

2011 - IRELAND

17 June 2011



Mizen Peninsula

BALTIMORE

We hold Lonely Planet in the highest esteem
It let's us know what's bad, or reasonable, or really keen
Places that we must shun, other places held in awe
But the book stressed to us "don't miss beautiful Baltimore"

The Irish south west coastal area is a land of deep green
Definitely one of the best locations we had ever seen
With anticipation we were biting our nails raw
Because we were coming closer and closer to Baltimore

We drove through many villages with a pretty main street
Quaint little places, vibrant, shop colors very upbeat
Eventually, expectantly, in front of us on the shore
We rounded the last corner to expose "our" Baltimore

Now as seasoned travelers we've seen our fair share
Cobbled alleyways, ruined buildings, monuments restored with
loving care
It's best to linger longer in villages, always wanting more
Until, that was, when we eventually, finally, eyed Baltimore.

The fish smell and diesel hit us right in the nose
Biking up its steep streets sweating in our clothes
Limited parking, no shops to speak of was Heather's last straw
We hightailed out of Lonely Planet's heaven called Baltimore

We now look back on all this with a knowing wry grin
We were just about to chuck the book away in the rubbish bin
No, its been a great book to date - just look beyond one flaw
The writer obviously found a lover in boring Baltimore

Fastnet Rock Lighthouse is located 10kms south of the mainland. It was built in 1904 from more than 2000 huge interlocking basalt bricks. An earlier iron version fell down.



Sun shining brightly on Baltimore

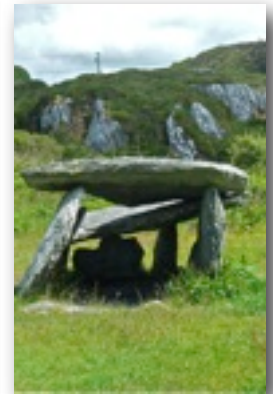


Baltimore putting on its best face for Heather

Baltimore lost a large part of its population in 1657. African pirates captured 200 unfortunate local inhabitants and shipped them to Africa as slaves. Luckily all 200 were English!!



Pretty Schull village where we walked the streets and had a long chat to a shopkeeper



Ancient burial site found on the road to Mizen Head

THE ROAD TO MIZEN HEAD

Names on the Mizen Peninsula are becoming more imaginative. If you discount Baltimore (and a couple of others like Lowertown or Church Cross) the names are very Irish sounding - Skibbereen, Inishbeg, Foilnamuck, Ballydehob, Schull, Toormore, Raheenragh, Rathruane, Goleen, Knockaphuca, Ballyvoige, Clogane etc etc. You have to slowly pronounce the name in your head before saying it out loud.

Our plan today was to drive around and explore three small peninsulas - Mizen, Sheep's Head and Beara. We were lucky we got as far as we did - Mizen. There was so much to see and we drove like typical tourists, only slower, and therefore had to pull over many times to allow locals to go past. To make matters "worse" we had a lovely sunny day which meant, because of better lighting conditions, we could take more photos than usual. And what a day it was. Driving

along, hugging the coastline, was a real treat. Being able to see the scenery without rain or overcast conditions was even better.

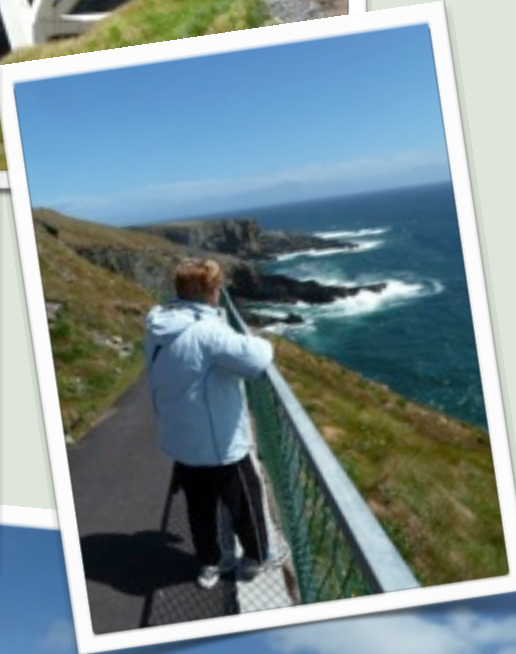
After sleeping in until 9.30, we headed off on our day's journey. Although the coastal scenery was delightful, all the hoopla about Baltimore was not warranted. I suppose the delightful towns we have seen over the last few days, have given us high expectations. We rode around the town to get some much needed exercise and then drove back the way we came to do some food shopping. Then it was on to the peninsula, some 24 km distant.



MIZEN HEAD

The coastline along here is what we expected to see - deep inlets with magnificent high cliffs and white surf bashing against the base. This is the most south-westerly part of Ireland - where the warm Gulf Stream flows, giving this part of the country a very mild climate. We meandered along the coast and finally came to Mizen Head, where a wind blown weather and communications station is open to the public. There was a very informative museum dedicated to maritime and communication activities. Of particular interest was a display all about Marconi, the inventor of wireless communication, who did some of his experiments in this area. The walk to the station itself (crossing over a breathtakingly high connecting bridge) was a highlight. We enjoyed watching the huge waves break on the rocks below. The Atlantic Ocean was a beautiful turquoise and contrasted with the bright green of the fields.

Bridge over to Mizen Head weather station



Ireland's most south-western mainland point

