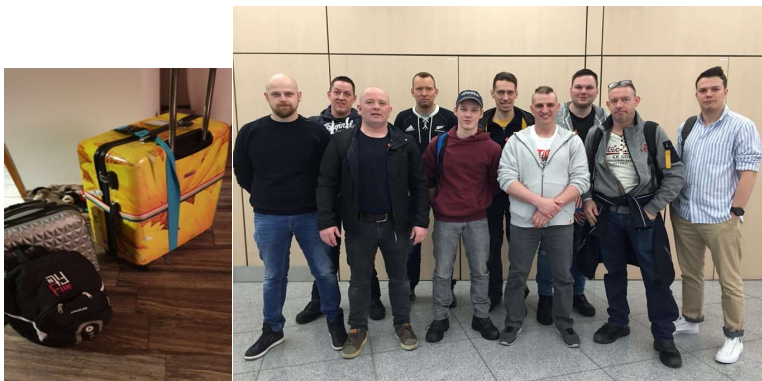


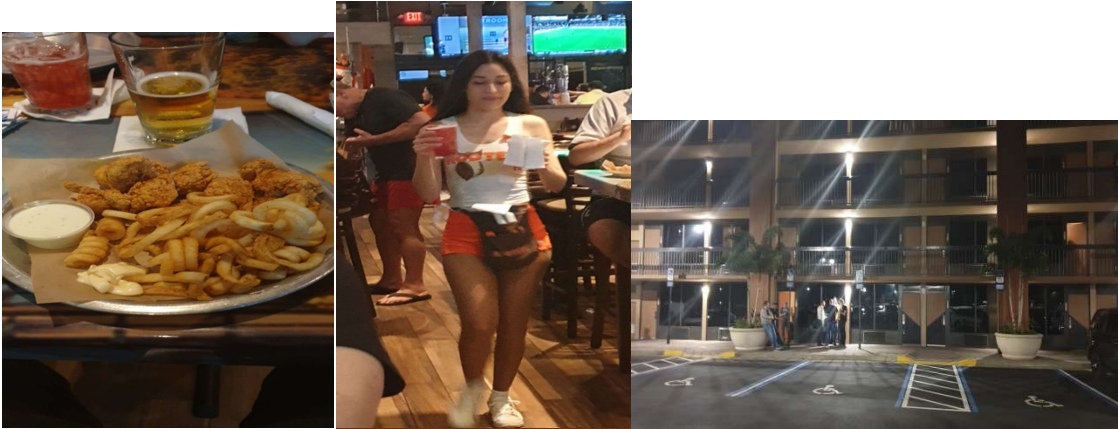
Tampa 2019

Sunday, March 3:

So ... the first internship trip of 2019 Fire Observers vzw has started. Mario and Robby guide 8 Fire Observers during the internship at the fire department of Tampa, Florida. I left very early today and the atmosphere was right there. When picking up Sammy Blommaert, no light is detected. His brother David Blommaert was called hard a few times, but no answer. When he finally realized that he was pressing the wrong bell, the damage had already been done. Fortunately for David, no one came to open the door at the wrong house. His brother opened the door after the first bell. And we just laugh ... Then on to Zaventem, where the group was ready on time at the agreed place. Quickly done baggage drop and then another coffee together with Carl Verstrepen who came to wave us goodbye. Everyone went through customs smoothly and not much later we flew to Amsterdam. We had to wait a while for our connecting flight and at 2.40 pm the Boeing 767 went from Delta to USA, more specifically Orlando, Florida.



After flying for 10 hours we arrived in the US. Everything went very smoothly there and less than 30 minutes later we already had our rental cars. Just playing Tetris with the suitcases, but no problem we got everything in the car. For our hotel we had to drive a 28km, but then the GPS must be on 1 line with the driver, with the result that our 2nd companion arrived 20 minutes later at the hotel (local time 9 pm). Just check in and put our luggage in the room and then have a bite to eat. The choice was quickly made ... Hooters. We ate and drank well and at 11.45 pm we went to sleep. Tomorrow another busy day ahead of colleagues at the Tampa fire department.



