

Netherlands

What is the Netherlands like? Thirty-eight students of Grammar School of Josef Jungmann in Litoměřice and their teachers, H. Golová, S. Duková and V. Švihlík, could find out during one week in March. We discovered that it is the country full of bicycles, canals, high brick houses and landscape where is difficult to find a hill higher than 322.5 metres. We set off for many fascinating trips, but the destination where we stayed for the whole week was a lovely town of Oss.

Apart from many sights we saw, we also tasted local cuisine. Traditional Dutch breakfast consists of toast with butter and hagelstag, which is rather used as a chocolate cake topping in our country. Except this unusual variation of a sweet toast, we tried a typical one with Dutch cheese as well. The main meal of the day is dinner. It is different in every family, but most of the time we ate mashed potatoes, minced meat with vegetables, potage and hearty desserts. We did not forget to take a taste of herring, fresh raw fish with onion, which surprised us with its specific texture and flavour. But we were always in a good mood after eating delicious desserts.

Throughout the week we visited many significant places of interests. First day we saw one of the largest churches in the Netherlands - Gothic St. John's Cathedral in s'Hertogenbosch. During its recent renovation, a statue of an angel holding a smartphone was added there. The following day we looked around the Hague, the seat of the Dutch government and the International Court of Justice. After leaving the city, we stopped at Madurodam. This miniature park is home to a range of 1:25 scale model replicas of famous Dutch landmarks, historical cities and large developments. We had also time to explore a prison tower full of torture instruments. On the way back we visited Kinderdijk, which is a place inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage Sites list because of the largest concentration of old windmills in the Netherlands.

The most demanding day was Wednesday, when we visited Amsterdam. There we enjoyed countless canals, houseboats, and moreover, famous paintings displayed in the Rijksmuseum. At the end of the day, we had an impressive tour at the Anne Frank House.

We began Thursday morning with a stroll through a picturesque town of Willemstad, which used to be a fortress. Despite the fact it was raining while we were driving to Rotterdam, we admired the imposing Maeslantkering, a storm surge barrier, which automatically closes when needed. The weather was so miserable that the visit of Rotterdam turned into a quick stop. We saw plenty of modern designed buildings though. Our stay in the Netherlands ended with a cycling trip with a stop at a windmill. Before leaving the country, our Dutch friends prepared a nice goodbye dinner for us.

A fortnight later, everyone was happy to welcome twenty-three Dutch students of Titus Brandsma Lyceum in Oss and three of their teachers, Marieke Reijs, Martijn Vermast, Rop v.d. Burgh, in Litoměřice. We organised for them some excursions to the Škoda Auto factory and museum, the Prachov Rocks, Ploskovice Chateau, Terezín Fortress, and Litoměřice including the excursion in a small local brewery, where we learnt something about a process of beer making. Students had time to attend some of our lessons and after that there even took place a football and volleyball match between Dutch and Czech pupils.

Then we had to say goodbye to each other and our friends from Oss set out for Nižbor glassworks. Their next destination was Prague, where they did some sightseeing. They also tasted Czech cuisine at Zlatá Lyra Restaurant, saw a play at Black Light Theatre and enjoyed themselves at a club.

We firmly believe that all of them enjoyed their stay in the Czech Republic and we are looking forward to seeing you next year.