

I WILL HONOUR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

AS WE HONOUR CHRISTMAS 2024 IN OUR HEARTS, WE THINK FONDLY OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU AND THE PERSONALITY TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO RECEIVE THE 32ND ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE INGLIS NEWSLETTER.



Ian is not normally a sadistic person, but this year he planned two 8-week trips: Two people who've been together 50 years confined in a 6-foot-square front seat or a 50-foot-square trailer — for 56 days straight. Twice in one year. What could possibly go wrong?



Driving down the east side of the peninsula on Highway 5, the Sea of Cortez changed from



a beautiful sky blue to aquamarine. Cocktail hour in our chairs on the San Felipe beach, watching the sun set in a pink sky behind two beautiful peaks — this is the life!

Ouch, American, not Mexican, prices in Baja. And we're driving 2,000 miles at \$8-10 USD per gallon of gas?!

Around the time Ian drove into Baja California Sur, I was peacefully dozing when suddenly **KA-BOOM!!!!** Precious had run the truck over a gigantic, deep, VISIBLE pothole. When we arrived at our campsite, imagine our wonder and surprise to find the bathroom door off its broken hinges.

So much for our bathroom door, which now resides in **Guerrero Negro**.



In **Laguna Ojo de Liebre**, we watched the massive gray whales (exoskeleton below) play and dance like svelte dolphins. We also met the delightful Cristina and Erwin from Switzerland.



In 1728, **San Ignacio's** historic mission was constructed with an amazing canal system all around the area. In our campground you heard birds singing and pruned palm fronds swaying in the breeze.



In Mulegé, on the Sea of Cortez, tall, thick gorgeous hedges of bougainvillea grew everywhere. Lots of large birds soared close to the water along the boardwalk.

Baja has frequent military checkpoints, so we developed a routine: Ian rolls down his and Walter's windows. In my innocent, elderly, squeaky, gringa Spanish I greet the trying-to-look-tough officers. When they see Walter, they break into smiles exclaiming, "¡Mira las pestañas!" They couldn't get over Walter's eyelashes. After admiring Walter, some taking pictures, they'd wave us on.

On to **Loreto**, home to a stunning UNESCO World Heritage esplanade. The couple next to our camper (who supplied me with "G&Ts") kayak out to an island early and stay overnight, eating the fish they catch for dinner. You meet the most interesting people when RVing, like this one with the three-legged dog. We ran into her again at La Paz.

Surprise! Our friends Cristina and Erwin showed up! One night, upon Ian and Erwin's return from drinking beer on the plaza, a happy black lab approached Ian. Lovestruck, the lab began relentlessly humping Ian (wish I coulda seen it!) Ian finally shooed him away with his leg at which time he thought he saw the dog lick a sore spot. When he got home, he was seriously convinced he was going to die of rabies.



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That seemed ludicrous to me, but being the excellent person that I am, we went to the hospital next day, where we were in and out in no time after they explained to my satisfaction in understandable Spanish why he wouldn't have been infected. I knew that wouldn't satisfy Ian, so surprise! A few days later we're back in the hospital where we heard the same song, second verse (duh). After much effort rationalizing by me, *hello — the nurse!*, he calmed down a bit. It was weeks before he no longer mentioned it.

Ciudad Constitución. Beautiful weather, so as usual, the first thing we do is throw open all the windows. Ah, heaven! That is, for five minutes until the ceiling and walls suddenly were covered black with flies. No big deal, we'll leave the windows open so they can fly out when they get bored.

But nooo. Precious commenced to furiously swat, thus not making the slightest dent in the little darlings, but *definitely* making fly-gut marks all over the ceiling and walls (none of which he saw.) "Quick! Put the shades down!!"

"Why?!?" I asked, enraged. Answer: "So no more can get in!" And *that*, my friends, became the *worst* argument we had in all of 2024.

The next day we hauled ass out of there for **La Paz.** Our campground, Maranafa, was run by missionaries, and was as wonderful as Constitución was horrible. We ran into Cristina and Erwin again at a beach here!

Next stop: **Los Cerritos**, a quaint town just north of Cabo San Lucas at the tip of the peninsula. That beach was clear, more green than blue, had great waves, and out by a rock outcropping tons of terrific surfers, some who looked professional, were riding the waves. We walked forever down the beach throwing a ball for Walter the

whole way. That day was **THE No. 1 BEST DAY in all of 2024!**

Interesting folks in Baja. We've not seen a single other Texas license plate, but plenty of Americans from cold-weather states, some Europeans and tons of resourceful Canadians migrating south for the winter, outnumbering everyone else three to one.

Ingenious Baja travelers had modified their vans (and every vehicle you can think of) into truly awe-inspiring, functional campers.

Next day, a day trip to



Todos Santos. Then to **Los Barriles** on the Sea of Cortez. Watch how deftly Walter fetches the ball out of the deep blue surf. Then ... Northward, Ho!