Monday, March 4:

After our first night in Orlando in which many of us got up early, we will have breakfast at Denny's where we let ourselves be stuffed with a hearty American breakfast. Full and satisfied we left on time. we were received by Chief Locicero and Jason Penny with whom we made the contacts. After a brief briefing and explanation of the Tampa Firedepartment, we had a Quick tour around headquarters and Firestation 1 The Big house. After the visit to HQ we went to arrange some last things at a local Wal-Mart and we dropped the men off at their assigned stations. We were warmly welcomed about all the places we visited and we were given a tour in the station, eventually we were talking to one of the firefighters and he also knew someone who came from Holland Fabio, and yes the world is small Fabio from Hulst whom we well know. After we dropped everyone off, Mario and Giovanni went back to their station # 1. And where we didn't have to wait long for the first call a working fire on which several of our group went, so that promises something for the coming week. Tomorrow Tuesday 5 March we will visit the training center where we will see a few demonstrations.



Tuesday, March 5th:

Today we had a tour of the Training facility there, although it is called The Sunny State, we unfortunately had some rain today, but that didn't spoil the fun and a nice program was put in for us inside.

We had quite a bit of insight into the American way and in many aspects it is very similar to how we are doing in Europe, after a short break for lunch where we had a delicious Cuban Sandwich, the program started again.



Wednesday, March 6:

Today the Fireboat is on the program.

Arrived at the port we were received by the duty station that manned those boats during an exit. Captain Bogush gave us a tour on Fireboat 1 The Patriot, he gave us a detailed explanation of how the Patriot worked and what it is used for.

After the tour, the Patriot was prepared to make a tour of the Tampa Bay.

First they sailed to Down Town where the maneuverability and extinguishing capacity etc. of the Patriot was demonstrated, this was for many impressive and beautiful to see, after this demonstration a course was set for Tampa Bay where of course the power of the Patriot was shown.

The tour was again closed with the handing out of the necessary Gifts as a thank you on behalf of the Fireobservers.



Thursday, March 7:

Today the visit is planned at the airport service ARFF of Tampa International Airport. The ARFF is manned by station 2 and its crew, we were warmly welcomed by the Chief, we got a nice presentation of the facility and what the ARFF stands for and afterwards were shown around by the facility that looked great, and many of us european where jealous of the equipment.



After the tour we were allowed to go to the garage where of course the crash tenders are, they even have 4 here and it is always great to see these machines.

After they were all put outside, we got a nice explanation from the Captain how they work and how they are used during an intervention.

Of course we all had the opportunity to drive and a nice demo was given of the capacity of these vehicles, always impressive to experience.



After this beautiful morning, we closed with the necessary thanks and we all received beautiful souvenirs as a memento.



After this beautiful morning a course was set for the Firemuseum at HQ where of course the necessary T-shirts still had to be purchased. This was, of course, largely used and the necessary bags were dragged along



After everyone had replenished the necessary items and it looked as if some of them were going to be short of space and there was already talk of buying an extra suitcase for the return flight, a new course was set for Stations to prepare for the evening filling. We go to an ice hockey game from the Tampa Bolts. Arriving at the Amelia Arena of the Lightning Bolts, some were first consumed by some at one of the stands, which became a one-off promotion after payment was made ... Others went to the souvenir shop to buy something. Arrived in the Arena and after we registered for our first Lightning game we went looking for our place. To be honest it is quite impressive how the Americans build this festival, they really make it happen and we all enjoyed it. It may be a coincidence that the Bolts this time lost and undefeated series of 8 games, would we be bad luck?



Friday, March 8:

After the necessary calls from everyone again, today Signal Division (911 call center) was on the program.

Arrived (without Quinten because it was still on the rescue) at the location were again warmly received there.



After a nice informative explanation of how 911 works and the necessary information about the number of calls they have on an annual basis, we were given a tour with the men and women of Dispatch themselves.

Here we were assisted by Janet and we received a wonderful explanation about the daily life of a dispatcher and what they already do during a service.

We were then given the opportunity to listen to the 4 dispatchers on duty and we were given an impression of what they should do during a call.





After the visit it was time for lunch, since the men have not yet been to a Firehouse sub, the choice was quickly made.



