

2023...Slipping into Sixty

Rain, rain, snow, snow and more snow. What a year! As we were excited about sharing the Santa Ynez Valley viticultural area with Andi, a monster storm dumped 12 inches of rain in 24 hours and cut off the Santa Barbara area from the rest of the world. While scratching our heads for Plan B, highway 101 opened up! We found Andi at Thousand Oaks and proceeded to wining in the rain.



We finished January in Death Valley for Nic & Barbie's birthday celebration. We bagged a few peaks and enjoyed the varied & extreme geology.



March treated us to exploring the many ways that humans have interacted with

their environments, from the ancient past, into the present. We learned how indigenous Baja people used their habitat for food, medicine, tools, shelter, and ceremony. Agave fibers were used to make bowstrings, brushes, cradles, nets, shoes, skirts, mats, rope, baskets, and snares. We soaked and pounded the leaves to release the fibers that were dried and separated by combing with a seashell. We also made pots with the native clays. Of course, we tried some of the native plants and roots...not sure if we could survive....???? hmmm



In April, we were off to Bavaria...our happy place! Two highschool pals skiing on Zugspitze makes a happy picture and it is endearing to their honeybunches.



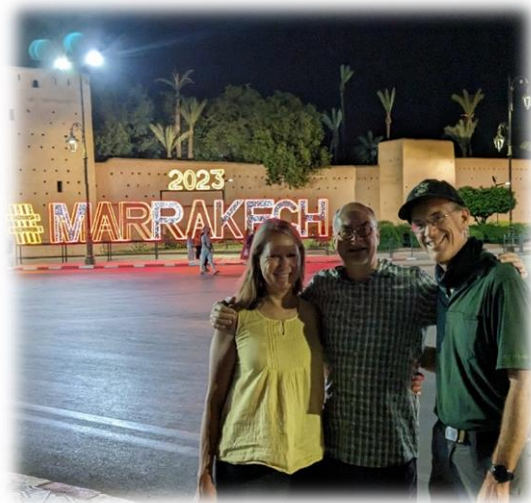


We skied the last days of the season and then skipped over to the Dolomites to finish it off. What else would we do for our 5th 'Alpine' anniversary? We were having so much fun, the ski police escorted us off the mountain to close for the season.

Since we were in the neighborhood, we zipped down to Venice for the ever so romantic gondola ride. No roads, 126 islands in a lagoon, 472 bridges, built on wood pilings, a UNESCO site and in danger with sea level rising due to climate change.



Back to Garmisch and we packed up for Morocco.

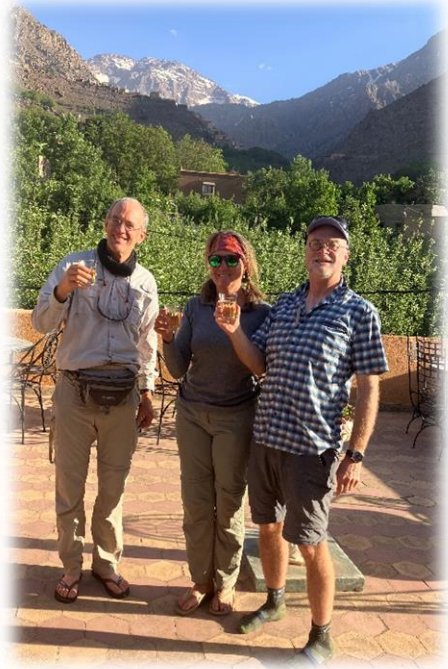


We met Dave in Marrakesh and the slip sliding into 60 began. From the sweet mint tea poured from a great height to the trails of the soaring Atlas, nomads living with their herds, camels

parading thru dramatic dunes & the iconic kasbahs ... Morocco has fascination in all directions.

Toubkal, the highest of the Atlas and northern Africa was first on our agenda. Summiting as the sun rose was a reward in itself, then slip sliding down the snow covered slopes back to Imlil to celebrate our '60' peak.





Morocco is one of two migratory paths for storks. It seemed every stack, transmission tower, kasbah had nests the size of baby buggies with little heads peeping out. One tower had 8 nests!

Monkey Fingers awaited us in the Dades Valley. Sixty shades of orange is the perfect description of the colors of the mountains and the villages. The slot canyons, red stone formations and hidden life in the heart of the desert begged for us to monkey around.





