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May 18: Left Dayton at 3:00, uneventful flight to Detroit. Trip to Amsterdam from Detroit was torture. Guy in front of me kept his seat reclined, so he was in my lap the entire eight hours. The guy across the aisle to me left stood in the aisle with his right foot on his armrest talking to someone behind him so his butt was in my face for significant stretches of time. Some obstruction under the seats prevented me from sticking my camera bag under a seat so I had no foot room. My controller for the TV screen didn't work, so I could not take advantage of the otherwise impressive system that played games, music, classic movies, recent hits, HBO and Showtime series, and network series. Finally, even though it was an all-night flight, apparently everyone but Lisa and I were just too excited to sleep and there was a flight-long cacophony of voices preventing us from sleeping.

May 19: Got to Amsterdam about 7:30 am local time. Very pleasant flight to Edinburgh. Very pleased to see Molly meet us when we got off the plane-she looked great and was very sweet.

Took cab to hotel-Holiday Inn Express. Went with the chain because it was the closest hotel to Molly's flat. Tried to check in about 11:00 and the desk clerk said the room wasn't available until 2:00, but they could store our luggage. Another clerk conspiratorially told us some room would certainly become available before that and she'd call us when it did. We made the 5 minute walk to Molly's flat. The building and flat were alright, but nothing great. We discovered she was not ready to go at all (way too much stuff- no surprise). Almost as soon as we got there we got a call that our room was ready. We walked back to the hotel, got our room keys, and couldn't figure out the lights in the room. Eventually figured out you have to put your room key in a master switch and leave it there.

Walked to the Royal Mile for lunch. Had fish and chips at the World's End pub, so named because it marks the spot where the original walled city ended. Very quaint place and food was good. Big soccer match in town and several supporters of one team were there including one huge guy wearing a dress!

Walked up a couple blocks on the Royal Mile. Very neat buildings filled with touristy shops. Complete kilt sets can be had for 49 pounds! Learned later good ones cost ten times that much. (Alastair told me a real set includes a knife-the only type of knife and the only circumstance a Scot can legally carry a knife.)

Took 12:45 train for the one hour trip to Glasgow. Met by Margo and Lorna. Just walked around downtown for a couple hours. We could tell something wasn't right

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but nobody was saying anything. At 1 o'clock, Lorna literally ran away and said she was going home. We later learned Bill (age 88) had fallen and bled a lot, causing the Hutchison family a lot of concern, but fortunately he was okay. Eventually, Lorna came back and we drove to meet Norman and Alastair at the University of Glasgow, where Norman and Margo met. They told us the original campus had been torn down and this one was built in 1871. The campus is on a rise overlooking the city. It's Gothic and very impressive. Then drove to Hutchison's home, found they live a short distance from Bill and Margaret. We picked them up and drove about 10 miles into the countryside to the small town of Killeen and ate at the Black Bull Inn. I had game stew, Lisa had chicken Balmoral with haggis and Molly had duck. Very pleasant meal, cute town. Very much enjoyed our time with the Hutchisons. Had to rush to make our 10:30 train back to Edinburgh. Walked back to hotel after 39 consecutive hours of being awake. Expect to sleep well tonight!

May 20: Met Molly for breakfast at our hotel. No cinnamon rolls in the UK! Molly ate a British delicacy--baked beans on toast. Not too appetizing. Walked to the Waverly Bridge, caught the Mac Tours bus, rode through New Town, which is beautiful, with gorgeous Georgian architecture. Urban planning from 1776.

Got off the bus to tour Edinburgh Castle. Pictures don't do it justice. Huge in scale, impregnable before modern weaponry. Stupendous views of the city and surroundings. Saw the crown jewels, the room where James VI/I was born, Great Hall, Queen Margaret's chapel built in 1150, Scottish War Museum, and Scottish War Memorial. Very, very impressive. After two hours, we left and walked down the Royal Mile. We couldn't find a Mac Tour bus to hop back on because many streets were closed for an impromptu parade for the Hearts of Midlothian football club which won the Scottish Cup the day before over another Edinburgh team--the Hibernians. Apparently sectarian differences survive here. Catholics support the Hibs and Protestants the Hearts. I wanted to take a tour of a whiskey making exhibit but the girls didn't, so we made our way to the Elephant House, where J. K. Rowling wrote the first Harry Potter novel, and had a very good lunch. I had a shepherd's pie. Girls had roast pork on a baguette. Great view of the castle. Walked to the campus area to look for a sweatshirt for Molly. (Not the best use of limited time. She's been here 5 months and we'll be here 48 hours, yet we will spend a couple of those hours looking for something that was available to her since January.)

Saw the Grayfriars Bobby statue and someone had brought two living Scottish terriers and put them up on the statue.

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Went to national museum of Scotland. It was nice but we rushed through it. Then to St. Giles, where Knox preached and the home of the national church of Scotland. Knox is buried in the back of the church. Under spot #23 of the parking lot!

The Writers Museum closed, which was a big disappointment. Instead, we reserved a spot on a tour of Mary King's Close at 5:40. Tried to catch up with tour bus again to finish the loop before our tour reservation. Waited forever and just as we were leaving, it came. We were able to see the other end of the Royal Mile, including Holyrood Palace, the Earth Museum, Arthurs Seat, and the odd New Parliament building. Renewed the search for Molly's sweatshirt and she was unable to find exactly what she was looking for until about the fifth or sixth shop we stopped at.

