

Post



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# How to grok a gracht - August 30, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

On what is probably about our 6th trip or 7th to Amsterdam, we finally get out butts to the Rijks Museum. Lovely wander along the beautiful canals ('grachts') with colorful flowers boxes on all the bridges. Good Italian lunch then back to the ship for a late afternoon departure. Big event in the evening on the pool deck with a massive buffet, DJ then live music, and a parade of a large portion of the ship's crew with their home country's flag. We show them our appreciation by waving our (used) napkins à la the Pittsburgh Steeler fans. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

We wake up, still in Amsterdam. Such fun. We have tickets to the Rijks Museum today. It's the number one most famous museums in the city and we've never been. What is one looking for while there? The Dutch masters (the artists not the cigars). And The Night Watch, the famous Rembrandt painting. We're excited.

Peeking out the window its grey and looks like spitting rain could start any minute. The meteorological prognosticators are saying rain between 10 am and 2pm we'll have maybe 0.4" in total, not an insignificant amount. Booo. Just in case, we're taking rain coats and umbrellas. We end up needing them pretty quickly into our 30 minute walk. It rained most of the way.

We have breakfast and get off the ship. Normally we're getting off the ship at deck 3, which is about at sea level. Here they have the cruise line equivalent of a jet bridge. I guess it's a "ship bridge".

Out on the street there are many  
Amsterdammers walking too and fro. And  
biking to and fro. We think we can now  
tell what is the bike lane and what is the  
pedestrian space. As long as we stay out  
of the way of bikes our longevity is pretty  
much assured. Alas that's easier said than  
done. At cross walks and where there's  
construction, the pedestrians and cyclist  
have to get along and it's not always  
pretty.

Our route to the Rijks takes us along one  
canal (gracht) and then another. There's so  
much construction going on in  
Amsterdam, which I guess is good. Along  
the way we get to see all the various haut  
couture. Some of it is "harried traveler"  
but much of it is "Amsterdam Business  
Person". We're gathering that if you're  
looking in the closet and don't like what  
you're seeing, just wear orange. It's the  
national color and people aren't afraid to  
wear it all over.

We get to the floating flower market in  
town and hike in front of that. Most of  
what they sell is tulip bulbs, tchochkis,  
wooden carved tulips, and the like. Not a  
lot of fresh flowers. It's August, y'all. It's  
fall. Why are you expecting flowers. Come  
back in the spring!

We get to the Rijks Museum twenty minutes before our ticket start time. We press our luck and get in. It's raining so maybe people who had planned to be here are instead cowering in their hotel rooms. Lockers are free. The bathrooms are very nice but the automatic lights in the individual stalls go out after four minutes and no amount of arm waving is bring them back on. Thank heavens for smart phones with built in flashlights.

We paid for the special "audio guide". It's essentially a smart phone with a set of headphones. Hey! I have one of those! The person helping us get our 'audio guide' language etc. set up mentions that next time we might want to just use our smart phones. The app is free to download and use. Next time.

The app and the guide are very well done, giving us so much information about each work (well, so many of the works) of art. The main halls are broken into little coves. Each time you get into a new one you look and say "oooooh, I think I know that piece!" The Rembrandt self portraits, and the girl pouring water from a jug, and of course The Night Watch. This last one was interesting. They have it pulled taut every few inches at the top, sides and bottom. There's a little robot which can point a camera left/right and up/down, maybe 18". And then all of that is on a gantry that can go left/right and up/down, to cover the entire painting. The small robot very slowly does a couple of inches at a time.

On the adjacent wall there's an explanation of what's going on. The painting is so large and so old, they want to preserve it. The backing won't last forever so they want to add an additional backing. However, different parts of the painting respond to vibration differently. If they could only know how every single part of the painting responds to vibration, they could know where to reinforce the back less or more to get the optimal support for the whole thing. That's what this apparatus is doing. There's a little vibrator on the side of the painting. (Didn't look like any vibrator I'd ever seen). And as it introduces tiny vibrations to the whole painting these little robots with cameras are determining how the vibration affects each tiny portion of the overall painting. Certainly more work that I'd have done.

