

ST.SOMETIMES



December 2015

V169

XMAS MENU

18

LUGANO TO ZÜRICH

Four stops, but for only \$100 on Swiss and German trains, not bad. Did I mention this was all on 1st class? Meet M&S at the Marriott.

22

BERCHTESGADEN

Rented a car with Matt and Carew. Autobahn a few hours. Visit Hitler. Go to see the latest "Star Wars VII" with Tracy and Matt. Kids with Stacy.

24

STUTTGART XMAS DAY 1

Goodbye to the Judd/Schneider family. Quick train to Stuttgart. Philipp and Moritz picked me up for Church. Then Presents!

25

STUTTGART XMAS DAY 2

Spent the day with Tini's mom. Relaxing day with a walk through the Wald (forrest) and a Christmas dinner of HirschGulasch.

26

STUTTGART XMAS DAY 3

Slept in. Went to an Italian Restaurant for lunch. Went to "Peanuts" auf Deutsch.

27

STUTTGART TO ZÜRICH

Another lazy, direct train to Zürich. Checked into the Limmathoff Hotel (as usual). First stop...Sternen Bratwurst! 3 Nights no plans.

30

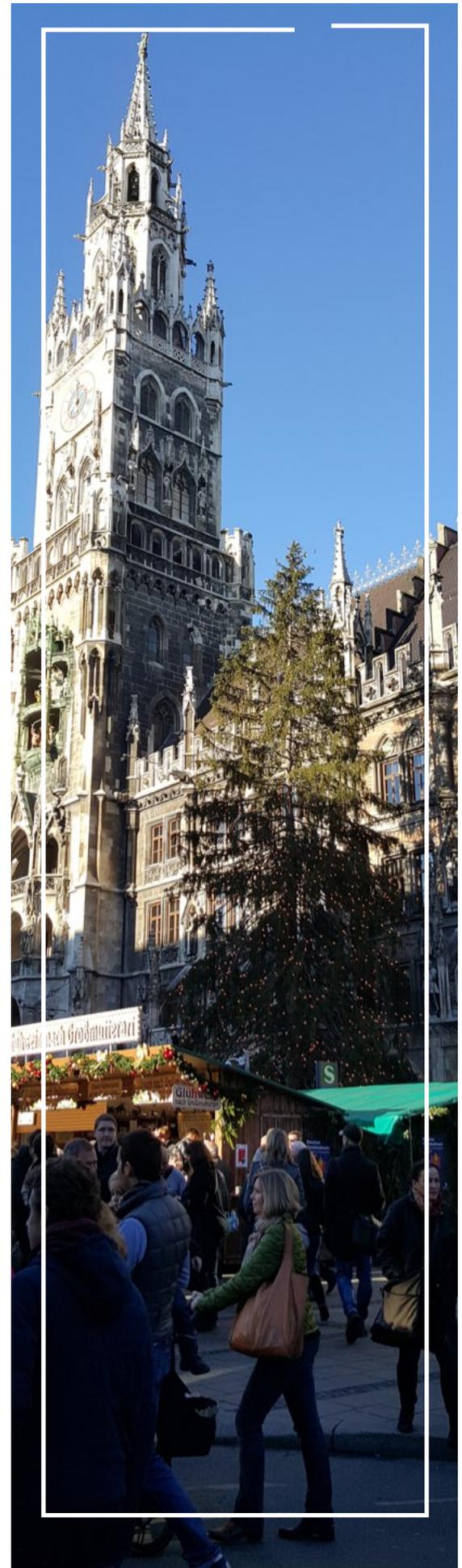
HOME

Head home on a direct train to Lugano. No specific plans until school starts again.

31

NEW YEAR'S EVE IN SCHWEIß

Typi non habent claritatem insitam; est usus legentis in iis qui facit eorum claritatem. Investigationes demonstraverunt lectores legere.



