

We had a quiet year this year and mostly stayed home, but we did a little travel.

After another winter in Apache Junction, AZ., we came back to our home in Oregon in late April. We hit the ground running, spending our days catching up on home maintenance and syncing up with our friends.

Some of our efforts this past year involved working with the Hillsboro Clean Water Services to remove invasive species of plants from our back yard and getting our property certified as a natural habitat area.

As usual, we spent time in the motorhome enjoying the Oregon parks from the ocean to the mountains.

In September, we left for a sea / land tour of Alaska and the Yukon on Holland America. The cruise left out of Vancouver, BC and set into Alaska's capital of Juneau. After exploring Juneau, we took an excursion to Mendenhall glacier and visited some early pioneer landmarks.

We reboarded the ship and left for Skagway with some sightseeing along the way, then set into port. At this point, we left the ship behind for the land portion of our tour. We boarded the Whitepass and Yukon railroad in Skagway which climbed high into the mountains looking down on the valley from rails that cling to the mountainsides and going through narrow tunnels, finally stopping in Fraser, BC. There we moved to a tour bus to travel to Whitehorse, the capitol of the Yukon Territory.

After a self-guided tour of Whitehorse and a trip to Tim Horton's for coffee, we left for Dawson City in the far north. Dawson City was ground zero of the 1898 gold rush, and gold mining continues at an industrial enterprise in the area. It was home to writers Jack London and Pierre Berton as well as poet Robert Service during that period. Permafrost runs 30 feet deep, so streets are not paved and buildings are elevated off the ground so as not to melt the ground underneath, which would result in structures sinking.

In Dawson, there is a tradition called the Sourtoe Challenge. A preserved toe lost by a miner to frostbite a long time ago is placed in a glass of whiskey, and the challenge is to drink that glass of whiskey in one go allowing the toe to touch your lips. Believe it or not, Janet took the challenge and got the certificate to prove it.

From Dawson City, we flew to Fairbanks, where we tried our hand at panning for gold and got a close up look at the Alaska pipeline. The following day we took a tour bus to Denali National Park and spent 2 days touring around America's highest mountain. After Denali, we took a beautiful scenic rail trip to Alaska's largest city, Anchorage. From there, we flew home.

As we've gotten older, we have encountered some health problems. John had to be admitted to the hospital overnight with bleeding stomach ulcers and had suffered blood loss. However, after medical attention and a change in diet, he is doing well.

As for future travel plans, we have a cruise scheduled for most of April. This cruise will take us first to Mexico, then out to sea to sit directly in the path of a total eclipse on April 8<sup>th</sup>. After that, it sails to Hawaii and visits several islands, and from there to Victoria, BC on Vancouver Island, and then finally ends in Vancouver, BC.

Videos and additional pictures of our Alaska trip are on our website at [www.majorspain.com](http://www.majorspain.com)

Here's wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Please keep in touch.

John and Janet Spain

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Janet examining Jack London's cabin in Dawson City



Mendenhall glacier outside of Juneau



Dirt streets of Dawson



Alaska pipeline outside of Fairbanks



Alaska scenery from the train to Fairbanks



Our ship, the Holland America Koningsdam