

Day 18 Aug. 11 – Rotterdam, The Netherlands – Pilgrims – Market – Walk of Fame

The day started with overcast sky and a light rain falling. About 7am the Maasdam entered the 20 mile channel to the city of Rotterdam. Along the route there were the iconic windmills as well as heavy industry and shipping.



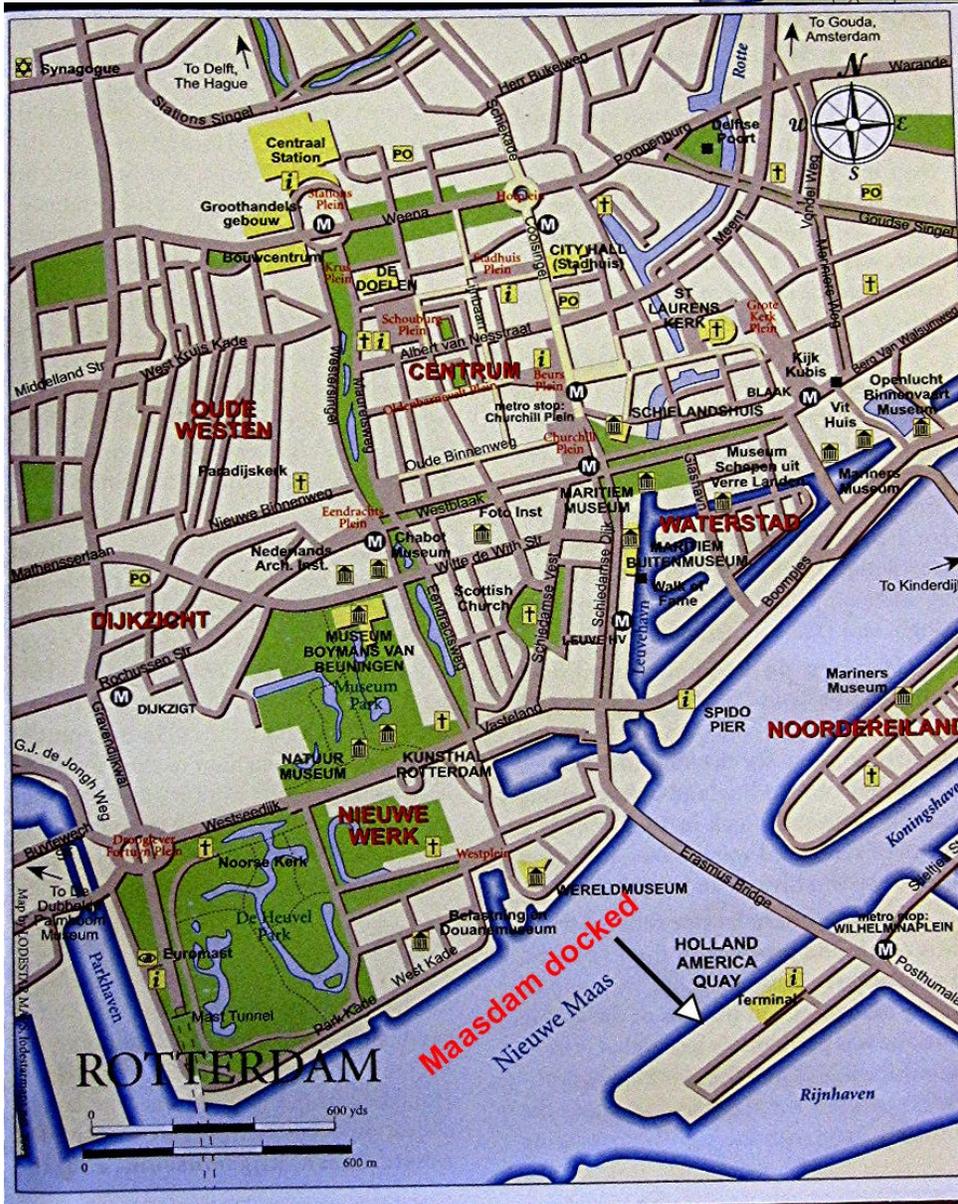
About 8am the ship was docked at the Holland America Quay, passenger terminal. Our arrival had been greeted with a fireboat with all cannons firing huge sprays of water, as shown on the right. Holland America had its original offices in Rotterdam and the city was giving the Maasdam a great welcome home.



