



Robinson News

2002

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Winter Fun

We started this year in Chamonix with all the Robinsons. Children stayed with their grandma & grandpa in their apartment and the two of us in an apartment next door. There was plenty of snow and sunshine, to the absolute delight of the boys, so they really advanced in their skiing abilities (shame about the technique, though: no turns whatsoever — just straight down the piste. *Quelle courage!*)



Abominable Snowmen in Argentiere

Harry was too young for the ski school so we decided to give it a miss and teach them ourselves. The rental shop did not even stock Harry's size boots, but that did not stop Harry from joining his brother on the slopes in his oversized boots and skis. Unlike Tim, though, he could not quite master the button lift so Andy spent many hours pushing him up while riding the lift himself. Needless to say, we did not get to do much skiing ourselves so we think we'll let the Panda club take care of the teaching next time we go. The boys are now proud owners of their own skis so we won't need to rent next time. Although they can't wait for the next skiing holiday they are still undecided whether they prefer the slopes to the beach.

Our next hop over the Channel was in March to attend Phaedra & Pascal's wedding in Paris. Alisa's parents very conveniently stopped in London on their way to LA and babysat for us while we enjoyed a romantic weekend in Paris preceding the wedding. The reception, which must be the best one we attended yet, was held in a Chateau in the Loire Valley (where we also stayed). After rivers of Champagne and the most delicious canapés, we were all treated to a sumptuous gourmet banquet which included 9 courses and 7 different types of wine (you know French—different wine with each course) in a Michelin 2-star restaurant—and then a

breakfast for anyone who could make it the following morning after going to bed at 4 am. Although we slept in pure luxury we hardly got to enjoy it as we only got 4-5 hours sleep. Most of us were too tired to enjoy the tour they organised for us the following day, but the wedding is the one we will never forget. Thank you Mme. & M. Betto.



When things go wrong!

A great opportunity arose at Easter, when Andy and Aljoša (Alisa's brother) were due to attend the same conference in Prague.

The plan was for Alisa's parents (who were with us in March) to take the kids to Sweden, and for we grown-ups to leave Stansted at the same time for grown-up fun in Prague with Aljoša and Raquel. It all went horribly wrong when Tim was refused travel at the check in as his passport was expiring that day. The fact that children's passports are only valid for 5 years had somehow escaped our attention. Needless to say, we had to stay behind and sort his new passport while Harry travelled on with his grandparents. We managed to get a new passport sorted within 24 hrs (impressive or what). Sadly, that was not the case with the flights for Prague as due to the Easter holiday rush there were no more available seats left unless we were willing to fork out (literally) thousands. We managed to change the tickets for Copenhagen (now just a 20min train ride from Sweden), and reunite Tim with Harry.

The two of us then came back and had a few days in historic Stratford staying in a lovely 16 century hotel right next to the Harvard House for Andy's UK Python Conference. Sadly, due to the Queen Mother's death, all the performances at the RST and the Swan were cancelled and we were robbed of what would have been, no doubt, a very pleasurable event. Still, the weather was gorgeous and there were plenty of cultural things for Alisa to do. The lack of 'Shakespeare' was made up for with the performances we saw at this summers Cannizaro Park open theatre. We just hope that Aljoša and Raquel have forgiven us, as they had booked into this extra plush hotel in Prague on our recommendation and waited in vain for us to turn up.



La Provence

We celebrated the Queen's Jubilee by escaping to the nearest Republic. As this coincided with Tim's half term and our wedding anniversary, we took the whole week off and flew to Provence. We began our little tour by visiting the oldest Roman bridge in Europe; we swam in the river Gard (which Andy says was as cold as a public school swimming pool) just beneath it, followed on to Popes' steps in Avignon, then carried on to Orange and the Ardeche gorge where we did

some canoeing. We enjoyed a little dégustation in Chateaufort du Pape while the children admired the caves. We saw a lot of beautifully preserved Roman heritage sites and as we were in a possession of a nice open-top sport's car (courtesy of Hertz), we felt it would be rude not to pop down to the Riviera too. We did not think much of St. Tropez, though, so after a night there we went back to Provence for some more of culture. Peter Mayle was right though—one does need at least a year there to do it any justice!



Summer Events

We used Harry's 3rd birthday as an excuse for our big summer garden party. We were incredibly lucky as this was one of the rare lovely hot summer days at the end of June. It was all good fun for children and grown ups alike (first let loose on all the playground equipment we had out and later charged by large quantities of wine and Pimms, no doubt). Now Tim is really jealous that he was not born in the summer and is demanding an outdoor party for his birthday—on the days when he isn't asking to take the whole class skiing in France.

There were not many free week-ends left between numerous social engagements of our children but we did manage to squeeze in few social events of our own. This summer was big on school get-togethers; The whole family (including grandma Gilly and grandpa Alan) flew to Oxford (YES—we most definitely arrived in style) for a family day at Balliol. Grandpa Alan flew us in his (borrowed) Saratoga which made children extremely happy. Alisa was appointed a 'co-pilot' but luckily this was one very smooth ride and she was not called upon to do anything!



Posing or what?

We hooked up with some old friends, kids enjoyed all the entertainment laid out for them and it was all jolly good fun (except that the bubbly was not flowing freely as it did the previous year at Pembroke college where we gatecrashed cousin Frank's family day). Still, at £4.50 a bottle, 'Chateau Balliol' was not too bad at all. The following day was Bradfield (Andy's old boarding school) Gaudy, where the two of us had some fun while T & H were looked after by their grandparents in Bucklebury during the official lunch bit, but joined us later for tea. At our table was Andy's



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We managed to squeeze in another kids free weekend to explore Hvar—a beautiful island and historic town, and it seems the place to be seen this summer. We're sure we recognized some of the boats from St. Tropez earlier in the year.



the family sailing at Mali Ston

old school friend who boarded in the same house as Andy and who now actually lives with his family around the corner from us in Wimbledon Village. Small world! Regrettably, we had to miss the Brockhurst (Andy's old prepschool)ball the following weekend due to some other engagements.

