

Spain says *Hola!* to Clive

In the last edition of Guidelines, we asked readers to tell us about their holidays with their Guide Dogs, Assistance Dogs and Guide Dog Puppies. The Whooley family of Foxrock, Dublin - Colm, Fiona, Sorcha and Murray - recently went on holiday to Spain and, for the first time, they took their Assistance Dog, Clive. Fiona Whooley reports on the trip for Guidelines.

'Nuestro perro, Clive, ha sido completamente entrenado y adiestrado por la fundación Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind (Fundación Irlandesa de Perros guía para invidentes). Trabaja como Perro de Asistencia, y ayuda a mi hijo Murray que es autista'.

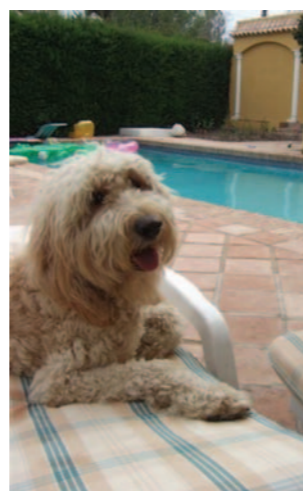
With those few words, explaining that Murray was autistic and that was why we had an Assistance Dog called Clive, we headed off for a three week holiday in Spain. It was our fifth visit to that country and, on previous visits, Murray had found it difficult to cope with being out of his home environment and, as well as being frequently sick, he was reluctant to leave the villa, even to go out for dinner. But we have family there and we all needed a holiday so we've persisted for the last few years.

This year was very different. We were taking Clive. So, my brother-in-law who lived there was asked to find us a large villa with a garden and a cool interior for Clive and a private pool for Murray, who hated sharing with anyone except his family.

Our journey started with a long delay at Dublin Airport as we tried to check in Clive with both the supervisor and duty-manager having to be involved. Once checked in, we went through baggage control where we had a few more problems as Murray was unhappy with Clive not only being scanned but having the pockets on his jacket opened and checked. Next time we will be prepared and warn Murray in advance.



Colm, Murray, Fiona and Sorcha Whooley enjoy a warm Spanish evening with Assistance Dog, Clive.



Goldendoodle, Clive relaxes by the pool before dinner.

The flight was good - Clive got a bit stressed at take-off and landing but, unlike previous years when he had been sick, Murray, was so preoccupied with his dog that he was fine. In fact, for the duration of the flight, Clive lay under Murray's feet or sat up with his head in Murray's lap and Murray just continually petted him and talked to him!

We had a wonderful time in Spain - yes, it was hot, but Clive coped really well. He enjoyed his daily early morning and late evening walks with my husband, Colm, especially when he found a very skinny Spanish cat to chase.

Clive slept for most of the day except, of course, when food was on offer! He is a fussy eater at the best of times and the local dry dog food from the supermarket didn't impress him much. However, fresh prawns and sardines - grilled and peeled for him - were most acceptable and he also particularly loved the fresh pig's ears we gave him on the night we had suckling

pig for dinner! We didn't want to risk the tap water with him so he had chilled bottled water with the rest of us.

We managed to eat out in restaurants during the whole holiday - a new first for us - and we were able to take Clive as long as we showed them the above Spanish explanation. This made life much easier for us as there were big 'Perros No' (No Dogs) signs outside the restaurants and hotels. I imagine if you had a guide dog and were obviously vision impaired it would have been easier however, when they were aware of the reason for Clive accompanying Murray, people could not have been more helpful. We were inundated with queries from other diners about Clive, what he was doing and how he helped Murray and we were more than happy to answer all the questions. Lots of people from Britain, France, Italy and Germany are going home knowing a lot more about autism and Assistance Dogs!

On our last day we took Clive to the local vet for his tapeworm and tick treatment. The Irish vet we had been recommended had gone away on a last minute locum job but the Spanish vet spoke perfect English and was used to having 'travelling dogs' through his surgery doors!

Malaga airport was simplicity itself - we were checked in just as quickly as the people in front of us - and the baggage controller and passport controller were charmed by both Murray and Clive. We were boarded first, which was great for both boy and dog and again, although Clive was a bit uneasy at take-off and landing, he looked after Murray and Murray looked after him. On landing in Dublin, a vet from the Department of Agriculture was waiting to meet us at his designated desk in baggage reclaim and Clive was cleared through in less than five minutes.

Would we do it again? Yes, absolutely! Murray is clearly happier with Clive and Clive certainly would be very unhappy without Murray. They are a mighty team and both look out for each other so much that parting them for the duration of the holiday would be difficult. We all had a really wonderful holiday - the first time for many years that we had no stresses, no upsets, and no sickness and came home really rested. What more could you ask for?



Fiona, Clive and Murray departing from Malaga airport for the trip back to Dublin.

Useful information

For pet passports - Prior approval for entry form visit www.agriculture.gov.ie/pets email: pets@agriculture.gov.ie We just had to fax into them a copy of Clive's passport and vaccination certificate to obtain the prior approval form needed for re-entry into Ireland.

Animal Hospital - Costa del Sol Centro Commerical Biarritz, Ctra. Marbella-Estepona, Km.169 - Tel (95) 288 55 95. We discovered that the Hospital sold Royal Canin' dog food on our last day as Clive was having his treatments - this would have been very handy to know in advance!

Golf Experience - Seamus Whooley (www.golfexperience.net) is my brother-in-law but his business is not only golf holidays, he can book hotels, apartments, villas including car hire at good rates. He is used to looking after us and all our demands so if anyone is thinking of going to the south of Spain on holiday contact him.

volunteer profile



NAME: TERESA FARRELL
LIVES: EDENDERRY,
CO. OFFALY
ROLE: FUNDRAISER

Teresa does sterling work for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind in Edenderry, Co Offaly. She was first involved many years ago when she became friends with the late Brendan Hughes, who was one of our volunteers in Edenderry and the father of Arlene Carroll who is currently our volunteer representative in Carrickmacross.

"I began to help out more and more and have been doing it ever since," says Teresa. "Also, a friend of mine lost his sight a few years ago and died last year and this brought home to me the work done by the organisation," she adds.

Teresa along with her daughter Tootsy (who was recently married - congratulations Tootsy!) organise the collecting boxes in shops, coordinate the church gate collections in the Edenderry area and also collect donations from family and friends. Teresa recently collected a cheque for €1,000 from St Mary's Secondary School, Edenderry, which participated in Shades Week and she is in regular contact with all the schools in the town, updating them on the activities of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind in the area.

As well as looking after her eleven children and managing the kits for the local schoolboy soccer teams, Teresa also takes care of pets, Rodger (Golden Retriever), Lady (Cocker Spaniel), recent addition Benji (Golden Retriever) and rescue dog Lucky (crossbreed). Teresa was delighted last year when Guide Dog Owner, Arnold Walsh, visited the schools in Edenderry and gave some educational talks on Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.