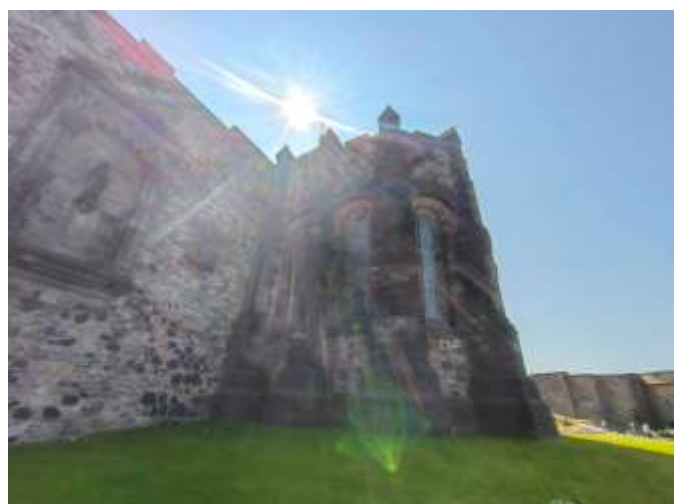


Highland cows and others

Waking up at 3 in the morning has never been my favourite thing to do, but on the 15th of July, I was more than thrilled to get out of my bed. Everybody was half asleep at the airport, but we still managed to get to know each other quite well. After the plane landed in Edinburgh, we dropped off our luggages, and we were ready to set sail. First, we took a bus to the Scottish coastline, where we visited the Royal Yacht Britannia, the ship that once belonged to the Royal family. We explored gorgeous rooms, huge dining halls, and several tiny bars scattered along the boat. After a quick lunch, we headed to the Edinburgh Castle, a building that has served multiple roles in the past, functioning as a royal residency, a military fortress, but it was also used as a prison at one point. We wandered around this massive building for a few hours, and when we were done exploring, we went to the Camera Obscura museum, a place filled with a bunch of cool illusions and magic tricks. We were absolutely exhausted at this point, so we hopped on a train to Glasgow, and after a long day of walking, we finally checked in to our Airbnb, and after a delicious dinner we said our goodbyes to the first day of the trip.



The next day we woke up early to catch the train to Dumfries, where our hosts, Pam and Colin were already waiting for us. They took us to Dunscore, the village where Jane Haining, the namesake of the competition grew up. We stopped at a graveyard on the way, and there we found the Haining family's grave. After climbing over the cemetery's wall with

the help of a built-in stair system, we continued our journey. First, we went to the community centre, where the residents of the village welcomed us with a lovely lunch.

Afterwards, we visited the local church and a Jane Haining memorial room inside. We got to see lots of relics, books written about Jane, and even a yellow star worn by Jewish people during the Second World War, donated by a fellow Hungarian lady. Next, we took a short walk up a local hill, where a tree, sprouted from an acorn found in Auschwitz, is growing to this day. Then we visited Jane Haining's memorial, and we also paid a visit to her old church and her family's old farmhouse. Before going home, Pam and Collin invited us over to their home for an afternoon tea and the best shortbread cookies of my life. It was time to say goodbye to Dunscore, but our day was not quite over yet.

After we arrived at home, we decided to explore Pollok Park, which was only a few minutes away from our accommodation. There we encountered these fluffy creatures called highland cows, and they even came over to us to say hi! We walked around lush gardens with vibrant flowers and green grass, and afterwards we finished our day with a quiz, which, lucky for me, I won.



On the third day, we woke up a little later than the day before, and we had plenty of time to get ready before we headed to the Queen's Park Govanhill Parish Church. This was the place where Jane taught Sunday school for several years while she lived in Glasgow. There we had the chance to look around for a bit and admire the two painted glass windows which were installed to honour Jane Haining. Next up we were served lunch, and we got to try their

signature vinegar-flavoured crisps, but unfortunately, they weren't even near tasty. After lunch we said our goodbyes and continued exploring Glasgow.

We visited the city hall, and then we hopped on a bus to the Glasgow Science Centre. We explored 3 floors of wonder, and when our time was up, we headed back to the city, and after walking around the Glasgow Cathedral for a bit, we hiked up to the top of the Necropolis, a huge graveyard filled with tombs of rich people. To wind off, we paid a visit to a local Lidl, where we culturally educated ourselves by mapping out Scottish people's preferences in food. The diagnosis: They have huge packs of chips, delicious cookies, and too many good things you can't fit into a carry-on luggage.



On our last day, we were in a rush, once again, to get the best of Edinburgh before our flight back home. On the way there, we played some games to pass the time, and despite the weak internet, we had the best time of our lives. After our train arrived, we dropped off our bags and headed for the city. First, we visited St. Giles' Cathedral, where, after a lot of searching, we found the famous statue of an angel with a bagpipe. Next, we grabbed lunch and then it was time to go souvenir shopping. We spent hours scanning the shops for the perfect fridge magnet, but I think we all found what we were looking for. Before we left for the airport, we wandered around Edinburgh for a bit, but eventually it was time to go home. On the plane, I scrolled through my camera roll, and all I could think about was that I enjoyed every second, and I was happy that we got the best of the trip and we didn't waste any time at all. I made some incredible friends, and I really wish I could go every year, but of course, that is against the rules. I am thankful for the great hospitality, and I wish the best of luck to next year's contestants!

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