

The West Highland Way

Milngavie to Drymen

Day 1, Saturday, July 1

14 miles



David and I are off on another long-distance hiking trip. This time we are in Scotland, doing the West Highland Way with friends Nancy, Jim, and Janet. We are going to walk 96 miles from Milngavie up to Fort William.

We arrived by train in Milngavie (pronounced "Mull GUY"!) yesterday afternoon and everyone was very eager to hit the trail this morning. As we were getting our obligatory beginning-of-our-trek photos done, Nancy surprised us all with a "wee dram" of whiskey before we got started. Let's hope she still has some left for our end-of-the walk celebration!

Everyone we met on the trail today—and there were a lot because this is a very popular trail—was extremely friendly and the locals were very welcoming and helpful. We think this is going to be another fun trip!

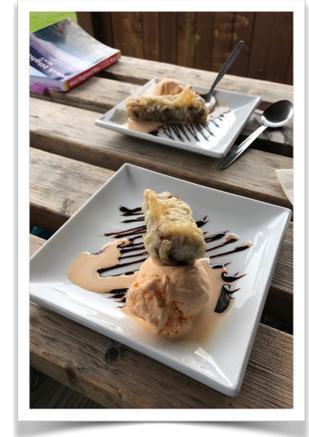


The trail took us along a creek and through some wooded areas. We were soon walking in the country. At one point coming out of Milngavie, we did need to be redirected to the trail by a local woman who recognized that we were doing the West Highland and had gone wrong. She assured us that it happens all the time and that the correct way was just a "hop" up the hill.



The weather was beautiful this morning—cool, cloudy, but bits of blue sky peeking through. At noon it felt cooler and looked like it might rain, but the misty rain held off until just before we got to Drymen.

We stopped for lunch at The Beech Tree Inn. They are right on the trail and let you use their picnic area if you buy something, so we all bought a drink and ate our sandwiches. Then Janet made sure we (especially David who loves Mars bars) all had the new experience of eating a deep-fried Mars bar served with orange sorbet. Reviews were mixed. David was completely unimpressed. Jim and I didn't like the texture...it was almost bubble gum-like. Janet didn't like the batter it was fried in, and Nancy liked the presentation chocolate on the plate the best.



This friendly group of cattle caught our attention first. Then Janet noticed the sign. We couldn't agree on what it means. Scottish drivers must have to be more literate than US drivers.

We made it to Drymen and our B&B about 3:15. We had an early dinner next door at The Clachan Inn, the oldest pub in Scotland. All in all, it was a fine day of walking!



We are staying here at Ashbank B&B.



The West Highland Way

Drymen to Rowardennan

Day 2, Sunday, July 2

14 miles

28 total miles

This was a fourteen-mile day, but it seemed longer before we finished up. We left Drymen before nine and headed along some tree-lined lanes then left the road and cut through a forest. We soon reached Loch Lomond but didn't get down to its shores right away as we chose the harder route of going up over Conic Hill. The trail doesn't go quite to the top. Janet was the only one of us to go up to the very top on a short but steep side trail. The rest of us waited on the main trail and put on our rain pants and/or had a snack. The weather was not as nice as yesterday. It was still cool and cloudy, but we had light rain for a good portion of the morning. In some places, it was quite windy. When we got around to the other side where it wasn't windy, the midges (and insect repellent) came out!



Heading up Conic Hill



Looking back the way we came

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Janet is in the foreground here and Jim is out on the point. The weather was the worst of the whole day on this part.



This was starting down, but the photo doesn't really show the steep it was.



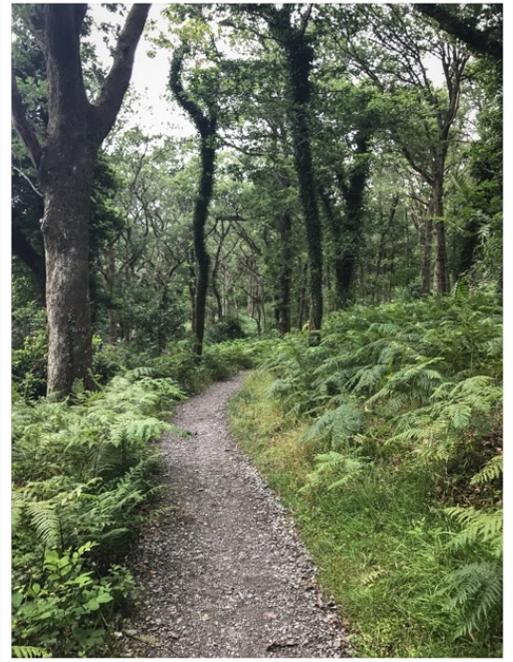
Conic Hill from the other side



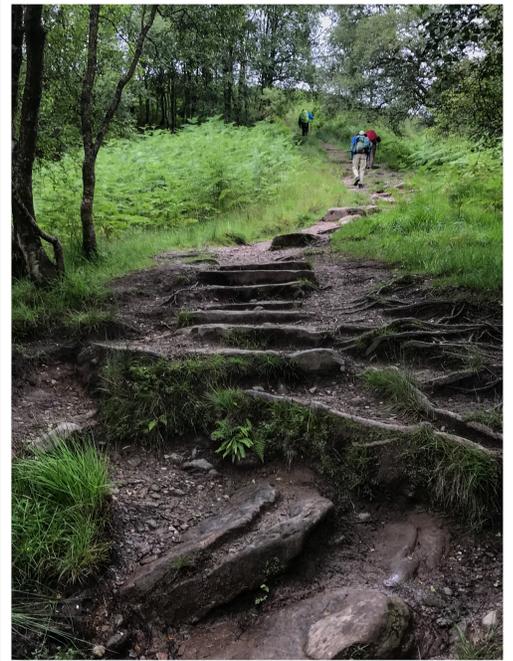
We found a sign for Janet. It says "There's no such thing as the dog poo fairy!"



The lake looks smoother here than it actually was.



The sun came out briefly in the afternoon.



The afternoon hike was along the shores of Loch Lomond. The trail had a lot of ups and downs and spots with stairs. We finished up at 4:15 and then had a Grand Prix-style ride in a taxi bus back to the B&B we stayed in last night. At times I felt the driver was playing Chicken with the oncoming cars, but I wasn't scared because he obviously knew what he was doing and had it under control. One highlight of the day for me: the Sunday roast pork dinner I had at the pub-a great way to end a strenuous day!

