

# The Luck of the Irish

Three cats, 21 hours, 6,400 miles – what could possibly go wrong? Christopher Warner writes.

ver since my first trip to Europe as a skinny, awkward 14-year-old, I've enjoyed travel. Maureen, my wife, has shared my passion for globetrotting, and we set a goal of someday living outside of the US. That moment came sooner than expected, following a vacation to South-West Ireland in August 2017 when we stumbled upon a house for sale in the small village of Glenbeigh. All it took was one look at the spectacular mountain and sea views to know this was the place.

We chose December 2 as D-Day and reasoned that the timing would allow us to avoid the holiday rush. We would finally leave behind the trappings of the city in favour of a simpler, more tranquil life. But we wouldn't be travelling alone.

One of the passions we

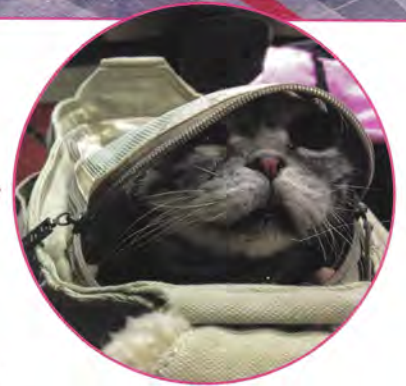
share is that we both love cats. And with no children of our own, our furry felines have given us the joy of pet parenthood. But we hadn't reckoned the mountain of paperwork generated by bringing Cleopatra, Girlene, Liam, and Noel (yes, my wife is a big Oasis fan) to Ireland. Not to mention the expense. But having heard too many horror stories of animals suffering in cargo, we decided to spend the extra money to have the whole family fly together. We quickly discovered, however, that flying internationally with cats in the cabin would necessitate some creative navigation.

From our home in Portland, Oregon, as a starting point, we secured reservations to Dublin via Los Angeles with just one small catch: the airline only allowed one pet per

passenger. Fortunately, I could enlist the help of my best friend, Alan, and his wife, Lisa, who agreed to join us on our transatlantic odyssey.

Approaching December, we were excited about the big move. But then, out of the blue, Cleopatra — the boldest, sassiest, and most beautiful cat I've ever known — passed away. We

Ready for their epic journey.



were devastated. So, with heavy hearts, we pushed on and took off from Portland Airport as scheduled. We managed to get through security with relative ease and breathed a collective sigh of relief with hopes the next leg would be as smooth. It wasn't.

Upon arrival at LAX, we experienced the first of three major disasters. Girlene, our Japanese Exotic Shorthair, experienced a small accident inside her carrier. Actually, make that a colossal accident. Next, we then accidentally traipsed to the wrong terminal — and had to hurriedly race like through one of the largest airports in the world accompanied by three screaming cats — one of whom didn't exactly smell like fresh clover.

Once we finally arrived at the proper gate, I was informed by the airline, per EU policy, that as a foreign citizen, I wouldn't be allowed to board with a one-way ticket. With less than 30 minutes to departure, I contemplated sobbing hysterically like Meryl Streep or demanding political asylum from a hostile government. Somehow, I talked my way onto the flight — no doubt the fabled luck of the Irish had shined down upon me.

Ten-and-a-half hours later,

We wouldn't be travelling alone.

we touched down in Dublin at sunset. At the last checkpoint, the customs agent waved us through and said 'Welcome home'. Our neighbour in Glenbeigh, Sean, met us at arrivals and transported our exhausted group through the calm, pitch-black night.

Maureen and I later scattered Cleopatra's ashes at the beach down the breen from the cottage and named the spot 'Cleo's Cove'. Adhering to the old Irish custom, I included a piece of candle to light her way across the river of death, a coin for the fare, and poured out some whiskey to fortify her journey. As we stood in the sand that afternoon, a majestic rainbow arched over the bay. It was glorious.

