

## **The Travel Journal of Lance Eaton**

### **May 10-May 31, 2013**

**Start:** Here is my travel journal for my trip to the Netherlands, Germany, France, and England. The crux of my visit will be in the Netherlands--particularly, staying in Zwolle. Besides that, I will be doing about 2.5 days in Berlin, 3 days in Paris, and 2 in London.

For more information about me and such, visit: <http://byanyothernerd.blogspot.com>

For the companion video travelogue, please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/user/setgewick>

For access to photos and mini-videos, please visit:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B0orYUoxaTfbSUhaTnc4cm95blE&usp=sharing>

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Don't forget to comment or add your questions/thoughts through the Comment feature (may need to sign into Google). Thanks for reading!

## **Friday, May 31, 2013: 10:20AM**

After writing in the journal this morning, I looked at maps on Google Maps and saved a few to my iPad before heading off to CamdenTown for some exploration and excitement. Finding my

way there was pretty easy--take one road, then a right on another and BAMN--there you are.

So when I first got there, I had some breakfast at a cafe that had a full veggie English breakfast which included an egg, veggie sausage, hashbrown, toast, baked beans, mushrooms, and a tomato (cooked, mind you)--and of course, coffee. This was all quite tasty. I began to wander around a bit enjoying being in Camden Town which still seems to be my favorite part of London, every time I visit. Just the mixture of streets and sights and smells (sometimes aromatic; sometimes less so!). I started to wander the marketplace but it was still a bit early so I stopped into a Starbucks to kill a little time with a hot chocolate (was a little bit cold--my t-shirt wasn't enough but my coat made me too sweaty). By 10am, the markets were opening up and so I began to wander. I enjoy walking the markets because there are usually really interesting shops both commercial and small artisans and crafters while others seem to fill their spaces with secondhand things. You never know just what you're going to find. So I like to wander them aimlessly but I also knew there were a few last gifts I wanted to get (which I can't share cause said people are likely the few readers herein--hahaha).

After two hours of wandering and shopping the little stands, I decided I should figure out the rest of my day. I had decided to go see a movie instead of going to the theater again. The reason was twofold. The first was that it was cheaper and the second was that I could see an earlier movie and still make it back to the hostel for an earlier bed time. I found a theater that was a few miles from where I was but relatively close to the hostel so I decided to go see a 4:30PM showing of *The Great Gatsby* which I've been wanting to check out.

I stopped at a vegan cafe (Inspirational Lounge) that was fabulous. If I wasn't satiated already from some fresh made donuts (eaten before knowing I would find and stop in the cafe), I would have had some of their delicious treats. I mapped out how to get from there to the theater and set off.

Interestingly, the longest trek of my route was along a footpath on a canal which was a great time to wander about and see a part of London, I didn't realize existed (the canals). It was a good 2 mile stretch of canals with runners and walkers taking advantage of it as well as some tour boats. At the end of the canal walk, I was able to quickly figure out where I needed to go. I located the theater and it was about 2pm by this time, so I bought my ticket and wandered the area for a bit before stopping for coffee and to relax for a bit.

The movie experience was pretty cool--in buying the ticket, you had to select your seat (this would be important if it were a crowded theater but there was less than a 20 people checking out *The Great Gatsby* at 4:30pm on a Thursday afternoon--go figure. Apparently *Star Trek 2*, *Iron Man 3* and other films were getting more attention--hahaha. The seats were roomy and comfy by US standards which I also appreciated. Overall, I liked the film. I typically like Baz Luhrmann films cause they are stunning and beautiful. This lived up to that along with an interesting soundtrack and a very curious racial theme that I found fascinating for though it is present in the book, it was much more palpable in the film. I liked the acting and though there were clearly liberties taken with the plot, I still enjoyed it.

After the film, I found my way back to the hostel pretty easily and relaxed in the lounge area,

reading and writing. I went upstairs and took a shower, then laid in bed a bit reading. After an hour or so, I turned off the light and attempted sleep (it was close to 10pm). Over the next two hours, several people stumbled into the room and the comfortability of the bed was lacking thus I didn't sleep too well through the night. I eventually rolled out of bed a little bit before 6am having given up on sleep. I took my packed stuff to the bathroom, got dressed and went to the basement to get my luggage out of storage. In the lobby, I reshuffled things between my carry-on and my suitcase, figuring out what I needed for the flight and what should be going in my suitcase. Once I got it all packed, I headed to the subway station down the street. Luckily it was on the Piccadilly Line which goes to the airport and I had verified that I would be in Terminal 1. The ride took at least thirty minutes as it was on the very end, but once there, I found my way to the terminal but IcelandAir wasn't open yet. To no one's surprise, I was there much earlier than I needed to be. I went up stairs and had a tasty breakfast while doing some email and chatting with my partner who just happen to be online. I wandered back downstairs and they were setting up the checkin counter so I waited for the next half hour with another man waiting for them to open.

Upon checking in, the person at the clerk offered me the "emergency exit" seats for the extra leg room which was quite nice of her. I went over and got in the security line. I went through security but got held up because I had forgotten to put my utility tool (with knife) in my luggage. They said I could put the knife in the bag and check the bag in--but since it would cost more money and then I would need a second bag for my other stuff, I opted not to do so. So I left the utility knife with them--sad to have lost it as it was a nice present my brother had gotten me. I proceeded through security without any more issues and now wait to find out what my terminal will be.

Tomorrow, I will write a final entry covering the journey home and initial reflections and things taken.

## Thursday, May 30, 2013: 7:30AM

A long but fun-filled day! It started with me in Paris--waking up and packing up to go catch a train to London. The packing went easy as did the checking out--though paying what I paid for what I got--I would have been better in a hostel. I trekked over to the station with suitcase and backpack in tow. Finding my way to Gare du Nord was pretty easy since I had checked it out before and knew it was only 6-7 stops away from Bastille. I bought a ticket and go to Gare du Nord pretty quickly. Much quicker than I thought as I had (as people know) given myself plenty of time. However, getting from the subway to the train station and more specifically, the Eurostar line was a bit more confusing. With the help of a security guard (or poice?), I found my way upstairs and even got my ticket. I then had to hang out a bit before the queue for my train was open.

I grabbed a coffee and was sitting down relaxing. I was contemplating fixing my suitcase

because the extended handle doesn't work and that caused a lot more work as I mentioned before. In fact, I was a bit soaked from carrying a 30+ pound backpack and hunching over or actually carrying the 30 pound bag. I reached over to start to fiddle with the handle yet again and sure enough, my double espresso flipped over (my coat caught the stirring rod in the drink). It didn't pour over me but over said suitcase. So much for the much needed coffee! I grabbed some napkins and wiped up my bag and then wiped up the floor. C'est la vie!

I went back to the Eurostar check in and they were ready to allow those with my time to enter. I trekked through customs and answered their various questions ("What is an instructional designer?" "I work with faculty." "Do you have work in the US?" "Yes, about 3-4 jobs in fact." "What are you doing in London?" "Drug mule." Oh wait--one of those answers is pretend.). I sat in the boarding area having an actual coffee (the last of my Euros!) and waited to board. The train ride was nice. Even in coach, the seats were comfortable and they brought breakfast (they even made mine a vegetarian--you could opt for this when paying online). The scenery was beautiful along the way and when I wasn't staring out the window, I was reading or slightly dozing.

I arrived at St. Pancras train station and proceeded to the hostel which was right across the street. The St. Pancras YHA Hostel International is actually a really nice place. The beds leave something to be desired--but I'm a princess when it comes to beds--hahaha. I came around noon and they told me it would be 2 hours before I could check in. So I bought an internet pass and did some emails and writing as well as more reading before checking in. This also gave me time to sort of my bags situation. I had my suitcase, my backpack and a small backpack (a sack with strings---given as a present from the Midden-Netherlands ROC). I threw my important stuff into the suitcase and put that in the locked storage. I put my clothes, toiletries, and charging plugs in my backpack and put that in my room at the hostel and kept my ipad, camera, and other relevant items in my small backpack that I kept with me at all times. Once I divided the material and checked in, I took off for Leicester Square to see what tickets were available for half day showing.

I wandered in the general direction and again, relied on street maps to help me hone in on the specific direction. I eventually found the exact spot and went to see what tickets were available. Sure enough, they had half price tickets for Spamalot and so I bought a single ticket (actually really good--in the 7th row). Once I had the ticket, I used the map the ticket booth provided to determine where the theater was and walked by it to make sure I knew where it was. I stopped at the nearby Starbucks so I could get some coffee, use the bathroom, and use the wifi (and share my excitement about the show with my friends on Facebook). I wandered the area, checking out the small little gardens and parks and peeking into stores. I eventually had dinner (Mexican) and it was delicious. Not sure why I decided on dinner at a Mexican restaurant besides I knew they would have lots of veggie options and I wanted something with a kick. Post dinner, I continued to wander for another hour and then went to the theater.