The West Highland Way

Rowardennan to Inverarnan

Day 3, Monday, July 3

14 miles

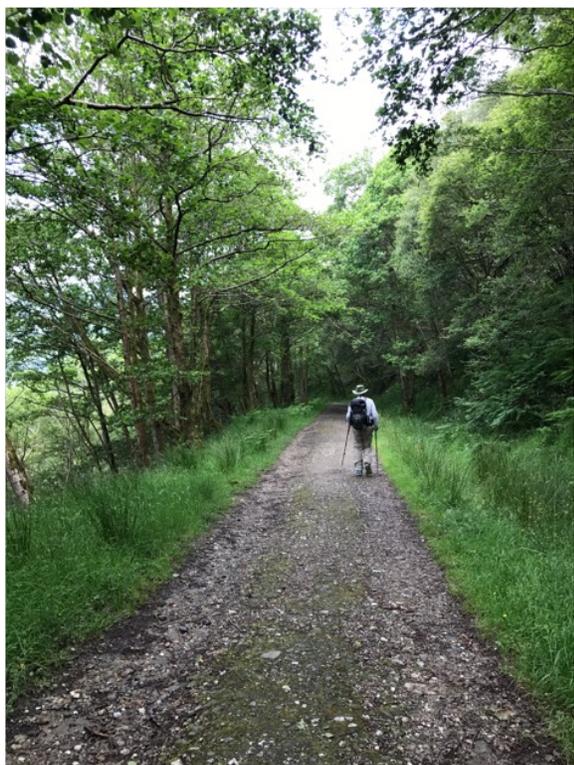
42 total miles

What a day! We were all very happy to arrive at Beinglas Farm this evening. We had lovely weather with no rain today. Our day started off quite well as we took off again beside Loch Lomond. We chose to take the higher, easier route and were rewarded with a nice wide track. Lauren, our little rock collector, would love this road, although we probably could not get her more than five feet down it without her stopping and collecting everything in sight. It was covered with all sorts of pretty colored rocks. I kept seeing rocks I would have loved to fill my pockets with. Lined with tall ferns and foxglove, the Way got even better as every so often there would be a waterfall cascading down. I counted at least a dozen waterfalls along this portion of the trail. It was an easy up and down track, and very pleasant with no one else on it. After merging with the lower route, we were once again along the shore of the lake and seeing lots of people.

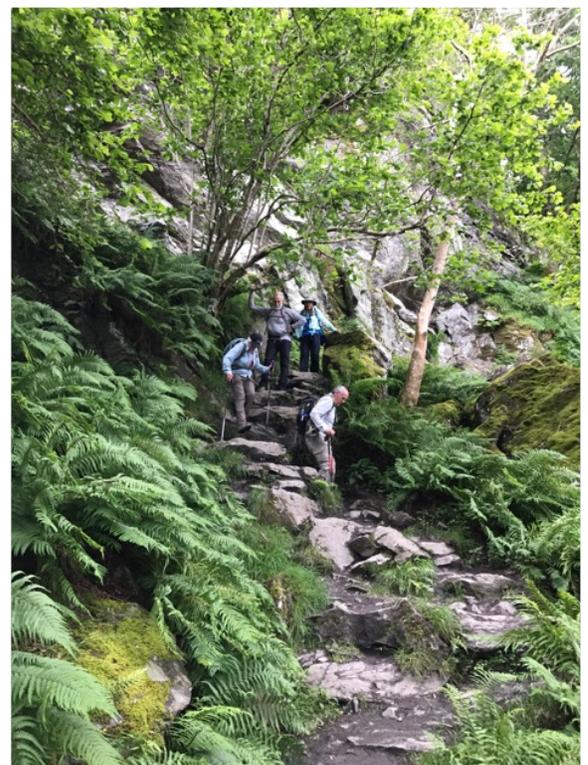
Occasionally throughout the day, we—at least I—saw ruins and enclosures or segments of old fences such as the moss-covered fence below. Janet tells me they didn't see anything unless I told them to look up because they all were looking at their feet all day! Which is mostly true, since after lunch it really became very necessary for us to be looking at our feet. The afternoon trek was quite stressful for all of us, and David accidentally did his part to add to that stress.



After lunch, the trail went along the lake with lots of ups and downs. The guidebook says it's one of the hardest parts of the Way. It describes it like this: "...a rocky path winding through woodland across steep craggy slopes leading down to Loch Lomond." Keep that in mind! We picked our way over, around, and through rocks, boulders, and mud for at least three hours. We were all very careful watching our feet and going slowly. Then, on a flat but narrow trail I was leading the way on, I heard what sounded like rocks and someone falling. I turned around just in time to see David go tumbling over the edge! Where he stepped on the edge of the trail had given away and there was no way he could regain his balance. He rolled sideways down the steep slope and got stopped in front of a big branch. The good thing is that that area was very brushy and it helped slow him down and stop. Jim immediately threw his pack off and went to help him. He said David probably fell about fifteen feet! David found his glasses and with Jim's help, climbed back up. We made him sit down and then all had the chance to practice our first aid assessment skills on him. The only mark on him was a little scratch on the back of his hand! He said if he ate his Mars bar, he'd be fine. He did and then carried on for the rest of the day. We are so fortunate!! It scared at least ten years off of me, though! Later in the day, we came upon a young man getting his ankle wrapped up after twisting it. He was one of the hikers that came tearing past us earlier. We are all very aware of the need to be vigilant and careful, but this afternoon really reinforced that. We will be even more careful, I promise!



The morning trail



Easier portion of the afternoon trail

We were all so glad to leave Loch Lomond behind—it felt like it was never going to end.



David and Jim at a rest stop before all of the hard work and excitement



One of the ruins I made sure Janet looked up to see.

Leaving Loch Lomond at last, but it was uphill. (Jim's okay, he was still moving; I just caught him in an awkward position as I took the photo!)





Better trails ahead—Highlands, here we come!

The West Highland Way

Inverarnan to Tyndrum

Day 4, Tuesday, July 4

13 miles

55 total miles

Today was a much better day! David woke up feeling fine with no ill-effects from his adventure yesterday. We started out in a light misty rain, but it was soon gone. Our biggest challenges for the day were the mud and the midges. The trail we were on for most of the day was a nice wide track through open areas and dark, forested areas. We got into Tyndrum right at 4:00, and what a treat! We are in our own little house with a kitchen area, a drying room, and a sitting room which is actually two rooms with a fireplace and TV. We are all taking advantage of WiFi tonight since last night we only had it in the bar and not our rooms. (I should probably warn everyone that where we are staying tomorrow is more remote and has no WiFi!)





We followed an 18th century military road with a stone fence, or dyke, beside it for a long way. The path is shared with sheep and cattle in parts and got quite muddy. These pictures don't show how muddy it really was—it was sink-in-to-the-ankles deep in some places.



The views were beautiful despite the weather.



The midge nets came out several times today...like every time we stopped to eat or rest. This photo was taken by a girl from Belgium who had little red bites sprinkled across her face like freckles. Here we are at the halfway point for the trail!



A railroad bridge and another old bridge.

Foxglove is everywhere.



Ruins of St. Fillan's Priory, established in 1317. The graveyard is from the 8th century.



