

R F N L

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Disney
World
Adventure



Brian, Drew, and Karla's Trip to Walt Disney World

By Brian Riel



Drew, Mom, and I got to take a weeklong trip to the happiest place on earth, Disney World in Orlando Florida! Disney World was also celebrating its 50th Anniversary so there were lots of cool things to see and do. Drew especially enjoyed searching for all the 50 golden statues scattered around each park. My cousin Robbie (Mom's nephew) is a Disney Vacation Club member and had been wanting to take a family trip for a few years now. He had been saving his points so he could get all the rooms

required for everyone at a Disney Resort. Sadly, with COVID and other things, the only family members that joined him and my Aunt Brenda were Drew, Mom, and I. So, the five of us made our way out to Florida and all met up at the airport and headed to our resort. Drew and I got our own room while Robbie, Brenda, and Mom shared a condo. The very first night after arriving we had reservations at Beaches and Cream at the Beach Club Resort. This is where we got massive desserts to start off our magical trip! Drew and I got the 50th Celebration shakes with a slice of cake on top.



Our first full day was at EPCOT, it was a little rainy but with jackets and ponchos we didn't let it stop us. We made our way onto rides like Soarin' Around the World, Spaceship Earth, Frozen, and Remy's Ratatouille Adventure.

We enjoyed a lovely lunch at Space 220 which takes you up to a space station via elevator. There is a window on the floor that allows you to watch the world drop away as you ascend into space. Once inside you have a view of the earth and watch spaceships dock or depart the station, as well as astronauts floating around. The food was the best I've ever had (I didn't know potato wedges could be made so perfectly) and I highly recommend it to anyone going to EPCOT.



Day two was a day at Magical Kingdom, again it was rainy, but again, we came prepared ready to conquer the park. We rode as many rides as possible. Drew's favorite ride for this park was the Seven Dwarf Mine Train. Mine was Space Mountain, I have been to Disneyland so many times I have the ride memorized. So going on this one was fun because it brought a whole bunch of fun surprises I wasn't expecting. We had lunch at Be Our Guest where you eat in the ballroom of the castle from Beauty and the Beast. Complete with large windows showing you snowy grounds. Dinner was at Skipper Cantina; this came as a recommendation from friends but sadly our experiences wasn't as magical as we hoped. No worries, however, we wouldn't let one bad meal ruin the trip!



On the third day we made our way to Hollywood Studios, a smaller park which was good because after two full days of walking Mom was getting tired. We took it easy and rode a few rides like Tower of Terror, Rock N' Roll Coaster, and Rise of the Resistance at Star Wars land. The new trackless rides at these parks were awesome and really delivered new and exciting experiences. We had lunch at an old diner with classic, homemade, mom's cooking, type of food and it did not disappoint. I even made it into the clean plate club! Mom left a little early that day to catch some extra sleep because we would continue to be busy busy busy.

The fourth day was spent at Animal Kingdom and this park ended up being our favorite. The lush landscape and Pandora Avatar area was stunning. The Tree of Life was also cool to check out because it has 325 animals carved into it. We did our best to find them all but I'm sure we didn't come close. Our favorite ride was Flight of Passage where you get to ride on a Banshee which is a creature from the movie Avatar. It's interesting because the seat you ride in actually moves and even breaths as if you're on the creature. For five minutes you get to fly around Pandora and experience breathtaking views and thrilling drops. This park also offers different kinds of Dole Whips, which if you have ever had Dole Whip at Disneyland, you know how good it is. So, we had a pineapple, orange, and vanilla Dole Whip as well as a pineapple, strawberry, watermelon Dole Whip. Disney World also isn't as strict with booze like Disneyland is, so you know we added coconut rum to our Dole Whips!



After visiting all the Disney Parks, we spent two days at Universal Studios. Being such big Harry Potter fans how could we not go experience the park and rides that we love so much. Also, Robbie is almost 7ft tall and a big man and loves to cosplay as Hagrid. He often goes to Harry Potter world at Universal California, dressed as Hagrid. The first day there we spent almost all of it at Harry Potter world wearing our cloaks, drinking butterbeer, and riding the rides. The newest ride is Hagrid Motorbike where you actually sit on a motorbike and a sidecar. Drew and I got to ride in the front row; I rode the bike while he rode in the sidecar. This ride blew our minds and truly made us feel magical. Mom rode with a single rider and asked to be in the sidecar as the motorbike seemed a little scary to her. The single rider agreed but maneuvered herself at the last minute, so my mom had to take the bike. Despite her fear she loved the ride and was glad she rode on the bike after all.



I am also a huge fan of dinosaurs and love all the Jurassic Park/World movies, so we just had to ride the new VelociCoaster ride. It's a thrilling roller coaster with fast speeds, launches, loops, corkscrews, and inverted drops. It also doesn't have shoulder restraints so when you go upside down only the lap bar is holding you in. Raising your hands, going upside down over a lake, with only a lap bar that you are slightly falling out of was SO MUCH FUN! We rode other rides as well and got to see some cool things around the park.