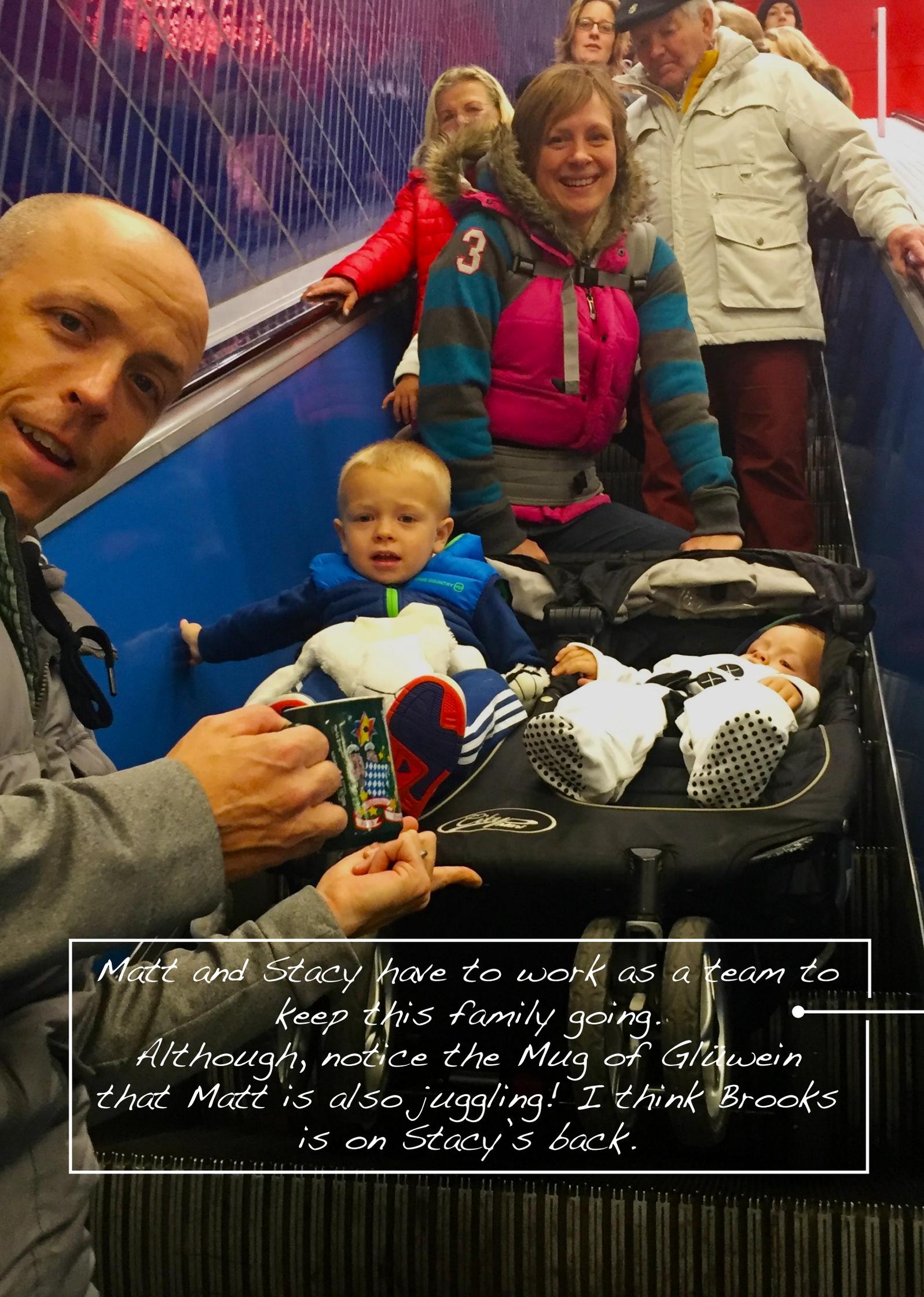
OH NO, KIDS!



I haven't seen Stacy, Carew, or Matt since I left Venezuela. This Christmas was a meet and greet in Germany, of all places. Their family has been living in Saudia Arabia since leaving Venezuela when I left. They have been trying like mad to get me into their school, but it isn't easy. The school is tough to get into, even though M&S say the schools are having trouble finding people to come to the Middle East recently. Here I am! For six figures, I'll teach and live there on a compound. That way I could complete a doctoral program in Educational Technology and not worry about how to pay for it. Besides this being their first time ever in Germany, getting me into their schools was the only topic. Now I'm excited about even the possibility.

Twins are such a handful! M&S are constantly juggling babies, clothing, food, bottles, and all the other baby stuff. The twins are 14 months old. Walker and Brooks are so identical, the only visible difference is a tiny birthmark on one of their arms. I cannot remember, but I think the one with the mark is Brooks. M&S always make sure to dress Brooks in Blue so they can tell them apart.

Carew, now 3yrs old, is always on hand to offer some brotherly love. His dad always reminds him that some day, he's going to regret hitting his little brothers so often. It will always be two against one and these twins won't be separated! My favorite quote on this trip was from Carew: "Daddy, which one is Brooks?" This was during a diaper change, with two naked babies crawling around.



Matt and Stacy have to work as a team to keep this family going. Although, notice the Mug of Glühwein that Matt is also juggling! I think Brooks is on Stacy's back.

KRANKENWAGEN



Germany has been a home to me since 1986. This was their first time to experience it. We stayed at the Munich Marriott, real close to the U Bahn stop called Nordfriedhoff. Most of the days followed a routine: breakfast, swim while the twins had their first nap, go out for lunch somewhere (including the famous Hoffbrauhaus), return for a nap, go out to the Christmas Markets, have dinner, go back to the hotel.

