Darcy Lectures 2012
(S. M. Hassanizadeh)

For schedule of lectures:


03 February 2012 (Ready to take off)

Last year on March 21, which is the first day of the Iranian New Year called Norooz, I received a phone call from an official of the National Groundwater Association (NGWA). He told me that I’d been selected by a search committee to be the Darcy Lecturer for 2012, and asked whether I’d accept. For a minute, I didn’t know what to say. I knew of course what a Darcy lecturer was. I had hosted Darcy lecturers in the past and I had heard of stories about many lonely hours in airplanes and hotel rooms in far away places, and seemingly endless visits to yet another university. I needed some time to think about it. So, I said “give me a few days”. I prepared a list of important factors:

- This is a major commitment. I will have to pledge, one year in advance, to give 50+ lectures at 50+ different places. This will require a total of about 150 days of my time.
- Do I have that time? Actually, not. For years, my days and evenings are full. Some periods, e.g., when I teach, the days are even fuller! So, is it feasible? The answer always is: yes, if I want to.
- Why would I want to do this? Well, I love to tell others about the research we do in our Group. I always try to make them enthusiastic about my theories. I am hoping that some clever researcher will find a nice and easy way of testing those theories. And I always learn from talking to other researchers; I learn how to do our research better; to do it differently, and to see the results differently. Besides, this is a great honor. So, yes, I should want to do it!
- But, this means even less time for the home front and for my grandsons. I had to make sure that I have their support. Sure enough, after explaining all this to my wife, she said that I had her full support.

So, there was no excuse of any sort! I wrote an email to the NGWA officer and announced my acceptance. From there, the ball started rolling. NGWA announced it on their website and invited interested people to fill out an application form. After the deadline of 15 October, I got the list of applications; 57 from all over the world, but mainly from US, Canada and Europe. Requests kept coming in and at the end of 2011, there were a total of 64 applications.

I could not possibly visit all these sites. I tried to cluster them by geographic location, and period of visit (most sites had indicated a preferred period for the lecture). To decide on how much time I needed to go from one site to the next site, I had to consult maps. Google and many airline schedules over and over. I’ve spent tens of hours (if not hundreds) on determining the best combination of sites, dates, and routes. Now, it has taken shape.

The schedule so far is given below. The tour starts in Bangalore, India, on February 6th. From there, I will go on to lecture in New Delhi, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, and Christchurch. The rest of the schedule until May can be found at http://www.ngwa.org/Foundation/darcy/Pages/2012-Darcy-Lecture-schedule.aspx. I must say I’m already excited about it!

05 February 2012 (From Amsterdam to Bangalore)

Yesterday, 04 February, my lecture tour started. It was not a perfect start. I left The Netherlands having a bad cold and congested sinuses. And you shouldn’t have that when you travel by air! If sinuses are congested, the air pressure on the two sides of the ear drum cannot equilibrate. This can cause pain in the ears because there is a
significant change in the cabin air pressure during take-off and landing. It may even cause the eardrum to rupture. And that is what happened to me during landing in New Delhi, despite precautions (taking nose drops and chewing gum). This has happened to me before and usually eardrums repair themselves.

My wife Forooz is accompanying me in this trip. We arrived in Delhi around midnight and went straight to a hotel near the airport what we had booked in advance. We had a morning flight to Bangalore; so, we thought we can rest for the night and start fresh; too much to expect from a hotel near an airport! For the whole night we were hearing not only airplanes, but also passing trains, car, and people talking outside. This was all topped around 4am when some loud banging somewhere in the hotel started. We called the reception to ask what was going on and they said “Oh sorry, we stop it immediately!!”

The flight to Bangalore was eventless. Our host in Bangalore is Professor Mohan Kumar of Civil Engineering Department of Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Together, we are organizing here a winter school, partially supported by Utrecht University fund for Utrecht-Asia collaboration.

Established in 1909, Indian Institute of Science is the premier research institute in India (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Institute_of_Science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Institute_of_Science) for information). It is located in a tree-studded 400-acre campus in Northern Bangalore. We are staying at the Guest House of the Institute. It is an old but clean building.

This afternoon (on Sunday) was my only chance to do some sightseeing in Bangalore. So, a driver took us around the town and saw the Bangalore Palace and Sri Radha Krishna Temple (see the two nice photo’s I took!).
07 February 2012 (My first Darcy Lecture)

Our winter school, entitled “Research Tools for Evaluating Availability and Safety of Surface Water and Groundwater”, started on Monday. Most lecturers are from IISc, Bangalore. From Utrecht, Jack Schijven and I are lecturing. Dr. Amir Raoof was also supposed to be here but his visa didn’t arrive on time. Jirka Simunek, who together with Rien van Genuchten, have developed HYDRUS was also lecturing. As I said earlier, the campus is like a garden. The coffee and lunches were served just outside the lecture hall under the shade of the trees; with a temperature of 27 degrees, this was very pleasant. The funny thing was that little monkeys were jumping around us (in the attached photo, Professor Mohan Kumar is offering a cookie to one of them!).

