

Global Grant Scholar Newsletter: Karen Tai

Hello Friends,

Happy January and Happy New Year!! I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and joyous holiday season. Although I wasn't able to travel home to the US this holiday, I did spend them abroad in the Netherlands and in France with friends from college.

Not too shortly after the last newsletter, my partner and a few close friends from Yale flew from the US to London Heathrow on December 19th. I picked them up from the airport and I spent the next four days showing them around Oxford and London. We went and visited several Oxford colleges and also caught the tail end of several Christmas markets.

London proved to be even more festive during this time! With beautiful lights along many of the main streets, we spent quite a lot of time just walking around the city and admiring the holiday scenery. We of course had to visit Buckingham Palace and The British Museum, but also were able to squeeze in a visit to the Tate Modern art museum. Capping off our last day in London, we sat for an evening showing of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* at London's West End.



We had planned our Christmas holiday in Europe several months in advance, before the emergence of the Omicron variant. But, it was at this moment when the variant was taking hold in

the UK, leading to the shutdown of travel and borders between the UK and EU. While we were all doubly vaccinated and had all recently received boosters, it was unclear whether we were going to be able to travel to our next stop: Amsterdam. Fortunately, luck was on our side and we were able to get into the Netherlands just before additional travel requirements were instigated!

Because the entire country was on lockdown during this time, we weren't able to visit many of the typical attractions in Amsterdam. However, the supermarkets remained open so we spent most of our time cooking and preparing dinners together, as one would do during Christmas anyways! On Christmas Eve we had a braised chicken with sides of brussels sprouts, homemade cranberry sauce, wine and cheese. Then on Christmas Day, we had a pot roast with peas, beans, and more wine and cookies. We also had a Secret Santa gift exchange between the five of us and replicated the gift-opening tradition on Christmas morning. I got a mini-waffle maker! In spite of the lockdown, I'm incredibly grateful that we were able spend our time rejoicing in the time we had together.



Christmas Dinner with my friends!

Finally, on Dec. 26th we hopped on a train and headed towards Paris! We also made a quick stop in Rotterdam to admire the beautiful post WWII-architecture. Paris was a big change from Amsterdam – with everything open and operating as normal. There, I met up with a childhood friend (who is currently pursuing an MFA at Les École des Beaux-Arts) and she gave us a whirlwind tour of the city she's been living in for the past four years. Among other things, we visited the Louvre, Eiffel Tower, Saint Chapelle, the Arc de Triomphe, and peered at Notre Dame from a distance!

We topped the trip off with an incredible five-course dinner at Vantre and on Dec. 29th, I said goodbye to all my friends as they flew back to the US! I, on the other hand, headed back to the UK by going through the Chunnel and rang in the new year at Oxford.



Sunny skies and warm weather in Paris!

Looking back on 2021, there's so much to be grateful for. It's been a year of change, growth, and importantly gratitude. For 2022, I'm looking forward to growing and learning more. I'm particularly excited for the next term in my Master's course. This term, we select four out of eight modules to focus on, which for me are: non-communicable diseases, health economics, clinical trials & meta-analysis, and statistics and data-science. With these four modules, I will be poised to begin my dissertation work on nutrition and its relation to cancer risk.

Additionally, I'm hoping to spend more of 2022 reading about subjects ranging from racial identity to climate change. There's so much to learn about the world and people around us, and books make it incredibly easy for us to do so. Here are some of the books I'm planning to read in the coming term (hoping to get through one book a week)!

- The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert
- Milkman by Anna Burns
- A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles (courtesy of Bill Davis who sent a copy to me in the UK! – thanks Bill!)
- The End of Bias: How We Can Change Our Minds by Jessica Nordell
- The Status Game: On Social Position and How We Use It by Will Store

- The Sweet Spot: Suffering, Pleasure, and the Key to a Good Life by Paul Bloom (a psychology professor at Yale)
- The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett
- Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
- Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

And that's it for me so far! I begin classes again this Monday (Jan. 10th) and am wishing all of you a healthy and peaceful January. Thank you all for following and see you in February!

Always my best,
Karen

See below for Picture from London!







Top Left: Light up advent calendar!
Top Right: Christmas decorations in Covent Garden
Middle Left: Hokusai's The Great Wave at The British Museum
Middle Right: Christmas market at the National Gallery
Bottom Center: Seven Dials Market

Pictures from Christmas in Amsterdam



Top: Amsterdam canal view opposite from the Anne Frank House
Bottom Left: View from of one of Amsterdam's many canals
Bottom Right: Our home-made Christmas eve dinner

Rotterdam Architecture



Top: Rotterdam's Central Train Station

Bottom Left: The Markthal

Bottom Right: The Cube Houses (Kubuswoningen) in Rotterdam

Last Stop in Paris!!



Top Left: Arc De Triomphe

Bottom Right: Notre Dame under construction

Bottom: Outside the Louvre