

Questions and Answers – Two Celtic Nations, Scotland and the Isle of Man, 2012 with Sandy Lydon

Question: Who should consider going on this tour? Our group experiences are designed for travelers wishing to learn something about the places we visit. We have designed a full mind and body experience that will begin long before you board the airplane, and hopefully continue long after you return.

We believe that every minute spent in pre-trip preparation pays off a hundredfold.

Question: Why go with a group? Traveling with a group removes all the annoying day-to-day considerations of making connections, finding things, worrying about whether or not the hotel lost your reservations, or whether the taxi driver cheated you. Encountering and understanding another culture is daunting enough without having to worry about the logistics of everyday life. We take care of the day-to-day stuff so that you can concentrate on spending every waking moment experiencing the wonders of the Celtic people. And, you will see more and get the best presentations and explanations if you are with a group. We use the group to bring out the best that our hosts have to offer.

Question: Why should I go on a Lydon tour? We always travel with a purpose. There are personal connections and reasons that we have traveled to the Isle of Man in the past. Several Manx organizations and local government are looking forward to seeing this group. Also, you will be part of a well-prepared group of like-minded travelers. By the time we depart, the group will be friends, not strangers. Plus, we always have a great time. We subscribe to the idea that laughter and learning are interwoven.

Question: When are the pre-trip sessions? There will be informal opportunities at local concerts and language classes, but the 3 required sessions are on three Sundays: June 10; July 29; September 9.

Question: What subjects will be covered in the pre-trip sessions? The subjects will range from Celtic culture and music through Scottish History and the History of the Isle of Man. We will recommend a number of books and films as well as encourage you to become immersed in things Scottish and Manx. . The subjects during the sessions will range from luggage management and how to stay healthy while traveling to pub etiquette.

The Scots and the Manx have a significant presence here in Central California, and we're going to do some exploring in local and regional cemeteries and churches so that you will understand the deep strong bond that Celtish immigrants feel here.

Question: What if I cannot attend the pre-trip sessions? Then you shouldn't apply to go with us. We feel very strongly about the pre-trip sessions.

Question: Can I attend the pre-trip sessions if I'm not a member of the group? No. The sessions are designed as part of this particular trip and for the group.

Question: Will I be embarrassed by behavior of group members? No. We carefully screen group members before accepting them and observe their behavior during the pre-trip sessions. If we feel that someone in the group does not fit, we will ask them to leave the group and we will return their money. Our groups are not random collections of people who meet for the first time in the lobby of the airport, with all the subsequent posturing and bravado. We will have been together for several months, working together to come to some common understandings about Celtic culture as well as traveling with each other.

Question: What's the number one issue in group travel? Being on time. Groups are very tolerant of most human behavior, but they are very impatient with people who keep the group waiting. Every minute we spend waiting is time we could be spending in a museum or wandering through the countryside. Therefore, beginning with our first group session, we will expect all group members to be on time. Timeliness is essential to the over-all mental and emotional health of the group.

Question: What's the number two issue in group travel? Group members asking the dreaded "Lazy Question." We expect group members to read distributed materials and pay attention as we go along. Groups have little patience for members who ask questions about things that have already been explained.

Question: What's the number three issue in group travel? Bus etiquette – seating on the bus. We will discuss this issue in some detail prior to departure.

Question: What if I don't have a roommate? We will attempt to match you up with a roommate during our pre-trip sessions; however it is always best to come to the trip with a roommate already in hand. The best way to insure that you have a satisfying trip without all the interpersonal concerns associated with a "blind date" roommate is to get a compatible friend to join you on the trip.

Question: Why aren't meals built into the trip as they are in China and Japan? We believe that restaurants in Scotland and the Isle of Man can be trusted for their cleanliness and all round safety. Also, they speak English. Further we believe that sit-down group meals take much longer to complete. We prefer to spend as much time as possible touring and exploring. Finally, if we are not tied to a specific time for the evening meal, we can rest when you want to, eat later, or even skip the meal altogether. All breakfasts are buffet style. The weakest link in our food chain is the meals on the airplanes over which we have little or no control. The foods of Scotland and the Isle of Man are—well—bland. The ales and beer are wondrous, of course. Perhaps there are subtleties in Scotch and Manx cuisine that we have yet to discern. We will once again approach the dinner table with hope and optimism. Maybe this time.

