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The Misty Dreamscape: Highlands of Untouched Beauty

Travels from Edinburgh to tour the Highlands

“I close my eyes and imagine I’m still there on my own, exploring the misty dreamscape of the Scottish Highlands; for now, I am simply dreaming of the day I return to the heart of Scotland.”

I sometimes find myself picturing the days during July 2019 when I visited what I can only describe as a serene and mystical place that truly lived up to its reputation: The Scottish Highlands. My experience started off in Edinburgh waiting to board a crowded bus where I waited patiently for our guide for this venture. After about 20 minutes, Jack, our tour guide, made his entrance and let me tell you, he was quite a character. The man had a full beard, a kilt, thick accent, everything you would expect from a stereotypical Scotsman. The tour then proceeded to begin when we left the city and started to head out into the country-side which I lazily stared at the rolling greens passing by my window. I then felt my eyelids lower as the relaxing view of the outside green lulled me to sleep. I thought I was still dreaming when me, my family, and the guide reached our first stop. When I subconsciously pinched myself, I knew that what I was witnessing was far from a dream. Thistles of unique shape and gorgeous violet color peppered the fences, mountains so majestic and green that they looked like they were taken straight from a watercolor landscape piece, and the clouds were so thin and wispy that they curled off the mountain sides like an entrancing dance. I stood on the cusp of the mountain in awe at such a picturesque site that had captivated my very being.

As much as I wanted to take in more of the sights, the tour moved on to the next leg of the venture. Although not as impressive as the mountains, we arrived at a quaint little town called Pitlochry. My dad, mom, sister, and I went to a small café that mostly served coffees and pastries called Morton's Coffee Lounge. Not being a fan of coffee, I opted for trying their strawberry shortcake and the flavor blew my taste buds away. It was fluffy, smooth, and the right amount of sweet, even the strawberry itself was one of the most succulent and tasteful fruit I had ever sunk my teeth into. The town was petite, but it had so much to offer I couldn't help but grin ear from ear when I left it to continue my ride.

While still boarded on the bus, our guide Jack started mentioning areas of interest to direct our attention to as we passed by seemingly endless mountains for a good while. At one point we crossed by a seemingly run-down withered old shack which we were informed was one of the filming locations for Hagrid's house in *Harry Potter*. It gave me good humor to see that this place could mold words into reality as Jack started pointing out other movie locations such as scenes from *Braveheart* and *The Hobbit*. As the rain began to tap the roof of the bus, Jack then went grim and began mentioning the treachery of Glencoe in 1692 where a rival family, the Campbells, slew almost the entire clan of the MacDonalds under orders of the king at the time because of a simple misunderstanding. The worst part was the MacDonald family were hospitable towards their rivals during a blizzard and they still massacred all of them in their sleep. When he pointed out where the old village of Glencoe used to be, I could only imagine the cries of betrayal, the blood thirsty screams of the rival clan, and the snow being dyed in crimson from the unexpected attack on that cliffside. Some places have hidden nightmares that, while making a place more interesting, seem so much more grounded in reality than I could ever imagine.

I sat deep in thought for a while, until we came upon another breathtaking view that put me in better spirits after that grim tale. We arrived on the outskirts of what looked like a local farmhouse, whoever was living there had one of the luckiest views to wake up to everyday. Behind the house was a brilliant waterfall cascading down between two pillars of natural stone, the light rain falling seemed to enhance the majesty of the falls, giving the pure mountain water a tiny sparkle to its visage. As enchanting as the falls were, I knew like a dream we would have to continue our expedition moving from one mystic landscape to the next.

After a short break and a few bites to eat, our tour was underway again, being spry and awake I noticed some houses in the distance, when our bus passed some greenery spilling out into the road, I was astounded that a whole village was just sitting there majestically. Our guide mentioned that the place we were about to pass was the new town of Glencoe. The MacDonald clan had survived and built a new town from the ground up. The town was so scenic that I wholeheartedly wish we had stopped there for a bit just to explore the glimpses I caught of the town. White houses that the sun came out in the eye of the storm to hit them just right and give them a heavenly glow, moss covered hills overlooking the entire town, and the view of Loch Leven was so deep and blue that I could just sit for hours doing nothing but listening to the waves while lying down on the sandy and rocky wharf. Just as quickly as the moment came it left and I returned to my thoughts, wondering what sites could possibly be left in store after seeing a town as gorgeous as New Glencoe.

I was quickly snapped out of my reverie when I heard a loud clap of thunder and instantly the rain picked back up to the point it sounded like bullets hitting the top of the bus. On our next arrival I pulled out my umbrella to avoid the deluge and I was treated to quite an interesting view: we were at the heights of the highlands. When I looked up there was a layer of clouds so

close that I could almost touch them. Looking down I could point out all the previous destinations we had stopped at, and looking outward there was nothing but endless greens, greys, and blues off into the distance. Looking off into the horizon gave me more of an understanding how vast our world truly is and how something simple like a mountain can really put a lot of things into perspective for anybody who puts thought into philosophical ideals.

Our last destination was not something as grandiose as clouds dancing off the mountainside or as majestic as a waterfall in a drizzle, but it was simply a vast green pasture with some highland cows. Although the cows were not all too interesting, I did appreciate the view of the sun setting behind what looked like a large mansion of sorts, one made out of polished wood from what I could assess. That moment may have not been something to write home about, but to me it was the perfect end to a day full of sight-seeing, sounds, and moments I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Me and my family then proceeded to return to our hotel room and continue our activities for tomorrow morning. I close my eyes and imagine I'm still there on my own, exploring the misty dreamscape of the Scottish Highlands; for now, I am simply dreaming of the day I return to the heart of Scotland.