

A couple of days in Cologne, Germany

Saturday, December 27, 2008



Around noon we left our apartment to go to the train station. Our train, the ICE International, was already fifteen minutes delayed – which is very weird, because it only came from Amsterdam (thirty minutes away). We found our places in the train and we looked around, both outside through the window, and inside to other passengers. It took two hours and fifteen minutes to travel to Cologne in Germany. So it's definitely not that far for us.

In Cologne we walked – almost directly – to our hotel, Drie Könige am Dom. We couldn't book the hotel we preferred (the one we booked last March with Easter, but unfortunately we had to cancel our trip), but this one was also pretty close to the Dom, and very close to the train station. Our hotel room was at the back of the hotel, which meant that we had a view at the train station. We do like trains, so that's no problem, but it's not very pleasant to hear every train station announcement in your hotel room.

In the afternoon we left the hotel to walk through the city center and to look around. We visited the tourist information and picked up a map of the city center. And in the store right around the corner Tjeerd bought a flag of Germany for his flag collection (we couldn't find one in Hamburg last year). Of course you can't miss the Dom, because it is a huge building and very impressive! It was quite crowded in the city center, so we walked with many others through the main shopping street. We found a place where they sell *berliners* – some sort of doughnut with jam inside. We liked them very much. We walked around without a specific goal in mind, and so we came in a beautiful old neighborhood, right next to the river the Rhein. The small streets reminded us to the Gamla Stan in Stockholm. In Cologne it's part of the Altstadt.

And then we became part of a weird situation. We saw a car driving by, and we thought that it was strange that cars could actually drive through these small streets. Suddenly, Tjeerd heard a weird sound and the car stood still. We walked in the direction of the car and we saw that the car was driven over a big stone. And now the car couldn't drive further or back. We watched what happened next. Well, in the end someone else who was watching shouted that the car needed to be lifted and slid, and that all the men in the neighborhood had to help. Tjeerd helped, together with about eight others, and so the car was set free again.

We decided to have an early dinner (that's great in Germany – it's not like in France, where you can't eat before seven o'clock in the evening) at a restaurant in the Altstadt. All the German restaurants had lots of meat on their menu, so we chose an Italian restaurant. After we had dinner, we walked through the city center back to the hotel. It was freezing cold outside, so we were very happy when we were back in our hotel room.



Sunday, December 28, 2008

We didn't sleep very well, because our hotel room wasn't very dark during the night. The lights from the train station were shining in our room, so we woke up many times at night. Every time we thought that it was already morning. We had breakfast downstairs in a small breakfast room. We got tea served, and we chose some tasty bread with jam and Nutella. Of course we also had some fresh orange juice. After we had breakfast, Tjeerd found out how we could put a screen down at the window, so we would sleep better the next nights.

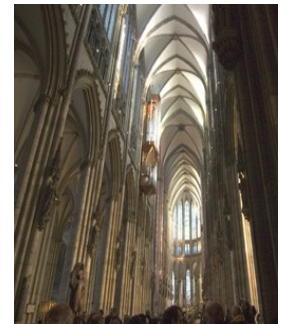


We took our coats, scarfs, heads and gloves to stay warm, and then we walked outside in the freezing but lovely weather. It was Sunday morning and it was very quiet, so it was perfect to walk around and take a look in the city center, without people everywhere. We made some pictures of the city center and of course of the famous Dom. After one hour we were very cold – and the camera was cold too, so it didn't want to work again – so we decided to drink some tea in a cafe next to the Dom.

At this cafe I have seen the most beautiful toilets ever. The toilet room was in Buddha style with relaxing music. The doors to the toilets were from a special sort of glass where you can see through. When you are inside and close the door, the special glass went from see-through to white and not see-through. To wash your hands you use beautiful water fountains – a glass plate where the water falls down, just like a small waterfall. The paper towels, to dry your hands, were placed in a wooden cabinet. You could put your used paper towels in a basket on the floor. This experience costs fifty cents, but it is worth it!

In the same cafe we drank the most expensive tea we ever had. It costs 5.10 euro per person, so we really had to like the tea. I did, but Tjeerd thought it was ridiculous to drink such expensive tea. After the cafe visit, we bought some lunch to bring to our hotel room. On our way back to the hotel we stopped at some souvenir shops and bought some postcards and a small present.

