

## 2009 – A Year In Retrospect

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Well it's not quite Christmas yet but time to reflect on the year.



January kicked off with a family week at Center Parcs to celebrate Wendy getting her free bus pass (60th birthday). Unfortunately, Grandma did not make it, as Harold was unwell.

suddenly on February 1st.

February was in theory the highlight of the year. A months skiing in Salt Lake, a proper holiday, all psyched up for it and trained to peak fitness ready, but sadly we had to cut it short after a week as Harold passed away

Rest of February and March we spent organizing funeral and sorting out Harold's estate. Then at the end of the month, we spent a week caravanning in the Birmingham.

April saw us setting off to France for 8 weeks to escape the British weather. We spent 3 days in Paris, meandered down to Languedoc Roussillon, with a visit to the fantastic castle at Carcassonne on the way. What a lovely part of France, as usual spoilt only by the French. Montpellier is such a relaxing city, the campsites and beaches were wonderful. Certainly, we will be visiting again next year as there is so much more to see.



Mid June, we got back in time for Honey's 2nd birthday. Meanwhile Tony started using that 4-letter word "work" having joined a small Internet Company as a non-executive director – all of 10 flexible days work a year so it does not interfere with our "Belthorn Evasion Strategy".



July 1st we set off to the USA for a month's road trip. Started in San Francisco; then visited the wine country and sampled a few; up the East Coast through the avenue of the giants, stunning and ghostly. We spent July 4th in Eureka, grey and cool. Then we drove up the East coast of Oregon to Seattle, what a stunning coastline. Seattle was interesting, especially the Boeing factory tour. From there we drove down to Portland Oregon, what a fantastic city, our favorite city in the US.

Then we stayed for a week at a beach house in Waldport on the Oregon coast, what a great place with fabulous ocean views and a great place to relax after all that driving. Then drove down through Lake Tahoe and Mammoth Mountain followed by a stunning

drive across Yosemite. This has to be the most beautiful place in the US. Stunning, words cannot describe it. We finally got to see a black bear, in fact two seconds earlier and it would have come through the windscreen and sat on our laps. Yosemite was truly the highlight of the holiday the only pity was we did not have longer there. 4,200 miles later, we returned our car back to San Francisco and flew back to sunny England.

After 3 weeks at home in August, we set off for the South of France for 10 weeks. Beautiful weather and being boring we returned to last year's campsite in Frejus for 4 weeks. Also spent 2 weeks in sunny Provence, what a lovely region but that damned Mistral can get you down. Still anything is better than English weather.

End of October we came back to England and spent 3 days in our caravan in London in order to attend David and Polly's wedding. Then it was back to sunny Belthorn.

After 3 weeks of rain in November, we finally capitulated and booked a 12-day Caribbean cruise on the Butlins cruise HMS Wallace Arnold (Celebrity Equinox), on the theory that nothing can be as bad as the weather in Belthorn. Have to admit that the cruise was spectacular, very elegant and enjoyable, full of interesting Americans and far too much fantastic food.



Kurt finished his LPC in June and after yet another mini-break – only 3 months this time - started work in September as a trainee solicitor. He seems to be really enjoying it.

What of our progress against retirement plans? On the plus side, Tony has started archery; does the occasional yoga; making good progress in reading French, but needs to improve speaking or listening; some digital photography; and maintains our travel blog on our web site at [www.4uand.me.uk](http://www.4uand.me.uk). However so far he has not made any progress on learning German; Rambling / Famous Footpaths; touring the rest of Europe (too busy with France); ski job; house swap. Wendy has tackled cookery in earnest and loves her Remouska, we have fantastic food in the caravan; but has made no progress on family tree or photo album. We really need to revise our 5-year plan!

Next year as part of our "Belthorn Evasion Strategy", we have a month's skiing in February. From April we spend 10 weeks in France. July somewhere in the USA, if only we can agree upon where. Then back to France for 10 weeks August to October. Finally, if we have any money left, then we will do a cruise in November. With a bit of determined effort we might achieve Tony's target of 26+ weeks away from Belthorn.