Mary King's Close is a recovered area where houses 8-11 stories high were "decapitated" to make room for a royal assembly hall. The old places were used as a foundation for the new building. The tour was entertaining and provided some insight as to how local Scots lived three hundred years ago. We then caught a literary pub tour where two actors engaged in a "debate" about the nature of Edinburgh's literary sons- mainly Burns, Scott, and Stevenson. Ian Rankin was mentioned, to my satisfaction, but Conan Doyle, to my distress, was not. I dominated on a post- tour trivia quiz.

Tour ended at 9:30, and no restaurants were open- relegated to Pizza Hut delivery at Molly's flat. Long walk back from New Town. Lisa helped Molly get started packing. Doesn't look good. Back to hotel at midnight. Lots and lots of walking today. Expecting leg cramps tonight. Writing this at 12:55 with a 6:15 wake up call.

Bought tablet-sugar cubes-and shortbread. Very good, especially after 4+ months of dieting.

May 21: Up at 6:30, packed, left luggage at front desk, and walked to Molly's to finish her packing. Walked to Unit 11, had to ring the door buzzer a couple times before we were buzzed in, walked up the three floors to room 5, had to knock several times, progressively louder each time, before the door was finally opened by ... Not Molly! At that point we realized she lived in Unit 10. The poor girl we woke up was very nice about it, however.

When we made it to the right room, Molly and Lisa finished packing. I patiently waited for instructions and stayed out of the way. Soon enough I was asked to go to the post office to mail her boots and pick up some boxes and packing tape. The boots cost £64 (about \$102) to mail. I later learned the other boxes together cost more. Yes, it would have been cheaper to buy new.

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Margo, with Bill and Margaret picked us up at 10:30 and we headed to St. Andrew's. We drove through several charming seaside towns on the way. Stopped at one and spoke with a retired lobster fisherman. Norman and the kids were traveling the same route and we met there.

Finally got to St. Andrews at about 1:00, and went to the Old Course. What a thrill to see the course. Really wish Andy could have been here. It was a beautiful day, as were all three of our days in Scotland. All the locals could talk about was how bad the weather had been before we arrived, so we got a lot of credit for bringing the beautiful weather. Walked down to the 18th tee and took a photo of the Swilcan Bridge and the Road Hole. Got a huge smile on my face just seeing the famous bunker on 17. We ate at the Golf Club restaurant near the course. Food was good but service was very slow and we didn't get out until 3:30 so we didn't get to see much of the town. Did stop for a quick photo of the cathedral. Lorna wanted to stop for a cake at a local bakery, but Norman couldn't find it for a while. Ultimately, they found it but discovered the place didn't sell boxed cakes anyway.

By this time, catching our 5:30 train from Edinburgh to London was becoming a concern. We called Molly, who had stayed behind to study for her last final exam, scheduled for the next day, and told her to bring her big duffel bag to the hotel, so we would only have to make one stop, and called a cab to meet us there. We arrived back in Edinburgh at 5:00, said our goodbyes, and took the cab to Waverly. Arrived at 5:15. Molly's flat mate, Adele, was on that train, traveling from the north to Edinburgh, so we were able to meet her as we were boarding the train. However, the meeting of Adele caused us to board after all the luggage bins were full, so the duffel bag was resting in the aisle, threatening to trip anyone who passed. We were scheduled to arrive in London at 10:20, averaging about 75 mph, on a very quiet train. And to think we could have had high speed rail in Ohio.

Got to London a little early, and took a cab to Morgan Guest House. Trip took about a half hour and we got to the place a little after 11. The driver apologized for it taking so long because lots of streets were closed or were temporarily one-way in preparation for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in four days. Our hotel looks like a house in a very nice neighborhood. Found the door locked, rang the bell, and began to get a little nervous when no one answered. But after a few minutes a man came to the door, confirmed our reservation, and gave us keys for our room and the front door. This is not like any hotel we've ever stayed in. No front desk, no ice or vending machines — it's just like staying in someone's house. We're on the third floor with two other rooms. On the landing half way up is a very small room with a shower. Next to it is an even smaller room with a

toilet. The sink is in our room, which is also very small with one double bed, one single and virtually no floor space. It is quaint.

May 22: Not too impressed with the breakfast offered in the hotel for the price, so we stopped at Starbucks on the way to Victoria Station. We found the place where the tour bus stops and bought tickets for the Original London Sightseeing Tour, recommended in Rick Steve's guidebook, and the London Eye. We stayed on the bus for the first few stops. The guide was very good and London was very impressive. It is a mix of old and new unlike any other city I've seen. It is vibrant and busy, like NYC, but with buildings as much as one thousand years old.

Our first stop was St. Paul's Cathedral and it is breathtaking in every sense. Built after the great fire by Christopher Wren, it is nearly 400 years old. We proved our mettle by climbing to the top of the dome. Lisa went to the next to last level and I went all the way to the top. Breath was not a problem but my knees were crying in pain. It was 365 steps to a very tiny space looking out all over the city. We spent a couple hours exploring everything at the cathedral and returned to the bus stop to hop back on for the rest of the tour. We were approached by one of our bus companies' sales guys and he tried to sell us tickets. We told him we had already bought tickets on his line and that we were looking for the bus for tour #1 and he told us we could expect it in a few minutes. In about 5 minutes it arrived and we made our way to the door. Since other tour buses used the stop, there were a number of people we had to work through to get to the curb. When we got to the door the salesman we had talked to was talking to the driver, preventing our entrance. He was still standing there as the bus began to pull away. I yelled, the salesman was still standing by the bus but made no effort to stop it and told me I'd just have to wait for the next bus, which should be there in about 15 minutes. Nearly an hour later we were still waiting for the damn bus. At least three other families were as mad as we were, but the sales rep made no effort to help, just saying we would have to talk to management at their Trafalger Square office, which would have been kind of hard considering that lack of transportation was our problem. We were told that the problem was heavy traffic. However, one of their competitors had at least two dozen buses come by while we were waiting for one. They simply don't have enough buses on line. After an hour's wait a bus finally came and we completed most of the tour, except we transferred near the end to a one which would take us to the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. We rushed through the British Museum, only checking out highlights, so we would be sure to get to the Victoria and Albert before it closed at 5:45. We caught a bus at 4:00. At the first stop after the museum, our driver came up on the second level of the bus and told us there would be a five minute delay. After 15 minutes, I decided to go down and tell him I didn't pay £44 to sit alongside the curb at Russell Square, only to find there was no driver. About 5

