

This way to the Pavilion of Dreams

Bob in Taiwan 2015



Bob Giddens

DAY ONE



Thursday Noon. Off to Taiwan. Visiting Carry Freedom manufacturer Jim at Excellent Product in Taichung and then going to the Taipei Cycle Show next week. Daniela is not with me this time, she has to stay at home and take care of orders. She said goodbye, telling me I was lucky to have someone to do the work, while I am away having fun. Is she right? Of course not. And if she was I wouldn't say "yes" anyway.

Train from USED HQ to Osnabrück, then on to Hilversum. Great weather on the journey. Trees are not green yet, but I bet when I get back they will be. The train is Dutch since leaving Bad Bentheim. Even though Germany is a great cycling country, you really notice more bikes and bike paths here in Holland.

Flying EVA Air tonight to Taipei via Bangkok. Haven't flown EVA for a long time. EVA is a Taiwanese Airline that is owned by the mighty Evergreen shipping people.

Trips to Taiwan on business carry certain expectation. We have things to change, we must prepare for entering the American market and we need the new products to be ready well before the Eurobike in August. It's frustrating how long it takes some times for new ideas to blossom into real products. This is never really anyone's fault, but there always seems to be things going wrong that result in delays.

But also trips to Taiwan are about meeting friends. It's a great industry for making friends and I look forward to seeing a lot of them at the show and in Taichung. So I'll write some more at the airport.

Actually I won't write in Amsterdam, no real space to sit, so I killed time, had some Sushi and a Dutch Mojito (made with Genever) and got ready for

security. Took off my belt, loosened my shoes, put my wallet in my carry-on bag. Amsterdam is one of those airports where the security is done at each gate, which usually takes a long time to get through, but luckily this flight is not very full. I had managed to get a premium economy ticket and I was surprised at the space. A lot of legroom (more than enough for little old me!) and no one sitting next to me. EVA has been doing premium economy long before it became the latest trend. It makes sense to pay a little extra and be able to sleep. I slept for about 5 hours, which is something I never really manage.

Of course, just my luck the video system wasn't working on my seat, or the one next to it. So the stewardess gave me the seat in front. Supper was chicken. The main course was only so-so, but the salad, appetizer and desert (Häagen Dazs ice cream was perfect), topped of with a Taiwan beer and the world is looking good from up here. The flight route was not over Russia as usual, but over Rumania, Turkey and India.

So after supper I watched "Interstellar" with Matthew McConaughey, which was the kind of light entertainment I needed and I'm a sucker for time travel anyway. Having lived in Germany for so long, one of the few things I still can't get used to (along with Oktoberfest!) is the dubbed foreign movies. A big part of every actor is his voice, his diction and his emotion. This is really lost in the dubbing, although they try very hard it's still not the same. EVA Air is showing most of the Oscar nominated films, so this is my chance of seeing them in English. Back home in Quakenbrück, the chances are very slim that the Schauburg cinema will go "original"!

So after sleeping I watched "The Imitation Game". A remarkable film. I grew up in England, knew my

history pretty well, but I had never heard of Alan Turing. I also never new that in those days the homosexual laws were so radical. The man that solved an unsolvable problem that beat the Nazis, was reduced to being just a “queer”. It seems that after winning the greatest fight to save the world from the oppression against Jews and other minorities, we forgot our tolerance and compassion when it came to our own minorities. Cumberbatch and Knightley are fantastic, but if you get a chance watch it in English.

I just managed the credits at the end, before we landed in Bangkok. 28 degrees here, I had read reviews of EVA that they turn on the air conditioning to freezing, so I had a scarf, a hoodie and a beanie. But it was fine. Taipei will be colder.

You have to get out of the plane, take your stuff, go through security again and get back in the same plane. Anyway, my stewardess had told them I needed a different seat, because the video was not working and I got a new boarding card. We will see. Seems to be a lot more people on this flight.

