

1. Reminiscing about Scotland

René Valentina Doušová, Barbora Nápravníková,

Sabrina Hronová, Karolína Miková, 7BG

After endless stressful weeks full of tests, homework and mental exhaustion it was finally June 13th 21:45. Minds overflowed with excitement and a long night on the bus ahead of us, that's when our trip to Scotland began. Around noon the following day we arrived at Amsterdam, where we walked around for a bit and got to see the house of Anne Frank and the flower market. Soon after spending time exploring the city, we headed back to our bus, ready for a night on the ferry.

Finally after spending quite some time at the passport control, we managed to get on the ferry and were free to do what we wanted. Now we could tell you about all sorts of interesting stuff that happened that night, but I think we can all agree that what happened on the ferry, stays on the ferry.

Thursday was a day, when we woke up on the ferry which was getting closer to New Castle every minute. It was early in the morning when we got off. We headed to our bus and our first stop was a huge statue called Angel of the North, located in England. Then we continued to the borders of England and Scotland, where we enjoyed the picturesque view of the nearest hills. Another place, which took our breath away, was a nearby town called Melrose. We also visited the Abbotsford House. House in which the infamous Walter Scott has spent his life. At the end of the day, we met our families and enjoyed our first dinner with them.

Our second day in Scotland was as marvellous as the one before. We visited Edinburgh, the capital city of Scotland. First thing that shocked us was being supposed to climb a nearby located hill first thing in the morning. We were struggling to catch our breaths going up but in the end it was worth it. The view there was extraordinary. Visiting Edinburgh castle was terrific. Not only were we able to adore the castle from the outside but also visit its indoor areas. We spent the rest of the day wandering around the city and exploring its hidden treasures.

The sun was shining brightly, soft breeze brushing through our hair, and we immediately knew another amazing day full of adventure is ahead of us. As we

were climbing into the bus, we spotted our charming guide wearing a traditional kilt. After a second breakfast and a nap we saw the scenery behind the window gradually change from wooded plains to spectacular grassy hills of the Scottish Highlands. The bus stopped and we enjoyed a 5 kilometres long enriching walk in the picturesque landscape. After another short but well-deserved nap we found ourselves at the famous Loch Ness, where we boarded a boat in search for the monster. The luck was on our side as we managed to spot Nessie's slender serpent body in the murky waters. She probably wasn't hungry as we managed to successfully land back on shore without any casualties.

The next morning, we asked the host about our next destination – St. Andrew's. She said something along the lines of: "What a lovely place!" We later realised that her answer was definitely an understatement. St. Andrew's enchanted us all with its beautiful architecture, endlessly entangled alleys and a wild white coast rich in fauna. We've longed to explore more but we had to return to the bus to continue our journey elsewhere. Later that day we visited the Falkirk wheel, but sadly we didn't see it in action. Then we bravely ascended the monument of Sir William Wallace where we learned more about Scotland's national hero. In the evening we arrived at Old Stirling, and we were given plenty of time to explore the city on our own.

After waking up we realised that it was already Monday, and the end of our trip was nigh. As saddening as it was, we quickly packed our luggage stuffed with souvenirs and said farewells to our host families. On our way south we arrived at Gretna Green. A charming village known for allowing young couples that didn't receive their parents' blessings to get married. Soon after we crossed the border between England and Scotland we stopped at Hadrian's wall and learned more about Roman dominion. We were surrounded by sheep, their lovely lambs and their not so lovely feces the entire time. After leaving the fort we were headed straight to New Castle where our beloved Princess Seaways was already waiting for us.

It was a hot night, July 20th 22:30 and our trip has come to an end. We enjoyed seeing the beauty of Scotland and we're hoping to visit again someday. **What an amazing way to end the school year!**

2. Scotland, or There and Back Again

Ema Ditrichová 7.BG

It was the end of the school year, when the septimas, to the chagrin of many of the teaching staff, decided to go far over the barbarous land of Germany and the depths of the North Sea, to visit the mysterious, wild Scotland. Place inhabited by hairy cows, sheep, and folks who above all enjoy playing the bagpipes and talking in an accent that only they can understand, Scotland seemed like the perfect place for us to explore. And explore we did. Our journey begun in the evening of June the 13th, when we met up with our guide and his two grumpy, bus-driving companions. Under the care of Mr. Blomann, Švorc and Mrs. Dowden, off we went. Nothing could slow us down, for our hearts yearned to reach the green shores of United Kingdom. Well, we did stop at gas stations for the loo, and we did visit Amsterdam, the capital of fast and furious cyclists, and of Netherlands as well. But mainly the cyclist. Really, they took over the whole city, I'd bet the Dutch are cycling even in their sleep. Still, it didn't take more than a day after our departure from Prague, when those who didn't get biked over in Amsterdam boarded on to Princess Seaways, a ferry that was supposed to take us to the promised land. With only about 12 hours at the sea between us and a fresh serving of haggis, the spirits onboard were high. Not even no Wi-Fi or cabins the size of a bigger cupboard could sour our mood. The waters were calm, the ride was smooth and the wind powerplants waved at us even far from the shore of Netherlands. Princess Seaways offered something to do to everybody, with its outdoor decks for watching the sea, clubs with live music and bars that offered drinks off all kind, although we only tried the non-alcoholic ones, of course. Of course. Again, it only felt like a flash, until it was time to gather up and once more set foot on land.

