

Europa-Tage in Detmold

Saint-Omer (Frankreich)



Hello, my name is Tristan Bouteiller and I am the proud father of 4 kids : Angèle (16), Primrose (14), Galaad (11), and Harold (16 months).

I am 51 years young and I teach english at LYPSO, St-Omer's vocational training school. My girlfriend Laura works at the city museums (Sandelin and Dupuis). I became a member of the city partnership in march 2017 and have been involved in the ERASMUS schemes for a few years now, more specifically with Detmold.

St-Omer is a charming city in the north of France, between Lille and Dunkirk. It has the UNESCO label for its marsh area. There are only 10,000 inhabitants but the conurbation is nearer 35,000. The most notorious local activity is glass-making, notably with ARC INTERNATIONAL.

How does Corona affect you and your country?

As you all know, France has been rather badly hit by the virus and the lockdown started on tuesday March 17th at noon and will normally be progressively lifted up from monday May 11th. All activities have come to a sudden halt, schools, industries, shops, etc.

What are current restrictions in your area and what does your daily routine look like at the moment?

The restrictions are rather strict in France and St-Omer. People are basically asked to stay home except for vital shopping (food and medicine). Some physical activities are possible but only for an hour a day and within a 1km perimeter from your house, and you need to fill in a form in order to do so. Being a large and funny family with the privilege of a garden, our daily routine is not too strenuous : activities with the kids (and believe me, Harold really has to be entertained !), tele-working with the students, gardening when the weather permits, keeping in touch with family and friends, etc.

In your opinion, do the restrictions help to bring people closer together or rather divide them?

Well, I would say that in hard times, you can see the best and worst sides of people ! Nobody will forget the ridiculous scenes when people were almost fighting over stocks of rice and pasta ! At the same time, all health workers are doing a great job for the community. The same goes for food suppliers and other workers who have remained in activity. With more time on our hands and less urge to rush, we definitely come closer, from a distance, with our relatives, friends, and neighbours. A nice chat over the edge or the fence is rather pleasant, isn't it ?

What do you miss the most and the least in your current situation?

As a family-guy, I miss seeing the rest of the family. As a teacher, I miss sharing knowledge with the students. But many other things could be high on the agenda : freedom to wander about, sport, culture, playing music live, the sound of the sea, people's smiles with no mask, not knowing what tomorrow will be like, etc.

It rather came as a surprise but I don't miss having to hurry. As a moderate hyper-active, blame it on modern life, I tend to rush about all day. After 2 weeks of transition to slow down, I really enjoy taking my time. The salt of life ? Philosophical, hey !

What have you learned from the crisis so far?

Sadly enough, there are many good things to learn with every crisis, until we forget again ! This virus shows that reactions can be swift all over the world, no expenses spared. Couldn't we do the same about the environment, the alarming pollution, the permafrost ? Obviously, when there is a will, there is a way, so...

We always say that health is the supreme good to be cherished, and then it only becomes too true with this epidemic. Life is fragile, no matter if you are rich or poor, in the western world or elsewhere. We need good health systems all over the world.

With the pandemic, people are also back to basics ; what do we really need to be happy ? Mostly things which are not manufactured and don't come at a price.

Which message would you like to send to your twin cities?

Well, we'll all only be the happier to meet again and the sooner the better. The frontiers may be locked but not our hearts and minds. Take extra-good care of yours and yourself.