

## Celtic Tiger Yoga

Yes, it's true. Yoga has made it to Ireland. For those Californians out there, though, this is not YOUR yoga. I had seen signs for a yoga class posted for several months in the library and decided to check it out. I rang up the number listed and spoke to Jackie. Classes started Nov 9th, it was a beginner's class, and I should bring, not my own mat, but a blanket for the relaxation after. Instantly, I knew this was going to be a different experience. Sure enough, Wednesday morning, I found my way to the studio, where mats, and blocks, and belts were laid out, shoes stayed in a line in the dark hallway, and about 20 students (only one man) in various states of confusion reigned. Peaceful New-Agey music was playing and the scent of lemongrass was pretty strong in the air.

Our fearless leader took our money and had us sign a consent form, excusing her from any liability if we were hurt. The smiling girl next to me introduced herself as Irene. We started off on our backs, with a simple tense/relax exercise that was more reminiscent of high school drama class than anything else. I fought to restrain giggles as Jackie tried to marshal 20 beginners into the right positions: "No, blocks out now, pillows under your head." Pause. "No, no--no blocks. Pillows." (Jackie marched over to the offending block owner, handed her the pillow and waited.) "Right." She continued with the class. Finally, we sat up and she asked us to "sit like an Indian." There was a long pause, while we crossed our legs and I tried to remember when I had last heard that expression. I was amazed to see that fully half the class had trouble crossing their legs to sit. Jackie noticed too, and said, "I teach yoga for children too--and in these days of video games and TV, the children are losing their flexibility as early as 5. Let's try to get some of ours back here." As we were doing a few stretches standing up, I heard her say, "There should be no pain in yoga. So, wipe those looks off your face--you're not being run over by a car." We chuckled dutifully and re-arranged our expressions. By the end, I wasn't a bit tired--it really had been a beginning class. We hadn't even done a downward dog. We were instructed to take a "wee eye pillow" and lie back under the blankets. Jackie put on a meditation tape and asked us to set aside any preconceptions of what it would be like. It was ok, but not as nice as just taking a few minutes in shavasana (sp?) by ourselves. I missed the bells that Diane used to wake us up with and when it was time to say thanks, the namastes were quite abrupt and no one bowed! It was an odd ending. I asked Irene if she wanted to get a coffee after, (making new friends here is HARD) but she whisked off on her bike after establishing I had moved here from California, saying, "Nice place!" Strangely, the next day I was really, really sore. Those stretches must have been more intense on my back than I realized. We'll see what this week brings.

Insurance is still a major problem. We had problems getting some of the paperwork for the insurance application, as the Irish postal system went on a little strike this past week and my old insurance company had trouble with our address (County LANE instead of County Louth.) The requirement list for insurance is a page long. It includes, but is not limited to: Proposal form, Premium payment, Original Proof of No Claims Bonus, Driving Licenses, Gap in Cover Letter, Current NCT certificate. We are going to take the NCT (National Car Test) today. The first time pass rate for '94 cars is only 37% this month, compared with 49% overall. It costs 49 euro and if you don't pass, you have to pay half of that for each re-test. Our American neighbors got failed for having the incorrect version of the county name on their registration plates (LU instead of *Lughbhadh*.) I can't find anywhere that requires this, though, and our plates have the same notation. We're going to give it a try. Over here, you get your plates from any garage, and they make them up while you wait. Our friends were not sure how the garages can make the wrong ones consistently and get away with it. I'll bet these are really boring details. I just can't believe how long it takes to get insured here.

Of course, our insurance premiums will be direct debited, once we are actually signed up. Direct debit is a passion over here. Everything, from rent to health insurance is debited directly from our local bank account. I thought this curious, until I asked our landlord about it one day. He

explained that Irish folk have always been loathe to pay their bills and at least this way, the companies know they'll get paid!

I heard a great joke this week. An Aussie comedian was explaining the difference between Irish and Australian humor. He said, "If an Australian gets up in a bar and says he has a joke, the surrounding Aussies will mutter, 'It better be funny.' But if an Irishman gets up in a pub and says he has a joke, the men around him will call for silence, saying, 'shut up, the man's got a joke!'" For some reason, this sums up life here.

The Farmer's Market was in full swing this week. There were some new stalls, but we missed the honey stall and the Indian food stall, which were missing. The Muffin Lady from Berkeley was back. :) Dan and I had a lovely conversation with Frances the Beads (I might visit her this week up in Banbridge) and even found an organic turkey for Thanksgiving. We tried an eye of the round roast from the same butcher (dry aged for three weeks) and it tasted unlike any meat I've had before. It was the difference between supermarket eggs and home-grown. I can't wait to see what the turkey will be like. It's funny--in stores here, instead of being asked if you're ready, they ask "Are you ok?" It still startles me and tempts me to answer!

A quick update on the music lessons: One student tried to tell me she had practiced a little, but she'd only done her worksheet. The next one came in and was completely upfront, saying she'd practiced Mon and Tues, but had forgotten the rest of the week, as it's all so new to her! The only violin student didn't show, as she had a choir rehearsal for a concert the next night. We are still trying to reschedule. They liked their new books, though. We'll see if there's any progress this week!

Love,  
Heather