As if this was not enough, we (Andy) embarked on a couple of other summer projects which required some strong carpentry skills. He single-handedly built a tree house for the boys (sadly one of our apple trees died last year and needed to be cut off but the remaining trunks made an excellent base for the tree house). His other project was building (decking) a lovely new patio in the right corner of our garden where the giant sand pit (that our gardener gradually turned into a damp pit) used to be. Now we have a fantastic new sun deck (our big patio next to the house gets into a shade after 5-6 pm) to enjoy our lovely summer evening's drinks at.. Andy's now threatening with installing a hot tub there as well. Our remaining apple tree had produced so many apples this summer that every dinner party since then had to involve an 'apple' pud....

A 'thank you' cheque from The Castle went into new front drive and fancy gates which we had done at the beginning of the year so our hols budget this year was significantly reduced. Now we realise how lucky we were to have lived in a serviced apartment for so long where everything is taken care of (alas in an exchange for a hefty service charge). Still, this expenditure did not stop us from doing now a traditional thing of taking August off and spending it in Alisa's homeland...



Mediterranean Blues

On route this year, we camped in Italy on lake Garda which absolutely delighted the boys - but not as much as camping in a naturist resort in Istria the next night (don't ask - some friends invited us to their place without telling us "the whole story"! After 3 days we made it to Duboka. T & H had enormous fun in their grandparent's beach house and night after night we were subjected to disco evenings organised by Tim on our big terrace. Things got slightly better when all the 10-year-olds managed to persuade Tim to start playing pop music instead of his usual 'times tables', and Shakira soon started to dominate. Tim is now such a convert that he thinks the world of her, but for Harry nobody beats Kylie (although he recently started saying that 'McDonna' isn't too shabby either...)

Andy's parents arrived in Croatia in the last week of August and we joined them (minus the kids) for a few days of sailing on their boat which was enormous fun.. This is definitely the way to see the Adriatic. The kids were ecstatic when we phoned them shortly before sailing into our little harbour and they waited for us impatiently ashore. They were very happy to have both sets of grandparents in one place although they kept pointing out that grandpa Alan's boat is much bigger than Dedo's (the other grandpa's nickname)...

On the way back we spent a day in Venice. It would have been rude to drive straight past for the third time :-). Andy and the boys had their first taste of this wonderful island, while Alisa reminisced about her youth. . We then had a night stop in the flat in the Alps, and finished the trip on a high note with a day in Disneyland Paris. Tim started Year 1 day after we arrived back and Harry is happily established back at his Montessori Nursery. He really missed being at home and during the holidays he kept asking us about going back to Wimbledon. Tim, meanwhile, burst into tears a day after coming back and asked if we could move back to Croatia. He has made a lot of friends there whom he sees every summer, so round about this time he starts pestering us for the start date of our next trip there.

The boys are a handful and are far too energetic for our liking but they do keep us fit. Actually, most of the time they are rather fun to be with. Tim is seriously into pop music now and we are subjected to endless hours of Shakira and occasionally Robbie & Kylie. However, Alisa has found a way back to sanity by getting them each a walkman for Xmas. Let's just hope once they have headphones on they don't start singing at the top of their voices...

Tim is now writing and reading and as a consequence our phone bill has gone up substantially as he likes ringing people from his (self-made) phone book. The upside is that at least we had some help with Christmas cards. He's incredibly creative and innovative and is forever making things. His Headmistress is convinced that one day in the not-so- far future she would go into a shop and see half a dozen things designed by Tim. As you could imagine, our consumption of sellotape, glue and staples has increased enormously. He recently lost his first tooth and was rather miserable until the tooth fairy left him presents under the pillow. Now he's trying to work the rest of them loose! Also, like father like son, he is a wiz on the computer (well for his age anyway—hasn't started programming yet) ; he logs himself on, finds his favourite internet game and sits and plays it for hours (occasionally letting Harry have a go). We're grateful for ADSL.

Tim & Harry are real pals now and Harry copies absolutely everything. The moment he turned 3 he said "Now I'm 5 just like Tim!".



Latest Adventures

Gilly, Andy's mum, finally sold her ballet school in the autumn and "retired", citing a desire to spend more time with grandchildren. We responded in microseconds by offering to lend them the children over half term (the end of October) and found a last minute holiday. And this was a discovery tour to remember. We were looking for a diving package in the Red Sea when we saw some adverts for cruises on the Nile . This was definitely on our list of 'must-goes' but we always thought that it was one of the tours people do when they retire. We were very pleasantly surprised; not only by the average age of fellow 'cruisers' but also by the amount of things we saw in just 1 week: Luxor was like an open air museum, with temples on one side, tombs on the other and magnificent Nile in the middle. We sailed to Aswan and back and even made a trip to famous Abu Simbel. The only word to describe it all is: **AWESOME!**



Relaxed on the Nile

Meanwhile, we had an exciting year at Reportlab with all the ups and downs of a small business. 'Ups' peaked in July when the UK branch hired its 6th employee but then had our worst nightmare last month when due to some cancelled projects and stock market collapse we had to put everyone on notice. Things are much better now, everyone but one person is back on track and we're overloaded with work. We are also having another round of fresh investments so the future looks bright.

Xmas will be spent 'en famille' in England but we're scooting off to Paris to spend the New Year there with some friends.

For more pictures of our year go to:

www.pasic-robinson.org

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Seasons Greetings

Andy, Alisa, Tim & Harry