

Lifestyles

Springtime in Holland blooms with some bittersweet memories

By VINCENT EGAN
Travel Columnist
Thomson News Service

At this season, the natural beauty of the Netherlands is always at its peak.

Spring brings its annual explosion of color, as millions of flowers - tulips, mostly - burst into bloom.

For an ever-diminishing number of people, this time of year also recalls bittersweet memories of 1945 and the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian troops.

Many thousands of Dutch people had died of hunger during the terrible winter of 1944-45. German armies, crumbling elsewhere on the Continent that spring, continued to oppose the Canadian forces in the Netherlands until they were ordered to surrender May 4.

(German negotiators agreed to unconditional surrender to the Allies in the early morning of May 7, and the following day was designated as Victory-in-Europe Day).

Over these past 44 years, the shared experience of that period has made for a special bond between the Netherlands and Canada. So has the fact that the Dutch royal family spent most of the occupation years in Ottawa - an exile that is remembered annually by the Dutch gift to Ottawa parks of thousands of tulip bulbs that bloom in May.

FLORAL BEAUTY

With the passage of time, fewer relatives are left to make the pilgrimage from Canada to the Canadian military cemetery outside of Groesbeek that is the resting place of 2,600 young men who didn't return from their first trip to Europe.

It's reassuring, then, to think of the special floral beauty that returns to the Netherlands in early May each year, almost as Nature's tribute to those young people and to the Canadian-Dutch friendship that has grown out of their sacrifice.

For a short period each spring, there is probably no more colorful area on earth than the flowerfields of the Netherlands. All traces of war erased, they become a fragrant springtime paradise of bulbs in flower.

The floral focal point is a superb park called Keukenhof outside of Lisse, 40 km southwest of Amsterdam.

dam, and 40 years old in 1989. Tens of millions of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and narcissus create a dazzling rainbow of blooms throughout the 70 tree-studded acres of the former hunting lodge.

GROWTH INDUSTRY

Needless to say, the onetime forests and swamps of the Netherlands did not spontaneously transform themselves into today's meticulously arranged gardens and parks. Horticulture is a major Dutch industry, and in several parts of the country, visitors can get a close-up look at that industry in action at commercial flower auctions.

The largest of these is at Aalsmeer. If you are there in season, and if you get an early start in the morning, you are welcome to attend the daily auction where millions of flowers change hands.

History tells us that a 16th-century horticulturist, Carolus Clusius, introduced tulip-growing to the Netherlands when he moved to the Dutch coastal city of Leiden from his native Vienna, bringing bulbs that had come to him from Turkey.

And history further relates the story of the tulip-bulb madness of the early 17th century, when bulbs commanded enormous prices - until 1637, when the market collapsed and speculators were ruined financially.

The present-day industry is a postwar phenomenon. In the early years of reconstruction after 1945, growers seized the opportunity to plant bulbs in the welcoming soil of the rich flat lands behind the famous Dutch dunes and dykes. (Much of the Netherlands lies below sea level).

TWO-WHEEL TRAVEL

Perhaps the best way to visit Holland's flower gardens and markets is by bicycle - as it is to see almost anything else in this neat, compact and flat country.

The cyclist has one decided advantage over the motorist in cen-

tral Amsterdam: It is almost impossible to find a place to park a car in the centre of the metropolis.

Amsterdam, it must be conceded, suffers from some other common urban problems besides inadequate parking. The most obvious is the graffiti: Spray-paint vandals seem determined to ruin what used to be an extraordinarily clean and neat city - all in the dubious pursuit of "freedom of expression."

Amsterdam is a key European airline hub. Canadian Airlines International, which has been flying there since 1955, now operates a daily Boeing 767 flight from and to Toronto, with DC-10 flights from Western Canada and Halifax.

Forty years ago, KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) inaugurated a service to and from Montreal, with Toronto added in 1974, and Calgary and Vancouver in 1986. On June 2, KLM will add Ottawa and Halifax to its Canada-Amsterdam service.

Wardair Canada, this month, has introduced a new service to Amsterdam, with five non-stop flights weekly from Toronto, and two each from Edmonton and Montreal.

The Netherlands Board of Tourism's Holland Leisure Card, priced at \$15 plus \$3 postage and handling, is valid for one year from date of issue, and provides free rail transfers from Schipol Airport to Amsterdam (about 17 km) or The Hague, and discounts on a wide variety of visitor services - car rentals, domestic flights, hotels, tours and concerts.

Your pooch will go crackers for this

POLLY'S POINTERS



POLLY FISHER

DEAR POLLY - Do you have a recipe for homemade dog biscuits? I realize this may sound a bit unusual, but I'm sure I've seen recipes for doggie treats you can make yourself. - JAN

DEAR JAN - It took a bit of searching, but I did come up with this formula for homemade dog biscuits, provided by an animal hospital near my parents' home. Here 'tis!

Blend 2 cups rye flour with 1/2 cup soybean flour OR 1/4 cup each white flour and cornmeal. Add 6 table-spoons oil and 3/4 cup warm water and mix well to form a dough. Roll 1/4 inch thick and cut out in squares or whatever shapes you desire. Bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes or until dry and browned. This formula yields 40 to 50 2-inch-square biscuits at about 30 calories each.

I hope your pet enjoys the treat! - POLLY

DEAR POLLY - I put a little pot-pourri in containers of water in front of the heat registers. This spreads a nice odor as well as moisture throughout the house. - JEAN

DEAR POLLY - When you make bread pudding, you can use cake and

cookie crumbs in place of some of the bread. Just cut back on the amount of sugar. Use your favorite recipe and bake the same length of time. - MARGARET

DEAR POLLY - The easy way to use cocoa in baking recipes is to mix the sugar and cocoa together first. Then it won't be lumpy. - OLETA

Traveling with your pet this summer? Polly's newsletter "Pet Pointers," provides tips and information that will make traveling with Tower or Puff more peaceful and comfortable for both you and your pet. Send \$1 for each copy to POLLY'S POINTERS, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 93863, Cleveland, OH 44101-5863. Be sure to include the title.

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