The West Highland Way

Tyndrum to Inveroran

Day 5, Wednesday, July 5

10 miles

65 total miles

So, this morning, my travel mates informed me that with my pretty photos, I am not reporting the true picture. The words "fake news" were not uttered, but someone did say "fiction." I happen to think I must be traveling with a bunch of glass-half-empty people! Anyway, I have promised to try to present a more well-rounded picture. To start me off, Janet sent me this picture she took yesterday. Notice the mud, the cattle, the power lines, and Nancy's bare legs that the midges loved.



This morning we had a slow start since we knew we only had an easy ten miles to cover. Our B&B hosts served us the best breakfast—baked and deboned trout that the husband had caught. I wish I had taken a picture of it! The weather today was perfect with a nice breeze blowing; I don't think we saw a single midge all day.



Leaving Tyndrum.

We passed two men getting ready to pan for gold and backpackers that had camped the night beside the trail.



Easy trail this morning—it's the old military road. The mountain is Beinn Dorian.



Cotton grass is blooming

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Bridge over the railroad



Still lots of water coming off the hills





In the interest of factual reporting, this is David and Jim smiling—they claimed to be almost giddy.



We took our first break at this bridge. While we were there, a father and his adult son and teenage son stopped for a break, too. They assured us that the hardest part is over and the best part is still to come. Today was to be “a wee bit of meandering up and down over the green bumps.” We saw them again later having a beer in Bridge of Orchy as we passed. They were going ten miles farther than us today but did not seem to be in any hurry as they stopped for a second beer at the hotel where we are



This is one of many conifer plantations we've seen. The trees are Sitka spruce, imported from North America. They have realized the ecological consequences of replacing their moorland with densely planted trees and are beginning to try to remedy it.



Janet and I have decided not to let these guys choose the lunch site/sight again.



This was also a lunchtime view. A man walking by told Janet a recluse used to live there until about fifteen years ago. It hasn't been cleaned up because???

Back to the pretty pictures...



Looking back the way we came.

The trail was rocky, but nothing like the other day!



Our destination for the day in the middle of the photo—the Inveroran Hotel, built in 1708.

The West Highland Way

Inveroran to Glen Coe

Day 6, Thursday, July 6

10 miles

75 total miles

Today seemed like such an easy day for all of us. We left Inveroran at 9:15 and arrived at the Glencoe Ski Centre 1-1:30ish. A light rain was falling and the midges were out, but it wasn't too long before they were gone. We went up and over Rannoch Moor on a drove road that was used to take sheep and cattle to market. The road itself was stony but the moor was boggy. There were lots more waterfalls to see today and we passed more conifer plantations and little lochs. Before we knew it, we were finished; we didn't even stop to eat lunch on this stretch.



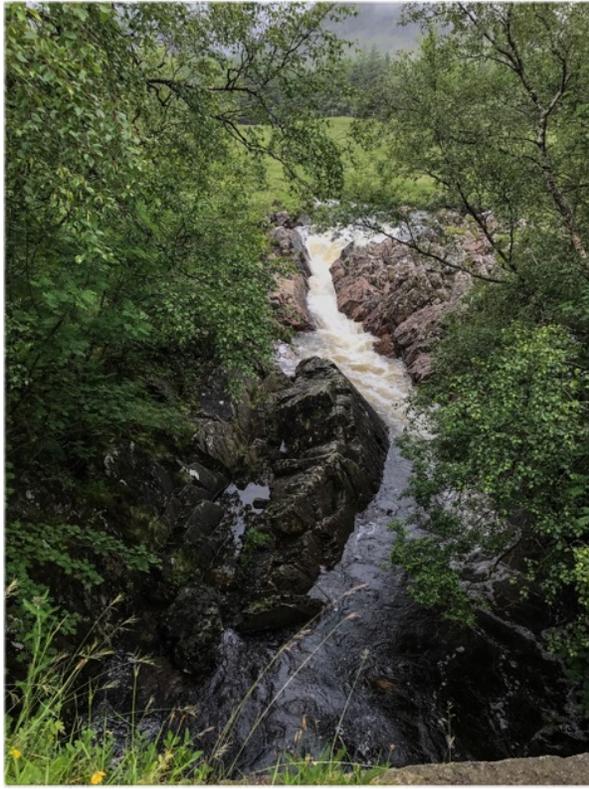
Sign in all our hotel rooms last night.

More waterfalls and another ruin.



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Looking both directions from Bà Bridge.



Can you tell I like taking photos of water? I was unprepared for how much water there is here, though!

David and Carla's 2017 Adventures



The moor must be very desolate in winter!



We had time to kill waiting for our taxi once we reached the Glen Coe Ski Centre. Janet and Nancy went for a walk, I stayed to take pictures, and David and Jim engaged in lively conversation.



At Glen Coe Ski Centre



We are so glad we couldn't stay at the Kingshouse Hotel on the trail.(It's being renovated this year.) The drive over here was so beautiful and the village is very picturesque. I didn't get many pictures in town, but we are enjoying staying here.

