

Jane McGurk

From: Fran Birch [fran@birches.org]
Sent: 30 October 2007 15:47
To: Fran Birch
Subject: looking to sell my story - it'd make a good carry on film!

Just in case any of you thought you had a bad day over the holidays I'll share yesterday with you:-

All up bright and breezy for our last trip to Legoland of this year - good weather forecast and lots of schools back so an easy day we thought!

Spent the journey hyping the kids up about the rides we like best [michelle, Louise, plus George age 2 who has just learnt to say 'legoland!' also had lily age 1 and my older daughter, their mum, Laura on board]

Get to legoland at 10 to find it closed! George can now proficiently scream 'legoland' as we have taught him the correct pronunciation on our journey. Michelle in tears. Lily needs a bottle.

Phone graham at his office who looks on internet. All farm parks closed due to foot and mouth and theme parks etc closed now for winter.

Decide to head for London – Mme Tssauds is always good fun. Phone 118247 who need the spelling before they can find us the number! But they are open. A good sign!

Osterley is where we always park to get the tube into London. Marvellous! Sailed through and found it straight away!

Height restriction on barrier to car park [usually go in grahams car!] sees us and two double glazing vans doing a kind of white van dance to get back out onto the A4 again.

Residents seem to have priority parking for the surrounding 2 miles!

Walk back to the station and think our day is nearly over before discovering my mobile's clock doesn't automatically update the time! Phew! Tis only midday!!! Still time to have fun.

No lifts at osterley so get two buggies and two children with limited ability to stand still when requested, down stairs to the platform. [in retrospect we should have been grateful it was the right platform but we didn't realise the significance of relishing the moment!]

I often get panic attacks on the underground so we cut our losses at Earls court where there are lifts and get above ground.

McDonald's saves the day! Never mind the backpack full of sandwiches – we can eat them later for tea.

We've read the map the kind man gave us at the station and we can see the bus stop from here. Cross the busy earls court road just not quite in time to get the number 74 bus that pulls away. They come every 5 mins so no problem.

20 mins later and much screaming from George who is used to busses running only once an hour from Cricklade, and wants to get on every bus that comes regardless of destination!

74 arrives, michelle and louise head upstairs, I get one buggy wedged nicely in the wheelchair section, and laura asks the driver how long it takes to get to Mme Tssauds.

A long time – we need the bus that goes down the other one way street, the other side of the station! Hey ho!

Mme Tssauds is excellent – helpful people who don't actually want to charge us to go in, even though we don't have the documentary proof of the girls disability status. I'm guessing the obviously challenging mental health of granny comes a close second here !

Just as well it didn't cost us as George hates it! He needs carrying as he screams otherwise 'me no like this!' at every turn.

Michelle asks us at every model if the person has died, and Louise similarly 'are they nasty?' so we do the halls in record time! At least we all enjoyed the ride on the little taxi things. And the loos are clean.

The ladies had 3 cubicles, and whilst we sit Michelle ponders 'it's a shame George doesn't like it here mum'

Me: 'yes, never mind, we'll find something he does like soon'

Michelle: 'he would have liked the rides at legoland'
' I would have liked the rides at Legoland, I'd rather have gone there today'

Me: 'but we couldn't go there Michelle – do you remember'

Michelle: 'no, I wanted to go there'

Helpful-Louise: ' and you wouldn't let us'

Me: 'michelle, it was closed, do you remember now'

Michelle: 'but we could have gone on the rides anyway'

Me: 'We couldn't, can you remember why we couldn't go on the rides Michelle?'

We leave the cubicles at this point.

Michelle: ' were the rides closed?'

Me: 'yes, so we couldn't go on them, the park was closed, and the rides were closed, that's why we came to London. Have you washed your hands?'

Michelle: 'I wish you'd stop asking me silly questions mum, it's getting very irritating!'

Ggggggrrrrrh!

Next stop rainforest café – George is sure to love that! Never mind the backpack full of sandwiches – we can eat them tomorrow.

We go by bus again as granny is a little stressy and can't face the tube.

Checking with drivers before getting on the bus we do quite well [if you discount waiting a little while before discovering that the N preceding the number means we'd have to wait til the early hours for the bus to arrive!]

Rainforest café is lovely! George likes the animals, but not the very loud monsoon noise, which every 10

minutes sees him abandon his dinner to sit on mummy's lap.

Lily hates the noise and moving animals and refuses to sit on her own, screaming and clinging to us limpet-like. Laura and I wish we hadn't chosen noodle dishes as even taking it in turns to hold Lily we end up wearing most of it. Wet wipes don't remove rainforest special sauce from hair as easily as we'd like.