The stunning rose-gold dunes on the edge of the Sahara welcomed 60. After a morning of jumping and rolling in the dunes, we were off to explore. We ventured to visit nomads and enjoyed mint tea poured from a great height. We felt very fortunate for the life we have. As the sun was lowering we jumped on camels and rode into the sunset to our foo foo la la Sahara camp. 60 is surreal.



Out of the desert, and up into the forests of the Middle Atlas, we found more wildlife in Azrou. Even though the Barbary Macaque monkeys are endangered primates, they sure knew how to entertain us in a respectable manner.



Sitting in the middle of a fertile plain, the ruined Roman city Volubilis is the best archeological preservation. The many beautiful mosaics are an amazing feature and in 1997 it was declared a UNESCO site.



Fez Medina, another UNESCO site, is a fortified 220 hectares of homes, businesses, palaces, shops set in a natural basin. The allure, mystery and beauty are certainly due to the architecture. The narrow streets provide protection from the harsh sun and insulation from the cold. No fatties allowed. The widest streets only need to be as wide as two donkeys. The design elements of the architecture have a strong Islamic influence including ornamental calligraphy, elaborate geometric patterns, colorful mosaics & Moorish arches. The artisanship is stunning.



Casablanca awed us with its opulent mosque set on an outcropping jutting into the ocean. It is the epitome of Moroccan artisanship.

The gorgeous crescent lagoon of Oualidia was the source of our seafood delight. The best oysters ever!!!!





Essaouira, our grand finale, brought back memories to Germar's younger windsurfing days. We wandered through the medina, protected by 18th century seafront ramparts, enjoyed our yummy seafood dinner as the sun set over the Atlantic. What more could we ask for?



Back to reality and we were picking up trash along the 395...volunteering for the SD ski club mid-May. Afterwards, with Deborah, we camped in the Trona Pinnacles, a unique geological place, featuring more than 500 tufa spires, some as high as 140 feet. We arrived at a time when a thunderstorm was brewing and suddenly a show with spectacular lighting started around us. If that's how purgatory looks like, we wouldn't mind spending more time in 'tufa villa'.

Idyllwild was our playground in June. While camping and hiking, mother nature put on a flower show taking our breath away. And of course, we also enjoyed our dear Tahquitz fire tower sitting on the peak behind the guys. You are always welcome to visit us at 8850' next year!

Once again, Valle de Guadalupe beckoned for our 14 JUL 'Bavarian' anniversary. We just love the food and the wines. We compare all our culinary experiences to the Valle. The Baja cuisine with the heartbeat of Mexican tradition from the freshness of the sea to the strength of the land, it seems we are forever searching for something comparable. ↓





We finished off July with a new roof & solar installed. We have been thoroughly ecstatic about it. We are able to use the AC now and again! We flipped the switch and jumped on the plane to Munich the next day.

We sandwiched our happy place, Garmisch, with a conference in Munich and a conference in Lyon. We kept our carbon footprint a little bit less dismal than typical by flying across the big pond just once. Even better, we relied entirely on our feet, bikes, and public transportation. It was a good feeling. Our dear San Diego friend Gloria joined us for a few days. We introduced her to Bavaria's pastime: drinking beer, dancing to oompah music, and having a jolly good time. Each day her beer mug got bigger and bigger!!!!



The Bavarian Alps above Garmisch-Partenkirchen with their breathtaking views, handsome cows and fountains with the best spring water make our hearts pitter patter every time.





Andi & Lisa joined us biking, then hiking to Meilerhütte, perched on the crest of Bavaria and Tirol, Austria. They left us to enjoy our perch and the next day we bagged Dreitorspitze on the "via ferrata" trail. We zig zagged between the 2 countries to the peak which is on the border. We photo'd from Austria to Germany! It would be a tad harder to do on the US/Mexican border. We lovingly admired Zugspitze from our vantage point, reminiscing about our wedding 5 years ago already.



Garmisch, with the view of the Wetterstein Mountains is our real glücklicher Ort (happy place). We are always sad to leave. ↓



We soon departed on the bullet train to Lyon. We reached 315 km/h and actually felt it. It was quite thrilling, and our ears were popping as if we were going up a mountain. In Lyon, we rented bikes, took a slower train to the northeast end of Lake Geneva and peddled back to Lyon along the Via Rhôna cycle route. Biking thru the vineyards was surreal, realizing they were there as early as the 12th century, with monks growing grapes within the stonewalled terraces.