Glen Coe Village



The West Highland Way

Kingshouse to Kinlochleven

Day 7, Friday, July 7

10 miles

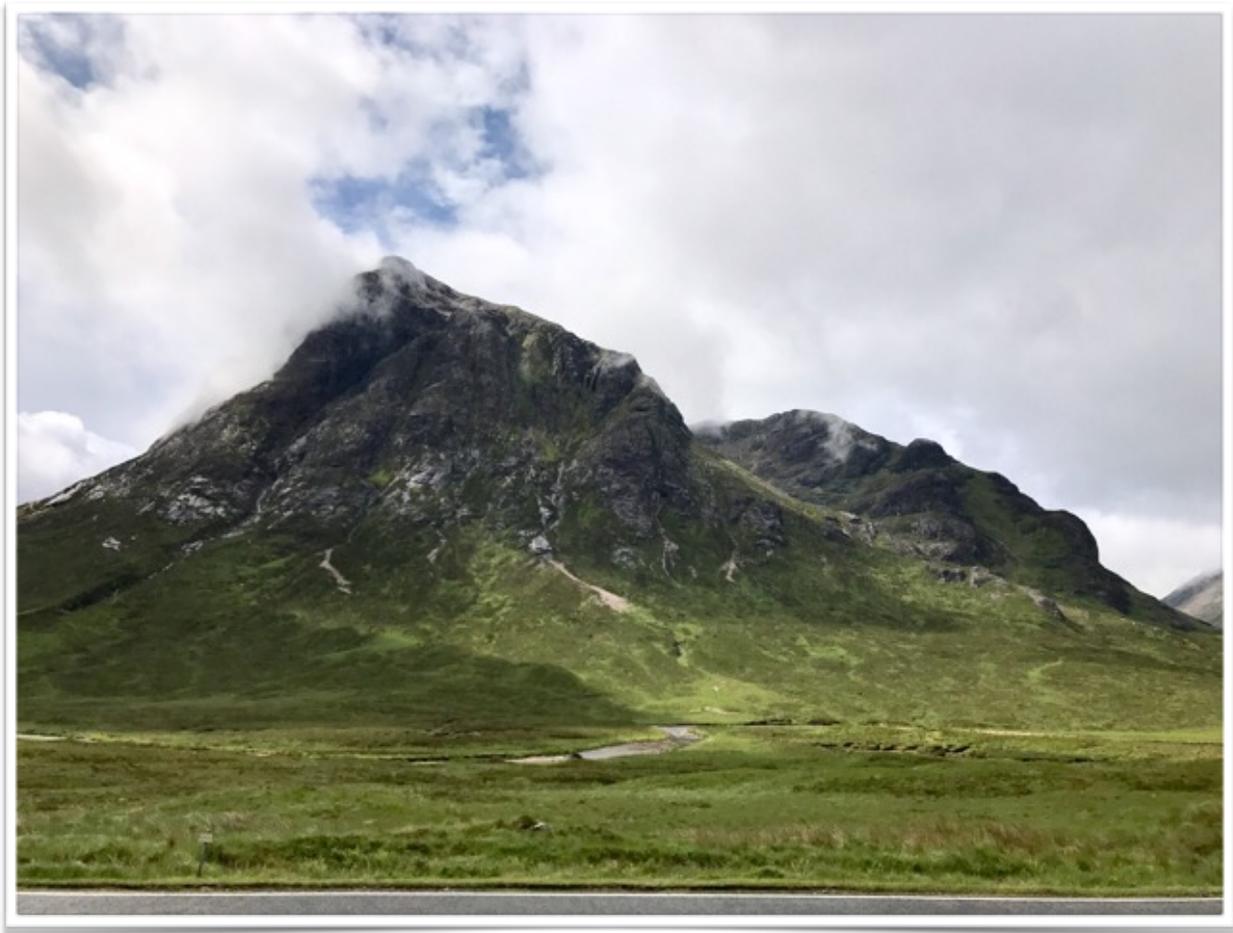
85 total miles

We were taken back to Kingshouse from Glencoe Village by taxi this morning and thoroughly enjoyed the drive. The driver took us on a back road for the first part so we could see a little different scenery. This is a gorgeous area! When we arrived at Kingshouse, a stag and a doe were out in front. The stag especially acted as if he were a paid professional model. He would strike a pose and very kindly hold it for a few seconds for the photographers. Jim cut up his apple and shared with us so we could feed the stag, something I had never done before. I loved taking pictures of them even though they were so tame.





As we started out, I kept my eye on this Munro (a mountain over 3000 feet) and was determined to get a good shot of it. I kept getting just a glimpse of the top and then it would be covered again. Finally, the clouds cleared for just a couple minutes and I could take a good shot.





It was another damp and chilly day, but no one complains about this weather.



The sun came out for a little while, but didn't stay very long. This is very scenic along here, but also follows a very busy highway.



After a couple miles, we left the highway and headed up The Devil's Staircase, which sounds daunting, but it wasn't bad at all. We had already been told by several people that it wasn't so hard and that the part by Loch Lomond was actually the worst part of the Way.



Looking back partway up the Staircase. David took one of me on my way up. I'm the blue dot in the photo on the left.

At the top, some enterprising people set up the "Tuck Shop."

The group on the right are the girls from a group of high school students that we keep seeing on the trail. They are with Apogee Teen Adventures.



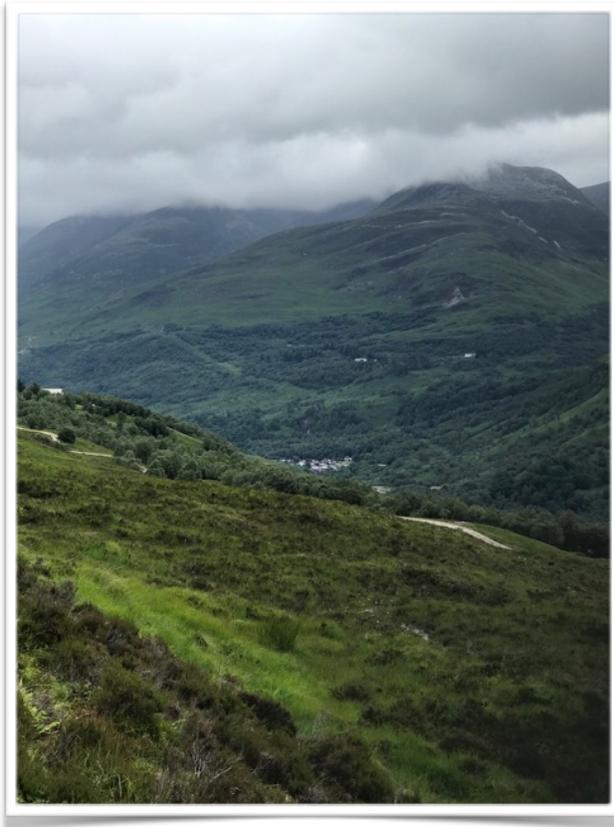
At the summit!



David and Janet starting down the other side. Great views but we had to watch our step.



Kinlochleven looks deceptively close!



Our B&B for the night. So comfortable!



Tomorrow is our last day on the West Highland Way. We've got sixteen miles to go and then we will be finished!

The West Highland Way

Kinlochleven to Fort William

Day 8, Saturday, July 8

16 miles

101 total miles

We did it! After a long day, we arrived in Fort William tired, but all in good spirits. Today we had our best weather of the trip. We left Kinlochleven and the best B&B of all about 8:30. We immediately had a steep climb up out of there and then headed over the moors.



On this part of the trail, we once again encountered the Scottish husband and wife mountain bikers. They have passed us several times the last two days, just as often pushing their bikes as riding them.





Jim looking back at Kinlochleven. Yes, that rock is the trail right there.



Leaving Kinlochleven...if you zoom in, you can see part of the trail we took down to the village in the middle of the photo.



Loch Leven.

Up on the moors, we were once again on a military road. We passed a few old farmhouse ruins. I like to look at these and wonder about the people who lived here so many years ago. It's hard to imagine what their life out here must have been like.



Celebration! We had another wee dram of Nancy's whisky and had our photo taken by the statue of a weary walker. I felt like taking my shoes off, too! It was a great trip. Thanks to Janet, Nancy, and Jim for joining us on it!

As we neared Glen Nevis and Fort William, we were so appreciative of the better trails. We had had enough of walking on rocks! We still passed many more streams, but I limited myself to just one more cascade photo. Full disclosure: I only took one photo of the logged area we went through. Except for that one area, the rest of the walk was gorgeous





Fort William ahead, Ben Nevis to the side



Celebration! We had another wee dram of Nancy's whisky and had our photo taken by the statue of a weary walker. I felt like taking my shoes off, too! It was a great trip. Thanks to Janet, Nancy, and Jim for joining us on it!



