

Charmaine's Diary

26th April 2010

Monday

Enjoy an almighty sleep to catch-up on some missing hours. Monday seems to have turned into my admin day when I catch up on article-writing, thank-you notes and emails.

Tuesday

Drive to Dublin to do some clothes shopping. Pick up some beautiful Dynasty ballgowns and Frank Lyman dresses. Have lunch with a friend in Avoca before heading back down to Athy. The afternoon is reserved to pack for my upcoming trip to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sydney, Queensland, Darwin, New Zealand and London where I will attend rose events and selection nights.

Wednesday

Drive to Dublin for a photoshoot in St Stephen's Green to promote the Irish Regional Final which takes place in early June in Portlaoise. Delighted that four of the Irish county roses are involved. Not so delighted when I realise that a ram named Sean is also involved. And to add to my non-delight, I have to hold him. The owner tells us that this is the first day that Seán has been bridled. But Seán and I make friends – I think he knows it's my first day dealing with a ram too. The reason for Seán's appearance in the photoshoot is that The National Sheepshearing Competition is taking place in Portlaoise during the same time as the Regional Rose of Tralee Finals. We all have great fun, the five of us girls and Seán. Dash back to Athy to do the last of the packing and say goodbye to my parents before driving back to Dublin to stay in the Carlton Dublin Airport.

Thursday

Fly to Dubai, the first stop on a six week international trip, with my childhood friend Nicola as the lovely Escort. After thirteen hours of travelling we are delighted to meet my brother and his girlfriend in Dubai, where they are now both living. The heat, even at 2.30am in the morning is stifling.

Friday

Have a welcome sleep-in on the most comfortable blow-up mattress ever! It is the weekend in Dubai and the four of us go for a light brunch. We sit outside in almost 40 degrees Celsius and the waiter laughs at Nicola and I for the constant stream of water we order. Clearly newbies to Dubai! My brother gives us a quick introduction to Dubai Mall, the world's largest shopping mall (based on total area) with over 1200 shops. We buy some beach towels and vouch to come back another day. Later in the evening, we have dinner in the shadow of the Burj Khalifa, the tallest man-made structure ever built, at 828m. It stands over twice as tall as the Empire State Building in New York and nearly 7 times taller than the Spire in Dublin, and has a staggering 160 floors! Mind boggling. We enjoy the very impressive fountains that dance to classic Arabic and world music in front of the Burj Khalifa. Our first night out in Dubai and we

make the most of it. We head to a cocktail bar with a 360 degree view of the city. Then onto a nightclub where I am delighted to bump into Aileen McCarthy, the 2007 Dubai Rose. News of Gerry Ryan's death reaches us by text message and it is the talk amongst the Irish community over here.

Saturday

After a late start we meet some friends for lunch in Dubai Mall who are now living in Abu Dhabi. Plan to watch the Heineken Cup match of Leinster vs Toulouse. We find a nice rugby bar and order food only to discover that they are not showing the match! We gobble our dinner and catch the end of the second half on the radio over the internet while drinking Barry's tea and eating Butler's chocolate. There's nothing like a taste of home when you're abroad. Take it easy for the rest of the evening and watch a movie called Iron Man. I am unconvinced by the title but am pleasantly surprised.

Sunday

Lie out in the sun for the first time. The heat is so intensely suffocating that we cannot stick any more than an hour. My brother treats us to Afternoon Tea in the 7-star Burg Al Arab. This hotel is in the shape of a boat sail. We take the express panoramic lift to the Skyview Bar enjoying spectacular views of the Palm and the World (islands that are man-made from reclaimed sand). We get a fabulous window table and indulge in champagne, fresh berries and cream, vegetable samosas, a four-tier serving of miniature sandwiches, savouries, cakes and desserts, scones with clotted cream and strawberry, rose petal jam and finally petits fours. And that's not to mention the choice of about 60 different types of tea! Totally over the top. After this absurd indulgence we think it best to not do anything too energetic and spend the evening digesting. We book into the Platinum Cinema in Dubai Mall for a showing of Iron Man II. A very plush cinema and we giggle at the novelty of being given pillows and blankets. We push the button on our reclining chairs and sit back and enjoy the show. We could get used to this life!