

Hello, we are Chan Ching-yui Joseph, LAI Cheuk-kei Katy and Ning Qian Tehilla from C&MA Sun Kei Secondary School in Hong Kong. Together with our teacher, Ms. FAN Sze-Ki Kate, we were invited to the Netherlands and had a very pleasant and meaningful learning journey.

In February 2018 we were happy to welcome our Netherland's teammates to Hong Kong and in April 2017 it was finally our turn to visit our partners' city – the Netherlands.

It's our greatest honor to receive the grand prize, the Best Sustainable Community Project Award in The Hong Kong-European Union School e-Learning Project "Green Living and Sustainability in the Community 2017", with the project themed "Food: How can everybody act to alleviate the fake organic food problem?".

It was a really enjoyable and fruitful learning experience for us and our counterparts in the Netherlands. Though the internet, we exchanged ideas, explored issues, shared findings, and meanwhile we had developed our friendship gradually. We were glad that we could eventually meet each other in person, and had a chance to visit Enschede, the Netherlands. In the trip, from 8th April to 15th April, we had exchanged with local teachers and students and learnt from their school, Kottenpark College, so as to experience a different lifestyle and culture, and understand their practice of green life.

Hereby, we sincerely invite you to read this report, to follow us on our discovery tour, share our experience and learn about the different faces of a fascinating country – the Netherlands.

Day1: Visit to The University of Twente & Muenster

After having a good rest, we started our wonderful trip to one of the famous universities in Eschede - The University of Twente which highly specializes in psychology and engineering. First, we had a little chat with the students and professors there. Through the communication, we could feel that they really loved this university and enjoyed the school life. Afterwards we had a school tour, we visited some facilities of the university, such as the Drienerlo tower and science laboratory. During the tour, the students patiently explained everything thoroughly, which allowed us to know more about the university in details and acquire some scientific knowledge that we had never heard of. We enjoyed the trip in The University of Twente a lot.

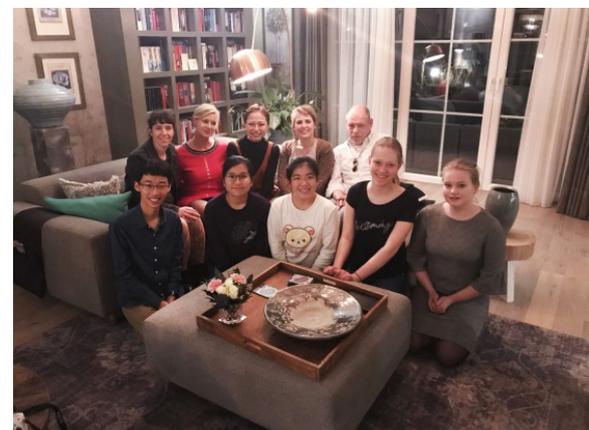


Then, we got a surprise from Renske (one of our groupmates). As the schedule stated, we were going to have lunch in a small restaurant. However, when we arrived, we found that the small restaurant was actually Renske's house! We were shocked but thankful for all the things they had prepared for us. Furthermore, we found in Renske's room our photos which were taken when they came to Hong Kong. We felt so warm and realized how valuable our friendships are. We had a fruitful lunch with a variety of bread and we tried different kinds of toppings which are the Netherlands' features.



What follows was the trip to Germany! We were so excited before visiting there. We found that there were no boundaries between the countries in Europe, which is different from other countries. We visited several churches since the citizen there are mainly Christian.

We ended our day by having dinner in Ms. Jackeline's home. We tried different dishes of Dutch food such as the vegetable soup and we had a great time there.





Day 2: School Visit: Kottenpark - Het Stedelijk Lyceum

The second day of the trip began with a visit to our groupmates' school "Kottenpark - Het Stedelijk Lyceum". It was a golden opportunity for us to meet new friends and have a comprehensive understanding of the Dutch education system. We began with attending their Dutch lesson, where Kris and Renske (our groupmates) shared with us the Dutch idioms and language. Then, we visited the History and Fine Arts lesson. We were introduced with the history of Giethron and The Hague, as we were going to visit them in the next few days.

