



2013 Xmas News from Herrliberg, Switzerland.



History repeats itself - again.

Last year I wrote: "On December 14, we're hosting the Julefrokost.

We haven't really started the preparations, so I foresee a few busy days over the next two weeks."

Apart from the date, this year is no different, we're running a little late, again :-)

Julefrokost 2013 is the sixth. The first one in 2008, was quite honestly a bit of a scary undertaking, but with experience, the feeling of running a little late is not so worrying. We try to vary things a little bit, such as slightly different beer, slightly different snaps and such, but the menu stays more or less the same. However, it's not an undertaking to be underestimated, so every year Nadine records notes in a "lessons learnt" document. Too much food, bad timing, when to start, not to leave the snaps next to George for too long etc.

Last year we were paid two really nice compliments – independently, Jens and Katharina both said that the Julefrokost to them has come to signal the true beginning of Christmas, the point when one can start winding down and enter properly the Christmas spirit (no pun intended).

Mali. In December last year, our good friend Delia Lenoir acquired a new dog and named her "Mali". This may seem like a somewhat innocent event, but I can

assure it was not. Mali has taken our lives by storm (quite literally in fact). She is a spanish greyhound, and she's very fast. We think she is also very intelligent and communicative; you can even have non-verbal "arguments" with her (which she most often wins). I have already dogsat her a couple of times, and as Delia often brings her once or even twice a day, by now Mali feels very much at home in the house and in the garden.

Sometime mid January, **Nadine's gall bladder** started playing up again and she was eventually admitted to hospital to have it removed. It was meant to be minimally invasive keyhole surgery, but that didn't quite work out. Nadine spent a week in hospital, followed by three of weeks recuperating at home.

For **Sportferien** (winter school holidays) in February we borrowed George and Kat's apartment in Sagogn in Graubünden for a week. This was quite a departure from previous years where Nadine has done daytrips to Flumserberg. Getting away from

the office is always good, and it was really quite a relaxing week. Aksel attended the ski school at Laax, which he really enjoyed. In this area, the local language is Rumantsch, which is a mixture of Latin, Italian, French and German, possibly one or two other languages thrown in for good measure. In Migros and the other shops, one was frequently greeted with "Buon giorno".



Per & Mali in the garden

Medical update. Due to having converted my license a couple of times over the years, my Swiss license miraculously includes a commercial bus and lorry license, for which I am required to pass a medical checkup every 5 years. After my check-up in May, Dr. Dünner, our Hausarzt, looked a little worried when we were going over the blood work. "Look, your cholesterol isn't good, nor is your sugar level". I was given the option of starting on some anti-cholesterol drugs or lose some weight and start exercising regularly. So I promptly began daily walks, later on with jogging, up to 90 minutes a day. I also cut back my starch (e.g. white bread and pasta) intake, and in three months I managed to shed 13kilos and improve on the cholesterol levels quite significantly. With winter setting in, I've scaled back the exercise scheme, it's just too difficult to work up the enthusiasm. Fortunately, presumably due to my still staying away from starch, my weight has remained very steady, and when I occasionally go walking with Mali, I can still keep up a very decent pace.

Verein Herrliberg Plus . Herrliberg has a railway station with very good services in and out of Zürich all day until 00:30. There is a network of connecting busses, but the last regular bus is at 20:00, leaving people in a lurch when they arrive on the later trains. In 1987, the association *Verein Herrliberg Plus* (VH+) was founded with the

purpose of running a bus service with volunteer drivers, to take people from the station and straight to their homes every day

after the regular bus stops running (20:00) and until the last train (00:30). Sometime in March or April I decided to join VH+ as an active member, i.e. as a driver. The duty roster is published twice a year, so my first "run" was in August. With some 30 odd drivers, I have about one evening per month. The bus is parked at the Herrliberg fire station, to which I now have a key. I first met a bunch of the other drivers at the annual get-together at the Herrliberg Badhüüsli. To be honest, it was a little intimidating

joining this group of Herrliberg natives, but contrary to what one might expect, they were completely open and welcoming. I later went for a brief test run with my assigned group-leader, then joined a "run" with one of the other drivers to see how it worked. I've now done the drive four-five times, and have gotten to know most of Herrliberg quite well.