The map on the right shows the location of Rotterdam in The Netherlands about 35 miles south of Amsterdam.



The map below shows where the Maasdam was docked in Rotterdam.



We had purchased a tour that involved both a guided bus ride around town and a boat ride around the harbor. At 9 am we joined our tour group and boarded the bus on the pier. Our guides name was Jim and he turned out to be an energetic guy who gave us a good tour.

We wound our way around city streets and across a bridge where we stopped at the landing for the Spido Harbor Tour boats. There we boarded a sleek harbor boat along with about 100 other passengers, primarily from the Maasdam.



We had thought the boat tour might be like one we had in Amsterdam several years ago. In that case it was a small boat carrying about 25 people and it could pass under the low bridges on the charming canals of Amsterdam. This huge tour boat was comfortable and limited to the main industrial channels of the harbor. It was not charming but it gave us a good picture of all the industrial activity taking place in the harbor within a few miles of where the Maasdam was docked.

From the deck of our tour boat we saw huge cranes everywhere lined up along the shore.

Sea going containers and ships, like this one, loaded with containers were a common sight.



We had fun trying to figure out where these huge tires were going. It must be someplace in the world where the economy is showing some life. Maybe Dubai?



There were dry-dock facilities in a shipyard to allow significant repair work on ship's hulls below the water line. In this case the vessel holding the ship is called a floating dry-dock. It is first filled with water and then the ship is driven into the water filled space. The ends are closed and the water pumped out to raise the ship above the water.



Near the Holland America Quay, we saw the old HAL Cruise Liner, ss Rotterdam. It is being converted into a luxury hotel permanently attached to land.



When the cruise around the harbor was completed we boarded the bus again and Jim continued his guided tour of Rotterdam.



One of the most interesting sites we visited was the area called Delfshaven in Rotterdam. He took us to this small church, on the left, that was attended by the Pilgrims who eventually came to America on the Mayflower.

The Pilgrims were deeply religious people who apparently had some conflicts with the locals and they decided to leave Rotterdam.



Jim gave us a short history lesson about how Rotterdam, because of its strategic importance, was alternately bombed by the Nazis and Allies during World War II. Early in the war, after severe bombing, Rotterdam had surrendered when the threat to extend the bombing to Amsterdam was made by the Germans. Later it was bombed by the Allies because it had become an advance base for Hitler's planned attack of Britain. At the end of the war, unlike Amsterdam, hardly any of the buildings in Rotterdam remained standing. This explains why Rotterdam architecture is essentially modern while much of Amsterdam retains the charm of 200 and 300 year old buildings. In tribute to the sacrifices made by the people of Rotterdam, the artist, O. Zadkine, created the sculpture shown on the right entitled, "De Verwoeste Stad". It represents Rotterdam, with hands uplifted, receiving the bombs while protecting other cities in the The Netherlands.



Speaking of modern architecture, we next drove by the modernistic buildings called the Kubus. This building has cube shaped rooms which are stood on their corners, as shown on the left. This configuration presents an interesting sight when viewed from the outside but must be mildly disturbing from the inside perspective. Behind the Kubus building can be seen the top of a building shaped like a pencil. The "Pencil Building" is appropriately located next to the Rotterdam Public Library.



At this point we drove by the large open air market located on Binnenrotte Street near the center of Rotterdam (the Centrum in the map above). It is only open on Tuesdays and Saturdays so we were fortunate that today's visit was on a Tuesday and the market activity was in full swing. The attraction was too much for Barbara so at the nearby City Hall Jim had the bus stop and let several of us passengers off.



