

Leon & Audrey's world trip 08/09

Part 19 – Day trip to Amsterdam

We had arrived home to a cold flat. The leaking heater had been fixed by way of disconnecting it so the entire kitchen dining area (and most of our storage space) has no heater. The rest of the heaters had been turned down to 2 which is too low for our tastes. We went to bed and decided we would see what time we woke up and decide what to do then. We woke at 8:10, showered and were on a train to Amsterdam by 9:15. A call to the landlord rang out and having left Germany the calls are now more expensive so another call will wait until we get back tonight.

Sitting on the train going through Holland it seems to be very flat. A few small hills but the rest is just flat to the horizon. Makes you wonder about the effect of a few meters of sea level rise here in Europe.

We did the canal cruise last time we were here so we walked to the Rijksmuseum down the main street and across the canals. We had lunch along the way which consisted of a croquette from an Automaat which is a vending machine with a kitchen behind it. We topped it off by sharing a cone of the number one chips in Holland. If they are the best then Holland really does quite ordinary chips.



The chips are served in a cone and you eat them with small forks, you can add one or more sauces from a list of 40 mayonnaise, tomato or BBQ based sauces. We had a serving from a place in Düsseldorf in 2002 that were much better.

Koninlijk Paleis which is infested on people dressed in costume standing on boxes (see batman in the foreground). If you take a picture of the palace with them in it they invite you to pay them. I'd give them a Euro to go away – except there are so many of them it would cost a fortune.

The buildings here (apart from the palaces and churches) have a distinctive style. They are tall thin buildings and due to the tight stairs inside have a



beam extending from the top for attaching a hoist and large windows that open to let you bring the furniture in.



There are bicycles everywhere here. It's so flat that anyone can get around on a bike. A lot of them are in need of maintenance however and make various rubbing or knocking sounds as they go along. Parking is also a problem. Anything you can lock a bike to has several bikes locked to it. This bike (left) was at the end of a railing near a bridge. The sheer number of bikes behind it has pushed it over the edge supported only by its lock (all of which are very sturdy and suggests a problem with theft).



One of the bridges over the canals. The boats are all designed to fit neatly through the arches.



The Rijksmuseum, where you are not allowed to take pictures and they expect you to leave your camera with your coat (I kept mine and behaved).

Amsterdam has the odd sex shop and movie cinema appear on the path we took, which was nowhere near the red light district, but it wasn't offensive (to me at least). As we walked along however we caught the odd whiff of smoke that was nothing like tobacco. It makes you wonder how stoned everyone is and if this is the cause of all the warnings about pickpockets (we were even warned on the PA on the train as we got off, which has never happened anywhere else).