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minutes later, another driver appeared and we pulled out. All of our stops took a lot longer than was necessary. In the end, we got to the Victoria and Albert just in time to be told that the museum was closing and they couldn't let us in. We were not too far from Belgravia, the part of town in which we were staying, so we then walked back to our room. So, in our first day in London, we saw all of two attractions.

We didn't want to waste the little time we had on lunch, so by dinner time we were famished. We stopped at two pubs, sat down at tables, and waited for a server who never appeared, so we walked out in a huff from them both. Being surly about the bus had not put us in a very good frame of mind, so we were pretty ticked when we couldn't get waited on. Turned out it was our bad. When we entered a third pub, we walked up to the bar and asked if they had a full menu, (which the first two had), and we were told we would have to order at the bar and bring the food back to our table. Unfortunately, that pub had no tables available, a restaurant we stopped at which was highly rated by Yelp required reservations, so we got the original fast food--Cornish pasties at a little shop. Not bad, but not what we'd been looking for.

After eating we went back to Kings Cross to meet Molly, then took the Tube back to Victoria Station, and walked back to the room, which seemed tiny with two people, and now seemed like housing for Lilliputians with three. I began to write this day's entry. When I got to the part about buying the tickets, I realized I didn't have the strip of tickets including the London Eye tickets. Searched high and low with no luck. £55 literally lost. Icing on the crap cake that was this day.

May 23: Much better day. Great day, in fact. Started out worrisome, though. We tried to get on the tube to the Tower of London at rush hour. We waited for two trains before we got close to the doors of a third. Lisa and Molly got on, but there was no room for me. I told them to get off at Tower Hill Station and they were off with a roar. The next train came and stopped farther down the platform, so I couldn't get on board it, either. I made the third, anxiously hoping we could find one another, which might be difficult in a city this size and with no cell phones. Happily, when I got off, they were waiting but had been concerned when the second train had come through without me on it. After all, I had the money, keys, and other essentials.

We toured the Tower and it was terrific. Our yeoman guard, (Beefeater), Barney was very funny and his tour was excellent. The tower construction began after Hastings, so the original building, the White Tower, is nearly 950 years old. Saw the Crown Jewels, the ravens, (including one that got into the trash cans, grabbed several bags, turned them upside down, shook out the crumbs and had breakfast), traitor's gate, Edwards Longshanks' rooms, armor and arms, the bloody tower where Richard III had his

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nephews killed, and the site where Anne Bolyn was beheaded and buried. Lunch at their cafe was fish and chips for all of us.

We were then off to Parliament, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and the Churchill War Rooms. Westminster Abbey gave me chills. Parts of it were built over one thousand years ago. Elizabeth I, Edward II, and most of the other kings and queens of England are buried there. More significantly, in my democratic opinion, so are many writers and scientists. Shakespeare, Dickens, Dylan Thomas, Olivier, Handel, Jane Austen, and dozens others are either buried or memorialized there. Darwin and Newton are buried there. So ironic that two men whose work destroyed so much religious superstition are buried in one of the greatest churches. Talked to a docent who told a story about a young Darwin meeting Joseph Herschel, one of the most prominent scientists of his day, while on the voyage of the Beagle. Darwin told him some of his developing thoughts and Herschel said it only made sense that since the earth itself changes with every earthquake and volcanic eruption that life itself would, also. He told Darwin he must continue his work and publish it. They are buried beside one another. That was one of the moments where I got chills.

We then walked a couple blocks to the Churchill war rooms. Their location was secret during the war and they were not bomb proof. Nevertheless, it is where Churchill, and his cabinet and his military and personal staff essentially lived during the Blitz and the V1 and V2 attacks. The rooms were locked after VJ Day and left intact until the museum was opened. The space also includes an excellent Churchill Museum. Very well done.

We then went to 221b Baker Street. I've wanted to go there since I read my first Holmes story, when I was probably about ten years old. Very kitschy, but they have everything there: a deerstalker, the Moroccan slipper, the violin, and "VR" shot into the wall. They had mannequins portraying major characters and scenes on the uppermost floor. And, of course, a very large gift shop. It was great.

I gave the girls several options for evening activities and Molly really wanted to see the new Top Hat musical. Tried to find discounts on tickets, but had no luck since the play has only been playing for a month. So we went to Covent Garden--which is like Quincy Market x 10--found the theater and asked the guy at the box office what deals were available. Got third row orchestra, center for the price of the balcony. Not as good as the film but very entertaining. The supporting cast was outstanding and Lisa and especially Molly were very excited. Molly got autographs with the leads and her photo with them at the stage door.

It was a really great day.

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May 24: Another day plagued with transportation complications. Our plans were to take the Central or Direct tube line from Victoria Station to the Globe Theater, walk across the Millennium Bridge back to the same line, take it to South Kensington, spend an hour or so at the Victoria and Albert Museum, then go to Harrods until it was time to go to St.Pancras to catch the Eurostar. As it turned out, both subway lines were experiencing severe delays because of signaling problems. So we got to the Globe at 10:30 instead of 9:00, and it took more than 1½ hours to get back, instead of the expected 15- 20 minutes. As a result, no Victoria or Albert, and we only had about 1 1/2 hours at Harrods.

