

30 May 2010 – Sunday

Dallas – Chicago – Den Hauge

What a difference 18 years makes. I remember being shocked over the cost of a hamburger at JFK in 1992. Today we used the 4+ hour layover at O'Hara like a day at a resort: lunch at Macaroni Grill, 30-minute massages and drinks before boarding our 767 for the 8 hour and 20 minute flight to Brussels.

We both remarked how much more 'routine' this trip feels. Mostly I think that is due to our having traveled a lot lately, but it is probably more due to how busy we both have been leading up to the trip. I just booked the hotels last week, and the cars yesterday, which is when I did a lot of the "how do we get from point A to point B' by train research (which I had to do in order to know when we were picking up and dropping off the rental cars).

We had breakfast on the way to the airport this morning, so I am already feeling like I am eating my way to Europe.

We have exit row seats on all legs of our flights (thanks to Kathleen's Gold card). On this leg we are in a bulkhead row so the leg room is a little on the short side, but at least we are in A/B seats!

We both managed to get more sleep than we usually do on an airplane, although my shoulder ended up a bit of a mess. Kathleen had the aisle seat, and I was up against the window and my right arm ended with shooting pains. A few Advil and some quick massage from Kathleen has (so far) taken care of that though.

31 May 2010 (Monday)

Den Hague

Arrived on time at 8:30. Other than a bit of a wait in line customs was a snap. Turned out that our rail pass worked on the train from the airport to Brussels Central (a 20-minute ride) and on the train to Den Hauge (about 2 hours). Arrived at the HS station and took the train to the Central station which is right next to our hotel (the **Eden Babylon Hotel**).

To get from the Central train station to our hotel:

- Make your way out of the station **via platform 12 and continue walking straight ahead.**
- After a one-minute walk you will see the Nationaal Archief on your right.
- Keep walking past the entrance.
- In about another minute, you should see the main entrance of the KB (a big KB logo is above a small revolving door). Enter, go past the security guards on the left, and take the stairs to your right up to the first floor. You will be in the BIDA corridor, where you will find the conference registration desk.

Our room wasn't ready yet (by not it was about 1:00) so we checked our bags and headed out into the city.

It was cloudy and cool but not unpleasant. The city is very tourist friendly. We had lunch on a square lined with restaurants with outdoor seating (and heat lamps which were very welcome on this day!) and watched the steady stream of people as they walked or cycled by.

The Netherlands, Germany & Belgium
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This is a rather casual city – nobody seems to dress up too much. We have both been taken as natives by just about everybody we have dealt with.

Came back to the hotel after eating and walking around a lot – got a smallish but nice corner room on the top (9th) floor. The window opens and there does not seem to be a lot of street noise (it over looks a park) so this will do nicely!

We slept until 7:00 pm, then showered and headed out for dinner. Picked a place out of our Lonely Planet book, which turned out to be a good choice (Les Ombrellas at Hooistraat 4). There are very many restaurants in town: it would have been hard to pick on with any confidence on our own. Had a marvelous 3-course set price meal with several extra courses (hot fish soup and a pre-desert – both blended concoctions that were more interesting than good) and a bottle of wine.

Walked back to the hotel at 11:00 – noticed how light the sky still was!

01 June 2010 (Tuesday)

Den Hague

So, quite a day in Der Hague!

Woke up later than planned but made it down to breakfast at 9:30. That is a story in itself. We are not sure what we are being charged for the room. I did not think the rate we got included breakfast, but apparently it does. Whatever, the breakfast was great: Scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, fruit, sliced meats & cheeses, rolls, butter, cereal, coffee, OJ and more. All in a pleasant room overlooking the park across the street.

"Archiving 2010" conference

Conference Location

All short courses and technical sessions will be held in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), located at Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 5. The KB is adjacent to the main train terminal, Den Haag Centraal

Found the National Library behind the hotel and located the train station. Kathleen registered, hung her poster and called it a workday.

We headed to beach (Scheveningen) on the #17 tram: What a place! Miles of beach bordered by a terrace of hotels and restaurants. We walked north and eventually left off the commercialism. Found (and photographed) the remains of fortifications built by the Germans during WWII in the dunes. One main battery with two smaller gun emplacements on either site.

Had fish and chips and several excellent beers for lunch. We toured the hotel we could have stayed in (if Kathleen had been able to justify the cost to the University of North Texas). It is beautiful, on the beach, but in the end, we decided that it was not where we would have wanted to have been. It turned out to only be a 15-minute tram ride from the conference but that works both ways – it is only 15 minutes from where we are staying.

