



## MAASLUIS BELLERA

### 8<sup>th</sup> May, Tuesday. Maassluis

After a two hour and a quarter flight from BCN airport to Rotterdam airport the students were given a warm welcome by their matches and families and taken to their respective houses.

The next day they got up early and rode their bikes to the high school accompanied by their Dutch partners. It was very hard for some of them to cycle from quite long distances for the first time in their lives and under a heavy rain.

The Dutch students and teachers showed us around their school, which everybody liked very much because it is very modern, cosy and with a lot of convenient and beautiful facilities.

Next they did the presentations of their power point projects about The Netherlands, the educational system and other interesting topics.

After this we ate our snacks with them and we set off for Rotterdam. We spent the rest of the morning and the afternoon there, visiting the most emblematic buildings of the city. We went up the Euromast, which is the highest telecommunications tower in the city. From up there we had impressive (breathtaking) views of the city, the port and its surroundings.

Then we went to get on board a vessel, called the spido boat which took us all around the biggest harbour of Europe and second in the world.

In the afternoon we went to see the famous cubic houses where we could also visit the interior of one with its rooms, furniture and a completely equipped kitchen.

After this some free time for shopping and relaxing (chilling out) and then back to Maassluis again where the Dutch students were waiting for the Catalan ones with their bikes.

Then they had their second evening out with them having some icecreams and then back home to have a rest.

### 9<sup>th</sup> May, Wednesday (Catalan and Dutch students)

On that day we got up very early in the morning (some of the students at about 5'30) because we had to meet up outside Maassluis town to start a journey on our bikes with a first stop at a place called Flora Holland; the place are some very big premises where they do the flower auction of all kinds of flowers recollected in The Netherlands that afterwards are distributed around the country and all over the world. The prices of the flowers are also set/fixed there.



We could witness in live all this process and also see thousands of trolleys moving on long tracks automatically and carrying/transporting a lot of varieties of beautiful flowers.

Then, after a relaxing break at the cafeteria we set off for our second stop, the Delta Plan, which is a place where they are developing some of the works to control the sea tides that could enter inland and the possible floods caused by the heavy rains. It's important to notice that about half of the country is covered by water and a greater part is under the sea level.

There we could see an interesting audiovisual and then witness part of the engineering works being carried out at the place.

After having our snacks we decided to cycle back to town to have a rest because later that evening all the students had a school party at a local disco. The party was great; they were celebrating the Queen's day so everybody was wearing something orange as the tradition advises. Even our students had some orange clothes or accessories on. It was really fun.

There were students of all of the grades of this Maassluis school, from the 12-year olds to the 18 year ones as well as students of other nationalities who were on an exchange too.

#### **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> May (only Catalan students)**

We met at Maassluis railway station at 8'30 to take the train to Delft first and then to the Hague. You have to stop at Rotterdam and change trains to get there.

At 9'30 we had an important appointment with Mr Vermeer, you know him, the famous Dutch painter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The truth is we didn't meet him but at least we could see replicas of all of his works and also an interesting audiovisual about the Delft of his time.

We had some rest after it and then we began a walking tour of the city with Vincent as our tourist guide. Delft is a typically Dutch town with its canals, its pointed houses, narrow streets and an enormous market square, where we could do some souvenir shoppings. Altogether charming. Standing on one side the impressive old church with its tall tower. Most of us got into the church and could admire its beautiful vaults and coloured stained glass windows as well as the tomb of Dutch hero William of Orange, precursor of the present royal dynasty. From his time on all the Dutch kings and queens have been buried there.

It was a pity that we couldn't go up the tower stairs, because they say the view from there is great, but it was a little windy that day.

At 12'00 we took the train to The Hague, which was a marvellous visit too. Vincent showed us around the city and explained to us very interesting facts about its history. We could see the Dutch Parliament, the Queen's work palace, and other emblematic buildings.

After lunch, we visited the Escher museum and then we returned back home.



### **Friday, 11th May (Dutch and Catalan students)**

On this day a rented bus was waiting for us at the high school entrance and drove us to Amsterdam. It was an hour and a quarter journey to the capital of The Netherlands.

At about 10'00 we got on a boat which took us around the city canals. From it we could have astonishing views of the city, full of very beautiful buildings, all of them built in the typically Dutch style with the triangular facades and pointed roofs.

We went past Anna Frank's house, the Jewish girl teenager who died victim of the Holocaust after having been hidden in the inner part of this house for two long years.

After if we did a walking tour of the old city with the Dutch teachers, Cindy and Vincent, as our tourist guides. We could see very interesting places, such as the Dam Square at the heart of the city with the impressive Royal Palace and the National Monument, a white stone pillar to commemorate the victims of the II World War.

We also walked about the red light district, a set of narrow streets in and about The Dam plenty of very small premises where prostitution is a "legal" business. The area was full of the well-known shop coffees.

And to finish our visit to Amsterdam, we headed towards the Van Gogh Museum where we could admire some of the works of this worldwide famous artist of the Impressionism.

After lunch and doing some shopping we had arranged to meet at the dam to take our bus and return back to Maassluis.

That evening the students had a party at a student's house.

**Saturday and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>** were family days, when our students could share with their host families and mates relaxing moments but could also meet up again with the rest of the students of the exchange. Despite being very tired of the hectic week they had just had they still had the energy to go shopping, gaming or going to the disco.