We had to pack before we left the hotel, and that was the normal travail whenever Molly is involved. The storage area for our bags was in the basement--of course.

The Millennium Bridge is a pedestrian walkway across the Thames. It acquired the nickname, "the Wobbly Knobbly" Bridge. We experienced none of that and the view was terrific. The Globe was neat and the accompanying museum was very well done. Unfortunately, in my opinion, there was a rehearsal for an international Shakespeare Festival, so that a play was being rehearsed by a company from Nigeria in their native language. We couldn't understand what was going on, we couldn't take photos and we couldn't get a tour of anything backstage. Nice gift shop, though.

We abandoned the delayed tube lines about a third of the way back to our destination and took an alternate route with a couple of additional transfers. It was still quicker than it would have been had we stayed aboard. Because of the time that had elapsed. We went straight to Harrods. It is like no other department store I had ever seen. They have everything, it's all extremely high class merchandise, and the store is unbelievably decorated. They have areas with exotic themes, their window displays are very clever and attractive. Quite an extraordinary place. Ate lunch at their tearoom, which the girls enjoyed. However, out two salads, one BLT, a pot of tea and my £4.25 Diet Coke added up to £47, (about 75\$)! For entertainment, we did have a couple at the table next to us become engaged during lunch. I was the first person to congratulate them and Molly took their picture for them. An older lady on the other side of them bought them champagne.

We returned to our hotel to pick up our bags and caught a cab to St. Pancras to take the Eurostar under the English Channel. I am writing this just as the trip has begun. The train is very fast and quiet. We have no sense of speed because of the smoothness and quiet of the train. It should take only 2 hours and 10 minutes to travel 240miles. Next stop—Paris!



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Arrived at Gare du Nord, (north station) at about 8:30, Paris time, (6 hours ahead of home), and waited in line quite a while to catch a cab. A guy was directing people to cabs and just grabbed a couple of our bags and threw them in the back of the cab and said "you give me a tip." The only euros I had were €50 bills, so I asked if he'd take American dollars, and he was happy to take a five. The cab was quick and we got to our hotel, the Hotel Muguet, 11 rue Chevert, in the 7th arrondissement. After our bandbox of a room in London, we found our room was very spacious and well-appointed. The highlight was that we could see the Eiffel Tower from our window! About 9:30 we made our way to the Champs du Mars, a park running south from the tower towards the Ecole Militaire. The park was filled with people eating, playing, and just hanging out. Thousands of people on a Thursday night. The tower was lit and beautiful. At 9:55, white lights sparkled all over the tower and people oohed and aahed. The sparkling lights last for 5 minutes and are on at 9:55, 10:55, 11:55, and 12:55. When we left the park, we tried to find a restaurant that was still open and stopped at the Terrasse, a sidewalk café near our hotel. Lisa and I had chicken brochettes and Molly had duck. We ordered some white wine and the combination of dehydration, great thirst which led to me drinking two glasses very quickly, and no food for about 12 hours, resulted in a little dizziness on my part, which the girls enjoyed immensely.

May 25: We got up on Friday and had a petit dejeuner (little dinner) at the Cafe Central on rue Cler. Hot chocolate or coffee, a croissant, and O.J. For €7. Very good. Rue Cler is a wonderful two-block street filled with cafes, cheese shops, bakeries, florists, and fruit stands. The street is the heart of the neighborhood and a sample of what many neighborhoods used to be like thought Paris.

We then walked to the Invalides where Napoleon is entombed and the French War Museum. Apparently the U.S. played some small role in helping France win W.W.II. The tomb was, as befits the man, huge and impressive.

Then we went to the Rodin Museum, which was undergoing renovations, but several statues could be seen in the gardens, including the Thinker.

After that we caught the open top bus tour and saw the city. Paris has beautiful monuments and broad, tree-lined streets. It is far more beautiful than any other large city I've ever visited. The beautiful weather, which seemed like a blessing, turned out to be a curse. After a few hours sitting in the open bus, we all became sunburned. Molly, particularly did not handle it well. We had a very late lunch at the Cafe Marche, also on rue Cler. Molly and I had cheeseburgers and Lisa had salmon salad.

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Dinner that night was at the Eiffel Tower. Had 9:00 dinner reservations and our table looked out over the Seine. I had perch, Lisa had foie gras and salmon, and Molly had a grilled prawn and duck. When we sat down, our waiter greeted us in French, to which I responded, "Bon soir." Apparently, my two years of high school French and two years of college French were completely wasted, because his response to me, in middle American English, was, "Oh, I'll get you the English menus." I asked if my pronunciation was that bad and he said he could tell we were American by my accent. I asked if he was American, and he told us he was born in Paris and had attended the American School in Belgium during his high school years. During the entire trip we were never unable to communicate with wait staff, salespeople, museum staff, or transportation workers. Everyone spoke very competent English. I am even more embarrassed by being monolingual. We sat next to a couple from Venezuela celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They were very nice but spoke little English. With the help of Molly's rudimentary Spanish, we were able to communicate effectively, however. The wife shared food with Lisa and Molly. Very enjoyable evening.

May 26: We left the hotel at 8:00 without eating in order to get to Versailles. We got there at 9:00, when they open, and there were very few people who had traveled with us on the train from Paris. However, the place was packed with Japanese tourists who arrived in tour buses. It was almost impossible to move through the place.