Came back to the hotel, cleaned up, and went to the Parbe (sp?) Hotel for the reception. Small crowd but managed to meet some interesting people.

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Finished the night at an Irish pub we passed. Has several drinks and mussels like I have never had: shelled with onions and peppers – really good!

Picked up some wine and pistachio nuts on the way back to the hotel.



June 2, 2010 (Wednesday)

Den Hague

A day on my own. Katheen spent her first full day at her conference, so I got to be a solo tourist.

We did have breakfast together. Kathleen had the ‘Oh my god I’m not ready for this presentation’ jitters. I’m sure she will be her usual stellar self.

I went back to the room and caught up on my email, then left to catch the tram to Delft. I could have taken a train and been there in 10 minutes, but I preferred the more leisurely pace the 30 minute tram ride offered.

Delft is a beautiful little city full of trees and house-lined canals. It was a beautiful, sunny day and the crowds of tourists slowly filled the square and the many outdoor cafés.

I of course was drawn like a moth to a light by the old church steeple that graces one end of the market square and soon found myself on the dizzying circular staircase, thighs burning and gasping for breath as I walked my way up the 373 steps to the top.

I waited at one of the few places wide enough for two people to pass for a group of 3 elderly women who were on their way down. Motivated/humiliated by the fact that that they had obviously been able to make it I struggled to the top where the view was, of course, fantastic.

At several points in the staircase, I stopped to admire the pendulum-driven machinery that makes the tower clock tick.

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Back on the ground I took a lot of pictures of the stained-glass windows in the church itself.

After all that work I was hungry. For some reason I have been craving fish – I guess because I was surrounded by it. I followed my Lonely Planet guide again to a wonderful walk-up (De Visbanken) that has been in business since 1342. I'm not sure what kind of fish it was, but it was fried and it was delicious.

I felt photographic today, so I spent a lot of time walking around and taking pictures, most of them using a polarizing lens (because of the beautiful sky and the striking, sunny settings). They turned out to be really beautiful.

Went through the Old Church as well (mainly because the ticket at the New Church included admission) and spent more time photographing the stunning windows.

I finished off my time in Delft at the Café Wijnhaven (corner of Wynhaven & Nieustradt) writing these words while imbibing in several delicious Anker-Bok beers (my waitress's suggestion), sitting in the warm sunshine, cooled by the breeze (occasionally gusty enough make me reach out to steady my glass of beer!) and watching the endlessly fascinating stream of pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles go by.

I did have a good idea for a bumper-sticker or T-shirt for the tourist bureau after walking so much on the narrow area between the houses and the canals in this town: "If you don't like the way I walk/ride/drive get the heck off of the sidewalk/path/street" since it really is not possible to tell the difference between the sidewalk, bike path or road (or even the sidewalk/front porch of the houses).

Last night's reception was at the Photo Museum, quite a distance from the hotel but no problem on the tram (#10 or 17). The pictures on exhibit were fascinating! Unlike the night before there was a lot to eat and the wine flowed. We sat with a man from Delaware (Mark) and another (Neil) who works for the National Library in London. We all had a great conversation (and a lot of wine). We finally left after 10 (and it still was not dark outside yet).

June 3, 2010 (Thursday)

Den Hague

Today started the same – breakfast with Katheen, read email, then set off for Leiden. Compared to Delft it was not impressive. I stopped by the TI and found out that the Tulips were no longer in blossom. Got a map showing a 2-hour walking tour around the city but found it impossible to follow. I did tour a windmill that made the trip worthwhile. It was the De Valk museum and quite interesting. They let you climb all the way to the top to view all of the cogs, gears, shafts and stones that make it all work. I spent a lot of time there and took a lot of pictures. I'm hopeful that one or two may turn out.

By 1:00 I was ready to leave. I did stop at a mobile fish booth in front of the train station and shared a stand-up table with an Iranian who has emigrated here to study law. We had a pleasant conversation over fried fish, then I was on my train back to the Hague.

On the way back I looked at the map and decided to give Gouda (which, as I found out while trying to tell the ticket agent at the station where I wanted to go, is pronounced "Hoo Duh") a visit.

Gouda has a huge market square dominated by the city hall. In fact, they were just breaking down the farmers market as I arrived.

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The Sint Janskera church has a fantastic collection of stained-glass windows. Sadly, they also have a policy prohibiting photographing them. It is a beautiful church none the less.

