

✈ Travel

Anne Frank's House-A Place Filled with Tragedy, Yet Hope

By Mira Temkin



When in Amsterdam, a visit to Anne Frank's house is a must. This historic site will bring you to tears, yet inspire you. I had anticipated seeing Anne's house for years. After all, I had cried through the book, the movie and the play...but what emotions would the Secret Annex really evoke?

As I entered her house and slowly followed a group of people up the stairs, I could almost sense Anne's feeling of dread. Here, up the same narrow stairs she trudged, to what would become her hiding place for the next two years...and walking down those same stairs two years later, facing a bleak, uncertain future.

When I reached the top, I touched the famous bookcase that opened to reveal the attic and felt a chill. Looking in, I was amazed at how small the attic really was...and to think, this was the home of eight people, sitting in silent despair. Hot and stuffy, it gave me a sense of what they surely must have endured.

The rooms were empty and barren, left the same way after the Nazi's had confiscated their furniture and belongings. Anne's pictures of movie stars and newspaper clippings have been left under glass on the wall. I looked out of the window and saw the same chestnut tree in bloom she had watched and written about. I heard the church bells chime, just as she had. Then I moved into Peter's room where Anne's diary is displayed. I couldn't believe I was actually seeing "Dear Kitty" as she called

it— her red, plaid diary, written in Dutch, revealing her deepest secrets and innermost thoughts —and giving the world the greatest treasure of innocence lost.

Suddenly, I heard the siren, piercing and loud, and I froze, transported back in time. It was the same evil siren of the Gestapo, the same sound the Frank's heard, striking fear in their hearts every time it passed. Only now, it was 2004, and I was safe.

Anne's story ends in tragedy. All of the people who hid in the attic were caught and transported to concentration camps, where they were murdered. Only Otto Frank, her father, survived and returned to retrieve Anne's diary. The rest they say, is history.

Today, the ground floor of the building has been turned into a multi-media center, working to combat racism and Anti-Semitism as well as promote tolerance. Through interactive computers, visitors can learn more about the people in hiding as well those heroes who helped them during the war. While I left Anne Frank's house in a somber mood, I was encouraged to learn that her home has been visited by thousands of people from across the globe. It was also encouraging for me to see, as I left, the line around the block of people who were waiting to get in.

Anne Frank's house is located in the center of Amsterdam and is open to both individuals and

groups. For more information about Anne Frank's house, visit www.annefrank.org

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