



Happy
Holidays!!!
from
QM2



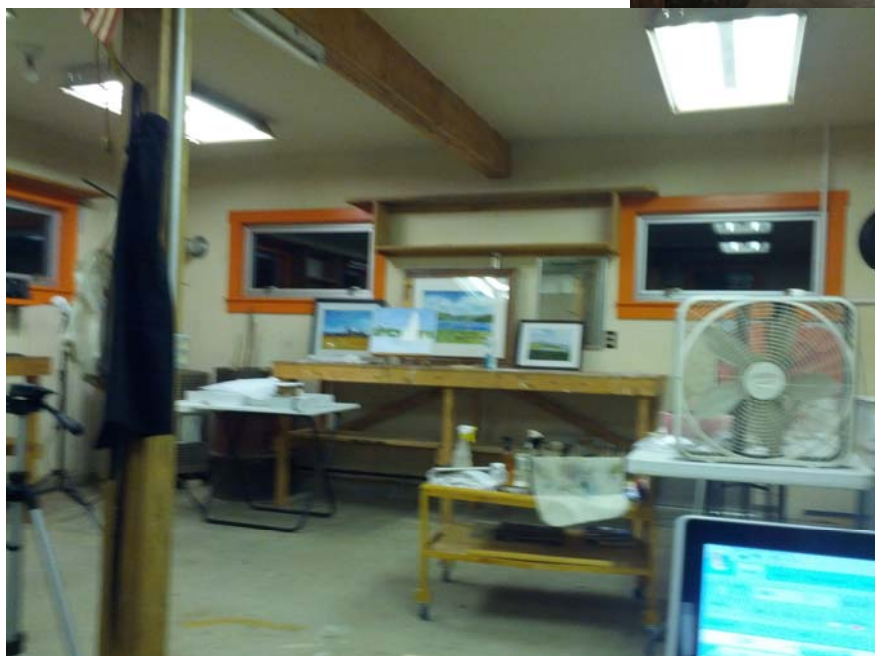
After quite a year of organizing our household, we finished the year with a cruise on the Queen Mary 2. We began right before Thanksgiving and will be home for Christmas, but we are dreaming of white sand of Florida and hoping to avoid white snow on the drive from NYC to Delray Beach. The photo on the top is the grand lobby of the QM2 and the bottom is the Christmas village on QM2. And there is Donna tasting wine in Madeira and John enjoying Belgium hot chocolate in Bruges.



The reorganization of the household involved setting up of our new home for the summer months in Barton Vermont. Since January when we had the closings on the property until the end of August when our furniture was finally delivered we were dealing with all the little details of setting up. Donna was doing more painting of walls than watercolors. And John was recapturing memories of his youth in a country setting while zipping around on the John Deere riding mower / tractor. We had a mini-family reunion in June and hope to host many more good times with family & friends in the coming years. We are there from May to Oct. We have a guest room and welcome visitors.

New summer address

1414 Roaring Brook Rd
Barton VT, 05822



Pumpkins at Parker Pie which is just down the road from the new house.

<<- Donna's studio in Barton

The QM2 Travel Log

The reason we have this travel opportunity is because Donna is the artist in residence on QM2 teaching watercolor as part of the enrichment program. Here is the itinerary and some photos, watercolor artwork and travel log notes.

11/18/13 Leave NYC for transatlantic crossing. Here is the view of lower Manhattan from the Brooklyn cruise terminal. Beautiful day when we left but once at sea we hit some rough weather.



11/22 It was so rough last night that the song and dance show had to be canceled and a pianist replaced it, much to John's disappointment. Tickling the ivories can't compare with displaying the gams from his point of view. The weather is settling down although we still have 18 foot waves, but the wind has dropped off a bit. The Captain is like a kid at Christmas telling us that we will see QM2 in the weather she was designed for.

11/26 We were in Southampton today for the first of what will be four visits on this trip. We got a lot done but it was frustrating. So we went out to catch the shuttle into the city's heart.



Southampton with Queen Victoria also in harbor. Taken from deck of QM2

Right off, we went into a large mall advertising free Wi-Fi. However, it required us to log on using our phone number, a BRITISH phone number. So much for that. Then, we went into a Burger King, free wifi of course. However, it was the same system. We did fiddle around a bit and got access. Of course, we only had our Nooks, so the email messages were kinda short and to the point.

The QM2 Travel Log

11/27 Today, we docked in Zeebrugge, but didn't spend much time there. We hopped a train to Bruges.

This wasn't our first visit to the medieval city; we visited there during our last trip. Last time we missed the train and took an intercity bus. This time we made the connection. More convenient, but also more confusing as we were now in an unfamiliar part of the city. Fortunately, there was a bookstore near the train station and John was able to buy what he later discovered was a somewhat romanticized and less-than-accurate map.



Bruges

We found the historical part of the city fairly easily and wandered around a bit. It was quite cold and I relaxed our diet to the point where we allowed ourselves a cup of the city's famous hot chocolate.

[John] Oh, I have to credit the citizens of Bruges with a sharp sense of capitalism. In the city and even back at the train station entry into restrooms were consistently priced at half a euro. I can assure our Republican Brethren that there is no danger here that socialism will break out any time soon. I am planning on purchasing a "Motorman's Friend." [Look it up on Google]



Bruges

[Donna] I took lots of photo reference shots for future watercolors. There are beautiful landscape and cityscapes.

11/28 [John] Today has been at-sea. Because there was no time change, Donna and I were able to take in a planetarium show between her classes. Instead of the usual 20-30 students, she had ONE! These short trips attract a very different demographic.