We ate our lunch and relaxed a bit before we left the hotel again. We walked to the Dom and this time we went inside. Earlier today it wasn't possible because of the masses that were held there. In the cathedral it was very crowded. I have never seen such a big cathedral. If you think you have seen the whole cathedral, you just find out a new part of it (also full with people, all photographing). We made pictures with both of Tjeerd's cameras.



Because this Dom is very impressive, we were also curious about the treasure room. We paid 4 euros each, put our bags in a safe, and went downstairs to look around in the different rooms with treasures. Unfortunately, but understandable, we were not allowed to make pictures of the treasures. After our visit of the Dom, we went to the souvenir shop of the tourist information office, but the souvenirs they sell are very expensive. So we just looked around and then we went back to the hotel.

We took a break at our hotel room and in the afternoon we walked to the city center again to find a restaurant where we could have dinner. Most restaurants offer schnitzel (of course), but not just a small piece, no, a very big piece with *schweinenfleisch*. As we didn't want to eat that we searched for a

restaurant that offered also other things. We were again in the Altstadt, because there are some very nice small streets with a lot of restaurants and cafes. We went into Dohmen's. Tjeerd ate potato with salad and I ate a large salad with everything you can think of in it. After dinner we walked to the train station to find a supermarket that was open on Sunday (and we found one). We also bought some more postcards and stamps at the station.

Monday, December 29, 2008

After a good night of sleep with the screen at the window down, we went to the breakfast room. Apparently, we went on a common time, because not much later the whole room was full, and other guests had to wait before they could have breakfast. We had some bread, tea and orange juice.



It was still very cold outside, so everybody walked with their hands in their pockets and their head so far down in their coats as possible. We walked through the big shopping streets and went into a *kaufhaus* where Saturn (looks like a MediaMarkt) had a shop. Even though it was Monday morning, it was very crowded already in the city center. I finally bought a nice bag as a souvenir at a shop right next to the place where we bought our lunch and, of course, two *berliner* again.

The last two days we did a lot of things and I think that's why I needed a day of rest. So the whole afternoon we read (books and magazines) in our hotel room, just to relax.

For dinner we went to the restaurant next door. We are the first ones there, but not much later some other people come in. Tjeerd and I both chose a vegetarian Chinese dinner with rice, and we really liked it. After the waitress got our plates back, it seemed hard to get her attention again. Tjeerd tried to get her attention on a special way – he put out his tongue... Okay, it was meant to wet his lips, but it looked a little strange. We ordered some green tea and we sit for another hour at our table. The other guests were all Chinese people. After we finished the tea, Tjeerd has another chance to get the waitress' attention. This time he held his wallet in his hand and he tried to wink at the waitress at the same time. It resulted in a throw with the wallet in the direction of the waitress. (The wallet actually never really left his hand, but it looked like another very strange way of getting the attention of the waitress.) Back at the hotel, we enjoyed for the last time our warm bathroom with bath.

Tuesday, December 30, 2008

The last nights were very warm, because the hotel had some kind of heat inside (we didn't put on the central heating), so this night we chose to open up the window. Even though that meant we heard every announcement from the train station. Actually, it worked as a 'natural' waking up call this morning. Okay, it was a little early to wake up at six, but we were perfect on time to catch our train!

After having had breakfast we checked out of the hotel. Behind the counter sat an older lady, who just looked like Mrs. Doubtfire. The receipt was written out by hand, because apparently, Mrs. Doubtfire isn't very handy with computers.



We walked tot he train station, which was just a two minute walk and we looked up from which track our train would leave. We were twenty minutes early, but we had enough to watch at the track. There was a train ready for departure, full with football fans from FC Köln. The football fans behaved

very well, compared to the football fans we 'know' from the Netherlands. Their train went to Berlin.

Our train was also quite crowded, but we had our seat reservations, so we didn't mind. We watched how some people thought they had nice seats, and not much later they were kicked out their seats by the persons who made a reservation for those seats.

The train delayed twenty minutes during our ride, but we were still very quick in Utrecht. We got Tjeerd's bike from the bike parking place, and we went home.