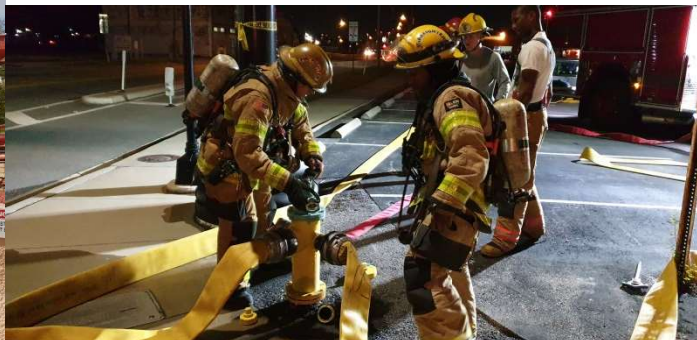


Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 March:

These two days were all about 48 station time.

These days were freely arranged by everyone, some had arranged tickets for Bush Garden and they were eagerly used.

Others stayed at the barracks to make the necessary calls and to spend more time with the crew.





Monday, March 11:

Today the last day full day in Tampa, because from tomorrow the tourist program is on it. This afternoon we will all be welcomed at HQ where we will officially say goodbye to the Tampa Fire Department.



For the official part, it was quickly arranged that the fire department store that was normally closed was just opened because apparently there was more demand for T-shirts etc. So that 3rd suitcase is probably full now. I can proudly say that everyone enjoyed it immensely and received a lot from the working method in the United States and of course made many new friends, therefore a big thank you to the men and women of the Tampa Firedepartment and the facilitators of all this (because being a supervisor is a difficult and tiring task of course) to make this possible. At Headquarters we were welcomed by our first contact person, Chief Locicero and Jason Penny, for these gentlemen, of course, gifts were brought from Belgium and the Netherlands. Of course the Tampa Firedepartment had the necessary goodies for us as a reminder of their beautiful department

For all there was also a Certificate on behalf of the Fire department of participation in the internship, which was issued by Chief Locicero himself.

All in all, we can already speak of a very successful internship at the Tampa Firedepartment.



Tuesday, March 12:

After everyone had been able to say goodbye to the stations, we set course for our first stop of our Florida tour. Gathered at station 1, a course was set for Kissisemee (kiss mission according to someone) where we went on an Airboat trip. Before going, of course, first fill up

the cars and grab a breakfast, because the inner person must also be taken care of. Arrived in Kissisemmee we were able to join the airboat immediately after an hour



After our Airboat trip we went on to Orlando where we will stay 2 nights.

But before we go to our hotel, it is first shopping time in 1 of the many shopping malls in the USA.

Here too, the necessary dollars were left behind.



According to the law on privacy and the advertising committee no photos could be published about this. After the car was filled with the necessary souvenirs we went to the hotel to check in. After a smooth check-in, we could freshen up and get ready for our evening meal and the further entertainment in Orlando.



First we of course went to eat at TGI-Fridays where the necessary steaks and ribs were eaten.



After all the eating, it was time for some relaxation, and direction was set for a kind of amusement park with numerous activities. It was decided to all go karting, where we had the greatest fun.



Now it is a coincidence that another group of fire observers still happens to be in Orlando and a board meeting was quickly organized at a local drinking facility. After which a tough meeting ended the evening with a drink.



We went back to the Hotel early because tomorrow Universal Studios is on the program.

Wednesday, March 13:

Today Universal Studios is on the program: After a short morning walk we arrived at Universal.



Of course because it was a spring break, it was extremely busy Unfortunately, this led to long waiting times in the park.

But that didn't spoil the fun and everyone had an excellent afternoon in the many roller coasters and other attractions that the park had.





Towards the end of the evening it was concluded with a snack at the local Hardrock cafe of Universal Studios.



Thursday, March 14:

Today we leave Orlando and head for Cocoa Beach, but before stopping there we first have a trip to Daytona Bike Week. After a ride of almost 1.5 hours we arrived at Daytona Bruce Rossemeyer's where everything was dedicated to the Bike week, here was enough to see again about all kinds of motorcycle issues.



After this stop it really went to Daytona itself where even more engines can be seen in all sizes and shapes.