The show was a lot of fun. It largely reconstructed some of the best parts of Monty Python and

the Holy Grail and a few other ones tossed in. The best times were when the show went beyond the film with their jokes and songs. The most prolonged laugh was when Philip's (?) father demands the guards stay and watch him. When the second guard made kissing lips at the father, the audience broke out laughing, and when he continued to make faces during the laughter, this sent the father into laughter and this just fed into itself for a good 2 minutes of laughter---ad libbing, the father yelled at the crowd to "Stop it!". The show was great and upon leaving, I attempted to use my ninja master skills to find my way home. It should be clear by now, I don't have ninja master skills. So for the second time in 36 hours, I found myself a bit lost in another major city. As I realized I was lost, I did go back to the maps at the bus and train stops to navigate my way back--but what should have been a 1.5 or maybe 2 mile walk home turned into a 4-5 mile trek. I was fine with this; London was beautiful to walk around at night--especially when you have places like Piccadilly Square which felt like the Times Square of NYC--bright as day with lots of bright storefronts and a giant screen.

I found my way back to my hostel and checked email before going up to the room. When I showed up in the room, there was no one there. I got ready for bed and climbed into my bed (top bunk bed) and went to sleep. I can say I slept like a baby--because I felt slightly imprisoned with the bars and such--hahaha. I slept ok. By the time I got up in the morning, I had 3 roommates (each having stumbled in during the night).

I rolled out of bed around 6:30AM and did the shower and get dressed thing. I came downstairs to map out the day and get some coffee. Here's to the last day of the trip!

## Wednesday, May 29, 2013: 7:00AM

I awoke on Tuesday morning ready for another adventure and certainly got one. I first did a morning video but had trouble uploading it, so I finally gave up because Paris was awaiting me! I headed out in the direction of the Botanical Gardens I had stumbled across the night before and slowly worked my way through them. They were beautiful though one section sent me into allergy overload where I was sneezing, coughing, and eyes watering--it came out of nowhere and quickly left once I had passed the section. They had a small zoo there but I passed on it since the price seemed too high and the content too low. I eventually found my way to a shrub labyrinth that I walked into. It was at this point that it started to rain enough for me to get out my umbrella. I eventually exited and headed in the direction of the the Garden of Luxembourg which I didn't know or remember the exact path but just went in the general direction. I stopped along the way for a petit breakfast of chocolate croissant, espresso and water and then continued my wandering. I found it (mostly by chance) and proceeded to explore them. Again, another stunning garden in the middle of the city with flowers, statues, landscape, and building that were certainly majestic and awe-inspiring to wander around and enjoy.

Upon exiting the garden, is where I landed in some trouble. I walked in a general direction of the Seine but after stopping in a few shops and having lunch, I ended up a bit lost. It was probably in part due to the audiobook I was enjoying (A Queer and Pleasant Danger by Kate

Bornstein) but I think I was also pushing myself to get a little lost or out of my comfort zone. So I wandered for about 3 hours towards the middle of the 2nd hour, I began checking out the maps at bus stations and such. I eventually figured out where I was and how to get back. So I began to trek home in the rain, continuing to enjoy the walking, the sights, the smells, and some of the sounds. As I got closer to home, I found a restaurant to have an early dinner in (it was a yummy cheese plate) and, of course, coffee.

I wandered back to my hotel around 5pm and did a little pack as well as skyped. I then did some reading and had an early night.

## Monday, May 27, 2013: 9:30PM

A very long but marvelous day! I got up around 7:00AM and had some fruit while I wrote in my journal and updated by video blog. I headed out by 8:30AM and stopped at a cafe for cafe, coffee, and juice before heading in the general direction of the Louvre, but not without occasionally distractions along the way.

The outside area of the Louvre in itself could be a day activity in itself, examining the various parks, courts, statues, and miscellaneous objects and with buildings so immense in both height and length, it's enough to make one feel the power and ingenuity of humankind. Marvelous, indeed. I got in line to enter the museum, noting the numerous signs to beware of pickpockets. I found this amusing because this was pretty much said to me at least 5 times in my time leading up to going to Paris--"Beware of pickpockets" I was warned by several and while I appreciated the warning, the idea that pickpocketing was the only thing to be on the lookout at the Louvre in terms of the advice or thoughts they could give me seemed amusing in itself. I did lookout for pickpockets...but didn't find any, alas. We slowly shuffled through the line to get into the Louvre and then in the line to get the ticket--a tedious and time-consuming process but one that actually helped as it let me settle into the space and fully absorb it and figure out what I would do and such. Ticket acquired, I hit the toilets (always the first essential before embarking) and began the wander the Louvre.

I didn't create a set plan for wandering as I just wanted to absorb what was around me and drift to what call to my attention. More by chance than purpose, I did stumble upon the Venus de Milo and even the Mona Lisa, but these didn't grab me as much as other works and elements of the museum. My actual favorite part of the museum was the halls of tapestries. Not only were these massive threaded works beautiful to look at and understand the complexity of creating such works with thread, but when I visited them they were utterly abandoned with maybe 1-2 other people around. While many crowded the more popular halls, these were quiet and almost intimate as I could sit and stare for minutes at a work without being in someone else's way, interrupting a picture, or having my view interrupted.

Wandering around and finally getting a sense of the massive size of the Louvre, it totally brought to mind one of my favorite graphic novels, Museum Vaults: Excerpts from the Journal of an

Expert

([http://books.google.fr/books/about/The\\_Museum\\_Vaults.html?id=ISMzGQAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.fr/books/about/The_Museum_Vaults.html?id=ISMzGQAACAAJ&redir_esc=y)) by Marc-Antoine Mathieu. In the book, an art assessor literally spends an entire lifetime trying to go through all the works in the Louvre--not just in the museum proper but in its archives and basements. After seeing the actual Louvre, I may have to re-read the book.

I took on two of the three wings of the museum (Richelieu and Sully), realizing that by the end of the 2nd wing, I was a bit over-stimulating with the place and couldn't absorb or enjoy much more. In the 2nd wing is where I caught the Venus de Milo and Mona Lisa, but mostly in passing. The crowd around the Mona Lisa was more fascinating than the picture itself.

So I exited the Louvre and wandered into the surrounding park area which was immense and beautiful, filled with people, sculptures, flowers, and other delightful sights. I was also fascinated by all the chairs what were put outside for public use. They weren't fixed benches or chairs but ones that could be moved about as one saw fit. Many people were sitting comfortably in these green chairs throughout the park. Finally, I come to the end of the park area and turned towards the Seine so walking back I would see other aspects. Along the way, I stopped at a stand to get a crepe (nutella and banana--yum!). The genetleman was very nice and when I asked in broken French (Si vous plais, une photo?), he was quite generous and not only agreed to let me photo him making the crepe, but invited me behind the booth and had his friend take a picture of me with him making the crepe. Also along the way back to the hotel, I stopped at a grocery store and grabbed some cheese, bread, and wine along with some cereal and rice milk for the morning. I also stopped at a Starbucks to get a coffee to have for the morning (purely for fuel--not for taste; not particularly fond of it in the US and the French version was just as lackluster to say the least--but to help jumpstart my morning, it will do the trick). I got back to my room around 4:30PM and enjoyed a meal of bread, cheese, cucumbers and wine while watching a classic movie on Youtube (Fear of the Night, 1947: <http://www.youtube.com/movie/fear-in-the-night>). I took a nap and then wandered back into Paris.

I eventually found myself in the Botanical Gardens--which I will have to revisit tomorrow since it was just closing and I did not get much time in there (it's also free!). There were also some cool other shops and stuff I plan to check out tomorrow as well. I continued wander a bit, trying different main and side streets I hadn't tried yet, but still able to keep a sense of where I was in relation to the Seine (and therefore in relation to my hotel). In total, I walked about 15 miles (not an exaggeration--my pedometer logged about 32,000 steps and usually it's about 2,000 per mile). So I am definitely tuckered out--but less by the walking and more by the sights and soaking all of it in. It was indeed a great day in Paris!

## Monday, May 27, 2013: 8:00AM

Sunday morning came and throughout the night I could hear the pounding of rain--making me in

part dread the Sunday morning's transport to the airport. I rolled out of bed earlier than my alarm (I got up at 6:30AM instead of 7:00AM). I finished packing the rest of my stuff and had some breakfast (fruit and diet soda--not quite the champion's breakfast but was in need of some caffeine to get me through the next 2 hours). Once I was all packed, I said my goodbyes to a very sleepy Anna and Bert Thijs. It was definitely sad to depart from them as they were such a great pair of people to get to know and spend time with. I walked to the train station and the rain wasn't bad but my suitcase was big and bulky. The button to allow for the extended arm is broken and thus I either had to carry it or do a slightly hunched-walk in order to move it on its wheels. I got to the station and found the right train to get on and the right stop to get off. Once at the station to catch the bus, it was a little confusing about where to go and so I wandered a little bit, still carrying my backpack and suitcase. I found the bus stop and it was within minutes of the bus arriving. I got onto it and the airport was less than 10 minutes away. By this point, my t-shirt was soaked with sweat while my jacket was damn with rain--I was pretty ripe.

