

Adventures in Northern Ireland| Easter 2019 | Part 3

Thursday

Today we were supposed to be saying goodbye to **Ballyness Caravan Park** and moving towards Londonderry.

As you could probably tell on our previous post, we had fallen in love with this campsite so decided, based on the fact we could still day trip to Londonderry from here using public transport, we would extend our stay for two nights. Thankfully this could be accommodated, although we would need to

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change pitch. This was fine as actually we were intending on driving away from the campsite today anyway as we wanted to explore Portstewart Beach. We could get here from the site on the bus however we wanted to take advantage of the novelty that this was one of the few beaches where we could drive onto the sand and set our stall out.

On the way to Portstewart we stopped at the local fishmongers van at Portrush.



We'd been recommended this by the people who kindly fixed my bike yesterday – the visiting fishmonger visits the Eurospa car park every Thursday selling local fish and shellfish. Given that the weather was still fabu-

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lous, we took the opportunity to get some fresh fish. We stocked up on mussels, scallops, cod fillet and salmon and made our way to the beach.

Portstewart Strand is National trust owned, and as members this enabled us to drive on for free rather than the £6 fee to park on the beach otherwise. We would have happily paid the £6 as we've never come across a beach which you can do this at, although I am aware there is one in Wales somewhere I think.



It was exceptionally exciting driving on to the beach and we soon picked our spot, right by where the high tide was due to peak in just

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15 minutes. Keith got the table and chairs out and the camp cooker whilst I found my Prosecco glass and mini bottle and a beer for Keith.



The weather was fabulous – we couldn't believe our luck!

For lunch I got to tick off one of my bucket list items – “cook fresh mussels on the beach”. Never in a million years did I think we'd get to do it here, but we did and it was every bit as magical as I'd imagined!



After lunch, which attracted a few interested glances from passers by, I donned my new

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wetsuit, a Christmas present from mum, and had a dip in the sea. I was hoping to paddle board, but the waves were just a bit too big for me, still a novice!



We couldn't resist doing a little **video** of our days adventure on Portstewart Strand.

After a good couple of hours of pure relaxation on the beach we turned Ruby's wheels back towards Ballyness Caravan Park, stopping for a pic stop at Dunluce Castle and settled onto our new pitch and sparked up for our luxury fish bbq.



Keith did a tremendous job, scallops and Irish

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chorizo to start, then Cod and Salmon served with a simple vegetable rice. It was wonderful and the perfect way to finish our perfect day!🍷🍷🍷

Friday

Today we got up early ready to take the 09.37 bus from the campsite to Coleraine, where we changed onto the train - which took us to Derry. The train journey was very scenic and hugged the coast all the way. The journey took around 1.5 hours each way, but it was relaxing and nice not to drive. Plus I was looking forward to sampling either some Guinness or the local Walled city brewery ale.

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We enjoyed a meander around the **City Walls** – the walk is around 1 mile in length and the city walls are well preserved. In fact they are the best preserved in Ireland.



Unfortunately, despite dogs being allowed on the wall walk, we really struggled to find any pubs that welcomed dogs and due to alcohol laws here, we struggled to find pubs with outdoor or on street seating. This meant that our plans of a pub lunch were over sadly, so we ended up grabbing a sandwich from the supermarket before catching the earlier train back to Coleraine for our bus to the campsite. It was shame as we'd really been looking forward to a pub lunch. We did manage

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to grab a quick drink outside the Walled brewery, but it really was quick as by the time we had got served it left us than 10 minutes to finish it and get to the station!

Our **time lapse video** of some of the scenery on the train ride between Derry and Coleraine

Thankfully, as I had some diced beef to use, I had made a beef and tomato casserole in the slow cooker before we left with the intention of freezing it if we were full from lunch, so when we got back we enjoyed this along with some fresh bread.

Derry had been a nice day trip however we hadn't found it quite as welcoming as other

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places along the coast.

Saturday

Today we bid a very very sad farewell to our home for the previous 5 nights, Ballyness Caravan Park. This was the first time we'd based ourselves somewhere for 5 nights, as usually we get itchy feet, but it really is a testament to the wonderful facilities and location, the fact that we'd been extremely happy there for 5 nights. For anyone visiting this area, I'd highly recommend staying here. At just £26 pn it was an absolute bargain.

Today we were leaving the coast and driving south. Our destination was Newgrange - a prehistoric monument that is even older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids! We needed to

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cross the border into the Republic of Ireland, so we set Google maps going and began our journey. As we passed Antrim we stopped for a top up shop at Asda before stopping at **Lough Neagh shore park** at Antrim for lunch and a leg stretch.



Lough Neagh is the largest freshwater lake in the UK, it's circumference is 90miles long! Sadly, the weather had turned, and despite it being dry, the wind was blowing a hooley. This was a shame because this would have been a great spot for a paddleboard session. Also there was a lovely bike path too. So this would definitely be a place to return to. There is a nice looking caravan park here which would have been a good base for a

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few nights.

At this point, we looked at the map to discover that it was still almost 2 hours to Newgrange. As we were only having one night there, and we couldn't pre book tickets as there is major works going on at the visitor centre, plus Newgrange Lodge, our intended home for the night was unable to prebook, and essentially just a car park with hook up, we made the joint decision to change our plans. It was too much of a risk to do a 4 hour detour for an activity that either may not be open, or wouldn't be able to be enjoyed to full potential. We therefore have vowed to return when the works are completed.

We called our next campsite, to see if they could accommodate us a day earlier and luckily they could. We therefore set Google maps and Ruby's Wheels East, heading towards the **National Trust campsite** at Castle Ward, which we arrived at just over an hour later.

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