

2011 - SCOTLAND

6 May 2011

Today we experienced the major memory we had of Scotland almost 30 years ago - a vast wilderness.

Here we are camped for the night in a picturesque spot, near the furthest western tip of the Scottish mainland and far from the maddening crowd. This place is called the Fort of the Storms but the weather has improved and we are sitting in the van enjoying the setting sun. Twilight here is very long and it gets dark around 10.30pm. Our view is worth bottling. We are told that in the early morning, otters and red deer can be observed, so we will be on the lookout. There is not a soul around and we are pleased that, once again, we took a less traveled road and were rewarded with a location to remember forever.

GLENCOE

The area around Glencoe, where we stayed last night, is geologically dramatic. The mountains here rise spectacularly either side of the valley. Photos don't adequately show the scale of the place. There was snow on some high spots and the weather is renowned for its freezing temperatures. Today was no different. After a short visit to the Glencoe Visitor Centre, (where we were informed about local geology and human history) we drove up the impressive valley along with the loads of tourists and stopped at various locations to take in the views. Magnificent. So many superb photos. Sitting in the van eating morning tea, looking at the beauty surrounding us made us realise we are so fortunate to be able to experience this.



Fort of the Storms



Dun Ghallan or Fort of the Storms for the night - a striking wild camp



Narrow roads and bridges



Home away from home

The Ardnamurchan peninsular is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the western Highlands.

But few people are prepared to travel along the winding coast-hugging southern one-lane road.





Glencoe - a very austere landscape



THE ROAD TO FORT WILLIAM

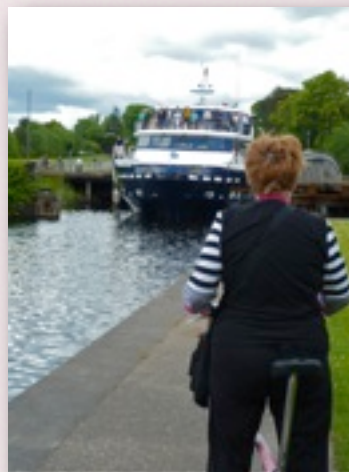
Many of the B roads around here are narrow and winding. We had to make doubly sure of our safety because there was evidently a major motor bike competition being held because motor bikes were roaring around every corner when we least expected them.

We had decided to head for Fort William and the Caledonian Canal but Heather decided it might be better to take the more scenic route around Loch Leven. Wow. The place was very tranquil and we both were glad we did not have any urgent schedule.

CALEDONIAN CANAL

The guide books told us not to miss Fort William which was supposed to be absolutely stunning but we didn't stop because parking was an issue and the divided highway separates the town from the water side. We did though admire the mountain towering behind Fort William. Ben Nevis is Scotland's highest mountain. Further on, we came across the 7 mile long Caledonian Canal where we watched in awe as a very large ship progressed down 5 of the 8 locks. The whole process takes 1.5 hours so we rode alongside the

canal on the tow path to its end and, on the way back, met the ship coming out of the final lock of Neptune's Staircase, as its called. The final part was witnessed by a large crowd. It involved the ship going across a road and a rail bridge. The road bridge was drawn up while the rail bridge swiveled to allow the ship through.



It was finally on to Malaig to catch a ferry to the Isle of Skye. But as vigilant as ever, Heather spied in the guidebook two worthy places to detour - the monument to the Scottish uprising and a visit to the Ardnamurchan coastline where we are camped for the night.

We are eating very well - usually a hearty early breakfast and fresh food lunch - we are even stopping for morning and afternoon teas. But because the daylight is so long we tend not to get dinner organised until very late - usually 8.30pm. This is not good for digestion so we have decided to ensure that we eat dinner before 7pm.



View from atop the Glenfinnan monument - in memory of the Scots who died in the Jacobite rebellion



View of Loch Leven