Tracy, a colleague/friend of theirs, drove down from Berlin to visit for two days. The extra person allowed for a little splitting up. I went out shopping with Stacy one afternoon. She just cannot spend any time shopping for herself if the twins are within reach. Matt took all three boys back to the hotel and Stacy went looking for a new pair of tennis shoes. Tracy is really cool. She has been in Saudi for five years, hanging in their for a sixth year so she can be officially vested



in the company! It's good to know there are SOME singles there.

Star Wars was showing at the theaters in English, in 3D, and some kind of SuperOutOfThisWorldDolby sound. Tracy, Matt, and I went to the 10:25pm showing. Wow. What a great movie!

Matt has to modify his bucket list! Matt, Carew, and I rented a car for a day and went to Kehlstein and Berchtesgaden (the Adolf Hitler retreat known as the Eagle's Nest). The Eagle's Nest is closed from October to May but we were able to get into the bunkers, see the museum, and see the ruins of Hitler's hide out. Amazing. I recommend it for any WWII buffs out there. Matt was speechless.



PHILIPP SCHWARZ



Pauline 6 1/2 yrs old

Another Brother? A History

I was an exchange student in 1986 for an entire year with the Schwarz family in Berlin, Germany. The oldest sibling is Julia. She was in Nebraska for the year. I lived in her bedroom. Philipp is a year younger and Jakob was a few more years younger.

Two years after my exchange year, Philipp went to live with my family in Green Bay for a year. He graduated with my brother Jason, from Abbot Pennings High School.

I went back in 1990 to visit Philipp and the family for Christmas. Later, in 2008, Philipp married Tini and I went to the wedding all the way from Cambodia. In 2013, when I moved to Switzerland, I was able to spend Christmas with Uta, my mother in Berlin and see Philipp's family. This year I got to see them again.

Moritz 4 1/2 yrs old



Philipp and Tini offered to let me join their family for a few days over Christmas, so I trained it over to Stuttgart for the third time in my life to celebrate the three days of German Weihnachten - the 24th, 25th, and 26th of December.



I left Munich on the 24th as Matt and his family got on a plane back to Saudi Arabia. I simply bought a first class train ticket from Munich to Stuttgart via Ulm. Philipp and Moritz met me at the train station and we went directly to church. I never thought I'd end up in a church in Germany again. It was so weird, and Philipp even mentioned this to me, that someone besides Philipp's father was playing the organ during the service. You see, Philipp's father (my exchange father) was a chorus leader and organ player. This was weird for Philipp and I.

Right after church was presents. I had to sneak into the bedroom and quickly wrap their presents. Should've done that before, but I forgot they open presents on Christmas Eve. Present time was a blur. Moritz and Pauline went through all of their gifts in a heartbeat. In a few moments, all of the toys were being put together between a pile of wrapping paper and bows.

Philipp and Tini prepared "abend Brot" - dinner - while the kids were playing with their new toys. It's been a while since I sat around the table eating dark bread, assorted meats, cheeses, and nutella. I love it.

The other point of interest was the candles on the tree. Philipp and his family still hang on to the tradition of a real tree and lighting real candles on Christmas Eve and Christmas day.

Thank you Philipp, Tini, Moritz, and Pauline. I had a wonderful time!

FRÖHLICHE WEIHNACHTEN

Christmas Day 2015 was spent at Tini's family house. Tini's mom is not doing too well. I wasn't told specifically what illness she has, but she is certainly in a wheelchair. You can see her in the photo between Philipp and Tini. The other woman is the live-in helper that takes care of her.

Tini was the star of the day. She cooked a HirschGulasch - Venison Goulash - with a potato salad, cranberry sauce, and red cabbage. It was so delicious! While Tini was cooking the celebration dinner, Philipp and I took the kids for a walk through the forrest just a few blocks

away. If you haven't gone on a walk through the forrest in a while, do it. There wasn't any snow. It was warm. The kids didn't even want to wear their jackets. No problem. It was a chance for Philipp and I to hang out and we got the kids out of the house.

The plan is for Tini's mom to be in a home soon. The nearby home has an opening and she really needs to be fully cared for. We stayed for most of the day after the wonderful Goulash meal. It was a real pleasure to meet Tini's mom for the first time. I hope she is safer and healthier in her new home.



I stayed on with the family for another two days. We spent the 26th sleeping in. Of course, the kids wake up a little earlier, so I put together legos and put together puzzles with them before breakfast. We went to an excellent Italian restaurant for lunch. They even let me pay for it. Then we took a short train ride and a walk downtown to the theatre. The new "Peanuts" movie was playing and everyone wanted to see it. I have to admit, I slept through some of it but I

loved the animation. It was easy to understand the German because I was acclimated after eight days!

Philipp and I got a chance to sneak out one night for a beer at a local bar. It was the first chance he and I have had a one on one time. We shared stories about life, work, and family. Naturally, the memories of years past came up. Those four hours went by so fast. Before I got on the train, Philipp and I made a tentative plan to meet in the USA summer of 2017.



•—HAPPY—

•—NEW—

—YEAR—•

2016