After finally finding a parking spot we went to minstrel where there is a lot to do, and again the necessary photos were taken and souvenirs were taken.



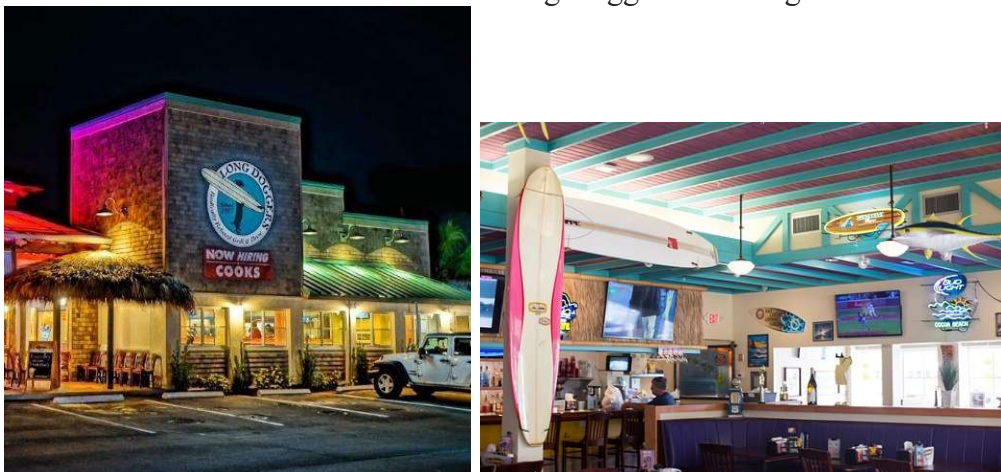
After all the motor violence we went to the hotel where again 2 nights stay in Cocoa Beach.

Arrived in Cocoa, a wonderful dip was taken in the swimming pool there shortly after check-in.



After this refreshment it was time again for a snack and a drink and we went looking for a restaurant, which was quickly found.

After another short walk we arrived at Long Doggers where again the necessary was taken.



After dinner back to hotel for a good night's sleep, tomorrow Kennedy Space Center.

Friday, March 15:

Today we decided to sleep in, because most of them were ready after all the tiring days. Agreed to leave at 11:00 towards KSC. Here too we suffered from the Spring Break crowds and of course the launch that is scheduled for tonight. After an impressive tour along the launch devices and the various platforms, there was a stopover where the Apollo rocket is located. This spectacle is also beautifully constructed by the Americans.





After the beautiful bus tour it was time to watch one of the Space Shuttles de Atlantis.



Remains always impressive to see such a thing.



After all this space violence, we had to wait for the launch that was planned and where some of us wanted to be present, now that we are there One half wanted to stay in the park

and the other half wanted to see this spectacle from the beach of Cocoa Beach. After many delays i.v.m. various disruptions eventually went into the air two hours later, and we saw the successful launch of this rocket live and via a large screen.



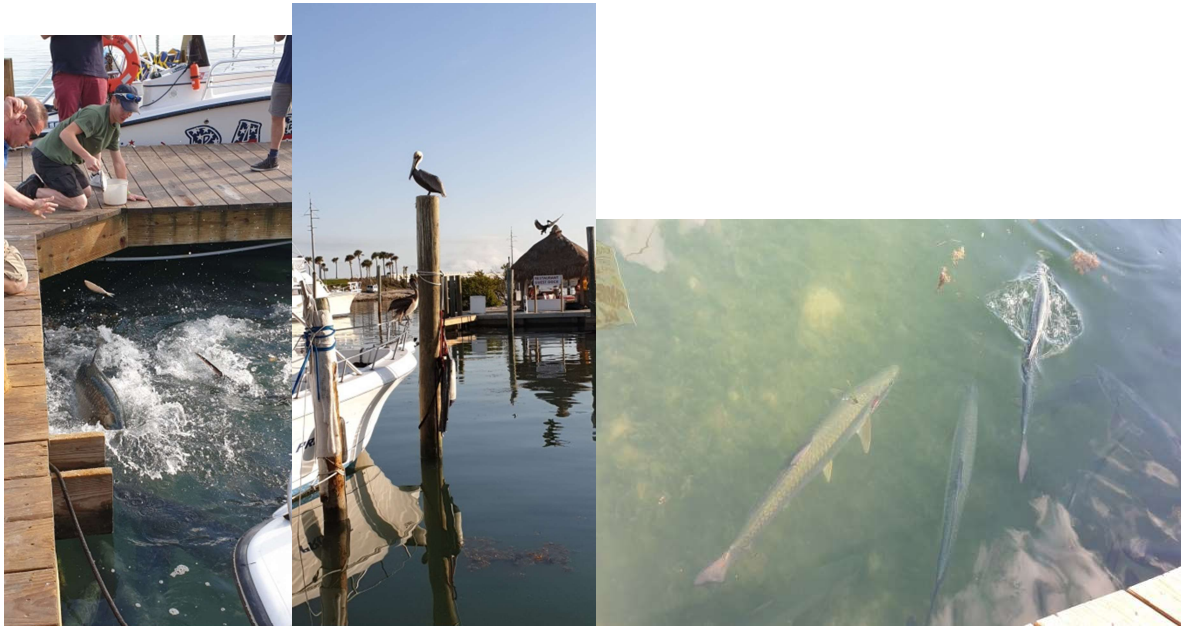
Saturday, March 16:

