

RETIREMENT HOLIDAY

We're all going on a **Summer Holiday**, so sang Cliff, we'll be **leaving on a Jet Plane**, don't know when we'll be back again, (well we do really!) In three weeks' time. This was to be a special retirement holiday, I had just retired after working for 50 years, so it's now time to soak up the sun, and dance in the rain!

Couldn't sleep the night before, as soooo excited, flying to **Memphis, Tennessee** via the gateway airport of New Jersey, (or New Joysey as they say there!) We could see the Statue of Liberty from the plane window as we took off, and had ate, drank and watched films on our little screens before finally arriving in Elvis land!

Journeyed from Memphis to Tupelo, Mississippi first for a couple of days, where Elvis (and his stillborn twin Jesse) was born and lived for the first few years of his life. Began with a tour of Tupelo , as by now we had joined the rest of the 'gang'. 5 coachloads of us. First coach is 'E', second coach is 'L', third coach is 'V', fourth coach is 'I' andyep, you've guessed it, fifth coach is 'S'. We are in 'S'.

Stopping via all the Elvis landmarks, Lawhorn Elementary & Milam High School. On to the two room birthplace shack, Assembly of God church, Mud Creek swimming hole, so pretty with it's little lake, lots of butterflies, and the crickets chirping. Great merchandise shop at the birthplace and of course, we didn't come out empty handed!

A visit to the Tupelo Hardware Store was a must, and as the saying goes, 'Where Gladys bought her son his first guitar'.

After two days here, we journeyed along the '**Long Lonely Highway**' from Mississippi. **We're going to Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee, we're going to Graceland.** All 5 coaches E.L.V.I.S. ok rubber duck, we've got us a **Convoy!**

We stayed in downtown Memphis, round the corner from Beale Street, home of the Blues, and not too far from the Hard Rock Café, which is always a lovely 'watering hole' for '**Little ole wine drinking me**' and has a great merchandise shop, both for the Hard Rock and Lanskys. Across the road from the famous B.B.Kings, & we're '**Walking in Memphis, walking with our feet 10 feet off the Beale**'.

Along to Highway 51, now called Elvis Presley Boulevard, and to the beautiful Graceland Mansion, This doesn't feel like walking around a stately house, it feels so homely, and very emotional as you go through the music gates up the driveway listening to Elvis singing '**Welcome to My world**'.

Went into Glayds' Diner in the Complex across the road from the mansion, and had a Fried Peanut butter and banana sandwich.
..... Well you gotta do it! When in Rome and all that!

This was not the first time we had visited Memphis; indeed, we were married here in January 2005 in the beautiful little Graceland Chapel in the Woods. All the Christmas decorations were still up in the Mansion, the Chapel, and a huge Nativity displayed on the front grounds of Graceland as it had been whilst Elvis was still alive.

But back to now, the Summer of 2017. As well as seeing all around the rooms of the beautiful mansion, including the Jungle room, living and dining room, and the special Meditation garden, where Elvis, his parents, and grandmother are laid to rest, the Graceland complex has all the exhibits on display, such as all his cars, including the famous Pink Cadillac, all his gold discs, jump suits, and the famous planes, the **Hound Dog 2**, and the Lisa Marie.

The new Guesthouse Hotel just down the road from Graceland is quite stunning, Although the **Heartbreak hotel** is still standing, it does look forlorn, and this is quite sad, we had stayed here twice before, and it certainly now is 'Down at the end of Lonely Street.'

'Big Wheel keep on turning, **Proud Mary** keep on rolling, rolling down the river, we are going on a Mississippi river boat cruise on '**old Man River**' the Memphis Queen 111.

A visit to the Peabody hotel, and to see the Ducks was also a must whilst in Memphis.

'**Goodness Gracious, Great Balls of Fire**, a visit to Jerry Lee Lewis' ranch was also a must. It is a lovely little ranch, and whilst Graceland has the music gates, with music notes and silhouettes of Elvis, Jerry Lee's gates have a piano. Part of the house was private as he did live there sometimes; his kitchen wallpaper was awesome, coca cola logos, and a piano shaped swimming pool in the garden. There a small animal graveyard as a shrine to his past doggies.

The night of the 15th August, was the annual Candlelit Vigil. Thousands of people along the Boulevard waiting to silently to go up to the graveside holding their candles to pay their respects whilst loud speakers played non-stop Elvis Gospel music. This was so emotional.

After a week in Memphis it was time to leave for the Beautiful Hawaiian Island of Oahu. The flight to Honolulu took 8 hours, and Hawaii is 5 hours behind Memphis, so we gain an extra 5 hours there. YAY! **Aloha Hawaii U.S.A. Gee it's be great to be in the 50th State**, so sang Elvis in the song.!

Craig my husband is a 'walking meals on wheels' for all the little bugs, midgies, and mozzies! They don't touch me, I think they'd sent the tom toms out and said 'don't bite her else you'll get a 3 day handover!

Our hotel was just along the road from Waikiki Beach, and we stood there watching all the surfers. We found the statue of Olympic surfing champion Duke Kahanamoku, a fine figure of a man he looked too. Several people had put beautiful Lei's over his arms. As indeed we had been presented with a beautiful smelling lilacy purple plumeria as we arrived in Honolulu.

Wow, to be walking along Waikiki Beach and paddling in the Pacific Ocean in this beautiful beautiful **Blue Hawaii**. Livin' the dream!

The following morning before breakfast (of the most wonderful pineapple I had ever tasted - the pineapple here is to die for!) I swam in the beautiful blue waters singing along to several of the wonderful Elvis songs from the film **Blue Hawaii**. Apparently there are two seasons in Hawaii - Summer and nearly summer!!

A trip to Pearl Harbour was not to be missed. Very emotional. We watched a short film of what happened on that dreadful day of 7th December 1941. You could have heard a pin drop as we came out the small cinema and boarded the boat that would take us to the USS Arizona Memorial, which stands above the sunken battleship.

Next a visit to Hawaii 50 . (Book 'em Danno!) before an evening swim to the tune of Elvis' **Hawaiian Sunset**.

A day trip to the isle of Kauai where Blue Hawaii film was filmed. Chickens everywhere, running loose, beautiful waterfalls Cascading from the hilltops, and a rainbow was in the sky as we landed and again as we departed at the end of the day.

A visit to Coconut Palms was called for, even though this resort was destroyed by Hurricane Iniki 25 years beforehand. The lagoon was still there, and we had to sign a waiver before entering, in case any falling coconuts dropped on our heads! But this iconic Elvis location which was where the Wedding scene from **Blue Hawaii** was filmed just had to be visited.

Our final night in Oahu. An evening sunset dinner cruise on the 'Star of Honolulu'. Mai-Tai's at the ready as we stood on deck and watched the sun setting in the west.

What wonderful memories of a wonderful holiday.

Sue Toyne