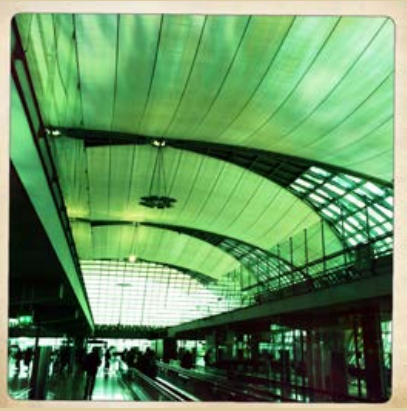
Food again....! And the flight was a little late. Chose “Birdman” for this flight. It is a great film, but flawed I thought. First half Norton is the star, second half not really visible. And with Keaton it’s the other way around. For me it didn’t have the “every second is good” feel, that Imitation Man and The Stephen Hawking film both had.

Flight was uneventful. Taipei is rebuilding its airport so only one runway is open, but I survived that as well. Fingerprints are now needed at immigration, which I hadn’t done before. My bag came up fast and I was getting the bus, to the High Speed Railway station. Taiwan has one of these very fast trains that go from

north to south of the island. All the trains were sold out so only standing room, luckily the trip is only about 30 minutes from the Airport to Taichung.

A lady in the train gave me some cake, telling me she worked for a travel group and is in Europe a lot. Nice people the Taiwanese. Some things are different though. Men sitting and women standing in trains is something strange. But positive is that anyone with a cold or the flu wears a mask, so they won’t contaminate anybody. Looks weird but works.

Had fun with a taxi driver that didn’t know my hotel or the area it was in. So I called the hotel and he got directions from them. I don’t sleep in a fancy western style hotel in Taichung anymore, so this one is close to my manufacturer, cheap and got everything I need. Just watched the end of the Lakers against the Knicks, which the Knicks won and its time to sleep.



DAY TWO

Slept pretty well. Up at 8, you can't be late for the Taiwan breakfast. They do a western style as well but the butter smells really weird. I actually thought about bringing some with me, but must just find a 7-Eleven for that first. Anyway, I really enjoyed my vegetables, peanuts, even some potato with pork and the regular coffee is good. My waitress chose "Cher" as her English name. I imagine the scene at school where that important day comes where everyone has to choose their English name, I wonder if the only one left was Cher! Anyway she is a lovely girl, it's just funny talking to someone called Cher. Maybe the other waitress is called Madonna! I'll check tomorrow.

This hotel has one cool feature. For every night you stay you can have 5 pieces of laundry cleaned for free. It means you can get by with a lot less stuff in your suitcase and in Asia they know their laundry!

So then I went for a long walk. Right outside the hotel is a river, with a park running alongside it. The paths are not as good as we might wish but it's refreshing to have something like this in the hustle and bustle of a city like Taichung. Of course an obvious westerner gets a lot of looks, there are very few out here in the suburbs. Some say, what I suppose is "good morning", some even want to take a picture with me. Funny world. Walked in a circle (old travelers trick) until I came to the shopping area. One big department store SOGO which is actually Japanese, where I walked around for a while. Then past a big temple and around back to the hotel.

Walking in Taiwanese cities always leads me to one conclusion: the advantages of pavements or sidewalks is very underrated. Only when you go to places that have no pavements do you realize that someone back in the day had a really good idea about

making space for walking. In Taiwan you are not supposed to walk. If you do have to then you need to use the road. Using the road means confronting a lot of scooters and cars. The only consoling aspect is that I think if you are going to rundown a pedestrian it's probably not a good idea to kill a foreigner....! Just think of the paperwork. So let's steer around him.

Down in the lobby there is free coffee. And after that I tried to do some work. Actually I nodded off and didn't wake up until about 6 pm, which is why I'm writing this at 6 am because I can't sleep!

Went back to the SOGO for a fast dinner. They have a food court with some great restaurants downstairs. I usually go to the Tepanyaki place where they cook on a hot plate in front of you. It's basically good quality fast food. You sit at a bar with others and they bring you soup and a paper cup of juice (some kind of bean) a bowl of rice and the chef cooks in front of you. I had steak and squid. But first he makes cabbage mixed with chilli on the hot plate, so it's lightly fried and it tastes great. After the meat is finished he makes the second vegetable course which is bamboo sprouts. Anyway all that plus a ginger dessert came to 378 NTD. Funny thing happened when paying I gave the guy a tip. He refused smiling and saying "Not necessary. Thank you for coming!"

