

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | THURSDAY, 28 MARCH 2013

De Hoge Veluwe

An interesting day where we immersed ourselves in physical exercise, art and culture, great food and some Dutch history.

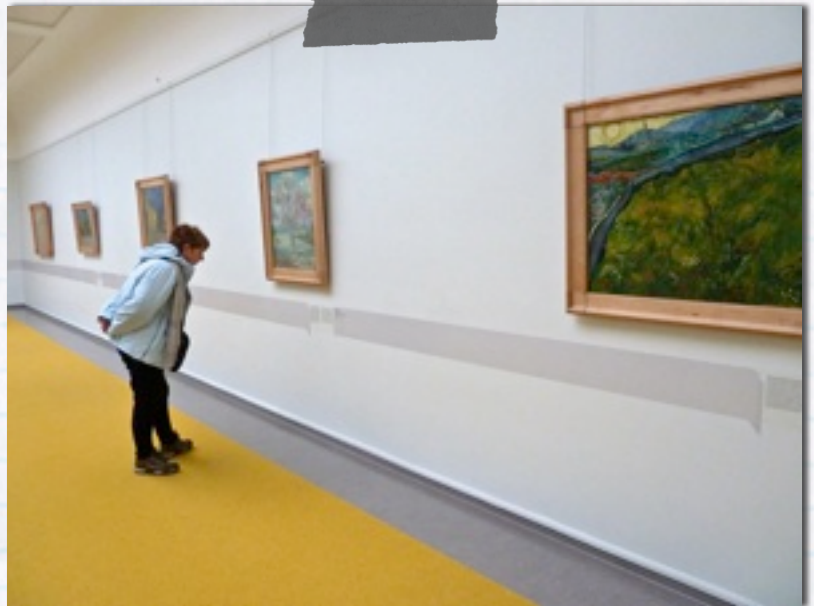
It was bloody freezing outside when we woke up and by the time I put the rubbish bin out it was even colder. Heather suggested that I might need to soon locate the snow shoes.

All rugged up, we decided to visit one of the largest private natural recreation parks in The Netherlands. It's only 8 kms from Arnhem and covers an area of 54 square kilometers. The entrance fee was a little steep (approx \$25 each) but it covers entry to an art gallery and museum plus parking and the use of bikes to get around. We were not disappointed.

After parking our car in the extra large car park we were surprised to find that there are 1700 bikes for visitors to choose from. There were not many visitors (mainly school groups). The 3 kms ride to the museum was through open forest on a paved bike track. Luckily the terrain was flat because the bikes had only one gear.



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Brrrrrrrrrr

It's not often that I feel the cold. With a heavy jacket and gloves and woolen hat I felt invigorated, especially when the air is really crisp. Heather, on the other hand, would rather live life in front of a heater.

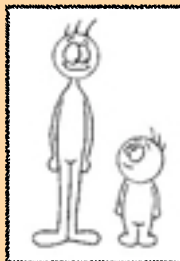
But the unseasonably bad weather here has caught both of us by surprise. It's been colder than we ever imagined. When we visited Poland around the same time in 2009 it was cold but not freezing. After deciding to go on our first

bike ride yesterday we only lasted a short time before we were forced to turn around and come home. My fingers were totally numb and Heather's teeth hurt. I have since invested in winter gloves while Heather is determined to keep her mouth shut when riding!

To top things off, it snowed lightly today! The novelty soon wore off. We rushed outside to catch some snowflakes but only lasted a very short time before we froze.



EXPLORERS The Dutch first discovered Australia (named New Holland) and Tasmania (after Able Tasman the explorer) and New Zealand (after their Zeeland province).



INTERESTING FACTS Dutch people are one the tallest peoples in the world and the Netherlands (low country) has the highest population density of any country in Europe.



THE NETHERLANDS is referred to as Holland but North and South Holland are actually two of it's 12 provinces. There are another 3 provinces in the Caribbean!!

Kroller-Mullers collected 171 Van Gough paintings plus many paintings by Gouguin, Mondrian, Picasso and others.

We visited the park/museum which documented the natural history of the area and the work done by the Kroller-Muller family who regenerated the vegetation, built a major mansion and ensured that future generations would enjoy what De Hoge Velewe has to offer - the largest open green space in The Netherlands.

Thousands of visitors come to the park each year. Apparently being able to walk or bike ride through natural bush land is rare in The Netherlands. After the museum we enjoyed a warming Dutch pea, ham and sausage soup. It was just like the one Kelly makes. We sat near a lovely open fire. Yummy and warm.

SEEING ONE FAMOUS PAINTING IN THE FLESH IS UPLIFTING BUT SEEING SO MANY IN THE ONE PLACE IS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE.

The jewel in the crown of the estate is the vast collection of rare paintings by famous artists. Over 20 years, Mrs Kroller-Muller purchased hundred of famous paintings. We were totally fascinated to find so many paintings we have heard about or seen on TV. Here they were within touching distance. There was also a number of unusual outdoor sculptures but we ran out of time.

DUTCH FACTS

THE NETHERLANDS HAS TWO CAPITAL CITIES - AMSTERDAM AND THE HAGUE.

PROSTITUTION, ABORTION, SAME SEX MARRIAGE AND SOFT DRUGS (CANNABIS) ARE LEGAL IN THIS COUNTRY.

THERE ARE STILL 1180 WINDMILLS IN THE NETHERLANDS.

FAMOUS DUTCH COMPANIES INCLUDE PHILIPS, KLM, UNILEVER, SHELL, ING AND IKEA (EX SWEDISH).

IT HAS LONG BEEN ONE OF THE RICHEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD (PER CAPITA).



PHOTOS



ANY RAIN THAT FALLS ON THE DE HOGE VELUWE CONSERVATION PARK IMMEDIATELY SEEPS DOWN INTO THE POROUS EARTH MAKING THE AREA VERY DRY. DESPITE THIS, THE REGION IS HOME TO A IMMENSE RANGE OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS.

VISITORS ARE ATTRACTED TO THE PARK BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE FLORA AND FAUNA, ITS AMAZING ARRAY OF FAMOUS PAINTINGS, ITS UNUSUAL OUTDOOR SCULPTURES, ITS BUILDINGS AND THE ABILITY TO RIDE AROUND ON BIKES (THERE ARE SO MANY BIKES THERE IS EVEN A FULL TIME BIKE REPAIRER ON HAND).