Edinburgh, Scotland

Sunday, July 9--Tuesday, July 11

The morning after we finished walking the West Highland Way, David, Nancy, and I said goodbye to Janet and Jim. We headed off to Edinburgh by train. The mountain biking couple from the trail was traveling on the same train, so we talked to them a little bit more. On the train, we met another couple that had just biked one hundred fifty miles across Scotland (on roads) in one day! I sat next to a young man who was a trail guide for the UK and Europe. He had just finished a solo hike and was writing about it for his website. With such interesting conversations to keep us busy, the time passed quickly.

When we got into Edinburgh, it was raining. Unfortunately, it continued to rain the whole time David and I were there. We decided not to go up Arthur's Seat and contented ourselves with looking around Old Town and New Town.



It was still raining when we left Edinburgh on Tuesday. We traveled by tram, plane, airport shuttle, three trains, and finally a bus to get to Chipping Campden. It was still raining when we got here at 5:30. Chipping Campden is a sweet little town but our B&B hostess says it costs a lot to live here.



The Cotswold Way

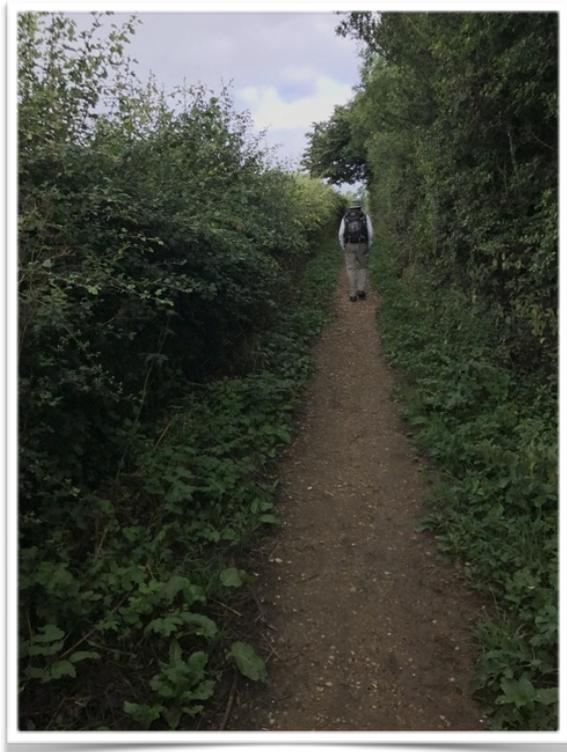
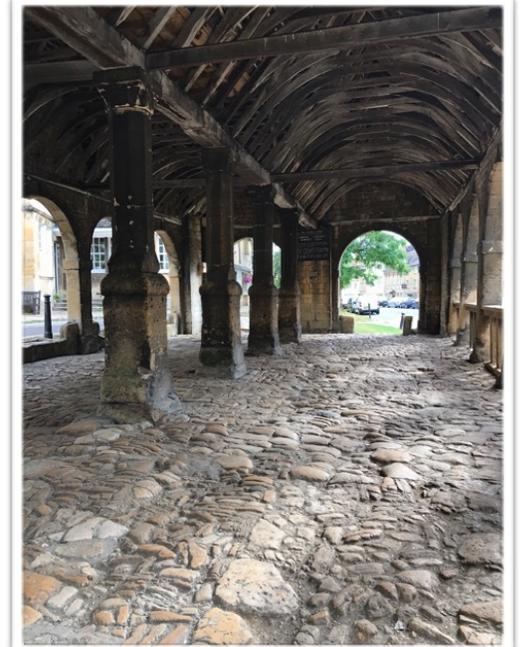
Chipping Camden to Stanton

Day 1, Wednesday, July 12

10.5 miles

10.5 total miles

Skies were gray when we set off this morning, but the weather forecast called for a much better day than yesterday, and indeed it was! We started at the circular plaque set into flagstones next to the 400-year-old Market Hall in Chipping Campden. We went out of town and immediately started climbing. As we crossed over Dover's Hill, and actually the whole day, we couldn't help but contrast these trails with those we had just finished on the West Highland Way. Today was so much easier on our feet! I think Dover's Hill must be named that because of all the doves we heard calling there.





The view from Dover's Hill.



Fields of gold.



We saw very few people on the trail in the morning...just a few locals out walking their dogs. After Broadway Tower, we started seeing more people on the trail, but we didn't meet anyone doing the whole trail until the afternoon.



I'm trying to identify this plant. Its flowers look like woolly thistle, but the leaves don't look like a thistle to me. I took several pictures and the leaves are all like this.

Broadway Tower was built in 1799 as a “folly” for the Earl of Coventry’s wife. It is open to the public now. A gift shop is on the ground floor and you go up the circular stairs in one of the three turrets.(Coming down the stairs actually made us dizzy.) The three levels each had a different display about the tower and the people who lived there at one time. The very top had spectacular views all around. The hill the tower sits on is called Beacon Hill because before the tower was built, they used to send signals from there. I think the estate there has its own private herd of deer.





The trail is very well marked with signs and guideposts like these.

The view as we started to climb again. We went up and over Shenberrow Hill and then down to the village of Stanton. There is only one place to eat here and no shops, but the village is lovely and our B&B is delightful!



The Cotswold Way

Stanton to Cleeve Hill

Day 2, Thursday, July 14

14 miles,

24.5 total miles

We left Stanton at 9:00 this morning. We lingered over breakfast talking to two other couples who are doing the Cotswold Way. One is an older couple from Southern California. They aren't doing the whole trail, they are just walking for six days. The other couple is from Sweden and look to be in their fifties. They are doing the trail in seven days, but have the same stops that we do these first few days. We talked briefly yesterday with a couple from West Virginia doing the whole trail in six days. She got food poisoning and so they had a late start with eighteen miles to go yesterday! We won't see them again. I mention these other couples because there are not a lot of other people out on the trail. We didn't even see the older couple on the trail yesterday or today. We saw the Swedish couple coming up behind us at one point today, but we stopped at Hailes Abbey and figured they must have passed us, but they got in to the hotel later than we did. There has been just a handful of people here and there the rest of the time.



We saw lots of cows and sheep today. They didn't mind us going through their pastures.



A thatched "cricket pavilion" built on "saddle stones" to keep rodents out. This building was a gift from JM Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan*. He used to spend summers in Stanway. The saddle stones look like cement toadstools.



Several of the woodlands we went through today were like tunnels through the forest. We also went through several barley fields.



These are "ploughing humps." The ridges and furrows are left over from medieval times when they plowed their fields in only one direction. This built up ridges over the years. They kept them this way because they used them to tell whose it was.



We stopped and toured the ruins of Hailes Abbey. It was a cloistered monastery founded in the 1200s and of course, shut down by King Henry VIII in 1539.

We ate lunch along High Street in Winchcombe, but for some reason, I didn't take any photos of this quaint area. I guess I was too hungry at that point. When we started out of town, I wasn't paying close attention and we ended up walking at least a half mile out of our way. Back on the trail, we started climbing immediately to the highest point of the Cotswold Way Trail (only 1066 feet) and another significant stop on our way today. This time it was Belas Knap, a long barrow where medieval people buried their dead. 38 skeletons were found in this one. (And no, Henry, it wasn't spooky at all.)