Of course, no Disney trip is complete without shopping. Mom and I had attended Disneyland's 50th Anniversary in 2005 and have pins, Mickey ears, and her famous fanny pack. So, we wanted some merch from Disney World's 50th to add to our collection. At the beginning of the trip, they were out of Mickey ears and fanny packs but by the end they had come back in stock, and we loaded up! We also made sure to get our 50th anniversary pin to add to our collections. Drew and I also bought a limited-edition art piece for our friends Pete (aka Petey my best friend) and Daniel. They are huge Disney fans and just became homeowners. So, we wanted to get them something really cool as a housewarming gift. Mom got them a new Christmas ornament customized to say "Our First Home 2022" that will fit in perfectly with their Disney themed Christmas tree they put up every year.

The trip overall was amazing, full of fun, and magical. We are so thankful that we got to go with Mom and make lots of new memories. It was also great to experience the 50th anniversary! The rides, food, entertainment, and company were all amazing and I urge anyone who can take a trip to go and experience it all for yourself.

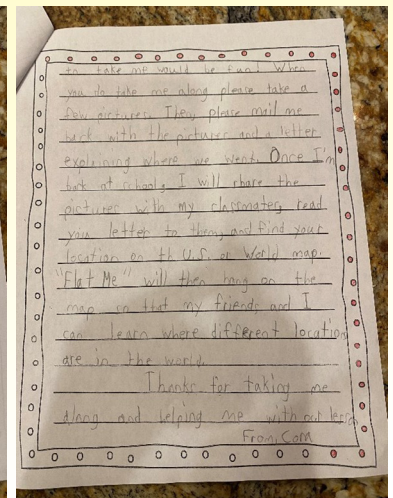
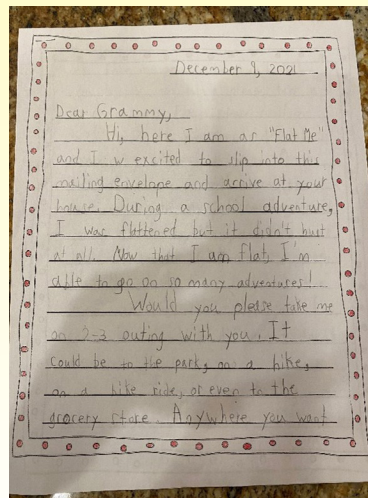
Our visit with Flat Cora



By Birdy Hartman Hall

I was thrilled that Flat Cora came this week, because Lyle and I had planned a train trip through the Rocky Mountains to see the snow-capped peaks. We were sure that Flat Cora would love being on a train and would enjoy the trip with us. So, to celebrate Flat Cora's first night in San Diego, we took her out to Pazzo's for some pasta and explained

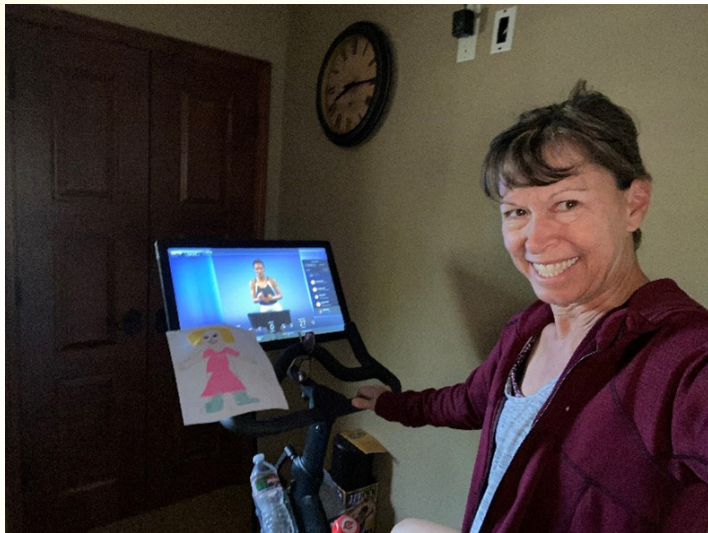
I was so excited to see a letter from my granddaughter, Cora, arrive in my mailbox in early January. To my surprise and delight, it was an invitation to spend some time with Flat Cora so that her class could track her travels. That sounded like a fun project and a great way to connect people during these pandemic times. I am so proud of the teachers that are working during this period in our history. It certainly has been a challenge for everyone. And the letter that I got from Cora was beautifully penned! I am so pleased that her handwriting is neat and easy to read. What a joy to begin this adventure with her here in San Diego, CA.



how we would fly in an airplane to Denver, Colorado. She was so tickled with the idea of getting on a jet with us. We would spend the night in downtown Denver and then hop on a train to take us across the US back towards Sacramento. We explained to Flat Cora that Sacramento is the state Capital of California and she really wanted to visit it. It was fun to explain the trip and dream of what we would see. Flat Cora enjoyed the spaghetti at Pazzo's (even though she was nervous about getting the sauce on her pink dress) and then we went home.



