

My kind of town

OBAN is a town that many holiday makers take a liking to, and return time and time again.

But there's one man who has returned to Oban year after year for almost three decades, and although he will turn 80 next February, he's not planning to stop any time soon.

Emil DeRose, a former bookkeeper from Schenectady in the north of New York State, makes the six-hour journey across thousands of miles every November to visit friends and spend three weeks in the town where he 'feels so at home'.

Emil, who first visited Oban on one of the Wallace Arnold Bus Tours around the country 25 years ago, recalls the first day he spent in Oban.

'It was a Sunday, and there was no one in sight and I thought to myself 'what is there for me to do here?!'. I met a local man out on a walk, and he told me to go to the Westbay (a former pub which is now the Westbay Apartments). At that time it was the only pub open on a Sunday. There I met Marie McKenzie and her sister Cathy, who were barmaids. Everyone was so friendly and so open.'

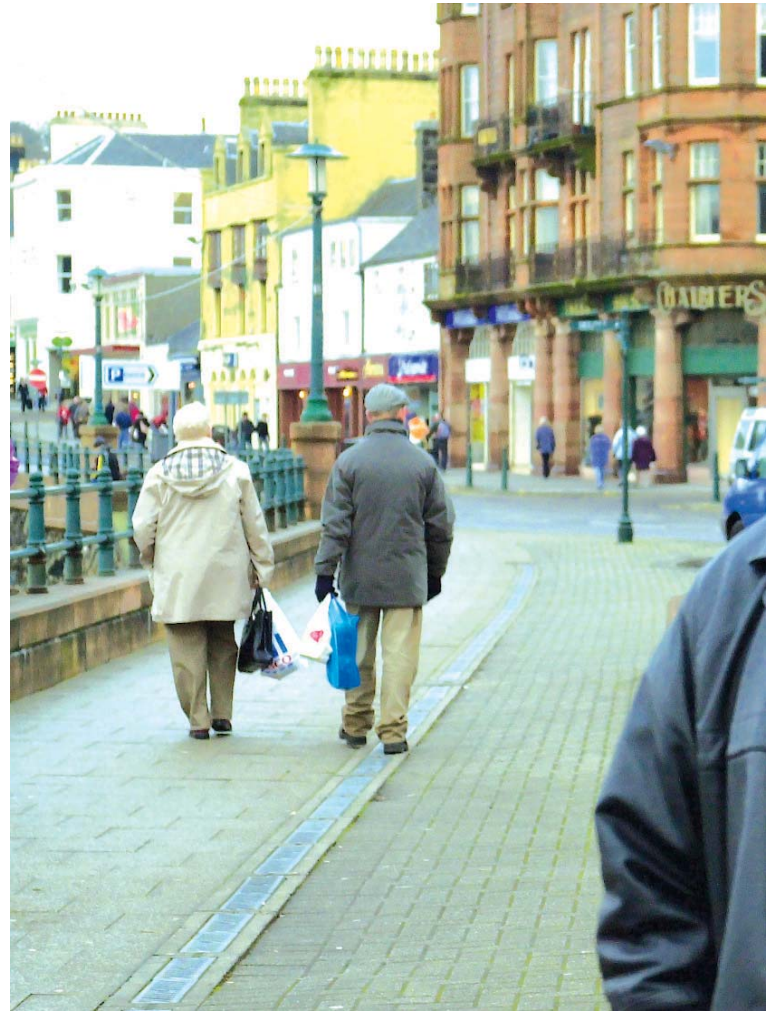
After his first encounter with the Oban pub scene, Emil knew it wouldn't be hard to fit in. For years Emil's face could be seen in Oban's pubs of the past; the Waterlot, the Westbay, the Hunting Lodge, the Gateway and the Mantrap. Now Emil's favourite haunts include the Tartan Tavern and Aulays Bar.

'All the people in the pubs are wonderful to me,' said the American. 'The bars at home are no comparison - they are really restaurants, while pubs here are smaller and have a more personal touch.'

'Many people I first met in the bars were teenagers at the time, and boy, they could drink - before I came here I had no idea what a pub crawl was. But I have had to stick to my four half pints - if I have any more than that I know I'm in trouble!'



Emil DeRose with Tesco butcher and friend Neil Morrison.



Emil DeRose - New Yorker Stater who feels a

Whilst in Oban, nothing makes Emil happier than just walking about the town. 'I walk miles when I come to Oban because it's very comfortable. At home it is a different story - it's a jungle. There's lots of traffic and congestion, and it can be very risky.'

But it can be very difficult for Emil to simply take a stroll around Oban, for it doesn't take long until he meets a familiar face or two and stops for a chat.

'I don't come here to do anything,' said Emil. 'I take each day as it comes and just see who I meet.'

On some of Emil's more recent returns to Oban he has found that some of the faces he knows so well are no longer able to greet him.