

Celebrating our 50th wedding Anniversary
Richard's 74th Birthday
November 1, 2015
AMA Waterways Boat Cruise
From Prague, Czech Republic to
Paris, on October 24, 2015 to
November 6, 2015

One week to the day, upon our return to Boulder, Paris was struck by ISIS terrorists leaving 129 dead and 325 injured. We feel very fortunate to have gotten out of Paris before the attack and travel turmoil. Since we had just been in Paris and had such a wonderful time in cafes and sightseeing we couldn't imagine what that attack was like for the City of Paris and France as a whole. Our hearts go out to all of the people there.

We were particularly excited about our upcoming boat trip to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary on the 6th of November. We had never been on a riverboat cruise so we were really looking forward to the new experience. Richard's birthday was on the 1st of November so we would also be celebrating his special day.



Kay Winburn Seale & Richard Seale celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary and Richard's 74th birthday – November 1, 2015

10/24/2015, Saturday – Day 1 of our trip (allowing for time and date changes).

Stephanie picked us up at 8:00 a.m. for our drive to DIA. We arrived at 9:00 and were on the 12:52 p.m. flight to Chicago. We arrived in Chicago at 4:15 p.m. and then headed to Brussels, Belgium at 8:20 p.m. We arrived in Brussels on Sunday, October 25, at 8:30 a.m. We departed for Prague at 4:35 p.m. and arrived in Prague at 5:55 p.m. All in all, our trip took 20 hours and 30 minutes which includes getting up at 6:30 a.m. in Boulder, driving to the airport and all of the connections between Chicago and Belgium.

10/25/2015, Sunday – Day 2 of our trip and Pre-Extension, Czech Republic

Welcome to Czech Republic and its magic capitol, Prague.

When we arrived in Prague, Czech Republic we checked into the Inter-continental – Prague hotel for a wonderful two nights and three days stay. Prague is the capitol of Czech Republic and is known as the historical “city of a hundred spires”.

Since this was our second visit to Prague we had ideas of exactly where we wanted to visit as well as just randomly enjoying our surroundings, with its restaurants, cafes and monuments. The legendary Charles Bridge was a must see as we ventured into the Old Town Square and the historic city which includes the Astronomical clock. The food, wine and beer were delicious.

Many buildings have been restored since World War II and it is a very modern city. WW II brought many suffering Jews to Czechoslovakia and, sadly, about 70% of the Jews became victims of the Holocaust. The Czech Republic broke with communism in 1989 to establish a new economy. Prague has become a major tourism site since and businesses are thriving.

10/26/2014, Monday, Prague – Day 3 of our trip and Pre-Extension

We went to Prague castle, one of the largest in the world, and the American Embassy along the way (which wasn't the way we had remembered it from our previous trip). Being different from our previous trip there was a barrier between the street and the door of the residence plus two armed Czech guards. Previously the guards were U.S. Marines! That was O.K. The guards

talked to us (more or less) at length about our previous visit and the fact that this location had always been the site of the embassy. We found that a little confusing as we had fond memories of a completely different entrance. We walked to many areas and visited UNESCO World Heritage Site and continued to enjoy a couple of Prague's cafes and bars.

10/27/2015 – Tuesday, Nuremberg – Day 4 of our trip, Day 1 of our cruise

We left our hotel and took a four-hour bus trip, with escorts, on the Autobahn to Nuremberg, Germany. Our tour guide told us that the average speed of cars on the Autobahn was 81 mph. However, luxury car manufacturers set their cars' speed limits to attain much higher speeds. After the bus trip our city tour included free time to explore the city, with its "fabulous Gothic churches, Coliseum, and elegant impressive city walls." We saw Zeppelin Field where Hitler held his infamous Nazi Party Rallies and the Imperial Place trial courthouse where the War Crimes Tribunal was held in 1946. Nuremberg was a strong player location for Hitler and was a hot seat of activity and the Nazi regime.

When the bus tour was over Richard and I stopped at a large authentic bier stube for lunch. I had a potato and mushroom bake and a side of "too sweet" sauerkraut. Rich had liver dumplings and gravy, with a couple of sides. We both had a local bier. I took a few sips and Rich was able to finish the rest. Pickings are slim here (as everywhere) for vegetarians.

On to Bamberg, Schweinfurt and Main River.

10/27/2015 – Tuesday – Day 4, of our trip, Day 1 of our cruise and first night aboard our boat.

Later in the day it was time to board our boat, the AmaLyra to begin our "Europe's Rivers and Castles" cruise down the Main-Danube canal. Wouldn't you know it, I began the trip with bronchitis and had terrible coughing throughout the trip. There was the mandatory meeting (muster/Captain's welcome party) and the event went on for an hour and fifteen minutes. They lost me after the first 15! I'm now in the cabin chillin' and I don't know where Rich is. I've texted him several times and he hasn't replied. Maybe he fell off the boat and I should report him missing to someone. Oh, well, since we are still tied up to the dock I won't worry.

