

♥ 2017
laugh lots &
live lovingly

After the (almost) heart-breaking year of 2016, we started 2017 with the magic of Mata Ortiz, a remote village high on the plains of northern Chihuahua, Mexico. > We witnessed the remarkable pottery practiced here by half of the community. It was started by Juan Quezada, who was inspired in the 1970s by prehistoric Paquime pottery > that he found as a kid. The genuine simplicity and friendliness of these people made us suddenly realize that happiness does not require a big-screen TV.



Kelly



February started off with a tres amigos trifecta – ocean, mountain, desert in one day – sponsored by A16, our favorite outdoor store. SoCal/Baja is the only place in the world with all 3 climates in such close proximity. Germar enjoyed downhill skiing in San Diego County for the first time and later had fun with the local fauna.



March found us skiing at Mammoth with John, Betsy, Tony & Jim then soaking in hot



springs and the super-bloom of poppies in Antelope valley.

We devoured our Easter eggs at Wind Wolves Preserve. A 'must visit again' special place.

We all know that the Earth is becoming warmer after day light savings time was introduced (the Sun now shines one hour longer – duh). We felt obligated to stand up for the polar bears and the joy to breath fresh air, so we happily joined <the March for Science on Earth Day.



Andi showed up for Cinco de Mayo. Afterwards, we explored slot canyons, wind caves, and marine fossils in our desert. > We finished the weekend off with Annie's unofficial birthday party at Vintage Alpine and a rainstorm, the last rain that we can recall.



At the end of May, Caitlin and Adam entranced us with their stunning wedding in North Georgia. v The 'green' was ^relaxing & cheerful, creating a calmness



that soothes and balances ones' emotions and feeling healthy (I think Annie had a New Age moment here). Thus, we enjoyed the first <miles of the Appalachian Trail and Georgia's highpoint, Brasstown Bald.

Mid-June, found us in the Valle de Guadalupe
<again for Guateque. This year we blended a
Zinfandel with a touch of Petit Syrah with
Barbara & Danny. We ♥ Baja!!



Well, a record year of rain, brings lots of snow
and our plans to bag a few peaks on 4th of July
were thwarted by heaps of the white fluffy
stuff. Instead, we camped on a speck free of
snow below Sawtooth Mtn. The third day we
moved camp to an alpine meadow & waterfall
with deer and marmots boldly walking thru
camp and harassing us. Can't have peace
anywhere!





After we returned from the Sierras, we welcomed two students from Belgium, Thomas and William, who stayed with us for three weeks. Of course, we showed them all highlights of San Diego, starting at Coyote's <Flying Saucer Retrieval and Repair Service. We were amazed that the priority of today's boys is not to do some crazy stuff in San Diego's surf but instead spend 3 hours at the hairdresser to get their hair dyed gray.

20 JUL, we received Bernadette's cancer update. It metastasized. Only experimental drugs were left. Annie made a banner and we did the "3 Peak Challenge" for her. SoCal's highest three Peaks: Mt. Baldy, 10,064' or 3,068m for our non-US friends, San Geronimo, 11,503' or 3,506m and San Jacinto, 10,834' or 3,302m. ^Michele, Raul and Hope joined us, and we pulled it off in three days. Bernadette was on our minds as we were kicking rocks



up the trail. Cancer sucks!



We went on a road trip to Smith Rock State Park in Oregon. We set up camp on our 20 x 20 ft² parcel along with Jennifer, Allan and Lydia. The distance to our neighbors was exactly zero inches. The camp site went into the annals of Oregon as "the refuge camp" but probably didn't meet UN standards. 21 AUG left us mesmerized and in a state of reckoning with the awesomeness of the universe for

1.5 minutes of totality. The sky darkened, the temperature dropped 12 degrees and the event modestly dubbed "The Great American Eclipse" engulfed all our senses and brought tears to our eyes. Our lives were now complete. Of course, Germar, had to bring 300 lbs of ^scientific equipment and is still excitingly looking forward to crunching all the data. A first glimpse is [here](#), if you are brave.



September was the beer belly and fluff fighting month. Gernar's meeting of the United Nations Environment Programme was in England, continuing his futile quest to save the planet. It was organized in Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birth place. Annie had the brilliant idea to bike to the meeting from Land's End at the very southwest tippy tip of England, and to continue afterwards to John O'Groats at the very northeast tippy tip of Scotland. Gernar uttered a few "but, but, ouh-uuh," but it didn't help. We packed our bikes, trailers, all camping gear and off we went. As always, we were self-contained, enhancing our spontaneity.



Biking through the lovely, green countryside on the wrong side of the road, we made the following observations: (1) "Minor" roads are lined by 10 ft high impenetrable hedges made of stinging needles, roses, yummy black berries and wide enough only for one tractor and one bike. We had to bite into thorns whenever a tractor came by.

(2) Green creates calmness that soothes and balances ones' emotions and feeling of healthiness.

(3) Brits are splendidly friendly.



(4) We speak the same

language, yet were

unable to understand them many times. It took a while to get directions to Newquay, which we learned is pronounced "nookie".