This summer we went back to **Anti-Paxos** for two weeks. Since last year, for whatever reason, Swiss no longer flies direct Zürich to



Aksel & Per in a taverna on Anti-Paxos

Thessaloniki. The alternative was flying via Vienna with Austrian, which, despite the extra hassle, was actually really nice. On Anti-Paxos, we spent one week in villa Violetta, the second in Villa Phoenikas. Katerina joined us a couple of days into the first week, and everything worked out really well. I kept up my daily exercise regime, which gave me ample opportunity to explore the island. On the south end, it has a lighthouse, built by French naval engineers in the 18th century. It is no longer manned, operating on full automatic, but the building is quite impressive even if essentially abandoned. In short, a stay on Anti-Paxos is unadulterated genuine relaxation, even if I need to check in with the office every day. We read, we do crossword puzzles, explore the island, go swimming, play cards and scrabble, go for a drink in the one local taverna that is open, lounge about on the beach watching the big yachts etc. It will come as no surprise to anyone that we're going back again in July next year.



After Anti-Paxos, **Nadine's mum Penny and Aksels' cousin Victor** came to stay with us for a couple of weeks. Among other things, we went to see the exhibition "Qin: The immortal Emperor and his terracotta warriors" at the Bernisches Historisches Museum. It was quite impressive. A few days later I needed to go back to Bern to pick up some equipment I'd bought on eBay, so I took Aksel and Victor along to go and see the Einstein Museum, a permanent exhibition at the BHM. Aksel was much taken in by it all, it's exactly the sort of thing he's really interested in.

Spamchek. After letting go of Herbert Rohr last year, it's been a bit quiet. Despite my initial plans to start looking for another salesman, I've been holding back, not really knowing which way to go. At the same time, I've put a lot of effort into Hostsuisse and DNS24, and Spamchek has been more or less running on auto-pilot. However, we did sign a 5-year contract with Marti AG, which was very welcome financially, and our resellers have also been quite active.

Hostsuisse. As I said last year, Holzmann's law always gets in the way - things take longer than you expect. Hostsuisse went on-line in September, somewhat later than anticipated. We have however already attracted some interest, four or five webhosting customers, and even three customers that have booked a dedicated server. Without advertising, this is quite encouraging. Edward Snowden and all the privacy hoo-hah has evidently put the focus on Switzerland (due to our very strict privacy laws). There is still quite a bit of work left though – admin interface, new network in January, UPS rewiring etc., but things are progressing steadily. We've not done any advertising so far, whether in print nor on Google, but I expect to look into it next year.

Herbstferien. We don't usually do anything in particular for the autumn school holiday, but this year we went to Rome. Nadine had some ancient air-miles long due to expire, which she used to book hotels. We drove down over two days, stopping in Lucca on the way down and in Firenze on the way up. Aksel was thrilled because the ancient Romans is one of his favourite topics. On the way back, we stayed in a hotel/vineyard about half an hour

outside Firenze.

It was a really nice trip, I suspect we might very well repeat the exercise next year, there is plenty more to be seen in Rome.



Nadine and I in Rome

New Christmas lanterns. We have long had a couple of largeish black lanterns (about 20x20x20cm), I think they may have been a birthday present some years ago. In winter, we usually hang them outside with a lit candle, but this has never really produced much light nor the right look. Last week we were throwing away an old IKEA lamp, when



Lantern

it struck me that I could quite probably reuse the bits to put some decent light in the lanterns. I tried out one or two things, and when I added an LED bulb, I had a very nice looking lantern. I got them both ready and wired up in time for the Julefrokost.

Christmas in Danmark. Yes, we're going to Denmark for Christmas again. I had the winter tyres put on the car in mid-November, one day before the first 15cm of snow, so we're ready for the journey north.



Well, that's all for now - as usual, I'll finish by wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