The next day was Thursday, and that is Grammy's neighborhood pickleball game day. I took her out to meet some of the gang. Paul, Erik and James were the first to arrive. So, we took pictures and set up Flat Cora in a good spot to watch the action. She was so excited to learn the rules! She loved that I got her a racket and sunnies to play the game with us. She turned out to be the queen of the dinks (where you drop the ball over the net before your opponent can hit it). And it wasn't long before she was smashing balls across the net. Everyone wanted her to come back and play with us again soon!

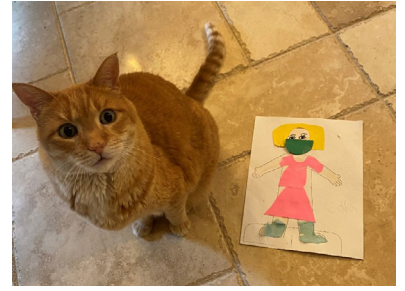


Flat Cora is used to a family that exercises a lot. And so, she had no trouble keeping up with Grammy as she hopped on top of her peloton bike each morning to put in a workout. First, we would bike for 40 minutes and then we would do another 45 minutes of Pilates. I never knew that Flat Cora was so strong. She handled all the sit-ups and different exercises like she had been doing them every day forever. I am so glad that I have such a strong flat granddaughter!

Her newfound skill at pickleball did not go to waste because Saturday is our legendary family pickleball game. We have always been a family that likes to play and once the covid doors opened again, Listy and I decided to teach the family some pickleball. Each Saturday, we bring a bag lunch to the designated courts (either her house or mine) and enjoy a little lunch conversation in memory of our parents. Then we play about a 2-hour session of some intense and hilarious pickleball. Aunt Listy is a powerhouse hitter, Uncle Ed has a mean serve, Aunt Margaret has lightening speed at the net, Uncle Bud is the best stand in one spot player you have ever seen, and Aunt Carol is a wiz on that backline with powerful hits that you would rather dodge. Uncle Jeff was missing on this Saturday, but he sure loves the game of pickleball like the rest of us. We keep trying to get Uncle Robert out there to join us, but he is always so busy making the Riel Family Newsletter. We hope that when he retires, he will join the group and have fun with us.



Unfortunately, when I returned home from pickleball, I discovered Grandpa Lyle was sitting on the couch with a nasty cough. It made Flat Cora and I nervous because Grandpa Lyle isn't usually one to be sneezing his head off. We had plans to enjoy the evening with friends, but we decided to cancel after Grandpa Lyle took a covid test. Yes, he tested positive. Cora and I were a bit nervous. We both put on masks, but it was too late for Grammy. By the next morning, Grammy's throat was sore, and it was left to Flat Cora to take care of our home and us.. Thank goodness she was here. Over the next few days, she fed Kona the cat and learned how to pet him just right. She also became really good at throwing him treats as he runs around the room chasing them.

