

Travel

A visit to Amsterdam

by Jan Ross, *Staff Writer*

Our first trip to the “Venice of the North”, which is one of the nicknames for the lovely city of Amsterdam, Netherlands was wonderful. We stayed at the Movenpick hotel and this was a perfect location, just a few blocks from Central Station and right on the IJ River.



First, we had to decide how we wanted to get around this lovely city and we realized that we needed to see everything from the scenic canals which wind through the city. We decided the Canal Company was our best option because they offer several different routes and you can “hop off and hop back on” whenever you want. If you are ever in Amster-

dam I really recommend this way of touring. The boats are warm, clean, comfortable, on time and it is truly a great way to see the city.

We cruised under beautiful, ancient bridges, saw a windmill and floated by dozens of houseboats which line most of the canals and provide year-round housing for a number

of residents. We saw the beautiful monument to the Jewish resistance fighters, Ann Frank’s house, the Van Gogh museum and beautiful houses which line the canals, many with shutters, which are holdovers from the days when merchants used their houses to store goods and needed extra protection. We also strolled through the beautiful flower market

We cruised under beautiful, ancient bridges, saw a windmill and floated by dozens of houseboats which line most of the canals and provide year-round housing for a number of residents.

and even made a little (daytime) visit to the Red Light District, one of the most famous areas of Amsterdam and one that is probably for travelers much more adventurous than us.

One of the major attractions as far as we were concerned involved cheese tasting. The Reypenaer Cheese Tasting Rooms offer some of the finest Dutch cheese in a lovely little store in the middle of Amsterdam. In a basement furnished with tables and chairs like a schoolroom, they have cheese tastings. We settled down at our little table for two with several others who love cheese, watched a little video clip about cheese and then began the sampling. Who knew cheese could taste so different, based on how long it aged?

Then we headed back to Dam Square to a pancake restaurant I had noticed earlier. Sara’s Pancakes has pancakes and waffles pretty much any way you want them and, since we were in Holland I thought it only appropriate to get Dutch waffles. This turned out to be a delicious, crunchy homemade waffle with pecans, cherries, cherry cordial and whipped cream and was probably the best waffle I have ever eaten.

It’s ironic that after this huge lunch we began to notice that there didn’t seem to be any overweight people in Amsterdam. That’s probably because virtually everyone in Amsterdam rides a bicycle. There are approximately 750,000 people living in Amsterdam and over 1,000,000 bicycles. We saw people of every age merrily riding their bikes, even on the rainy, cold days we had while visiting. Many had children on their bikes and some had other items - we even saw one young woman bicycling along, balancing a large cake box in one hand!

We left Amsterdam after only two days but felt like we had really experienced the flavor of this fascinating place. Although we would have no problem going back - we could really use some more cheese and some delicious waffles.