



Welcome to Rott's Manor

Pete & Mary Clukey

Chattanooga, TN 2004 Trip Report

Labor Day Weekend 2004

Not only was this a holiday weekend but a good portion of Florida had been evacuated to get out of the path of hurricane Francis. It would be a few more days before we would be effected by the remnants of the hurricane. Even so, we still decide to leave on Sunday, September 5th around 9: 30 AM for an overnight trip to Chattanooga.

We made it to Chattanooga just in time to catch the noon riverboat cruise with lunch onboard the Southern Belle Riverboat (www.chattanoogariverboat.com). Lunch was a self serve buffet which included sodas from the fountain, bread or hoagie rolls, ham, turkey, and roast beef lunch meats, two different cheeses, lettuce, tomatoes, coleslaw, baked beans, and potato chips. The lunch room staff were almost hostile. They did not explain that they have an organized method for letting only a few tables at a time up to the buffet. And when they uncovered the dishes, some very hungry people started to get up, to which a staff member screamed out "SIT DOWN". Not a "please sit down, we will release tables one at a time starting with the upper deck". Very rude. Other than this little disappointment the rest of the cruise was quite pleasant. Lunch was of adequate quality, exactly what you would expect. The captain was on the upper deck telling stories over the PA and pointing out landmarks on the shoreline.

As soon as we finished our lunch we scurried outside to see the sites. In hind site, I think I would skip the lunch on board because we missed so many sites while we obeyed the "SIT" command waiting for our turn to eat. After our cruise, it was on to see the Tennessee Aquarium (www.tennesseeaquarium.com). The line to purchase tickets was moderately long but it moved along quite well. We purchased a combo ticket to the Aquarium and the IMAX (NASCAR in 3D). Our aquarium entry was at 3:30

and we wanted an after dinner movie so we scheduled that for 7:00. We had a little time to kill before our tour of the aquarium started, so we went into the gift shop for some souvenir scouting. We found the cutest little stuff black & white spotted ray that we decided we would buy after our tour. Soon it was time to start our tour. It began with the sea horses. This display is amazing. Mary snapped picture after picture. And Pete was trying all the settings on his new camera just to get the right shot. After the sea horses it all became a blur of people, people, and some very interesting displays of all kinds of fish. Everything from rainbow trout (that looked pretty yummy by now) to small hammer head sharks, in different tanks of course. As Mary looked across the room (and the sea of people) she caught a glimpse of our black & white spotted ray... but the tank appeared to be full of fresh water type fish. Eventually we made our way over to that tank and sure enough there was the black & white spotted ray. We lingered at this tank for a while just trying to get a picture of this unique creature. Then we navigated through the crowd past many more tanks until we found ourselves back in the gift shop. While purchasing the little black & white spotted ray, our cashier recommended a Mexican restaurant just across the street. It was just about dinnertime, so off we went for some nourishment.

After our early dinner, we still had some time to kill. So we started to look for a place to stay. The first place we wanted to try to get into was Stone Fort Inn (www.stonefortinn.com), a small B& B a few blocks away from all of the hustle & bustle. We were in luck, they had one balcony room left. So we drove over to get checked in. The room we got was very plush. It had a TV/ VCR combo and a CD alarm clock radio. It had a "private" balcony with a small hot tub. It had a fireplace. And it was furnished with some very nice antiques. Mary almost needed a stepladder to get onto the overstuffed double- mattress queen sized bed. While Mary took a little nap, Pete checked on the status of hurricane Frances.

Soon it was time to get up and go to our evening movie, "NASCAR: The 3D IMAX Experience" (www.tnaqua.org/IMAX/NASCAR.asp). Even Mary enjoyed this.

After the movie, we called it an early evening and went back to the B& B to enjoy some of it's quiet and relaxing amenities.

On Monday, we weren't in any hurry to get moving since the B& B was running breakfast from 8: 00 AM to 9: 30 AM. It was a small but very nicely appointed continental buffet that the Stone Fort Inn provided. Pete had some yogurt with fresh blueberries, frosted mini-wheats with fresh milk, and a large bagel with homemade honey hazelnut cream cheese. Mary had a large cinnamon sugar bagel with homemade walnut honey cream cheese and a small bowl of fresh blueberries, strawberries and grapes. There was the usual tea, coffee, orange juice, and cranberry juice available. Mary had some cranberry juice and she thought it was quite good. She could almost picture the staff of Stone Fort Inn hand squeezing the cranberries.

Today we started out by driving up Lookout Mountain to Ruby Falls (www.rubyfalls.com). We were directed to front row parking. Wow. Then surprisingly there were only 2- 3 groups in front of us in the ticket line. We were able to get right in and start the tour immediately. People in our group commented that they were here yesterday but the wait was so long that they decided to leave and try again today. Ruby Falls is a 145- foot waterfall in a cave 260 feet below the ground. Cool, huh!?! We were transported down via an elevator then we were lead on a tour for about a half a mile before making it to the waterfall. Along the way we were given a history lesson of the cave and some of its' neat formations were pointed out. The underground tour lasted a little over an hour. Then we were herded into the elevator and taken to the very top of their castle tower for an incredible view of Chattanooga.

From the tower the exit is though, of course, the gift shop! After a little shopping Mary's stomach was beginning to grumble. Lunch time. There was a little "quick food" stand at Ruby Falls but Mary was in the mood for a salad. So the search was on. Mary thought that she had read that there was a restaurant at Rock City (www.seerockcity.com). So, reluctantly Pete drove to Rock City. He had been told that it was a waste of time and money. As we approached the parking area for Rock City an attendant pointed us to a front row parking space (how lucky are we?). Smiling, we left the car and ventured toward the entrance, just hoping that we wouldn't have to go in the "park" to eat at the restaurant. And luckily for us, the restaurant (cafeteria is more like it) is outside the park. It did have salads, so Mary was all set. Pete ordered a Philly Cheese Steak and Mary had a grilled chicken salad. It really wasn't too pricey either considering its location. After lunch, we decided to explore the gift shop and fudge shop. Pete could no longer resist the "See Rock City" birdhouse, which everyone seems to have (but us). So, Mary guilted Pete into

going into the Rock City Garden park. How can you have one of their birdhouses and never actually have seen it? You can't! So, while Pete took the birdhouse to the car, Mary got in the short ticket line.

Neither of us knew what to expect... a bunch of rocks we guessed. Well, we were treated to some very nice views and interesting landscape as we strolled through the park. It was a neat place for photography. On a really clear day, you can see seven different states. For the little kids it ended with "Fairyland Caverns", in which fairy tale scenes are displayed with brightly colored paint and black lights. It's really different. By this time Pete was quite over the whole thing and ready to go home.

So we departed Chattanooga and headed for home to prepare for Frances. Remember Frances, the hurricane, it was now a tropical depression heading right for North Georgia.

We had a great time in Chattanooga. It is so close and we didn't get to do everything that we wanted to this time, so I'm sure we will be returning. Next time we have to see: Raccoon Mountain Caverns (www.raccoonmountain.com). We also plan to be there a night that the Murder Mystery Dinner Show (<http://applemachine.com/vaudevillecafe.com>) is running.