

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | FRIDAY, 29 MARCH 2013

Easter Bunny Needs Fur Coat!

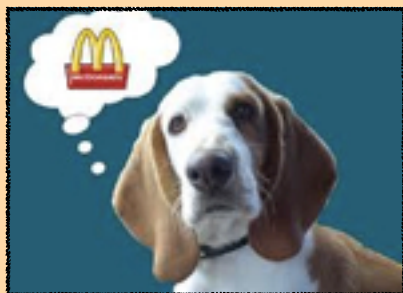
We woke this morning to light snow. It was starting to cover the car. We watched the gently falling flakes for a few seconds and decided that going back to bed was the best option. According to the news it has been apparently the coldest March since 1916.

After a leisurely breakfast in bed we decided to head for Amersfoort. It is an old medieval town about 58 kms from Arnhem.

Before heading off we detoured to find a local shopping centre to buy a GPS. We have a loan of one from our hosts but it keeps promising to power down due to low battery. This could prove quite distressing when you are in the middle of heavy traffic. How did we cope all those years ago without these lovely devices?

Talking about driving - it was stressful on day one. To change from one side of the road to the other is not something that one does naturally. I had to concentrate fully and Heather constantly kept reminding me to "keep to the right." As time goes on I am hoping that driving on the right will become more natural.

➡ continued on next page



DOGS We have been to two restaurants in the last two days and both times dogs were sitting with their masters enjoying the warm interior. Never ever seen that in Australia.



BIKES Seen outside a specialist bike shop - you can order whatever bike you want. Demand for customized bikes is high in Netherlands - even a Brompton was almost \$600 cheaper than the price at home.



GPS VOICE Salesperson told us that "Emily", English voice on the GPS, could not pronounce Dutch street names very well. We told him it was "all Dutch to us" anyway.

The historic inner city centre of Amersfoort has a medieval pattern of streets and squares.

Heather started to wonder if my efforts to cope with the changes was the reason why I seemed to be to losing some hair!

We finally arrived in Amersfoort after criss-crossing the country. What a lovely city. The old centre has certainly retained it's charm. The very narrow brick paved streets were plied by pedestrians and cyclists. The bikes came in all forms - taxis, kid movers and heavy cargo transporters. Cars were in a minority.

THE 100M STEEPLE OF OUR LADY DOMINATES THE AMERSFOORT SKYLINE

Right in the centre of the town, in the shadow of the tower called Steeple of Our Lady, we were lucky to come across a flower market. The colours and variety of flowers were magnificent. Apparently the Dutch love to have flowers in their homes.

It is Good Friday today but it is not a holiday here. The shoppers were obviously buying up for the next few days.

Around the next corner, another general market was in progress. It had lots of fresh vegetables, heaps of cheese and numerous bread stalls.

We rode around for about an hour and then stopped to warm ourselves up with some more lovely soup. We then took off for another tour around on our bikes. The snow started to fall again, but we were fairly well rugged up.

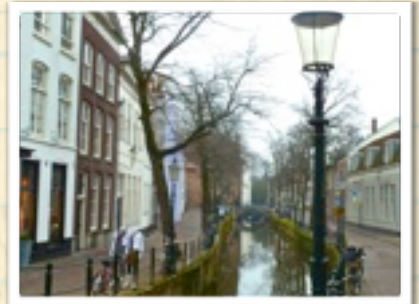
The streets were extremely busy with pedestrians. Even in this freezing weather, the shopping precinct was buzzing. The cold weather finally got to us and we headed back to the underground car park.

I am now managing to drive more confidently. The roadways here are spaghetti-like. The 58 kms to Amersfoort took us via about six different motorways. The area is much more urbanized than we had imagined.



AMERSFOORT

PRETTY AS A PICTURE





PHOTOS



MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | SATURDAY, 30 MARCH 2013

Happy Easter

It's snowing quite heavily outside. Heavily for us means that we can at least catch a snowflake or two before it lands and melts. Never thought we would have a white Easter.

The TV is on but we can only surmise what is going on. Dutch is a strange language - somewhere between English and German. Very guttural sounds - spoken as if the person is bringing up phlegm and about to spit but we don't mind it at all. Occasionally we recognise a word or two but it's hard work to listen and try to make out the context. We tend to watch the gesturing and not concentrate on the speech - very funny at times. Thankfully English is not a problem in this country - every person we have talked to understands English.

This morning we drove to a large shopping centre to check out a new camera and mix with the locals. The place was very busy with last minute Easter shoppers. As soon as we got home we jumped on our bikes for a short invigorating ride. Within minutes we found ourselves out of suburbia and into a rural area. The weather was freezing so we did not last long. It was supposed to be a rest day after all.

Tomorrow the bunny arrives.



Kelly sent us this picture - grand daughter Lily ready for the easter bunny.



