

In a few days, it's time for the next Creahan Family adventure. It's been a while since the last major adventure, and this one is reversing the trend of the adventures getting shorter. Having teenagers doing NCEA makes it difficult to disappear overseas for longer periods of time. The last long adventure was 8 weeks in 2012, back in the distant days when I was taller than both kids and neither of them had made it to College. Since then we've had the USA winter adventure (4 weeks) and spring in Japan (3 weeks), along with a good number of shorter breaks closer to home. When the downward trend in the length of holidays was mentioned by the kids, I pointed out that they had also been getting closer together, and reminded them just how fortunate they are to have travelled so much.

With university and school holidays out of sync, the only option for a longer trip was the summer school/uni break. We've always wanted to take the family back to Scotland and spend Christmas with Jo. That seemed like the ideal excuse to head to Europe and add on some other adventures. Most people would consider winter a bad time to visit Europe, and we explored all sorts of options to minimise the cold. While Southern Europe would be warmer, it's also often wet. And it just didn't feel right to visit places like Greece and Southern Spain unless it was hot. In the end we decided to embrace winter and experience how people go about ordinary life in the dark cold winters.

So, we may be mad, but we're swapping a good chunk of a NZ summer for the cold dark winter. We are leaving NZ looking like this (although this was taken a few weeks ago and it hasn't looked so much like this lately!)



and heading to places with weather statistics like this...

MONTHLY - WEATHER AVERAGES SUMMARY BERGEN

Average Temperature

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
C	7.6	1.3	1.5	3.3	5.9	10.5	13.3	14.3	14.1	11.2	8.6	4.6	2.4

Average Number of Days With Precipitation

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Days	274	27	21	23	21	20	19	21	22	24	25	25	26

Average Length of Day

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Hours	13.3	7.7	9.9	12.6	15.5	18.5	20.6	19.3	16.4	13.5	10.8	8.3	6.9

Thanks to understanding bosses and modern technology allowing some remote work, I've managed to stretch it to seven weeks. Andy will have five weeks and joins us in Edinburgh just before Christmas. We've stocked up on merino and down clothing and are almost ready

to go. While most people think we are a bit crazy, a few that have done similar trips think it's a great idea. We're looking forward to the Christmas Markets and the many winter events that are on to brighten up long dark nights, and very excited about seeing friends and family across the world.

Our travels will take us through a dozen countries - ten European countries and a stopover each way in Los Angeles and Hong Kong. We've all been to some of the countries before, but there are new ones for all except Andy. Anna is excited about returning to Norway after her visit last year, although it might be a little different in the winter (it never got dark during her time in Bodo!). Matt is especially looking forward to Rome and our Austrian ski week. Andy has a stopover in Berlin on his way to meet us in Edinburgh, which is somewhere he's wanted to return to for a long time (we last visited in the early 90s soon after the wall came down, so it will be very different now). I'm just excited about everything!

We leave late on Wednesday December 5th, heading to Los Angeles. I'll do my best to blog on a regular basis, although there may be some delays as I juggle working and playing tourist. I'll sign off with a photo of Andy's suitcase. On returning from a recent trip to the USA, he left Auckland Airport with someone else's suitcase, and is determined that will never happen again. He has transformed his generic black suitcase into a unique masterpiece with the help of some marine paint left over from the submarine he built. He was especially proud of his suitcase after being told by a baggage handler on his next trip to the USA that it was the best suitcase he had ever seen! Not everyone in the family appreciates its beauty, I'll let you judge for yourselves.