The weather has been perfect and especially, for a Colorado girl, in the low to mid 60's and there was very little fog. I'm enjoying the views and at the tip top of some tree branches I saw a cormorant, with his wings spread apart drying them. Unfortunately, by the time I found my camera I was too far away to take a picture of him. Within ten seconds of my foiled attempt I saw three large white storks fly by, but their light colors faded into the sky so I didn't get a picture of them either.

On to Bamberg and Schweinfurt.

10/28/2015, Wednesday – Day 5 of our trip, Day 2 of our cruise

We were leaving the 327 mile long Main Danube Canal (with no less than 34 locks), to visit Bamberg. Bamberg is built in the middle of the river Regnitz. Old Town Bamberg was a beautiful village and an UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its well preserved buildings. Along the river we were able to “visit storybook German villages and experience the dramatic scenery of the Rhine River Gorge, lined with fortresses and mist-shrouded castles.”

We passed many incredibly steeply-terraced vineyards of the Mosel River Valley. We wondered how it was possible to harvest the grapes when the vines were planted in vertical rows from high above the hills to the river's edge.

Richard gave me my “50th Anniversary present after we finished dinner. It is an absolutely breathtaking Na Hoku Yellow Gold Le Vian Aloha Turtle Pendant with 0.65 Carats of White and Chocolate Diamonds and a delicate gold chain. I was thrilled to be able to wear it throughout our trip.

We are on our way to Wurzburg, Kitzingen and Main River.

10/29/2015, Thursday - Day 6 of our trip, Day 3 of our cruise

In the village of Wurzburg we saw its famed leaning tower. Legend has it that it was built during a wine festival and the masons used wine instead of water to mix the mortar, thereby causing the roof to lean.

The jewel of Wurzburg is the Residenz Palace, originally built for the Prince-Bishops of the Schonborn family. The Residenz of former Bishops, now a World Heritage site, was built to symbolize the wealth and power of the ruling Prince Bishops, both a church and secular ruler. This extraordinary baroque palace is one of the largest in Germany. We enjoyed the beautiful and expansive Court Gardens that adorn the palace grounds. Near the Residenz itself, the garden design is very formal and the style changes to an English Garden with small forests and meadows. We enjoyed the wines of the area, food tasting, and the village with its cobblestone streets.

Kitzingen Am Main is one of the oldest towns on the Main River. It is a beautiful little village and our guide couldn't have been any better. Kitzingen is famous for wines and has established a wine law against adulterated wine. Now, that is impressive!

After dinner, on the ship, we were surprised by a small group of little "dancing kittens" to celebrate Halloween. They put on quite a show for us and many of them danced to a beat of a different drummer. They were darling with their black cat costumes, black noses and whiskers. We were immediately welcomed by the Kitzingen Aulic Council and Wine Queens who invited us to visit their village and join them in one of Germany's oldest wine cellars. After the introductions we were ushered into town by the mayor and the Kitzingen Wine Queens. At the end of the plank we were met by a dazzling umpah band. We were immediately given the first of many tastes of wine and their wines were absolutely delicious. After enjoying wine and hors d'oeuvres in a large wine cellar we retraced our steps to hear songs being played by the brass and tympanic band once again. They played everything from Bon Jovi, Mama Mia, traditional German songs, etc. With it being a chilly evening there were heating lamps around the seating area. We enjoyed additional glasses of wine, for a long time. Mind you these glasses were small so many glasses to taste the wine was all right. Right!!

Last night an invitation was slipped under our cabin door inviting us to attend the Captain's table tonight for dinner. I told Richard that probably everyone had been invited, but when I looked at the invitation more clearly, I wondered about it. I asked our Activities Director who all had been invited and she said only us and two other couples. I asked if I needed to RSVP and she said no and that we were just expected to attend.

The Captain's Dinner

We dressed semi-formally and headed for the table. The Captain and two other couples formed the dinner party. It was a beautiful setting and the two other couples seemed very nice. I talked at length with the older gentleman who was sitting next to me during dinner. He spoke softly and yet joined into our conversation, without hesitating. I didn't know until later that he had been a highly decorated officer in the United States Air Force, during WW II. I think that it was the Army Air Corps at that time. Talking with him was such a pleasure. I found out that he had been a United States Ambassador and had lived in many countries around the world after WWII ended. It truly was a very memorable evening for us.

We sailed to Wertheim and Main River.

