

## Sending Postcards From Hell

LuAnn and I just returned from our annual trip to the Cayman Islands. I may not be able to bore you with my photos in person, but I'll bet I can do it with just the descriptions. Use your imagination.

↑The nice rental car lady pictured here is saying "remember to drive on the left!" as she hands me the keys. She speaks with an endearing island-tinged British accent, which makes her far easier for me to understand than most Americans who originate from places that are any farther south than Keokuk.

↑This is LuAnn in our tiny rental car. You can tell when she is getting ready to make a turn, because her windshield wipers start slapping madly on a perfectly sunny day. That's because the steering wheel is on the right, which means the turn signal and wiper levers are also reversed.

↑Here I am in our condominium - doing an emergency laundry load of underwear - which was the direct result of a car crash I almost had with another clueless American trying to go the wrong (American) way on one of the huge and incredibly congested roundabouts.

↑That's me standing in front of one of the 692 licensed financial institutions on Grand Cayman. About all that most people know about the Caymans is that it's a good place to have a bank account if you ever need to launder mob money or accept payments for extortion. Actually, the vast majority of the business transacted here is legal, but the reputation persists.

↑You probably won't recognize this as the Cayman national flower - yes, it's a large satellite dish. That's the running joke here, because almost everyone has one - the Cayman Islands have an average per capita income of over \$43,000, which is higher than the U.S.

↑Welcome to Hell- the name of a real town on the north end of the island. It actually resembles biblical images of Hell, due to these natural black limestone deposits that look like scorched stalagmites. It has a fire-engine red post office that allows you to literally send "Postcards from Hell."

↑The energetic, elderly man in the comically baggy Satan costume (note the trident) is the goodwill ambassador in Hell. Interestingly, he's a retired clergyman. His conversations are rather one-dimensional, with questions like, "How the Hell are you?" and "Where the Hell are you from?"

↑Here's something you don't see every day - a service station with gas pumps that have no self-serve credit card slot. Instead, real gas station attendants run out and service your car, just like in the old Texaco TV commercials. The guy that filled our tank was so friendly and animated that I told LuAnn as we drove off, "If Hell ever needs a new Satan, that guy has my vote."

↑You can read this highway sign as well as I can - "CAUTION – Iguanas On Road." You have to love a place that needs signs like that.

↑This large sign nailed to a tree by this rural restaurant says simply, "JERK" – which indicates the style of chicken they serve there. For some reason LuAnn insisted on taking my picture standing next to it.

↑Last year, my waterproof camera fell out of my scuba diving vest and sank in 6,000 feet of water. I haven't replaced it yet, so imagine several blurry photos of colorful tropical fish here.

↑The waiter at this restaurant took this photo of us and two other couples that we accidentally met, who all (as it turned out) once attended the University of Iowa. One of the women – originally from Wall Lake – was amazed that I knew that Andy Williams was born there.

↑While we were on the island, the annual land-crab hatching occurred. Our condominium turned out to be on their marching route from the beach to the inland waterways, so we had thousands of crabs about the size of wood ticks swarming all over the patio looking for (and finding) ways to get in. Here's a short digital video of them – like something out of a horror movie.

↑This photo is the diagram of the fire route that's posted on our condominium door. It will not be very useful, because all of our doors and

windows are now sealed from the inside with duct tape to keep the baby crabs out.

↑Finally, use your imagination on this smell instead of a photo. The night before we left Iowa City, LuAnn spent some time in front of our open refrigerator to empty it of most of its perishables. She thoughtfully turned off the thermostat while she did so, to conserve energy. Unfortunately...

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