The town was so much more interesting than Leiden (but still does not compare to Delft). There is much less traffic and more pedestrian-only areas. After photographing and touring the city hall I am finishing my solo tour chapter of this vacation at the Grand Central Café on the square, hoping to get the attention of my waitress so I can order another Heineken draft before heading back “home” to meet Kathleen.

The trains here are just as efficient and convenient as I remember from our last European trip. Leiden and Gouda both have 4 trains each hour, and the 2nd class rate is reasonable (6 Euro’s to Leiden, 10 Euro’s to Gouda).

I did stop at the info desk and mapped out our trip to Würzburg for tomorrow. We leave just before 10:00, arrive just after 4:00 pm (via Frankfurt).

Met Kathleen back at the hotel. Her poster presentation apparently went very well. She talked to several people who were very interested in her part of the project, and who were interested in working with her and/or having her present at another conference. So, it was a very good conference for her.

We went back to the same square where had lunch on the day we arrived. It was cold and there were very few people around then, but they were out in force when we arrived! All of the outdoor seating was jam-packed with people enjoying the warm weather and the last of the sun’s rays. We snagged an outside table and had a leisurely and enjoyable meal with wine at Cloos, an Italian restaurant (another Lonely Planet recommendation, which has been very reliable).

We are still having a hard time getting used to how late the sun sets here this time of year: it must have been 10:30 and it still was light enough to be able to enjoy the view outside of our hotel room window.

June 4, 2010 (Friday)

Den Hague - Würzburg

Slept in “late” today (7:00), packed, ate breakfast, checked out and caught the 9:53 train to Utrecht (a 35-minute trip) where we were to catch our ICE for Frankfurt.

| Den Haag | Amsterdam | Amsterdam | Frankfurt (Main) | Frankfurt (Main) | Würzburg |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 7:47 | 8:33 | | | | |
| 8:02 | 8:52 | | | | |
| 9:02 | 9:52 | 10:34 | 14:30 | 14:54 | 16:03 |
| 10:02 | 10:52 | | | 15:54 | 17:03 |
| 11:02 | 11:52 | 12:34 | 16:30 | 16:21 | 17:31 |
| | | | | 16:54 | 18:03 |
| | | | | 17:54 | 19:03 |
| | | 14:34 | 18:30 | 18:54 | 20:03 |
| | | | | 19:54 | 21:03 |

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Instead, we caught a regional train from the Dutch railway which took us to Emmerich. It was a small train and very crowded – we stood, crammed in the entranceway for the hour or so it took us to reach Emmerich.

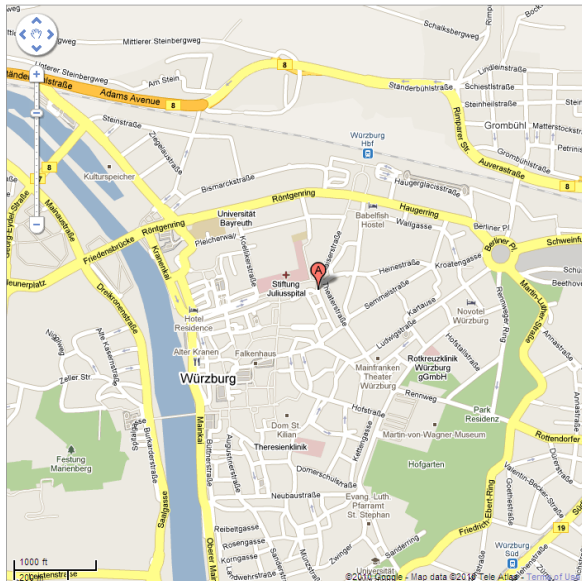
Our DB ICE stood waiting across the platform, but we had to endure another delay of 5-10 minutes while they tried to figure out how to get the doors to open. The did (eventually) and we are now sitting in first-class comfort (jut has my coffee served by a smiling hostess) and all is right with our world! All of this will probably cause us to miss our 14:59 ICE to Würzburg. I'm hoping there will be other trains that will not cause too much delay.

We made our train connection in Frankfurt with almost 5 minutes to spare! We had planned to buy a sandwich there, but there was no time so we settled for the remains of a bag of potato chips.

Found the hotel in Würzburg (Hotel Würzburger Hof, Barbarossaplatz 2, Würzburg, 97070) without trouble and it is really nice! We are in the Toskana Suite (room 224) that has a couch and two chairs in a sitting area, fridge, bathroom, desk and two large windows that ope to the alley running on the side of the hotel.