When comparing Dutch education system with ours, we appreciate their education for a comprehensive and diversifying learning. They have to learn a broad range of subjects, including several languages, history, philosophies, sciences, etc. Their intelligence and broad understanding of things around them amazed us. This can also account for the reason why we could observe that their students are more mature when compared with most Hong Kong students of the same age.

To our surprise, after the lessons, we had an interview with the newspaper. The local newspaper was interested with the E-Learning project and made a detailed report on what we had done (on the next day, the newspaper was published and we were all very excited!)



Afterwards, we had lunch (all prepared by the Student Council) with the Principal and teachers and exchanged gifts. They let us try different types of typical Dutch food. We then also watched a performance by them and had a sharing session. Later we were told that all the programmes were solely initiated and organized by the students themselves. We are amazed by their self-initiation and attitude. This is another point which we believe should be learnt by Hong Kong students. Most Hong Kong students only finish tasks upon request by their teachers. However, if we wait for learning opportunities to come, we will miss a lot of precious chances. We have to be self-directed learners and learn from the Dutch students.



After school, we had a city tour (with bikes) led by our two groupmates. They brought us to some local markets, restaurants as well as one of their homes to let us experience Dutch life. Bikes are one of the most significant modes of transport for them and we tried riding them. We also tried cheese and ice-cream. Thanks to their generosity, we also visited their home and was given a very welcoming dinner. We tried food like Stampot and vegetable soup. This was one of the best nights we had.



Day 3: A Day at Hague



The third day we went to the political center of the Netherlands – The Hague, where Palace, Parliament and more important institutions are located. Thanks to their schools' perfect arrangement, we were able to join a guided tour inside the Binnenhof (the whole complex of buildings), Ridderzaal (House of Knights, used by the Monarch for giving speech), Hofkapel (Senate, or the upper house) and the Staten-Generaal (House of Representatives / second chamber). The tour was amazing and we could see the political side in the Netherlands. More than that, we also visited Noordeninde Palace (residency of the Royal Family) and Peace Palace (where International Court of Justice is now located). One of the most precious things was that we

were accompanied by five students from their school and we shared our own cultures and learned a lot of things.

One of the most inspiring moments was when we asked them whether the Monarch or the Parliament attained the greatest power, we expected them to say either the Monarch or the Parliament. However, they answered, "The people. If we do not think they are doing the right thing, we could make them go." Their mindsets are different from ours and this truly reflects why the Netherlands are called "the Capital of Freedom". It is where democracy and the view of people prevail.



Of course, other than political infrastructures, we went to The Pier (a famous beach in The Hague). We had beautiful moments together. On the train back to Enschede, we shared a lot of things, and we taught each other our own languages, fostering our friendships.



Day4: Visiting Giethoorn

On the fourth day, we spent our whole day in Giethoorn. It was mainly divided into two sections. In the morning, we had a boat ride trip as well as a bicycle trip in the afternoon.

We rented two boats for the boat trip. In Hong Kong, we seldom had a chance to ride a boat by ourselves so we looked forward to it a lot. First, everything was going smoothly without a hitch, although it consumed a lot of energy to ride the boat. Unfortunately, when we went on, we got stuck in the middle of the lake. That day was so windy which caused our boat to go on one side. Even the people on the motor boat gave up. However, due to our perseverance, we paid our greatest effort to finally get back to a safe place. It was a thrilling boat trip but an unforgettable one for us.



We had our lunch on the boat. Everyone was freezing because of the cold weather. We shared our hand warmer to them. They were so curious about that since they don't have that in Netherlands.

Afterward, we had a bicycle trip around Giethoorn which is a part of the Netherlands culture. The view was picturesque. We could cycle between the miscanthus and enjoy the beautiful natural scenery of Giethoorn, with lakes and bridges.

Finally, we had a gathering in an ice cream shop with many schoolmates from their school. They were so enthusiastic to chat with us although that was only the first time for us to meet. We had a meaningful cultural exchange with them too! They also treated us with one of the Dutch food, tompouce. It was a special food for us to try. We had a pleasant night with laughter everywhere.