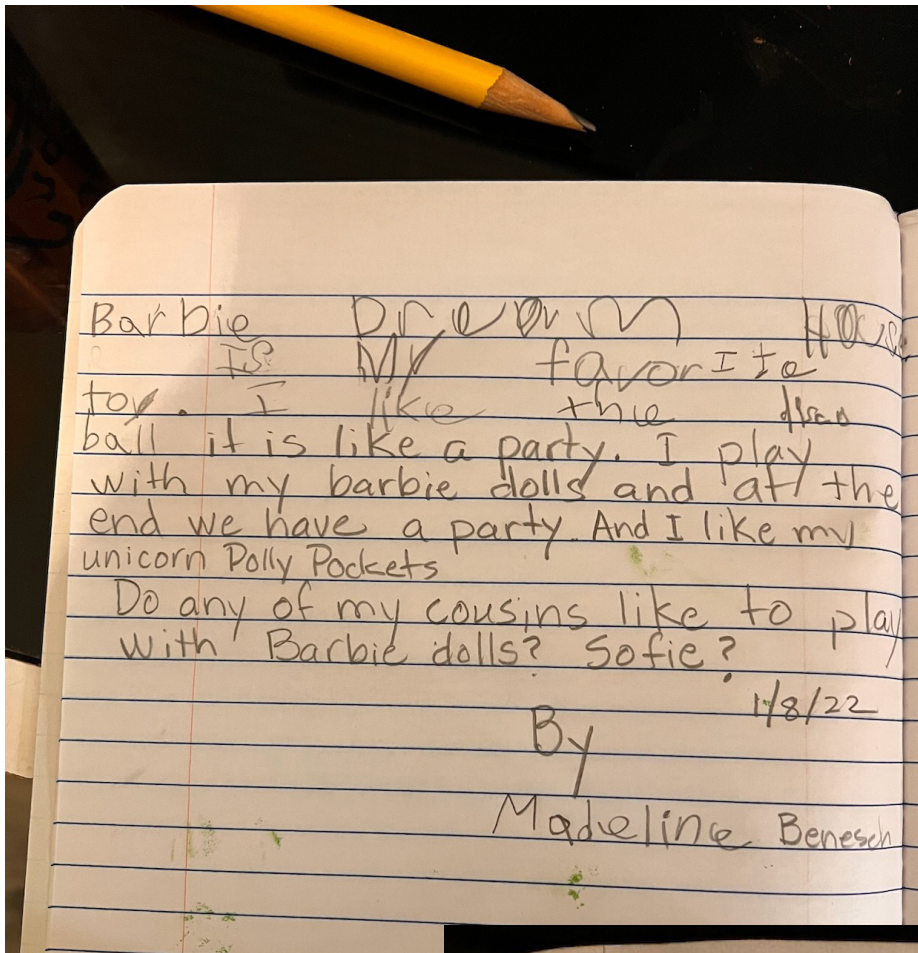


It was also a surprise to know that Flat Cora was such a good cook. I am sure she learned many skills by watching her dad in the kitchen. He is quite a chef, too. She made Lyle and I some great pork chops with Feta Butter one night. And during the days she would whip up some soup to soothe our aching throats. She also was great at counting out the many different vitamins that we were supposed to have to help treat our covid. She was the best nurse we could have ever asked for and we so appreciated having her here to make us both feel better.

I am disappointed to report that the rest of the week was pretty dull for Flat Cora. We spent a lot of the time resting. Luckily, Flat Cora did not seem to mind one bit. She was quite happy at helping us put together the puzzles that we had stashed in our house. She was really good with the edge pieces and finding that small bit of pink or yellow piece as we hunted across the table. With her eagle eyes, puzzle making has never been so much fun. It reminded us both of last year when we were in Palomar with Cora and her parents enjoying a snow weekend. We made a puzzle in the cabin while the snow lightly fell from the sky. It was a fun memory to tell Flat Cora all about.

The one thing that I know Flat Cora enjoyed about our covid nursing days was that we spent some time in our home theater watching movies together. She liked having popcorn as a reward for all of her hard work as our nurse. We really don't think we would have had such an easy time with Covid if it weren't for Flat Cora. She made our days in quarantine seem like a fun holiday break in the mountains. We moved our train trip to March 3 and we hope that Flat Cora will come back and join us. We would love nothing more than her great company. Thanks Flat Nurse Cora for a wonderful week in San Diego. You are welcome here anytime!