We decided to try to do some laundry in our room rather than find a laundromat so left the room for the evening with dripping socks and underwear hanging all over the bathroom.

Walked to the market square and found a large and vibrant wine festival in full swing. The entire square is consumed with small booths serving all manner of food and drinks interspaced with covered eating/drinking areas crammed full of tables. We found a good spot and settled in to enjoy half of a roast chicken served with fries and the first of what would turn out to ne 3 bottles of a pleasant white wine from the region. We just slowly slipped the wine over a 3+ hour period of time and watched the sea or humanity come and go around us before finally surrendering our seats around 10:00 pm.



June 5, 2010 (Saturday)

Württemberg Germany

Today we got up at 7:30. The breakfast here is worth writing about: served in a beautiful room, the food is a delight to look at (it is well presented) and to eat: salmon, cereal, bread, meat, cheese, eggs.... There was too much to describe, but it was delicious!

We walked back to the train station to pick up the car. Couldn't find Hertz so very impolitely went into the Euro Car rental store to ask them. Turns out Hertz has been displaced by some constructions and is located some distance away (a 8 Euro can-ride away!).

They were very nice – took the cab-fare off of our bill, and we can dump the car back off at the train stations, so all is well.

Headed out of town guided by our trusty Garmin GPS (had bought the Europe chip before we left) so navigating was a breeze!

This was my first experience on the Autobahn. Our little Opel did not have the oomph to keep up with the Mercedes's, BMW's or Audi's, but we cruised between 120 – 140 kph most of the way up to Wernshausen.

Found the church (it was locked, but I did get a few pictures of the interior through an open window) and cemetery and spent a lot of time taking pictures of tombstones, but did not mind many old ones. I am hoping that some of the info from the newer graves may help me bridge backwards and connect the family to some of our relatives living in the area today. Managed to drive down a very steep, narrow and bumpy alley that became a dead-end. Backing up that hill probably took a few thousand miles off of the life of the clutch, but I made it without any dents or scratches on the car.

Drove down to Arnstein. Apparently got there too late for lunch (or much of anything else) as just about everything was closed. Found the church in the center of town. It was open so I got to photograph it. We stopped a local and got directions to the cemetery and what turned out to be the old church. Took more tombstone pictures (same deal – no old ones) and the interior of the church.

Headed back to the hotel. Parking the car is an adventure: the garage is in a small building several blocks behind the hotel, down an alley. We were given a key to open the door, then drove several levels down a narrow, winding ramp that we had to walk back up to get out after parking the car.

The clothes seemed to be drying so rinsed a few T-shirts out before heading out for a well-deserved dinner. Tried a few restaurants but they were all booked so headed back to the festival. The food ended up getting was much like the night before, and we met nice local couple. His English was on par with Kathleen's German, but we managed to get our ideas across. Walked around a bit after that (had ice cream for dessert) and made an early evening of it.

June 6, 2010 (Sunday)

Würtzburg Germany

Another road trip: south this time to Sachsen bei Ansbach (about an hours drive south-west of Würtzburg). On our way out of town we stopped by the cemetery in Würtzburg, but we were completely overwhelmed by its size and did not stay long (needless to say we found nothing of interest).

Kathleen's digestive system has been disrupted a bit... not sure what is responsible suspect dairy products since she has been eating a lot of that.

Found Ansbach without much trouble (although we did have to back-track and detour around some bridge construction nearby). Got an area map at a store in the tram station that showed us where Sachsen was – a small, neat little town a few miles to the west of Ansbach.

Its dominant feature is a Lutheran church surrounded by a small cemetery. It took only a short time to discover nothing... Not an Amborn (or any other familiar name) to be found. The graves appear to be for a given family and all were marked with fairly recent stones. It appears that unless your family stays in the area the gravestones are removed after some period of time. Still, the fact that the church was more Lutheran (and not Catholic), which is what the Amborn's reportedly were gives me hope that this is the right town.

We were able to get into the church to photograph it. Had lunch (the sandwich we bought while at the train station earlier) in the beautiful church yard. It was a pleasant, sunny day and a joy to be where we were.

Tried our luck in the cemetery in Ansbach, but it also was too big to cover, and I had no reason to believe that I had any relatives there. We did come across a large section with simple iron crosses marking the graves of those killed by a bombing raid during WWII.