Had a good cappuccino next door and walked back to the hotel. Bought two cans of beer at the 7-Eleven and then did the work I should have done in the afternoon. Now I'm going to get up and be the first at breakfast. I hate jet lag.



DAY THREE

Breakfast early and Cher is showing me the buffet with some new stuff for a Sunday morning. Today no walking around, got to do some work. Went down to the lobby got a coffee and finished my plan for the meetings tomorrow and Tuesday. Jim from Excellent Product who builds all our trailers, called and invited me to dinner. He is having BBQ at his house and will pick me up at 17:30. I fell asleep again, trying to lose that jet lag and had a weird dream. It was a real motion picture in my head. Ok, maybe it was just a soap for TV. Anyway I danced with old people and spoke to someone driving a big Mercedes down a hill and around a corner until he hit something and tore into a factory that exploded, in full glory and technicolor. Ok, try explaining that.

Jim picked me up and we drove to his house. I have never been to his house before. It's a big step for someone in Taiwan to invite you into their home and I was honored. I met Jim's children who are 16 and 17. I already knew his wife Jennifer. Also invited were some of Jim's Taiwanese golf buddies and one of his customer/friends from the USA. Tim Watson works for KoolStop who make brake pads and has also known Jim for years. We talked about God and the world, ate steak and chicken and had a great evening. Tim and I drunk beer, the others drunk wine. Jennifer, who didn't drink, drove me back to the hotel.



DAY FOUR

Ok, this is why I came here. Had breakfast, just went for the Taiwanese stuff today. I was down in the lobby at 9 am when Jim arrived. He drives a Lexus SUV which I always kid him about. You know the kind of thing "I see the prices are way to high!" Jim shrugs it off and tells me his wife has all the money. I'm going to believe him.

Jim's factory is 10 minutes away. It's two buildings part office downstairs. Jim is an amazing guy, he is very versatile, does some bike business, some optical stuff and even makes luxury coffee drawers, for bars, in stainless steel. He says "not all eggs in one basket!"

He employs about 10-12 people and outsources a lot. For example, the Carry Freedom trailers are cut and welded outside, the wood is cut and painted and then delivered here, where the assembly and packaging is done. We had a lot to talk about. We are working on two new products, the LEAF is a folding trailer that we showed at the last Eurobike. We have made two prototypes in Europe and now Jim is getting everything ready for Taiwan manufacturing.

Let me take a short break here to answer the question, why we make the trailers in Taiwan and not in Europe? A few years ago the answer would have been the cost first. But this advantage in the current economical situation no longer works. The Euro has taken a beating and our prices are up 25% and rising, just because of the currency movement. But still we will stay in Taiwan. Why?

1. Taiwan is a strategic location - the distance from here to Europe, USA and Australia is similar. This allows us to provide the same pricing to each of these markets.

2. Taiwan has expertise. The bike business is

developed and renowned. Welding is a good example. It is almost a lost art in Europe these days. But here it is something still done with pride.

3. Taiwan has a lot of small workshops, offering specialized skills that are accessible to companies like Carry Freedom.

4. We like the people we deal with. Now we just have to get through this economic crisis and better days will come.

Jim and I went through the new products, he showed me some of the parts he had sourced. Last time I was here we visited a guy that makes bags. We need one for the Y Surf, so that people can store stuff under the board. Nick did a quick sketch and we were away. Today I saw the bag and it's great. We refined it a bit more, chose a smaller net material so that keys and stuff would not fall out.

We also talked a lot about the orders being worked on. We have listened to feedback from customers and are making a few changes. Better painting on the plywood, some grease for the axles, and more. Also the box we are using will be optimized. The Y large was always too big to go on the standard postal system. So one change we have done is that the load bed and frame will not be assembled in the box. It's only four bolts that need to be installed, but the freight rates to our customers will be lower. It will save container space.