The chateau is ostentatious, opulent, and huge beyond imagining. The Hall of Mirrors might be the most beautiful room on earth. However, the highlight was the gardens. Acres, acres, and acres. It took us 15 minutes to walk across only 2/3 of their length, and they are as wide as they are long. Fountains and classical statuary are everywhere and the views back to the palace and over the countryside are spectacular. The fountains, powered only by gravity, are only turned on for two hours each day on summer weekends and classical music plays in the background. We planned our visit to coincide with the fountains, which undoubtedly contributed to the crowds. Again, the weather was beautiful and the entire scene was unbelievable.

We took the train back to the city and visited l'Orangerie to see Monet's Water Lilies. The original roof has been removed and replaced with glass so that the paintings were bathed in natural light

We met our tour group at the Hotel Muguet at 4:30., then went to the Terrasse Restaurant for an initial meeting and drinks. We were assigned buddies--Dale and Suzanne, from Colorado were ours—to make sure we were all present whenever we move from one location to another. Three couples, including us are celebrating 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries on the trip. Molly is the youngest in the group, there are two couples in

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their 30s, including Bret and Marilee from Liberty Township, and the rest are about our age. Our guide, Donald, is from Scotland, now lives in Italy, and has been a tour guide for 28 years. After the meeting we walked to the Cafe Bosquet nearby for dinner. Shared a table with Tim, who is traveling alone and is the strength and conditioning coach for Michigan State for all sports except football, men's basketball and men's golf. Girls had escargot and liked it a lot.

After dinner the entire group took a boat ride on the Seine from Quai Alexander past Ile de Cité, back down to the Eiffel Tower and back to the dock. It was a huge boat, filled with hundreds of people and we had a lot of fun.

May 27: The next morning we traveled by the Metro to Ile de Cité and saw Notre Dame and Sainte Chappelle. Both are beautiful beyond description. Mass was being conducted when we visited Notre Dame. The outside is simple perfection. Sainte Chappelle is justifiably known for its stained glass on the second floor in the king's chapel. We also walked through Ile de St. Louis and the Latin Quarter. Saw Shakespeare and Co., and looked around for a while. We spent the afternoon at the Orsay Museum, home of Impressionism. Molly really enjoyed the Van Gogh paintings, particularly the ones featured in Doctor Who. We ate in their cafeteria which featured a view of Sainte Chappelle through their giant clocks and a terrace overlooking the Seine and the Louvre. The Orsay was one of the highlights of the trip.

After the Orsay, we were on our own. We had big plans for visiting the Pompidou Museum or squeezing in something else, but fatigue won out. We went back to our hotel and rested up. Then we went back to rue Cler and Molly bought a baguette and we went back to the Terrasse to eat. Then we caught a cab and asked him to take us to the Trocadero, the Arch de Triomphe, and the Louvre, so we could see them lit up. They were beautiful and it was surprising to see that even on a Sunday night Paris was swarming with people at 11:00 p.m.

May 28: Memorial Day in the USA and Pentecost in France. Therefore, the Louvre was very busy. We had a local guide, who was very good, and showed us the highlights in 2 hours. The Mona Lisa was more impressive than I had anticipated and I now understand why the Venus de Milo and Winged Victory are so famous. After lunch at the Louvre, we took a 3 hour bus ride to Beaune where we stayed at the Ramparts hotel, a building began in medieval times and built right into the old city walls. The town is right out of a storybook. The buildings all look to be 4 centuries old, or more. Many wine shops and restaurants, as it is the home of the Burgundy wine industry. Went to a

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wine-tasting and dinner at an old Abby and had beef burgundy, of course. Very good and a lot of fun. We were all quite fond of a black currant liquor.

May 29: We had 1½ hours to explore Beaune on our own. We toured the Hotel Dieu, a 15<sup>th</sup> century hospital used until 1984. It has beautiful glazed ceramic tiles on the roof and the building itself is very beautiful and quite unique. We left Beaune for Switzerland, stopping at a French shopping mall on the way for lunch and to get a glimpse of everyday French life.

As we approached the Alps, the scenery again exceeded my ability to convey its beauty. We arrived at Lauterbrunnen, our destination, and found our hotel room has a balcony with a view of the village's iconic waterfall. That evening we had a fondue tasting and were served traditional Swiss food for dinner, featuring bratwurst and potatoes.

May 30: This was a spectacular day as we traveled to Europe's roof. We took a cable car up about 2000 meters from Lauterbrunnen, then a train to Mürren, a small ski town, then two more cable cars to Schilthorn, about 2,970 meters above sea level. Schilthorn is a mountain that stands by itself so it provides a panoramic view of some of the highest peaks in the Alps, including the Mönch, Jungfrau, and the Eiger. We could also see just a glimpse of Mont Blanc, the highest spot in Europe. The north face of the Eiger was the final Alpine peak to be scaled. The weather was perfect and the sky was crystal clear. In our trip we ascended about 8,000 feet from the Lauterbrunnen Valley floor. The cable car platform on Schilthorn was built for the filming of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the George Lazenby Bond movie. They have built a 360 degree viewing platform, a revolving restaurant, and a small movie theater on the top. It was surreal and spectacular. We spent 1½ hours there and took several hundred photos. We took the cable cars back to Mürren and ate lunch at a place with a terrace that overlooked the valley with breathtaking views. We saw several paragliders passing over us as we ate. We then walked downhill, ( extremely downhill) to Gimmelwald, a well-preserved farming village that is protected from development because it is in an avalanche zone. It is connected to Lauterbrunnen by a cable car because every community in Switzerland must have some form of public transportation--train, boat, post bus, or cable car. There was about a 40 degree temperature difference between the Schilthorn and the valley floor, from 41 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit.

