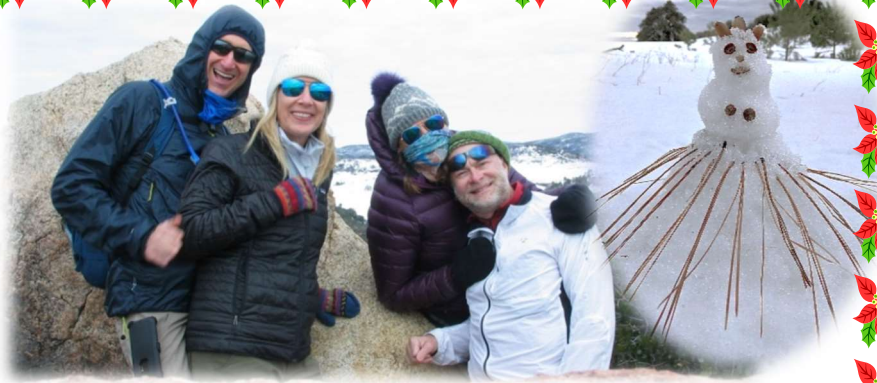


# 2021 Quarantine Quandary

Another year of COVID whizzed by, enticing us again to indulge in the Big Outdoors – our happy place!



Snowy hikes with Stephen & Autumn, biking, and backpacking filled up January. Being one snow-gal-distance apart continued to be the norm.

The Anza Borrego Desert called us in February with bagging peaks, sunrise coffees & sunset wines. The tranquility of the desert brought peacefulness to our souls as the cotton candy pink and blue skies slid us into the feeling of being in a Vintage Lexus commercial.



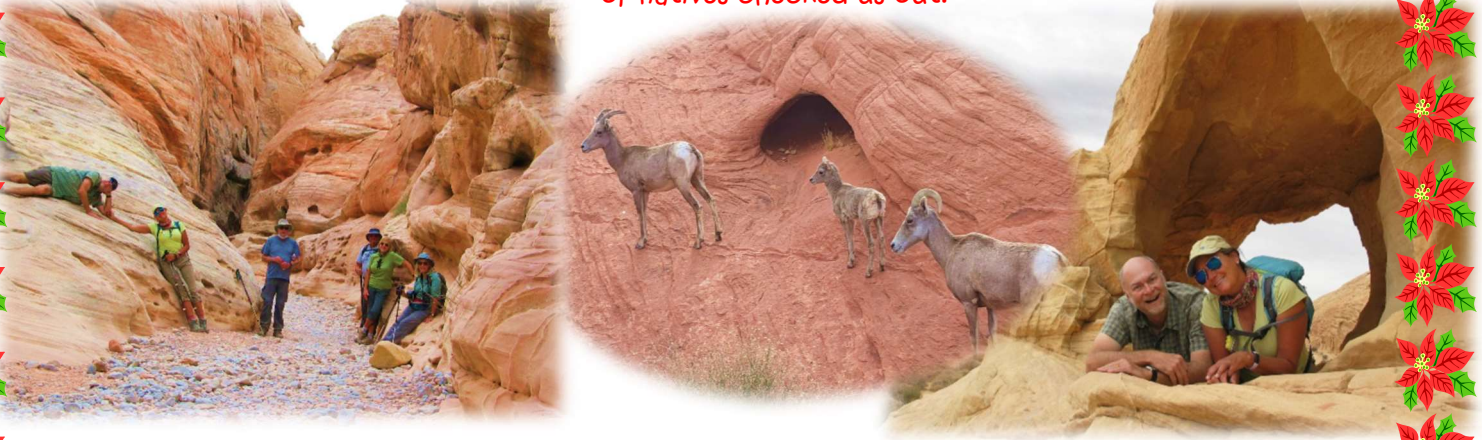
Southern Nevada dazzled six of us with a small engineering feat in March. We stood on the Hoover Dam and looked into Black Canyon while Lake Mead was struggling to be a lake behind us. The lake is at its lowest since it was being filled in the 1930's. Please send rain!!!



