

October 5 to 8, 2015

## OSL TO AMS

Today will take us from OSL to AMS. Despite our planning, when I ask about checkout time we discover it is 10 am, not 11 am or noon! We rush to finish packing and check out—just at 10 am. There are new people gathering and clearly they are ready to be done with weekend guests! The desk calls us a cab to the train. At the train station Mitch gets us onto the train with little a difficulty, but much patience. This is why he is so much better at logistical stuff: patience.

We enjoy a Starbucks at the airport then check our bags, get through security and customs, then grab lunch and go to the SAS lounge which, by stroke of luck\* our tickets give us access to. I spend the next two hours trying to do a newsletter on the iPad, which is difficult because I have never done it before and I don't have access to all the things I usually use to create them. I get something done, but it is funky and not what I wanted at all.

\*One of my mother's favorite sayings, which was apparently also a favorite of her mother's, is:  
"More by good luck than good management."

We get to the gate where I read my book. I read on the trip to Amsterdam. Again we get on a train after the application of much patience by Mitch and head to the City Center Station. We have a little trouble with our bags, because these are not trains designed for this purpose. We have to carry our bags down the aisle to a seat configuration that is large enough to get them in because there is no other place for them. In our defense, these are 23/24" suitcases, not really huge ones! On disembarking at the station and jumping on an escalator my bag is overturned because it is so fat and I am exceedingly grateful to a nice gentleman who helps me right it and my carry on, and get myself in order again. Mitch's patience is a little thin at this point and he doesn't even notice this. I am grateful when we hand our bags over to a cab driver and head to our hotel.

As I walk into the lobby of our hotel, the windows are full of handbags by **Hester Van Eeghen**. The front desk person scrutinizes our passports and notices that today is my birthday. I've actually kind of forgotten it. Shortly after arriving in our room another staff person knocks on the door with piece of birthday cheesecake and french macarons. We make dinner plans and break out the vodka purchased in the duty free shop at the airport. I make make-shift martinis. No olives. Stirred, not shaken. I actually begin knitting again! We make our way to an Indonesian restaurant, then return to our hotel for birthday cheesecake.

## STARSHIP CAPTAINS AND MUSEUM OF BAGS & PURSES

We get up slightly ahead of the alarm today which I consider a good sign. Breakfast is included in our room so we go down for coffee and a croissant. The coffee is vile. I am meeting **Tanja Oswald** from the **Starship** at 11 am in the lobby. We will then go to breakfast and spend some time getting



acquainted. Tanja and her husband have come up from Germany. I am the first Starship Captain she will meet so I want to make a good impression. Mitch joins us for the eating part of our visit, then leaves to buy Museum passes, exchange currency, and have some time to himself.

Tanja and I have a good time despite our age difference. As designers we have plenty in common and she speaks excellent English. Her husband Rainer joins us for a bite, but after Mitch has gone. Tanja and I talk designing mostly--she does **unbelievably beautiful crochet**. Tanja has a PhD in philosophy, and got her masters in Amsterdam because she wanted logic which isn't available in Germany. She is logical! She walks me to the **Museum of Bags & Purses** to meet Mitch. It is undoubtedly possible for me to get there on my own, but I'm not good with directions, and throwing canals into the mix just seems like more than I am ready to tackle. We walk past buildings she had classes in, and this old theatre which she admires.

We find Mitch easily. Tanja has to go back to her hotel to collect her bags and Rainer for the train ride home. Mitch and I inaugurate our Museum passes at the Museum of Bags and Purses. It is quite a good exhibit--some history and lots of pretty bags. I buy postcards for my next mailing back to the U.S. We do a little



shopping (window mostly) near our hotel. I look at the bags **here** and know which shape I will likely buy, but decide to wait. Mitch has scoped the neighborhood out while I was visiting with Tanja. We find a grocery where we can get olives, nuts, and sparkling water.

I do a little work before making martinis--still stirred, but at least we have olives. I am knitting while enjoying my cocktail. We go around the corner to a restaurant called **Bussia**. Italian food made from local or specially procured ingredients. It is delicious! Mitch is able to swap out the beet appetizer for a local chowder (which was awesome) to suit his palate. He chooses a lovely red wine.

## VAN GOGH

Today we're starting to feel a little pressure to get to the things on our Amsterdam To Do List. We get up and get breakfast (requesting espresso drinks instead of coffee), and organize ourselves to go out. We walk to catch the tram to the **museum district**. Mitch has concluded that it would take too much time to walk, and the Museum passes he purchased give us free tram riding.

