

2022...our Blissful Bubble



2022 popped us back to reality from Costa Rica and into Anza Borrego, our favorite desert. The harsh environment welcomes us each year to enjoy the subtle beauty rich with unique plants and animals adapted so beautifully to their home. The hiking & camp sunsets warmed our senses as we were thrilled to be back into 'desert season'. The big outdoors continued to be our bubble for the 'pandemic with no end'.



Even though the desert is so intriguing, the winters we grew up with called for snow. Thus, February found us on the slopes with Wooley the Mammoth. He has a way of putting humungous smiles on our faces.



March, once again, relegated Gernar to his 'hobbit hole' for a virtual conference of the United Nations Environmental Panel. So...Annie packed her camp gear and headed to Big Sur with pals. It is truly one of the world's most unforgettable coast lines where the allure of rugged cliffs merge with the sea and sky.



Four years of wedded joy swept over us 14 APR. We escaped to a small AVA in SoCal...San Pasqual Valley. Wow...what a pleasant surprise. The views and wines put us a million miles from San Diego.

And then we were off to Germany. We determined the best way to get over jet lag was to hit the slopes of Zugspitze with a nap in between.



While Gernar was schmoozing with colleagues at a trade show in Munich, Annie enjoyed 'Frühling'. The crisp air turned to sunny days and awakening from winter, the flowery rainbow of colors kept a pep in her step exploring.

Then it was May Day!!! Every village celebrates around the May Pole as it is erected. The village cheers at each cm of progress and of course 'prost' as the 36 m high Maibaum rises. Teamwork beyond comprehension!





Austria beckoned for Annie's birthday. Up, up and up until we reached Vorderkaiserfeldenhütte at 1388m within the Kaiser Mountains. The 59th trip around the sun finale was spectacular as peaks called for the big day.



A few more days of Bavarian biking bliss and then we were flying back across the pond.



The Memorial holiday had us packing our backpacks and heading over Kearsage Pass in the Sierra with Michele & Raul. We enjoyed a lazy weekend, as Plans A, B & C were full of snow.





June found us back on duty at Tahquitz Fire Lookout. Kirk visited us and he was indoctrinated as an Ancient & Honorable Order of the Squirrels. Visit us next year and you too can become an Honorable Squirrel. :0)

4 JUL came around and the Sierras beckoned again. Banner Peak guarding 1000 Island Lake was our backdrop for Camp 1. We bagged Mt Davis from there and packed south to Iceberg Lake and then Cabin Lake. The stunning beauty can only be seen to be understood as it puts life in perspective.



The Green River enters into a deep canyon at the northern tip of Dinosaur NP. Rafting the Gates of Lodore thrilled us with rapids, great fun with Diana, Lily and geology pals, capsizing, admiring pictographs, and wondering how John Wesley Powell's party explored the Great Unknown in their 4 wooden boats.



Kiwis, Richard & Louise, were in San Fran visiting their grandbabies. Of course, we had to zip up and visit. Richard is **THE** responsible party of Gernar being in San Diego, thus us being 'happily ever after'. We love you two!!





Germar's annual meeting of "his" UNEP panel assessing the environmental effects of ozone depletion happened in Kalmar, Sweden. We arrived a few weeks early and explored the beautiful country from the bottom to the top in September. Kayaking the Sankt Anna Archipelago within the Baltic Sea was more than we ever imagined. It is a maze of 6000 islands, islets, skerries and just as many swans.

The surreal quiet, orange and pink sunsets, mirrored in the still water made us feel like tiny specks. After all, the 2 billion year old gneiss and granite dramatically displayed the sculpture of the massive ice sheet of the last ice age. Our hardest day paddling was when the mainland was in sight knowing the end was near, and Sea Eagles watched us from their perches.



Our pure nature exposure continued. In the middle of a spruce forest, on Lake Skärsjön, Kolarbyn (charcoal village) welcomed us. Charcoaling is an old-fashioned method of producing charcoal in kilns for the extraction of iron. The people in Skinnskatteberg have done it for more than 400 years. The sod-covered huts used by the 'fire watchers' to observe their kiln became our romantic hut. Germar felt like





a caveman: chopping wood, sleeping on reindeer furs, carrying water from the spring, and cooking breakfast with the fruits of our labor. The blueberries we gathered enroute from the lakeside sauna to our romantic hut were delectable in our morning pancakes.