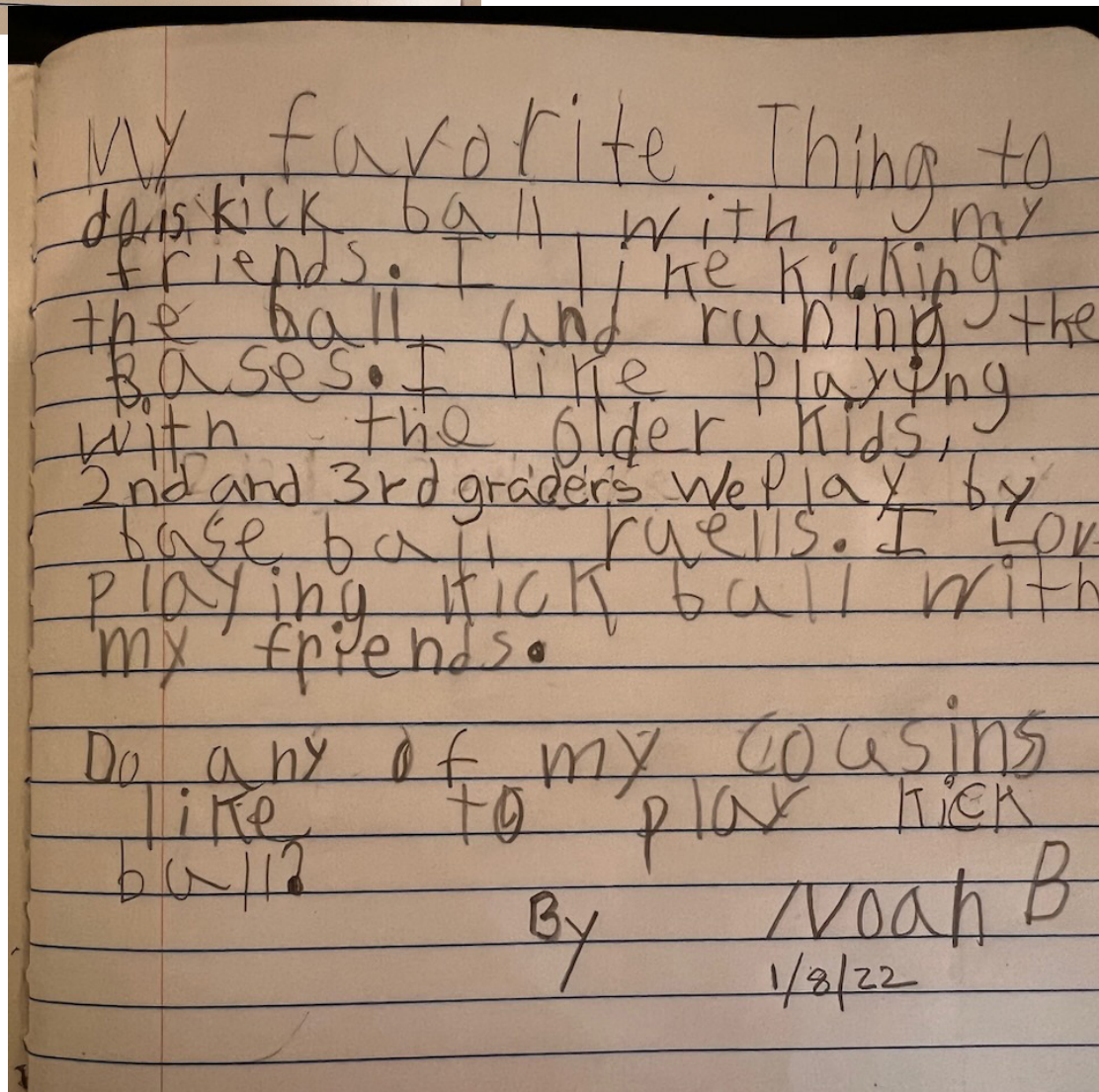
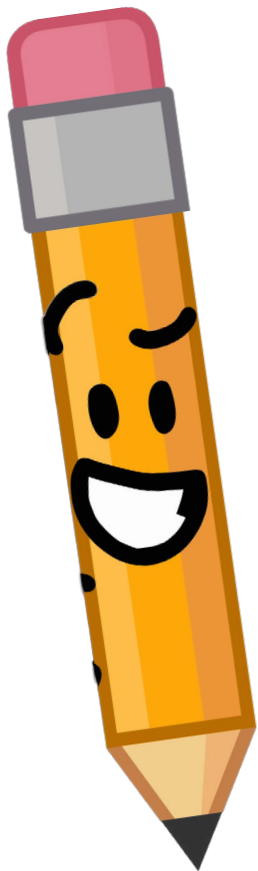




I'm trying to get my grandkids to become reporters. This month I just asked them to write about anything.

I only got Noah and Madeline to do a little because there was too much going on. I'm hoping this will encourage my other grandkids/grand nieces and nephews to write. I didn't type it cause it looks cuter this way.

Carol Benesch



Hey Dad! This Porch Could Use Some Work!



By Annie Mulholland

We don't have many exciting updates because we are currently tied to a newborn's timeline. However, we finally took on a project we have been talking about forever. We love our deck in our backyard but since moving in, we knew it needed some serious help. It was slowly falling apart under us! We wanted to redo the entire deck but with the ridiculous price of wood, we decided to repair it and keep what we could.





So, Kevin got to work replacing old, damaged boards with new ones. He also rebuilt some of the substructure that was falling apart with the help and consultation of “build-it Bob”, our go-to construction guy. The deck had a single seam running through the middle, so Kevin played deck Tetris, moving the boards so they were staggered appropriately. Kevin also built new railings as some of the railings were either falling apart or never completed from before. And finally, he rebuilt both sets of stairs and they look beautiful!



After all of the building, he re-stained the deck a nice dark brown! Whew, after typing out all the steps no wonder he felt he deserved a few extra beers in the afternoon!! We are so happy with how it turned out and love that we get to continue to enjoy this amazing outdoor space, with a solid floor under our feet! If you want to come by and check it out yourself, a 6 pack is the price of admission!



I gave birth in the US and in New Zealand. Just like the countries, my birth experiences were oceans apart.

By: Isobel Benesch

It wasn't until my husband and I had sold our belongings and booked our tickets to move with our two kids across the world from the US to New Zealand in 2016 that I discovered I was pregnant with our third child.

I naively assumed that my experiences of pregnancy and birth would be the same as my first two. Just like the countries, my birth experiences were oceans apart.

With our first baby, nothing went as planned. I was determined to have a vaginal birth. I even sought out the hospital nearest to us that had the lowest cesarean rate and wrote out my intricate birth plan, only to discover at 37 weeks that my baby was breech and I would require a C-section. When I became pregnant with my second son, I searched across the entire San Diego area to find a provider that would allow me to have a vaginal birth after a cesarean. When my baby's head started crowning, I was told to wait to push while a nurse called the doctor to let him know it was time to come to the hospital.

"Don't worry," the nurses told me as I sat with my baby's head partially out. "He lives five minutes away, and he doesn't like to miss it."