(5) Cornish Pasties are the bees knees! ^

(6) There is not always fog in England – only if it is not raining. < We once asked a Brit how many days in

a year do you see the blue sky for an entire day. She laughed herself silly.

(7) There are almost as many sheep as in New Zealand.

Annie had a jolly good time herding them.



(8) There is nothing cuter than a Scottish Highland cow. >
(sorry, Annie!)

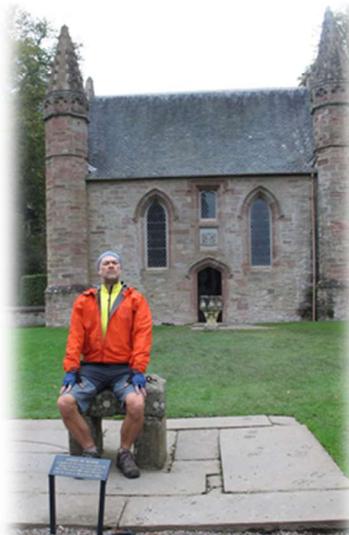


At our first camp after leaving Shakespeare behind, we were awakened by a chicken < pecking at our tent. Next the camp host knocked, delivering 5 freshly-laid duck eggs. After cooking those we were treated to a second breakfast of "black pudding" consisting of text-book heart-attack nutrition. Before we left, he gave us bacon and sausages from his favorite pig. All that for £20!

The 'green' continued to sooth our senses as we biked thru England, Wales and into Scotland. We lost track of time. A day was ending, and we were desperate to find a love nest for the night. We finally came across a gigantic [Tibetan retreat center](#) with tents next to it in a field. We asked for permission to camp (granted), but the ground was too wet, so we decided to pitch our tent at the adjacent creek with nice dry gravel banks. Bad decision! Annie woke at 5 a.m. to a raging river splashing against our vestibule. Bloody 'ell! We were back on the road lickety split!

We decided to contact our friend in Edinburgh < and counterbalance the crazy river experience. We dried out, visited the famous castle complete with the crown jewels and the stone of destiny.

We biked on to Scone (pronounced "scoon") where the Scottish kings were coronated. Germar could not resist sitting v on the coronation stone while Annie flirted with the local fauna. v Needless to say, we had a scone in Scone.



Our last and highest pass of Scotland, advertised as “dangerous”, was before us as night set in & poof – Annie’s rim broke. We walked back to a little inn, and desperately sent off e-mails to bike shops. When we woke the next morning, our 106th anniversary, we found a reply “I have two rims; I can be there at 8 a.m.”. One hour later, we had a new rim for a donation to build schools in Nepal & we were back on the road. Did we mention that Brits are awesome? Germar jumped for joy ^ and we were on the road earlier than any other day. The day was full of diverse, jaw-dropping landscapes. It was our favorite day.



The tiny roads, historic sites, emerald green hill sides, single-tracks, castles, sheep, cows, more sheep, pasties, soothed our senses and Germar’s heart. < Or was it the ice cream?



We made it to John O’Groats in 18 biking days with a 1000 miles behind us.> We were at a loss of what to do next. But all things have an end except a sausage, which has two. We did our ‘happy dance’ and headed back to Wick in the tail end of Hurricane Maria. (The hurricanes of our east coast

dwindle in the UK). Germar’s neck is still stiff from keeping his head straight from the ferocious winds. We scooted back to Heathrow via Ullapool and along < Loch Ness. It was a bit of a challenge driving vs. biking, but we managed to drive on the correct side, and made it safely back, fully rejuvenated.



October plunked us back across the pond in California wild fires. We wanted to run back to Great Britain! All our concerns were blown away with the email from Bernadette on 26 OCT. It made us cry with joy. Her immunotherapy was working!!! Yahooooooo!



Thanksgiving is our special time. We had our tenth turkey together. (We first kissed after our first turkey together.) We woke to crashing waves in Ensenada, then moseyed our way to Ojos Negros and found the most scrumptious oysters and vino blanca under oak trees at La Cava de Marcello in the middle of nowhere. > Onward to Laguna Hanson within Parque Nacional Constitucion de 1857 via



40 miles of dirt road. We ❤️ Baja! We were welcomed by pristine pine forests & a lovely dry lake, ranchos with friendly ranchers, and a little shoot-out at night just 100 yards from our camp site. Actually, we learned the next day that it was just fireworks for our 108th anniversary. Really 😊

As always, the holiday season is set off by Germar's birthday. He has become hyper appreciative of birthdays, so v he donned his Lederhosen and prepared a Bavarian feast of Schweisbraten mit Knödel and Blaukraut (pork roast with dumpling and blue kraut) for dear friends. Bavarian cheese cake, made from "quark", topped off the evening.



Now, we are packing to visit Bernadette. It will be quality time for all. Mike & Tim's family will visit; Germar will meet Karen, Mike's wife-to-be; Mark & Sarah, the newlyweds – Caitlin & Adam. We are all excited to share a white Christmas with love and laughter.

We wish you a beautiful 2018 with your family and friends. You are all special and make our little world a wonderful place.



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Germar, Annie & Juniper