

W A N D E R

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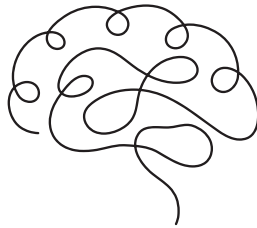


THE BENEFITS OF TRAVELLING

WHILE COPING WITH GLIOBLASTOMA,
AN INCURABLE BRAIN CANCER

Living with my husband's glioblastoma diagnosis is a daily challenge. On July 29, 2020, an MRI detected a tumour in Ira's brain. A subsequent craniotomy confirmed the diagnosis of incurable brain cancer. My life was suddenly turned upside down and inside out. After 45 years of marriage, I was not ready to see my husband succumb to an aggressive brain cancer. While adjusting to our new reality, we had to find ways to embrace life rather than cancer.

BY SANDY BORNSTEIN



After reading the inspiring stories of people who beat the odds of their incurable diseases, I realized that within the darkness of a terminal diagnosis there can be glimmers of hope. Hope has the remarkable power to diminish the bleakness surrounding an incurable cancer diagnosis. If people around the world could circumvent their doctors' dismal prognosis, we could potentially do the same. I agree with Ira that medical statistics do not always apply to individual patients. To remain positive, we chose not to accept the timelines mentioned in medical articles and instead fostered our own journey which included an abundance of travel opportunities.

Finding our unique path became dependent on how Ira responded to his craniotomy, six weeks of chemotherapy and radiation daily, followed by a six-month protocol of a second round of chemotherapy combined with Ira's decision to wear the FDA-approved Optune device on his shaved head. The neurosurgeon and the neuro-oncology team are responsible for surgeries, cancer treatments, follow-up tests and future treatments, while we remain answerable for Ira's ability to cultivate a balanced mind and body.

If Ira could tolerate his treatments, we had a good chance of maintaining our quality of life. We altered our diet, increased our daily exercise, spent more time in nature, implemented a consistent sleep schedule, and periodically meditated while simultaneously sustaining a positive attitude coupled with our Jewish faith. By consistently looking forward, we avoided falling into a state of despair.

Instead of hibernating in our home, we explored the world. The pandemic limited our ability to travel to certain places, but it did not curtail our desire to ski, to seek adventures, or to periodically step outside our comfort zone. To keep Ira's attention focused on the future while simultaneously challenging his mind and body, I planned and booked vacations.

In the winter of 2021, we skied more than 20 times at Keystone Resort and had a memorable time horseback riding, snowshoeing, and learning archery at Vista Verde Guest Ranch near Steamboat, Colorado. Near the end of the ski season, we were guests at the Grand Hyatt Vail. In a blinding snowstorm, we skied the accumulating powder at the ski resort's expert back bowls with our youngest son, Jordan.

When the snow was melting in the mountains, we embarked on our first COVID domestic flight. Our destination was a late spring getaway to Captiva Island, Florida. Our time spent at the ocean was energizing. For my father-in-law's 94th birthday, we reunited with Ira's elderly parents and his extended family during a weeklong trip to suburban Chicago. To celebrate our 46th wedding anniversary, we explored Kauai's hiking trails and snorkelled near the coast of Ni'ihau. Ira's birthday was celebrated at Arizona's Civana Wellness Resort & Spa. This was our first official wellness experience. We happily sampled a variety of classes, including aerial yoga, hiked in the desert, and thrived on nutrient-dense foods. We ended the year with a Celebrity Cruises Caribbean weeklong cruise. After decades of amazing cruising experiences, we were eager to return to the sea.



Sandy Bornstein is an award-winning travel and lifestyle writer. *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life*, is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. In the Fall of 2022, *100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die* will be published by Reedy Press.

Follow her travels at thetravelingbornsteins.com.

We remain grateful for each day we share together and the abundance of positive memories we are accumulating. I agree with Elie Wiesel who once stated, “When a person doesn’t have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude.”

As more time passes between Ira’s diagnosis and the present day, we are becoming increasingly open to expanding the scope of our adventures. Our dreams to explore the world keep us afloat and prevent us from drowning in the immense sea of uncertainty normally tethered to a glioblastoma diagnosis.

To just be alive falls short of participating in life’s journey. Ira would prefer to be living an active existence rather than being simply alive. Without the magical ability to look into the future, we patiently wait every two months to receive the results of his latest brain scan. In the meantime, we continue to embrace both tiny and momentous events that are intricately woven into our fulfilling adventures.

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Disclosure: The Traveling Bornsteins were hosted by Vista Verde Ranch, the Grand Hyatt Resort, South Seas Island Resort, and Copper Mountain. Civana Wellness Resort & Spa and Azamara Cruises provided media discounts.