

Land Tour – Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary & Danube River Cruise

(October 16, 2014 – November 3, 2014)

This year has certainly been a year of travel for us. It began with a trip in February/March to South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Then in May/June we traveled in our camper for eight weeks on National Park Trip #1 to numerous parks in South and Eastern United States, and also spent a month with family in Pennsylvania. We continued our camping journey in July/August with National Park Trip #2 to parks in the west and northwest US, and now this trip to Europe in October. These trips have been incredible, interesting, educational and fun. As someone, long ago, once said: *“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only the first page.”* Visit my travel web site to read reports and see pictures of each of the trips mentioned above. <https://careystravelsite.shutterfly.com/>

Let me begin this report with “why” we chose to visit these countries.

1. We’ve never been to any of these countries before.
2. We were interested in learning more about Europe’s famous castles, churches and palaces.
3. We wanted to visit the sites of World War II and learn more about the atrocities of Hitler and the Third Reich.
4. We were never on a river cruise before. We chose this one because of its association to the “Sound of Music” movie location (Salzburg, Austria) and the lure of the Danube river.
5. I wanted to see the country where my ancestors came from – Germany.
6. Last, but not least, we were flying to Europe from New York, so we wanted to visit the September 11th Memorial and the World Trade Center site in New York City.

So let’s begin with the visit to the 9-11 site. There are three separate attractions. One is the September 11 memorial, another is the museum dedicated to the victims of the tragedy, and the third is the now completed, new World Trade Center Tower #1. Visiting here brought back sad memories of the event, along with hope for the future, as one new tower now rises above the ashes of the old.



Entrance to the site



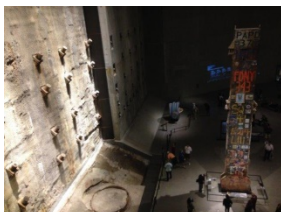
September 11 Memorial



Memorial Museum



Fire Engine – Ladder 3



Scarred Wall – Original Bldg



Pictures of Victims



Lady Liberty – Tribute



New World Trade Tower #1

We flew from New York's Kennedy airport to Frankfurt, Germany, and then transported by bus to our hotel in Mainz, Germany where our land tour began on Saturday, October 18. Since there was 7 hours difference we were given the afternoon to relax and recoup from jet lag. That night we were given a welcome drink, dinner and a briefing of what the tour included. We also had time to mingle with the other 37 people who would be traveling with us on Bus #1. There were a total of 80 people on this tour, traveling in two separate buses.

Sunday morning, October 19th began with a 4 hour cruise on the scenic Rhine River. The weather was cold and foggy for the first hour, but then the sun burned off the fog and the balance of the day was beautiful. Along the river we saw hilltop castles, terraced vineyards, and villages of timber framed house; and passed the famous Lorelei rock where, legend has it, the Lorelei siren bewitched sailors passing by in medieval times.



Lorelei Rock

In the afternoon we traveled to Heidelberg and toured the imposing ruins of the Heidelberg Castle which was originally built in the 12th century. This castle stands as a dominant symbol of the city.



Heidelberg Castle from the Old Town

Another view of the castle ruins

In the castle courtyard

Old Town is an area in the city of Heidelberg which is a combination of old and new buildings, narrow streets, market squares, arts, history, science, shopping, eating and relaxing places where locals come to shop and socialize.

We had dinner that night at one of the famous local restaurants – the Schnitzelbank.



Entrance to the Schnitzelbank



Donna enjoying her dinner



“Old Town” in Heidelberg

The next day we headed south on a scenic drive through the famous Black Forest region, stopping to buy a “cuckoo clock” along the way, then on to the Rhine Falls – one of Europe’s largest and most powerful waterfalls.