At 800 hectares, sprinkled with 14 quaint villages, terrace after terrace offering magnificent views of Lake Geneva, this UNESCO region dappled our cheeks with sunshine as it does the grapes. As we peered across the lake riddled with small ships, the glaciers of Mt Blanc would glisten back at us.



Camping on the edge of the lake, Germar had a déjà vu as we enjoyed the sunset. He was at the same spot with his parents 45 years ago when they were cruising around the lake in their 12 foot dinghy, powered by a 4 hp lawnmower engine. He remembered waking up every hour when a train came by, which sounded like it would roll right over him. Lots of endearing memories overwhelmed him.

We peddled thru the Olympic Museum near Lausanne where Annie tried to keep up with the bicycle racers and Germar was proud to find Garmisch-Partenkirchen on a column commemorating the 4th Winter Olympic Games in history.



As we rode into France, a record-breaking heat wave with temps exceeding 38 °C overwhelmed Germar. He would jump into the Rhône every 2 kilometers to cool off. The scientist in him, was soooooo excited to have an ultraviolet smoothie, his finale to cooling off.



The scenic villages & fields of sunflowers continued to escort us all the way to Lyon.





The photobiology conference in Lyon was quite interesting, although the venue was a bit unsophisticated with the registration and poster session set up in a tent. It turned out that someone had burned down the originally planned venue. The French really have talent in both protesting and improvising! Germar tried to contribute by helping to unhinge the world.

Lyon is the gastronomic capital of the world, thanks to Paul Bocuse. He was the most prominent chef associated with the *nouvelle cuisine*, which is less opulent and calorific than the



traditional *cuisine classique*. (We read that the latter required heavy sauces to mask the smell of rotten meat, which apparently was not unusual before refrigeration became available.) Monsieur Paul, as he is nicknamed, was ubiquitous. Of course, we enjoyed one of his brasseries, the l'Est, which features, as the name implies, cuisine from the east of France. Yummy!

We couldn't leave Lyon without visiting Le Dôme, the most impressive bar in the world. Under its 32 m keystone, the majestic dome & excellent architecture truly impressed us. With 800 years of history, the building started out as a hospital, only permanently closing in

2009! The French do not only like to riot but also take care of their sick and dying!

September brought us back to reality. Germar prepared for his meeting of the Environmental Effects Assessment Panel under the umbrella of the United Nations Environmental Programme. An assessment on "plastics in the environment in the context of UV radiation, climate change and the Montreal Protocol" was finalized. Please do not use single-use plastic bottles!!! The world will love you.

However, the Panel's main accomplishment this year was the publication of their quadrennial assessment, a report of 372 pages and 2197 references (!) which assesses the science of the effects of stratospheric ozone depletion that had accumulated during the preceding 4 years.



Geremar was lead author of two chapters and also coordinated a [Questions and Answers document](#) about the effects of ozone depletion, UV radiation, and climate on humans and the environment. (Click on the hyperlinks if you are intrepid!). The tremendous effort exhausted Geremar and gave Annie time to play. Since we were meeting in Fort Collins, Annie was able to explore the Rockies with Pean and find moose.



Autumn is the time of the year when the desert calls. We have already been treated to a proud bighorn greeting us. Our first sight was from behind. We were quite amazed at his endowment. Geremar is still imagining walking around with so much stuff dangling between his feet!



Geremar enjoyed his birthday in Palm Springs. We stayed at the Monkey Tree Hotel where apparently JFK & Marilyn Monroe did a bit of monkeying around. The hotel brought us back to the 60s and even had a photo booth where annoying monkeys danced on Geremar's bald head. With a few peaklets bagged in between, we also explored the breathtaking contrasts of the indigenous fauna & flora, mostly palms, and the rocky gorges, which the Cahuilla people so expertly used.



The holiday whisked us away to Montaña de Oro with dear Christina. The rugged coastline and bluffs offer a sweet serenity along the Central Coast. It is so sweet, all the monarchs west of the Rockies migrate



annually to overwinter nearby at Pismo Beach.

As we wish you a splendid 2024 full of family, friends, and laughter, always remember that "Happiness held is the seed, Happiness shared is the flower". And Rudolph agrees. We hope to share bunches of happiness with you in 2024!!



Gutes Neues Jahr!!! Geremar, Annie, Tabuki & Juniper