My first lecture of the tour was given on 7 February. The host had done a good job of publicizing it. There was a good crowd. I gave the lecture on virus transport. There were many questions and a good discussion. I thought it went well. Someone suggested that I should go back at the end of the tour and give the same lecture again so that they can tell how much I would improve!

08 February 2012 (Two down, 53 to go!)

The stay in Bangalore was short. On Wednesday morning (at 6 AM!) we headed for the airport to fly back to New Delhi. My host in Delhi is Dr. Brijesh Yadav of Indian Institute of Technology. He was a post-doc with me in Utrecht until about two years ago. Last year, he got the prestigious Ramanujan Fellowship, which is reserved for highly promising young scientists, especially those who want to return to India from abroad (http://www.serc-dst.org/ramanujan_felloship.htm). At the Delhi airport, we were received by two PhD students of Brijesh. When arriving in a foreign place, it is always a reassuring feeling to know that someone out there is waiting upon you; you don’t have to worry about finding your way and about how much extra the taxi is going to charge you.

After a quick lunch, I gave my Darcy Lecture at the Department of Civil Engineering; they had also chosen for the virus transport lecture. Then, the plan was to meet with students of Brijesh. But, I was just too tired (and sleepy). We decided to reserve Friday morning for that. Tomorrow is a day of rest, and we plan to visit the famous Taj Mahal in Agra. I hope I can share a couple of nice photos with you after that visit.
09 February 2012 (Traffic in India is not boring!)

We had seen Taj Mahal on photos and in films. But, being there is a different experience. It is one of the most gracious and harmonious buildings I have ever seen. It is simple and majestic. I am glad we took the trouble of going there. We had to start early (so, another 05:30 wake up!) in order to beat the morning rush hour. Also, although the distance from New Delhi to Agra is only 209 kilometer (with a driving time of only two and half hour according to Maps.Google), it took about four hours to get there. There is a divided highway (for which toll has to be paid), but it is by no means a “restricted access highway”. In addition to cars and lots of trucks, cyclists, people (many of them), vendors, cows, etc., move around and about the road. So, the speed is not very high. Indeed the story of traffic in India is a whole different story from anywhere I have seen. Either there are no traffic laws and regulations, or they are facultative; and it seems that everybody chooses to ignore them. In the process, they make their own regulations. For example, as a matter of “rule” slow traffic, specially trucks, drive on the high speed lane (which is the right...
lane in India, as they drive on the wrong, oops, I mean left, side of the road) and the faster traffic drives on the low speed lane! and it works out too. In fact, drivers don’t seem to like the concept of “driving lane”; they drive where there is unoccupied asphalt. Sometimes, there are 4-5 lanes of cars in a two-lane road. I know, coming from Iran, I shouldn’t be sarcastic about driving habits of others. But, here it is really different. The way cars, motors, bicycles, and people cross each other’s path with centimeter precision requires excellent driving skills and fast reaction ability. Today, we were in total about 10 hours on the road (got back to IIT Guesthouse at 10:30pm) and we did not see any accident, whereas theoretically, given the fact that common driving laws (and in fact common sense) were not observed at all, there were numerous opportunities for it. The goddess of traffic must be of Indian origin and waking over them!?

I talked too much about the traffic because there was so much excitement on the road. But, of course we saw beautiful palaces and tombs too. From Agra we went to Fatehpur Sikri, about 40 km away from Agra, where one can marvel a complex of palaces and mosque, built out of red sandstone, with beautiful carvings and raised decorations. We were also offered (with much vigor) to buy lots of small (and large) handicrafts, books, guides, food, drink, toys, batteries, memory cards, scarfs, and you name it, by large groups of vendors, aging from four to eighty years old. The majority of them were saying that they are students and do this for a living in order to convince us to buy things. It was very hard to resist these persistent sellers, until we run out of cash. Next time, we should take more cash with us; or maybe not?

