



MELCHERS TRAVELS

By Phil Melcher

After living in Amsterdam for almost half a year, I can say confidently that I've grown accustomed to the city. I've grown accustomed to the swarms of tourists often wandering ignorantly onto bike paths. I've grown accustomed to the weather, which gives value to a sunny day after weeks of only rain. I've even grown accustomed to Amsterdam's labyrinthine streets, which on multiple occasions have made me feel completely lost. In my past, I've recognized myself as a wanderlust Canadian, moving with uncertainty into lands unknown, but lately, I've come to see myself differently. I've come to see myself as slowly integrating into a world that is starting to feel more and more like home.

It's easy to find home in Amsterdam. It's easy to live here. By circumstances of extreme luck, I've managed to move into an apartment with a canal side balcony. The view from this balcony offers a visual slice of the unique Amsterdam cityscape. First, in the distance I can see the wind sails of the Brouwerij 't IJ, a local brewery built around a still operating windmill. Below the balcony, to the direct right, there is a bike path and a bridge which crosses over the canal. Night and day I can hear the bicycles ringing their bells as they pass. It is a welcoming change to any other cities' orchestra of frustrated car horns. Finally, there is the canal itself, where I often see boats come drifting past. Watching these ships reminds me of a sunny day on the St. Lawrence River, where tall ships often drift in similar fashion. These three elements: canals, bike paths, and windmills, sum up a typical image of Amsterdam, so scenically

unique, that it has also become for me a symbol of Europe as a whole. It is within this connection that I easily see Amsterdam as Europe's gateway.

Though I do love the sights Amsterdam offers, for me the sights are not the most important part of the city. It is within its people that Amsterdam finds its true heart.

During my stay I've managed to grab a job cooking in a cafe just outside of central station. The food there isn't extravagant but the people I work with certainly are. This is because, in typical Amsterdam fashion, they come from all over. I work with Italians, Polish, Hungarians, English, Spanish, and of course a few Dutch for good measure. Many people end up in or travelling through Amsterdam making transiency quite common in the city. In fact, it's common for the Dutch to say that Amsterdam has become more foreigner than local. For some this may be seen as negative, but for me it's beautiful. In working with so many different nationalities, I have already been given so much insight into the lives of others, recognizing not just the easy differences, but the more rewarding similarities as well. Outside of work, I've also managed to make plenty of friends, most of which I've already had to say goodbye to. In a transient population, relationships are quick, sudden, and yet cherished because of how short they become.

Now that I have a steady income, I've been able to travel around Europe more. I've been to Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and England. I still have plans to see Spain,

Czech Republic, Iceland, France, and Ireland. Though I've enjoyed greatly all of my travels, I am warmed by the fact that I can always return to Amsterdam. Within this year I have already experienced so many sights, and met so many people. I've had so many adventures, that I don't remember individual days as much as I recollect an assortment of stories. Within Europe I've encountered another view of life. After all is said and done, I feel that everyday here has become a blessing. **LM**

Editor's Note: Phil Melchers is one of our freelance writers, and has written for Living Here since our inaugural publication in Nov 2013. Phil lives in Lyn, On. and has decided as a twenty something young man to do what some of us wish we could have done; take a year out of our lives and explore the world. In this case he is in Europe where he hopes to work, travel and connect with his family's roots in The Netherlands. In our March/April issue Phil started off his journey and gave us some of his first impressions of his trip. We learned some more about his travels in the May/June issue and we will be continuing for the rest of 2015. upcoming issues having Phil write about his experiences through his eyes. To read about Phil's experience go to our website www.livingherebrockville.weebly.com and find our March/April & May/June 2015 issue.