



## Merry Christmas from Switzerland

December 2011

Aloha Friends!

By Christmas last year, we had sold our business, Hawaii Holiday Vacation Rentals, and Hale Kakahi, our former home on the Big Island. We were busy putting everything we didn't sell or give away into two large storage units near Hilo.



In late April, we began a six-week road trip through Canada and the northern part of the U.S., seeing many friends and family members along the way. We loved Banff and Quebec City in Canada and it was fun to see iconic sights in the States including Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, and Niagara Falls.

We wound up in Boston in the historic North End just in time to celebrate the 4th of July... where else to spend our last days in the U.S. but in this historic city. We were not disappointed by the grand fireworks and the Boston Pops.



*Amsterdam's many canals make the city beautiful, comfortable, and easy to love*

On February 4th we embarked on our "year of being homeless." We landed in Seattle, where we stayed for three months visiting old friends and enjoying the beauty of the Northwest. Harrison had lived in Seattle before and Sharene had visited many times, so we felt like we were "coming home."



*Fireworks over Boston*

On July 6th we flew to Europe for a six-month stay. We started with a couple of weeks in Switzerland and then continued on to Amsterdam for what we thought would be three months. Three turned into four as we fell hopelessly in love with this vibrant, multicultural, cosmopolitan city! Although we had never lived here, once again we felt like we had "come home."

We saw wonderful museums, concerts, and other performances, and we did some touring around the Netherlands. Sharene bought a bike and Harrison got back to his daily three-mile morning runs, so we saw a lot of the city close up.

But what made our Amsterdam experience most memorable were the people. We had close to 20 old friends visit us, and we made many wonderful new and lasting friendships. We just loved the people of Amsterdam. They look great, they're healthy, and best of all, they're happy! Life just seems to be better here and they know it.

Between all our exploring and all the people, we never had a dull moment during our entire time in Amsterdam.



*Prague captivated us with magnificent buildings, natural beauty, and centuries of history*



*Porto Venere, Italy... one of many picture-postcard towns we explored on our Europe tour*

We could have stayed in Amsterdam forever! But a great deal on Eurailpass train tickets beckoned us to see more of Europe, so off we went at the end of November on a month-long rail and road trip and found amazing cities and towns all decorated for the holidays. Frankfurt, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Venice, Rome, and Tuscany were all incredible; we are still overwhelmed at all the art and architecture (some thousands of years old). Our last stop in Italy was a beautiful area on the Mediterranean near the Cinque Terre, which reminded us how much we love the sea.

We arrived back in Switzerland shortly before Christmas to celebrate the holidays with our hanai (adopted) family. We return to the U.S. on January 4th and make our way back to Hawaii, where we get to figure out what to do next! We suspect you'll hear from us before next Christmas about where we have decided to live as we start the next chapter of our lives.



*Harrison, Hallie, Amelia, Sarah, Sharene, Isabel, Phil*

We call ourselves retired, and we love our retired life so far. But we still have plenty of projects to keep us busy for as long as we can see into the future.

We are truly grateful for the good health and good fortune that has allowed us to experience this remarkable year and spend so much time with our Swiss family. We may have been "homeless" but we felt at home the entire time. The trip has been life-changing for both of us and has renewed our love in ways we never expected. We certainly hope the year has also been good to you and your families. We love reading all the electronic Christmas letters we have received; thank you for remembering us.

Best wishes for a wonderful 2012 and remember, wherever we land, we always have a guest room!

A hui hou (until we meet again),  
Sharene and Harrison

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