

# Dear family and friends

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Now, the earth's rotation axis has again crossed the plan defined by containing the line between the earth and the sun and being orthogonal to the ecliptic plane - the year passed, the Mayan calendar ran out ... but life went on.

It has been a very eventful sun rotation. January was in many ways a new beginning and an end to many things: We started with a trip to Ole Roemer Observatory along with some of our friends and later we sold Jesper's father's house (he died on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011).

In February we were on the first "mini-family vacation" to Koldingfjord (a beautiful hotel that belongs to Charlotte's nursing union). We enjoyed taking walks in the winter forest - there was so much snow that the children could go dog sledding and afterwards relax in the hotel pool. In March Jesper enjoyed a field trip to Barcelona, Spain, where he looked at the mathematics behind Gaudi's architecture. In April, it was exactly 100 years since the Titanic sank and to follow up on the ups and downs of history, we drove on a "mini-vacation" to Berlin at Easter. It was a wonderful and somewhat exhausting, city vacation. We saw a lot of things. What has burned itself most clearly into the memory of us semi-adults was visiting the Holocaust Museum and the Bahnhof Berlin-Grunewald, where more than 50,000 Jews were systematically deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and to the concentration camp Theresienstadt. For the children it was probably the visit to Europe's largest water park that fills the memory. It is constructed in a building that once was a repair place for zeppelins. It was soooo big. There were sand beaches, parrots, pheasants and much more inside the water area.

In May, Noomi entered the West Danish Championship (VÅM) in swimming. She was very proud, because there are not many who are fast enough to enter. In June John went on a camping trip with his school to Sønderborg - it was strange to be at the train station as a parent and send him away (he had almost no time to say goodbye to his father). Also in May, Noomi was part of a music festival in Vordingborg. She had been looking for to this trip for a long time. Many famous music groups from Denmark played and gave autographs. There was also an amusement park and in the afternoons different school bands perform on the stage. Noomi performed with a band called "Stream city high" (it is direct translated into English of the name of our town (Åbyhøj... "Å" means Stream, "By" means city or town" and "høj" means high). It was great to stand in front of more than thousand spectators and sing their songs. Both Noomi and John had some great trips and they become more and more independent each year.

In June China's President Hu Jintao came to Denmark on his first official visit, and it put China on the Danish agenda ... and we were ready: Charlotte and Jesper have been studying Chinese language and culture for approximately a year and a half and this summer vacation we went to China and Mongolia for five weeks.



Figur 1 Our geir in Mongolia

The beginning of July was very in the sign of the Dragon and we were preparing our trip to China (although we must not forget that the scientists at CERN on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July announced that they had measured a particle which corresponded to the Higgs particle - the last piece of the particle physics puzzle (... does one hear an echo of the Titanic 100 years ago). However, we were in for a big surprise – something that we did not expect at all: On our wedding anniversary (the 11<sup>th</sup> of July) Charlotte and Jesper had invited each other out to eat in a small



Figur 3 In the trans-Siberian railway

town called Ebeltoft. Two days before that we had been on the internet and surfed around a bit and found a small cottage in Femmøller (a small town close to Ebeltoft) that looked interesting. We would just



Figur 2 On the Chinese wall

drop by on the way to restaurant. The house looked nice, and while we ate, we agreed to buy it. 10 days later (the day before we traveled to Mongolia) we drove to Ebeltoft and signed. It was a bit surrealistic to sit in the train early in the morning the day after on the way to the our biggest family holiday ever and remind each other that we the day before had bought a small cottage (approx. 40 m<sup>2</sup>) on a lovely spot in Jutland.

We were in Mongolia and China from mid-July to late August and experiences from the trip fills up our mind-streams. Our mental year is broken into two pieces; one before and one after our trip to Asia.

Noomi writes about the part-trip to Mongolia: "In Mongolia, we lived in a Gher (this is a traditional Mongolian tent) . The best thing about Mongolia was a three-hour long horseback ride in the country. We went without equipment through rivers and plains. At one point, my horse stood still in the middle of a river, and lifted its tail and farted, and when it went the opposite direction", and John thinks " It was fun to see the place where Mom and Dad had lived for 3 years and the culture in Mongolia. It was very different from what we are used to in Denmark. We were in the countryside where we lived in a small country hotel. We ate together with the other guest at the hotel - it was very cozy. The hotel was without electric power - I thought it was fantastic, but



Figur 4 Noomi in Shanghai

dad thought it was too primitive. Honestly - it's me who's a teenager... I should have been the one who grumbled. We were also out riding in the countryside. It was the best of the entire trip - untouched nature and the great open spaces".

We traveled from Mongolia to China with the trans-Siberian railway, and met with Hans and Anne Kirstine (a couple we always travel with during our summer holidays) in Shanghai. In Shanghai we were delayed due to a typhoon, which made the Chinese evacuate 1.800.000 people. It rained quite a bit, but we were soon of to west and southwest China. The whole trip was such a great and big experience that it is difficult



Figur 5 In the stone forest in Kunming

to write about. We came back home in August, the children started school. Now John is in the seventh grade, and has bygone learning French. He thinks that there is too much homework, but he is doing a great job. There are however also good things at school. They have just finished a week where he chose to study how the McDonald Company is operating. This was fun! Every Wednesday John works as an assistant to the swim coach in the local swimming pool. And he gets paid to work where.... he says "Jackpot"! Noomi is in fifth year and remains happy with both everything that has the school, her after school club and all

her friends.

When we came back from summer vacation we were all very curious to see what kind of summer cottage we had actually board – remember it all went so fast just before we left for China. It turned out that we bought a small house and approx. 6000 m<sup>2</sup> forest, and now we are listening us into how we can transform the area ... everything is possible, the world is changing. John writes about the cottage: "We bought a small cottage with a huge forest, it's great, but now mom and dad cut down too many trees, if you ask me, so it was a little better before they went crazy with the saw" .

In October we were back on a "mini-vacation" to Kolling Fjord, where we enjoyed some lovely days with excursions to Givskud Park and Danfoss Universe. In addition, we were of course a lot of days in our lovely cottage, a place that grows within us (... was there a world before we got our cottage?).

In November Charlotte was elected to the church council in Hasle (where we live). John and Noomi continues to swim three times a week – they now swim 4,400m (close to 3 miles) in only 2 hours. And then December came: We had almost all weekends filled with rather large dinner parties, but Jesper did have time to set up an experiment to measure the speed of light together with some of his most talented students. A night in December, Charlotte and Jesper decided to by a build in fireplace for our second living room and on the 19 December the craftsmen came and installed it. It is so great! We both love to sit and watch to fire and feel the heat streaming towards us.

Charlotte is still looking for Women Aglow Aarhus (a Christian women organization), but at the time of writing she does not know if Aglow in Aarhus will continue – she expects to know more about that early in the new year.

We wish you all a happy and blessed New Year, with thanks for all the wonderful moments we have spent together in the real face-to-face world as well as on Facebook, via Skype and on the phone.



Figur 6 On a river in south China

*Noomi and John, Charlotte and Jesper*