



## Happy Holidays To All

Merry Christmas – Happy Hanukkah – Happy New Year  
Good Bye 2010! Hello 2011!!

Dear Friends and Family,

We're tempted to say it was the best of years and the worst. But that wasn't the truth. We have no reason to plagiarize Dickens. It was just somewhere in between, which means just great. That means that while we did have minor aches and pains (more below) we've had none of the major illnesses and problems to be feared at our age.

We're also tempted, again inspired by Dickens, to say our 2010 was a tale of four cities: Christchurch, Tokyo, Brussels, and Vienna, as we had a house or apartment in all four. But that wouldn't be right either. We left our comfortable Christchurch digs on January 6 (2010 – *bien sur*) so it hardly counts for 2010. And while we did have very nice stays in Tokyo (1.5 months), Brussels (3.5 months), and Vienna (1.0 months) these home-stays only account for less than half the year. Even if we include our three weeks in Darlington that only gets us up to just half the year.

The other half of our year was spent in wanderlust, already much reported on our web site ([www.chandlerbates.net](http://www.chandlerbates.net)) so we don't need to go into it much here. We've posted 65 of what we modestly call our best photos of us in 2010 at

[www.chandlerbates.net/~YIR/YIR2010/YIR2010-Trav/1nzF.html](http://www.chandlerbates.net/~YIR/YIR2010/YIR2010-Trav/1nzF.html).

After leaving Christchurch we wandered about New Zealand's South Island for six weeks and then the north Island for four weeks. It didn't happen but we learned much later that we might have bumped into our friends the Martins from York, if luck and chance had worked out differently. Besides all of the great natural sites we visited and people we met perhaps the most enduring memory is of how easily we sold our van. We got up one morning about 200 km south of Auckland and three hours later it was sold to a young German couple, Kai and Jasmine, who themselves had only been in country about 12 hours. Last we heard they were still happily driving it.

From Auckland we went on to Tokyo where we stayed in a communal apartment belonging to a Kiwi. As good luck would have it we sealed the deal by visiting him in Auckland; he was there for a wedding but lives in Japan. Carry-aways from Tokyo are the interesting memories of the other residents in the

apartment, the wonderful cherry blossoms we found all over Tokyo, the great pleasure we had biking around with our locally bought used bicycles, and a few amusing hours spent helping an 80-year-old retiree practice his English.

From Tokyo it was off to – well, before we got to Japan we were mostly focused on Hokkaido, which we had never been to. But in the end spring temperatures kept us in central Japan even though we had visited it twice before and thought we sort of knew it. But we had forgotten much and discovered much more. and all was so pleasurable we want to go back soon. We discovered Nagoya and think it should be on everybody's map; highlights were a day of Noh drama and religious ceremonies we not only watched but were right in the midst of. We stayed in a temple in Takayama and an inn in Kanazawa, but our favorite was far and away Kyoto, which we'd completely forgotten and got to know again, this time in depth. Last but not least, we walked and bussed to about 1/3 of the temples on the Henro trail on Shikoku island; thanks to being invited by Murato San, we had a full day's instruction on how to be a proper pilgrim.

We got to Brussels on July 1, Gerry hoping against hope that his right leg would recover from a strained ligament quickly enough to allow us to carry out our plan to bicycle from Brussels to Copenhagen. Almost a year earlier, when we had left Europe for NZ, it was his left-leg that made him limp; over the course of six months it finally got better; and then as we were about to leave Japan the combined effect of over-bicycling in Tokyo and enthusiastic overuse of his right leg climbing temple steps, made it go weak at the knee and around the ham string. After three weeks in Brussels it was obvious that a full recovery was still weeks away. Bicycling would be crazy.

So at the last minute we looked for something to do. We had great luck, finding an apartment quite close to the center of Vienna. Because Ryan Air flew that way, we took it to Bratislava and had a great four days there. It's an easy, one-hour train ride to Vienna. On the return from Vienna, going back to the airport, we got our most enduring memory of this charming town: Gerry was pick-pocketed. The monetary loss was small but unfortunately his driver's license went and has still not been replaced.

Vienna itself blew our minds. Gerry had been there for two nights in 1970 and we were there together for just one night in 1975 so you could hardly say we knew the place. What a wonderful mixture of kitsch – that undoubtedly is what any architect born after 1850 would feel – and elegance. Bauhaus fans notwithstanding, we love the architecture and decorative arts of the late baroque period and so we love Vienna. From Vienna we got out of town twice, once for a weekend to visit Jane and Ingo, the first an old Bradford friend not seen since 1994. Vienna had two other surprise connections: we rented from an Austrian woman (married to an Indian man) living in Nagoya! And the wonderful Vienna art museum was filled with Flemish paintings, giving us an early introduction to an art world we would soon explore in depth.

Our return to Brussels started a wonderful three-month stint house-sitting for our friends Anna and Steve while they jetted off to Australia to visit family. It was a stay that was full of nostalgia: Nostalgia for the days when we owned our own comfortable family house with large garden and for all the tasks large and small that go with it. Since we were there during the late summer and fall, we got to practice our raking and mowing. And nostalgia also for Jan's university days because in Brussels we met up with two other Bradford graduates and got to meet their respective wives and catch up on their life for the past forty years.

Of course we spent a lot of time getting to know Brussels, not least its lovely art nouveau houses scattered throughout the city and its stunning Flemish art in the Royal Fine Arts Museum. We got

annual membership of the latter so that we could (and did) go back several times. We made regular outings to the nearby village of Tervuren with its Royal African Museum and superb gardens and park. It was Jan's favourite destination for bike rides. We also got introductions to Antwerp and Ghent, lovely Flemish cities with old churches packed with great art to admire. A real feast for the eyes. And then of course there were the mussels and the chocolates, the chocolates and the mussels. There was other stuff too, but the mussels and chocolates were definitely the stars.

Besides Gerry's right leg mostly recovering Jan had a miracle of her own: Hats off to Anna, who recommended her foot doctor. After some annoying delays Jan received the shoe inserts she ordered and consequently felt reborn. Rather than having to give up after a few hours walking she can now keep up with Gerry for the whole day.

As we were about to leave Brussels for Darlington winter hit Europe with a vengeance; we spent the night before wondering if our train would go. It did but for a TGV rather slowly; even the engine conked out and had to be replaced. We got to London an hour late and our connecting train was cancelled.

But we made it to Darlington, took up residence in our own place (also half-owned by Jan's brother who is currently working in China) and again experienced home owner chores, mostly liking them because they were novelties. That includes shovelling the snow off the front and back walk, snow that resulted from one of Britain's coldest ten days in decades. Besides re-connecting with the very large Bates tribe that we know and love we've just met our sixth grand-nephew on Jan's side, all of 14 weeks old. That's right six of them and all boys.

After a three-week stay in Darlo it was off to London for the holiday season and end of the year celebrations with friends. It was literally past the last moment that we knew we were going: The icy-conditions were so bad that Heathrow was mostly closed and the trains serving our part of the country were entirely closed. But we'd elected for a long distance bus and, after much doubt about its whereabouts, it picked us up 30 minutes late and took us to a London still somewhat snow-shocked.

Once we leave here – weather permitting, of course – we'll begin a whole new adventure with a flight to Florence, Italy, where we are renting an apartment until the end of March. That will be followed – what was the phrase? “Hope springs ...” – if legs permit, by a bike tour around Italy or Sicily (that's almost Italy) or somewhere else. But that will be the topic of next year's letter. For now it is time to

***Wish you all a most happy, successful,  
and most of all healthy year in 2011.***



***Jan and Gerry***  
*December 2010*