Work for the UNEP Panel has no end. Annie built a 'camp office' and Germar enjoyed the set up of precision cut logs. (Kelly, thanks again for my awesome hat!)



Heading north, we stopped to construct a raft of timber logs, floated down the Klaralven River, and camped on its shores. Germar went from caveman to Tom Sawyer. This went very well until the next morning when we discovered that the level of the river fell by a foot over night and our 1.5-ton raft was now sitting on a sand bank. It took us 3 hours prying the monster off the bank, inch by inch.



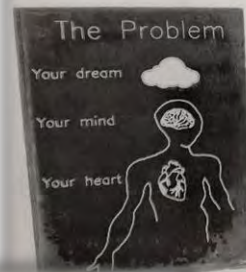


Soon after, we were heading north, past the Arctic Circle and reindeer herds. Kebnekaise, Sweden's highest mountain, was calling us. We first had to hike for 20 km through stunning forests, beaming in fall colors of orange and red, to a luxurious mountain hut (sadly, many people came by helicopter).

Early the next day, rain turned into snow, which turned into a blizzard, which turned into a white out. The summit was near, as we turned back, rationalizing that standing on a cornice with a 1000 foot drop on the other side in zero visibility is not brilliant. 15 hours after our departure, we were rewarded with a reindeer stew, washed down with a bottle of superb French wine.



Since we didn't freeze to death on Kebnekaise, we challenged our luck once more by staying in *the* Icehotel. Each room has varying artwork carved into blocks of ice cut from the nearby Torne River. Our room theme was simple yet profound...? It was decorated with a heart and a brain, which was a tad weird considering Germar's medical history. But we slept very well pondering our problems and solutions in our comfy -20°C sleeping bags.



Finally, we headed south for Garmar to attend his UNEP meeting. On the way we stopped in Gävle, visiting Teresia and Pontus, our new friends from Kolarbyn. We were welcomed with a Swedish feast that we will never forget. Thank you again!



While Garmar and his colleagues were finalizing a gigantic 600+ page report on the interactive effects of ozone depletion and climate change on human health and the environment (due for publication in February), Annie explored beautiful Kalmar and mingled with the local wildlife.



Last stop...Garmisch. The Wenzel Bunch soon ambushed us. Full of fun, we headed up Eckbauer for Regine's birthday hike.



Alpspitz and Zugspitz, bathed by the morning sun when we awoke bid us goodbye. The stunning view welcomes us and bids us goodbye each time. It is always sad to leave, especially for Garmar!





Back home, reality hit us on the nose! A geology field trip to Lake Havasu, complete with burros, helped us to adjust.



And then we were back on duty again in November. This time it was Morton fire tower. Smokey Bear was very happy to see us again! Come visit us next year.

We celebrated our 168th kissaversary in Mexico, starting at our favorite hotel in Ensenada. We continued to the Valle de Guadalupe where we ran into an old friend who welcomed us barrel-tasting in his wine cellar. Very special!



Finally, our guest bath remodel started. We ordered a new window in Nov 2021, but the world has its own serious issues affecting our schedules. Sorry, no bidet, butt we still hope you visit.

Geremar's birthday was on the slopes of Big Bear with our dear friends Autumn and Stephen. The snow was made by snow canons, but it still felt like winter. The caveman was now an ecstatic Bavarian.

Apart from contributing for the UNEP panel, Geremar still works for Biospherical Instruments and is currently developing technology to prevent the growth of biological matter on instruments that are left in the ocean for months on end. This keeps him very busy, and he hopes that the new method will be a game changer for doing long-term research.



And now as the holidays give us time to reflect, we are so grateful that you are in our life! Family and friends make our happy world go around. We wish you Frohe Weihnachten und ein gutes neues Jahr!



Annie, Geremar, Juniper and Tabuki