Lots of cuckoos



Demonstration on how they're made



We bought this one



Rhine Falls



Carey/Donna in front of the falls



Close up of the island at the falls

That afternoon our bus drove into Switzerland where we stayed at the Europa Hotel in Lucerne for two nights. Lucerne is a city in north-central Switzerland, in the German-speaking portion of that country. With a population of about 76,200 people, Lucerne is the most populous city in Central Switzerland. Due to its location on the shore of Lake Lucerne, within sight of Mount Pilatus in the Swiss Alps, Lucerne has long been a destination for tourists. We walked on one of the city's famous landmarks - the Chapel Bridge (*Kapellbrücke*), a wooden bridge first erected in the 14th century, and our tour included a ride on the cog railway up to Mt. Pilatus – the steepest cog railway in the world. We also had an opportunity to view the Lion Monument of Lucerne which commemorates the Swiss Guards who were massacred in 1792 during the French Revolution, when revolutionaries stormed the Tuileries Palace in Paris.



-----The Chapel Bridge (*Kapellbrücke*) -----



----- Mt. Pilatus Cog Railway -----



Climbing to the top of Mt. Pilatus



View from the top



Lion Monument of Lucerne



Carey & Donna in front of Monument



Detail of Monument

Mark Twain praised the sculpture of a mortally-wounded lion as "the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world." The Lion lies in his lair in the perpendicular face of a low cliff — for he is carved from the living rock of the cliff. His size is colossal, his attitude is noble. His head is bowed, the broken spear is sticking in his shoulder, his protecting paw rests upon the lilies of France. Vines hang down the cliff and wave in the wind, and a clear stream trickles from above and empties into a pond at the base.

On Wednesday morning, October 22, we drove through the tiny country of Liechtenstein which is sandwiched between Switzerland and Austria.



View of the Alps on the way to Liechtenstein - Carey at the border



Donna's favorite store in Liechtenstein

The rest of the day was spent driving to Innsbruck, Austria. We crossed the Alps and experienced our first snowfall along the way. We stopped at a local truck stop for lunch and desert.



Crossing the Alps



Snow along the route



Truck stop on route to Innsbruck



Inside the truck stop



Soup for lunch



Lots of desserts to choose from

We arrived at the site of the 1976 Innsbruck Winter Olympics late in the afternoon; took some photos then headed to our hotel for the evening. These were the first Olympics held following the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 summer games in Munich, so security for the Innsbruck games was much more rigid. At the base of the Olympic ski jump is a famous church, the Wilten Basilica, one of the most visited attractions in the city. The interior of the church is a kaleidoscope of soft colors, gold and a lavish rococo stucco by Franz Xaver Feichtmayr and Anton Gigl. The elaborate ceiling murals by Matthaus Gunther depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. The sandstone figure depicting 'Our Lady Under the Four Columns' on the high altar has been the object of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages.



