

The Jewish Travler

AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

By Maxine Silverstein

It's been about six years since my husband Gary and I visited Amsterdam and I'd almost forgotten what a fun and upbeat city it is. We had a business meeting in Amsterdam and decided to go early to spend some time in the city. We are so glad that we did. Amsterdam is great for walking and there are lots of Jewish sites to explore.

Amsterdam conjures up images of water, canals, and an active port. Just wandering around is fascinating - you can sit and watch

the barges cruise the canals, admire the diamonds in the many polishing factories, or simply stroll on streets with the cool sea breeze in your face. Wherever you go you are sure to be in view of some of the nearly 200 canals that were created by dredging marshes.

The Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, is a place that has always welcomed political and religious refugees. For centuries, Jews have carried on a love affair with Holland, a

relationship that began in the twelfth century. Fondly referred to as "Little Jerusalem" and "Mokun, the place," Holland has never persecuted Jews.

The first large-scale immigration of Jews came via the sea from Spain and Portugal in 1580. The newcomers were Marranos, secret Jews, who had escaped to Holland and were forced to hide their religion. Amsterdam would later become the "Metropolis of the Marrano Diaspora." As descendants of Spanish, Portuguese, and Moorish culture, Dutch Jews, made up mostly of Sephardim, would become one of the most important guardians of Jewish life in Europe.

Of all the countries in Western Europe, Jews in Holland suffered proportionately the most in the Holocaust. Holland was close to Germany, and the Jews were concentrated in the large cities. At the beginning of World War II, 156,000 Jews lived in Holland, but 107,000 of them did not survive the Holocaust. One of the most famous to perish was Anne Frank. Today it is very easy to visit the Anne Frank House at 263 Prinsengracht. Now an international center against discrimination, this is the actual four-story house where teenager Anne Frank (1929-45) hid from the Nazis and kept her unforgettable diary. A million Jewish children died in the Holocaust, and Anne became their voice and a symbol of that tragedy. The secret annex is an extraordinary place. Don't miss the photo exhibit downstairs.

The Pancake Bakery two blocks from the Frank house is a great place for a casual bite. There must be 40 different kinds of pancakes - everything from apple and cinnamon to gouda cheese with mushrooms. It's a favorite of ours



Gary Silverstein outside the Portuguese Synagogue

and we always go back there when we visit Amsterdam.

The Portuguese Synagogue, 3 Mr. L. E. Visserplein is famous and recognized as the largest historical Jewish monument in Holland. The synagogue is always open for services on Saturday mornings and is walking distance from the major hotels. At one time, it was the largest Jewish house of worship in the world. Modeled after King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, it was designed by Elias Bourman in 1675 and took four years to build. The congregation today consists of 500 to 600 members, but attracts some 25,000 visitors a year. It houses unique works of art, many from the sixteenth century, and a collection of exquisite antique silver.

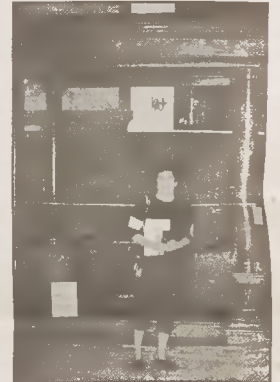
Be sure to make time to visit the wonderful art museums. The Rijksmuseum on the Stadhouderskade has many paintings of Jewish interest. A highlight in this museum is Rembrandt's

Night Watch. The Vincent Van Gogh Museum honors this great Dutch painter with a collection that includes nearly all his paintings, drawings and letters.

Most of Amsterdam's nightlife is concentrated around the Leidseplein and Rembrandtsplein bustling with activity until late at night. The city has something for everyone, including great restaurants, jazz clubs, piano bars and café's made for enjoying a few Dutch beers. Amsterdam also has a full-scale casino right in the heart of the city.

From Amsterdam as a central point, it is easy to arrange wonderful excursions outside the city. The flower auction at Aalsmeer is fun to see and the cheese markets at Alkmaar are well worth a visit.

Amsterdam is definitely one of my family's favorite places to visit. The Dutch people are the nicest and friendliest around. My best advice to future visitors is to allow plenty of time to enjoy this exciting destination. ✪



Maxine Silverstein inside the Portuguese Synagogue

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Children's Theatre Presents "And Then They Came For Me: Remembering The World of Anne Frank"

Panel Discussion on Ethnic Profiling to Follow

Children's Theatre of Charlotte remembers stories of Holocaust survivors that lived close to Anne Frank with its presentation of *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank*, performed Jan. 25-Feb. 2 at Children's Theatre of Charlotte. A special panel discussion on Ethnic Profiling: Then and Now will follow the production on Saturday, January 26 at 7:30 PM.

And Then They Came for Me is a unique theatrical experience: a multimedia play that weaves videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors Ed Silverberg and Eva Schloss with live actors recreating scenes from their lives during World War II. Silverberg was remembered fondly in Anne Frank's now-famous diary as "Hello." Eva Schloss was the same age as Anne Frank, lived in the same apartment building in Amsterdam, and her family went into hiding the same day as the Frank family. And like the Frank family, they were betrayed. Part oral history, part dramatic action, part direct address, part remembrance, the play has been acclaimed by audiences and critics in productions across the United

States. "... like a historic newsreel brought to life on the stage. And it works" (Charles Epstein, WICR Radio, Indianapolis). This play by James Still is one of the most widely produced new works of



recent years. This production is directed by Alan Poindexter, and is recommended for ages 11 and up. This production is sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Eric Sklut.

Show times are: Friday, January 25 at 7:30 PM; Saturday, January 26 at 7:30 PM, to be followed by a special panel discussion on racial and ethnic profiling; Sunday, January 27 at 2:00 PM; Friday, February 1 at 7:30 PM; Saturday, February 2 at 3:00 PM;

Saturday, February 2 at 7:30 PM. All performances are at Children's Theatre of Charlotte, 1017 East Morehead Street. Tickets are \$9 (center seats) and \$6 (side seats) and are available by calling the box office at 333-8983 (10:00 AM-5:00 PM, Monday-Friday). Group discounts on tickets are available. Ticket information and sales are also available online at www.ctcharlotte.org.

A special panel discussion on the subject of Ethnic Profiling: Then and Now will follow the Saturday, January 26 performance. The audience will be invited to participate in this discussion with panel representatives from Charlotte-Mecklenburg's various ethnic communities as they discuss the issue of ethnic profiling in today's society. This issue is especially relevant following the events of September 11. Please join us for this important community event.

Children's Theatre of Charlotte is supported by the Annual Fund Drive of the Arts and Science Council-Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Inc. and the Grassroots Arts Program and a Theatre Section grant of the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency. ✪