

Blog 5 - April 25th (Dublin to Waterford)



Up bright and early (5:00 a.m.) to get ready for our 6:15 pick up taking us to Heuston Station. This was our earliest start time yet. We didn't have time for breakfast. Another lovely gentleman picked us up and gave us another mini history lesson as he drove us to the station. He took us to see the Guinness Distillery and it was huge. It takes up about 4 city blocks and our driver said it is expanding every year.

The Heuston Station was another surprise!

Very modern, easily accessible, good directions and instructions and lots of coffee shops. We were able to get coffee and a muffin so we didn't starve. Love the coffee shop name.



One nice touch that we have noticed is that someone has taken pianos, painted them almost art deco and have place them in Stations for people to play. (Thank God it was locked or Kevin would have made me play - whew - dodged that bullet).



No problem getting our tickets printed, and we had assigned seats. How civilized. The trains remind me a little of the Shinkansen in Japan, but they don't get that fast. Thank God because looking out the window made me nauseous as it was. The trains were very quiet, not crowded at all, ultra-modern. Each table had a charging station as well so that was a big help.

Dublin to Waterford was about a 2 hour ride. (Plunkett Station). The weather has turned very cold, so the short walk to our hotel The Fitzwilton felt like miles. We were freezing. It



was truly a short walk, about 600 meters (halfway to the Sicamous from our condo).



We were able to check-in but there were no rooms ready so we checked our suitcases and headed out on another adventure. Just as we left the hotel the skies opened up and within 5 minutes we were soaked from the waist down. Our jackets beaded the rain, but the wind blew it back on us. Now we were soaked and freezing. We decided to take cover in the Dooley Hotel Cafe. An Americano warmed up our hands, and a bowl of porridge my stomach. (big mistake - forgot about the oats). Kevin has a delicious looking scone, with clotted cream and jam (I was envious). Love the decor - some great musical instruments hanging on the walls.



We enjoyed the warmth of this cozy bar/cafe and by the time we had dried out, the rain has stopped. We stopped at the local Visitor's Centre to get a few maps of the places we would be visiting over the next week or so and to get some suggestions for "the" places to see in Waterford. Great info from the man there and he got us started on our Waterford day.

We were only a block from our first destination "The Viking Triangle". We found out that Waterford actually began as a Viking city under the rule of Reginald. It is one of the oldest settlements in Ireland and was quite prosperous because of the monks, the Vikings and the Normans.



We saw a scale replica of a Viking dragon boat then decided to take in the “King of the Vikings” virtual tour. That was amazing! We were in a freezing longhouse, video/audio headsets on and voilà we were in a Viking City. It felt like we were right there, and once or twice I ducked because I thought I was going to be hit. Love it! Learned a lot and can now tell Zen that I really do know about a Virtual headset. (He asked for one for Christmas last year and I had no idea what he was talking about.) What a history lesson. Well worth the 10 Euros admission.

We continued walking along the waterfront and up to the Waterford Crystal Factory. The factory traces its origins back 200 years, however it was closed for 100 years until it reopened under new owners.

Another fabulous, informational tour. We learned that it takes 8 years to become a master craftsman in each of the major disciplines and most people only manage to master one of the disciplines (designer/blower; cutters; engravers). The constant quality assurance measures are incredible and ensures that there are no flaws in the pieces. If they find one, the piece is rejected, smash and recycle back into material to try again.



As we began the tour our guide showed us the first piece that was made by Miroslav Havel the only person who mastered all three disciplines. Also, there was an amazing crystal clock. The wooden clock was very old and was donated to

the factory, the finished crystal cabinet was beautiful.

The tour took us through each phase of the creation of the fine crystal that Waterford is so famous for. We learned that the only difference between crystal and glass is the amount of lead in the product. Anything over 30% lead content is crystal, anything under is just plain, ordinary glass.

Several designer pieces really caught my eye. Beautiful.



As with most tours, in fact all tours, you end up in their “show room/gift shops”. It was fun walking around looking at these works of art. It was unreal the number of people who were buying tons of crystal - there was no such thing as a “cheap” piece. However, having said that we did find some very reasonable pieces. We decided for fun to each pick out our favorite pieces - Judi choose these beautiful wine glasses, with different colours on the stem work and beautiful cuts in the pattern; Kevin choose a whiskey decanter, equally as beautiful. Then we went back and looked at the prices. Judi’s glasses were 79 Euros a piece and the decanter was 75 Euros.





Judi did have an agenda though. At the last Whiskey Tasting Event, her friend Karen showed her a beautiful necklace that she had bought at the Waterford Crystal factory a few years ago. It was a tri-sting of sterling silver with a shamrock on each strand. Judi did manage to find one that was a little different, but along the same lines. (Didn't want to tell her that it looked beautiful on her). She made up her mind to purchase it for herself as a

70th birthday present. I am glad she did. It really is lovely. We won't discuss price!



The tour lasted about an hour and as we were heading back to the waterfront it started to spit rain - just a drop or two. We wanted to go to Reg's Tower, but we got there at 1:30 and it was closed from 1:30 to 4:30. We crossed it off our list. We did a bit of a walking tour in the downtown area. Waterford is actually a nice little town, lots of history and contained in a manageable area.



We stopped for lunch at the No. 9 family restaurant/cafe which the hotel clerk has recommended to us. Had soup and a salad, AND a very nice South African white wine which we will try to find when we get back home. It was a lovely, crisp Sauvignon Blanc.

We continue our journey and found a great "Irish" souvenir store which had lots of nice, flat, reasonably priced gifts to take home from Ireland. We are not bringing gifts back per se.... but need something for the grandkids. (Sorry Neil).

Outside it was getting colder by the minute and starting to rain quite a bit. Since it was after 3, we knew that our room would be ready so we headed back to the hotel. It had been a long, enjoyable day for us however we were ready to put our feet up and rest. Hot showers, a wee dram of Glendalough and an early night.

Tomorrow we have another early departure, but we had learned our lesson. We pre-ordered a cab for 6:45 as the forecast was windy and raining and we asked the desk to have a boxed breakfast prepared for us to take on the train.

We both are enjoying Ireland, but there is so much to see. We may have to come back. I keep saying that in the hopes that Kevin rereads the blogs.

Hopefully when we get back to Penticton the weather will be warmer. Annabelle, the jackets are fabulous. Well worth the extra pennies. Every traveller should have one.

K & J