Innsbruck Olympic Ski Jump



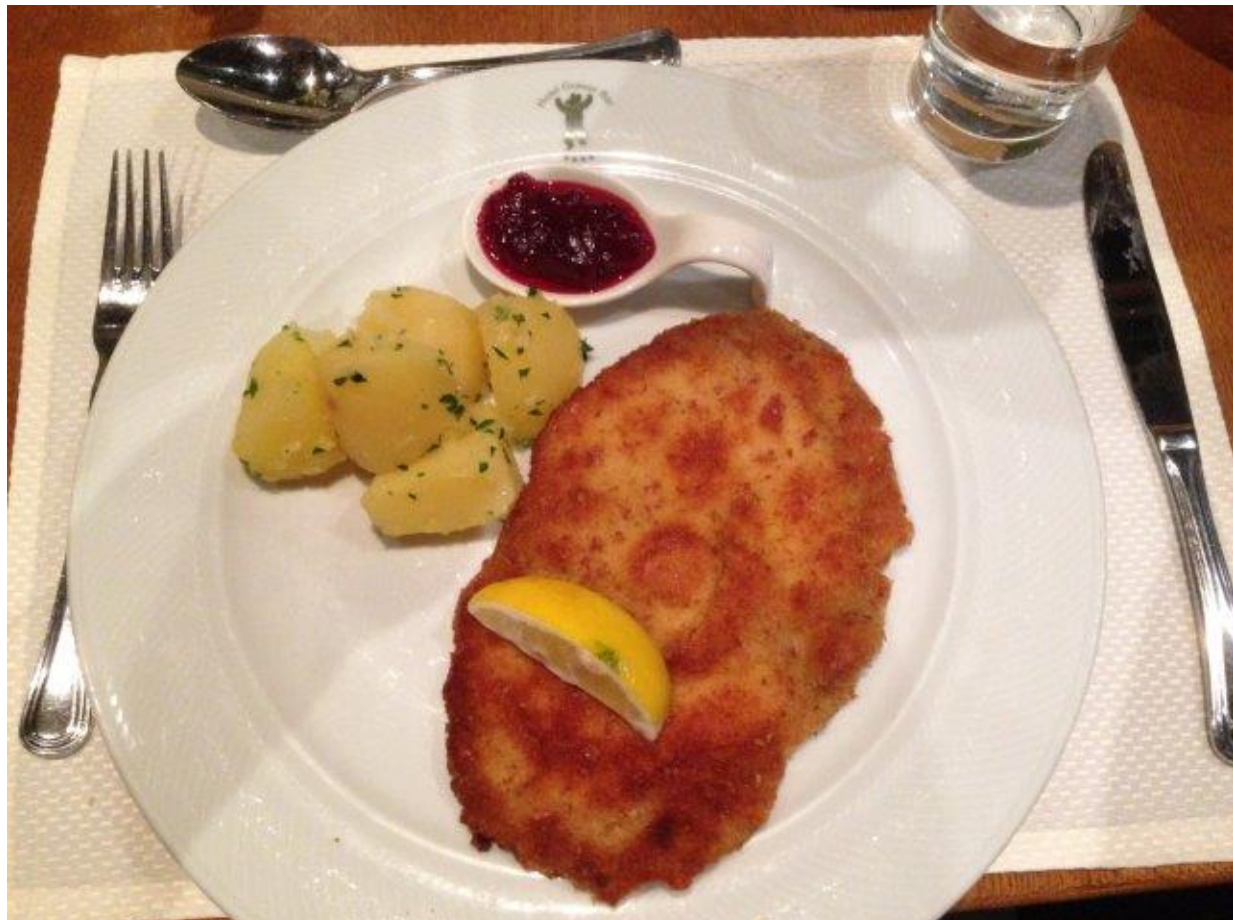
Wilten Basilica in Innsbruck, Austria



Inside the Basilica



For dinner that night we had - **Wiener Schnitzel**, which is a very thin, breaded and deep fried schnitzel made from veal. It belongs to the best known specialties of Viennese cuisine. The Wiener Schnitzel is the national dish of Austria.



On Thursday, October 23 we were taken through some incredible alpine scenery, with lots of snow, to visit Bavaria's "Mad" King Ludwig's fantasy castle of Neuschwanstein, perched high above the valley below. The castle was intended as a personal refuge for the reclusive king, but it was opened to the paying public immediately after his death in 1886. Since then more than 61 million people have visited Neuschwanstein Castle. More than 1.3 million people visit annually, with as many as 6,000 per day in the summer. The palace has appeared in several movies and was the inspiration for Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle and later, similar structures. The opulence within the castle was overwhelming.



On the way to the castle – heavy snow



View from the bridge



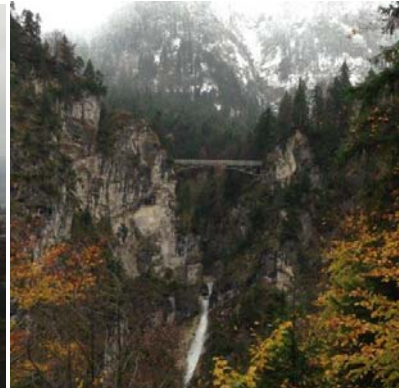
This is what it looks like on a clear day



We were not allowed to take pictures inside.



A closer view of the castle



Looking at the bridge from the castle

After the tour our bus drove to Salzburg, home of Mozart, and the place where the movie – *The Sound of Music* was filmed in 1964. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era. He composed over 600 works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, chamber, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers, and his influence on subsequent Western music is significant. ***The Sound of Music*** is a musical with music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and a book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. It is based on the memoir of Maria von Trapp, *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*. Many songs from the musical have become modern classics, such as "Edelweiss", "My Favorite Things", "Climb Every Mountain", "Do-Re-Mi", and the title song "The Sound of Music". The movie was released in 1965 and starred Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer.