In contrast, the free, personalized care I received in New Zealand, as well as the feeling that I was going through a natural process rather than a medical procedure, made giving birth there a more supportive and less overwhelming experience. It also made for a much smoother transition into motherhood my third and fourth times.

In New Zealand, care is midwifery-led

I arrived in New Zealand during my second trimester, and my cousins set me up with the midwife they had used for their births. In New Zealand, you won't see an obstetrician unless you have a high-risk pregnancy or experience complications. Most perinatal care is led by midwives.

The same midwife was there for me throughout both pregnancies, delivered my third and fourth babies, and checked in on me throughout the postpartum period.

My prenatal visits didn't feel time-constrained, and I could text my midwife at any time with questions or concerns and receive a quick response. She became like family by the time my baby was born.

The care I received from pregnancy through postpartum was intimate in New Zealand, a stark difference from the clinical approach I received in the United States.

In New Zealand, my care was free

The schedule of care was much the same as in the US, yet I didn't pay a cent for my visits or required lab work in New Zealand.

In the US, we paid well over \$5,000 each for the births of our first and second child, on top of our decent insurance plan.

When my baby measured small at the regular scan, my midwife mentioned cautiously that she would like me to get regular scans to ensure he was growing properly, and that it would cost me \$25 for the scans since they were outside of the regularly scheduled scans.

I laughed thinking back on how I paid a \$150-plus copay for every ultrasound that I had in San Diego.

I got intimate postpartum care in New Zealand

The postpartum care I received in New Zealand had the biggest effect on my well-being.

After giving birth, many people register at a local birthing center, where you can stay free of charge for up to five days in a homelike environment and receive one-on-one care for you and your baby.

Instead of waddling out of my house with an adult diaper, leaky breasts, and a heavy infant seat to the pediatrician's office three days after birth — like I did in the US — my midwife came to our house to check on both me and the baby. And instead of waiting six weeks, which is standard in the US, my midwife sat at my bedside every day for the first couple of days after the birth and then once a week for the first six weeks. With three children under the age of 5, I was also given free in-home help for cleaning, washing dishes, and doing laundry.

Isobel Benesch is the founder of *Atlas of Motherhood* — @theatlasofmotherhood, the first maternal wellness platform of its kind to share the best mother care and support practices from around the world to prepare parents for birth & beyond.



Hawaii With Friends



By Listy Gillingham

The fun part about being retired is being able to travel during the off seasons to enjoy the travel perks that always looked tempting, but we were too busy to take the time off. When we booked out flights in October, we noticed the fares dropping on the airlines, and called to make adjustments on the original fares we purchased. As a result of the savings, we had enough airplane miles to purchase another trip for Feb. which made perfect sense for us to do! We expected that traveling in Feb. would bring a lot of rain given that the summer usually includes a few showers on alternate days, but much to our surprise, it was relatively dry. The weather was near perfect hovering at 79 degrees with little humidity and made for a fantastic trip. Especially when it came to hiking, because most of the trails were slippery-mud FREE! That made it much easier for us to trek around and enjoy the beautiful Jurassic-park like features of the northern side of the island.





We decided to stay in Princeville because we found a great 2-bedroom villa for a reasonable price and the hiking area is pretty amazing. Our first day was spent orienting ourselves to our new home. So, we hiked around the golf course towards an abandon fort and watched the whales playing in the distance, jumping around and putting on a show for us. We also got to spend our first day sitting on the beach with a good book, because that is our favorite way to share a true vacation.

We hiked almost every day except the one day that we played golf. Finding hikes was



easy because there were so many places that had footpaths which made them hard to miss. We went down to Queens Bath which is a pool of water made from lava rocks where it's easy to find turtles swimming around. We also hiked up around Hanalei Bay where we found a trail that went up 2 miles, but it gave you views of both the bay and the Pacific Ocean. It was spectacular and worth the effort. We ventured down to the beach using an abandon path that took you past an Old Club Med that doesn't exist anymore. It gradually descended to Puu Poa Point where we met some locals and enjoyed hearing their perspective of living in Hawaii.

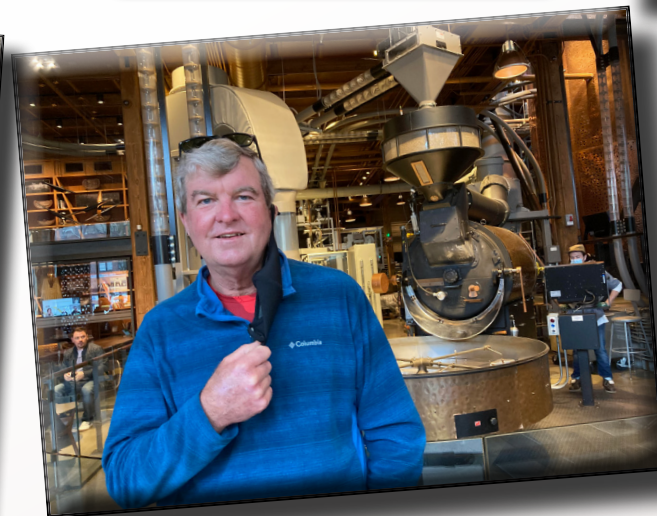


We played golf in the middle of the trip on a public course that sits right on the coast giving you some beautiful views. Not quite Torrey Pines, but very green and fun to play a round on. We let Bob win even though he played with my clubs and didn't bring his fancy new putter.