However, we were glad that there was not a flashflood when we were exploring Red Rock Canyon and Germar got stuck.



We equally enjoyed the geology of the Valley of Fire north of Las Vegas and were thrilled when a herd of natives checked us out.



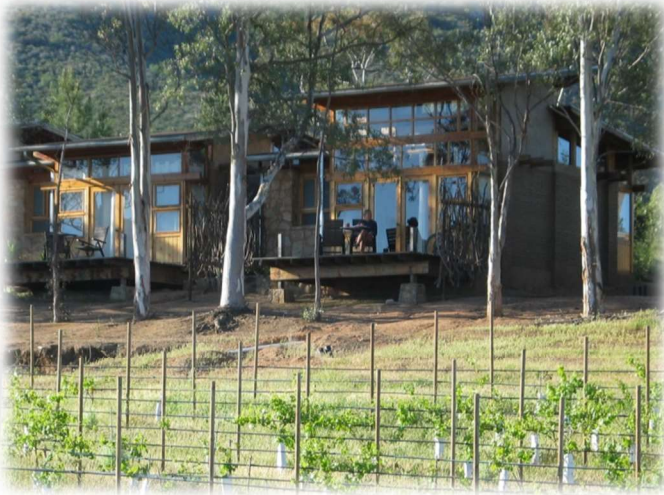
March faded into April with three friends and us camping in the mountains of Ojai. Stunning cascades, refreshing vinos, and hydrating waterfalls led us forget COVID.



And then our world changed. We were vaccinated!!! Wow...what a feeling. The magic of Baja was calling. The sprawling hectares of vines in Valle de Guadalupe tantalized our senses as we reflected on our past 3 years of married bliss.



Nestled in the foothills, our Cabin was our base for exploring the culinary orgasm that the Valle offers, peddling on our mountain bikes from winery to eatery.



May offered a birthday biking expedition on Catalina Island. 19 miles from Avalon, we pitched our tent at Little Harbor for a few days.



Exploring, we reveled in the serenity of private beaches and the huge Critters enroute.





The mountains were calling, and we had to go. Five of us filled our backpacks and were off to bag Olancha Peak in the Sierras for Memorial Weekend. The stock camp at Summit Creek (what creek???) was our home for a few days. For more than a century, ranchers would drive their cattle and sheep into the Sierra Nevada and nearby Monache Meadows. Kirk recalls his great granddad used to come up here to hunt deer. We saw no deer but chunks of meat, bones and fur that once belonged to a deer. And when Kirk reported that he

was stalked by a mountain lion while using the facilities, we felt a jolt of adrenaline.

The ranchers left a tub behind, so of course we were obligated to jump in and reminisce of our first kiss 150 months ago. (The kiss that changed our world happened shortly after sitting in a similar tub hidden in the Arizona mountains.)

Round Mountain offered us a relaxing hike to stretch our legs and reflect upon yesterday.



Olancha

The Sierra mountains continued to call. We grabbed the last permit available for the 4 July holiday. We ventured up and over Duck Pass to Purple Lake complete with our very own beach & waterfall. Of course, we had to bag Pika Peak to take a look around.



Pika

The mountains continued to call, so we packed our bags and flew to the Upper Bavarian Alps. COVID was in a significant lull in Bavaria & we felt extremely safe! It was great to be back in the most gloriously beautiful countryside of Europe. Andi greeted us at the Munich airport as we tore off our masks after 30 hours. He and Lisa treated us to our welcome Brotzeit. In Garmisch, we hopped on our



mountain bikes and let the mountain air fill our lungs with happiness. Up 2700' to Esterbergalm and Gernar's beloved cows. Of course, we gobbled up proper Bavarian fare at the hut.



Markus was our tour guide for our Walgau ride, up 5200' on our bio-bikes while he la-la-la-ed on his e-bike. He enjoyed a refreshing cold beer on top, but we could have devoured a cow!