Drove back on a smaller highway. Got to see more of the countryside, but I was glad to park the car in our hotel's underground garage in the alley behind the hotel.

We had asked the Woman at the front desk to try to call for dinner reservations for us but she said the restaurant was full. I called the Backofele (another recommendation from our book) and was able to get a 6:30 table.

So, after cleaning up a bit we went back to the wine festival and had another delightful bottle of the local offering before walking to our restaurant.

Reservations did not appear to have been necessary, but we had a private table, and the food was good. Kathleen had pike perch and I had pork with fried potatoes and an excellent white wine.

We walked around a bit after dinner and found the river and the lively area around it. We stopped in at a small exhibit in the Rothaus. It showed how the city had been devastated by a British bombing raid in February of 1945.

They dropped incendiary bombs so anything not damaged by explosions was consumed in the ensuing fire storm. The display had pictures and a model showing how the city appeared after the flames had died down. It was an appalling scene of destruction.

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The American Governor appointed after the war proposed rebuilding the city further upstream but the people of the city wanted to rebuild where the city had been, and so they did.

This is a city worth coming back to!

A storm began to blow in so we hurriedly bought ice cream (for Kathleen) and a bottle of red wine (for me) and returned to our room just in time to enjoy the cooler breeze (it had been 89 degrees Fahrenheit!), rain and lightening from the comfort of our room.

June 7, 2010 (Monday)

Württemberg- Heidelberg

Today we tried our luck at the library and had none (they did not appear to have genealogy records). After talking to a helpful woman at the TI we went to the church information storefront near the church. No luck (again): it should have been open according to the times posted on the door, but it was closed).

So with that we collected our car and luggage and departed. Never could find the Hertz parking spot (we did manage to drive through the bus station though). We think we left it in good hands at the DB ticket counter after parking in a regular parking spot.

| Württemberg | Frankfurt (Main) | Frankfurt (Main) | Heidelberg |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| 8:56 | 10:05 | | |
| 9:56 | 11:05 | 11:06 | 12:39 |
| 10:25 | 11:36 | | |
| 10:56 | 12:05 | 12:18 | 13:12 |
| 11:56 | 13:05 | 13:18 | 14:12 |
| 12:56 | 14:05 | 14:18 | 15:12 |
| 13:56 | 15:05 | 15:18 | 16:12 |
| 14:56 | 16:05 | 16:18 | 17:12 |
| 15:56 | 17:05 | 17:18 | 18:12 |
| 16:56 | 18:05 | 18:18 | 19:12 |

We just missed the 10:56 train so killed an hour using the internet and buying sandwiches for the trip to Heidelberg.

Unfortunately, our train was 20 minutes late so we may miss our connection there and will have another delay of nearly one hour!

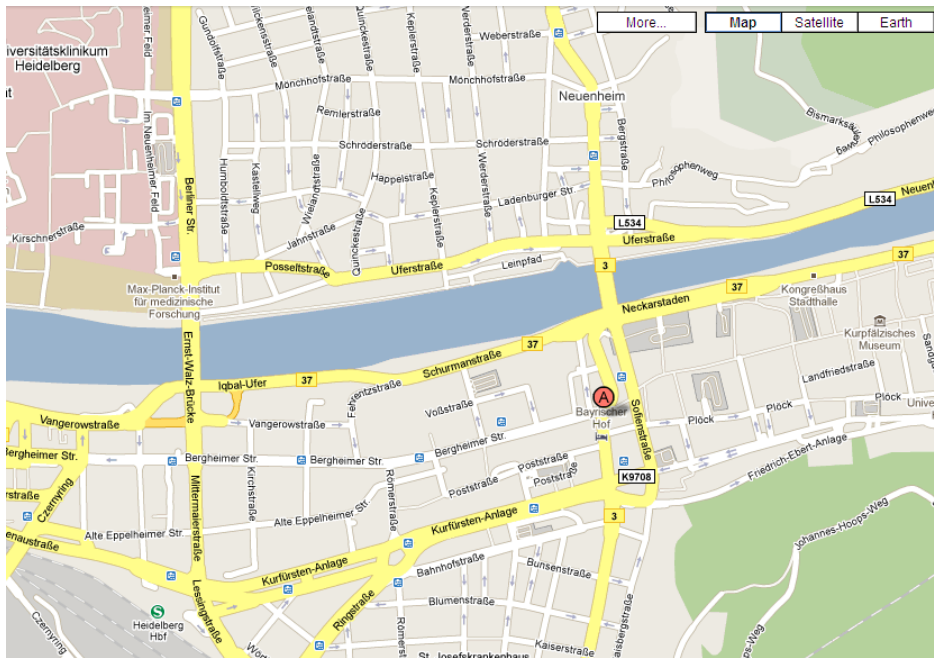
We did. Caught a local train to Heidelberg: it stopped at every crossroad and windmill on the route (well, maybe just every town). The train was hot and fairly crowded when we started. It took a while, but we got here!

