

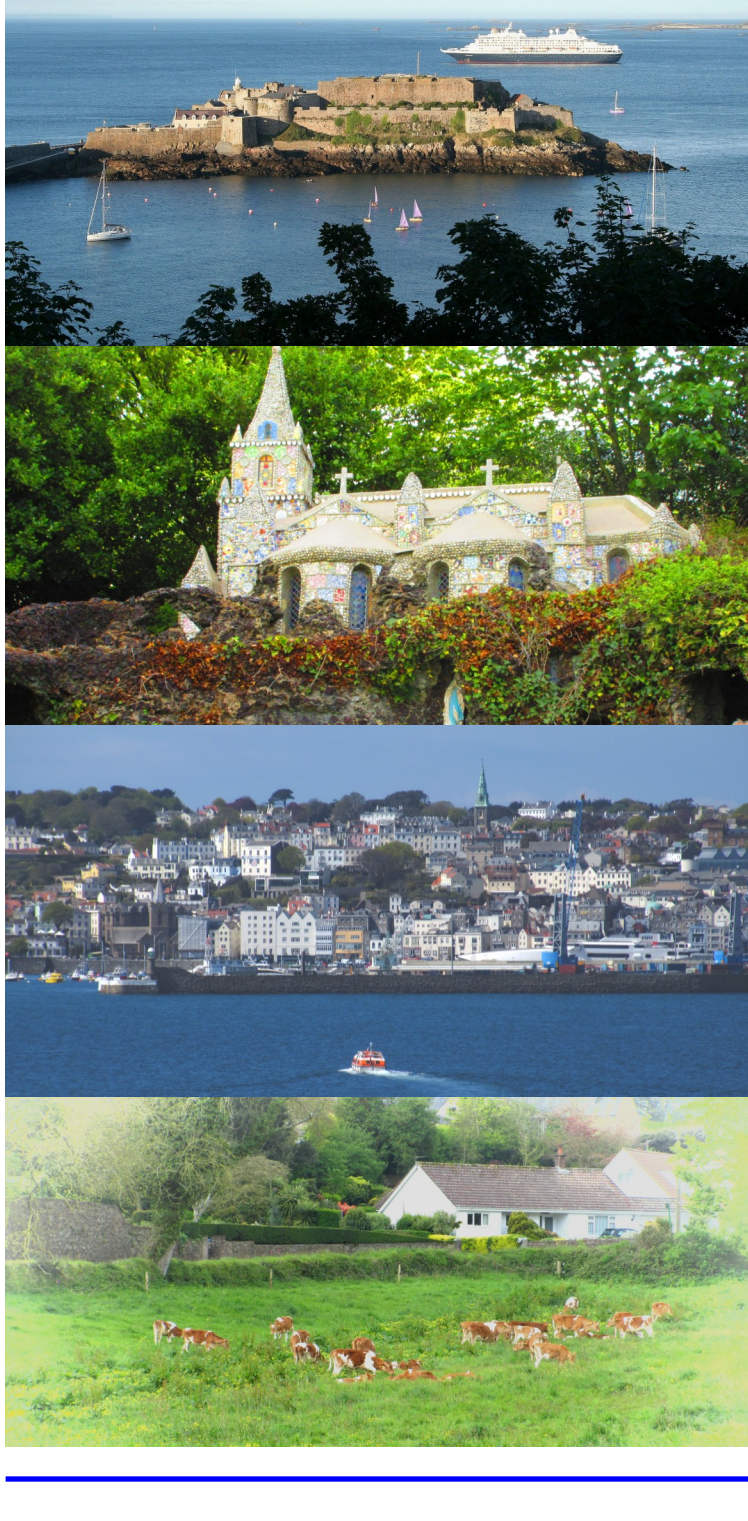
This is a BIG one!!!!

Well, Bob & I ended the month of April by flying to London on Friday, the 28th. This was the beginning of our newest adventure, a 12 day cruise around the *British Isles* on the 'Caribbean Princess'. This was my first visit to Europe, which made it extra special for me. Bob has been to parts of Europe, but not *London or Ireland*. We had an over night flight which brought us into *London* early Saturday AM. Our plan was to spend Saturday and Sunday touring London, before boarding the ship on Monday. That plan was reduced to one day of touring as we were both dealing with *jet lag* on Saturday. On Sunday, we used our time touring the city via the available hop on and off tour buses, including a boat tour on the *River Thames*. This is a good time to bring out the fact that we did not have a drop of rain during the 14 days, which was wonderful. Warm, it was not, mostly in the 50's with a short dip below and a brief rise above in the 60's. We stayed at the *Grange Tower Bridge Hotel in London*, which worked out well. Princess had a representative at the hotel for help if we needed it. The first picture below is of me near our hotel, with the *Grange Tower Bridge* in the background. Following this are some pictures we selected while riding around the city. The next picture is of the Westminster Abbey, built in 1050 AD, in Romanesque style. All this 'old stuff' is so interesting! The picture up top is of the Tower of London, founded towards the end of the year 1066 as part of the Norman conquest of England. Do you remember that from the history books? The next picture is of the London Eye. Next, I threw in a couple of pictures of what a business street and a residential street look like. Just a little added touch to end page one. The chimneys caught my attention.