At this point, we decided we better get a move on because it was getting late and we still had a ways to go. The trails down the hill were great and we made really good time here. We had one more climb to go before we reached Cleve Hill.

Last night, David found a website about the different UK trails. We were surprised to learn that the Cotswold Way actually has about one thousand more cumulative feet of elevation gain than the West Highland Way! This one is much easier walking, though!



The sheep were all nestled in taking a nap. I would like to have joined them.



Cleve Hill Common. A golf course, shared with sheep, hikers, and bikers.



The Cleeve Hill Hotel. Another big bathtub-hooray!

The Cotswold Way

Cleeve Hill to Birdlip

Day 3, Friday, July 14

17.5 miles

41.9 total miles

Today was a long day...and the kind of day we will look back on and say, "That wasn't so bad." Right now, however, I'm extremely tired and glad to have it over with. Thanks to my misreading a sign and the map, we had an additional two miles on what was supposed to be a 15.5-mile day.



We had to climb back up to Cleeve Hill Common. The first 9.5 miles today was skirting around Cheltenham up on the escarpment. Great views from up there.

We had lots of tree-lined trails and roads today.





In this photo, we started at the high point in the middle on the ridge and came clockwise around the city in the valley. We still weren't past the city here.



We also went through two reserves where rare butterflies and plants are protected. I don't know if I saw any of the rare species, but I enjoyed the butterflies fluttering down the trail ahead of us. The plant is a woolly thistle...we've seen so many, I doubt if they are rare or endangered.



This crop was very pretty but we don't know what it is.



The trail also went through Crickly Hill Country Park, the site of an archaeological dig. They found that this area was inhabited between 3700 BC and 500 AD.



David insisted we take a break here because it was only the second log he has seen in Scotland or England that was sit-worthy.

The Cotswold Way

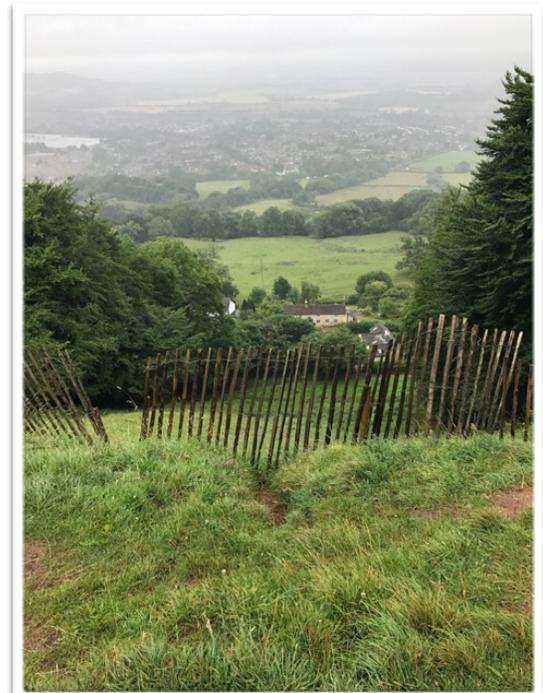
Birdlip to Painswick

Day 4, Saturday, July 15

6.5 miles

48.4 total miles

Today was basically a rest day after our long day yesterday. It was raining when we woke up and since we knew it was a short day, we took our time leaving the Royal George. When we finally started, the rain had stopped but it wasn't long before we were getting out our rain jackets. The good thing about today was that we walked through mostly woodlands today, so the beech tree canopy really kept us protected. It is interesting walking through the woods, though, because they are so dark! It felt like we were wearing sunglasses at dusk or later. I didn't take many photos today since it was so wet.



I had to take pictures at Cooper's Hill, looking up and from the top. At the top, I didn't want to get close to the edge! They have some kind of competition here where they roll wheels of cheese down the hill and people run down the hill trying to catch them! Because it is so dangerous, they tried to stop it a few years ago, but people showed up anyway. Our guidebook says 4000 people show up here during the competition.



One of the dark woods we went through.



We got in to Painswick before noon, so we immediately stopped to tour Painswick Rococo Garden. Originally developed in the 18th century, it claims to be the only complete surviving rococo-style garden in England.

We looked around a little bit in Painswick and then came back out of town to our B&B. This is the best one we have stayed in yet! We have a new little garden house all to ourselves. It's on two floors and has everything we could want, including a washer/dryer. I am doing our laundry as I write this, and we didn't have to pay extra to use it. It will be so nice to have fresh clean clothes!



Painswick is very interesting architecturally. The old part of the village that we were in has buildings built in the 1600s when the wool trade was booming. I'm hoping to get more pictures of it in the morning. We didn't stay long down there because we were eager to get out to our B&B. As I sit here on this soft couch with my feet up and having my tea and biscuits, I am so glad we didn't linger in the village!

Friends from home have helped solve my plant mysteries. Thanks, Darko and Lana! Darko identified this one from the other day that looked like a woolly thistle to me but didn't have thistle-like leaves. It's burdock (on left, woolly thistle on right) Darko says it's common in the Mediterranean and the young leaves and roots are edible. It's used for many things, including baldness. I didn't collect any.



Lana identified the mystery plant from yesterday. It is flax. Apparently flax thrives in poor and barren soil. Look at the rocks in that soil!

The Cotswold Way

Painswick to King's Stanley

Day 5, Sunday, July 16

10 miles

58.4 total miles

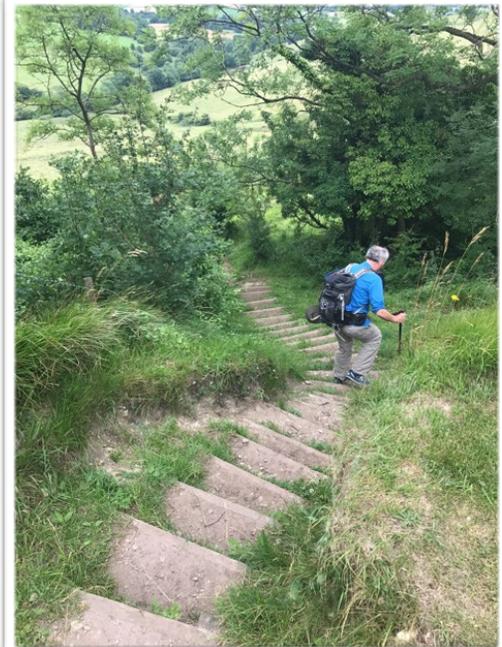
Today's weather report: partly cloudy, not too hot, not too cool, pleasant breeze at times, one rain shower after we arrived at B&B. In short, perfect hiking weather. We encountered lots of people out for a Sunday stroll or hike but no one also doing the whole trail. We passed the halfway marker today. I'd like to say it's all downhill from here, but that is far from the truth!