As we arrived at the airport, I figured out where I was going and checked in. I went through security and into my gate with no fanfare and was able to get some coffee and a little more food. I settle down to read for the next few hours before the plane was set to go. I also wandered back and forth within the terminal just to stretch my legs. The plane ride was uneventful except that the seat next to me was empty so it was less sardine-ish than usual. I read mostly. Upon landing, I got my luggage quickly and after fussing with the public transportation system that wasn't clear and the desk was unmanned, I just took the taxi to my "hotel." The Hotel Central Bastille is a pretty basic place--though the room leaves a bit more to be desired--rug stains and all. I checked in and came up to my room--which had a closet of a bathroom and a room with a bed and a window. I unpacked what I could as best I could. I checked email and did some searches of the local area to see what was around.

I took off for a 2 hour walk and wandered down the Seine until I found the Notre Dame--which had all the majesty as has been implied by many others. Like the Berline Dome, from the outside, it's power and ability to make one humble is clear. More wandering around after that--actually before that, when walking along the Seine, there were little racks of booksellers so being the bibliophile that I was, found myself slowing down for each vendor to see what they had. Sure enough, I had to buy a book and bought a French edition of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

I stopped at the market stand and bought some fruit for the next few days and came back to the hotel where I skyped with my partner for a few hours and then headed off to bed (it was around 10:30-11:00PM-on the early side but still recovering from the last few days).

## Saturday, May 25, 2013: 10:00PM

A very long and tiring day. Berlin is a beautiful and rich city--but it sucks in the cold rain! The morning started with me writing my journal and reading before Bert Thijs and Anna got up.

Once they were up, we got ready for the day and figured out where we were going. We left our hotel room (or rather, apartment) and walked down the street. We stopped at a little bakery and

got breakfast (coffee and an egg sandwich--which was actually pretty good). We walked down towards where we thought the metro station was and didn't find it. We got a little bit lost but enjoyed seeing the different scenes around us like cool street art. We found the entrance but before going down, I (of course) had to use the bathroom. I am trying not to think about how much I had to pay on this trip to use the bathroom since most facilities make you pay, and I almost always had to go the bathroom (the result of drinking lots of water and coffee). It's probably in the vicinity of \$15. Found my way back to Bert Thijs and Anna and we ventured down into the subway. The train carts were yellow and boxy--they seemed to fit with the perception of Germany, what can I say.

We arrived at a stop and walked around for a bit as it started to rain. We got a little bit lost but then found what we were looking for, the Berliner Dom, a beautiful and massive church that was amazing to explore and walk through. We paid admission and walked into the main hall. It was massive and awesome in the full sense of that word's original meaning. I may not consider myself Christian, but I certainly understand the power and elegance of the church itself and the humbling effect it can have on an individual. We sat in the benches and just looked around for a bit, taking in all the different details before wandering around and taking pictures. The Dom also allowed attendants to go upstairs to the actual dome itself for some amazing views of the church itself and of Berlin. Absolutely beautiful--even with the rain. We descended the stairs (and there were a lot of them) all the way to the basement where they had tombs of some of the famous people of German and Prussian history. After wandering through, we stopped at the cafe for a light snack and some coffee. As we finished, we realized the giant organ would be playing shortly so we backtracked upstairs to listen to the organ and a brief sermon (in German--but sounded nice!). We left and began our trek towards the Pergamon Museum--by this point, it was starting to rain hard and I luckily had my umbrella. We got to the museum but had to wait for about a half-hour for admittance to the museum and then to purchase our ticket. Here again, the museum was amazing. It is a collection of works from the ancient worlds--many still preserved including the gates of Ishtar and other "acquired" material from the Islamic world, ancient classical world, and Ancient Near East world.

By this point, we needed to find some food because we had done a fair share of walking. We went to the first restaurant we found--which we probably shouldn't have--hahaha. We got a table and found limited food options for me but we managed. I got a mushroom and asparagus soup which was good. Our waiter left something to be desired alas. He tossed the menus on table haphazardly and we had to flag him down to order. When I went to pay, all I had was a hundred and so when he gave me change (the point at which I was going to figure out tip), he put the money on the table and said, "Thanks for nothing."

We left there back into the pouring rain as we tried to head to another place we wanted to check out. As we did, we encountered a protest--maybe 100-200 people moving along the same direction as us, protesting Monsanto. We moved down a different street and up another--we were also on the look out for a place to get Bert Thijs an umbrella as the rain really required it. We found one and then continued on--only to run into the protest group again. We continued

along to our next destination when we found ourselves with another rowdy group--football fans getting excited for the big game this evening. They were making their way to a central area where it would be projected on a large screen--and many people were in attendance despite the nasty weather. We found our destination--a government building--but it was closed to the public. After all of this, we decided another coffee was needed as Bert Thijs was soaked (and by this point, so were my shoes and socks). We found another cafe to have some coffee and reassess plans. By this point, I was tired and wet and knew my levels were low. Through our discussion, none of us were really enthralled with hitting something else so we decided to head home (it was close to 4:00pm by this point). We figured we could head back to near our hotel, I could hit an Internet cafe nearby and then we could do dinner. We found the nearest subway and headed home. On the way back to the hotel, we passed an Internet cafe and I went in to make use since there was no wifi and I hadn't checked in for a bit. I spent about 45 minutes there and then met up back at the room. We decided to check out a nearby Indian restaurant called "Siva"--which was excellent--I'm going to write a review of it on TripAdvisor since it is pretty new and damn good Indian food.

After being sufficiently satiated with food, we walked back to the hotel. Bert Thijs went to a bar right nearby but Anna and I were spent! (In total, we walked about 9 miles in the cold wet weather). I came back and did some packing and planning for my commute to the airplane the next day and then took a shower. I then did some journaling and am shortly going to bed.

## Saturday, May 25, 2013: 7:00AM

I got up for the last time in the Netherlands yesterday. I awoke with my alarm around 5:00AM and just listened to the birds for a little bit before getting up and taking a shower. I went downstairs and repacked my suitcase, making sure everything could fit and then did a video post and some email before having breakfast. I left the house earlier than Anna since I had to walk today since I wasn't coming back, taking the bike seemed silly. So I enjoyed one last wandering through the neighborhood and got to the train station where Anna showed up shortly after me. We hopped on the train and went to Amersfoort.

While in the teacher's lounge, a colleague of Anna's asked me about my presentation and the importance of Robert Crumb (I hadn't included him in my presentation). I assured him that Crumb was a major part of the underground comics movement, but that I didn't focus too much on the movement itself as I had a to do a very very brief snapshot of the history. I attended Anna's first class where I mostly worked on my computer double checking odds and ends about Paris and London. After the first class, I went for a walk and wandered the area around the college for about 1.5 hours. It was an enjoyable walk as many houses had really great little gardens in the front.

Upon return to the school, I had remembered I forgot to do 1-2 work related items that I had promised to get done, so I got on my computer for about an hour to get caught up. Anna also told me that 2 students wanted to interview me for a documentary they were doing for their

audio-visual program. I was happy to be interviewed and so the students set it up. They were interviewing me about comics, pop art, popular culture, and education, so I rambled away as I always do. They seemed to enjoy it--of course,, the video could be wonderfully mixed into some kind of bad meme no doubt--hahaha.

After classes, Bert Thijs arrived and so we got our stuff together, made one last bathroom trip and got into the car for our long ride. As a passenger rather than one of the pilots in a road trip, the trip was all right. We hit a few patches of traffic in the second half of our ride which delayed us by a good hour or more. The scenery was nice in that it regularly changed between farming fields, flower fields, hills, and cities. I finished listening to one audiobook and started another.

We had a few bathroom breaks along the way and Bert Thijs was great at pointing out the different landmarks--particularly those that related to the East-West Germany divide.

We first stopped for dinner by asking the TomTom to direct us towards some place to eat. We turned off the road and soon found ourselves in a little village but there was no (clear) food places to eat. We were left at hitting the dinner downtown road and right on the highway. Needless to say, it was far from fine-dining. I had salad and french fries since those were the only vegetarian options. We piled back in the car and continued driving. We arrived at our hotel around 10:30PM.

The hotel is an odd place. It's the "Birth Hotel" right next to the Sissy Bar. The hotel entrance was open and sure enough there was baby carriage sitting in the hallway next to the entrance (though looking like it was just left there--not purposely placed there). We walked up 2 flights of stairs, following a paper sign taped to a chair directing us to "reception". We knocked on the door and waited a few minutes before a woman came out to show us to our rooms because we were in another building. We followed her back downstairs and to the back exit (darkly lit) and into another building in the back courtyard. Up another flight of stairs and finally, we were there. The room is more of an apartment. There were 3 beds in the living space (along with sink, fridge, stove, etc), but there was also another door with 2 beds. We put down our things and settled a bit before going back out to wander and hit a pub.

The reception had told us that we could bring our car into the courtyard so when we came out again, we aimed to do just that. This was an interesting mixture of events. Bert Thijs went to get the car and I stood by the narrow courtyard entrance. As I was waiting, I found a very fascinating set up. Right near me were two guys sitting in a car with the front of the car facing the Sissy Bar. At one point, I heard a whistle near me and looked over to the Sissy Bar where there was an older woman and a young woman standing in the doorway. It only took me a few minutes to figure out what the the Sissy Bar was and who the guys were. They nice guys at least though because when Bert Thijs was having trouble getting the right angle, the guys moved their cars since their cars were blocking the easiest angle to approach the entrance.