I also ordered some trailers for the first deliveries to the USA. We need to stock some trailers at Jim's warehouse for the first order runs for other countries. Other topics we talked about were magnets for the LEAF. At the Cycle Show I have to look for a QR handle that I like for both the LEAF and the Surf.

DAY FIVE

Lunch was noodles and vegetable soup.

We checked the new manual, which is being printed for the first time in Taiwan. And I talked Jim through my stickers that we need on every box. In the past we never had to worry about barcodes, but now all our bigger customers are demanding them, so it's another step forward.

Jim brought me back to the hotel. I was tired and my head as exploding with all the ideas and plans that we have and we need to get to production. But I guess we have to tell ourselves it's step by step. I drunk my Taiwan beer and tried to sleep. But I was wake at 3:30 am again. Did some more work, posted on Facebook and waited until it was breakfast time again.



Up early again. It's getting to be a habit. Packed up, paid my hotel and took a taxi to the High Speed Railway station. The train gets up to 300 kph and the journey Taichung - Taipei is over in 40 minutes.

In Taipei Main Station I headed for the MRT. Got myself a prepaid card that books each journey, much like the Oyster Card system in London. It makes getting around Taipei super easy. My new hotel is the Howard Plaza. It's about 500 meters from the nearest MRT station. Coming outside, it was very humid and about 28 degrees.

Checked in and got a room on floor "T" for top! Although the room is smaller than my room in Taichung. But it has one of those Japanese toilets, that are so high tech they do every thing for you! Scares the hell out of me! But for all you wimps out there, the seat is heated!

A lot of German and other European visitors to the Cycle Show are staying here. So you bump into people you know in the lift or at breakfast. My friend Martin from Magura was the first person I saw in the hotel.

I went out for a walk and ended up in the SOGO. A good tip for any tourist in Asia, is that the department stores have fantastic food courts. When you are traveling alone, you don't really need a fancy restaurant and in the food court you can either stay safe or experience lots of weird and wonderful culinary treasures. Well I wasn't really hungry so I just had ice cream. I the past we were usually a group of 4-5 people at the show. Debra from Rivet saddles, Richard from Allegro and Dani from USED. This time for various reasons I was the only one to make it here, but I thought about the other guys while savoring my ice-cream.

Also went into the supermarket downstairs and bought some beer. The experienced traveller had already seen that the very good Taiwan local beer cost 120 NTD in the mini bar, so I bought a couple of cans for 35 NTD each. And yes I will enjoy them a lot more for that.

I had arranged to meet Andreas and Mats from Monark Exercise. We distribute the Swedish company in Germany, selling their transport bikes and utility scooters. This is another one of those strange "go half way around the world to talk" occasions. But in the bike industry there is more time to talk at shows like this. We had a Sushi dinner together in the hotel, it was a set meal with a lot of courses. I lost count somewhere along the line. Saw Michael Marx (German gold medal winner at the Los Angeles Olympics and tire man at Vredestein) at the table next to us. We went out for coffee and then ended up in the hotel bar for a final beer. The Monark guys are a big part of our business and it is good to have business and friendship go hand in hand.



DAY SIX

Woke up at 4 am. Sleep is relative in Taiwan. I still haven't got onto any rhythm yet. Interesting, the Champions League was just finishing at that time, and there was no soccer on TV. In Taiwan the American sports are so much more popular than soccer.

Went down to breakfast about 7 am. In the hotel they have two breakfast places. One in the atrium serving Chinese and Japanese style and one on the second floor taking care of the western style. I chose the Chinese style this morning. I knew from past experience it would be pretty empty there. Some of the Magura team joined me and we enjoyed a good breakfast. Maybe tomorrow I'll go western style.

There is a shuttle bus to the Cycle Show, it takes a long time to get there because of traffic, so I took the MRT. It's fast and a little greener than all those old buses that should have been retired years ago.

Kept meeting people, then had a wander around. The show is sold out again and overflowing. They are building a new hall which should be finished in 2017. The exhibition area is a big hall with six floors. One and four are the main areas, but there is space being used all over. Had a coffee and met Kyle and Al from Surestop. A great product. It's a braking system that stops the rider going over the handlebars. We gave them space at the Eurobike, then did the same for us at the Interbike, two years ago. We are meeting tomorrow at 10 am.

