

Post



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Delft to Den Bosch - April 29, 2022

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As has become our custom, we wake up around 7 and have coffee in the room. We get ready and meet for complimentary breakfast in the dining room around 9:00. Very civilized.

Today we're changing cities, so we pack and tip the maid and dining room help. We enjoy the variety of breakfast each day, but with all else we're eating (and drinking) we try to cut back where we can. Are we successful in those efforts? Probably not much.

We put our luggage in storage, pay our bills, and head for the "Johannes Vermeer Centrum" a few blocks away. It boasts having *all* of Vermeer's work (albeit the word "replications" appears in parentheses). We pay admission and get our audio tour hardware. We watch an introductory multimedia/video introduction to Vermeer's life and mysteries. This also includes some of the history of his city, Delft, which supposedly shaped him.

One of these formative experiences was when the local government, to ward off the advances of the English and Spanish who wanted to own the land, stockpiled a large quantity of gunpowder. Needless to say, it didn't go well, and on a certain day, at a certain hour, about a quarter of the city, and 100 residents, were blown to smithereens. Vermeer's art thereafter seems to 'accentuate the positive' and that little gunpowder incident was apparently quite the downer to be swept under the Dutch carpet.

The museum was well done, with lots of information and interactivity. The girl, with that oh so famous pearl earring, featured prominently. The art was, unquestionably, reproductions, mounted on less than museum quality poster board. The offerings in the gift shop were as varied as they were amusing. Vermeer's art could be purchased on as many different portable objects as the marketing department could imagine. One of our favorites was the sleep mask sporting the eyes from the Girl with the Pearl Earring. Eventually we are Vermeer'ed out and we head back to the hotel, with our train ride to Den Bosch in mind.

It's a long fifteen minute shlog from our hotel to the train station, over incessant cobblestones and a number of canal bridges. With the 100+ pounds of luggage we have between us it's a work out. We get to the station with it's smooth floors and are relieved. We buy lunch and quickly board the ever clean and quiet train towards Den Bosch. We'll make one change of trains, and stop at two other stations during our hour and 45 minute ride.

The countryside is ever interesting. It doesn't seem like the Dutch thought to leave any square meter of this part of the county unused. They do have national parks in the other regions of the country, but seemingly not here.

On the second leg of our journey we trundle ourselves, and our luggage, aboard the 2nd class car. We miss that it's labeled 'Silent' in many ways on many parts of the car. This is apparently the monk's space. Our fellow travelers are being completely silent and we follow suit. We eat our sandwiches, chips, cookies and beer as quietly as we can.

Den Bosch (which is short for 's-Hertogenbosch) is famous for being the home of painter Hieronymus Bosch, famous for his 'Garden of Earthly Delights'. From the train station to the hotel is a good half mile, again over cobblestones, but we cover it quickly. There are people everywhere. Not tourists, we don't think, but just locals going here and there, or hanging out, or sitting in chairs outside cafes. The forecast had been for highs in the upper 50s or low 60s but the sun makes it feel warmer.

At the hotel the reception greets us with the normal pleasantries of "where are you from" and "where are you visiting?" We reel off our practiced list of Dutch cities we're staying in and, once again, we get the standard followup question: "Why?" Apparently the Dutch don't think these cities are all that interesting and can't quite see why we would come to visit.

Our rooms aren't ready yet so we stow our luggage and head out to wander. We have a coffee in a cafe across from the #1 attraction in town: the cathedral of Saint Jon. It is a massive cathedral, very imposing. Karen read that during a recent rehab they added an angel on a smart phone to one of the flying buttresses. It becomes our mission to find her. We do, and we also find the poster where they're promoting her presence. We can't read it, since it's in Dutch, and we're not that interested anyway, but we are amused by some apparent reference to their equivalent of calling 1-800-SATAN (or is it SAINT-JON?).

Our rooms are now ready so we drop our luggage, and head back out for more walking. We plan to find our dinner restaurant (an Afghan place, named Sarban), so we know where we're going later on. We walk all over the city (which isn't hard, since it's not that big). We "Google" Den Bosch and learn its population is over 150,000, so we figure we didn't really get everywhere, but we saw the interesting parts. In addition to the population the Google entry informed us that the elevation of Den Bosch is 18' above sea level. We're hoping for no tsunamis while we're here.

We check out a cute home accessories store. We all have to do the same bathing, gardening, and cooking activities, but different parts of the world have different brushes and dishes for different activities or meals.

Back in our rooms we decompress for a while and eventually head out to dinner. We stop for a glass of wine and eventually make it to Sarban. We explain we have reservations for eight for dinner. They think we're saying eight people instead of eight o'clock but eventually it all gets sorted out. A young lady who owns the place (for the past nine years) with her sister seats us and explain how it all works. She starts with beverages. She crouches down on her haunches and explains that since they're Afghani they don't serve wine. We're a bit surprised, but whatever. She laughs and say 'of course they serve wine' and we all nervously laugh and order wine.

For the meal we're offered al la carte or she can just takes care of us. This second option will have us tasting maybe 75% of the menu, so we opt for that. We have a wonderful time, laughing and talking and eating. Our host stops by frequently and we learn about Afghanistan, then and now. Dinner is delicious and oh so filling. We finish up around eleven and get a group picture with our host. Walking the considerable distance back to the hotel we see lots of people still about. We're asleep shortly after we're back in our rooms and the heads have hit the pillows.

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