

Report# 3
Life In The Netherlands
By Wan-Ju, Li (Judy Li)

I see myself as someone with international views because my past studying and working experiences, but one suggestion I would like to provide to anyone who is interested in studying either in North America or Europe is "PLEASE DO NOT HAVE ANY HIGH EXPECTAION ABOUT IT".

Why? You must wonder if I am making a joke? No, I am definitely not making a joke here because when you do not have any high expectation, you will adjust yourself to the new city, new cultures and new life faster than other students.

For myself, the study in the Netherlands has not been easy for me. Why? Because I was too enthusiastic about studying in the Netherlands before my arrival, the reality in the Netherlands will soon wake you up realizing "you are in a new country with a new culture, language and life style". From my own experience, I am listing a few things here which I observe and expensive in the Netherlands for your reference.

1. Language - One of the great things in the Netherlands is most of people speak good English, even 10 years old kids you meet on the street can speak English well; this is one of the main reasons I chose the Netherlands. If you are going to study in the Netherlands for more than 1 semester, you may consider taking Dutch lesson while you are here. But based on my personal experience, Dutch language is not an easy language for us to learn because lots of "R" pronunciation is difficult for us, Mandarin speakers.

2. Dutch Food - Please get yourself ready for the culture shock on Dutch food. In Taiwan, we have several of food choices for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Unfortunately, food choices in the Netherlands are very limited. What is on their lunch menu? Cold sandwich! At school cafeteria, you can find hot food selections, but be aware of very limited choices. Also, most of us would like to save money; you do not wanna buy food from cafeteria when you can simply bring your own food to school. A typical lunch for Dutch students is toasts with ham, cheese or with egg salad filling.

3. Milk - Dutch people love Milk, they can drink milk with any of their meals,

even DINNER! Yes, they do drink milk during dinner time! I was not aware of this milk culture before my arrival, but it is actually ok for me because I have never been a soup person. Funny thing is sometimes I drink milk during dinner in Taiwan.

4. Cheese - If you love cheese, you will feel like you are in heaven in the Netherlands. Cheese is one of the main foods in the Netherlands; it is sort of like rice in our culture. You can find cheese from their breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even snack time. In any supermarket, you can find various types of cheese, of course you can find specialty cheese store.

5. Wine - In Europe, you can find wine easily. At any supermarket in the Netherlands, you will find a good selection of wine in very reasonable prices. The price of a bottle ranges from EUR 2.99 up to EUR 13.99. A great thing about buying wines in Europe, you do not need to buy the most expensive ones for the good tastes, they are generally in good qualities.

6. Bike - You cannot live in the Netherlands without a bike. This might sounds like a bit too crazy, but the truth is a bike in the Netherlands would make your life much easier. Biking is a very Dutch culture expensive; almost everyone in the Netherlands has a bike which make you travel within your city easier and faster, also save your money. Transportation in the Netherlands is not cheap if you convert the cost into Taiwan dollars.

7. Banking – Unfortunately, there are only ONE bank available for short-term student which is ING bank. It takes around 1 month to get your ATM card, YES, one month! This is how “efficient” Dutch banks!!! Bad comments about ING bank, only Dutch for online banking. Also, they charge EUR 20 for opening the bank account. Every 3 months, they charge EUR 3.75 as service fee. But good thing about having a European bank account is NO CHARGE if you take money out of other bank ATM machine in Europe.

8. Weather – The Netherlands is well-known for the bad weather. It can have 4 different seasons in one day, sounds crazy? No, it is true. If you decided to study in the Netherlands, get ready for the weather change.

Ok, I hope the above information provides you better ideas about living in the Netherlands. For next report, I will tell you how to shop in the Netherlands.