We start with the **Van Gogh Museum**. We have a short wait to get tickets, during which I knit. As we approach the ticket window the ticket person says to me, in perfect English, "You haven't been waiting in line that long have you?" I reply that indeed I haven't. It is amazing how quickly people are able to switch between languages, and how well they use them.



The first exhibit we see is **Van Gogh / Edvard Munch**. This is a perfect counterpoint to our visit to the Munch Museum in Oslo and we are quite anxious to see it. Without being unfair to Munch, I think Van Gogh was a genius and Munch was not. They are each notable for their exploration of something new in their art. The exhibit does have some really wonderful Munch pieces. The two artists were not contemporaries, but they both used art to express their interior lives. Onward to the Van Gogh collection. Mitch thinks they should hang more pieces and be less didactic about his life, methods, etc. but I don't mind that. I am inspired, in fact, to get and listen to a book of his letters to Theo. When we were here in 2004, most of the well known pieces were elsewhere so it is lovely to see such a large number of works hung. There are a lot of earlier, less well-known works that I've never seen. Some of my favorites are not up, but we saw those at the D'Orsay in Paris in 2013.

We go on to the **Contemporary Museum**. A few brilliant pieces, but I am probably sated from the Van Gogh Museum. The design exhibition seems nearly identical to the one in Copenhagen.

We set out in search of a French brasserie, but end up at an Indonesian "rice table" pub/restaurant. Unwilling to figure out all the dishes and possibilities of the rice table, we order rice plates which were perfect for us. While eating it starts to rain, and the rain will continue almost non-stop until about 4:30 pm. I have my umbrella and Mitch has a hood so we continue on our quest for stores that have men's clothing that will fit Mitch (someone 6'2" - the Dutch are unusually tall, but this doesn't seem to matter) and a second outpost of the handbag store.

I snap photos when Mitch stops to check his maps. I see this truck outside a concert hall with these incredible bouquets. I dash back to take a photo of them, and as soon as they notice me, the delivery guys rush to get in the photos.

Around the corner I see this sign which I cannot resist. This just shows such a difference in transportation priorities.

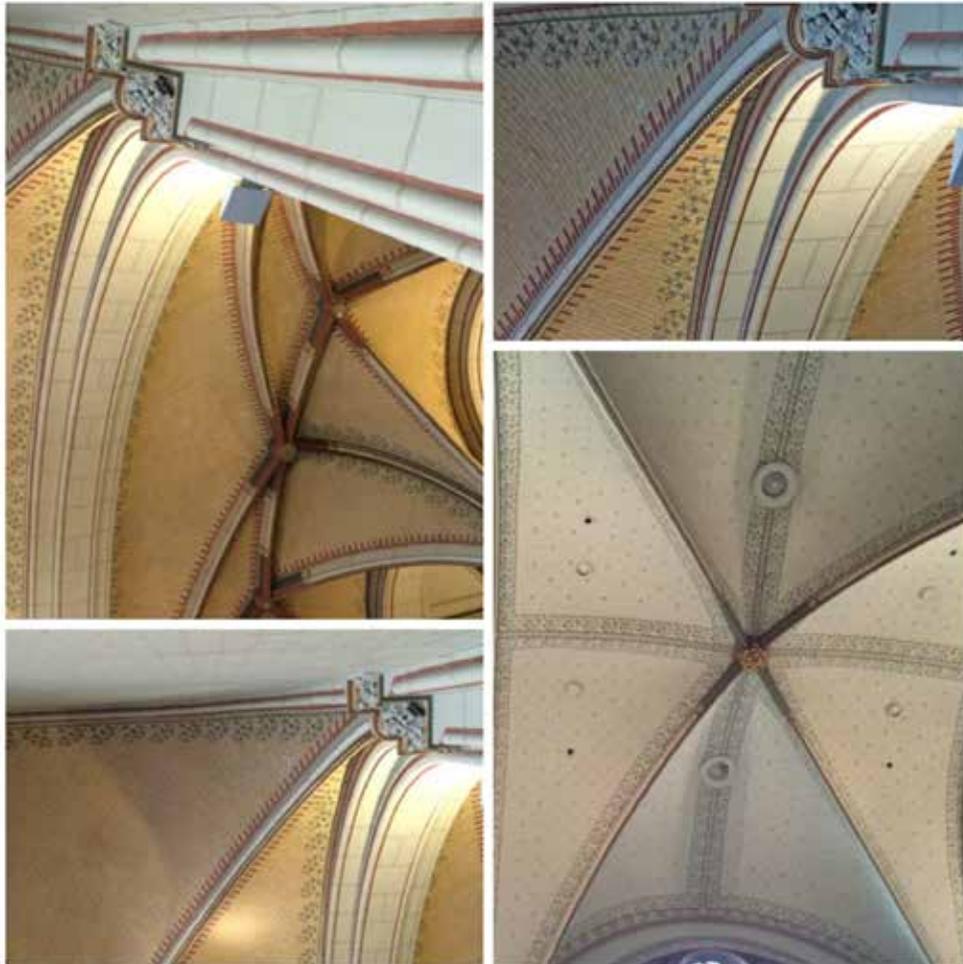
The gold "flags" above the museum building as they shone against the darkening sky really struck me.