Newcastle, the city where we landed, welcomed us with weather warmer than one would like. It was a promise of a week of temperatures that Scotland sees once in ten years. That means really hot. It couldn't stop us though, for the road was calling to us and we had no other choice but to continue in the direction of the Scottish border. After some stops in the cheerless home of the English the bus pulled up to a rock on a hill that didn't seem much different

from all the hills, we met on our trip so far. This particular hill was special though, as it had the border of Scotland and England on its back. It only took a glimpse down the Scottish side to see that the grass is indeed greener and the sky indeed bluer that way.

Our next stop introduced us to the home of a well-known writer Walter Scott. He was from Scotland if you couldn't tell. After that, we traveled to our own homes, and to meet the families that would be hosting us for the next few days. Some living right in the city of Stirling, some close nearby, the host families were of all shapes and sizes. Even if few of them made it so that the students will forever remember their stay as a who-survives adventure, all managed to keep us alive and somewhat fed. And that is a win in my books.

The next day greeted us with sun and not a cloud in the sky. The perfect opportunity to visit Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, and see what all the hype is about. Starting with the hike up to the top of Arthurs seat, a mountain suspiciously located right in the center of the city, it was assured that we will spend the day properly sweaty. Still, the view was stunning, so all was forgiven. After returning from the clouds, we visited the Edinburgh castle, a beautiful historical place, that almost measures up to the Prague castle. Almost. The rest of the day we could explore on our own accord, so that everybody could see what interests them the most. I personally went for a tour of the local second-hand stores, which are, for change, far superior to those in Prague. Evening came earlier than anybody would like, and soon it was time to head back to Stirling.

All hoped for a good night's sleep, because the next day we were to set on a long drive around the countryside of Scotland. The image of seeing the wilderness of Scotland with our own eyes was tinted with only one small shadow. The meeting was moved from 8am to 7:30am, which for most meant waking up at an unholy hour. The lack of sleep could be banished by a nap on the bus, so in the end we were fresh and ready to see what Scotland had to offer. An incredibly breath-taking nature is what it offered, and we had the chance to take a hike through some of it on a part of 154 km long hiking trail. Carrying on in our (t)rusty bus we arrived at the temple of monster-hunting – the Loch Ness. The lake itself being a bit of a monster, with its 200 m depth, black water and size of a small city, nonbelievers also couldn't help but agree, that even a whole colony of giant creatures could indeed live down there undetected. We took a tour around the

lake on a boat, where a local Scotsman told us about the monster and her story. When we stood on land once more there was no doubt in our hearts that even if there is no dinosaur swimming around in Scotland, the Loch Ness is truly home to creatures you wouldn't want to meet in your nightmares. And off we go. On our way back home to Stirling we stopped in a town in which a little corner shop sold whisky ice cream, a flavour that was surprisingly quite good. Personally, I think we should implement whiskey ice-cream in all Czech sweets-shops, and with it replace the crime that is pistachio ice-cream.

Our last Scottish day took us to St Andrews, university town, where prince William met his wife, Kate. More importantly its also the town where golf was invented. We took a walk around the oldest golf course, which, to me, looked more like a really sad meadow. To make all the golf-loving parents jealous, we took photos on some tiny stone bridge, where all the famous golfers supposedly end their careers. I guess my golf career is over then. What a shame.

St Andrews behind our back the final stop of the day was Stirling, the city where we lived the whole time, but until now didn't properly visit. First, we walked up to a tower on a green hill above the city. The Wallace Monument, an impressive building 67 meters high is a tribute to Scottish national hero, Sir William Wallace. It was him who defeated the Englishmen in the battle of Stirling bridge, a story that is worth hearing. We heard it from an actor dressed up as a Scottish warrior, who told the tale with passion that only somebody who really feels proud for their country could have. When we sat down in the bus again it was already 5pm and our last day in Scotland was nearing its end. We still had to visit the Stirling castle, but sadly we arrived only after it already stopped letting people in. Though the impressive cemetery nearby was still open, so many took a stroll between its various tombstones.

In the families it was time to pack our suitcases and have one more sleep under Scottish stars. In the morning goodbyes were said, lunch packages were received, and Stirling was left behind in a curtain of rain – the first rain we saw since our arrival. Back to Newcastle it was. Last stop on Scottish ground was Gretna Green, a border town, where many got married in the past. Young couples came to Gretna Green not only because the grass is greener and the sky is bluer in Scotland than in England, but also because it was forbidden to get married without the parents' agreement in England. Even with the city itself being

nothing too special, it was quite obvious that love is, has been and forever will be in the air. With this last hooray we left Scotland and dove back into the land of crumpets and tea at five. Hadrian's Wall was our last destination and left quite the impression on many. There is a hiking trail running along the old roman wall and I made a vow to walk it one day, as its one of the most beautiful places I've seen in a long time.

Hadrian's wall marked the complete end of our British adventure. Our old acquaintance Princess Seaways took us safely back across the North Sea and the bus delivered us the rest of the way to our sweet old Prague. Oh, what a wonderful place the Zličín parking lot is at 11 at night. And thus ended our trip to Scotland. It really was there and back again, and where our next adventure will take us, none of us know, yet. The Road goes ever on and on, down from the door where it began...


