

Hello again!

I am back with another blog post to share a little bit of information about my arrival in Amsterdam and some of my first impressions here. :)

My Lufthansa flight landed in the Amsterdam Schiphol Airport at 13:55 after about nineteen hours of travel from Denver, Colorado...horrible, I know. (Even worse is the fact that this was the second such journey I had that week, as just three days before I had travelled from Poland to the United States, and here I was, doing it all over again.) By the time I picked up my luggage and made it to the main terminal, I was absolutely exhausted and ready for a nap. However, after being greeted by the happy faces of the Semester in Amsterdam team and eating my first *stroopwafel* on the shuttle to my hotel (Hotel Jansen), my excitement was reignited. I realize that I was officially in Amsterdam, living on my own for the first time and starting the best experience of my life. This realization made the entire (*exhausting*) journey very much worth it.

My first few days were, for the most part, a blur of unpacking, meeting *so many* new people, and drinking more cappuccinos than I could possibly count at Mama's Restaurant & Café (it's a café in the lobby of my hotel...amazing, I know). During those first few days, I felt a bit homesick as expected, but the immense fun I was having and the lifelong memories and friends I was making overpowered any sadness I experienced.

A big part of the happiness I experienced during this first week can be attributed to the friends I met on my first day in Amsterdam. My first afternoon in Hotel Jansen, I was introduced to several people in my program. As it turned out, we all went to the same university back home and were now living on the same floor in the hotel. Immediately, the eleven of us became great friends and had a joint assumption that we would stick together during our Semester in Amsterdam.

Luckily, this assumption came true. The past three weeks, our entire group has stuck together through countless Albert Heijn trips, never-ending bike struggles, and the first week of classes at the Vrije Universiteit. And, fortunately, along the way we have met many other VU Semester in Amsterdam students and Hotel Jansen residents who have joined our ever-growing friend group.

But my new friends are not the only thing I love about being in Amsterdam. Immediately upon arrival, I knew I would love it here. It seems that each and every day, I find more things I love about Amsterdam: the unpredictable rain, the frequent bike rides around canals and *Het Nieuwe Meer*, the myriad of interesting museums, the delicious *friet met mayonaise*, and, of course, the amazing cultural variety around town and the Vrije Universiteit campus.

And, happily, these wonderful Dutch discoveries have turned out to be more than just good first impressions. After almost four weeks here, I fall more and more in love with the city and the culture every day. So far, my Semester in Amsterdam experience has been the best of my life, and I cannot wait to keep updating you on my incredible Dutch adventures.

Until next time,
Julia :)

P.S. Here are some photos I took in NDSM, a.k.a. my favorite neighborhood in Amsterdam so far! All it takes is a (free) ferry from Centraal Station and you're surrounded by artsy graffiti, amazing beachside bars, and beautiful views of the city :)