Here are some pictures!
Taj Mahal (Agra)

Mosque (Fatehpur Sikri)

Mosque (Fatehpur Sikri)
February 17, 2012 (Hectic schedule)

I have not been able to write for a whole week. This is because I needed every spare minute I could find during the last week. In between flights, transfers from airports to hotels and back, lectures, and meetings, I was working on a large EU research proposal with the deadline of February 16, at 17:00 Brussels time. The last day I was working frantically to get it done. I was in a hotel room in Adelaide, next to a beautiful beach with great weather; but I saw only from the window of the hotel. I had to write and write. In total more than 20 pages of carefully written text. One night I went to bed at 6am, and the next night until the last second of the deadline. With the help of the Research Support Office of our Faculty, I managed to submit the final version of the proposal online 14 seconds before the deadline (that was 02:30 am in Adelaide)! Then, we had to take a taxi to the airport at 4am (for an early flight to Hobart); so there was no sense in going to bed anymore! I did survive.

Let’s go back to India. After a visit to Agra, we had one more day in New Delhi. I met with my host Dr. Brijesh Yadav and his students and talked about their ongoing and planned research. After that, we had a little time to visit the Akshardham Temple (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akshardham_(Delhi)); one of the largest Hindu temple in India. It is constructed only recently; a magnificent and imposing structure. Then, we had our last HOT dinner in India. As usual, we had a choice from two general categories of food: vegetarian HOT food and non-vegetarian HOT food. In one week of stay in India, we had enough hot food for a year! In the last morning, I thought I had enough of hot food. So, I ordered a plain omelet. But, I guess in India there is nothing plainer than plain green pepper. It was cut into pieces and planted into the omelet; like a minefield. As my teeth stepped on the pieces of pepper, they exploded in my mouth. I am afraid there are burning spots all along my digestion canals!

We also tried the rikshaw’s, and the tricycle taxi’s. I didn’t like to use rikshaw’s. I found it degrading for the human being to be used as a horse. I took a rikshaw in the Campus of IIT to go from the Department to the Guesthouse. There was this old man peddling the bike. Some part of the way was a little uphill. The poor old man was struggling hard to keep the bike going. I seriously considered stepping down to help him. But, fortunately it was a short distance. For 10 minutes of biking, they would get only 10 Rupees; that is only 20 dollar cents!!
The tricycle taxi, called “oto” (at least that is the pronunciation I understood; I had often difficulty understanding Indian English), were everywhere and at many places the only mode of transport. They were OK except that it was cold. When we were there, they had record low temperatures for this year (4 degrees above zero). The oto is open. So, as it races through the traffic, the cold wind blows all over you.

There is one more thing very special to the Indian traffic. First, let me say that I think the most popular musical instrument in India is horn; the car horn! And you hear it when you are out on the streets! All cars use it VERY frequently. It is even written on the back of many cars “Please horn” or “Horn please”! And they don’t disappoint each other!

On Saturday 11 February, we took a flight at noon to Kuala Lumpur on our way to Perth. We arrived there around 10 pm. The flight to Perth was not until the next morning. So, I had made reservation in a hotel nearby to stay overnight. We had been to Kuala Lumpur a year earlier (in February 2010). It is (for the most part) a modern and clean city. The weather was very pleasant. The flight to Perth was eventless. At the airport, we were met by Forooz’s cousin who is studying at the University. As I said earlier, it is so special to have a friend or relative waiting for you upon arrival at a very far place. The Iranian lunch and dinner we had at her house was so tasteful and it was not hot. I will write about Perth, Adelaide, and Hobart later.
February 20 (How does it feel Down Under?)

It feels great Here Under! It is summer time; it is nice and warm. I know it sounds a little mean, but it actually feels doubly good knowing that it is freezing in Holland!

Perth is said to be the most isolated city in the world. The next large city nearby is Adelaide, which is 2700 km away! It is the capital of the Western Australia State. Due to extensive mining activities in Western Australia, Perth has become very rich. There is low unemployment and the pay is good. In general, salaries are higher in Australia, compared to Europe. Australia is doing well in the face of the world financial crisis. But, prices are also high. The minimum wage is 20 Australian dollars, which is about 22 US dollars; compare it to a minimum wage of 7 dollars in US!

In Perth, I had two hosts, Henning Prommer of CSIRO (a large research institute with many offices all over Australia) and Ryan Vogwill of University of Western Australia. Henning was a postdoc with our group around eight years ago and he is now a senior researcher with CSIRO and has a professorship appointment with University of Western Australia.