I had one important meeting today. For a while now we have been looking for American distribution for Carry Freedom and at Interbike we made some great progress. Our booth was way in the back, so we were lucky that a dealer found us, liked the trailers and then went a found on of his wholesalers. So that

was the reason I was talking to Steve Boyd, apart from being Tern distributor for North America is also selling a few other brands. His knowledge of urban cycling will be great for our brand. Steve is a nice guy and I like his outlook on business. We talked about a lot and agreed to work together. He is really interested in the LEAF, because it will tie in perfectly with the Tern line, but also he will take the Y as well.

After that I walked the floor for a while, had a buffet lunch which was very good, including sushi, roast beef and desserts.

I went to the Conebi press conference. This is a new European initiative for the bike industry and there were a lot of people there who I knew. The German journalists Jo, Markus and Alex, but also Toni Grimaldi owner of Monark, Manfred Neun from the ECF, and many more. There is a lot of lobby work going on and it is paying dividends for us in Europe. Next year the Velo City Conference will be held in Taipei. I want to get USED and Carry Freedom into that. So we will see.

Back to the hotel at the end of a great day. I fell asleep and didn't bother to get up again, which is why I am writing this at 1:50 am.



DAY SEVEN

Breakfast western style. Was ok, good bread, a cheese and onion omelette and some yogurt. Off to the show again. Set to meet Kyle and Al from Surestop at 10:00. I told them why they should do some lobby work on the European bike industry to get the standard changed. I keep seeing a film, where a kid goes over the handlebars and a voice says "This braking system is approved by the European standards institute". And then the film of a kid doing everything wrong and not being able to go over the handlebars - "this braking system is not allowed in Europe". Things will have to change.

Most of my time is spent today waiting for my 4pm appointment with QBP. Adam Schmidt the product manager is here in Taiwan. For those of you that don't know, QBP is a big distributor in the USA. QBP stands for "quality bicycle parts". At the Interbike last year I had a 5 minute "pitch your product" slot with Adam. What probably made it interesting for him was that we had some backing from Dave Gray from Surly, who loved the Y after I gave him one at a previous Interbike.

Anyway the meeting with Adam was a great meeting. He was aware, he knew his background, he gave me some homework to do and we agreed on working together. It will be a big step for Daniela and me, but it's a huge chance. I was a little apprehensive about telling Adam we had someone else interested (Tern), but he thought it was a great idea. He knew they were big in the urban mobility sector. So it looks we are good to go. The reason for this trip has worked out better than expected.

Saw Kyle and Al from Surestop afterwards and it was high fives all around. They were convinced that having both companies working for Carry Freedom was a great idea.

I should have been celebrating, but on your own you go back to the hotel and take the buffet dinner and go to sleep.



DAY EIGHT

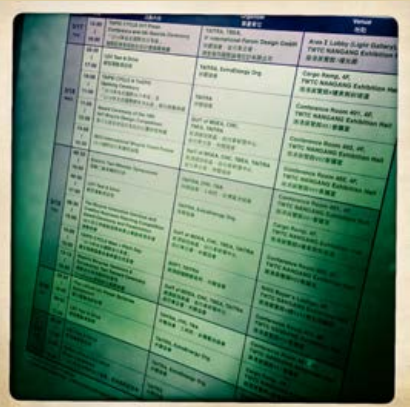
Had breakfast with Martin Gnann from Magura. And I walked with them to the MRT and we were at the trade show by 9. I had a meeting with my friends from King Kong a great hub maker. Stanley is a master craftsman, he doesn't speak much English, but we get on well. I want him to give me a quote for hubs and also quick release axles for all the different needs we have. Even fat bikes need a trailer...!

Thanks to Christ and Michael from KMC chains I had a coffee supplier. I chatted to Olivia from TransArt about a new grip tape for the Y and I went looking for a rear light and some fenders.

I also saw my old friends Peter and Philip Chou from Sunstar. They were the first people I ever worked with in Asia, when I was working for Kynast. It's always great to see them. They have been taking care of Shimano in Taiwan and mainland China for almost 50 years.

