

HAPPY RETIREMENT

August 1, 2016 was my final day of a 32-year career at Metro Transit. I had started driving a bus part time in 1984 to tide me over until I found a “real” job. In 1989 I went full time and drove 40 plus hours/week all over the transit area. I learned a lot about humanity, poverty, racism, ethnic diversity and social class. In 1998 I was promoted to a first line supervisor in Transit and in 2009 to Chief in the Transit Control Center from which I retired. What I had intended to be a six-month interim job turned out to be a pretty good career.

The following day on August 2 when my plane lifted off from SeaTac heading to Dublin, Ireland, I was thrilled to start my new life as a retiree. I had planned to travel two weeks around Ireland by car with my husband after which he would fly home and I would remain to ride horses.

RIDE HORSES? Yes. Along with passions for my Australian Shepherd, Italian and opera, I ride horses all over the world when I’m not riding my own steed, Wyatt, who is stabled nearby in Redmond. Equitours is a reliable top notch organization that works closely with international outfitters to arrange experiences for riders of all skill levels. I have taken trips arranged by them to Spain (twice), Italy and Mexico. I had planned my retirement celebration to include a week’s ride in Sligo, Ireland, followed by a week’s ride in Iceland. The link for the Irish ride is the Atlantic Coast Trail <http://www.equitours.com/horseback-riding/atlantic-coast-trail-formerly-markee-castle-trail/>. Both rides are aimed at fit, advanced riders comfortable at trots and canters for extended periods as well as challenging terrain 4-5 hours/day. As a stationary ride we daily were picked up at our lovely Sligo hotel and transported to and from the Sligo Equestrian Center for departures as a group heading along trails, beaches, to castles, up mountains and through rivers. It was wonderful. My horse was a big bay standing nearly 17 hands. I loved him. He was responsive, smooth and well behaved. At night the ten of us met for dinners and Irish music.

Following my week at Sligo I was transported to Dublin airport for my August 21 flight to Iceland’s capital city Reykjavik where I caught a bus to go two hours south for pick up in Hella. I specifically had chosen this point-to-point ride in order to experience the gait, known as the tolt, of the Icelandic horse. This gait, similar to a trot, differs in how the

horse places its foot to the ground. It is so smooth you can hold a glass of water without spilling a drop! Icelandic horses are quite small, certainly no more than 13.2 hands, yet strong, able to carry up to 220 lbs. It made me laugh to go from my very tall friend in Ireland to the short little guys in Iceland. They are the only “pure” horse breed in the world; indeed no other breed of horse is permitted in Iceland. These wonderful animals are known for their kind temperament and endurance.

We made a huge circle in the southwest corner of Iceland through one of the greatest wilderness areas left in Europe, known as the Hekla-Landmannalauger. The ride was very physically challenging, riding continuously at the tolt and canter 6-7 hours each day with only a stop for lunch and change of horse. The herd of 50-60 horses travelled with us galloping alongside. Astride my small Icelandic horse with his mates on either side matching our pace was an amazing experience. I never got tired of it. We stayed in huts without much in the way of heat, electricity or running water but somehow our hosts and guides managed to cook healthy meals with plenty of coffee and tea. The link for this ride is: <http://www.equitours.com/horseback-riding/hekla-landmannalaugar-trail/>. The scenery was barren, grey, desolate and oddly beautiful. I was happy to explore from the back of a horse

Janice Berlin



Sligo Equestrian Center
Ireland