Painswick



Halfway to Bath



David and Carla's 2017 Adventures



Looking back at Painswick



Another tunnel path



Different stiles today



The Cotswold Way

King's Stanley to Wotton-Under-Edge

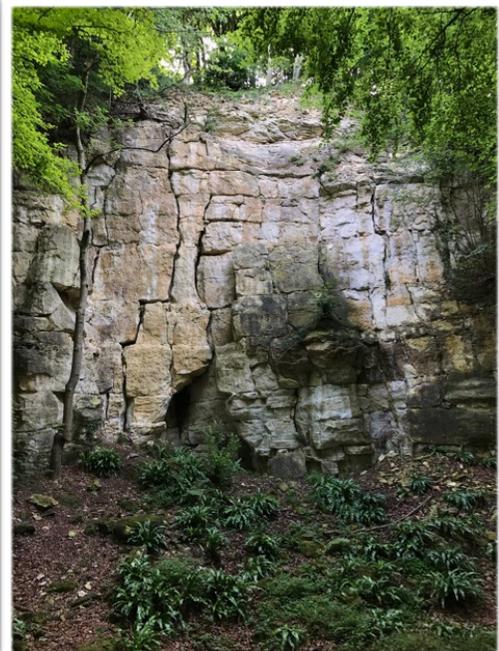
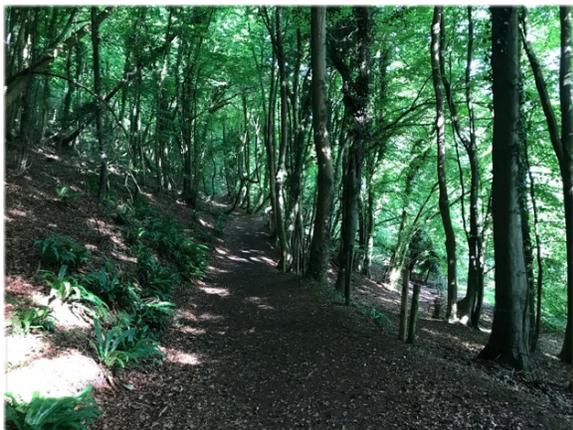
Day 6, Monday, July 17

13 miles, 71.4 total miles

Today was another day of steep climbs, cool and shady woodland tunnels, superb views, and quirky conversations with people we meet. We were standing on a corner in Dursley, just about to get the map out when an older gentleman stopped to ask how far we had come today and where we are from. Then he asked, "What are you going to do about Donald?" That led to a long conversation about the state of our country and healthcare as well as England's system and politicians in general. In conclusion, he then told us about one of their crooked politicians that "If he'd of ate nails, he would've shit corkscrews!" It was a delightful conversation, but he told us the Cotswold Way was just up the hill and we walked a quarter mile up the hill before we realized that was not the way our guidebook had us going. We needed to turn at the corner we had been standing on!



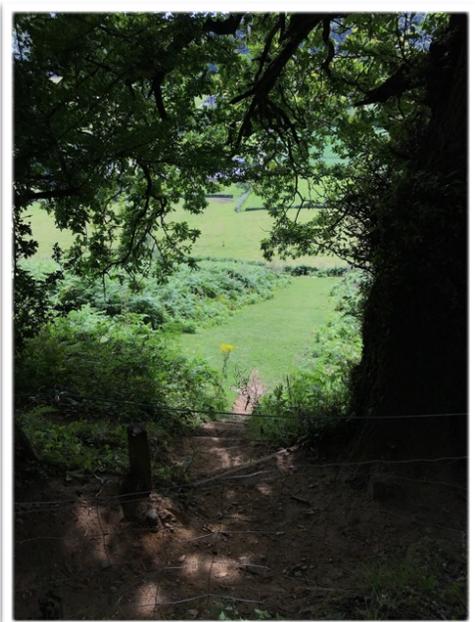
To get back on the trail this morning, we just had to go out the gate.







The English trails have very few switchbacks. Case in point: the trail up to Cam Long Down—straight up! That's me in the middle photo. David waiting in right photo.



Still going up. Photo on right is looking down from edge of trees. We still had to climb. When I booked this trip, I thought it would be easier than the West Highland Way. It's not! The trails are better but it is just as strenuous. I will be in great shape by the time we finish!



Hillside covered in hart's tongue ferns.

The Cotswold Way

Wotton-Under-Edge to Old Sodbury

Day 7, Tuesday, July 18

14.6 miles, 86 total miles

We met very few people on our trek today. Only a handful going the other way and none going the same way. We weren't sorry we didn't meet the English lady, hiking solo, that sniffed at us yesterday for taking the old Cotswold Way trail that cut off two and a half miles of steep up and down and for not going up to the top of the Tynsdale Monument. She is also doing the trail in nine days and clearly let her disdain show. She had spent the night before at the same B&B as us. Other than her, the people have been so nice, helpful, and encouraging. A man even stopped his car to ask if we were okay yesterday when we were taking a break and looking at our map halfway up Hill Road. (Which ought to be named Extremely Steep Hill Road!) Maybe we looked pathetic!



St. Mary the Virgin Church at Wotton-Under-Edge. The pipe organs were a gift from King George, 1726.

John the Baptist Church, Old Sodbury, built in the 11th century.





Badger setts

While the trail is well-marked, sometimes we have to look a little harder for the signposts. Can you see our direction in the brambles on the right side of the post?





Sodbury House Hotel, our accommodation for the night.

The Cotswold Way

Old Sodbury to Pennsylvania

Day 8, Wednesday, July 19

8.5 miles, 94.5 total miles

We woke before 5:00 AM this morning to the sound of thunder and rain. It rolled on for a couple of hours. We checked the weather reports and they said more thunder starting at noon. When we went down to breakfast, we had decided not to walk this next stage. Over breakfast, and after checking the weather forecast again...the predictions for more thunder were moved to later in the afternoon...we figured we could do eight and a half miles easily before it would hit again. We started out and were soon so glad we had made this decision. It was a beautiful walk, much easier than any of the earlier stages, and we stopped and toured Dyrham Park. That is a fascinating National Trust park. It is the estate of William Blathwayt, built in 1692. He was extremely wealthy and paid attention to details; his house and gardens prove it.



It was definitely damp and muddy this morning, but very refreshing. The sheep look very well-cared for in this part of the UK. This was on a private estate we walked through.

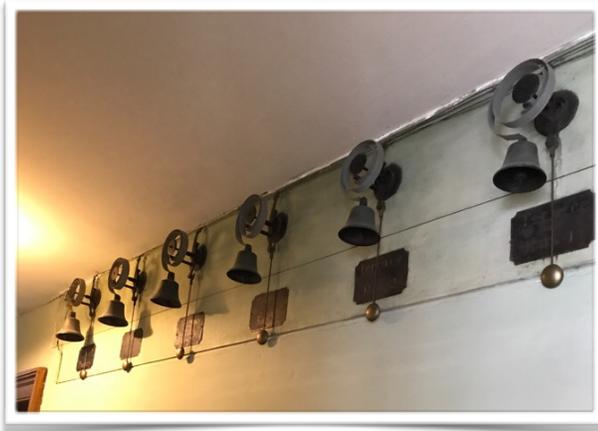


At the bottom, it says ten to Bath; it must be for a different route than ours.