Our bikes needed a rest, so we donned our backpacks, bagged Hoher Fricken, had close encounters with 25 salamanders frolicking in the rain, and spent the night at Weilheimer Hutte. We confirmed that Bavaria is one of the most beautiful places in the world.



Next stop was with Thomas & Martina at their mountain hut below Heuberg. Thomas and Gernar reminisced about Croatia where they first met in the 70's.



A visit to Bavaria is never complete unless we have a family gathering. Of course, Gernar enjoys entertaining the 6 grandkids of Fritz & Gabi.

Our San Diego friends Ron & Ute (originally from Hessen) were in Germany also. They stopped by for a Bavarian Brotzeit at Gernar's house in Garmisch and a hike. It was super fun to share our chunk of paradise with San Diego pals.





We had a bit of investigating to do. We will just say we have a brewery in the family!

And then the Wenzel bunch ambushed us. We went up with the Eckbauer Bahn to the fairytale scenery below the Alpispitz. We met Peter & Regine in Switzerland in 2011 on the Walker's Haute Route. Two boys later, Garmisch has become their summer playground during COVID. We were thrilled that our schedules overlapped!



Our dear San Diego friends Diana and Lowell, plus their daughter Jen and husband Edo happened to be in Südtirol in Italy to embark on their holiday hike in the Dolomites while we were still in Germany. So we zipped down to Bozen to share their excitement.



Two days later, we had to don our masks again for 30 odd hours to get back to San Diego.





September found Germar relegated to his home office as his annual meeting with the United Nations Environmental Effects Assessment Panel was moved from Sweden to Zoom. He was in the coffee mode at 4 AM for a few weeks while those on the other side of the planet were in wine mode. The meeting was successful, but there is nothing like face-to-face interactions. Fingers and toes are crossed for Sweden next year!

While Germar tried to stay awake, Annie escaped to Washington. The majestic beauty and power of Mt Rainier left Kelly & Annie in awe and feeling miniscule in this world. The sunset from Fremont fire tower was flanked by the grandeur of Rainier. The pristine wilderness is a treasure to share with a dear friend!



The melting of the glaciers on Rainier was an astonishing sight. And then, when climbing Mt Baker, it was in our faces. We should have been camping on snow!!

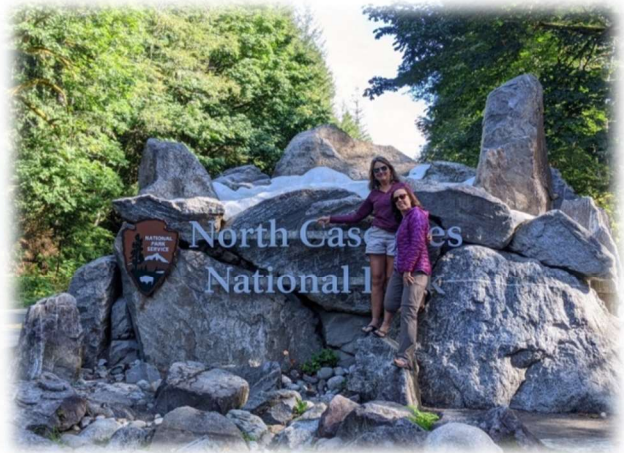




The summer heat dome was unprecedented and 'hammered' the glaciers. The headwall to the Easton glacier was almost unrecognizable to the locals. The scenery was stunning, yet there were creeks running on top of the ice. But hanging out in a crevasse in the midst of dark blue ice was beyond spectacular and the sunset over Puget Sound was surreal.



Off to the Northern Cascades and ready for more wonder, Lidija & Annie followed the Skagit River through the mountains to Lidija's world. The jagged peaks crowned by more than 300 dwindling glaciers beckoned.



It was a special treat to have Alan join us, too. Looking at the beauty of the Northern Cascades, we completely understand why our pals moved to Washington.