Reduce the service charge as we feel that it is rude of them to add it and we'd like better service for the price of £11 for a kids meal, most of which the adults and floor ended up wearing!!

They don't worry that we only have one raffle ticket to claim 2 buggies and they kindly help us leave!

Decide to walk to Trafalgar square to find the right bus back to earls court and that proves to be a good move, despite that several people obviously thought we looked like we knew where we were going so asked us for directions.

The accident closing the road ahead, and subsequent rerouting of our bus we get on doesn't even affect us, as we find that the end stop, Hammersmith, is a station further on than earls court and it has lifts.

Marvellous glass lifts enthrall us all at hammersmith, a bit small, but we squeeze in.

'do not obstruct the doors'
are we? Maybe Michelle was looking out to see the people behind us?
She's not now.
All in?
'do not obstruct the doors'
Oh heck! Squeeze in and shuffle around a bit more then.
'do not obstruct the doors'
Well this lift can't be working!
All out!

Find advice and information and seek both about accessing level below.

Lady comes to help us. We pile into lift again

'do not obstruct the doors'
We aren't – we have a witness!
'stay still' she says ' the sensor is very sensitive if you move past it again the doors will just stay open'

So actually it should have said 'if you are not obstructing the doors, please continue to stand still' then - shouldn't it?! She then walked off laughing hysterically at these two blonde women who couldn't even manage to work a lift properly.

Station staff sort us out and luckily do not need to see our tickets which are now safely buried in my bag. They usher us into a huge lift with no problems with sensors. We walk to the other side ready to alight, how convenient – a walk-through lift! .

Arriving at the platform we all back up and all turn round as we have to leave through the door behind us!

No seats left on the train but with littluns in buggies and pole dancing as an optional activity, we get on our way.

Head the right way out of Osterley station, hooray! after having enlisted support this time to manage the steps.

The truck has NOT been stolen and the littluns are asleep as we set off.

Call from son-in-law tells us of a major hold-up on the M4.

12 missed calls from graham tells me I should have been at an adoption uk meeting 5 mins ago that I have completely forgotten about! Talk him through finding the coffee etc to take and make him promise to hold off being angry with me til Thursday!

On the way home! No hold ups so far on the M4! All asleep except me!

Truck develops a fault I am not happy with as it affected the steering so have to pull over and we are right by an emergency phone which is fortuitous as my mobile is just about to run out of battery.

To be safe we need to be behind the barrier!

I'm told this in the first sentence and then the stupid man goes on to make me answer loads of questions while I stress as I am standing the WRONG SIDE of the barrier with the children all STILL IN THE TRUCK and, AS HE HAS POINTED OUT - VERY SERIOUSLY in danger!!!!

NO! I don't know the registration – but I am the only tatty white transit truck broken down on this bit of the M4, with two buggies, two children and stood freezing by this clearly numbered phone for goodness sake!!!!

Thank goodness we don't empty our truck after rallies as we needed every dog blanket, picnic rug, all of graham's coats [?!] and other bits of tat to keep us warm as we waited, sitting on the side of the road, huddled together, for help to arrive.

Just as help comes an hour later, in the form of highway patrol with survival blankets, Michelle remembers that we are not allowed to stop on the motorway and has a major screaming attack, trying to climb into my coat with me, to get away from the men with the very bright torches who she is sure are going to take her away [why her? If anyone deserved to go it's me!!!]

Quickly we get their names and pretend that we have known each other for ages.

Check that Tom knows that the buggy he is leaning on does actually have a sleeping child in it [he hadn't realised!] and they wait with us for the recovery truck.

The fruit pastils they found in their van looked to have come from the bottom of my bag, next to the train tickets! But Laura and I tried not to care and the children ate them anyway.

Louise's wee 'will come now mum if you don't hold me in the bushes to do it' Tom has clearly been trained in providing adequate light for mothers to have their feet peed on on the hard shoulder!

Recovery truck comes and we clamber aboard. Forget to tell recovery truck driver to take the lowered tow bar of our vehicle off, before trying to load it on the back and so repairs are needed to the M4 hard shoulder where a long and deep gouge is next to phone box number 2536!

We stop at the services for a wee and some hot coffee.

Laura leaves me crossing my legs, with the sleeping children, while she goes in first with the girls. They look at bit odd as they are all wearing graham's coats on top of their own!

My turn!

Wearing graham's padded hi-vi jacket, I clearly take up more space than I am expected to in the cubicle and just as I am about to sit, the jacket shoulder passes across the sensor and the automatic flush is set off!

We got home at 1am

What did you do in the holidays then?

Fran

xx

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