Today one of the highlights of the internship is on the program the Dellray St Patricks Day parade, at the parade old warriors who have contributed to our freedom are invited and all the people present at the parade receive the honor and appreciation that these heroes deserve. , it is just a matter of getting goosebumps from how these people are appreciated and shouted at by all those present who stand next to the 4 to 5 kilometer long parade. Some of us had the honor to guide these heroes during this procession.



Sunday March 17:

day we leave Delray for Key West after a very impressive day during the parade. Decided to leave nice and early (6:00 AM) to enjoy the time in Key West as much as possible. A couple of stops were planned along the way. One of these was Robby's where we could feed fish, this turned out to be very nice and our Belgian colleagues were treated to some Dutch statements that have lingered for a long time ...



After this nice stopover we went on to the Key's, also stopped at the turtle hospital, but unfortunately this was fully booked for the coming hours, so the trip was continued.

Arrived around 12 o'clock at our stay in Key West, after we checked in we rented bikes and went to Mallory Square / Duvall Street to try to make reservations for the jet skis and some

wanted to dive, unfortunately this was no longer on the possible the same day but in the next morning ...

So it became mandatory to go on a tour this day on Key West, where of course you would visit the famous Sloppy Joe's and Southernmost Point.



Some of us were allowed to go into the books for a test before skiing, otherwise they were not allowed to come. Probably an unreliable face



First we enjoy the evening hours on Key West, where various street artists show their skills during sunset.

The local catering establishments are of course also visited, where we met a friend of the Fireobservers.



The following morning Monday March 18 it was time for the chosen activities. Some went diving and the rest went Jet Skiing.



All in all a wonderful day and closing on Key West.

After the beautiful morning it was time to leave Key West and set sail for Miami Beach where the last night is planned. After another beautiful drive along all the islands of the Key's, we arrived at our Hotel on Miami Beach around 18:00.

After checking in and freshening up, of course, Miami Beach was thoroughly inspected. And here again very busy because of the Spring Break youth who are hanging around here, there was also a considerable police force to keep these youngsters in line. After a good meal, the evening life was further investigated and that was taken to Belgium and the Netherlands as a once in a live time experience.





Tuesday, March 19:

Today, unfortunately, the wonderful internship comes to an end and it is time to finally pack our bags to get ready for the return flight. Some were up early to enjoy the beach of Miami Beach, but unfortunately it can rain in the Sunshine state as well... so that didn't happen. Everyone was fresh and fruity in the lobby again at the agreed time and the cars were packed to return to the airport.

Cars are handed in and checked in again for the return flight to Brussels. After a smooth transfer in Atlanta, we came back to Brussels around 7 am where our friends and family were waiting, Willem was also present on behalf of the board to greet us. After another joint drink, we said goodbye to everyone and we went back home.



Sammy David Joost Sander Quinten Thank you Robin Giovanni 1 and 2 on behalf of Mario and Robby Thank You for this great 2 weeks and it was an honor to be able to undertake this journey together with you.