October treated us to Santa Lucia Highlands enroute to Pinnacles National Park. The sweeping views enveloped with fall colors made the wine taste even more exceptional :o)

The movement of the Pacific plate along the San Andreas fault created the wonderland of spectacular Pinnacles NP, which became a perfect backdrop for an apish Halloween with Ellie and Carlos.



The Valle de Guadalupe was calling again. The wine, the food....OMG!!! We celebrated Thanksgiving with Barbara + Danny and did not think of turkey one wee bit. Mountain biking from winery to winery made us feel a bit less guilty as we indulged!!



Lower latitudes enticed us for the December holidays. We envisioned camping on the beach, monkeys, windsurfing, and happy people, so we decided to explore Costa Rica! This explains why we are behind the rest of the world's schedule with our happy and healthy wishes for the new year to you!

As soon as we figured out the respectable care and feeding of "Bego" (gasoline in a vinegar bottle bought in desperation at a roadside Café), we were on our way.

Bego was small but mighty. We opted for taking the adventuresome way for getting to the Oso Peninsula. We first embarked on a tiny two-car ferry across a river at Sierpe. Then we were on our own. Up (full throttle in 1<sup>st</sup> gear at 2000 RPM)

and down and through rivers, always trusting that we were still on the road to Drake Bay, because there was no road on any map! We made it safely (only Bego's license plate got bent in a river crossing) and took a panga to Corcovado, the most biologically intense place on our planet in terms of biodiversity. It contains 3% of the world's biodiversity within 164 square miles. We were greeted by collared peccaries right off the boat,

entertained by boisterous spider monkeys, squirrel monkeys, howler monkeys and

endearingly Cappuccinos (Capuchin monkeys), and serenaded by numerous birds as we hiked through the impenetrable jungle.

not see her, and suddenly she jumped out of her murky puddle and leaped at us, missing us only by two feet before her incisors got stuck in the mud. Our hearts were pitter patter, Germar was happy to still have two legs & his Bavarian sausage, and our guide was delighted not having to fill out tons of embarrassing paperwork.



Looking forward to cooling off, we headed up to San Gerardo de Rivas, the gateway to Cerro Chirripo at 4,593' ASL. The cool cloud forest dominated the landscape, and then gave way to "paramo", a unique ecosystem only found at high altitudes in Central America.



Crestones Base Camp at 11,155' ASL was our place for a short night. We got up at 3 AM on Christmas eve and were on the trail to Cerro Chirripo, at 12,533' the top of Costa Rica, to watch the sunrise. It was a rewarding, memorable spectacle!

We were ready for balmy days again and headed for the ocean. We woke to quietness before half the population of Costa Rica flocked to the beach to enjoy Christmas day.



Germar is used to skiing on Christmas day, not to go for a swim below palm trees. It was a Christmas to remember!!!!



A promise of windsurfing lured Germar to Costa Rica in the first place. Lago Arenal, the largest lake in Costa Rica, idyllically situated below Volcan Arenal and offering consistent 20-30 knot winds, was calling him. Peter & Christl from Bavaria have been operating a windsurf station there for 30 years. Germar knew Christl when he was still in Garmisch. The world is small! Being together for New Year's Eve with Walchensee stories was super fun and we could not have planned anything better!



The Bavarian had never been to the Caribbean, so we enjoyed the wildness of the Caribbean waves and camped with a sloth family on our last day before heading back to San Diego.



2021 was a great year in our little bubble. Life was simple and refreshing, although we missed birthday celebrations, graduations and wine dinners. We have fingers, toes and eyeballs crossed that the days of roaring parties will soon return.

We wish you a healthy, fun-filled, happy 2022, full of love. We look forward to sharing happy times with you soon. You are special and our world is a wonderful place because of you!!

*Pura Vida!!!*

*Annie, Germar,*



*Chinquapin, the gentleman*

*and*

*Juniper, the rascal.*

