

SPEED BOAT TO HEAVEN OR HELL?

The first few times our speed boat crested up over a swell, the boat would lift entirely out of the water and slam into the water below. The sound was similar to thunder ... only a few feet away. There were 11 other passengers and I promise Kristen and I were *not* screaming like little children. I cannot say the same for most of the other victims, er, I mean passengers. For the first 15 minutes or so it was exactly like hearing the screams from a roller coast ride ... every 15 seconds. Soon into the journey, the excited screams turned into blood curdling screams of torture and then just yells/moans of pain and discomfort.



Artist rendering of our speed boat ride!

Thus began a most dubious adventure also known as a speed boat to Paradise? We were traveling to a small uninhabited island about 6 miles off the coast. Most boats to the island are big and slow, taking well over an hour. I discovered 2 companies that had great advertisements stating 1) if getting up at 6 AM is not your idea of a relaxing vacation and 2) if throwing up on a boat is not your idea of fun vacation times ... then try our speed boat. It only takes 30 to 50 minutes and it costs less money. Because of Kristen's propensity for getting sea sick and my propensity to avoid early morning light (Kristen's also) this seemed ideal for us.

I called the first company and they were not going over all week because the water was too choppy. Unfortunately I failed to take this as a sign from God. The next company said they were planning on going so we made the reservation. Foreshadowing the story, the company's name is Adrenaline Tours! We left a little before the crack of noon and I thought it a good sign they did not make us wear life-jackets. I did get a bit concerned when he said it might take a little over an hour to get to the island. I just dismissed it, assuming he did not know what he was talking about since the ad clearly stated it would take around 45 minutes plus they had said the water was only "average choppy."



How the ride felt to us!

It was a nice, pleasant cruise out of the harbor, gently lulling us into complacency. Then we hit the open sea and the boat suddenly turned into a mechanical bull ride! My actual first comparison was to that of the Wild Mouse Ride, which was my first horrifying roller coaster ride when I was young. It was not so much the huge hills you go up and down but rather the fast herky-jerky ride ... up and down and all around at a frantic pace. Then if you put that ride in the Log Flume setting so you are getting soaked simultaneously, you have a taste of what this boat ride was like. The Plexiglas windows on the sides with about a 3-foot opening to the canvas top did nothing whatsoever to keep the water from splashing in on us like someone was throwing buckets of water at us to put out an invisible fire.

Initially it was kind of fun like a roller coaster ride. Then it quickly resembled a nightmare. Four of our group got sick and had to go to the back of the boat to throw up. We would stop each time to allow them to re-situate and then stay at the back where it was less tumultuous. Kristen had taken Bonine prior to the trip and she survived unscathed!

About halfway along it came to me that this must be very similar to a mechanical bull ride ... that never ends! We each had a metal bar attached to the seat in front of us. We all had white knuckles from holding onto that bar for dear life! After the trip, the captain actually showed us a blister on his hand from trying to control the boat on this trip.

As we got closer, the first mate said he could see the island up ahead. Since the boat would often tilt back to an unsettling 45 degree angle, it was hard to see anything in front of the boat. The young lady in front of us stood up to try to see. After a few seconds the boat took one of its typical drops and she was actually hurled into the air and then slammed down onto the plastic floor of the boat. Fortunately she only got a bruised knee from what looked like a demon possessed encounter in the Exorcist movie.

I clocked our trip and it ended up being 1 hour and 35 minutes of sheer terror ... or as the brochure described it "a fun, exciting vacation boat trip!" Now I know a bit of what Gilligan went through on his 3-hour tour. I don't guess we should complain as the company (Adrenaline) did live up to its name!

The island did end up being beautiful! We spent 3-4 hours on this idyllic, deserted, white sandy-shored beach overlooking the clear aquamarine-colored water. We snorkeled and Kristen discovered 4 friendly turtles we swam with for a while. It was a bit like a taste of Heaven on Earth. By the time we left, we were the last 13 people on this entire island. The ride back was *with* the swells and waves so it only took 30 minutes, thankfully! Upon return the captain mentioned (paraphrase) that sometimes in life you have to go through junk, pain, troubles, and storms before you eventually get to experience a bit of "paradise."

**Jesus never said it would be easy,
but He did say it would be worth it!**

I guess our ride was a microcosm of how life is on this Earth. I remember a song called "Heaven is a place on Earth." There are also allusions in songs about "Hell" on Earth. I think we get a bit of each on our earthly journey but I am pretty sure neither is anywhere close to the actual future reality.

JOKE WARNING? (This is kind of like saying "No pun intended" since the pun IS usually intended.) I used to preach a sermon which began with a few "I hate it when that happens" ... like when your finger gets slammed in a car door ... and then the car drives away ... and then goes through the car wash ... and then the hot wax pours over you! I also hate it when you are in church and realize you forgot to silence your phone as the ringtone plays "*Highway to Hell!*"

C. S. Lewis' idea behind Shadowlands was not adequately explained in the Hollywood movie. In his writing, Lewis described a caveman watching his cave walls to see shadows of the reality outside. Until he goes outside, he never comes close to experiencing life in all its fullness from simply observing it on his cave wall. Lewis then made the comparison that this life on Earth is only like those Shadowlands compared to the exquisite reality called Heaven.

I think it illustrates a quote by ***Blaise Pascal***. In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't. If you see the glass as half empty, you are a pessimist. If you see the glass as half full through lenses you prescribed for yourself, you are an optometrist! (Joke for my good eye doctor friend, Kevin.)

"I am sure that the sufferings of this present time are not even worth comparing with the magnificent and glorious future God has planned for us." (Romans 8:18) SO HANG IN THERE!

"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." C. S. Lewis