On the way back to Lauterbrunnen, we got off our bus at the Trummelbach falls, which is a place where 10 snow run-offs all come together inside a mountain. Through the millennia the water has carved out caverns that became tourist attractions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1915 a tunnel was made for a funicular that takes you up 100 meters and

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then a series of stairways lead to the internal falls. They take dramatic twists and turns and are lit for effect. The openings are hundreds of feet high, demonstrating the power of the water over time. Because the source of the water is snow melt, the temperature higher up in the caverns is refrigerated.

We returned to Lauterbrunnen for shopping and dinner. Bought some Swiss Army knives and country flag patches and ate at the Jüngfrau Hotel. We ordered "Swiss Kitchen" dishes and a Swiss beer. Swiss food was good and homey, not spectacular. To bed early for an early start to Munich, tomorrow.

May 31: We had breakfast at the hotel and were on the road at 8:00. The desire to sleep was strong but the scenery was beautiful as we drove through mountain passes and past lakes. The mountain road was very narrow and we were right on the edge of the road, with only several hundred feet of air between our bus and the valley floor. Excellent driving by Paul. We stopped for lunch in the medieval German town of Lindau. The central area was walled and very well-maintained, filled with shops and restaurants. Lindau is on an island in Lake Caroline, with several hotels looking out on the harbor, which was filled with boats and guarded by an ancient lighthouse, a mammoth statue of a lion, and a tower that had 30 foot braid of blond hair hanging out a window. Obviously, Rapunzel's summer lake house. We ate at a restaurant looking out over the harbor. We all got a white veal sausage with a pretzel and sweet mustard. After we had started, our waiter came to the table with a look of shock on his face and told us that traditionally you peeled the skin off the sausage. We did so with what we had left and didn't notice a huge difference in taste, but we were properly chastened.

We got into Munich at about 5:00 and took a walk around the neighborhood of our hotel, the Blauer Bock, and saw the Viktualmarkt, Marianplatz, and the Hofbrau Haus. Ate dinner at the Hofbrau with Dale and Suzanne and had a very nice time, with oompah music playing in the background. We got 1 liter beer mugs and pretzels the size of our heads, both of which the Hofbrau (brewer to the Court) Haus is known for. Ironically, it shares a courtyard with the Hard Rock Cafe.

June 1: Kathy, a guide from Radius tours, gave us a walking tour of the central area of Munich. Most of the area was destroyed by Allied bombing during WWII and rebuilt to look like what existed before, without attempting to recreate the buildings exactly. We then took our bus to some outer areas, seeing the BMW factory, the 1972 Olympic stadia, and the Bavarian royal family's summer palace, which was opulent, much like Versailles, but smaller. Munich was the capital of Bavaria, an independent kingdom until 1871, so there are a number of palaces in the area.

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We had lunch at the Viktualmarkt, an open-air market place with butchers, produce sellers, florists, dairy products, bakers, restaurants, and the town's Maypole.

In the afternoon we had to choose between tours of Dachau or a tour of Munich sites related to the rise of the Third Reich. Since Molly had recently toured Auschwitz, we opted for the latter. The tour was very interesting and provided a great deal of insight as to Hitler's ascension to power and how Germans relate to their Nazi history. Several Nazi buildings survive and have common uses. Hitler's Munich offices and the site of the signing of the Munich accords are a music school, although access to his actual office is prohibited. An art museum Hitler designed after he became Chancellor is still an art museum, but it houses modern art, which the Nazis hated.

After that 2½ hour walking tour, we started right into another 3½ walking tour, this one called the Beer and Wine Tour. We learned about how beer is made, its history in Munich, and sampled the city's best beer, Augustina, a Bock beer, and a wheat beer. We toured the beer museum, ate at the Hofbrau Kellar, and visited the Hofbrau Haus, again, where, in a rented room, the Nazis had their first meeting. Came dragging back to the hotel about 11. Our impression of Munich was that it was not a beautiful city, like our other stops on the tour, but it certainly offered a lot of fun things to do in the old central part of the town.

June 2: On the road at 8:00, more unbelievable scenery through southern Bavaria, Austria, and northern Italy. We had a pizza lunch in a small Italian town called Enge. It was picture postcard beautiful, surrounded by mountains, orchards, and vineyards. We arrived at the Venice train station at about 4:30, and took the vaporetto (Venetian water bus) to our stop at St. Mark's. We had dinner together and sampled a number of excellent Venetian specialties, saw a small part of the city, and then Donald arranged for us to take a gondola ride, complete with singers and guitar players to serenade us and champagne.

June 3: I got up at 5:30 in order to be able to take some photographs of St. Mark's square without the mammoth crowds. There were only a handful of other people out and about, all doing the same thing. After breakfast, we met with our local tour guide who was right out of central casting. She was very loud, opinionated, funny, flirty, and did a great job. She took us to a mask shop where she explained the characters who populate their Carnival celebration. In the afternoon we were on our own and made our way to the Rialto Bridge and the marketplace. Then, we toured the Doge's Palace and it was much more impressive than what I had anticipated, especially its huge council room with the world's largest painting. The tour included a crossing of the Bridge of Sighs to the Venetian dungeons. We took a quick tour of the Correr Museum and then went to

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tour St. Mark's Basilica. Unfortunately, there was a Mass and they closed early so we weren't able to get past the inner doors. Since we were right there, we opted to go up in the Campanile. Donald had warned us not to go when the bells rang, but it was 5 o'clock, and they weren't supposed to be rung until 6. We took the elevator to the top and, with the clear skies, had unimaginable views of Venice. Then the bells rang. Four very large bells, inches from our ears. There were about 50 of us in the tower, all holding our ears for about five minutes, until the ringing stopped.