Guernsey of the Channel Islands & Cobh, Ireland

Guernsey is an island in the English Channel, off the coast of Normandy, and dates back to 1204. We arrived 6:00 AM on May 2nd. While approaching, we viewed the *Castle Cornet* which was built as a fortified castle between 1206 and 1256. After mooring off shore, we took a tour bus, which brought us to the 'Little Church', the smallest consecrated Church in the World. It was created by Brother Deodat, in 1914, in spite of much criticism. There is a great deal of energy into saving the church. The next pictures are of St Peter Port plus a very lush green farm landscape.



Alright, a heads up on this one, as this is all about my *Bob and the Irish part of his family!* For the first time ever, he stepped on Irish soil. This is one of the reasons why we took this cruise. He even kissed the *Blarney Stone!* We were surprised when our group was given priority over the couple of hundred people already on line! I did not go up because of my knees. Bob took some pictures on the way up and someone took his picture while kissing the stone. Bob says, as with tradition, he feels much 'smarter' now!!



Dublin, Ireland & Belfast

May 4th, we arrived in Dublin and once again took a guided bus tour. Two of the main stops on the tour were *St Patrick's Cathedral* which dates back to 1191 with a great deal of history. There was a door set aside in the Cathedral, called the *Door of Reconciliation*, which told a story of how the church door was instrumental in making peace between two families at war with each other. The Cathedral was also full of beautiful stained glass, throughout. We also visited 'Trinity College' which dates back to 1592. Within the library of Trinity College is *The Book of Kells*, an illuminated manuscript Gospel book in Latin containing the four Gospels of the New Testament.



Belfast is in Northern Ireland. We did not take any bus tours here, instead we went on shore and just walked around the town. In the picture below, you can see people relaxing on the lawns, steps to the building, etc. We thought it must be some sort of holiday or something? Well, the real reason is the sunny warm weather today is a rarity, as it is usually overcast, rainy and cool. People were taking advantage of the warmth. The monument in the next photo is a monument to the memory of the 'Titanic', as the ship was built here in Belfast.

With all this touring, you may forget that we are actually on a cruise ship as well. In the next picture, Bob & I had our picture taken with the Ship's Captain, Marco Fortezze. This was at a gathering of members of the Captain's Circle, those of us who frequently sail with the Princess Cruise Line.



Greenock, Scotland May 6th and May 7th

We arrived in Scotland at 7:30 AM, and docked near the town of Greenock. We took a bus tour through the beautiful lush green country side. I know what you are thinking and no, we did not see the Loch Ness Monster! Below is a picture of Bob & I at lakeside in the town of Luss. The next two pictures are some samples of the scenic beauty in the area. Later that night we sailed again.

May 7th was an at sea day. We had two formal nights on board and this was one of them. The next picture is of Karen & David from Idaho, another fine couple we met while cruising. The next picture is of the dining room service people who were outstanding, with the Head Waiter on the right. After dinner, we attended the evening entertainment, which as a whole, I have to say was the best of any of the cruises. This night we had the music and dance of Scotland, which was excellent. I think the last picture speaks for itself. We posed for this one for the ship's photographers.



Kirkwall, United Kingdom Invergordon & South Edinburgh Scotland

Kirkwall dates back to the time of Vikings in history. The area is known for prehistoric sites. We took a bus tour ride while in Invergordon to get a general feel for the area. The scenery was beautiful. We saw multiple fields of bright yellow, farms that grow Rapeseed for the oil it contains. We also looked down a walk way over looking the water falls, 'Falls of Shin'.

The next set of pictures are of Edinburgh Castle, and we toured the castle. Once again, our tour guide was able to get us in before the big crowds. The next pictures are in and around the castle, including St Margaret's Chapel. Of course, this castle is the site of 'The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo', held in August.



Heading for Le Havre, France

Following Queensferry on Wednesday, we spent Thursday at sea before we docked in Le Havre, France on Friday. Although it was very tempting, we did not sign up for the tour to Paris. It would involve a three hour bus trip each way to Paris and back. We felt this would be too much the day before the end of the cruise, so we stayed on board. The pictures below are of the cooking demonstration presentation, during our day at sea. At the end, all the chefs came out on stage. Following this there was a tour of the kitchens, which Bob & I did not take part in as we had done this before.

I have been more than pleased at what came out of the kitchen for me gluten free, especially in the area of deserts. I took one picture of a cake type desert, which was delicious, and looked beautiful.

Below is the line up of tour buses ready to take people from the ship to Paris. Following this is a picture of Le Havre from the ship. After leaving the ship, on our way to the Heathrow Airport, I took one last picture of the ship. Quite an adventure for us both!!!



Smith Family Newsletter