Decided to walk to the hotel. It was a long hike, but we found the Hotel Bayerischer Hof ((76877), Heidelberg, Rohrbacher Str. 2, Heidelberg, 69115) with no difficulty. It is a training hotel for local hospitality students. Other than a lack of A/C we have no complaints. The room is large, has a seating/working area and Internet/Wi-Fi access! I feel like I am back in civilization again I can use my iPhone to read Email and send pictures. I can't tell who is happier: me or my mother!

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We walked down to the Marketplace and had a beer in the warm (but beginning to cool off) evening. Decided to have dinner at the Italian restaurant next to the hotel that Kathleen somehow managed to remember from our walk from the train station. Turned out to be a superb choice! Asparagus is in season, and the menu was full of things I never imagined you could make from Asparagus. All delicious and all paid for (eventually) with our credit card after working through a small problem with the credit card reader.

Good French wine: Moelleux Vin De Pays Du Comte Tolosan – Pierre Jean



June 8, 2010 (Tuesday)

Heidelberg

Seeing the area was all Kathleen had in mind, so we did. Decided to take the [boat cruise](#) since it was another nice day (warm with some overcast). Sailed up the Neckar River with a boatload of 10-12 year-old school children on an outing for the day. The top deck was crowded with noisy and boisterous children (and their alert teachers) as well as us tourists.

We passed through two locks (7 foot and 12 foot) on our way to Neckarsteinach, a sleepy medieval town on the bank of the river. We spent the hour and a half we had before the return boat arrived hiking up the hill to view the privately owned castle overlooking town, then back down again into town where we ran into our school group again at the Lutheran church. Finished our visit with ice cream, then went back onto the boat for the conclusion of our little voyage.

Decided to see Karlsruhe next, so we figured out the bus system and rode over to the train station and hopped onto a train which departed almost immediately. It took us about an hour to get there. The TI was helpful – suggested a pass for the tram and suggested a route to get an overview of the town.

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We arrived at the market square just in advance of a rain shower. Lucky for us there was another festival of some kind going on so we pulled up at a table under an umbrella and enjoyed a beer while the rain came down. It ended quickly so we were soon on our way on foot.

Karlsruhe has a huge palace with a large area in front surrounded by buildings, all in a very large circle. It was as large as anything I have ever seen. Stood on the front entry of what is now a museum (it had just closed) and waited out another very brief rainstorm before heading back into town through a large public garden on one quadrant of the grounds. Saw a group of men playing Bocchi Ball and another playing chess on a large concrete chess board with pieces that were one foot tall.

We window shopped on our way back, then caught the tram back to the train station, and a faster (fewer stops) train back to Heidelberg.

Went back to the hotel, cleaned up and walked as far as the restaurant next to the hotel for another delicious meal (fish for both of us preceded by asparagus soup and accompanied by an excellent bottle of white wine).

Our hotel room has a nice sitting area, which is what we did, with the windows open while we waited for the room to cool down. The wine in the room was reasonable and enjoyable and helped make the end of the day most pleasant.

June 9, 2010 (Wednesday)

Heidelberg – Antwerp

The breakfast was an extra 10 Euros each but was worthwhile: served in what must have been the wine cellar. It included the now expected array of delights: Not as expansive or as fancy as what we had in Würzburg but good and filling.

Our train did not depart until 11:20 so we packed and took one last walk before returning to the hotel, checking out, walking to the plaza and catching the wrong bus. Technically it was the correct bus route, just in the wrong direction. We got off, figured out a plan, caught another bus, walked a few blocks and still had 15 minutes to spare before our train to Frankfurt departed.

It was a 1.5 hour ride to Frankfurt. Got sandwiches & cokes and boarded our ICE for Brussels. We are in a 6-seat compartment, alone at the moment – expecting one more traveler soon – and enjoying our mobile picnic.

We tried to arrange our trip through Paris last night at the Heidelberg train station but could not get seats on the Paris – Antwerp leg so settled for the more direct route instead. We expected this to be a rainy day but so far it has just been cloudy.

