

# “I flew KLM to Amsterdam. And Brussels. I was treated to Royal Class service on a DC8, enjoyed the ultimate in airport design at Amsterdam, saw the grand hotels and fun palaces of Scheveningen, watched porcelain being handmade in Delft and the flowers of the garden of Europe auctioned at Aalsmeer.”

The Indonesian diplomat who found Amsterdam such a surprising place to visit and KLM such a nice way to get there.



I was going to Europe on diplomatic business. Amsterdam, The Hague and then Brussels. My travel agent recommended KLM. First, for reliability. And second, for the unique service and style of their **Royal Class**. I certainly enjoyed both on the



KL834, my Saturday afternoon flight from Jakarta. Champagne before take-off, offered me with a flourish by a very attractive Indonesian stewardess. The flourish continued under the cool hand of the purser and his very experienced cabin crew. Canapés, hot and cold. A choice of cocktails. Dinner, European or Asian. 7 Different coffees, Irish to Jamaican. Slippers to relax my feet. Shades to help me sleep. And so on, till I was convinced KLM's Royal Class is the definition of style.



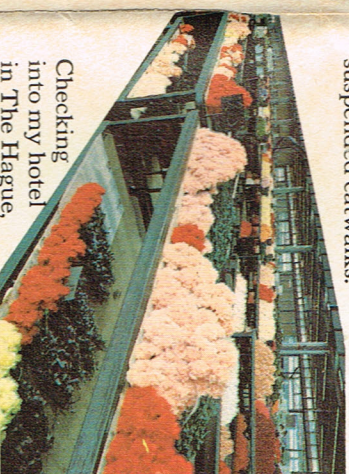
Arriving at **Amsterdam Airport** just after 10 on the Sunday, I knew I was in Holland immediately. Not only because there are flowers everywhere, but also due to the

ultimate practicality of the airport's design.

The rest of that day I relaxed, and on the Monday left for The Hague, going via the very **colourful flowercentre of Aalsmeer**.

One look and your guide doesn't need to tell you you're at the world's largest flower auction. There are 54 acres of it.

Bidding starts at 7 and continues till all the flowers - up to 6,000,000 a day - are sold. Meanwhile, everything is automated, including the visitors who view the whole business from suspended catwalks.

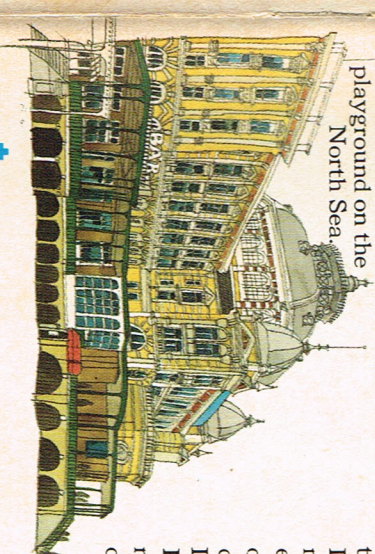


Checking into my hotel in The Hague, I found a brochure offering an afternoon tour of the ancient town of Delft. Included was a visit to the only surviving factory where the **real Delft**

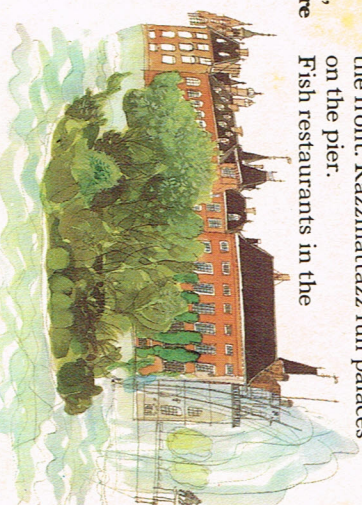


**Blue porcelain** is still made. Founded in 1653, visitors are taken round the tiny premises, shown all the techniques from moulding to glazing, and allowed to watch the artists paint each flawless stroke and squiggle.

(By hand, that is.) Tuesday was occupied by meetings with government officials in The Hague, but on Wednesday the weather was so good I went to **Scheveningen**, a neighbouring resort-playground on the



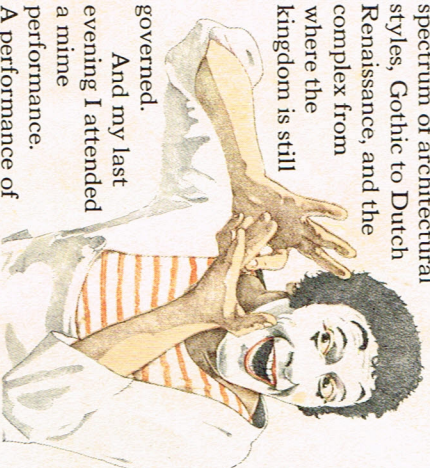
A strange mixture. The pomp-and-circumstance of grand hotels on the front. Razzmattazz fun palaces on the pier. Fish restaurants in the



original herring port. And many of the women in traditional costumes and coiffes.

Back in **The Hague** that afternoon I walked. Walked along its wide boulevards and open squares, past its patrician mansions and discreet embassies, until in the very centre I came to a quite perfect balance of water, trees and buildings.

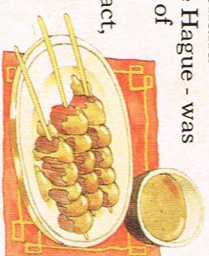
This was the Binnenhof. Almost a spectrum of architectural styles, Gothic to Dutch Renaissance, and the complex from where the kingdom is still



governed. And my last evening I attended a mime performance.

A performance of **pure European artistry**, unencumbered by stage props or effects.

Something else that impressed me greatly about Holland - particularly The Hague - was the vast number of



Indonesian restaurants. In fact, even in the most ordinary Dutch cafés I found I could eat **satoh**. Properly charcoal-grilled, bite-size morsels of meat speared on wooden sticks and



Thursday afternoon, I reluctantly took the coach back to Amsterdam Airport, giving myself extra time to browse **the famous bargains** of the Tax Free Shopping Centre. After much indecision, I chose a 25oz bottle of rare French Cognac for \$15.90, and a

Sheaffer Lady's Pen Set at \$15.80 for my wife at home.



Next, about 5pm, KL387, my flight number was called for Brussels. This time I enjoyed the comfort and service of a DC9, while the flight lasted barely half an hour. (I'd no idea Amsterdam Airport was that close to so many **major European cities**.) But even within that half hour, those KLM stewardesses managed to serve refreshments to all passengers with an absolute minimum of fuss. However, there was still time for me to reflect, perhaps a little sadly, on Holland and the many many pleasant surprises it had given me.



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