Question: What if I have dietary restrictions or requirements? Since you will have control over most of your meals, you should be able to find restaurants that cater to your particular dietary needs. Airplanes will also help you stay on your diet if you ask them ahead of time. However, if you require extreme dietary conditions, then this kind of travel might not be appropriate for you.

Question: What other expenses might I encounter? Obviously, there are a number of lunches and dinners that are not included. So, for those items, you can determine your own level of expenditure and diet. You can skimp at McDonalds, or splurge at some of the restaurants and pubs in Scotland and the Isle of Man. We will provide guidance along the way, of course. Also, there are about \$621 or so in airport departure taxes, fuel surcharges and security taxes (all imposed by airports and foreign governments) that you will be responsible for. Also there are books and published materials you may wish to purchase prior to departure. Travel insurance is not included. Finally, transportation to and from the airport is not included. Beyond those few items, most everything else involving the trip is covered in the trip price.

Question: Why should we take out trip cancellation insurance? It is the only way to protect your travel investment against unforeseen circumstances. Several times in the last ten years, members have found it necessary to cancel at the last minute because of health-related issues, often involving close family members. One of them cancelled the week of departure. In all cases, our trip cancellation insurance kicked in and they were able to get their money refunded.

Question: How much money should I take with me? The amount of money you might need will depend on your own personal shopping habits. Some group members are able to get by on several hundred dollars of spending money, while others who intend to do some shopping spend considerably more. However, it should be noted that group members sometimes catch what we call “the fever” when encountering some of the bargains overseas, so, if your self-discipline is relatively low, perhaps you should take a bit more money.

Question: Cash or credit cards? Credit cards are accepted everywhere in Scotland and most everywhere on the Isle of Man. But it is also a good idea to bring along some cash. We will go over the various monetary systems that you will encounter in the pre-trip sessions. (British Pounds and Manx Pounds) We recommend that you depart SFO with some cash for Scotland in hand. (British Pounds)

Question: What is the age range of your group members? In the past 20 years our group members have ranged widely in age. We’ve found that regardless of the dates on folks’ passports, Lydon groups are full of life and energy.

Question: What if I have some health/physical problems? Again, it will depend on the nature of those problems. In some cases we might ask that your personal physician sign off on the appropriateness of your undertaking the rigors of international travel. And, as with all other individual requirements, we will have to measure them against the good of the group.

Question: You keep mentioning that international travel is rigorous. What do you mean? All international travel is very tiring just by its very nature. It begins with the long trans-Atlantic flight and resulting weariness and jet lag. Most travelers find west to east travel more upsetting to their body clocks than east to west. You will do a lot of walking, stair climbing, and baggage handling through customs. You will be tempted to do and see everything possible, sometimes driving your system beyond its usual limits. You will awake earlier in the morning (see jet lag) and there will always be something to do. You must be able to sustain yourself at a pace that does not hinder that of the group. We strongly urge group members to begin a program of physical exercise as soon as you sign up, either walking or running, or going to the gym to help your body get ready for the strain of international travel.

Question: Can I use frequent flyer miles and meet the group in Edinburgh? Yes, but there will be some requirements as to when and where you will need to meet us. All of the responsibility for meeting the group will be yours. We won’t come looking for you. We will discuss flight deviations with those desiring them on a personal level.

Question: Can I earn frequent flyer miles for this trip? Yes.

Question: Can I fly Business Class? Yes, for an extra fee Pacific Harbor Travel can arrange for you to fly in business class. (Assuming, of course that there are Business class seats available on that particular flight.) The Glasgow-Douglas and Douglas-London flights may not have Business Class.

Question: What kind of clothing do I need to bring? Casual clothing is fine. I can foresee no situations where a jacket and tie will be necessary for the men in the group. We may have a meeting with the some Manx officials., but we will discuss appropriate clothing in our pre-trip sessions to make certain that everyone is prepared.

Question: What will the weather be like in September ? Because Scotland and the Isle of Man are influenced by the weather off the Irish Sea, the weather is always changeable. It can rain anytime. However, the month of September often sees the year's best weather.

Question: How can I reserve a space? Complete the application and attach a check for \$1,000 made out to Pacific Harbor Travel, for each person. (We require a check for the deposit, but you can pay the remainder on credit card if you wish.) Turn them in to Wendy Simon, Pacific Harbor Travel, 519 Seabright Ave., Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA, 95062. (83-427-5000).