We stayed in Port Mill Bed and Breakfast in Freemantle, a nice little coastal town to the South of Perth. Port Mill was a nice cozy hotel housed in a European-looking building and furnished with old furniture and decorations. It was only five minutes walk from a beautiful beach. At least that is what I heard from Forooz, who didn’t waste time in exploring it. Unfortunately, I couldn’t join her. Henning picked me up in the morning of Monday (Feb. 13) and took me to a field site where treated wastewater was recharged into a deep groundwater reservoir. In Perth, I gave two lectures; one on Monday on virus transport, mainly for groundwater engineers, and the other on Tuesday, on two-phase flow, mainly for CSIRO researchers and students. Right after the second lecture on Tuesday Feb. 14th, we headed for the airport to go to Adelaide. Australia is huge; there are three time zones across the country.

Fortunately, in Adelaide airport, we were also met by a friend. This time it was my former PhD student Saeed Torkzaban, who graduated in October 2007. The faith had it that he had just accepted a position with CSIRO in Adelaide, after having spent time in Riverside (California), Berkeley, Riverside again, and Perth. My host was Peter Cook of Flinders University. He has been a Darcy Lecturer himself back in 2009. We were put in a very nice hotel (Stamford Grand Hotel), right at the beach, with a room with a beautiful view of the ocean and the beach. But, I was at the height of my work on the research proposal I mentioned in my previous blog, as the deadline was close. So, I could only enjoy the view!
A highlight of our visit to Adelaide was to see Saeed, his wife Shiva, and their two boys. Shiva was MSc student in Utrecht too. She had also accepted a job with the local government Water Department. It was great to see them settled down. In Adelaide, I also caught up with another former postdoc, Behzad Ataie-Ashtiani. He spent about two years with me in Delft in the early 2000’s. He then took a position with Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, where he eventually became full professor. He was now spending a sabbatical year with Flinders University. It is so wonderful to come across friends in faraway places.

The lectures in Perth and Adelaide were well attended. Specially, the lecture about the removal of viruses as a result of water passing through the soil is popular. I haven’t noticed many people dozing off during my talk; which is a good sign. I know from my own experience how heavy the eyelids become when sitting in a warm lecture room, early in the afternoon, and trying to listen to a lecturer speaking in a monotonous voice (that is why I usually talk very loudly during a lecture!). It is hard to believe that such a small piece of skin (the eyelid) can weigh so much! It is worst when I am the host myself, sit up front, the speaker keeps looking at me; and I have not slept enough the night before. It becomes like a torture trying to keep those eyelids open. I wish someone would invent an “eyelid opener” to put on during such times; it would be great to be able to doze off with eyes open!

On Friday, February 17th, we had to take a flight at 6AM to go form Adelaide to Hobart. So, we had to leave the hotel at 4. As I said in my previous blog, I decided not to sleep anymore as I was up till 2:30 for finishing the proposal anyway; and I had a large number of emails I had to reply to. I think I responded to 25 emails in one hour. I wonder how many typing errors were in those emails, as the brain starts to get quite slow at that time of the night.

The flights to Hobart were fortunately on time. This was important because I was scheduled to arrive in Hobart at 10 (after change of planes in Melbourne), and my lecture was planned for 12:30. I was hoping I would stay awake during the lecture!!

My host in Hobart was Rob Virtue, who works for GHD (www.ghd.com), a very large Australian consulting company working worldwide. Their office in Hobart was in the middle of the town, built in a former rock quarry. It was a large open space with two sides being the bare rock (see photo). Groundwater was seeping out of the walls; quite inspiring for groundwater engineers!

We spent the weekend in Hobart. This was the first weekend we were not on the road from one airport to another. I took some time to do some sightseeing. Hobart is the capital of Tasmania, which is an island off the Southern coast of Australia. The nature is beautiful; it has nice beaches but it is mostly rugged and rough coastline (at least the part we saw) with lots of fjords. We took a boat ride along the coast and saw a number of seal colonies; very beautiful (see the photo).

I am now fresh and ready for the next lecture in Melbourne.
06 March (Back to Earth)

On Tuesday 28 February, we took yet another early flight from Sydney to Christchurch, New Zealand. The flight was at 8:30. So, we had to get up at 5:00. This was of course much better than the 6-o’clock flight we took from Adelaide to Hobart. We arrived around 13:30 in Christchurch, which is in a time zone two hours ahead of Sydney. I had rented a car, which I picked up at the airport.
New Zealand has two main islands: the Northern Island and the Southern Island. Christchurch is in the Southern Island. My host there was Dr. Liping Pang of Institute of Environmental Science and Research, which is part of the Christchurch Science Centre. I had met her once in Utrecht around 10 years ago. My talk was planned for the next day at noon. So, we had the whole afternoon to see the city.