THE WORLD IS A SMALL PLACE We forget where we are. This could be Australia. Then the reality sets in - the cars are on the wrong side of the road and its bloody freezing.



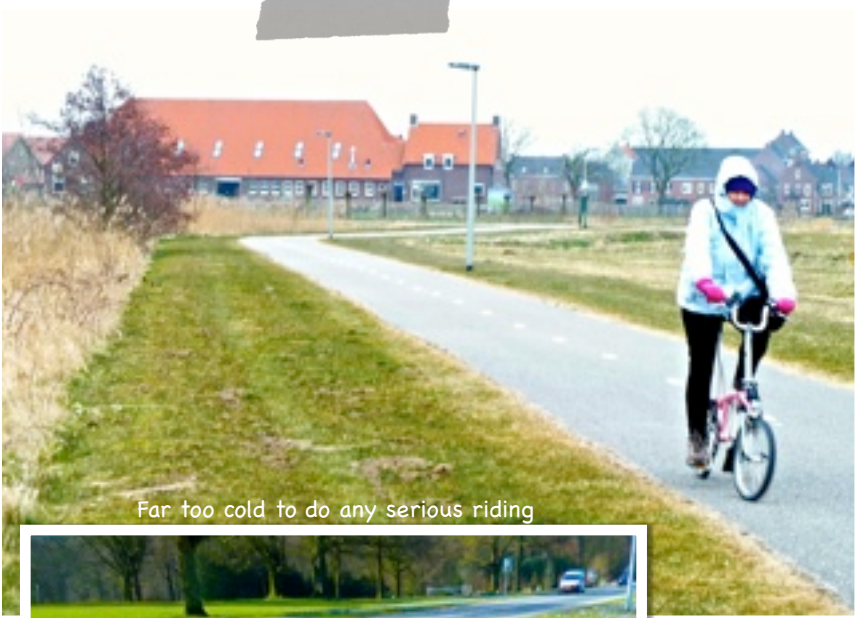
SNOW FLAKES Funny how simple things like falling snow can give us such pleasure. We acted like kids when the first flakes began to fall. We rushed outside only to come back inside quickly because it was just too cold to linger.



SWEET TOOTH Its interesting to check out the supermarket shelves to see the food on offer. The variety of Dutch pastries and cakes is amazing - maybe that's because its Easter.



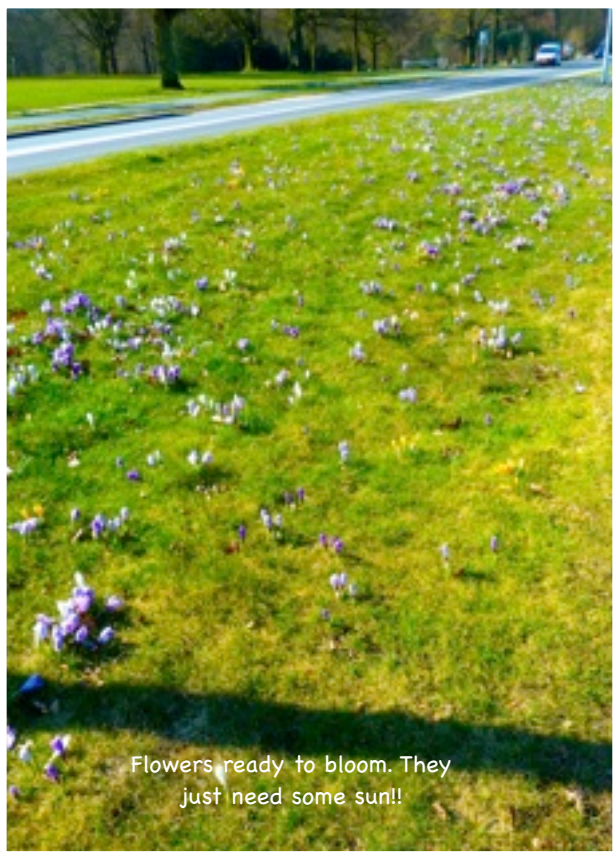
PHOTOS



Far too cold to do any serious riding



Siggy ready to bloom.
All he needs is some sun!!



Flowers ready to bloom. They just need some sun!!



One side it's houses, the other side it's arable land

THE DELINEATION BETWEEN "URBAN" AND "RURAL" IN THE NETHERLANDS IS LIKE CHALK AND CHEESE. RURAL LAND BUTTS RIGHT UP TO RESIDENCES. IF IT'S RURAL FARMING LAND IT'S QUARANTINED FROM RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPERS - FULL STOP. HISTORY HAS SHOWN THE DUTCH AND THE EUROPEANS THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF RURAL FARMING LAND WILL NOT BE GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY LONG TERM. GREEN SPACE AND FARMLANDS ARE SACROSANCT. NOT SO IN AUSTRALIA. WE DON'T SEEM TO LEARN THE MISTAKES OTHERS HAVE MADE OVER TIME.