

Thomas Stephens

Day 13: 5/30/2015 (Saturday)

On the second to last morning of the trip, our group rose early for our final long drive. Today we would travel from Bremen, Germany to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. The drive itself took about four hours, but we made a few stops along the way for lunch and a break. I don't remember much from the drive; I slept the majority of the way after not having a good night's rest the evening prior. I had heard previously that the countryside in the Netherlands was notoriously flat, and it lived up to its description. After studying the Netherlands in preparation for a spring semester presentation, we learned that the vast majority of the country was below 17 meters in elevation above sea level. During our time spent driving in the Netherlands both earlier in the trip (northbound) and now (southbound), I was quickly able to see how this was the case. Acres upon acres of farmland were visible, growing a variety of crops, while wind turbines and the occasional old fashioned wind mill dominated the horizon. PJ Tatano and Nick Buzacki might be able to provide the exact number of wind turbines visible from the roadway, as they counted on the way to Rotterdam. I found it very interesting how the majority of the cars on the roadways were sedans, sports cars, and SUVs; I very rarely saw a pickup truck. This observation remained true throughout most of the Nordic countries we visited, but was especially obvious to me in the Netherlands. This simple observation shows just how highly regarded fuel efficiency is within the countries we visited.

Upon arriving in Rotterdam, I was immediately impressed by the age distinction between itself and a number of the other cities we had visited prior. Much of the architecture appeared to be significantly newer than comparable Nordic cities. The hostel where we stayed was very impressive, one of the nicest of the entire trip. After arriving and settling into our living quarters for the evening our group essentially split into two smaller groups. One group ventured out for the Flying Dutch pop culture

and DJ music concert, which was taking place during the weekend we were there on the outskirts of Rotterdam as well as other cities within the Netherlands. Upon regrouping with, and hearing from, the others that evening, the concert sounded like a lot of fun. The group that I stayed with went for a walk to explore the city. Along the way we saw very modern buildings and bridges, waterways, the bay, boats, and islands (see below). We were impressed by the “Hot Tug” which was a small tug boat, only large enough to hold a hot tub to seat at most eight people on board, which seemed like a very relaxing way to see the city from the waterways. We had dinner that evening at the Satchhouse, which served Indonesian food, and it turned out to be quite tasty. That evening we relaxed downtown near our hostel and played cards before returning for the evening. When we returned to the hostel that evening, we were able to watch Netflix as a group in the basement social area. I also treated myself to Ben and Jerry’s ice cream, which was a delicious way to cap off the day. All in all, it was a great last day of the trip, as tomorrow most of us would be boarding planes back to our home countries.

