

Europe, July to September 2026

August 2 and 3, Antwerp

Today started much better. Arrival in Antwerp was late, so the excursion did not start until the afternoon. We spent two days here, so had time to just walk around the town.

Interesting story about the origin of the name "Antwerp". It is from the Dutch word *handwerpen*, meaning "hand-throwing". A giant, said to have lived near, was in the habit of extracting a toll from passing boatmen. He severed the hand of anyone who did not pay and threw it in the river. Eventually, the giant was killed by a young hero who cut off the giant's own hand and flung that into the river.

This story is unsubstantiated but widely believed to be true.

It is also of questionable truth that the people who live in this town are called *twerps*.

Antwerp is a bit inland. We were able to dock here by sailing a wide river. It surprised me that we could do this. The ship is quite sizeable, holding about 750 guests plus crew.

For those of you who have ever been to Belgium, Antwerp looks like most other large towns in the area.

Antwerp has one specialty. They have a lot of tourists in the summer that increase the population (temporarily) by several thousand. Even so, they pride themselves on keeping the city clean. And this they do in a novel way.





Presenting (channeling a younger version of Wataru), the garbage can! This may look normal, but it's not. To start, trash is deposited at the top through a slot like you might find in a mailbox. Pivot it open, insert trash, close. Closing is the key. When closed, it talks to you. Possibly saying "That was good, can I have more?" or maybe playing a happy tune. There are several possibilities. We heard some as the tour guide demonstrated.

How does this help? Well, a little because people could throw something away just to hear what would be said. But those people would not likely litter anyway. The advantage were children, who would run around the area looking on the ground for something to discard so they could get the verbal reward. Quite a clever idea, eh?



Now I said no more churches unless there was a story. There is.

The main church in Antwerp was used a few years ago to accept a large group of Ukrainian women who were fleeing their country for the obvious reason. They lived in the church a long time and, as they got ready to leave, sewed the silk dress on a statue of the Virgin Mary as a way of saying thanks.

Another contemporary fact about this church happened as we were sitting down to hear a talk from our guide.

Another cruise member came up to him with a cruise card key someone had dropped. I didn't even

look before I claimed it was mine. I had a divine insight. You know, church and all that. It proved to be right.



The second day in Antwerp, we set out exploring on our own and came across an interesting art museum. The room above was the entryway to an “original” exhibit. Original is in quotes. Make of that what you want. Here is one piece I found interesting.



It looks just like a row of stones of increasing size. Normal stones, all kind of greyish, getting bigger and bigger. That is, until you looked closer. They were not stones. Each was a common object, coated in the same grey paint. The part about them being bigger at each step was true, just that they were not stones.



For example, this one is a banana.



Another scene I needed to look at twice. The two people in the front are real. The one in the background is a statue.

That's it. On to Amsterdam.