Day 5: A Day at Amsterdam

It was a very special day as we left Enschede and set off the journey to the capital of the Netherlands, Amsterdam. We had complicated feelings of leaving the people we met at Kottenpark and the beautiful city, Enschede. Before getting onto the train, some of the Dutch students came to say goodbye, that was one of the most touching and emotional moments for us. But still, we could not wait to reveal the mystery of Amsterdam, and to know more about this city.

It took two to three hours from Enschede to Amsterdam. We all noticed the difference in the atmosphere of Amsterdam and Enschede. Comparing the cities, Amsterdam is relatively busier, with lots of traffic and pedestrians, also taller buildings, we can feel the fast pace of life of the citizens, which is similar to that in Hong Kong. Arriving at Amsterdam, we were so attracted by the gorgeous train station in Amsterdam that we could not stop looking around the station, appreciating the traditional western style of architecture of station.

We had a nice stroll along the river in Amsterdam. With packed apartments and churches, traffics and bikes, and of course the boats on water, those simple things matched together, and that's what we called 'Amsterdam'. We got a precious chance to go on a boat trip along the river. On the way, we got to know more about the history of the unique architectures, boats and the culture and tradition of the Netherlands. It was also surprising to know that a seafood restaurant in Amsterdam was built according to the style of the Hong Kong seafood restaurant, 'Jumbo Seafood Restaurant'. Globalization allows cities to learn from the others, and combine the Chinese style with the Western one.



Later, we visited two remarkable museums in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum. Both museums gave us new insights on what Western art is. The photo on the right shows the Rijksmuseum that we had been to. It was a museum with beautiful sculptures and splendid designs and decorations. Though we did not stay for a long time, we already viewed the famous paintings of the Dutch artists, such as Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, which were all aspiring and representing the art history of Dutch. After that, we

went to Van Gogh Museum, Van Gogh is a well-known artist around the world, and it was a

precious chance to see his artwork. Viewing the paintings along his career as an artist, his whole story could be seen. Taking a closer look at his paintings, we were immersed in how Van Gogh felt when drawing the artworks. It was a very special experience. Visiting two famous museums in a day had made an unforgettable day for us in Amsterdam.



As it was the day before the flight, and the Dutch teacher and schoolmates had to head back to Enschede, we said goodbye at the train station at around 10pm. It was so hard and heart-breaking to accept the truth that they were finally leaving, we might not see each other again. But all things do come to an end, we truly believe it was not a 'goodbye', but a 'see you again'.

Day6: The Last Stroll in Amsterdam before the flight

It was the last day in the Netherlands. As we took the 5pm flight, we still got time to take a last stroll in Amsterdam. We all agreed to take a look at the local cultures and taste the local cuisine, we eventually chose to visit the local market in Amsterdam, Albert Cuypmarkt. The market sold a large variety of products, ranging from drinks to snacks, clothing to daily necessities. Walking into the market, we felt the warm welcome from the shopkeepers, we had some chats with them and knew even more about their casual lifestyle of the Dutch. Scrolling past the shops, we were attracted by every single Dutch food, such as Stroopwafels and soused herring.



Before heading back to Hong Kong, we planned to buy some typical Dutch products from the local market, so we visited the flower shop in the market. There were so many types of tulips to choose from, and we did take a long time to choose some of them. It was a fresh experience to bring tulips on board, but we truly think this might be the best way to share what we have seen in the Netherlands. At last, we bought lots of souvenirs there and it was a very fruitful day.

Time flies, and it's time for us to get to the airport. Coming to the end of the trip, we recalled all the places we had been to, all the people we had met, and all the things we had done. There are much more we can cherish. In retrospect, we were just 3 typical Hong Kong secondary school students, having typical days at school. We have never imagined that we



would get a chance to have a sight-seeing in the Netherlands, experience all the wonderful moments with the Dutch, and met the lifelong friends. We are so thankful to European Union Academic Hong Kong to offer such an precious chance to make this happen, and all the Dutch people we met, which have created beautiful memories in our lifetime.