Car parked, we wandered down the street laughing mildly about what had just occurred. We found a 24 hour small grocery stand and grabbed breakfast for the next morning. We walked

back and went into a dive bar that was next to the hotel. People were occasionally putting coins in the jukebox and playing 1960s-1980s songs to which everyone would sing. They can still smoke in bars in Germany so the room was smokey and smelled of spilled alcohol. My hosts had their drinks and we headed back to the hotel to sleep. Not sure what time I went to bed but I awoke on my own around 7:00AM and got dressed and started writing since it seemed like the best time to do it. The saddest part about the hotel is that there is no wifi. Oh well--we'll classify that under "first world problems."

## Thursday, May 24, 2013: 11:00PM

Tw was a very long but enjoyable day. It started in the morning with writing in my journal and having breakfast. Anna came down and we headed off to the train station to catch the train to Amersfoort. The bike ride was a bit rough as it was pouring rain, so by the time we got to the station, my pants were soaked. However, by the time I got off the train, they were mostly dried. We walked to her school, chatted with her colleagues and then went into her first class. She was continuing with her instruction on their projects and had them design logos and text-logos based on an imagined museum that the student was "working" for. The logo and text-logo had to match the style of the type of art museum. I walked around and looked at the students projects for a bit--many of them were choosing surrealism or graffiti art to no big surprise.

After her class, it was time for me to present to 3rd year students on comics ([http://prezi.com/qt649-ggxa34/comics-history-form-value/?auth\\_key=01e4704c4da215d7642400853cce9e46c4ddcc50&kw=view-qt649-ggxa34&rc=ref-11185573](http://prezi.com/qt649-ggxa34/comics-history-form-value/?auth_key=01e4704c4da215d7642400853cce9e46c4ddcc50&kw=view-qt649-ggxa34&rc=ref-11185573)). The presentation went well overall--definitely a few things need tweaking (I haven't taught the comic course in almost 2 years soooo, I was a bit rusty). But the students seemed to mostly enjoy it and they had really good questions at the end. After the presentation, I made my way to the train station when I realized I didn't have enough money on my card. So this was the most challenging/frustrating part of the Netherlands. The train system requires a card and unregistered cards such as mine must have a minimum of \$20 on them in order to board the train (there are no gates--but train-staff regularly move through the trains and if you're caught without a ticket, you must pay \$40). However, the machines to put money on your card do not take Visa (only Maestro Cards or EU ATM Bank Cards) or coins. So as I got to the station with only \$10 on my card and no change--I had limited options, especially when it started to hail. So, I had to make a decision. I knew the next stop was Amersfoort Central where they would have actual tellers where I could use the cash I had in my pocket to put it on the card. I got on the train, knowing it was only 4-5 minutes away. I stood near the bathrooms and kept an eye in both directions for the train-staff but luckily none came. I got off the train at Amersfoort and put money on my card. I grabbed some lunch and then got back on the next train going to Utrecht Overvecht. Once there, I took a bus to the ROC where my next appointment was, but since I was early, I wandered around a bit.

In fact, in my wandering, I managed to solve the bad weather we had been experiencing. It was continually raining on and off, but I went into a shop and purchased an umbrella. Sure enough, as soon as I came out and started walking with said umbrella, the rain stopped and the sun

came out for the rest of the day--seriously! I wandered around a bit more and finally went into my appointment.

I met with three people from their ICT department which is a mixture of Information Technology and Academic Technology and we had a great 2 hour conversation that was still going strong when a knock at the door came. We were informed that the rest of my group was waiting for me, so we ended the interview and I found the other American exchange folk and Dutch members. We drove to a restaurant that was made out of a former Dutch fort and wandered the grounds. They had some very cute goats and a duck with ducklings. It was a very nice space and we sat down to have a drink while waiting for Anna to join us. Once she showed up, we took a group picture and then went in for food.

The food was excellent. I had a nice mushroom soup and vegetable lasagna. Dessert was chocolate cake and coffee. The conversation was lively and we enjoyed reflecting on the past two weeks with each other and some of the running jokes that we had. Norbert, the program coordinator, asked us for feedback and so we shared what was good and what was challenging about the program. I discussed that a more shared-vision or explanation of the program on the US end as well as upon arrival would be useful to better organize thoughts and make sense of all the things we were doing.

Anna and I got a ride from one of the other pairs to a train station in Amersfoort and only had to wait about 20 minutes before catching the next train home. On the train, I caught up on my email and my journal. We got home and biked home--a bit exhausted--especially with the cold (we had sun, but cold weather--the less of 2 evils, yes?). We got home and I started packing for tomorrow since this weekend I will be leaving from Berlin to France so I need to have everything with me. I also gave Anna her gift, a Dutch translation of Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics which I thought she would like and could also use with her students.

All in all, it's been a great trip thus far and largely because of the program and the gracious kindness of Anna and Bert Thijs. I definitely lucked out (again) in partaking in this program. Off to bed after such a long day (left the house at 7am and got back a little after 10pm).

## Thursday, May 23, 2013: 6:30AM

I got in an enjoyable--albeit chilly 8.2 mile run yesterday. It took me down to the park and then around the exterior of the city canals. The moment on my run was when I saw a woman on her bike with a dog in her front basket. I'd seen people do this with small dogs but this was easily a 40 pound dog and there he was just sitting all calm and collected as she biked away. When I got home, I took a shower and then had breakfast with Bert Thijs and Anna.

Anna and I biked to the cheese shop--where I wanted one of everything--hahaha. We were starting to collect some snacks for the next few days--particularly the road trip. I parted with

Anna and I went to downtown Zwolle to a second-hand bookshop to look to see if they have any of interest. I found an author (Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis) whom I have never heard of before but a small short story collection that I rather liked so I bought it so I could have some additional reading material.

I biked to the train station and got a train to Utrecht and started to read the book (and really do like it!). I arrived early in Utrecht as I was meeting a colleague from the last time I did the exchange program. So I wandered about Utrecht some more, checked out a comic book shop and another used bookstore. There I found another curious (and old) book on the story backgrounds to Wagner's music. At this point, I promise to only buy no more than 2 additional books. I brought 2 with me, I should be bringing more than 4 back--but we all know how much I love my books!

I headed back to Utrecht station to wait up to meet with my friend. He arrived with his partner and so we greeted one another and then proceeded to explore Utrecht some more and catch up about how things are going. I was happy to hear that he and his partner are getting married this summer and that he's been having success with his garden and other activities (he even gave me a bottle of home-brewed beer which was pretty cool!).

We sat down for some coffee and people watching before returning to more wandering about. His partner had gone to school in Utrecht so she showed us to some fun and less-busier spots. For dinner, she found a great Italian restaurant that had a good vegetarian menu on it (both she and I are vegetarians). The food was great and afterwards, we wandered back to the train station to catch trains.

On the train, I read and slightly dozed for a bit. When I got back to Zwolle, the weather had gotten colder and I could definitely feel it. I came home and Anna and Bert Thijs were around. Anna was very excited (as was I upon hearing) that they may be getting a kitten soon so she fished out the different items she had gotten a month or so earlier.

I finished up my Prezi for tomorrow's presentation on Comics and did a few other odds and ends. Before bed, I read for a bit.

## Wednesday, May 22, 2013: 8:00AM

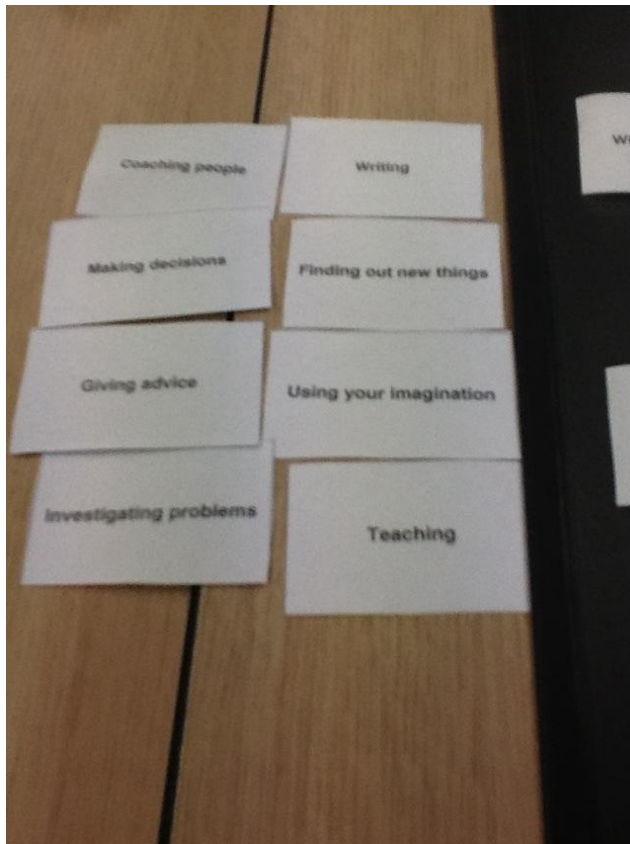
I got off the train yesterday in Amersfoort and went to Anna's school to meet up with others in the exchange program. We were transported to an ROC in Newtonbaan which focuses on hospitality and tourism.

