

Post



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# Flight over/Day one - April 26, 2022

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Another trip, another diary, good lord willing. This trip has been many years in the making. The goal is Dutch tulips. We also read an article named 'Ten great Dutch cities not named Amsterdam'. We decide to visit many of them, plus the tulips and make plans for a 2018 trip. Then we lose a parent, very sad and we cancel our trip. The next year more family health to keep track of, so no tulips again. One more year and Covid cancels the trip for us. The next year? More covid cancellations. Now it's OK to travel again and we believe we're going to the Netherlands. Finally!

The week before our departure we begin to adjust our body clocks. We start to go to bed and wake up a bit earlier each day. We also change when we're eating our meals.

It is the morning of our departure. Our flight isn't until around noon, but we've been up since 1am. We are ready to go! We've ensured all the door are locks, lights are on timers, and the oven and stoves are off. Our flight's on time so we call for a ride share to the airport. It's sprinkling as we get into the new Subaru. Closer to the airport it's raining so hard we can barely see the road. Surprisingly the driver doesn't know the route so we help him out and arrive safely, but a bit unnerved. We give up our heavy luggage (over 80 pounds between the two bags) and breeze through security.

We're traveling with friends, Mike and Liz. They're in business class or some such thing and have access to the special Delta Lounge. Thankfully they're able to get us in. We relax and eat and ponder the coming trip. The Austin weather says we've had 1.6" of rain, all since we left for the airport, it was amazing. In the airport maybe half the people were wearing masks. We were in that half.

The flight to Atlanta is fairly quick and uneventful. We visit another lounge in Atlanta and before long we're on our flight to Amsterdam. Everyone is eventually settled and before long our big Airbus A350 is lumbering skyward. Our seats are in "Comfort Plus", which means there's more room between our row and the one in front of us. We're also in a bulkhead row, so we have even more legroom. We eat our "chicken or lasagna", drink one glass of wine, pop a Sominex-type sleeping pill and we're out like a light.

When we open our eyes next we're an hour from Amsterdam. We wolf down breakfast and lots of coffee, look out the window. As we get closer we do see big fields of tulips dotted between other crops. We see roads but not very much traffic. So much of what happens is on foot, by bike, or by rail, bus or tram, there's not that many cars. It's nice.

On the plane there was no requirement to wear a mask (but we did). Between the plane and immigration/customs we are required to wear masks, and it's enforced. That's good because we're lined up tight and crowded like cattle. Everyone looks bleary eyed.

Reunited with our luggage and cleared by customs, soon we're on our way out of the airport, relieved to be maskless at last. A big yellow machine helps us to buy transportation cards (for all the busses, trams, and trains in the whole country). We're soon aboard a quick, clean, quiet train for Delft. It's about a one hour trip.

Along the way we see Leiden and Den Haag and finally Delft. The train really is quiet and no one is talking, so we follow suit. In Delft at last our smartphones guide us through the cobblestone streets and over the canal bridges to our hotel. It's only a ten minute walk but the heavy luggage makes its presence known. We check in and store our luggage (since our rooms aren't ready yet). We have a coffee on a floating barge on the canal in front of our Hotel Vermeer. It's cool (upper 50s) but sunny. Refreshed we head out, forcing ourselves to keep walking to help adjust to the time difference.

The place is very green and lots of flowers are in bloom: emerging from the ground, on the bushes, on the trees. We just wander and eventually are following signs to the city Botanical Garden. We cross bridges and walk through city gates from many 100s of years ago. We eventually find the Botanical Garden, but they're closed.

They're preparing for King's Day tomorrow. They're finishing up work on improvements, which to the Dutch means adding more bicycle parking. King's Day (which used to be Queen's day until 2014) happens in nice weather and is a great excuse for drinking, partying, and not working. But that's tomorrow, today we need lunch. We find a good looking place in the sun and split two burgers and fries with beers to wash it all down. After some more walking we pick up a bottle of wine for later. We retrieve our luggage and start to make ourselves at home in our rooms.

Cleaned up and refreshed we head out to a dinner place on a local square. Mike and Liz researched it and picked this place, Spijshaus de Dis, which means "place to eat known for having an impressive spread". It was really good. Delicious, well prepared and expertly presented. It was nice without being pretentious. Our table was by the window and we see many people looking at the menu. The place wasn't big but it was full. Repeatedly people poked their heads in to ask if there was any room that evening. Nope! Thank goodness we had a reservation.

Full, we head back to the room for our first night in the Netherlands. We're ready for bed. It's dark but there are lots of people walking and biking around. City workers are busy setting up for tomorrow, King's Day! This is going on in Delft, where we are, and in most other cities in the whole country.

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## Photos





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