
SEASON'S

GREETINGS



Christmas, 2023

**Here, There, and Everywhere...
If its Tuesday, this must be Armenia.**

Last year's letter left off with us going to Cape Town, South Africa to work on some new products with a friend there. But, our friend had a family emergency so our business trip turned out to be almost entirely just working on some of our own things in our rented room. We did get a new product designed for our company and ordered parts to be delivered to us back in Russia.

After South Africa, we went to Istanbul for 3 months, to complete getting our Vanuatu citizenship which we began in Cape Town. The process was not too complicated, but it was lengthy and expensive. We also got the remainder of the money from the sale of our house in California and tucked that into a Turkish bank.

In June we went home for a couple of weeks to get a lot of needed paperwork done, then we flew off to spend what we thought would be a couple of months in Armenia. Since Russia stopped renewing long term visas, we can only be home for 90 of every 180 days. Or, so it was in June. We then found out the rules were changing and now we couldn't return until 90 days after the last time we exited, no matter how long we were in Russia. We extended our stay in Armenia and then returned home in mid September.

While in Armenia, we renounced our American citizenship. That was an enormous relief, more so than we had imagined. We looked into getting Armenian residency which might help some things, but... the rules changed in June and so now we couldn't.

Back at home we mostly worked on repairing a defective drain in the downstairs shower and finishing the sauna room. Before the room didn't have a finished ceiling or a door and we got cold drafts from the attic. Now the room has insulated walls, an insulated ceiling, and a temporary door, but the wood paneling hasn't been done yet. We also made a nice storage area over the sauna ceiling. You can never have too many storage areas. Saunas need to have air ventilation and a vent shaft was built into the house wall for this. Only, we just found out that it stops

in the attic, due to regulations you need a sauna expert install the vent cap on the roof and connect it to the vent shaft, so that is not yet connected. But, enough is completed to be functional so we've started using the sauna as-is and will finish it when we return next year.

Every night we've been having a fire in our fireplace. Our house heating system keeps this place warm for very little money, but the fireplace is cozy and nice to sit in front of. It also heats the lower floor with only a small amount of wood.

So, where are we going for our next non-vacation trip? Well, we rented a room near the sea in Abkhazia, a half day train trip from here. We arranged for intense tutoring in Russia while we were there to improve our communications.

THEN... we heard from Abkhazia immigration that due to recent events with Georgia, the rules were changed and our visa would only be for 30 days. This posed a serious problem, the only practical way in/out is through Sochi, Russia. But once we leave Russia we can't return for 90 days. If we can't stay in Abkhazia for more than 30, and can't enter Russia for 90... what to do?

After a panic search for places where we could spend 3 months of holiday season that didn't cost a fortune, we settled on Armenia, but a different place from last time. This place is less remote than the last one and has somewhat better heating since we'll be there all winter. We would have liked to go back to Istanbul but... they've changed the rules and we can only get a 30 day visa. We may still cut the Armenian stay short and spend some time in Istanbul on the way home in order to handle some banking issues. We'll have to see what the rules are when the time gets closer.

Now, here we are just outside of Yerevan in mid December. Even though we are further south, it's a bit colder here than back at home, as we are much further inland and at a much higher elevation (4,000 ft, 1,220 m) surrounded by snow covered mountains.

Telegram Blog: https://t.me/Becoming_Russians

Links to travel photos:

Uzbekistan: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2022_Uzbekistan/

Moscow: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2022_Moscow/

Istanbul: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2022_Istanbul/

and again: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2023_Istanbul/

Pskov: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2022_Pskov/

On the Road Again:

https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2022_On_the_Road_Again/

Armenia: https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/2023_Armenia/

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Pictures of the house from bare land to now with some photos from our recent stay at home:

https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/Our_New_Home/



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