Upon arrival we met with the Student Success team in full and one of the Americans who also works in a Student Success Center at the Casper College in Wyoming did a presentation about her work. Next, we took a tour of the facilities which was quite impressive. The man giving us

the tour explained how he had worked to create a business within the school to help students learn--everything from the coffee shop to the cafeteria to a dining hall and conference center, all of it is organized and run by the students--depending on what year they are in--so the first year students will often be the front line of service while a third year student may be "manager" of the cafeteria for the week. The school as a whole had a lot of interesting and small touches to it such as a "red carpet" to the entrance emphasising a customer-centered focus in the students' work and forethought.

After the tour, we came back to the room and participated in an activity for sorting out one's interests and strengths for careers (as you can see below--I apparently have chosen the right professions--hahaha). We continued with dialogue about differences, similarities, and challenges that we each experience in our own colleges back home and what the Dutch encounter here.

My list of things that (I hope) I'm good at and enjoy.



Lunch was prepared and served by the restaurant services school in a very nice "restaurant" room that also stocked alcohol and such. After lunch (cheese sandwiches with argula on some kind of whole-wheat bread with tomato soup), we piled back into the car and went to the ROC in Vondellaan which specialized in Health and Social Care. When we arrived, there were some changes to what we were supposed to do so we ended up meeting with some of the employees

who pair up students in their 2nd and 3rd year classes with what could essentially be considered internships (some seemed paid--others didn't). So we discussed with them about the challenges of pairing up students and what the limitations were such as availability, distance from home, and level of students. We also met with another person from the Student Success Center to hear about other aspects of the program. Finally, we were given a walking tour of the school where we were shown their recycled art center, their pharmacology classrooms, and their chemistry labs. We finished up and by this point I was a bit antsy to be done with the day. There was a lot of information thrown at us--all of which was interesting but some of which felt redundant and sitting down all day was draining in itself since I'm not used to it and it makes me fidgety or worse--tired and start to feel my eyelids get quite heavy.

We got a ride to the station and I hopped on a train back to Zwolle. Unfortunately, when I got home, it was pouring rain (again) and I lost my umbrella somewhere in all the shuffling. Luckily, I remembered that my backpack actually has a bag in the bottom of it to loop around the back to keep it from getting wet. I tossed that on the bag and was reasonably fine walking home in the rain otherwise. When I got back home, Bert Thijs was cooking another masterpiece and so Anna and I caught up on our day inbetween my reading and doing email and her talking on the phone with Bert Thijs. For dinner, one of Anna's friends came over who I met on Sunday. The dinner was an excellent veggie pie that was delicious!

After dinner, I did some reading and then Skyped and rolled into bed, quite tired. Slept like a rock again and got up around 7:00AM. I'm excited about today as I'm going to try for a long run (9+ miles) and I'm also meeting up with my friend whom I did the exchange with 2-3 years ago. We're meeting in Utrecht.

## Tuesday, May 21, 2013: 7:00AM

Yesterday was an enjoyable day that had much to offer. It started with me rolling out of bed around 7:30AM and going downstairs to do some writing and a video update. After a while, I sat down to read and relax on the couch and Anna and Bert Thijs eventually came down for breakfast. We chatted a bit and Anna let me know when we would leave on the train to go to Appledorn to visit the Het Loo and a national park. It is also where she grew up and her parents lived so we would be meeting up with them too. We walked to the train station since her parents would be lending her their car so we could take it to Berlin this upcoming weekend. We hopped on a train and were off. We had to transfer at a station at one point. What I found curious about this particular train station was that it had a little green space in the middle of it--a garden essentially right in the midst of it, which I thought was pretty cool.

We arrived in Appledorn and Anna's father picked us up in the car and brought us to their house. There, her mother provided us with toast and various toppings (cheese, salmon, hummus, etc) and apple turnovers which were delicious. We went into their backyard (beautiful garden with small fish pool and lots of fragrant flowers) to grab the bikes and the 4 of us were on the road in no time. Because I was given a mountain bike, I ended up rolling up my pants so my jeans wouldn't get caught.

We trekked to Het Loo, a Dutch palace with royal gardens and woodlands all about. With the recent changing of leaders, the palace had gotten a bit more attention and was pretty busy. This wasn't a problem as we were more interested in the surrounding woodlands than the actual palace. As we walked about, Anna's father and mother provided me with some of the local history as well as stories of Anna as a kid, which was cute. In the woods, we came across a hedge maze, an old "bowling" lane, and a shooting gallery. The most curious spot was the horse (and pet) graveyard full with tombstones and dates of life. There was also a nice castle that is still regularly used by the royal family. It was a nice walk and at the end, we biked over to see the palace but didn't bother going onto the grounds as it was quite crowded. We returned back to Anna's parents' house for another snack before heading out. Anna's mother was cute and reminded me of my own mother. We had been wanting to hit a grocery store but they were all closed due to the holiday. Thus, her mother was insistent on providing us with ample food before we left. We got into the car and Anna warned me we might not make it home since she didn't drive much in general (she did just fine!).

We got home and unloaded. I did a few odds and ends and then began to read again. Anna came downstairs and we began making dinner together. We're not quite sure what we made--it was pasta with sauce, veggies, and cheese--but it was quite good, so that's a win! Anna and Bert Thijs's friend, Justin was over for dinner so it was good to get to talk to him again. After dinner, Bert Thijs and I had to go pick up the "tank"--a very large car--from Anna's friend so we could go pick up a dresser closet that Anna had purchased. With TomTom in hand, we took off to find and pick it up. It wasn't as bad as either of us had anticipated since it was taken apart, making it easier to transport. We loaded up the dresser and headed home.

On the way home, Bert Thijs and I were having a good conversation--apparently animated enough so that he wasn't driving perfectly straight (though not irradically either). a police car pulled in front of us and then pulled us over. He came over to us and talked to Bert Thijs to make sure everything was ok. It was rather funny. They asked if he was drinking or if we were fighting. Saying no to both and just saying that we were laughing at what was on the radio, he smiled kindly and went back to his car. No asking for license and registration, no excessive questions--it all took less than 30 seconds. The radio was soliciting and listing what they considered the best "porn" songs in pop music. Though they were going more for lyrics than mood.

We got back home and unloaded the dresser before dropping off the car at Anna's friend's house and biking back. When we got back, I did a little bit of work-related stuff and wandered

off to bed. I work around 5:30AM and got ready for another day. I made a quick video about my adventures, grabbed some breakfast and walked to the station to catch an earlier train than Anna since I had to meet the people in the program at 7:45AM and Anna doesn't have to be to school until 8:30'ish.

## Monday, May 20, 2013: 8:00AM

After yesterday's run, I took a shower and got dressed. I worked on the art exhibit video for a bit (actually finished it later on--you can find it here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaK-vlvBZOI>). Another of Anna's friend came over and we chatted for a bit, enjoying a hard-boiled egg and figuring out plans for the day. As I was hungry at this point, I made a peanut butter sandwich and as I brought it to the table, they both began laughing. Anna explained there were finalizing plans to go to have lunch in Zwolle (but doing it in Dutch--so I was oblivious). I wrapped the sandwich up and put it in the fridge--problem solved! We walked to Zwolle center and find a nice place to have lunch. It was an Italian place with really yummy sandwiches and tomato soup. One interesting element of the restaurant is that they had free wi-fi but you had to "Like" their Facebook page in order to get access. A very curious app and not one I had seen before.

While ate, we watched a group of boys launching spitballs at the McDonald's window next door at a girl they were either fiercely hateful at or madly in love. The girl kept coming out and chasing them away--she was having none of it. This went on for a good 20 minutes of entertainment. After lunch, we wandered Zwolle a bit more and visited a nice park that had a tall chair made out of a tree stump. Both Anna's friend and I saw this as an invitation to climb up it to sit upon it. We walked back to the house and while Anna and her friend chatted, I read from the book I had bought at the art gallery the day before on William Hogarth and his work. Shortly after Anna's friend left, Bert Thijs returned from a 40 mile bike ride with another of Anna's friend. We chatted with them for awhile before he took off and then Bert Thijs and Anna did some things around the apartment while I finished working on the art exhibit and did some more reading.

For dinner, we biked to an all-you-can-eat sushi bar. It was a little hole in the wall place but it was delicious and they had ample vegetarian sushi rolls with some that included seaweed, tomatoes, tofu, egg, cucumber, avocado, and other interesting combinations. Delicious! They also had some more dessert-oriented sushie too including some with kiwi or strawberry and a final one that had fried mango with rice and other fruits mixed in and a creamy sauce on top. Yum! They also had an interesting policy to avoid wasting sushi rolls. You had to finish all the ones on your plate before getting another plate and if you left your plate unfinished at the end of

your meal, you would be charged for the individual ones in addition to the "all you can eat" price. This kept people from wasting sushi at the restaurant's expense.