There are a lot of tunnels on this route – some are very long. Tough on the ears!

Arrived in Brussels late, rushed down the stairs to find the train to Antwerp. Kathleen spotted it on the monitor and took off for platform 11 even though it was 1 minute past the posed departure time. Locu of the Irish prevailed because the train was still there. A man on the platform confirmed it was going to Antwerp (the name on the monitor was in Flemish or some other language and did not look anything like “Antwerp”) but we jumped into the nearest car (2nd class) and collapsed.

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It was the correct train, and we soon found ourselves in the magnificent Antwerp train station, surely one of the most beautiful stations in the world.

Stopped to confirm what we need to know to get to the airport on Saturday morning, then stopped in at the station TI to get maps and some good information about the city. Walked blocks to our hotel, the Leopold Hotel Antwerp (Quinten Matsijlei 25, B-2018 Antwerpen).

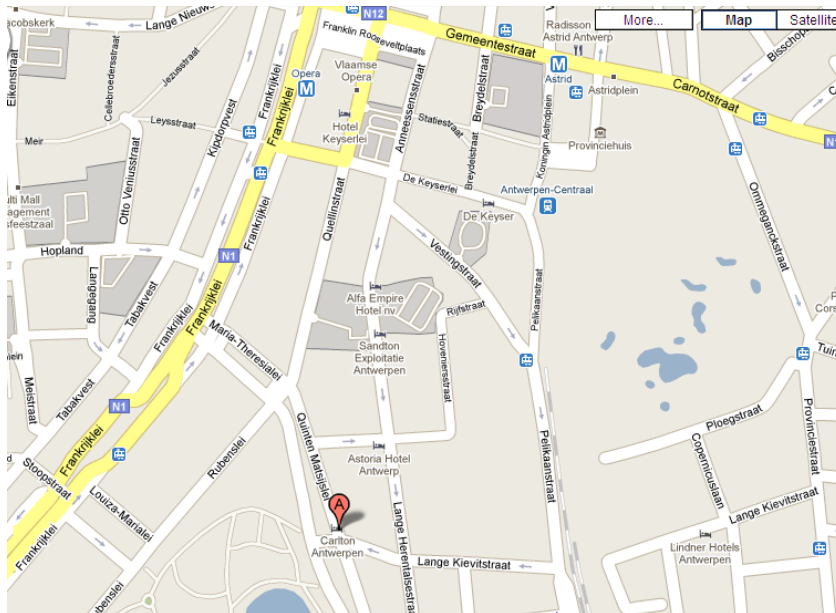
It is located across the street from a large park, although our room overlooks the buildings in back. Even so, it is spacious and has A/C. And, like our hotel in Heidelberg, the room has a gizmo by the door that requires you to insert your room key (really, anything like it will do) to enable the electricity in the entire room.

The walk from the train station was amazing. The station goes on forever, and houses (at least on that side of the street) a seemingly endless series of diamond and jewelry stores.

Ran down to the local grocery store and picked up some wine for the room (no mini bar!) before braving the trams to head out to the Old Town.

This town is amazingly beautiful. Narrow, winding streets and a seemingly endless series of Squares and Plaza's with archology beautiful enough to literally make us exclaim out loud. It was also devilishly difficult to navigate, but we managed to find our way to the Rooden Hoed restaurant – book recommendation – and supposedly one of the oldest restaurants in town. We liked it because the waiter goofed served us an opened bottle of wine so got a large glass for free: such a deal! The food was good as well (steak for Kathleen I had the duck).

Managed to find our way to the correct tram and back to our hotel, very tired after a long (3 trains!) day of travel.



June 10, 2010 (Thursday)

Antwerp

No alarm today! Got up when we were good and ready (but still not too late). The breakfast here was on par with Heidelberg: Good, complete, but nothing fancy.

Kathleen had noticed what she thought was the National Archive on the map. It turned out to “only” be the city archive, but it seemed like a good place visit, so after she got her thoughts together, we headed out to find it, only to discover that that it had moved in 2006! Not too far away as it turned out though, so after a walk of an additional 3-4 blocks we arrived.

They were obviously preparing for some kind of social event, so we stepped over and around the decorations and into the building. Had a bit of a staring contest with the woman behind the counter: must be some kind of a cultural thing because she did nothing more than glance at us occasionally. Eventually a man came in and offered to help us.