Dyrham Park...the avenue from the main gates. They have done an amazing job of restoring this estate, and it is kept up with an army of volunteers.

The bell for calling a servant, the bells downstairs. Servants used to sit in chairs lining the hall where the bells are until summoned by the ringing.





The gardens were beautiful and extremely well-tended!



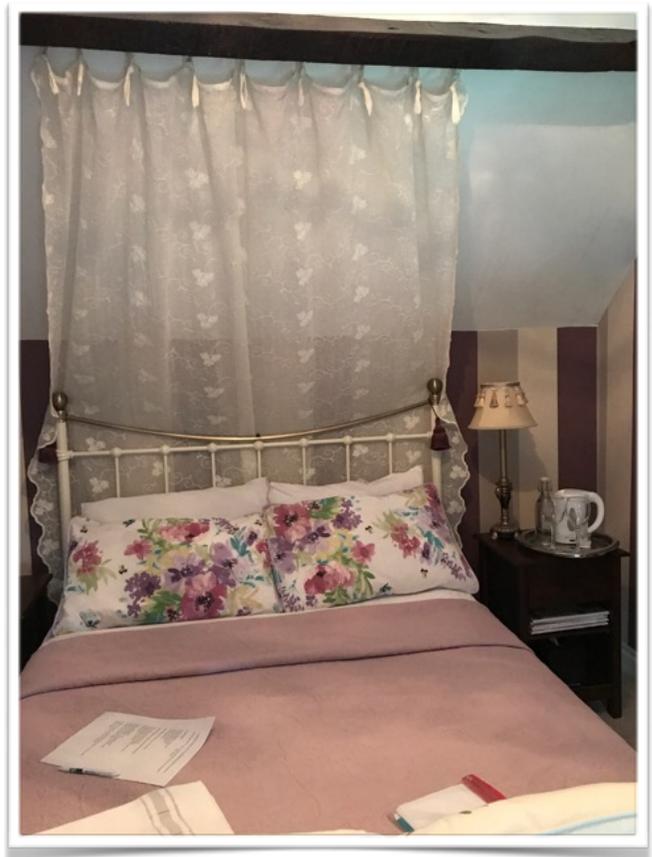
Lord of the manor....wondering who all these people are in his garden.



Our B&B—okay, not really.

We arrived at our B&B, Cornflake Cottage, by 2:00. There has been no rain or thunder today so we really made the right call. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day. We only have ten and a half miles to go tomorrow to Bath.

Our B&B is very comfortable with a little sitting room downstairs, bath and bedroom upstairs in a part of the house all to ourselves.



The Cotswold Way

Pennsylvania to Bath

Day 9, Thursday, July 20

We left Cornflake Cottage this morning by 8:30. It rained during the night but stopped just before we started out. It wasn't uncomfortable but a chilly wind was blowing. We had more beautiful vistas to enjoy as we went across areas as diverse as the site of a battle between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians in the mid- 1600s, a modern horse racetrack, old churches, and another golf course. As we neared Bath, we met a young Canadian by himself and three Swedes all heading out on the first day of their journey to Chipping Campden. They were all planning to camp. As we were finishing our walk, I told David I couldn't muster up much excitement for them; I guess I'm tired!





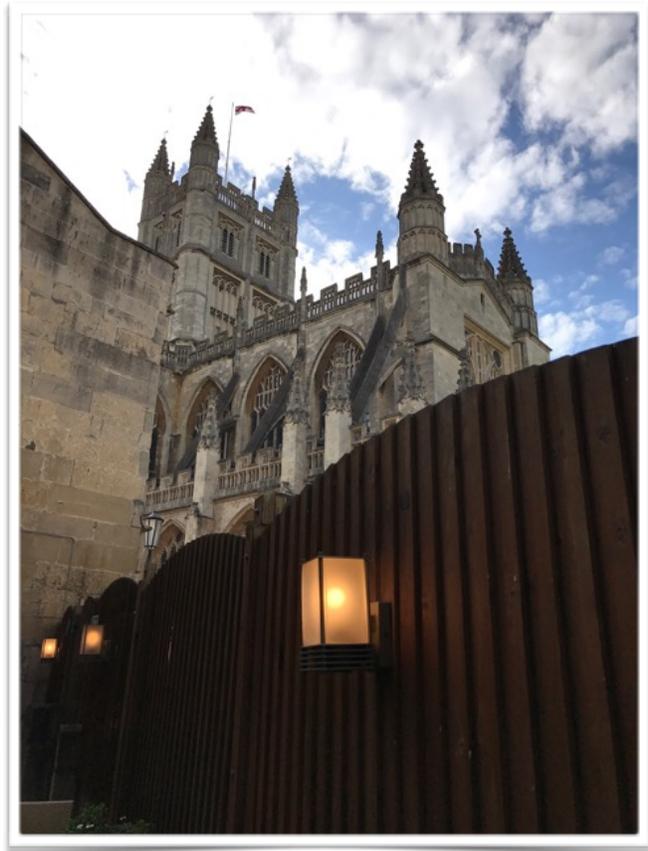
Just before two, we had one last steep climb and we were heading down into Bath. We went through Royal Victoria Park, passed in front of the Royal Crescent and the Circus (both are Georgian townhouses built in the 1700s. The Circus consists of three curved buildings that form a circle.) For some reason, I took no photos along here. Perhaps it was because we had to pay much closer attention to where we were going and look for the little acorn symbol on light posts, etc. once we got through the park, there were no more Cotswold Way signs. It was like a treasure hunt. As we got closer to the Abbey area, they disappeared completely and then the street we knew we needed to go down was blocked by workers. With the help of our trusty iPhone we made it to the Abbey only to find an incredible amount of people and a graduation ceremony going on in front of Bath Abbey! We tried to look around a little but couldn't even get down close to the Roman Baths. With all the people and fast traffic, I was really disappointed in Bath. We went to the train station and got our tickets for tomorrow and then headed to our B&B.





Full disclosure: I cropped this photo and took out all the heads of the crowd of people at the bottom of my original photo. I wouldn't want to be accused of fake news again!

After a rest and showers, we headed back over to the Abbey area. We ate dinner in the garden of a little Italian pizza place. My view was of the Abbey.



As it turned out, this was a perfect time to go back. This time, we could go in Bath Abbey for a quick look and then we went for a longer visit at the Roman Baths. These are amazing and they have done a wonderful job of arranging the exhibits and moving people through all the area of the Baths. I had no idea the baths were so large!



A Roman drain, right. A temple pediment below.