### **A wonderful plate of veggie sushi rolls!**



As we waddled out of the restaurant, full of sushi, we biked back towards their apartment. Bert Thijs went home while Anna and I visited a pub around the corner to meet up with more of her friends. We hung out for about a half hour and then came home. I skyped with my mom (5pm where she was, 11pm where I was). She was kind enough to skype in my apartment so I could see the kitties. Bear and Pumpkin weren't entirely responsive to me on the screen, but I was at least glad I got to see them (yes--missing them dearly--hahaha). After that, I got read to bed and slept like a log, again.

## **Sunday, May 19, 2013: 10:00AM**

I've been here now just over a week and am still having a great time. Even though it feels like longer than a week (in that, I feel I've slipped into some semblance of a schedule and feel very at home here--thanks to gracious and awesome hosts).

Yesterday, I slept in until about 8am or so--I know, it's becoming a habit--hahaha. I came downstairs and started working in my **Brief (and Poorly Constructed) Tour of Zwolle** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HleEn2pSnHo>). In part, it was to give folks at home a sense of what I'm doing but also because I wanted to explore and play with Youtube Video editor (in which it was entirely constructed). I finished and then did some email and other work-related things that I needed to catch up on.

Anna came down and started to have some breakfast and I grabbed a shower and got ready for the day's escapades. I came down and since I had time, I ran to the grocery store to get stamps for postcards that I had written the day before. Anna's friends pick us up around 11:30 to take us to Harskamp, Netherlands to the Galerie Zuid (<http://www.galerie Zuid.nl/>) where Anna and her two friends were painting columns (I'm creating a collage video to better show what I mean by this). The Gallery was awesome! It was chockful of all sorts of odds and ends. It had a gnome garden with hundreds of gnomes in all sorts of poses. In total, it was like someone took an art studio, a junk yard, and a massive lawn of garden furniture and smashed it altogether. It was great! I wandered around lots on the grounds while checking in on Anna and her friends progress. It was also an opening and thus, two women were reading poetry and many people showed up to see it all.

### Quite the Artist



I also got to meet Anna's parents and her sisters who were very nice and chatted with me for a while. We were originally going camping with them but the weather didn't seem like it was going to cooperate (though it fooled us and turned out decent). After Anna & her friends finished, the gallery owner got use pizza and ice cream. It was a lot of fun and on the car ride home, I kept on zoning out being a bit tired at that point. However, when I got back to Zwolle, I went for a nice 1.5 walk around the town, capturing more sites and just stretching the legs more. I came home and watched the Eurovision Song Contest (<http://www.eurovision.tv/page/timeline>) for a

little bit and chatted with Anna. I wandered off to be near midnight and slept deep till about 7:30am.

**Of course, I found the library!**



I got up and came downstairs. I got ready for a run but not before doing a quick video with some of the numbers of the first week:

- 135,000+ steps taken
- 20 miles run (60+ traveled on foot in total)
- 135 floors
- 13 Train Rides
- 2 Bus rides
- 2 Tram rides
- 4 car rides
- Too many bike rides to count!
- 600+ photos taken
- 5000+ words
- 6 Videos made

The run was nice as I covered some familiar ground and also some ground I hadn't seen before. I came across a group of runners who looked like they were preparing for a group run (they were in a parking lot stretching and such). I was almost tempted to ask to join them but I was already 4 miles into a 5 mile run and knew I wouldn't last long.

I've really enjoyed the running and walks I've been doing. Though I've done walking on other trips, the mixture of both, coupled with the opportunity to use a bike, allows me to cover a lot of terrain both new and old and get familiar with the area. I've actually been marginally impressed with some of the assumptions about where I am and how to take different routes to get to the same place (and actually been right!).

## Saturday, May 18, 2013: 9:30AM

After my biking around Zwolle and shopping, I came back to the apartment to get my stuff and get ready to head to Utrecht. I ran into Bert Thijs who was just heading off to work himself. I took the bike to the train and figured out which train I needed to get on since I was going a little bit off script from the schedule Anna had been so kind to prepare for me (I was leaving from Zwolle instead of Amersfort but given her excellent instruction, I figured out how to get to there from here without even having to ask for instructions--let's call that progress!).

On the train ride, I did some writing and some reading and promptly arrived at Utrecht Overvecht station wherein I caught a bus (almost the wrong bus but I figured it out just as I was about to make a snafu!--I'm getting better at this!). I was about an hour early for my interview so I wandered the area a bit and found a shopping mall. This was actually good because I wanted to get another shirt. I (with all my grace) had spilled coffee down the front on my shirt on the train, so I looked to see if I could find a reasonable replacement--which I did). As I came out, it started to rain pretty hard, so I whipped out the umbrella and proceeded to walk with haste to the college. I met with the school's Blackboard Administrator, Henk van Kyssen, who was a very friendly and courteous gentleman. Our interview went for about 3 hours and included lots of side talk on different experiences but also he gave me a lot of perspective about the Dutch system and some of the reasons for differences between the two systems (US & Dutch). Afterwards, he very kindly gave me a ride to the station.

### Some cool wall art in Zwolle



Upon arrival, I was about to go in when I tapped my OV Card (like the Charlie Cards in Boston, but tracked by distance), when it told me I didn't have enough money on it. This turned out to be not as easy as I had hoped and of course, it was pouring down hard now. The machines to put money on the card do not take Visa or cash. Only Maestro Card and coins. I walked across the street and had to get \$20 in coins in large part because I needed at least \$20 on the card. So I bought a soda and got change. I went back and fed the machine. With money on my card, I checked in and figured out which train to take. I got onto the train without further fanfare--though wet-footed and slightly cold. The train ride was smooth and I mostly read or wrote. I biked home just as Bert Thijs was finishing another wonderful meal (mushroom risotto) which we followed up with ice cream. After dinner, I worked a little bit on my video and then went for a walk in Zwolle to capture some more video. This was around 9:30pm at night and it was nice to see the city lit even though all of the shops were closed except for a few restaurants and bars. The city was still lively with many people walking and biking around. Finally, I came home and did a few more things before passing out, awaking around 6:30am thanks to the ceaseless screeching birds...where's a good hunter cat when you need one--hahaha.

## Friday, May 17, 2013: 9:00AM

Yesterday, (Thursday) was a raining and cold day. It definitely wore on me and if you detect a bit less excitement about the day, it mostly likely has much to do with the weather than anything that actually happened.

I finished up yesterday's journal entry on the train from Zwolle to Amersfort. Upon arrival, Anna and I went to her office and then I sat in her class as she gave a short lecture about the creative process. She then had them work on their mood boards as they begin continue into week 3 of an 8 week project. During this time, a colleague of Anna's Karin (?) came over to me and began talking to me about the work she does (she's a graphic designer, but was also a fire fighter) so we talked about differences in the school systems and such. After the class, Anna and I went and found the other Americans as it was Anna's turn to present to us about the Creative College part of the community college system. In this avenue, students are taught the creative process and how to apply it to video & audio production, media design (Anna's area), and Art & Design. She went through much of the process and discussed the challenges of the program and then had some students have some fun with us by putting us on a green screen and photoshopping use into amusing images (mine is forthcoming).

### **On the Wall at ROC**



For lunch, one of Anna's colleagues was kind enough to make us pea soup--but unfortunately, there was meat in it--which I didn't realized until I had a few bites of it. I finished it--but I think the Veggie Police are going to revoke my license...or I have to restart the "Days Since Lance Ate Meat" Clock...I'll try not to bring shame to anyone--hahaha.

After lunch, they crammed 5 of us into a car that might barely fit 4 and drove us off to Utrecht where we would visit another school in the ROC Midden Netherlands system to see some of their latest work. This school had a strong technical focus and thus there was much there in terms of metal working, stone working, electronics and the like. Upon arrival, we met up with one of the other Americans' host and then were sent to metal shop where two students walked us through and encouraged us to help in creating candle holders for everyone. Thus I will be coming home with a candleholder that I (somewhat) made.

After the metal shop, we were given a tour of the school and its different programs. At the end of the day, we left the school (into the cold rain) and found our way to the tram. We get onto the tram with little incident, though it was pretty crammed. We got off at Utrecht Central station. I attempted to catch the next train but there wasn't enough money on my card. Unfortunately, the quick ways of putting money on a card entail having a local back card or lots of change. I had neither and thus had to go to the ticket booth to by mine. So I missed the train and waited for

the next one, texting Anna to let her know where I was and when I'd be home.

### **The Finished Product from Metal Class**



The train ride home was calm and uneventful. When I got back to Zwolle, it was time to battle the weather. Once out of the station, I got on the bike and trekked away to meet up with Annie before visiting one of her friends. By the time I arrived, the front of my pants were quite wet. Yuck! Anna's friend made homemade pizza for us and we sat and talked with her, her partner and her daughter.

When it was time for the daughter (she's about 1) to go to bed, we left and came back to the

apartment. I had another skype chat and then soaked in a hot bath for a while before a few more odds and ends before going to sleep.

And boy did I sleep: until around 8am like a rock. I felt quite rested and have been overall impressed with my level of energy and activity I've experienced on the trip. After checking email and such, I went for a light run--3.6 miles. I was kind of excited because this means I made the threshold of 20 miles this week (which I should have been doing since January, but finally might be on the right track! The weather wasn't warm, but it wasn't raining so it I took advantage of it while it was still dry.