Our guide and Donald had recommended a restaurant mentioned in Rick's guide book, Trattoria da Giorgio. Our hotel clerk made reservations for a canal side table at 8 o'clock, so we could see the sunset. When we arrived, I told the fellow obviously running things, that we had reservations at 8, and he said, in his pleasant Italian accent, "Ah yes, the Bruns party of three from the Trovatore," which was our hotel. I asked how he figured that out and he said, "It is my business to know." We sat down and he asked if we wanted recommendations and we told him we did. He said, "Our special tonight is the Sea Bass. I cook it for you in the oven with onion and tomato and a nice sauce, and then I prepare it at your table, removing all the bones." We said that sounded good and also accepted his pasta and wine recommendations. He came back a few minutes later holding a large, whole, fish, showed it to us and asked if it looked alright. Not knowing what a Sea Bass should look like, we said it looked fine, and it became our (delicious) dinner. While it was being cooked, he saw our guide book, and proudly said, "I am the chatty Roberto." We looked at the listing for Giorgio's in the book and found that Rick had recommended it for its fresh seafood and pleasant hospitality of its owners, Giorgio, and his sons, David and "the chatty Roberto."

Apparently, they ran out of Sea Bass, because as we were finishing, some diners at the table behind us asked for recommendations, and Roberto told them, "Our special tonight is the flounder. I cook it for you in the oven with onion and tomato . . ."

It was really a wonderful meal with excellent food a wondrous setting.

We then tried to make our way back to St. Mark's but really got turned around with all the winding streets and the dark. Eventually, we reached our destination, and found the square was flooding pretty badly. It was high tide and the moon was full, which apparently always causes large parts of the city to flood. The water deterred no one, however, as the square was full of people, eating, listening to the orchestras playing, and taking photos of the square reflected in the flood waters. We listened to a couple of the orchestras while enjoying our first Italian gelato.

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June 4: After breakfast we walked the short distance back to the St. Mark's vaporetto stop. We scrambled to try to get seats at the front in order to have an unobstructed view for photographs as we traveled up the Grand Canal. Back on the mainland we met Paul and boarded the bus to our hotel in Tuscany. We were running a little ahead of schedule so Donald took us to the American Cemetery from W.W. II outside of Florence. It is still operated by the United States Government. An American administrator boarded our bus as we entered and talked a little about the fight for Italy and the history of the cemetery. As he was talking, it was raining hard. By the time he finished, the rain had stopped and we were able to tour the cemetery. There was a wall with the names of American casualties, a chapel, a peace monument and, of course, thousands of white crosses, arranged in row after row. It was very moving.

We continued on to our agriturismo, a working farm receiving subsidies from the government to operate a hotel and restaurant, so as to enable the owners to remain in farming. They had vineyards and olive groves set among rolling Tuscan hills. It was a beautiful setting. Our room was in a small separate building with two bedrooms and a bathroom in the middle. There's a pool, a bar, and a restaurant. After we got settled, the restaurant's chef gave us a cooking demonstration in the kitchen. We then had a buffet-style dinner of many Italian specialties, all of which were very good.

June 5: Our 30th anniversary! We drove about 15 minutes into Florence where we met our local tour guide, an American ex-pat who married a man from Florence. Our tour began at Renaissance era square and then we walked to Florence's cathedral, the Duomo. Given when it was built, it was an incredible architectural achievement. The architects knew they wanted to top it with a dome, but didn't know how to build one, the technology having been lost since the fall of Rome. So the cathedral was built with a huge hole left for the dome. It took 40 years before Brunelleschi figured it out. We also saw the famous Gates of Paradise, the brass doors of the adjacent baptistry. We then toured the Uffizi Gallery. It's a magnificent museum, but it was made even better by our guide. She did a great job of showing the parallels between the advances made by civilization and its art from the Dark Ages through the Renaissance to the modern age. From the museum we got great views of the Ponte Vecchio and of the Duomo and the City Hall. Dominating the courtyard in front of the City Hall is an exact copy of Michelangelo's David situated where the original sat for 400 years, until it was moved to the Accademia to preserve it from pollution. We then had lunch on our own and went to a nearby sandwich shop recommended by our guide. Molly insisted on treating us for our anniversary. We had delicious herring and onion sandwiches and gelato. We then walked to San Croce, referred to as Italy's Westminster Abbey. It's the burial site of Michelangelo, Galileo, Rossini, Dante, Machiavelli, and other Italian luminaries. It's also the location of the Florence leather school, which was created to



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give boys orphaned by WW II a chance to learn a trade. It was the principal reason Florence became a center for leather goods and fashion. We had a few minutes left to see San Lorenzo street market, an open air flea market with everything imaginable for sale. We then rendezvoused with our group to visit the Accademia to see the original *David*. It left us speechless. It is a perfect work of art in a perfect setting. It's beyond my ability to adequately describe.

We then made our way back to farm to relax around the pool and play some ping pong before dinner. We once again had a huge buffet style dinner with loads of Italian foods, which were all good. Donald arranged for some musicians to play as we ate and they dedicated a song to us for our anniversary.

June 6: After an excellent breakfast we left for Rome. We dropped off our bags at our hotel. Paul then drove us to Vatican City and then he took himself and the bus back to Holland. The crowds at the Vatican were beyond belief. We first toured the Vatican Museum which is huge and wore us out. We then moved through the Sistine Chapel, which is sublime, and then into St. Peter's. It's only the largest church in the world and a mass was going on, so we couldn't see everything. Did see Michelangelo's *Pieta* and several dead Popes laid out in glass coffins around the basilica. Enjoyed seeing the inscriptions in the floor showing where other lesser churches would fit.

