After having my mom and brother in Helsinki for an action packed ten days – it was such a treat to have them – I was exhausted. But we still had two more countries to go: Ireland and France. Luckily, Mom’s enthusiasm and Josh’s sage-like mellowness gave me energy.

I am used to John taking care of the small details when we travel: planning the daily itinerary, booking the hotel, and getting us around on public transport. On our trip to Dublin and Paris, I played this roll, and now have a greater appreciation for all of his efforts during our travels over this past year. One of my goals during our trip was to include Mom and Josh in the day-to-day decision making and problem solving. This wasn’t necessary in Helsinki because I am so familiar with it, but as we set off for unfamiliar places, I knew that there would be hitches, and three are better than one when difficulties arise.
The first order of business in Dublin, after we checked in to our hotel, was to go for a Guinness at Temple Bar. My first impression of Dublin was that it reminded me of Butte on St. Patrick’s Day. I even heard some people say “yous guys”, which is some serious Butte slang. Is it Irish? Hmm, I don’t know, but what I do know is that the Guinness, which is brewed in Dublin in the world’s largest brewery, was heavenly! I have had this beer before and haven’t enjoyed it that much, but on tap in Dublin it was my all-time-best beer experience. Josh and I enjoyed a Guinness every chance we got, while Mom opted for ale with tomato juice, which gave the bartenders a look of amusement. We really enjoyed our pub experiences in Dublin, the Celtic music, lively conversations, good grub, and plenty of smiles and friendliness.
At the Merry Ploughboy.

After being downtown our first day, we grabbed a taxi and went out of town to the Merry Ploughboy Pub, where we enjoyed traditional Irish food, Celtic dancing, and fantastic Dublin musicians. We had a blast and even knew a few songs. We got back to Dublin late, and mom and I went to bed, but Josh hooked up with some Austrians and Americans and went out till 6am. How many can say they pulled an all-nighter in Dublin?
The Second day in Dublin, Mom and I got up early and went on a bus tour of the Wicklow Mountains and Glendalough, a 6th century Monastic Settlement. This area is known as the Garden of Ireland. A bus tour is something John would never do, so it was a treat to do it with Mom. We had a blast. There were many nationalities on the bus, and our tour guide was a total hoot! He was seriously flirting with my mother! We also had a really neat blind guy along from Belgium named Timmy. I became his personal arm-holder when we got off of the bus to check out the Barren bog-lands, mountain lakes, and wild heather. He was such an inspiring guy: 24 years old with a super attitude toward life and a great sense of humor.

Timmy and I at Dunlaoghaire Harbour.

And the streams ran with Guinness.

Mom and I at the top of the Wicklow Mountains.
Our third and final day in Ireland was blessed with sunny weather and a little rain. We woke up to a hearty Irish breakfast, and set out to see Trinity College, St Patrick’s Cathedral, Ha’Penny Bridge, the Guinness Brewery, and Dublin Castle. But, the highlight of the day for me was lunch at the oldest pub in Dublin – an 11th century pub called the Brazen Head – where I enjoyed a Guinness and meat pie with mushrooms. We left Dublin for Paris at 6pm.