**Why is Ireland so green?**

**Sharon Frayne**

Everyone has heard the legend of the Emerald Isle – the greenest place on earth. This past spring, I had a wonderful opportunity to spend several weeks visiting Ireland. Take my word for it, it was green.

Why so green? Its Atlantic coastline largely affects the island. Warm waters from the Gulf Stream, driven by the North Atlantic drift push up against the west side. The climate stays relatively mild, compared to other countries of similar latitude and rainfall is plentiful. We learned that the West coast might receive 118 inches of rain annually!

Much of Ireland is now rural farmland and little of the original forest cover remains. As we drove throughout the countryside, we relished the rolling hills and many overflowing rivers, and streams and that rushed down to the sea.

Here’s why I turned green in Ireland.

For several weeks, I was relegated to back seat navigator. My husband and his brother claimed the front seats of our little standard shift car. Whenever we were hopelessly lost, or coming ‘round the Round About - yet again, my navigational skills were required to get us safely back on course. No one else in our car seemed to understand that a map should be held with north at the top, and that time and distance can be indicated or estimated with a map and the road signs.

Did I mention the many rivers and streams? I forgot about the waterfalls. There are hundreds of waterfalls, and my fellow travelers felt it was important to stop, get out of the car, and hike out to see each one. But I was fed up with back seat navigating and stopping to rush over and look at every waterfall along the way.

We were partway up a mountain, when passenger ‘C’ screamed, “Stop! Pull over. There’s a waterfall.” My husband sharply swerved over to the side of the road and stopped the car. The other three travelers leapt out of the car and headed off to look at Wonderful Waterfall # 43. I sat and sulked in the cramped back seat.

Then I felt the car start to roll backwards. My stomach lurched and I froze in fear. The car stopped. “Thank God,” I whispered.

Then the car started to roll again. Only this time, with more momentum, rapidly picking up speed while I sat helplessly covered with maps, tightly buckled into the cramped back seat.

Maps flew off my lap, the seatbelt was unbuckled and I threw myself over into the front seat. I grabbed the steering wheel with one hand and yanked the emergency brake with the other hand. The car jerked to a stop.

The waterfall admirers came back a little later, and wondered why I was green faced and bending over some flowering shrubs at the side of the road.

Why is Ireland so green? It must have something to do with the waterfalls.