Statue of Mozart in the town square



Mozart's Home



Typical street in Salzburg



Locks are put on the river bridge by couples to signify unity in marriage



Typical market stand in Salzburg



They sell lots of soft pretzels



----- Various filming locations in Salzburg for the movie – The Sound of Music -----



Later that day we traveled to Munich, Germany – home of the 1972 Summer Olympics, the Nymphenburg Palace and, on a more somber note, Dachau Concentration Camp – made famous by Hitler and the Nazi's of the Third Reich.

We arrived in Munich mid-afternoon, allowing us only a few hours to visit the Dachau Concentration Camp. We boarded the subway, then a local bus to get to the site and were able to spend an hour or so viewing the camp and trying to understand the atrocities that took place here during World War II. This was the first of the Nazi concentration camps opened in Germany, intended to hold political prisoners. It is located on the grounds of an abandoned munitions factory near the medieval town of Dachau, about 10 miles northwest of Munich. Opened in 1933 by Heinrich Himmler, its purpose was enlarged to include forced labor, and eventually, the imprisonment of Jews, ordinary German and Austrian criminals, and eventually foreign nationals from countries that Germany occupied or invaded. It was finally liberated in 1945. Prisoners lived in constant fear of brutal treatment and terror detention including standing cells, floggings, the so-called tree or pole hanging, and standing at attention for extremely long periods. There were 32,000 documented deaths at the camp, and thousands that are undocumented. On April 14 Himmler ordered the evacuation of the camp and the extermination of all inmates at Dachau, writing, "No prisoners shall be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy alive." Approximately 10,000 of the 30,000 prisoners were sick at the time of liberation.



----- Dachau Concentration Camp -----



The gas chamber was the site of potential mass murder. The room was disguised as showers and equipped with fake shower spouts to mislead the victims and prevent them from refusing to enter the room. During a period of 15-20 minutes up to 150 people at a time could be suffocated to death through prussic acid poison gas – Zyklon B.

Dachau was the concentration camp that was in operation the longest from March 1933 to April 1945; nearly all twelve years of the Nazi regime. Dachau's close proximity to Munich, where Hitler came to power and where the Nazi Party had its official headquarters, made Dachau a convenient location. Together with the much larger Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, Dachau has come to symbolize the Nazi concentration camps. Dachau lives in public memory as the second camp to be liberated by British or American Allied forces. It was one of the first places that journalist accounts and newsreels revealed to the rest of the world.

The following day we visited the Nymphenburg Palace - the main summer residence of the former rulers of Bavaria. Bavaria is one of the states within the country of Germany. The Palace is huge with a garden equally as big.



----- Nymphenburg Palace & Grounds -----

In the afternoon we were transported by bus to Linderhof Castle – the smallest of the three palaces built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria and the only one which he lived to see completed. Then to Oberammergau – a town made famous by their Passion Play held every ten years. The Passion Play is a dramatic presentation depicting the Passion of Jesus Christ: his trial, suffering and death. It is a traditional part of Lent in several Christian denominations, particularly in Catholic tradition. About half the inhabitants of Oberammergau took part in the Passion Play in the year 2010. This means that over 2,000 villagers brought the story of Jesus of Nazareth to life for the audiences that flocked in from around the world. In according with tradition, the play started with Jesus entering Jerusalem, continuing with his death on the cross and finishing with the resurrection. As ever, this was an extraordinary community enterprise. This has been the main focus of the town and its inhabitants since 1634.



Linderhof Castle – Front View



Garden Terrace – in Front of Castle



Garden Terrace – Behind the Castle



Passion Play Theater – Exterior



One of the Sets from past years



Passion Play Theater – Interior

Today was the final day of the land tour, so we had a group dinner at one of Munich's local restaurants. Tomorrow we board the MS Sound of Music river boat for a 7 day cruise on the Danube river. This ship is a deluxe river cruise vessel chartered exclusively by Gate 1 Travel (our tour host). Built in 2007, with a maximum capacity of 128 passengers, the ship features 64 spacious outside cabins each fully air-conditioned with private bath facilities, shower, telephone and flat screen satellite TV.



