



# Happy Holidays!

*Our travels this year began in early April with our first visit back to Austin in seven years. Along the way we stopped in McKinney, TX to visit friends Dave & Sara. We got to see one of the fastest-growing cities in the US and zoom along the freeways in their new Tesla Model 3. Once in Austin, we were delighted to find that the annual wildflowers were still putting on quite a show. We headed out into the Texas Hill Country to revisit places we knew would have great flowers. We enjoyed seeing many of our old friends and haunts but just didn't have time to do everything and visit with everyone.*



*On the way back to Greenville we stopped for two nights in the French Quarter in New Orleans. We didn't realize that that weekend was the annual French Quarter Fest which included many music stages and a great variety of music. We had a good time and, of course, had beignets at the Café Du Monde and several dozen oysters along with other NOLA foods.*

*In mid-July we drove to northern Michigan. We toured around the Upper Peninsula and spent a wonderful day on Mackinac Island. The weather was beautiful although the ferry ride to the island was a bit windy/chilly. We took a carriage tour of the island which has no motorized vehicles (at right). We intend to return and actually stay at one of the hotels on the island.*



*The real purpose of the trip was to visit John's college friends, Steven and Shelley. They have a beautiful summer condo overlooking Lake Michigan at Glen Arbor, close by the Sleeping Bear National Seashore. We enjoyed the area and the chance to catch up on each other's lives.*

*August saw us travelling to Pittsburgh for the wedding of our nephew, Ben, and Sarah. Their reception was in the Science Center which is next door to Heinz Field where a Steelers pre-season game was in progress. We also saw a Pirates game at PNC Park but left a few innings early when the score was 11-0 in favor of the Nationals. We had a wonderful night for dinner at our favorite restaurant, Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, which is atop Mt. Washington overlooking downtown Pittsburgh (at right).*



*August also saw us doing our annual visit to our timeshare on Sanibel Island, FL. This year was much improved over last year as the red tide had subsided and we were able to walk the beach without dodging dead fish.*

*To celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in October, we booked a seven day Viking river cruise on the Rhone in France. We flew into Marseille and were transported to board our Long Ship at Avignon. Unlike our trip on the Danube last year, the water levels were sufficient that we were able to cruise all the way to Lyon as planned. We had perfect weather and enjoyed the Roman ruins in the lovely town of Arles (the "Pearl of Provence") where Van Gogh resided for two years and did over 300 paintings, the Pont d'Avignon bridge (at right) and Palace of the*



*Popes in Avignon, a steam train ride in Tournon, many cathedrals, and the vineyards that line the river. We took a tour to a Beaujolais winery tour outside of Lyon, a city that we traversed many times over two days. Every town had a walking excursion that allowed us to see the quaint streets of these ancient areas.*

*As part of the cruise package, we opted for a three day extension in Paris. The TGV high-speed rail took us from Lyon to Paris and made us wish that the US had such trains. Although we encountered a bit of rain during our stay, we walked all over Paris and took the Metro a few times. While it wasn't possible to get tickets to the Louvre on short notice, we were able to get into two small art museums that had many Impressionist works. The Paris Opera House was a marvel of opulence built by Napoleon III. It was sad to see Notre Dame in its current condition. We did not ascend the Eiffel Tower or the Arc de Triomphe. We also took a side excursion to the Palace of Versailles (at right) which is just amazing in every way.*



*In October Jane and three of her girlfriends rendezvoused in Nashville for several days. They had tickets for performances at the Ryman auditorium and the famous Bluebird Café. They also visited the Grand Ole Opry.*

*We are still fully enjoying life in downtown Greenville. We walk to restaurants, theaters, and baseball games as well as getting in our 10,000 steps most days. We continue to take classes with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute program at Furman University.*

*We wish you and your family health and happiness for 2020. Have a great holiday season!*

*Jane & John*

