trip did allow us to see more of the Kildare County countryside. Sitting up high has its advantages.

ANOTHER VAN

We were picked up at the airport by the van hire company. Their depot was adjacent to the airport on a farm tucked



*Dual Irish
and
English
signage*



Our van for the next two weeks





I am not sharing these strawberries with anyone!!!



away from the maddening crowds. After the formalities we pointed the GPS back to Newbridge and gave it its head. Peeved at not seeing Dublin the day before, the GPS decided to make us see what we had missed. Trouble was it had a total mental breakdown at the worst possible moment and we found ourselves in the centre of Dublin. The friggen GPS then kept taking us in circles round the inner streets until I commanded my on-board alternative navigator (Heather "the master") to chaperone me. Luckily, with her trusty paper maps, she guided me along a crazy (but calm) zig zag pattern until we both eventually recognised some landmarks. Anyway, we did enjoy some of the sights of Dublin.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Our van is different to the other two we have rented on our trip. This one has two permanent single beds along one side of the van. The rest of the van is about the same as the others. But much to our surprise it is a lot longer than we expected - as long as the larger van we had in Southern England (which we thought was a little too long for our liking) - but, it is a little narrower. Unfortunately, the turning circle, if you can call it a turning circle, is absolutely

monstrous. I am going to have to watch where I decide to turn around or we could come a cropper. It's turning circle is almost as bad as the little Mercedes we hired in Northern Ireland. All in all it will take a couple of days to get accustomed to it. Meanwhile Heather has already settled down to read her book - she has 2 weeks maximum (we are not taking any books home with us).

TWO OBSERVATIONS

1. We have met a surprising number of Polish people in Ireland. There are even 2 polish grocery shops in Newbridge. We understand many Poles emigrated here when Ireland was booming economically. Ireland, like Poland, is devoutly Catholic which made assimilation into the community less challenging. Both are also in the European Union which has made border crossing easier.
2. There is a big debate here about the future of the peat industry. If the current rate of peat removal continues there will not be any peat left by 2020. The government is trying to persuade the population that there are better alternatives to using peat (with limited success).

It's late on a cold spring evening. It's windy outside. Everyone is enjoying themselves drinking and singing. One of the drinkers is unsure of the pub rules. He asks the publican - "In Australia we have set hours for drinking - when do you close the bar?" "Mmmm" says the publican. "In September."



Back on the road again



2 single bunk beds



Looking from back door through bunk beds to kitchen and dining area up front and toilet/bathroom to the left



Looking back from drivers seat to kitchen