We also loved biking in Kapaa. There is a beautiful 4-mile bike path that takes you right along the ocean. We stopped midway through and again got to watch the whales popping their heads out of the Pacific Ocean to say hello as they swam by us. Not quite as impressive views as if we were in a boat but still pretty cool. We found a cool tunnel that took you to Donkey Beach. It was a canopy of leaves that created a lighted path by the sun breaking through. Pictures don't do it justice for sure. The beach was beautiful too and it inspired Doug to drop down on all fours to reenact Charlton Heston's scene from the Planet of the Apes.

We ate, drank, and enjoyed cheering for the Americans with the Olympics playing every night. Our last day was spent on the beach on Hanalei Bay watching the surfers ride the waves in the distance. We stayed for the sunset, enjoying the warm weather that is signature Hawaii during the evening hours.





We did luck out on great discounts on the flight, however in November we learned that they didn't have enough travelers to give a direct flight, so we got relayed up to Seattle to gather more people on the plane. To make up for it, we decided to add a day in Seattle to break up the flights and to venture around the north-west for fun.

We had the whole day, as our flight didn't take off until almost 7:00 p.m. We took advantage of the time to visit the Starbucks Reserve place where they make the magic coffee everyone seems to love. It was a two-story Starbucks with real food, coffee, and wine/beer and spirits as well. Very fancy with giant equipment meant to show you the brewing/roasting process. From there we walked to the harbor to see Pike's Market and the baseball/football stadiums. We found Pike's Pub and enjoyed a round of drinks and some fantastic clam chowder. We did a little shopping and then made our way back to the airport. It was amazing how much we saw in a one-day layover. We lucked out with an airport pick-up by Carol and Jeff to complete our tour back to Lemon Ave. As always, we appreciated their kind service to help us complete our travels.



Loreto Pueblo Mágico in Baja Sur

By: Carol Benesch & Margaret Riel

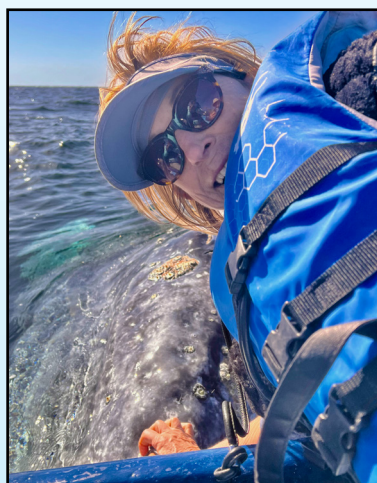
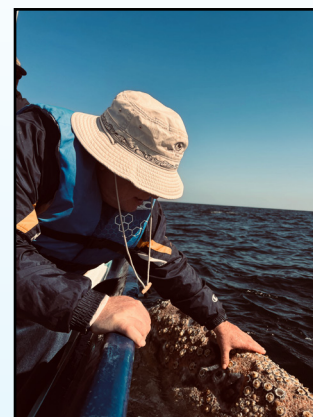
Jeff, Carol, Bud & Margaret, hopeful that the virus would be waning in the new year, planned a trip to Baja CA for a seaside adventure. While almost derailed by omicron, but armed with vaccines, masks and tests, we decided to risk the trip. Flying into Loreto was a magic glow of colors over the clear blue sea. We arrived in Loreto to find a mask-wearing culture that was attentive to covid precautions. Great for us (but not so good for Loreto), we found a lovely seaside community minus the tourists.

The clear highlight of the trip was experiencing whales from a small boat at a very close distance. Our hotel was on the Gulf side, so we had to drive across the peninsula to get to the Pacific Ocean. After a few days in Loreto, we headed out on a long but beautiful drive through the Sierra Gigante. Jeff did a great job navigating the many hairpin turns and got us there and back in one piece!! Carol had found a small family-owned whale touring company, Magdalena Bay Whales, that offered private tours and would take the 4 of us whale watching in a small boat (panga). Considering Covid, we thought this was a great option, little did we know how great it would be.