After the shower, I went on a bicycling tour of the town of Zwolle that I will share out with readers too. When I came downtown, there were open markets with lots of vendors selling commercial and artisan crafts as well as lots of food. I shopped around and made my way back to get ready for the rest of the day.

I think the rain probably added to a little bit of homesickness. Though I'm not even sure it's quite that which I'm feeling. It's part missing friends, family, and pets as well as being out of a normal schedule. I'm having a blast and experience so much, so it might also be I'm a bit exhausted from my ventures as well. Oh well, nothing I can do about that, I'm going back to enjoy more of my trip!

## Thursday, May 16, 2013: 6:30AM

Another day of adventure and fun for sure! As I finished yesterday's journal, I followed up with a video and then went for a nice 7 mile run around the city's commons and the walled city within Zwolle. It was a great run as the weather was largely sunny and it had warmed up to the mid-50s. My GPS watch wasn't working right so I couldn't get an exact time, but I did run at a leisurely pace, just enjoying the landscape and people around, and not worrying as much about time. Of course, with the 5-finger vibram shoes I did get my share of looks--particularly from the youth who were on their way to school.

I got back, showered, and added an addendum to my video journal--commenting that I thought it was pretty cool to see farm animals on the city common. But after this, Anna and I took the bikes to the train station for a full day in Amsterdam. When we arrived, it was crowded--which was to be expected but there was more to be expected as a major football (soccer) match was taking place in Amsterdam

([http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/15/chelsea-benfica-europa-league\\_n\\_3280613.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/15/chelsea-benfica-europa-league_n_3280613.html)).

Thus, there were lots of people walking about with various sports clothing and people buying and selling tickets. We slowly made our way from the central station and deeper into Amsterdam. We walked a few miles and finally got to the Rijksmuseum (national museum) that was recently opened after major renovations. However, it was fun to be back in Amsterdam, wandering the city and seeing all the different buildings, canals, and such. I probably could have just wandered for the entire day and still had a blast. When we finally got there (we had

some misdirection about where it was by the public signs), we waited in a line briefly before being admitted. We checked out bags and coats. The first place we hit was the modern exhibit which was curious and cool to see. It was great having Anna with me since art is her specialty so she could explain and contextualize much of the Dutch art within larger art movements. The museum layout was a little bit tricky so we got turned around a bit, but we managed to find our way with only a few misdirections. The one disappointment was that the brochure they gave us mentioned a room with Francisco de Goya ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco\\_Goya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Goya)) --one of my favorite artists--but it only featured one of his portraits but nothing else of his.

There was more to see and we caught some of it in passing but between the crowds and the walking, we were growing a little tired and also figured some food was in order. We left the museum and went over to a park where Anna took my picture next to the Amsterdam sign. We then grabbed a tram that was heading in the direction of central station. Getting off the tram proved a bit tricky. It was quite crowded and a younger man had a large suitcase in the middle of the aisle that he seemed to position in a way for maximum interference. Thus getting off the tram was even slower. Sure enough, as Anna got off the tram, I was still 2-3 people back and we both laughed and waved as I continued on the tram and she off it. It wasn't too problematic as I got off at the next stop and we met inbetween. We went to Bakerr Bart for a late lunch and enjoy sandwiches with brie, cucumber, and tomatoes (yum!). We started to make our way to central station but the crowds were in full force. We kept trying to go around the most crowded areas but this somehow landed us in the Red Light district which also was highly crowded (I would imagine the intersection of booze, sports, and sex is like triple word score on scrabble for many men). It was a little bit of tense atmosphere with lots of cheering, pushing, and yelling. There were also mounted and standing police everywhere and lots of paddy wagons. Eventually, we found our way to the station, slightly wiped from all the shuffling and navigating among herds of people.

We went to Utrecht to meet up with Bert Thijs where he talked about his work with the national exams and such and then found a nice place for dinner where I got Mushroom Goulash and Peanut soup--both of which were delicious! We trekked back to the train and got on it but not before getting some ice cream to top off the day. We took seats in the "silence" cart on the train (a cart where you are not supposed to talk--but remain silent). The train was slightly delayed and we eventually landed home close to 10pm. Exhausting day to say the least. In addition to the 7 miles I ran in the morning, I walked a good additional 7-8 miles throughout the day. I decided that Thursday, I would take it a little bit easier.

Apparently, things get a little warped in Amsterdam (or at least my camera does funny things)



Inside the Rijksmuseum



Wednesday, May 15, 2013: 6:30AM

Finishing up with the journal, Anna and I headed to the train station on bike. Apparently, Mother Nature intends for me to have a wet rear. Almost every time I go out to get on a bike, it has rained and I always forget to bring an extra towel to wipe down the seat. Oh well. the train station is just close enough that in the morning, my hands are just getting numb before we arrive (it's in the 40s F here in the morning).

Today's adventure entailed me going back to Utrecht on my own and finding both a building and

a person that I have not encountered yet. It was by and large a success. Anna and I took the same train but she got off in Amersfoort while I travelled on to Utrecht. Upon getting off the train, I located the bus station and with Anna's gracious directions was able to get on the right bus. I did however miss my stop. I didn't realize how close the first stop was and by the time I realized we had arrived at it and were departing, pressing the "Stop" button was too late. Unfortunately, the next bus stop was 15 minutes out of the city. So, slightly anxious, I waited till the next stop and got off. This time the dilemma was how to get back. The bus has pulled off the highway to drop off at the bus station on essentially a 1 way street. There was no "across the street" to find a bus coming in the other direction, initially. However, I did travel through the underpass of the highway and found the other station on the other side of the highway. I found the right bus stop and was picked up shortly. Another 15 minutes back to Utrecht and I was walking to the ROC.

Upon arrival, I informed the receptionist that I was there to meet Hans Balder, one of the Blackboard Coordinator for the ROC in Utrecht. We had a great conversation about instructional design and LMS systems and challenges in our field. Very rewarding and interesting to see the common challenges and practices. He was very friendly and showed me a great deal of stuff. I was also able to discuss with him some of my work and elements of the community college system in the US. After a 2 hour interview, I left and wandered Utrecht center for some lunch. And though it wasn't the healthiest by far, it was certainly tasty (see below).

**Fries with one of their wide range of sauces.**



Getting back to Amersfoort was relatively easy. I got back on a train and had one exchange. Though with the exchange, I had to confirm with Anna that it was the right train to get on. When I got back to her school, I visited her and her colleagues for a bit before going off to my Dutch lesson.

The woman, Martin, who taught us was a fascinating woman who teaches Dutch as a second language to a largely illiterate population (typically refugees and the like), thus she has to do a lot of work help guide the students into picking up the various words and forms of communication--and she has to do this to an entirely non-Dutch population while speaking Dutch all the time. It was great to see her in action as she taught us Dutch. The first hour was really engaging and useful, but I began to taper off in the second. This was a result of several forces. The first was just sitting for two hours; which I do less and less of and like less and less of as I just don't find it as comfortable than standing. But equally problematic was that my allergies were flaring making concentration hard. In hindsight I also realized that I hadn't been sufficiently hydrating myself that day and had mostly coffee. I was down some 2+ liters than what I normally drink. And finally, listening to her speak Dutch for 2 hours while helping us to was great, but just mentally exhausting, so I definitely hit saturation about 1 hour 15 minutes in. Regardless, it was a great experience on many levels (from my own learning to considering the overwhelming obstacles immigrants must face to integrate into a new culture).

Afterwards, Anna and I hung out waiting for the train and headed back home. When we got back, Chef Bert Thijs had dinner just about ready and yet again, it was delicious (see below--I guess today's picture theme is food!).



After dinner, I Skyped with someone from back home and then Anna and I biked to Zwolle

center to meet up with her friend at a pub. The same one we went to before. Instead of going for the wine (my usual friend--hahaha), I opted to try fruit beer--which is pretty much the equivalent to a wine cooler in the US. It was pleasant enough despite the elbowing I got from Bert Thijs when we came home (he didn't join us as he had a soccer game--wherein he scored 3 goals). After drinks and talking with Anna's friend, we biked over to another friend's house so Anna could drop off a pedal for a sewing machine. It offered Anna the opportunity to show me another destination I could go to run today so I will be checking it out shortly.



We returned home around 10:30PM and I prepared for bed, eventually settling in around 11:30pm. But, without prompting from my alarm, I awoke at 5:00AM. There's three reasons for this.

1. Bear & Pumpkin have had their effect on me in that this is the time they usually wake me up.
2. There is a very loud cackling bird (in addition to numerous other birds) outside my window.
3. By 5am, it's pretty light out and whereas I'm used to sleeping in a basement apartment that can remain fairly dark until 7-8am even if the sun is rising, where I'm station in Anna's apartment doesn't offer the same darkness. This works well because it gets me up and doing things before Anna and Bert Thijs so as not to be in their way as they roll out of bed.