We did see a Van Gogh or two, including a very famous self-portrait. They really do have an amazing collection. There's a painting of Napoleon surrendering at Waterloo. It's ? 20 feet tall and 30 feet wide. How they got this painting into this room we'll never know.

Our visit to the museum started at 10:30 am and we're told we can stay there til 5 p.m. At around 2 pm we start to get peckish. We give up our headphones and retrieve our coats and head out. The weather has gotten awesome. Blue sky and sunshine. Just plain nice. We ask Trip Advisor and soon we're in a nearby Italian casual restaurant. It's great and the wait staff are very sweet.

With this nice weather we walk back to the ship. We were to have cast off at 6 p.m. but that got pushed up to 4 p.m. and so we're to be on the ship by 3:30 which thankfully we are. We get to observe the ship disembark and we retrace our trip down the canal back out to the lock and the North Sea. We're on the other (north/starboard) side of the ship for this transit and it's fairly green and pretty. We see two major freeways that go under the canal that our gazillion ton cruise ship is floating on. Human ingenuity is amazing. Shame about the climate but we humans (some of 'we' anyway) have some truly amazing engineering skills.

While all this is going on Karen heads down to the medical office. She got a wasp or bee sting in Copenhagen 'underneath' where her wedding ring normally sits. She got two stings. Is there still a stinger in there? Will she ever be able to wear her wedding ring again? In the medical office they're happy to have their on-call doctor take a look. It starts at \$124 for the consultation. Karen suddenly doesn't feel that consultation is that urgent.

As we've been watching our progress down the canal and visiting the medical receptionist, the ship's crew have been setting up for a regular occasion on all Azamara Cruises: White Night. We've had conversations with a number of lovely African Americans and other 'non-whites' onboard, but we never asked them their feeling about "White Night". We're all supposed to dress up in white (or light colored) shirt, pants, dress, belt, shoes, sox, whatever you want. Each passenger has a long white bathrobe in their cabin that goes to the floor and has long, droopy sleeves. That's always an option.

We hope to be swimming in the waters between Croatia and Italy, so I have my long sleeve white clingy swim shirt. That all that I have that's white. Karen's not in much better shape but we get dressed, grab some extra layers against the cold and wind, and head to the pool deck.

The crew has removed every last chaise lounge from all around the pool and replaced them with tables and chairs. Where do they store all this stuff? The band plays, we eat and then dance. The crew is feverishly carrying around, and giving out, armloads of warm plaid blankets. The result looks more like a family reunion in Scotland, with everyone wearing the same family tartan plaid.

It's fun and the food is good, but it's too chilly and we head out around 8:30 (after some dancing). We later hear that the whole thing shut down, due to the cold weather, around 9. Tomorrow is our last full day of the cruise, whaaa. We'll be in Zeebrugge from where we'll take a bus to tour Bruges. We're happy to be seeing Bruges again, but sad the trip is almost over.

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## Photos



Walking to the Rijks Museum. So many pretty Amsterdam houses. It must be nerve wracking and expensive to own one of these beauties.



The canals, the grachts, are also pretty, with their canal tour boats always zipping past



The Rijks Museum building is pretty amazing



Vincent after he lost (had taken out?) all of his teeth. That'll give you sunken cheeks.



Vermeer, sigh.



Such realism!



Napoleon being defeated at Waterloo.  
How did they even get that painting into  
that room??



Italian lunch with Dutch beer. Yum!



The floating flower market. Bulbs-are-us.



Lots of hanging and supports baskets of blooming flowers. So pretty.



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town.



Time for the White Night party. If you don't have white clothes? just wear your cabin bathrobe!



Time to show our appreciation for the food prep and food delivery teams. Yay!



And then enjoy the dinner and (shown here) the dessert.



One dessert that really stuck out for Karen. White at one angle and chocolate at another!



Soon everyone also had a blanket to keep warm. It's August and we're freezing!

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