10/30/2015, Friday – Day 7 of our trip, Day 4 of our cruise

In Wertheim, one of the most picturesque villages on the Main River, smaller than the Rhine, our tour guide took us to a prized pretzel “bretzel” factory being run by the 17th generation of a family. The young boy in the kitchen, following his father's dedication to pretzel making, will be the 18th generation of pretzel makers. He already had a pretty firm idea of what it was to provide pretzels to perfection. We bought a red and a white bottle of wine that were in distinctive bottles called Bocksbeutel. The bottles have a short neck and a wide body.

Throughout the trip, there were many villages where buildings had measurements printed on their corners to show what the water level had been in previous flooding. The measurements began in the early past century right up until the last flooding in recent years. It was quite impressive. The flood waters that flowed along the rivers were 10, 20, 25 feet high. How amazing it was to think that the homes and stores could rebuild and were in use today.

Our tour guide indicated to us that we should observe the gold-colored bricks in many of the doorways. Each brick represented, by name and year, the family that had lived there when they were arrested and taken to concentration camps. We were told that no other Jewish people had ever moved back into the village.

On to Mainz, Rudesheim, Koblenz and Rhine River.

10/31/2015, Saturday - Day 8 of our trip and Day 5 of our cruise

Happy Halloween...Boo!! We wish that we would have thought about bringing costumes as a lot of other people on the boat had them.

We visited Mainz, Rudesheim and Koblenz, on the Rhine River going through the Main-Danube Canal and enjoyed tastes and sights of the region. UNESCO Rhine Gorge and cruised overnight to Cochem.

Because of the long wait, we decided to forgo visiting the Gutenberg Museum where the world's first printed Bible and so much more were stored. Instead we enjoyed Mainz's Old Town (birthplace of the printing press) with its narrow streets, Baroque churches, and half-timbered houses.

We docked in Rudesheim, most known for being one of the villages on the Rhine. Unfortunately, we missed visiting the Rudenscheimer Schloss in Drogelgasse where we could have enjoyed a cup of the area's popular strong coffee made with locally-distilled brandy, chocolate flakes and whipped cream (my personal favorite) and served in an authentic Rudesheim coffee mug and saucer. We'll have to construct such a coffee here at home. It sounds delicious.

We set sail to go through the famous Rhine Gorge with its many castles, then on to the Mosel River. Cochem, the fairytale village, Zell and Trier will be our next stops. These are the most scenic wine-growing villages along the Mosel River.

On to Cochem, Zell and Mosel River.

11/1/2015, Sunday - Day 9 of our trip and Day 6 of our cruise

Today is Richard's 74th birthday! Another invitation slipped under the Door last night.

We were invited, by some unknown entity, to enjoy dinner at the boat's upscale and semi-formal dining room. There were ten other tables of four. The couple who joined us were from New York City. The woman owned a travel agency right on Time Square, "with 80 agents," and was on our trip

to evaluate it for her business. Both the man and the woman were originally from Ukraine and were very interesting to talk with. To be truthful the man looked like he could have been with the Russian mafia. He was wearing a tailored black wool or cashmere suit, with a heavily-starched white shirt and lots of gold bling. I'm easily impressed, with a vivid imagination from reading all of those spy books.

The woman had escaped an Eastern Bloc country and moved to Israel with her family when she was six years old. Later she moved to the United States. People have such fascinating stories.

At the end of dinner the Chef, Sous Chef, Maître d', and servers arrived with a beautiful cake to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. We insisted that it be shared with all of the other diners. A few minutes later the same entourage of people arrived, with Richard's birthday cake. It actually was quite embarrassing, but such fun. The four of us ate the whole thing! Just kidding, but maybe we did! This was an evening to remember.

Unfortunately, however, I had forgotten my cell phone so was unable to take photos of all the exciting activities during the evening. I was so frustrated with myself that I had missed this historical photo opportunity that I could have just cried. It was terribly disappointing.

Our Chef is a member of Confrerie de la Chaine de Rotisseurs, the World's oldest international gastronomic society. He prepared the most delicious and beautifully-plated dinner that I, along with the other diners, had ever seen.

When we got back to our cabin we were in for such a surprise. Our cabin crew had decorated our cabin with a fancy hand-designed towel birthday cake sculpture as well as pinned up a happy birthday streamer. Richard had the best birthday ever and we will carry the memories with us always.

Overnight, in Trier and Zell.

11/2/2014, Monday - Day 10 of our trip and Day 7 of our cruise

We enjoyed the Moselle river and scenic views as we cruised to Trier and Zell. Trier is Germany's oldest city and considered the Pearl of the Moselle. There is a colorful history left behind by the Romans. Signs of the

Romans are everywhere. UNESCO World Heritage Site is here along with Porta Nigra Roman Baths, Amphitheatre and Trier Cathedral.