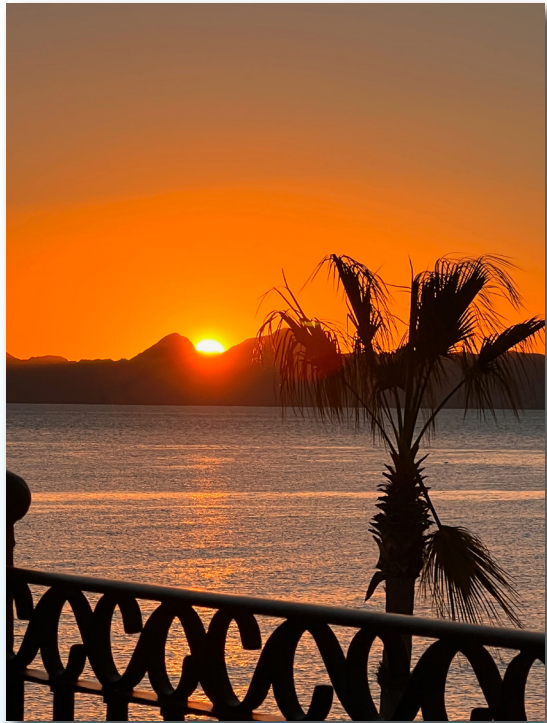
This was a second time for Jeff and Carol so when the boat headed north out into the open ocean, they feared this was going to be like San Diego where you see the whales from far off. On their last trip, it was a quick boat ride right into the lagoon to the breeding area. I'm not sure the boat driver understood their concern, but he continued at full throttle to the mouth of the bay where he assured us if we were lucky, we would see whales. Luck was with us. We spied another small boat with a whale next to it. As soon as we were close, the whale came over to check us out. The whale swam back and forth between the two boats. When he was alongside the boat, he was easily twice our length. When he swam under us, we could feel the lift, and then he would pop up right next to the boat with his sprays from the spouts surprising us and getting us wet. The boat driver assured us the whales would not flip the boat. And so, we rubbed and watched as the whale appeared at both sides of both boats in a steady pattern.

Then we saw some other boats in the distance and whale spouts and decided to move on. Our whale--we called him Barney as he was covered with barnacles--followed us as we checked out the other whales. With Barney, there were a total of three, another much bigger one we named Bluey and another average-sized one and 3 boats. The whales and the boats just kept circling around. We had ample time to pet, rub, take pictures of, and even kiss the whales. Our captain kept yelling, "beso! beso! beso!" kissing ballenas in Mexico is considered good luck. Margaret and Carol kissed a whale!! Our whale encounter lasted well over an hour and was amazing. It was so hard to see them as wild animals, there was no fear on either side. They seemed to be as interested in us as we were in them.



Loreto is famous for the first mission and having a car enabled us to drive up the rocky terrain to this 17th-century mission tucked in the Sierra Gigante mountains. We marveled at how such a huge and well-decorated church could have been built with hand tools. We saw the system of irrigation, huge olive trees that served the mission and it's still producing fields.

We toured nearby Coronado Island by boat, a marine preserve Island, with a stop on the island for a hike across, and saw sea lions, birds, and dolphins. Back in Loreto, we also enjoyed a Constitution Day concert with more performers than audience. At night we feasted on fresh fish at restaurants transformed into amazing dishes. There were no bad choices.



One adventure will be appreciated by our pickleball-playing siblings. If you don't know what pickleball is, you have that in common with most people in Loreto. Using the internet, we found one hotel with pickleball courts, but a phone call indicated a hotel guests-only policy. Another article spoke of a community-created pickleball court hidden down a dirt path behind an abandoned tennis complex originally built by the US tennis great John McEnroe. But these articles gave no address and google was not helpful. We stopped asking about pickleball, and asked people about the old tennis complex. Finally, a local could pinpoint the tennis complex on a map just outside of town. The tennis complex was locked, however around the back, we found the well-used dirt path, and after some walking, we heard the distinctive sounds of pickleballs. There in the middle of a desert was a fenced-in set of pickle courts with an invitation to play. We were able to get two afternoons of pickleball to offset a bit of the heavy eating and drinking that we were enjoying. The whirling wind provided both humor and cover for out-of-bound shots.

Our last morning, Carol enticed Margaret with sunrise photos, to join her for an early pre-sun morning walk that soon revealed a stunning display of sunlight, beach, birds, and shells. But also on the horizon, they saw a very large cruise ship. After a few hours, small orange boats started offloading tourists. Loreto woke up from the sleepy small town to fiesta time with the plaza filling with new table displays of souvenirs, food, & drinks, and everyone eager to be the first to welcome us. This gave us a quick glimpse of Loreto as a tourist destination. As we began our trip home, leaving Loreto to the growing horde of tourists, we were grateful to have experienced the magical beauty of Loreto without them.



FAMILY SHORTS



Happy Birthday Addy!



Happy Birthday Dave!



Brian and Drew did something that they are super excited about. They went ahead and purchased a new RV! Their pop up is just too small and they were tired of cranking it up and down! This takes care of all of that and more! Features a solar set up and bathroom and bunk beds and a queen size bed with AC and microwave!



Newest Member of the Kieth Family - Rookie