

London and Malta

October 6-19, 2009

Tuesday/Wednesday, October 6/7 - We decided to drive our car to the airport since we we'll be returning so late when we get back. Consequently, we decided also to have lunch at [The Front Room](#) in Portland, one of our favorite restaurants.

Our flight to Chicago was uneventful and we arrived in time for a drink at the Red Carpet club. The flight to London was very comfortable since we finally got to experience the lie-flat seats in United Business Class. It sure made sleeping much easier. Another Business Class perquisite was the special immigration line at Heathrow.

When we got through immigration and picked up our bags, I was dismayed to see that there was no driver from The Airport Transfer (TAT), which I had requested online and, even though I had the paperwork in my hand to prove it, they told me they didn't have a booking for us when I called them. All we could do was take a cab to our apartment. It cost about 50% more but we really had no choice.

We finally arrived at our [Castletown House](#) apartment (in the two windows on the second floor in the picture), at around 13:30 and were met by Mark Poppleton, who checked us in and made us feel at home.



We decided to spend the rest of the day acclimatizing to the neighborhood and shopping for supplies for our three day stay. It was raining pretty hard and we took a long walk along busy Talgarth Road to a Tesco store. It was a bit intimidating but we made it. We were even able to find some ice, which, in our past experience, was remarkable. We also found [Best Mangal](#), a nice Turkish restaurant in the neighborhood where we could have dinner. We started with some hummus and fresh baked bread. Cindy had grilled quail and I had a spicy minced lamb dish. It was delicious! It was a long day and we went home and fell into a deep sleep.

Thursday, October 8 - I got up and walked to the Baron's Court "tube" station to determine how far it was. I thought it would be best since it provided access to both the Picadilly and District lines. However, it was a long walk and I decided to use the West Kensington station for the District line only. We would later have to transfer to the Picadilly line in order to get

to [Harrods](#) (near Knightsbridge station). By the time we got to Harrods, it was nearly lunchtime so we decided to find a place to eat. We walked down Brompton Street where we found the Brompton Quarter Café (closed). Cindy started with a chicken liver pate and I had grilled squid with rocket. For the main course, Cindy had salmon with spinach and new potatoes and I had wild mushroom tagliatelle. It was great!

After lunch, we walked back up the street to Harrods where I bought this great postcard.

Cindy bought a gift to give a co-worker for a baby shower when we return to Maine. Then we roamed the food halls to find something for supper. We got ham salad, duck rillettes, and époisses.



By this time, we were tired and loaded down with our purchases so we went back to the apartment. We had bought a day pass for the "tube" so we decided to use it to go to [Westminster](#) for a little sightseeing. The picture on the left was taken from the [Westminster Bridge](#) and the one below needs no introduction.

We took a short walk around the area, [Houses of Parliament](#), [Westminster Cathedral](#), etc. taking pictures like ordinary tourists. Then back to the apartment for our Harrods feast.



Friday, October 9 - Took the "tube" from the West Kensington station to Embankment where we caught the Northern line to Charing Cross (below).



From Charing Cross, it was a short walk to [Trafalgar Square](#) and the [National Gallery](#).

Here are photos of the fountain and [Nelson's Column](#). Below is the National Gallery.



The following page shows the layout of the National Gallery. We were able to see most of Level 2.

When we left, I noticed this statue of [Abraham Lincoln](#) in Trafalgar Square, which was a bit surprising. Anyway, we made it back to the "tube" station just as it was beginning to rain.

We got back to the apartment and prepared for our dinner at [Zafferano](#) (now closed).

Although Mark had planned for a taxi to the restaurant, the traffic was very heavy and ours wasn't there when we were ready to leave. Luckily, though another taxi was waiting at the corner and it was from the same company. So, we got in and were taken to Zafferano (right on time).

We were anticipating the possibility that they had white truffles, as they did the last time we were there. Sure enough, they were available and we had a repeat of the starter from last time (truffles and pasta) as well as papardelle with chicken livers and sage. Then, for entrées, I ordered *animelle e rognone di vitello* (sweetbreads and veal kidney) and Cindy ordered *branzino arrosto con finocchio* (sea bass roasted with fennel). However, Cindy was served baked cod. We told the waiter it wasn't what she ordered but we would accept it anyway. Nevertheless, they brought the sea bass shortly after, even though Cindy nearly finished the cod, so we actually got three entrées, but were only charged for two. Great service and a fantastic meal!

We got a taxi back to the apartment where we finished the *époisses* from Harrod's and prepared for our trip to Malta tomorrow.