## Tuesday, May 14, 2013: 6:30AM

After yesterday's very early rise, I wrote in my journal and had some breakfast. Anna came downstairs a little before 7am and we got on our bikes and went to the train station. It was raining out which made for an interesting trek. Slightly damn, we arrived, and she got me situated with my ticket and such. We took the train to Amserfoort and the her college was within

walking distance. Upon arrival, we visited a teacher's lounge and I briefly met her colleagues. She took me to her first class and I watched as she corralled them into a lesson--the students having just returned from a vacation and thus a wee bit distracted. Shortly thereafter, I went downstairs as I was to be picked up and brought to the ROC in Utrecht by another Dutch person and her exchange person. So we travelled by car (I think this was the first car I've been in since I got here), and drove to Utrecht. We found our way to the school and then even to the right room. They (kindly) brought out coffee and tea but before having any, we were to meet with the President of the ROC Utrecht

([http://www.rocmn.nl/utrecht?gclid=CIP0-5\\_ilLcCFc3HtAodJhYAbg](http://www.rocmn.nl/utrecht?gclid=CIP0-5_ilLcCFc3HtAodJhYAbg)). He was a very nice man who wanted to hear from us about what we did, our schools and such. The 4 of us are an interesting group including myself (Massachusetts), Teresa (Kansas), Carrie (Illinois), and Jan (Wyoming). I was actually surprised that he was a President of a school as he was only in his late 30s and most college presidents have usually crossed the 50 year benchmark in my experience. But he told us about the work he is doing and the current development of the ROCs.

We then had coffee and were introduced to an overview of the ROC program as a whole throughout the Netherlands, the populations that it serves, its funding, its challenges, etc. Much of which was fascinating and through further questions, we were able to clarify the differences with our own individual schools. For lunch, we had egg sandwiches and vegetable soup. We were then taken over to downtown Utrecht to be given a walking tour by some students in the tourism program. This was fun, despite temperamental weather as I realized I had visited Utrecht before and so I was reminded of the wonderful sites it has to offer. We started at the famous Dom Tower of Utrecht ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dom\\_Tower\\_of\\_Utrecht](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dom_Tower_of_Utrecht)) and wandered along some of the canals and streets. The students were friendly and did their best to give us a tour despite not being entirely comfortable with English. We finished up at a restaurant that used to be a department store to have coffee and take a respite. Anna met up with us and we walked to the Utrecht Train Station to head home. On the ride home, I definitely dozed on and off, the lack of sleep finally catching up with me.

We came home to Bert Thijs finished another wonderful meal (curry cooked vegetables with rice) and catch up about everyone's day. I was feeling tired but wanted to stave off going to sleep until at least 9pm, so I went out for a walk for about 45 minutes and explore downtown Zwolle. Of course, this resulted in me getting some gelato--but really, it would be a crime not to do so.

I came back and migrated up to the bedroom as I got settled in. I did some reading and then was definitely asleep by 9:30pm. I slept like a rock and awoke with my alarm around 5am. I got up and went for a light 3.1 mile run, just to stretch the mind and body. At 5am it's pretty light out so I could enjoy some of the morning sites to be seen in terms of miscellaneous birds and small creatures making their way through the city. I got back, showered and got ready for another fun day.

Monday, May 13, 2013: 5:00AM

So after I finished yesterday's entry and posted it, Anna and I set off on our bikes through Zwolle and then to the river, IJssel, where we took a ferry across the river. We rode into Hattem, a small town next to Zwolle and grabbed some coffee just as it started raining. We waited for the rain to subside and then headed back, taking the bridge instead of the ferry. It was an awesome view--though a bit chilly!

When we returned to the apartment, Bert Thijs was up and about asking about our morning adventures. Anna had some work to do, so I decided to do some work on a presentation on comics that I will be presenting to her students this week. As we finished up, it was later in the afternoon and Bert Thijs tossed out the idea of going to the city museum since it was free to them and half-price for me since parts of it were closed due to renovations. We hopped back on the bikes and rode over. It was a very cool museum and I found a new artist that I like: Derk Jan van der Laen

(<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.stedelijkmuseumzwolle.nl/cms/index.php/nl/huidige-exposities/787-topstukken-stedelijk-museum-zwolle&prev=/search%3Fq%3DDerk%2BJan%2Bvan%2Bder%2BLaen%26safe%3Doff>).

The museum was pretty cool with lots of odds and ends from the history of the city. We finished up and walked across the street to a pub for an afternoon drink and some cheese (yum!). We headed back to the apartment and Chef Bert Thijs made another fabulous meal including portabella mushroom with cheese and walnuts, cauliflower soup, and leftover (but just as tasty) lasagna. We finished up the evening with watching Django Unchained which I hadn't seen yet.



I went off to bed but only slept till about 3AM. Maybe it's jet lag kicking in or just getting used to the new environment, but I awoke, and spent an hour tossing and turning until I figured getting up and doing stuff would be better.

So observations and thoughts just far. I really do like the Netherlands. This isn't the "I'm in a new place and totally in love with it" euphoria that strikes many travellers. This is now my third time here and each time, I'm just utterly enthralled with the place. First, there's the whole biking culture thing. It's pretty awesome to be in a place where there are more bikes than cars by far (I will have photos of their "bike lots" at the train station soon--they totally dominate more than cars). The idea that the infrastructure strongly supports bikes and public transportation is pretty cool.

The history of human space is also exciting. Zwolle is from the 13th century (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zwolle>), even Hattem is from around that time

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattem>). Cities that are nearly twice as old as the oldest cities and towns in the US. That in itself is cool and curious to see, but more curious is the organic development of the landscape mixing the different time periods and levels of technology. The way space and place is reconfigured to make room for the newer ways of living. I just continually find myself staring and making sense of the spaces around me and how they magically contort together to make some very cool living spaces.

## Sunday, May 12, 2013: 9:15AM

So I'm in Zwolle now staying with Anna and her partner, Bert Thijs. Overall, the trip to get here went off without major issues. But upon reflection, I took every major mode of transportation to get here.

From my house to Logan Express: Car

From Logan Express to Logan Airport: Bus.

From Logan Airport to Schlipol: Plane.

From Schlipol to Zwolle: Train

From Zwolle Train Station to Anna's apartment: Bicycle.

The flight from Boston to Reykjavík was less than blissful. Typically, when I'm travelling eastward, I try to set myself up so that I can re-set my inner clock fairly easy. This is usually achieved by staying up late the night before I travel (Thursday in this case--which I did. I have only about 4.5 hours of sleep). Then I stay up all day and before hopping on the red-eye flight across the Atlantic, I usually pop a benadryl to help me sleep better--since (no surprise here) airplanes aren't quite the most comfortable of environments--doubly so if you're a bigger person like me. So I was all set to do this but alas, my inflatable pillow for my neck had sprung a leak and could not secure my head in a position that didn't leave it sore within 15 minutes (one of the times having a big brain doesn't come in handy--yeah, that's what it is).

So sleep was hard in coming and lucky me (further), I was sitting next to someone who apparently was trying to cough up her lungs. So I arrived in Reykjavík airport in less than stellar condition and tried again to doze on that flight with lil success. When I got the Schlipol Airport in Amsterdam, I made it through luggage and customs with little fanfare (to everyone's surprise, I'm sure).

I easily found the train station and even bought the right ticket. I went down to the platform and asked some train workers if the train that had just arrived was going to Zwolle. My guess is that they thought I was asking can I get there from this train, not if it goes directly. I hopped on it but slightly uncertain. Which is where the beauty of modern technology is pretty fabulous. I asked a person on the train and he seemed to think I could. So he checked an app on his phone to see if it was possible and where to get off and such. I thanked him profusely and also confirmed through the free wifi on the train with Anna what the person had told me. Sure enough, I was

(essentially) heading in the right direction.

Train station in Lelystad



When I got to the Zwolle train station, Anna and Bert Thijs, were waiting for me with bikes, so we took off on them (though luckily we didn't have to go too far--maybe a mile). They were kind and did the most important thing upon arrival--made me some coffee. They gave me the tour and it's a very cute living space--more importantly, it's filled with books. Clearly, I'm in good company!

Once I got settled into my space, we headed down to the Saturday market for food supplies and stopped at a local pub just as it started to rain. It stopped and so Anna and I went to get SIM card for a temp phone for emergencies. We returned to an aromatic home with Bert Thijs making vegetable lasagna which was excellent (to say the least). Then, before the post-food coma set in, Anna had the insight to get me up and moving on a walk around the neighborhood. When we returned, I met one of their friends (who likes comics--again, I'm clearly in good company!) and then we played Risk. I had never played Risk before and I somehow one (without cheating, I swear). We'll chalk it up to beginner's luck.

After I got ready for bed, I passed out pretty quickly. My goal was to sleep till about 7:30AM (that's what I set the alarm for--it would have been about 7.5 or so hours). Instead, I awoke around 6:00AM to a very loud bird cackling for a while and a bright and sunny morning. My body felt rested enough and the forecast said the rest of the day and tomorrow was going to

rain, so I went for a run. I went light since I had done an 8.5 on Friday and the last 2 days of travelling were certainly felt within my body. I ended up doing a slow 4.2 mile trot that actually felt good--given the cramped conditions of the of flight and whatnot. It was also a great way to explore the surrounding area. When I got, I wandered around the neighborhood a bit more with my camera taking pictures. Finally, I came into the apartment showered and settled in to doing some writing and such.