At 5:30 I met up with Martin Gnann and we went to the Stevens booth. Tonight is the Stevens dinner, and I had an invitation. Stevens and I go back to Kynast times together. Stevens wanted to build at Kynast but we couldn't even do a decent paint job to try and get what would have been a very important client. I know some of the people there tonight, but I always meet some more. First one I got talking to was Julian, who takes care of export for Stevens. He's young and energized. Steve Carr from Selle Royal was also there. I hadn't seen him for a while. Steve is English, has lived and worked in Holland, Germany and now in Italy. Speaks all those languages and is a great person to sit with at dinner. I have always liked Steve. He still has that wry, dry sense of humor, but with a little European worldliness combined.

The restaurant was called Capones, so we had Italian food, a band played and we had a great time. Martin and I took the MRT back to the hotel and that was day three of the trade show.



DAY NINE

Breakfast Japanese style, checked out of the hotel and took a cab to the hotel where I stay over the weekend. I booked it on Expedia and it is better than the Howard Plaza but with a good deal it was cheaper.

Went a different way to the show. The MRT line one is mostly above ground and takes a very scenic route through north Taipei. It went past the other airport in Taipei.

At the show there were a lot of consumers waiting outside. Taiwanese interest in cycling is growing all the time. The race and mountain bike enthusiasts are understandable, but more and more people are using the rental bikes in Taipei and Taichung and then seeing first hand how easy it is to get around. Because for the lack of bicycle infrastructure this leads to a lot of improvising in traffic, so expect bikes to come at you on the pavement and on most crossings. Taiwan is the leading exporter of LED bike lights, but don't expect anyone to use them here....!

I said some goodbyes, has a chat with the SKS guys, saw Hugo and Malcolm from Knog. They offered us a sponsoring chance with a film festival they are supporting, that should be fun.

Back at the hotel at 13:00, happily they had the room ready for me. Room number 1111, on the 11th floor. The 11th floor is actually the 10th floor, because of superstition, the Chinese don't want to have a 4th floor. The number 4 brings bad luck in Chinese.

I had a rest. It was a hard show and it was beginning to take its toll. Went down to the main Station later to my favorite Teppanyaki fast food restaurant. Always friendly and great tasting. Back to the hotel and a great sleep.



DAY TEN

Breakfast at a so-called top hotel, looks better but dissolves into chaos really fast. I’ve stayed in three hotels on this trip, cheap, medium and pretty good, but the breakfast was better in the cheapest hotel, because they didn’t try to be anything more than what they are. Actually the coffee in Taichung was the best on the trip. And 5 star hotels still won’t have everything warm as it should be.

Ok, this is a day off. So let’s get some culture. I took the MRT to the Taipei Museum of Fine Arts. It’s on a big area that is known as the Taipei Expo. There are a lot of buildings, some look like theaters some are displays and some are just good places to hang out. There was a farmers market going on when I arrived. The Magi is a covered food area with a real British pub “The Three Lions” and 30 stands selling all kinds of food, including Mexican and Indian.

The fine arts museum costs 30 NTD to enter, which is about a euro. The exhibition was remark-ably good. They was a food exhibition, not about making food, but about food art. I posted some photos on Facebook. The most dramatic display was by someone that had made all kinds of war weapons out of chocolate. Miniature tanks, submarines and machine guns, all made with the finest details. Wouldn’t it be great if all weapons were made of chocolate?

Down in the basement there was a children’s show called “get rhythm with Paul Klee”, I didn’t really understand it, so I’ll have to google it first, but there were a lot of kids signing up to do the course.

I strolled around until I got to the next MRT and went back to the hotel district. I treated myself to an ice cream at Swensons, that was good.

Evening was food in another food court close by. When you are traveling alone, it’s easier to get something in the food courts, because you can’t really appreciate really good food alone. This time it was a place called Urban One, no foreigners and hardly anyone spoke English. Food was great after I figured out the system. Juice, rice and soup you had to collect yourself. I ordered a set menu. I got filet steak, calamari, a prawn and a scallop, all grilled in front of me. Brilliant. Have to come back here with Dani and the rest of the USED gang.





