

Post



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Den Bosch to Zwolle - May 1, 2022

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Happy May Day! We're told it's some religious holiday, at least according to our waitress at the café. She doesn't know exactly what it is about, just that it's eight days til her birthday. A big marching band, in uniform, sets up and plays in front of the church. The audience is mostly the people sitting in front of the cafés opposite the church. The band is quite good and is followed up by a parade complete with local flags and dignitaries. The café patrons take it all in stride and clap politely. We have coffee and ask about anything 'breakfast-like'. They have the Boche Bollen and fruit tart and other desserts (from the night before?). We just have our coffee and eventually head out to wander.

We note down the phone number of a passing taxi cab. We have seen almost none in the town. It's a long 15 minute luggage drag to the train station, so a big taxi would be most welcome.

As before, we pack, check out and put our luggage in storage. We look up the Gusto restaurant where we tried to have lunch the day before. It opens at noon, it being Sunday, so towards eleven our wandering takes us past Gusto where they're setting up. They actually open at 11:30 so before long we're seated and ordering. It's Italian, of course, and very good.

We pick up our luggage and call our new taxi friend. We have better luck with the phone this time. Alas our driver is taking someone to Amsterdam, so won't be back for an hour. Our hotel arranges a different taxi for us (the other one in town?).

The taxi does get us to the station in plenty of time to read the sign that says the equipment for our scheduled train is "defective", i.e. our train won't be going. There's another train in 30 minutes so we top off our train cards and wait.

Our passes are only for 2nd class (cattle cars) and all the passengers who would have been on the earlier cancelled train, plus everyone who had already planned to be on this train, are here. With their luggage. It's going to be packed.

The train stops, placing a door right in front of us. It opens and a very long parade of passengers disembark. More room for us! That's good because we have four suitcases and there's no place for luggage! We are forced to sit them on seats, as do others. After the train takes off passengers are still looking for a place to sit. Many end up standing in the aisles and some sit on the floor. Less than ideal in the time of Covid. Maybe we'll try first class next time.

The ride to Zwolle is just under two hours, which lets us relax and enjoy the scenery. Scott, Mike and Liz end up, once again, in a silent car. Karen can only find a seat (for her and her luggage) in the adjoining 'not silent' car, to her dismay.

The scenery, as we've come to expect, is pastoral, meticulously maintained, with occasional projects going on. There are animals and crops, but few cars. Lots of trees and plants. And canals.

In Zwolle we slog our overpacked luggage off the train, down to the station hallway underground and back up to ground level. The good news is our hotel is only 600 feet from the station. The bad news is that it's on the other side of all the tracks. We take the escalator back down, re-scan our travel passes, cross the whole station, take the escalator back up, and scan our pass again (no money deducted) to get out of the station.

Our hotel is one of the grand dame's of the Zwolle hotel scene. Our rooms are comfortable and modern. We quickly learn that the door closes by itself, but not completely. Then, when it's been open for too long, like a refrigerator, it sets off a moderately loud alarm. We certainly have never experienced that before! (In the morning we repeatedly hear the same alarm, at varying distances from our room, over and over as other guests discover this unique feature.)

We unpack and venture out to explore Zwolle, reportedly another college town. If we're 600 feet from the train station we must only be about 400 feet from the canal surrounding the old part of the city. The inner city is the shape of a Texas' sheriff's star. This is apparently the recommended shape for defending your medieval village from marauding invaders. In the past the canal around the city was for protection and transportation. Now it's for entertainment. There are boats for rent and people renting them for a relaxing Sunday cruising lazily beneath the springtime sun. Some of the boats are normal rowboat shaped with tiny engines at the back. Others are round with seating for six around the edge and a barbecue in the middle. Interesting.

There's a walking path around the outside of the canal, of course. We later learn it's about two miles around, not too bad. On the other side of the canal we see the art museum they're famous for. Like other museums it looks like a Greek or Roman temple, with a row of columns across the front. Unlike other museums there's also a huge white jelly bean shaped growth covering the entire top of the building. A bit jarring. We plan to check it out.

