

## Pre-Departure

Hello again my friends from far and wide! It's your pal Ruben the blogger here and I thought I'd start this latest blog post with one of my favorite games ever: two truths and one lie.

Here's how it works. I say three random things and your goal is to try and figure out which two are 100% true and which one is a complete and total lie. But I feel I must warn you that I'm a very tricky guy. Ready? Ok!

1. I once got to operate a flame thrower and, as a result, I caused a large forest fire :/
2. I met the former president of the United States, Mr. Barack Obama! However, I was removed from the area when I asked the former president to sign my Make America Great Again t-shirt.
3. The Semester in Amsterdam program starts in two weeks and I can barely sleep because I am so excited!

Do you think you have it figured out? The answers may surprise you. Let's work through them, shall we?

Let's start with number 1. Believe it or not, I did in fact operate a real flame thrower and as a result I caused a large forest fire! However, it was through my job as a forest firefighter, and at times we literally fight fire with fire. So it was all ok :) (P.S. I am planning to write a more detailed blog post about my job as a Forest Firefighter, so stay tuned.)

Number 2. Time to confess my lie, I hope you'll forgive me. As much as I would have loved for this one to be true, I unfortunately never met the former president of the United States Mr. Barack Obama. Believe me, I tried! But he won't return my calls. But perhaps one day he'll read this blog and think to himself, "*that Ruben seems like a cool guy. I wonder if he would like to grab a beer sometime?*" Yes We Can Mr. Obama! Yes We Can!

Number 3. My second truth gets me more excited than operating a flame thrower or meeting a world leader! That's right my friends, at the time of me writing this (July 30, 2017) we are just over two weeks away from starting our Semester in Amsterdam! I'm sure you are all busy as bees trying to get ready and prepare yourselves for your time in the Netherlands and I hope you are as excited as I am to start this amazing adventure.

From the moment I was accepted in the Semester in Amsterdam program my mind has been racing like a Formula 1 race-car. After all, it is no small thing to pack up your life and move across the world.

Questions began entering my mind at a rapid rate. What will my family and friends think when they realize I'm moving away? How will I raise money to support my stroopwafel addiction? What personal belongings should I bring with me? And lastly, how can I prepare for the language and culture shift? These questions are only a few that I was asking myself as my departure date approached.

I am happy to say that I have found answers to all of them! In this blog post I plan to share with you my personal preparations leading up to the anticipated date. So sit back, relax, and I hope you enjoy my latest entry.

For as long as I can remember my family has encouraged me to pursue living in the Netherlands. From the moment I was 10 years old my dad would periodically tell me that I should live and study in Europe. So when they all found out that I was accepted for Semester in Amsterdam they were thrilled beyond belief.

My dad is possibly more excited about this than I am! We'll be sitting in restaurants or walking down the street and he'll tell random strangers, "*Excuse me! Did you know my son is going to school in Amsterdam?*" Despite this being a little embarrassing (sorry dad) my family and friends have been extremely supportive and helpful as I have been preparing myself for my arrival in the Netherlands.

I have spent the majority of my summer working to raise money for Amsterdam. As I mentioned earlier, I work as a forest firefighter during the summers in Canada. It's a great job and it is my main method of raising money for my education.

As some of you may have heard from the news, British Columbia is currently in a State of Emergency due to the raging wildfires and my crew and I have been working around the clock battling the blaze. The work is hard, the hours are long, but I find it to be a meaningful job.



Since my free time is very limited I have been using every spare moment to organize and prepare myself for Amsterdam. As far as what I am bringing with me the list is as follows:

- My guitar (so I can play sweet music for all of you)
- A suitcase of books (because ladies love an intellectual)
- My skydiving parachute rig (so I can jump out of perfectly good airplanes)
- And a backpack of clothes (because I'm not allowed to show up naked)

The thing I have been preparing myself for most of all is the culture differences and overcoming language barriers. While I am aware that the majority of the Netherlands speaks English, it is my goal

to be fluent in Dutch by the time I arrive in Amsterdam. *Dus oefen ik elke dag mijn nederlands* (translation: so I am practicing speaking Dutch every day). Dutch podcasts, language apps such as Duolingo, and my parents have been helping me achieve this goal.

I have always loved the Dutch language and I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak it full time. Speaking Dutch with my parents makes me feel closer to my Dutch roots and it is now my favorite thing to do with both of them. With their guidance and support I feel confident that I will have a solid foundation to build off of when I arrive in the Netherlands.

There you have it! That is my quick summary of my personal preparations for our Semester in Amsterdam. I could continue on for pages but I don't want to distract you from completing your own preparations.

I'm sure you all have your own unique stories to tell in regards to how you prepared yourself for this amazing journey we are about to go on together. In two weeks' time we'll all be in Amsterdam, and I can't wait to hear from all of you in person :)

Looking forward to meeting all of you, and I wish you all safe travels to Amsterdam!

Tot de volgende keer (until next time)!

-Ruben

P.S. For all you non-believers out there here is my flame thrower picture evidence ;)