Saturday, October 10 - We had arranged for transfer to Heathrow with the taxi company that took us to Zafferano and he showed up right on time. Amazingly, so did a car from TAT (see page 1 for the story about how they didn't show up at



Heathrow when we arrived on Wednesday). Needless to say, I gave them a piece of my mind (what's left of it) and it felt so good to tell them, as I had in my phone call, what a lousy company they were and that I'd never contact them again. Anyway, the ride to Heathrow was very pleasant and we left London on Air Malta (late, of course). On the plane, we happened to be seated with Kathleen Bitetti, an artist and activist from Boston who was on her way to Gozo. We had a pleasant conversation and hope to stay in touch. Tom and Olivia met us at the airport in Luqa. We picked up our rental car, followed Tom to Lidl to do some grocery shopping, and went to the house where Angelique had a delicious chicken dish for supper.

Sunday, October 11 - We enjoyed a lazy Sunday playing with the kids and helping prepare for Alexander's birthday party.

Monday, October 12 - Angelique went to work and the kids went to school so Tom, Cindy, and I went grocery shopping at another store called Pavi in Qormi near the airport. We took both cars so Tom could leave there and pick up Anglique and the kids. On the way, our rear tire on the passenger side (left) got shredded somehow and I had to call Swansea to have them come and change it. I had to replace the tire because it was irreparable. When everyone arrived at the house, we made chili for the party.

Tuesday, October 13 - Alexander's thirteenth birthday! However, the party will be tomorrow since it's a holiday in Malta. We did some more party preparation and then had dinner at Trattoria Fiorino d'Oro (closed). We gave Alexander the birthday gift we had brought from home (Wii Sports Resort) but it wouldn't work with the European Wii he had, so we're going to have to get him a European version of the game to be compatible.

Wednesday, October 14 - PARTY!!! Ten or fifteen boys and a few girls attended and had a great time. It was amusing to see them cavorting and shivering in the pool during a downpour. The adults also had a good time, especially after Tom pulled out a bottle of wine his friend had given him a few years ago, ostensibly Hungarian but with forty-one percent alcohol. I



was the first to try it and found it very likeable, and strong, sort of like brandy. After passing around samples to unsuspecting parents of the kids as they came to collect them, we learned from a Russian fellow that it was Bulgarian [rakia](#).

Thursday, October 15 -I have a friend from California named Rose who is Maltese and happened to be visiting relatives at the same time Cindy and I were here (we got together on Facebook and planned to meet for lunch). After driving around [Bugibba](#) several times, we found her and her friend Lori. We parked the car and walked down Turisti Street to find a nice place for lunch. Here's a picture of Lori, Rose, and me near the bus station in Bugibba (Rose is on the right).



Tom brought a pork shoulder for dinner which we roasted with some fennel.

Friday, October 16 - We went to [Birkirkara](#), where there is a Klikk computer store, to buy a new Wii Sports Resort game for Alexander.



Afterwards, we went to lunch at [Palazzo Parisio](#) in [Naxxar](#). The portrait in the picture seemed to be three-dimensional thanks to the sword pasted onto the gentleman's hand. Cindy and I started with a bruschetta mix (several different toppings) and Tom had Bomba Ragu which was sort of like a beef pasty. For

entrées, Cindy had a Galletto (which was sort of a chicken galantine), Tom had ravioli, and I had gnocchi, all of which was very good.

After lunch, we walked across the street to Charles the Butcher where we picked up two nice porterhouse style steaks to grill for dinner.

Saturday, October 17 - Tom had planned to go to London to attend a fiftieth birthday party for a friend. More on that later.

We played with Alexander's Wii game (I loved the golf and bowling) and am trying to convince Cindy that we should get one. Angelique prepared a delicious seafood lasagna with a green salad for dinner with her friends Mike and Vjollsa.

Sunday, October 18 - Our last day started out with the revelation that Tom had not been allowed on the Air Malta flight from London that morning, as he had planned, because of a misunderstanding with one of the security guards at Heathrow. We learned later that he didn't get back to Malta until the following Tuesday.

Cindy and I took the kids out to the [Al Ponte](#) pizzeria in Mellieha for lunch. It was very crowded and we were there for a long time. I finally had to corral a waitress and force the issue to pay the check. Anyway, it was fun to spend the afternoon with Alexander, Genevieve, and Olivia. After we took the kids home, Cindy and I drove around the area a bit and I took some pictures.





Monday, October 19 - A long day awaits. I woke up at 3:00AM (9:00PM the night before in Brunswick) and prepare for the trip home. We arrived at the Malta airport in plenty of time, checked our bags (I had actually checked in online), and went to the gate. Air Malta served a good breakfast on the plane. Everything went according to plan from London to Chicago. However, the flight from Chicago to Portland was about an hour late and we didn't arrive home until after midnight, a total of twenty-six plus hours.