Final land tour dinner in Munich



Apple Strudel for dessert



Boarding the MS Sound of Music

We were originally scheduled to board the ship at Nuremberg, however due to high water from heavy rains during the previous week, the ship could not get under the bridges, so we boarded at the next town – Regensburg. Meals on board, room facilities and ship amenities were fantastic and the crew was friendly, helpful and available to answer any questions about any of the destinations along the way. Each day we went on a tour of the city where we docked, and had an English speaking guide to tell us about the history and culture of the area.

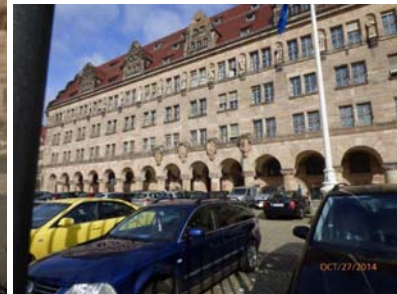
Cruise – Day 1 (Monday – October 27) – We boarded a bus that took us back to Nuremberg for a city tour which began at the Palace of Justice where the War Crimes Tribunal met in 1946, followed by a visit to Hitler’s parade grounds, the sight of the famous Nazi propaganda gatherings, then some time at Market Square where Germany’s most famous Christmas Market is held.



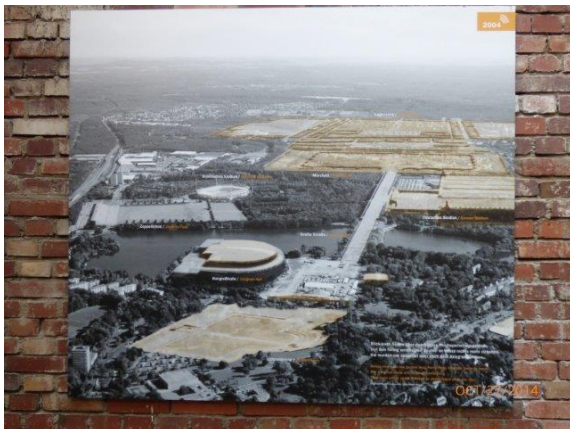
Palace of Justice – Room 600



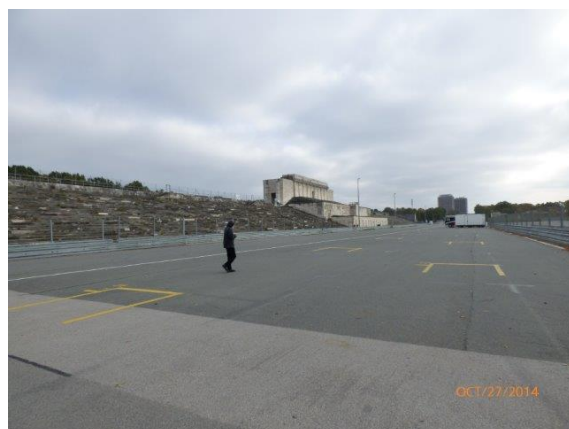
Nazi War Criminals – Original Photo



Extended View of the Palace of Justice



Hitler’s Nazi Party Parade Grounds in 1942



Parade Grounds Today

A common sight at the south-west flank of the **Beautiful Fountain** is one of tourists hanging on to the fountain grille and having their photos taken. According to a local legend, if you turn the “golden ring” (this ring gets replaced due to → wear and tear and on one occasion it was a black ring) on the grille three times and make a wish, your wish will come true.



St. Stevens Cathedral in Market Square (Hauptmarkt) in central Nuremberg

(Schöner Brunnen) – **Beautiful Fountain**
(See description above)

Cruise – Day 2 (Tuesday – October 28) – We began the day with a walking tour of Regensburg one of Germany’s largest and best preserved medieval cities. The entire town is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one structure in particular, the Old Stone Bridge is a UNESCO World Heritage site as well. Other sites include the Dom – Regensburg’s Cathedral, the Porta Pretoria – a gateway to an ancient Roman City; and a build housing the oldest sausage factory in Germany.