What a place. Everybody was incredibly helpful (and spoke English) and helped us find the records (on microfilm) we needed. Kathleen got her great grandfather’s birth record. The very knowledgeable and helpful guru found the street in present day Antwerp for us and helped locate it on the map.

Spent most of the day there looking for more information and left only when they closed (good day to be inside since it rained the whole time we were there). Walked over to the street where Kathleen’s relatives had lived (all new buildings now). Then was a local pub with a group of men outside right there. They started to make fun of our picture-taking but got a lot more respectful when they found out why we were there.

Had dinner at a small sidewalk café on the Grote Market by the Stadhuis. The Stadhuis itself was festooned with flags of the countries that are participating in the World Cup. One of the restaurants across the plaza was decorated in the Netherlands’ Orange. Another nearby restaurant had soccer balls hanging like Christmas ornaments. Europe is ready for the World Cup!

Took the tram home, had a drink in the bar (and took advantage of the Wi-Fi that was available in the lobby) before finishing the night in the comfort of our room.

June 11, 2010 (Friday)

Antwerp

Got up a bit earlier, had breakfast and headed back to the Archive to see if we couldn’t find records that eluded us yesterday. The tram took us most of the way, then we walked the rest of the way. Discovered that the Archives are located near Antwerp’s red-light district, which apparently opens for business about the same time we walked through.

Had a productive day at the Archive – found many census and immigration (people reporting to the Burgermeister) records. Worked straight through until 3:00.

Walked back down to the area around the church and also found the other street where Kathleen’s family had lived, close to the square. We settled into an Italian restaurant (we were both very hungry by this point in time) and found ourselves with a large screen TV (newly installed) showing the first game of

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the World Cup in Johannesburg South Africa. As the weather had just turned blustery and sharply cooler we decided to park ourselves for the game. Enjoyed a cheese pizza, tomato & mozzarella salad and three ½ liter bottles of Chianti wine as we watched Mexico and South Africa dual to a 1-1 tie.

Agreed that the best way to spend the last night of our trip would be to picnic on our room watching the next game of the World Cup, so stopped off at the grocery store and picked up some wine, cheese, bread and salmon and called it a day.

June 12, 2010 (Saturday)

Antwerp, Train to Brussels, then to the Airport

An early day. Got up at 5:30, packed, then checked out of the hotel (it was too early for breakfast). Walked the 2-3 blocks to the train station, which was surprisingly empty and devoid of anywhere to grab a quick breakfast. Settled for coffee and a blueberry muffin, which we ate on the platform for track 21 while we waited for the 7:32 train to Brussels North.

It was a 45-minute ride, with an 18-minute wait for the short (15 minute) ride on the Airport Express to the airport.

Kathleen's status saw us through the check-in quickly (good thing – the regular line was a zoo). Passport control was deceptively easy, and led to a large duty-free shopping zone, which was full of... People, standing in a very long line waiting to go through security. We both wondered how the stores even did any business.

The line moved quickly though, and we were in the concourse by 9:20 (our train had arrived at 8:43). The concourse is very long, and has a few duty-free shops scattered along its length. Kathleen braved the crowds and bought a few chocolates with our remaining 50 Euros.

Boarding was a zoo – absolutely everybody was standing in front of the gate, cutting off the main aisle for people passing by and creating a lot of unnecessary delay, but we managed to get on the plane. We were very happy to find that we were in the row behind the bulkhead seats for the return trip.

Thoughts as the plane departs:

- Found that everybody in the Netherlands speaks English, but not so much in the part of Germany and Belgium where we visited.
- We expected much cooler weather than we encountered.
- Both flights had a lot of children!
- I'm glad that Kathleen noticed the archives on the map in Antwerp – it was nothing that we planned, and had great success there.
- I was strangely unexcited about seeing the cities where my ancestors (I think) came from in Germany. I think it was because I have not documented that they really came from there (yet).

Ambassador Lounge – O'Hara Airport, Chicago

Well, we were delayed leaving Brussels for more than an hour - something to do with paperwork over the aircraft being "heavier than usual", then having to get cleared to use another runway, then getting ATC clearance.

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It has been storming in Chicago, so our landing was delayed, but not to worry – our flight to Dallas has also been delayed (to 4:45), so we will get home (eventually).

There was a large crowd outside our favorite pub – many people watching the USA – England World Cup game. We scooted to the Ambassador Lounge to join the crowd there watching the end of the game (tied 1-1, a good result for the US) and enjoying a beer or two.