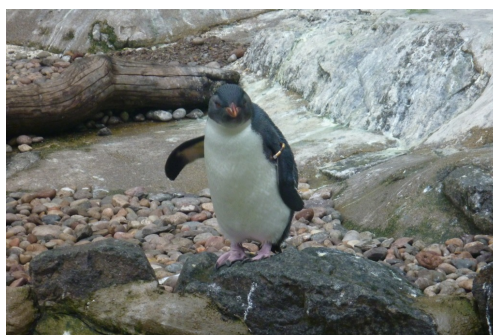


Up until now the Scottish weather had been unexpectedly pleasant, but the last couple of days have been truly miserable. The high temperature has been around 7 degrees with showers and a freezing wind. We all thought we had a lousy NZ summer this year, but the weather here puts that into perspective. You know it's cold in Edinburgh when the locals all moan about how cold it is!

But the show must go on and we have still been out and about, braving the elements. Yesterday we visited Edinburgh zoo - another of my favorite memories from my first trip to Scotland in 1975. Edinburgh zoo is famous for its penguins and especially the penguin parade. Sadly the main penguin pool is currently being refurbished and a lot of the penguins have gone on holiday to other zoos. It was still neat to see the 50 or so penguins left behind though (Gentoo and Rockhopper penguins).



A new highlight at the zoo are the two giant pandas that have recently arrived. We had to book well ahead for panda viewing, which is why we ended up at the zoo on such a miserable day. In a typical panda way, there was not much action for the two big bears. Pandas are solitary animals so even though they have two of them, they are kept in separate enclosures for all but about 2 days of the year. We got to spend about 10 minutes in each enclosure. Both pandas were sleeping, but they looked adorably cuddly. Our guide told us all sorts of interesting facts about them like pandas weigh 100 grams when they are born!

This photo is of Tian Tian (which means sweetie), the female panda.



The other highlight for us at the zoo was the monkeys. They had loads of types of monkeys - our favourites were the chimpanzees, Barbary Macaques and Squirrel monkeys. We spent a long time watching the monkey antics, a bonus given that we could watch from the inside which was warm! Here are a few more of our favorite animals, and one weird one!





Today (Thursday) Anna got her much awaited shopping day. We walked and walked and walked and looked in many many shops. Shopping overseas is so much more fun than at home. Some of the fashions here are quite hideous, but there is lots of nice stuff as well. In this cold weather we just want to buy winter clothes, but the shops are full of summer stuff. We did buy a few things each, and Anna was very happy with her day. Matt had a great time at the Edinburgh museum with Jo. He was proud to be the 3rd fastest driver of the day in a formula one car simulator. Tomorrow we are heading to the Highlands to stay with my cousin for a few days - it could get even colder!