Old Stone Bridge – UNESCO World Heritage Site

Dom – Regensburg Cathedral

Oldest Sausage Factory in Germany

Cruise – Day 3 (Wednesday – October 29) – We docked this morning at the 2500 year old city of Passau. This was a day for independent sightseeing and that is exactly what we did. It is also known as the Dreiflüssestadt or "City of Three Rivers," because the Danube is joined at Passau by the Inn river from the south and the Ilz river from the north. In the heart of Passau on the Old Town’s highest point rises St. Steven’s Cathedral, which house the second largest pipe organ on Earth. Sitting high above the rivers,

the majestic fortress "Veste Oberhaus" on the Danube's side (we hiked up to it), and the Pilgrimage Church "Mariahilf" on the Inn's side frame the city. Passau with its unique charm and its atmosphere is one of the most beautiful and spectacular German cities on the Danube.

Passau, Germany



St. Stevens Cathedral in Passau

Interior of the cathedral

Cathedral Ceilings



Veste Oberhaus Fortress

Making our way to the Fortress

View from the top

Cruise – Day 4 (Thursday – October 30) – Today we toured the Benedictine Abbey in the city of Melk. Melk Abbey is a Benedictine Abbey in Austria, and among the world's most famous monastic sites. It is located above the town of Melk on a rocky outcrop overlooking the Danube river in Lower Austria, adjoining the Wachau valley. The abbey contains the tomb of Saint Coloman of Stockerau and the remains of several members of the House of Babenberg, Austria's first ruling dynasty.



Benedictine Abbey

Garden behind the Abbey

View of the Abbey from bus parking area

Cruise – Day 5 (Friday – October 31) – We’ve arrived in Vienna, Austria – the Imperial City, legendary for its opulence and elegance. Vienna has 1.8 million inhabitants, and is host to many major international organizations, including the United Nations and OPEC. The city lies in the east of Austria and is close to the borders of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. In 2001, the city center was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our local guide gave us a two hour walking tour of the city which included a stop at the Hofburg Palace that housed some of the most powerful people in European and Austrian history, including the Habsburg dynasty, rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It currently serves as the official residence of the President of Austria. Another stop at St. Stephen's Cathedral (more commonly known by its German title Stephansdom) is the mother church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vienna and the seat of the Archbishop of Vienna. This is the third church we’ve visited on this trip that has the same name – St. Stephens Cathedral. In the afternoon we did our own walking tour of the city, stopping first at the Museum of the Treasury, then the Natural History Museum – one of the largest in the world.



Hofburg Palace – Austrian Presidents Home



St. Stevens Cathedral



Inside the cathedral



Museum of the Treasury – Crown



Emperor Napoleon



Largest Emerald on Earth



Robe of past Royalty



Natural History Museum



One of the many dinosaur exhibits



Exhibit for Primates

Cruise – Day 6 (Saturday, November 1) – Our last day of the cruise has us in Budapest, Hungary. The city is divided by the river. The west side is Buda, the east is Pest. Budapest became a single city occupying both banks of the river Danube with its unification on November 17, 1873.



Heroes Square – Center of Budapest



Us at Heroes Square



Changing of the Guard Ceremony

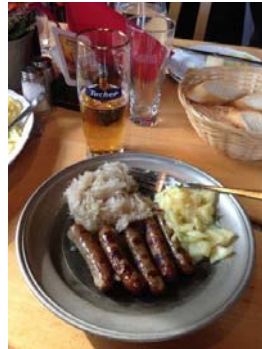


Matthias Church – On the Buda Side



View from the Matthias Church on the Danube from the Buda Side looking towards the Pest side of town – across the river.

That night, on board ship, we had the Captain’s Dinner which symbolized the end of the cruise, and the end of our trip. Of course they served Baked Alaska for dessert, every cruise we’ve ever been on serves that at the final dinner as they parade around the dining room. Sunday morning we flew from Budapest to Zurich, Switzerland, then to JFK in New York on Swiss Airlines. Below are some additional pictures from our trip. These were selected for their humor, cultural interest and culinary delight. Another incredible trip comes to an end.



This tour and cruise were booked through Gate 1 travel, our third Gate 1 trip. The first was to India/Nepal in October 2008, the second to South Africa in February 2014. We highly recommend them.