

Final Reflections



Happy New Year Everyone!

Wow! Here we are at last! 2018! The Year of The Earth Dog according to the Chinese zodiac! The year of taking massive action towards one's goals! I hope that you all have created spectacular goals/resolutions for the coming year. Perhaps some of you want to shed a few pounds or add some muscle? Or maybe you plan on coming up with that next great idea that will change the world? Or it might even be a simple one like make sure you don't forget to put the toilet seat down after using the washroom? Whatever they may be, I wish you all the absolute best of luck as you work to achieve them!

For me personally, one of my biggest goals is to start my own blog and continue to write every day! To help me accomplish this goal and to create a sense of extreme urgency, my best bud Trevor from Canada promised to punch me in my pretty face as hard as he possibly can unless I get the blog up and running by January 31st 2018!!!

Now I don't particularly want this to happen because my friend has extremely large banana hands! So I plan on working hard to accomplish this goal well before that date. It, therefore, seems fitting that my first act in pursuing and accomplishing this goal is to provide you all with my last blog for the Semester in Amsterdam Experience.

I promised myself I wouldn't cry :(

And I intend on keeping that promise ;)

We have come a long way, made life-long friends, enjoyed unique experiences, and created life-long memories. So for my final blog I would like to share with you all my

personal highlights and takeaways from this amazing experience. So sit back, get your tissues ready, and LETS DO THIS THING!

AHHHH Memories

There's no doubt that time flies when you're having fun. It seems like only yesterday when I first got on that airplane and flew across the ocean to the Motherland. I still remember how I felt that day when the realization truly sunk in that I was really doing this. It was a mixture of fear, doubt, and excitement. After years of saying I would do it, I finally found myself beginning the next chapter of my life in Europe. I was on a figurative rollercoaster of frantic thoughts and emotions that first day. And it was a feeling that truly made me feel alive!

After those first few days of getting over the jet lag and settling in, things began to move at an extremely rapid rate. To list everything from beginning to end within this blog would be a difficult task. So if you truly want to get a sense of what I learned and experienced during my time here, I would recommend that you re-read my past blog entries. However, for those of you who prefer the crash course summary of my time here in Amsterdam, allow me to present to you my Top Eight (because top ten is too cliché) highlights from my Semester in Amsterdam (I even added a few other things that weren't in past blogs).

Top Eight Highlights

1.) Semester in Amsterdam Introductory Weeks

The first two weeks in Amsterdam were amazing thanks to the hard work from the Semester in Amsterdam team. Through the well-organized walking tours, museum trips, and out of town field trips to places like Friesland and Maastricht, they helped create a great social environment for people to interact and connect. For me personally the trip to Efteling Amusement park was by far the best! I guess I'm just an adrenalin junkie who is a sucker for a Kick A\$\$ roller coaster!

2.) Meeting my amazing roommates

Life at the VU definitely got very busy and hectic for me as the school year progressed. So I, unfortunately, never had sufficient time to meet and mingle with as many people as I would have liked. However! My amazing roommates came to the rescue! Allie, Will, Zoe, and Taashi were my absolute favourite people and we shared a lot of laughs while living together. One of my favourite memories of this group of knuckleheads was our first time all together in the kitchen where we drank a little more than we should have. They are all incredible souls and I have much love and respect for them!

3.) Reconnecting with family

This was one of the main driving forces that led me to coming to the Netherlands. It was an amazing feeling to be given the opportunity to reconnect with my family in the Netherlands. Growing up in Canada I never had the experience of hanging out with my cousins, aunties, or uncles. So when I was given the opportunity to start spending more time with them I jumped at the chance! So far I've been able to experience family dinners, birthdays, and more during my short time thus far in the Netherlands. And I plan on strengthening our developing bond during the coming year.

4.) Exploring the streets of Amsterdam

Whenever my head was in the clouds or I needed a break from studying, exploring the city of Amsterdam was my stress release. Me and my trustee steed Black Stallion (my awesome bike!) have had countless adventures while roaming around the many intersecting streets and long, winding canals of Amsterdam. What struck me most about the city was that I could always discover something new and interesting every day. Even while travelling on an established route, I would always see something different. I could pass the same building every day for a week and learn something new each time.

5.) Becoming a Dutch Curling Champion

This one really deserves its own blog, but I'll give you the quick spark notes. A friend of mine from one of my classes asked if I wanted to join his curling team for a tournament that was being held in Tilburg. Even though I had never curled before, I thought it sounded like great fun. I naturally said yes. First prize was an all-expense-paid trip to watch the Dutch men's curling team compete in the 2018 Winter Olympic Qualifiers located in Pilzen, Czech Republic!

Long story short, we won the tournament! It was an amazing experience and, even though it was everyone's first time curling, we were naturals at it. Proof of our victory can be seen at the Uilenstede Sports Centrum where our trophy is proudly being displayed. The event garnered much attention and I even gave an interview about the experience on Amsterdam Radio!

I SWEAR ON MY LIFE THAT I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP AND THAT IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED!!!

And so, I can now say that I am a Dutch Curling champion. It's not that big of a deal really ;)



Photo: Winner Winner Chicken Dinner

6.) Becoming fluent in Dutch

Becoming fluent in Dutch has been the proverbial White Whale in terms of accomplishing goals during the semester. In a country that speaks better English than most native English speakers, it was certainly a daunting task to muster sufficient confidence when it comes to speaking Dutch yourself. However! Much like Frodo Baggins noble quest to destroy the ONE RING to rule them all, I accomplished my goal! It has certainly been an uphill battle at times, but I can now proudly declare that I am conversationally fluent in Dutch! I now honestly believe that if you can learn Dutch, there's no limit to what you can accomplish!

7.) My time at the VU

My time at the VU has certainly been an educational experience in the most unexpected way imaginable. While studying here, I developed the valuable habit of learning how to teach myself. The way that everything in my program, the Business Administration Minor, was structured encouraged us to find out answers for ourselves. We were given the tools to become our own teachers and, as a result of this experience, my thirst for knowledge has become unquenchable.

8.) Being your blogger for Semester in Amsterdam

This one might seem cheesy, but it is absolutely true. Being your blogger during our Semester in Amsterdam was one of the greatest periods of my life because it allowed me to exercise my creative muscles and make writing a priority rather than a hobby. It enabled me to fully reflect on all the great times experienced during the semester and I am now inspired to take my writing, and myself, to next level. It was my goal from the beginning to create fun, exciting, and insightful blogs for you all to enjoy, and I hope that you feel that I have made good on my promise. An entertainer is nothing without an audience, so thanks for being a great audience!

Final Thoughts and Words of Encouragement

In closing I would like to thank all of the members from the amazing Semester in Amsterdam team (Kelly, Ilin, Jan, and Rachel) for granting me the honour of blogging for all. Thanks for taking a chance on me guys! You have no idea just how much it has meant to me!

So as previously stated, it's 2018!!! And before I sign off I'd like to offer up a few words of encouragement that I hope will inspire you to make the absolute best out of 2018.

Now, if you're the type of person who scours the Internet looking at random Zodiac predictions about what this year has in store for you then let me make a suggestion. When you really think about it, every day is the beginning of a new year. Every day we have the opportunity to look back and see just how far we've come. And I firmly believe that you must be the one to firmly decide what type of day, week, month, or year you're going to have. So for myself personally, I predict that 2018 will be a year of prosperity and abundance for all! So I invite you all to take some time, reflect about yourselves, and truly DECIDE what type of year it will be for you.

Wishing you the best for 2018 and beyond!

- Ruben

Semester in Amsterdam Blogger