On the final night of our cruise we attended a cocktail party and the Captain's Farewell dinner.

On to Remich, Luxembourg and Paris.

11/3/2015, Tuesday – 11 of our trip and Day 8 of our cruise– Post Extension

This is the last day of our boat trip. We disembarked in Remich and headed to Paris via Luxembourg. In Luxembourg we had a city tour and then boarded France's famous high-speed TGV train (bullet train) which whisked us through the French countryside at speeds of up to 190 mph. Richard was excited! I worried about a cow crossing the tracks!!

Upon arrival in Paris, we checked in at the Montmartre & Illuminations, in Montparnasse. Situated in the south of Paris, the Montmartre became Renowned, in the latter part of the 19th century, as home to the burgeoning Parisian artist community. Since we have been to Paris several times we decided to venture out on our own and did. It was amazing at how many sights we were able to visit and enjoy without being part of a tour group. None of the famous sights were missed and we were able to enjoy wines, beers and delicious cuisine all along the way.

11/4/2014, Wednesday - Day 11 of our trip – Post Extension, Paris

More touring and especially enjoying walking along the streets and shops. This is where I bought my beautiful Miranda Konstantinidou necklace and earring set. Hey. What are trips for?

We attended a Parisian cabaret, "Paradis Latin", with a small group from our boat. It was so much fun. We met Augustine (the master of ceremonies and a mesmerizing transvestite) who taught us that there are three ways to say "Oh la la". Two of them are very spicy. We enjoyed a three-course meal with all of the champagne and wine we wanted. The servers told us how much we wanted! As they say, "tres Paris!" This is where our 50th Wedding Anniversary photo was taken. It turned out very good, as promised, and we will use it for our celebrations when we have

them in Boulder and California.

11/5/2015, Thursday – Day 12 of our trip – Post Extension, Paris

Our fun for today was enjoying the Paris cafes, pubs and restaurants, and the sights, as we walked along the Paris streets. We packed our suitcases (all four of them – two medium-sized and two large-sized) and put them outside our cabin door, then went to dinner and later, to bed. Sometime during the night the crew put our suitcases on the shuttle to the airport. We will get up early in the morning and wait for our number to be called to disembark and catch our shuttle to the airport.

On to Denver.

11/6/2015, Friday – Day 13 of our trip

Our 50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY and return flight to Denver.

It was quite a surprise when a chauffeur picked us up in a brand new Mercedes Benz (sounds like a game show, huh?) to take us to the airport. We were guests of the best tour ever as the driver took us all around Paris for a good hour to enjoy the sites, once more, before our flight left for Denver. Then it was “Au revoir!” We left Paris 11/6/2015 at 12:40 p.m.

On our way home.

11/7/2015, Saturday, Day 14 of our trip.

From Paris we arrived in Chicago at 3:10 p.m. and departed Chicago at 4:30 p.m. We arrived at DIA at 6:00 p.m. This timing includes waking up at the hotel, boarding the plane, connecting flights, plus about two hours to pick up baggage, and drive home to Boulder. Stephanie picked us up at the airport so that made things move along much more quickly-- we were very thankful for that. Our flight time was 16 hours and 45 minutes.

NOTES:

This trip began with a flurry of packing as we had been on several trips prior to taking off for this one. We didn't realize what a small cabin we would have on the boat and therefore packed four suitcases of clothes that would fit

in the space available for one. When we arrived at our cabin we both laughed out loud that there was so little space and we had so much to store. I opened two suitcases and tossed clothes out of each one saying “we need this” or “we don’t need this” until we only had one suitcase full of clothing and toiletries left. We were able to store all of our things and life was good. We were on an AMA Waterways boat trip. Unbeknownst to us, it turns out that AMA is one of the top rated boat lines. It really is a nice boat with a wonderful crew and good food, in that order. The only entertainment is a very good pianist. There are no singers, dancers or theatre. I like the fact that there is no excess, with little or no food wasted. I have not seen any truly obese people with plates full of food that they don’t eat.

We loved this small boat with 130 passengers plus crew. I’m feeling my German blood in my veins. Too bad that I can hardly remember any of the German language that I learned in my German classes around 1963 or so.

The boat seems to be for older-than-dirt people and there were no kids. Actually, it is quite nice and relaxing with only adults. Wine and beer are included with lunch and dinner meals. I only saw a couple of smokers, who were required to smoke outside in a designated smoking area.

This cruise has been the most low-key, land-accessible (excursions included), with good-food plus wine and beer served at lunch and dinner.

Our trip, from Prague to Paris was so beautiful, special and unforgettable in so many ways and we will never forget the fun that we had along the way.

Thank you, Richard for making it all possible and Happy United Airlines “Million Mile Club”. Yay!!!
