

2011 - SCOTLAND

1 May 2011



Far Away From the Maddening Crowds

The Isle of Arran is said to be a “mini Scotland” with it’s lowlands and highlands.



SO NICE

The island of Arran has 7 strategically placed golf courses. Many are located rather dramatically alongside the road. Heather remarked how beautifully manicured the paddocks were as we drove out of our caravan park until we realized there was a flag on the green!! We were told later that at one course golfers have to tee off over the main road because the road runs right through the middle. Fore!!!

Travelers come to Arran to play golf, ride bikes, hike up mountains and to generally kick their shoes off and relax (or freeze). The Nowak’s of course came here to get away from the maddening crowds and despite this being a long weekend (Bank holiday coupled with the royal wedding) we have succeeded. Arran is exactly like the Scotland we remembered many years ago - a strangely beautiful wilderness. The mixture of nature’s blossoming spring colors, the bleak yet beautiful mountainous vistas that go on for miles and miles, the straggly unkempt sheep, the icy cold winds and Scottish people who we love to listen to.

Arran is the first of a number of islands we intend to visit. What a great start. We even saw quite a large herd of wild deer.



Clean, green and unspoilt. Arran is a road less traveled.





Heather was warned by Barbara not to walk through any stones near Inverness.

“Barbara, you did not warm me about the stones at Machrie Moor!!!!”



Don't touch the stones or walk through them Heather!!

STONE CIRCLES

Arran has a very long history. The Machrie Moor upright sandstones slabs, for example, can be traced back to occupancy some 6000 years ago. The stones were believed to be used for ceremonial purposes. We wondered whether they were used in sacrifices so Heather tested this out with dramatic results. (Cross Stitch by Dianna Galbaldon, one of her favorite books, is based around a stone circle such as this). There are numerous stone circle sites in close proximity in this area but evidently the Machrie Moor stones are the most impressive.

Our walk to the stones was made all the more memorable when we met a lovely local couple who gave us an insight into the many attractions on Arran. They also shared their knowledge about local bird life and we spied pheasants and eagles. We spent the morning chatting as we walked with Don and Trish and will now travel with a more discerning eye. They told us about a recent law passed in Scotland that allows public access through any land. The walk to the stones was through farming properties with ewes and newly born lambs. It means that anyone can, with due care, traipse through any land (including

golf courses). We were concerned because we saw many dogs without leads where owners should have known better.

BRODICK CASTLE

When we first saw the castle it looked very Victorian. The castle had mock turrets and an immense garden. But lurking beneath its walls are remnants of a medieval stronghold with a bloody and turbulent past. It was originally a fortress built in 1255 but it was totally destroyed during the 14th century Wars of Independence and rebuilt to be destroyed again with the invasion of Scotland by Henry VIII in 1544. A century later it was home to Oliver Cromwell's men and then more recently it was totally updated as a (pleasure) palace for the Dukes of Hamilton, the last of whom was a very keen hunter. Heather and I were amazed at how many deer heads adorned the hunting gallery and stairs. The last Duke was certainly trigger happy but we were not allowed to record this on camera. Brodick has a lived-in feeling with lots of interesting furniture and Victorian era memorabilia. The National Trust took over the estate in 1957 because the owner was in debt (taxes).

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