Then we tram back to our neighborhood. We go by the handbag shop near our hotel, but I just admire what will be my

bag from outside today. I have seen another color at the other shop, so I now am fairly set on getting the one I looked at the first day. I briefly toyed with getting the one with cow hair, but I have to think long-term. This is replacing my winter handbag that is 11 years old!

Tonight we want an uncomplicated dinner so we choose an Italian place a short walk away. Mitch keeps telling me how far things are in meters, as in "that's 500 meters from our hotel" but I have no idea what this means in terms of blocks or miles. I could do the math, but realize that isn't how I think of distance, so just have him lead the way. The dinner spot seems just right and we have a nice bottle of red wine and a



good appetizer, but the entrees are pretty ordinary. This may be the first really disappointing meal, so we can't be too upset. I am highly amused by the American woman who pitches a fit about being charged for orange juice in addition to her vodka (twice). Seriously, you have to conform to where you are, and this is not a place serving mixed drinks. This is why I make martinis in our room: I get what I want and I don't have to explain how to make it to each bartender. I have learned to bring a small atomizer bottle with vermouth so I can get just the right amount, plus we don't have to purchase the whole bottle each time (we don't need a lot--I use a small cosmetics bottle). We walk back a different route looking in shop windows and me trying to see in peoples' apartments.

### RIJKSMUSEUM & FINAL PURCHASES

This is our last full day here so we go to the [Rijksmuseum](#) on the tram, which takes less than 15 minutes. I knit. While there are many things to see in this museum, it is mostly about Rembrandt, of which there doesn't seem to be enough. They are wonderful, and well hung. We see two really nice Van Goghs and a small number of Vermeers (but he didn't paint a lot). I take these photos of the ceilings as Mitch figures out where galleries are located.

We go to a small pub for a soup and sandwich lunch. Mitch figures out how to get to the Hermitage, but on reflection of what they are showing, I decide I will be bored, so we skip it in favor of a return to the **Rembrandt House**. Mitch calls it "This Old Rembrandt House". It is a restoration of a home he lost in bankruptcy. At that moment in time, a listing of all he owned was made so that everything could be sold. The museum is able to put "like" things into the house to give a real sense of what it might have been like. His studio and his apprentices' workroom was in there too, so you really get a great idea of what his world was like. They have been able to reference paintings he did to help determine how the rooms were set up and used. We have a good tour and look at etchings by Rembrant and other contemporaries.

We take the tram back to our neighborhood and walk a bit ,then stop for a sweet before we go to shop. I have a blouse I want to get, and finally, the handbag. Mitch is used to this process. He has looked at handbags in most cities we visit and knows I am fairly slow to pull the trigger on a purchase. We make some effort to find things for Mitch, but it would seem we have become irrelevant in the world of clothing. Nothing fits him or his needs. I am fortunate that I can occasionally find things like the blouse. Fortunately handbags remain an important item. I am replacing the bag I purchased for my birthday in 2004 with the 2015 version. There were really cute small handbags, but I can't justify the expense.

After a lot of internet consultation I choose three restaurants that I would like to try that do not take reservations (or I can't figure out how to do them). I give my list to Mitch in order of preference and he figures out **on his app** (he bought the unlimited maps version) where they are and we set out to find number 1 on the list. The app works offline, so he can download what he needs, then he can refer to it without needing cell or wifi access. It has gotten us this far!

Number 1 is a Spanish tapas place and we snag the only unreserved table. ~~Sadly I don't record the name of the restaurant.~~ Mitch has checked his app and **this is where we ate!** Anothr benefit. A nice Ribera is ordered and we start with two seafood appetizers: clams in sherry and garlic, and squid with onion and sherry, with delicious bread. Then we step up to the **Pintxos** bar to select four things. Each is delicious and we end up with the perfect amount of food.

We walk back to the hotel, satisfied with this trip segment: we've gotten a lot of walking miles in despite using the rain and using the tram, I have my new bag, and we have seen a lot of wonderful art!