Throughout Baja: colorful, brilliant flowers and every variety of green and blue palms *everywhere*...Outstanding cell service and internet throughout...No beggars...Fresh-squeezed OJ every morning (!!)



And we felt *totally* safe. That is, except the time I looked down during a shower and saw a scorpion next to my toes.

Visited friends in Arkansas and Vermont.

Iowa! "The corn is as high as an elephant's eye, an' it looks like it's climbin' clear up to the sky." Sing it, Gordon! Yummy!!

In Michigan we visited **Harbor Springs** where amazing boats and yachts were anchored. This neat and clean little town with restaurants, flowery landscaping and shops including Howse's Fudge (yum!) was a real gem.

Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario were all jaw-droppers. Those eponymous great lakes are massive stretches of fresh, clear, deep blue water as far as the eye can see with decent-size waves at their beaches. Just wow.



Going through customs in **Canada** took maybe a minute. I minored in French, so hearing people speaking that joyful, upbeat language was music to my ears. If only I hadn't forgotten it all.

In **Queen Victoria Park**, tourists from all over the world walk the wide esplanade beside the falls. Starting at the river end of the falls, through the trees and brush we excitedly glimpsed the thundering, forest green, huge, white-capped Niagara River as it rushed toward the cliff (at 35 mph).

Beyond the greenery, a massive horseshoe-shaped cliff emerged into view where (6 million cubic feet per minute of) river water rushed over it creating a huge mist cloud when it crashed down (from nearly 200 feet above) to the lower part of the great border river.

Neither one of us was prepared for that electrifying sight and feeling from the river's full majesty, immense power and beauty. Unforgettable.



[If you go to Niagara Falls, go to the Canadian side; you can't really see the Horseshoe Falls from the American side.]

Sharing that walkway with people from all over the world, all feeling the same wonder and awe, was equally exhilarating. Every few feet seems like, someone would ask in their language if they could pet or photograph Walter. They shared stories of schnauzers they owned, knew or grew up with while we admired each other's schnauzer photos. (Schnauzer owners are not normal people.) That was **THE No. 2 BEST DAY of 2024!**

On to **Le Vieux-Québec**, a UNESCO World Heritage treasure. The upper part of this beautiful old city is surrounded by a great stone wall fortification and parapets, but with its *very* steep hills, it was hard to get around in . Truly spectacular was **Le Château Frontenac**, opened in 1893, a gigantic, gorgeous hotel . I asked if there were a dog-friendly room available, and yes! For \$860. Um, no. However, I did use their bathroom and vowed to make a T-shirt that read "I peed in Le Château Frontenac!"



The next day, Ian found a wonderful patisserie where we bought cappuccino, duck mousse truffle pâté, charcuterie, baguette, plain and almond croissants, apple turnover and a French sausage. Afterward, we visited the lower part of the old city.

The ultra-wide streets were densely, wonderfully crowded with people from all over the world. Ice cream shops, fudge shops, indoor and outdoor art galleries, acrobats , giant old murals painted on walls, musicians playing and their **Notre Dame** — **THE No. 3 BEST DAY of 2024!**

Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick. The tide levels here change by more than 50 feet! Twice a day! After walking with tourists from all over the world down 99 steps, we got to the ocean floor at low tide.

Getting close to the water, Walter started barking at me like crazy until it clicked that he wanted me to throw rocks into the water for him to fetch. His tail furiously wagging, lots of people pulled out their phones and videoed him. The rock star!

Southward, Ho! In Maine, we ate fresh lobster and hiked up the fabulous Cadillac Mountain where Walter again was a hit. It's like traveling with the canine Ryan Gosling.

In Letchworth State Park in New York, our sewer hose broke, but ... Ian, the MAN , managed to avoid a nuclear olfactory disaster. Whew.

We spent the day visiting the **Kentucky Horse Farm**



in Lexington, where we went to two horseshows , the International Museum of the Horse and saw a near life-sized bronze of Staff Sergeant Reckless. You'll need tissues when you see her

story . **THE No. 4 BEST DAY of 2024!**

Also visited **Royal Spring Park**, where in 1789 Rev. Elijah Craig distilled the first bourbon whiskey. Bless him!!





William

Andrew



Celebrating our 47th anniversary and Walter's 7th birthday in Pescadero



P.S. William and Andrew are five years old now!



Walter's apparently irresistible eyelashes



Walter bored at the Gage Restaurant, Marathon



With Gratitude, here's wishing you a 2025 WITH ADVENTURES, good times and lots of applause.

love, the Inglises

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I love to dig at the beach!



John and AJ in San Francisco

Endnote: Throughout the 17 states we drove through this year, we saw Biden's badly needed Infrastructure Law dollars in action — dozens and dozens of roads and bridges either being repaired or constructed. Thank you, Joe.

Correction: Maybe Ian's planning these trips wasn't so sadistic. Maybe it was pretty freakin' wonderful after all.