



Adventure #14 – For Love of Scotland

When I went to buy my daily newspaper on a recent Saturday, the chap running the till was clearly Scottish, as you could tell by his accent. Of course, he could tell by my accent that I was not local, so we got into a chat, during which he asserted that he was in such a good mood..... simply because he was Scottish.

So, is everyone in Scotland just simply happier than elsewhere? A recent newspaper survey indicated that the people in Scotland were the happiest and most well-adjusted people in the UK, finishing slightly ahead of those in the English Borders (where we are living) and way ahead of the Midlands, Southwest, and Wales and WAY, WAY ahead of Northern Ireland, London and the Southeast.

This matches what we have experienced. Folks from the Southeast and London seem genuinely grumpy and unpleasant, despite having the best standard of living and most job opportunities in Britain. Meanwhile, Scotland has a much slower growth rate and not nearly as many jobs, cities, or services. This is recognized by everyone, as indicated in yet another newspaper survey in which Scotland was ranked low in terms of where people thought they could find employment, but highest in terms of where they wished they could live.

And when you are north of the wall, the people are just,....well,....different. When Wendy walks into the butcher shop in Denholm, for some fresh made haggis, the butcher immediately strikes up conversation, even though she only comes in every couple of months. In Peebles, recently, we walked out of a shop and stopped for a second to figure out if we wanted to turn left or right to get to our next stop. We must have looked a wee bit confused, because a local man stopped in his tracks and asked if we needed help. When Pastor Dave and his son, Matt, were here visiting, they had similar experiences of people stopping on the sidewalk to make sure they knew where they were headed. How often does THAT happen to you in the states? Once at breakfast, at a wee inn, Dave asked for something that they did not have in the kitchen, and did not usually serve.....so the cook sent her assistant running across the street to get a brand new jar from the store. When has THAT ever happened to you in the states? And in our last trip to the Hebrides, we were in a town where there was so little parking that everyone double or triple parked.....and left their keys in the car, so that if you had to get out, you could move your neighbor's car to get

yours out from being blocked. Can you imagine THAT in the US?

So, yes, there is just something different about this place. And yes, the people are happier. And friendlier. We were adopted, before we even arrived, by Jack and Ann, who Pete met through an email to the local Masonic Lodge. They helped us make local arrangements and offered to lend us an entire kitchen set, even before we ever met them. We have a whole pub full of people in the Denholm area who we have met when attending the local folk festival and who warmly welcome us back every time we walk into the Fox and Hounds. Kenny organizes the local festival, and the first time we came he held tickets for us at no charge until we could arrive for the week and pay him. Ron is an estate agent and folk singer who offered us help in buying a retirement house in Scotland. Bill and Lena have offered to let us store things at their house so that in the future we do not have to bring heavy suitcases when we travel over for the annual folk festival. And George and Wendy have hosted us as guests at a big Masonic banquet. **Mind you, these are people we had never met before New Year's a year ago.**

We saw a t-shirt recently that said "Money can't buy happiness, but it can get you to Scotland, and that's the same thing." Is it something in the mountain water? Is it the fresh air? Is it something about living in the most beautiful place on earth? Is it from living so close to the fairies? Maybe it's the haggis !



In the Highlands, the happiness may be rampant because the Inverness Caledonian Thistle football team just won the Scottish Cup.





Maybe it's the scenery, Scotland has some beautiful beaches, like this one in Caithness, near Thurso.



Or the lochs and mountains of the Highlands.

Maybe it is Scotland's amazing history.....like Kelso Abbey.



Or the rugged coastline, like that around Dunnet Head at the very northern tip of the Great Britain.





It could be the bagpipes.



We don't know. But there IS, most definitely, SOMETHING about Scotland that just makes us happy.

Here are some photos if a unique evening we had a few weeks back. We took a cruise on a "narrow boat" which is designed for the UK canal system.



This is a picture taken from the boat, as it crossed the Lune River Aqueduct, which carries the canal over the River. You can see the river below thru the side of the bridge.

