

2011 - IRELAND

22 June 2011



County Clare

The Scots know it as peat. The Irish have their own word it - turf

LEAVING DINGLE PENINSULA

It is estimated that the chief inhabitants on the peninsula, all 500,000 of them, are sheep. Following closely behind in numbers, are tourists. While the sheep concentrate on eating grass, tourists concentrate in Dingle before going out to greener pastures. We thank god we have not visited in the peak months of July and August because we have seen more people here than elsewhere on our travels.

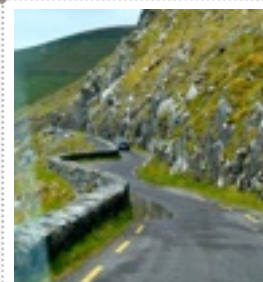
We drove out of our caravan park back towards the coast and ambled along some back roads. The scenery around here was not as dramatic as yesterday but we were able to view the quiet countryside from a high vantage point. We completed a circuit and arrived back in Dingle. Thankfully it was early and the tourist buses were only just beginning to arrive. After some initial fumbling around we found the road to the Connor Pass. This is the alternate scenic exit from the peninsular, via the mountains. Unfortunately, we were unable to continue. A large sign warned that the road was only passable by vehicles of no more than 1.8 metres in width. Even allowing for the fact that whoever constructed the sign was overstating the issue, we thought that 2.1 metres might be out of the question. We took the longer, less dramatic route to Tralee to find a gas supplier.



Tourist downpour imminent in Dingle - port area



Dingle harbor



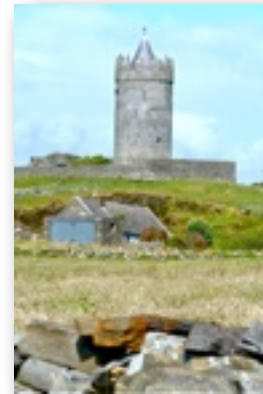
Dingle mountain road

At Kilkee beach when the tide is fully out, deep rock pools are exposed and can be explored by the brave. What needs to be added is "wet suits are a prerequisite in summer to guard against the cold".





Kilrush main street was wide with brightly colored buildings



Imposing building near our camping spot

THE IRISH LANDSCAPE

We have found the Irish countryside to be more intensely populated than we imagined it would be. A fair proportion of the houses here have been recently built. The houses tend to stand out more starkly because they are painted in bright colors and few have any garden around them. They stand out starkly against the grey sky (or blue sky if ever that would happen). The general design has a similarity about it. Dutch gables abound. The very newest houses are showing a new trend for feature stone walls. It's surprising to us that in a climate where rain and snow is normal that a lot of houses have front doors that open directly to



the elements (there is no porch). It also is very evident that developers buy a tract of land, build one house and then duplicate this house many times over - we call them ditto estates.

These ditto estates are mirrored in coastal areas by holiday parks. Line upon line, upon line, of mobile houses that blight the seaside with not a tree or shrub in sight. Yuk.

COUNTY CLARE

We decided not to spend more time in Dingle because we needed to replace our gas bottle which ran out of gas last night. The nearest town we could find with an authorised agent was Tralee, some 20kms away. At least it was in the direction we

intended to go. We spent a good hour or more trying to find the place - we wish that actual addresses are given rather than vague directions. It can be very stressful when even the GPS can't find an ambiguous location. This has happened many times on our trip. When we finally found a place where we could exchange our gas bottle for a full one I realised that the valve turncock was faulty and the bottle was still half full. I rectified the situation while Heather endured my swearing. We had wasted a half day but finally Heather was able to brew a cup of tea, and we had spent a little time in a town we normally would have simply driven through. Tralee is a busy, colourful, lovely looking city. Heather knows, because she spent an hour walking around looking for the gas supplier, whilst I sat and minded the van. As it was only about 2 pm we decided to drive on and get as close to County Galway as we could. We intend to spend a couple of days there.



These houses contrasted beautifully against the skyline



County Clare coastal view



Headlands on the way through County Clare



Kilkee inlet beach