We find an 'all you can eat' sushi place. No thanks for the sushi we will take a bottle of your French rosé wine and some of this gorgeous view. Later, more relaxed and the bottle empty we head to "Poppe's" where we have a dinner reservation. Trip Advisor rates Poppe's as the #4 restaurant of the 182 restaurants in Zwolle. It's in an old horse barn that's been added onto. Poppe, who sold the building, in the deed of sale required that the name be retained and continually displayed on the front, hence the name of the restaurant.

Fancy eating establishments in the Netherlands like the 'formula' meals, where you pay for either three, four, five, or six courses (with or without wine pairings). In France they have this, too, the Prix Fixe menu, but there you get to choose from among two or three of each course. Here it's just getting what they serve, which has worked out well everywhere we've tried it. We opt for the four courses (with the wine). They're generous and ensure that our college girl waitress is the one who is the most comfortable with English. Reportedly French, German, Spanish, Eastern European they get here a lot. Americans? Rarely.

The food is top notch and delicious, served in a very leisurely fashion. The portion sizes are big enough, though the wine pours are generous and the wine is very good. Do we want coffee or decaf after? Why not? With Ouzo? Why not? Our server lights the big saucer shaped glasses of Ouzo briefly to burn off a bit of the alcohol. We drink it with, not in, our coffee.

Eventually we are the only ones in the restaurant, save for a couple of servers. We package up the uneaten desserts for later and start our walk back to the hotel. As always there are people out walking and very few cars. We're sensing a trend in this country.

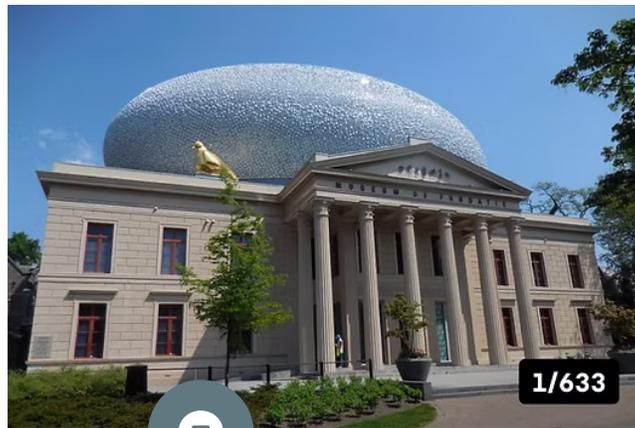
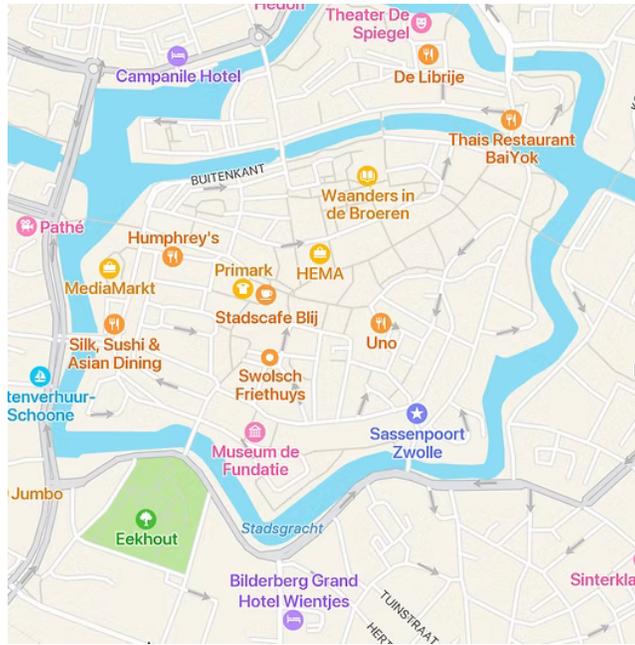
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