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The QM2 Travel Log

[John] I attended a lecture by a coxswain for the Royal Lifeboat Service. It's amazing how boring a rescue at sea can be made with a flat British accent. On the other hand, we had one by a female pilot, Anita Mays, who was a personal pilot for a lot of celebrities. Now, she keep the audience interested with stories like about how Malcolm Forbes used to travel with a bevy of high-priced hookers.

11/29 We had planned to go to Paris today but it's cloudy and rainy. However, the deciding factor was that the ship was now leaving at 7:30 instead of 9:30 as planned. That made the trip possible but ate up any margin for error. We also got up at 7:45, 45 minutes before. Instead we went back to bed and didn't get up until 10.



QM2 decorates for Christmas



Bridge over river to Lisbon. It is modeled after and by the same architect as the Golden Gate Bridge

We also saw the Castle of St George. It was a bit of a hike but it was worth the pain later. Here is a view of Lisbon taken from the tram stop for Castle of St George.

12/3 [John] We had quite a day today in Lisbon. Our whole plan was to take one of those hop-on hop-off buses and see the city. We went through most of the neighborhoods on streets that would have given me the screaming willies if I had been driving. Narrow, steep, with cobblestones. Everyone must skid all over when it rains. Of course, they drive like they are on an interstate.



The QM2 Travel Log

[John] Oh, and I also almost got robbed.

I was getting on the bus and I was a bit nervous because the people surrounding me looked more like the extras in *Pirates of the Caribbean* than tourists. Sure enough I got shoved on the stairs and felt a jerk on my back pocket.

THEN, the bus driver reaches out, pulls me on board and then grabs into the crowd, returning with my thief's wallet in his hand. Someone had went for it. That wallet is an old one with a few dollars in it and some old invalid credit cards. It's primarily for a robbery with violence so I can either get the guy to go away or distract him enough clobber him (less likely as I age).



Cathedral—the bus stop behind was the site of the attempted robbery.



12/5 At the stop in Santa Cruz, Tenerife, Donna had hoped to get chosen as escort for the trip to El Teide, a volcano whose 12,000+ feet height dominates Tenerife. That didn't come to pass, and it, in retrospect, probably was a good thing.

Instead, she got the escort on a trip to some northern towns. There was left over space so Cunard allowed me to buy a ticket and accompany her. The views were incredible. The band of mountains separating Santa Cruz from the North are almost straight up and straight down. However, even the few thousand feet of climb was more than enough for our Florida, sea level adapted lungs. We were both exhausted when we returned.

12/6 At the stop at Las Palmas, Gran Canarias, we decided to stick to the town. We took one of those hop-on hop-off bus tours. It was a national holiday so shopping was impossible anyway. We got off at several points and made the loop twice because the automated sound-track was a bit erratic.

The QM2 Travel Log



QM2 at Gran Canaria

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12/7 Today, we toured Funchal, Madeira. We had planned to use another hop-on hop-off, but a taxi driver made such a convincing pitch we used him. It was a bit more expensive but we got to go places like the botanical garden, that was not on the bus' route. Donna also bought a couple of bottles of Madeira wine, something that has been on her bucket list for a while.

There was a bit of confusion at the end. We had thought the driver said 17 Euros. Midway through the drive, I was wondering as it seemed we were burning more than that in fuel.



City Center of Funchal from the Botanical Gardens

The QM2 Travel Log



Funchal from the Volcano peak

It was 70! Fortunately, the guy trusted me enough so I could go aboard to get more money exchanged. Equally fortunately, security there was almost non-existent.

[Donna] Funchal Madeira was well worth the visit and I wish I could do a Plein Air painting trip there.

12/11 We were back in Southampton and spent the day hanging out at a Starbucks drinking coffee and hot chocolate and using their free wifi. Still not used to the late sun rises and early sun sets. At right is the sunset just before we left Southampton at 4:30 PM.



12/12 If this is Tuesday it must be Belgium, well it was Thursday, it was Belgium and we decided to do the Christmas markets in Brussels. It was a bus tour that did the highlights of Brussels with free time in



Atomium from the 1958 World Fair in Brussels

the Christmas markets. It was fun to see the city which has a complex history. The markets were kind of like any craft market but the prices were higher than expected for that type of venue. So we opted for some more Belgium hot chocolate. Very rich and creamy.

The QM2 Travel Log

12/14 [Donna] Paris!!!! I was determined to get there. So we signed up for the Highlights of Paris tour. Then John was feeling under the weather so decided not to go. When the ship changed the time we would leave port at 5 pm instead of 9 PM, that pushed the 10.5 hour tour to very early in the morning. We left at 6:30 AM, sunrise was at 8:50 AM so got to snooze a bit on the bus. Then when we stopped at the Eiffel tower it was early enough so that the sun behind it made a nice picture. It was my first time in



Paris and the highlights tour was a good idea. I loved the city and plan to get back when I can stay longer and see more of it. I wanted to get to the Louvre and I did but the lines were so long I decided it would be more frustrating than enjoyable with the free time I had. But I did get a lovely picture of it. As soon as the bus got back, the ship pulled up anchor and we were off to Southampton for the last time.

12/15 It was so rainy and cold we did not even get off the ship. Took the day to relax and put together this Christmas newsletter. We will be off tomorrow for the transatlantic to NYC which is the most beautiful port to come into. Compared to the ports we enter in Europe which are very industrial looking, I am so proud that our port in NYC is so beautiful and welcoming. I do plan to get up early on 12/22 when we arrive to see the sunrise over the city.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all from
Donna and John**