

HITEC Retreat on a boat | Enkhuizen 2024

(17th of April to 19th of April 2024)

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In this HITEC retreat event, 24 Ph.D. students made a trip to Enkhuizen, the Netherlands. We started on Wednesday 17th of April at 8 am in the morning from Forschungszentrum Jülich by bus. On our way to Enkhuizen we had a stop near Venlo at the Sulzer gas turbine service. Sulzer is a company with headquarter in Switzerland and with around 13,000 employees world wide. Sulzer's focus is on fluid engineering with expertise in pumping, agitation, mixing, separation and purification technologies for fluids. The location in Venlo, however, focuses on the repairment of turbines for energy production or aircrafts. We started our visit with a brief introduction to the company of Sulzer and the specific expertise at the location in Venlo. Next, the head of engineering department of Sulzer Venlo gave us a scientific introduction into the chemistry and properties of high temperature materials. Also, he showed us different characterization methods. Next, Sulzer gave us a tour through their workshops, featuring multiple production (cutting and coating) and characterization (3D scans, X-ray, UV for defect characterisation) techniques. They explained that they mainly focus on the repairment of turbines and also showed some dissembled gas turbines during our tour. We finished the tour at Sulzer with a talk of an HR representative about job opportunities at Sulzer and some coffee and cake.



After our visit at Sulzer, we continued the bus tour and arrived at 4:30 pm at our boat in Enkhuizen. After everyone settled in their cabins, we finished the day by having dinner together on the boat. Our fantastic cook Ine served mostly plant-based food and gave many of us new culinary experiences. Lastly, we explored Enkhuizen, and played some cards games.



We started the next day with breakfast on the boat followed by an introduction into sailing in terms of commands, knots, and other tasks by our first sailor and “hands on deck” Mary. Around 10 am we started sailing with our boat under the command of captain Jan-Willem and his dog Atze.





During the sailing we also had a fruitful poster session inside the boat where everyone presented her/his research to the others. Every Ph.D student prepared a unique and professional poster for our retreat poster session. To even increase the learnings from the posters we had a mobile quiz with three multiple choice questions per poster. Everyone put great effort in solving the quiz and in the end, the winners of the quiz were rewarded by some sweets.



We finished the day by having BBQ together on the boat and again some time to explore the city and bars of Enkhuizen.



On our last day we had again breakfast together on the boat and left the boat and Enkhuizen back to Jülich by bus at 1 pm. We finally arrived back at Forschungszentrum Jülich at 6 pm.

Overall, the retreat on a boat near Enkhuizen was a great experience and a good chance to establish new contacts between the Ph.D. students. The fact that we were (are) all in the same boat really helped to encourage everyone to get in touch with their colleagues and to share about their daily Ph.D. work, including both, best practices, and negative experiences. In combination with the company visit at Sulzer the students also discussed about future career plans and tips for transitions to industry. The sailing experience and fact that everyone had to work together to keep the ship sailing resulted in a very positive group dynamic and made it much easier for all of us to make new contacts not just on the professional but also on the personal level. Lastly, the poster session enabled the students to broaden their perspective on the research that is conducted at Forschungszentrum Jülich but also to obtain in-depth understanding of research fields related to their own Ph.D. work. The scientific discussions helped some students to think of new and interesting directions for their research work as well as to think about using synergies of the different institutes for their work or establishing new collaborations between the institutes and research groups.