We browsed through the market place which was a couple blocks long. Here are some pictures we took of items for sale along the way.

We found a spinning wheel, fruit, cheese and flowers as well as loads of clothing.



We finished our stroll through the market place and then decided to walk back to the Maasdam. A complimentary shuttle bus back to the ship was provided by the

Maasdam from the nearby City Hall. However, the day had turned sunny and temperatures were pleasant so it seemed like a great opportunity to see more of Rotterdam.

One thing we had been warned about and quickly learned on this walking venture was that in Rotterdam the people on bicycles rule the streets and sidewalks. Bicyclists have a well defined path next to the sidewalk that they are supposed to use but it is necessary for pedestrians to cross this path at intersections. It is important to look both ways a couple times and give way to approaching cyclists (both human and motor powered) before making the crossing.

There are plenty of cars on the streets but the large number of bicycles used by residents is staggering. There are places for people to park their bicycles in town, just like a car park. On the right is a picture of such a bicycle parking lot to illustrate the popularity of bicycles in Rotterdam.



Our walking route back to the Maasdam took us past the Maritime Museum and across the Erasmus Bridge. The Maritime Museum had been recommended to us but we were a little short on time so we passed it by. Here are a couple pictures of exhibits on the quay outside the main museum building.



This crane on the left was hand powered and capable of moving 10 tonnes (10,000 kg) packages of cargo to and from ships in the harbor.

Near the Maritime Museum we came across an interesting sidewalk feature called the "Walk of Fame". Squares of sidewalk have been replaced with concrete blocks bearing the handprint and name of famous persons.

Many of the names were of European fame and not familiar to us. However, here are three that we could easily recognize.



Our trip back to the Maasdam took us over the Erasmus Bridge, shown below. It is a beautiful modern structure that dominates the harbor scene near the Holland America Quay. Here is one view, showing the Maasdam on the right, as we started hike across the bridge.



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Of course, the bicycles have their own lane across the bridge, along with the car and pedestrian lanes.



Near the end of the bridge this modernistic building contributes its shape to the Rotterdam skyline.



During the walk we had decided that we would visit the New York Hotel on the Holland America Quay before re-boarding the Maasdam. The New York Hotel occupies the building that used to be the world headquarters for the Holland America Cruise Line. We had heard that the lobby of the hotel was decorated in an interesting way and we wanted to see it.

The front of the hotel facing the water still bears the Holland America name as shown on the right. However, strangely, the back side has this rather crude sign for the hotel as shown below.



In the lobby we found the promised interesting artifacts from the glorious early days of cruise ship travel. The registration counter, shown on the right, featured the old round clocks showing the time at locations all around the world.

The old wrought iron staircase had been retained along with lobby chairs and old steamer trunks ready for travel.



We soaked up some more nostalgia and then made our way to the passenger terminal so we could board the Maasdam.

At the passenger terminal we found this last minute, and perfect, opportunity to record the visit of Barbara's library card to Rotterdam.

We then made our way past the security and passport checking stations. At the same time there were passengers who had just arrived and were checking in for the last half of the Voyage of the Vikings. We were glad that all we had to do was find the way to our stateroom and collapse for a while before the ship got underway.



Many of the crew, particularly the officers, have family in The Netherlands and they had been visiting on board during the day. The sad announcement was made over the PA system that visitors had to leave and they filed off the ship. The Maasdam got underway about 5pm. There was this poignant scene, shown below, of people watching and waving from the dock as the ship pulled away.



It was soon time for dinner. From our table we could watch the passing scene of the Rotterdam harbor passing by during the hour that it took to pass through the channel to open sea.

Tomorrow will be a quiet day at sea as we get ready for our next port of call, Dunmore East, Ireland which is the site of an early Viking trading settlement. Dunmore East is also the entry point for the town of Waterford where exquisite crystal used to be made.