DAY ELEVEN

Out of this hotel today. It's raining in Taipei. Got my train ticket for Amsterdam printed in the business center and then I took my stuff and walked to the shuttle bus service. It was only about 500 meters away. Better than a taxi, you see more of life and it's a lot cheaper.

Because the flight is early tomorrow, I am staying tonight at the airport hotel. It's a Novotel about 5 minutes from the terminal. I got the hotel shuttle bus and checked in. A nice modern hotel, with designer furniture in the lobby. Upstairs the room was nice. Again very modern, big TV and everything the traveller needs.

The shower had a magic window. If you press the button the window clouds over so you can not see through it. I had never seen that before, although I had read about it.

Had a cup of coffee and took it easy. Watched Almost Famous on HBO. Good film about bands, groupies and Rolling Stone. You don't do very much in this kind of hotel because there is no where to go. However, the buffet dinner was very good, great sushi and sashimi, Mongolian BBQ, and a very good Panna Cotta for dessert. I went back for sushi twice. I had my last Taiwan beer and slept well. Watched the Lakers against the Jazz and the end of the Jack and the Beanstalk film.

Set the alarm for 5:30.



DAY TWELVE

I needed to be ready by 7:00 when the shuttle bus for the airport left. So quick shower, quick breakfast (I was still full from dinner) and I was ready. Lots of stewardesses at breakfast. Love those uniforms, but these days everyone is glued to their smart phones. Met a couple traveling around the world, they went to the GP in Melbourne, visited family in Taipei and are on the closing leg now.

Taipei airport, Terminal 2 was crazy this morning, thousands are traveling. But what looks like chaos, somehow manages to get you to the gate on time. First flight to Bangkok, then on to Amsterdam. Flight is pretty full. Watched "Gone Girl" with Ben Affleck on the plane. Anyone with a higher position at an airline, let me give you some advice. We love the money you spend on your entertainment program, but we don't want to know if you are coming by with duty free, what the weather in Bangkok is like or whatever. Don't interrupt my film with this useless information, in three languages! Two of the languages Chinese and English stop the film so you don't miss anything, but the third, Thai does not stop the film, so you have to rewind. Happened to me right at the key scene of "Gone Girl", it drives you nuts.

Our flight arrived late again in Bangkok, so will start late for Amsterdam, which is not good for my connection in Amsterdam. I don't really understand why they don't leave more time in their schedule. It would save a lot of worry.

Big rainstorm in Bangkok. Had to go through security again. And now I am writing this at the gate, waiting to board again.

Another flight more meals and more films. Saw "St. Vincent" with Bill Murray which passed the time and ended with Bill singing along with Bob Dylan on

"Shelter from the Storm". Also saw "The Judge" with Robert Downey Jr.

The plane is going to be late. I will try and make it to Grönau where Louis lives, but I think it will be Enschede and Louis and Kosta (my sons) have to collect Dad. Funny you can't get from Amsterdam to Osnabrück after 21:00.

Kosta came and picked me up and we drove back to Quakenbrück together. Only after arriving i found out about the Germanwings plane crash in France. It made me think about all those stewardesses and pilots i had seen at breakfast just this morning. And then all the passengers, going somewhere, meeting someone, and leaving others. Travelling is like that and life is one big journey. I am fortunate to have met many great people on my trips, different cultures and different positions and opinions. And when you think about how small we really are, in our universe. Sorry I always get a little melancholy when traveling.

OUTRO

12 days on tour. Lots of good people. Lots of impressions and tons of experience. The world is a village. Pain and heartbreak, fear and exasperation, mixed with joy and positive energy, global solutions for a better world. Will we change the world? Probably not, but we know what needs to change.

Differences in culture, religion and ideals are common in all societies. We are no different, we are no better.

We are in business, we need to make money somehow, but we have learnt to do it in a social context. Our business partners are our friends. Our competitors are on the same wavelength. We are the good guys. Riding a bike will make you feel better, it will save you money and keep you fit. You can be the inspiration to your children and your environment. Our life is better for it. Like I say "We are the good guys!".

Thanks for listening.

Bob