

Trip Slips

Turning our embarrassing moments into lessons—and memories

BY PAUL LASLEY AND ELIZABETH HARRYMAN
ILLUSTRATION BY STEVEN SALERNO

We entered the Italian restaurant eager to have dinner with a friend we hadn't seen for a long time. When a young man in a trim suit walked up to greet us, Elizabeth kissed him on the cheek.

"Thank you for the kiss," he said, "but I'm the maître d'. Your party is waiting at a table over here."

We've experienced many such embarrassing moments in our travels. Somehow we've survived. And our mistakes have taught us lessons we value.

We were about to depart from Miami International Airport on a trip to Finland with a group of journalists and airline VIPs. Elizabeth was scouring the terminal, searching for a place to mail a letter. She walked up to an official-looking man.

"Where can I mail this letter?" she asked.

"Oh, I can mail that for you," the man kindly replied.

When we boarded the plane, we learned that man was president of the airline.

Lesson: Now we think twice before asking strangers for favors.

Another incident was more serious. We were walking down New York City's Park Avenue on a glorious, crisp autumn day. Elizabeth had her purse over one shoulder instead of across her body. When we stopped at a stoplight, she realized that someone had taken her wallet. Fortunately, we contacted our credit card companies before the thief used the cards. **Lesson:** Now we carry valuables in zippered clothing pockets.

Paul is not immune to embarrassing moments. While out of town, he once put his wallet on top of the car—"just for a minute"—and drove off. Someone found the wallet, saw Paul's Auto Club card, and turned it in at a branch. AAA contacted Paul and all was well. **Lesson:** Now we try to be mindful every moment.

We both were embarrassed when we showed up at LAX for a flight to Istanbul three hours early—and a day late. **Lesson:** Now we triple-check all of our travel plans.

Looking back on our embarrassing moments, we can laugh at our missteps. As for kissing the maître d', Elizabeth is not sure she'd call that a mistake. **W**

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[Worth the Trip]

In an upstairs room at The Duke pub in Dublin, Ireland, actor Derek Reid, in a voice both haunting and cheerful, sang a traditional Irish ballad called "The Waxies Dargle." For the next two hours, Reid and actress Eithne Dempsey led our group of about 15 on a **Dublin Literary Pub Crawl**, stopping between pubs to perform scenes from plays by Irish playwrights.

"Oscar Wilde was on the boxing team here," said Dempsey at Trinity College Dublin, where the duo presented an excerpt from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Such insights about the writers enhanced the tour. "James Joyce spent much of World War I in Switzerland," said Reid. "Later, a man challenged him: 'What did you do during the war?' 'I wrote *Ulysses*,' Joyce is said to have answered. 'What did you do yourself?'" dublinpubcrawl.com.

TOP RIGHT: COURTESY DUBLIN LITERARY PUB CRAWL; BOTTOM LEFT: MASTERFILE

[From the Insiders]



Protect your identity when traveling. Don't carry any document that has your **Social Security** number on it. That's the most coveted prize for ID thieves.