We wanted to take the elevator to the top of the Victor Emmanuel Monument, but we got there just a little too late. We concluded that Italian traffic is crazy. There are no traffic lights and if you want to cross a street you're supposed to just walk out into traffic and assume that everyone will stop. You're not supposed to make eye contact with drivers because they will then assume you see them and will zip right through the intersection. Thousands of Vespas.

We walked to the Trevi Fountain where there were throngs of people. We ate at Sacre e Profano, a deconsecrated church, for dinner. Molly had spaghetti cooked in squid ink, turning her mouth black. We then walked by a street market where I tried to negotiate to buy a movie poster for Molly. Rather than entering into negotiations, the owner of the stall acted very offended and refused to sell to me at any price. It was very odd. We then walked to the Spanish Steps which was filled with thousands of people hanging out and having a good time. We stopped at the Trevi again on our way back in order to see the Fountain bathed in light—it's beautiful—then we took a cab back to the hotel.

June 7: Our final day in Europe. We left the hotel at 9:00 and walked a pretty good distance to a subway stop. Rome has a very limited subway system because they can't dig new tunnels without making archeological finds. We rode the train only one stop to

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the Colosseum. As we came out of the subway, it was the first thing we saw. It is awe-inspiring and larger than I had expected. We had an Italian guide meet us there. From her we learned that the Colosseum got its name from a statue that used to be nearby. Nero had built a palace at the edge of the forum near where the Colosseum was later built. It featured an enormous statue of him several stories tall. After his disastrous reign, the palace was torn down. Nero's head was removed and replaced with one representing Apollo. The statue was moved even closer to the location of the Colosseum. After it was built, the locals referred to going to the Colossus when they visited the Amphitheater. Also, the word arena is Latin for sand. Slaves were employed spreading fresh sand all over the Colosseum to soak up blood. Because sand was everywhere the patrons looked, they also referred to the place as the arena.

The Colosseum used to be significantly larger and covered with marble. However, it was looted for marble, bricks, iron pins, and other building materials for stores, homes, and, most of all, Catholic churches. The entire outer ring was removed. A small amount has been restored to show what it used to look like.

We then walked to the forum, which is nearby. It is a very small area where there were temples, including the Vestal Virgins', the senate, and other public spaces. All that are left are ruins. We saw the spot where Julius Caesar was cremated and it was covered with flowers left recently by people. Nearby is the Circus Maximus where chariot races were held. Immediately to the north of the forum is a piazza designed by Michelangelo, and the Victor Emmanuel Monument. Two thousand years of history all thrown together in a small space.

We continued walking to the Pantheon, the oldest preserved building in Rome. It was saved because it was turned into a church. It inspired Jefferson and has a magnificent 2000 year old dome that future generations couldn't replicate until Bernini built the Duomo in Florence 1500 years later.

We went to a restaurant recommended in Rick Steve's book, Osteria del Maria, and they had very good, basic food. I had prosciutto on melted mozzarella, and the girls had pasta. We then sampled gelato from the most famous place in town, Giliotto's, where Molly had stopped in April, and San Crispino's, which Donald recommended. Slight nod to San Crispino's. Tired and hot, we decided to head back to the hotel to rest for a little while and took the subway from the Spanish Steps.

At six, we went as a group to dinner. The restaurant was located at the former location of Pompey's theatre, the site of Caesars' assassination on the Ides of March. We had to

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go through a spooky tunnel and down into an ancient basement to eat. We had a great meal, with several courses, and had a good time with Tim, Robin, and Andrew.

After dinner, Donald led us on a night tour of several beautiful squares, the Piazza Navona, featuring the Fountain of the Four Rivers and Campo dei Fiori, where we saw the Bathtub Fountains and the statue of Giordano Bruno. Both were full of restaurants and people, and beautiful buildings and just gorgeous. One of the highlights of the trip and we would have never even thought about going there without being on the tour with Donald.

Marilee and Brett asked me to take their picture in front of the Four Rivers Fountain and when we looked up our group was gone. Donald had said he was taking us for gelato near the Pantheon and since he had told us about San Crispino's the day before, I assumed that was where we could find our group. We made our way there and, sure enough, found the rest of our group. We then boarded the Number 40 city bus to go back to the hotel. When we got on it was packed. At the next stop, more people got on and everyone was pressing up against one another. A pair of reading glasses in my camera bag got broken by the pressure. As we went around corners, people were making noises like we were on a roller coaster, Jerry made some lewd comments, and all of our group got giggling, making the Romans wonder what was wrong with all of us. Finally got back to the hotel and said our goodbyes. Then up to the room to pack and get ready for tomorrow's flight.

June 8: Grabbed a cab at 8 and took a 45 minute ride to the airport. We were dropped off at the wrong terminal and walked forever to get to the right place. Ran into Tim and Linda and found the same thing had happened to them. Italian security is much easier to get through than that in the US. Our return flight was much more pleasant than the trip to Amsterdam. The plane wasn't full so we had room to stretch out and they served a pretty decent pizza. Once we got to Detroit, we had to go through immigration, pick up our checked bags, pass through customs, re-check our bags, and because we were randomly chosen to have our bags x-rayed, we had to go back through security, even though we'd gone through security in Rome and had never been in an unsecured area. It took an hour from the time we disembarked until we got through the bureaucracy. Flight back to Dayton was completely uneventful.

The trip was absolutely exhilarating. What a great time we had! Now, we have to pack up Molly and get her to Washington by Sunday. No rest for the weary travelers!