We knew that Christchurch was hit by a severe earthquake on 22 February 2011, which caused a lot of damage and killed more than 180 people. Among other major landmarks, the old cathedral (built in the second half of nineteenth century) was destroyed (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Christchurch_earthquake#Casualties_damage_and_other_effects for information about damages). We thought we will go to the city center and walk around there. But, after trying a number of streets that according to the map would lead to the center, we found out that a large area around the center is closed off to the public. The damage to old and new buildings was so severe that there was danger of collapse everywhere and almost all buildings were being (partially) demolished and reconstructed. All over the city we found abandoned buildings, many of them were actually not old at all. It was a surrealistic picture.

We stayed at a motel near the University. It was nice and quiet. My Darcy Lecture was on a special day: February 29th (happens once every four years!). It went very well and there was quite a lot of interest.

After the lecture, we had four days of vacation. I was ready for it.

Our plan was to drive around and see as much of the Southern Island as we could: we visited Mount Cook (staying overnight), Queenstown (staying overnight), Fox Glacier, Hokitika (staying overnight), Hanmer Springs, and back to Christchurch (staying overnight). There are almost no divided highways on the South Island, but the roads are very good, with plenty of facilities. At some point, there was even free coffee for drivers (the sign said: “driver reviver, free coffee”). It was apparently a government program to promote resting by drivers.

What did we see? We saw more of the same over and over: breathtaking views, stunning sceneries, outstretched green plains, serene forests, majestic snow-covered peaks, mighty waterfalls, awesome glaciers, blue lakes, turquoise lakes, emerald lakes, idyllic places; just unforgettable natural beauties.

I thought it was a well-deserved vacation, if I may say so myself! It was also needed to get ready for the long trip back to Holland. We got up at 4:30am on Monday 5 March (that was 4:30pm on Sunday 4 March in Holland). Our flight was at 7am. We had to change planes in Brisbane, where we had a layover of four and a half hour. From Brisbane we went to Singapore, where we had to wait seven hours for the KLM flight to Amsterdam. By the time we got home, it was 10 am on Tuesday 6 March. So, we were on the road (and in the air) for more than 41 hours! And I was brave (or stupid?) enough to have made appointments for the afternoon of the day of arrival!

In total, in this leg of my Darcy Lecture tour, I took 18 flights and spent 143 hours on the road (from home or a hotel to an airport, in the air, and from an airport to a hotel or home). I visited 10 cities and gave 14 lectures. I am looking forward to the rest of the Darcy Lecture tour! The next lecture is in Karlsruhe, Germany, on March 15.
Visit to universities in US Southern States (March 21 through April 12).

For photos of this trip, see https://www.facebook.com/media/set/edit/a.3639839636659.2169596.1294339237/

This is the first blog I am writing after returning from New Zealand (on March 6). I had so little time and there was always something more urgent to be done (I am sure my graduate students who are waiting for my comments on their papers believe there are still something much more urgent jobs to be done!).

Within five days of returning from New Zealand, I left for a town called Freudenstadt, at the edge of the Black Forest (about two hours to the south of Stuttgart). I went to a project meeting that is held every year around this time. It is a very nice meeting because our collaborators from Stuttgart and their graduate students as well as our own graduate students get together in an informal setting. There, I gave my Darcy Lecture no. 15. On my way back to The Netherlands, I visited Karlsruhe Technical Institute to give another Darcy Lecture. Back in Holland on March 16, I hit the road again to go to US on Wednesday March 21st. This was the first day of Iranian New Year, called Nowruz. Fortunately, this year was a leap year; so, the actual moment of the “delivery” of New Year (which is the most celebrated moment of the year in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kurdistan) was a day earlier. So, I was with my family on that important occasion.

The plan was to visit 10 sites within three weeks. The first stop was Colorado State University at Fort Collins. My lecture was scheduled during their yearly hydrology meeting known as Hydrology Days. They also award a well-known prize called “Hydrology Days Award.” This year the award was given to my longtime friend and collaborator, Mike Celia of Princeton University. My talk was on the same day that the award was given. So, I was very happy with this coincidence.

After Fort Collins, I went to Laramie to visit Mohammad Piri of University of Wyoming. It was about one hour drive. In US, the public transport is in many places very minimal. So, in this trip, I usually arrived at a big airport, rented a car, and drove to my destination(s). Also, almost everywhere, I had to drive to go from the hotel to the university or a restaurant. Fortunately, I don’t mind driving, specially if the scenery is nice. Wyoming is a cold place and hilltops were all covered with snow, even though they said it has been unusually warm this year. Wyoming is not a small state yet it has a small population (about 500,000). It also has lots of energy resources. They export more energy to other US states than any other state. So, it is a rich state.

From Laramie, I drove back to Denver in order to fly to Albuquerque. I used Albuquerque as a base to visit New Mexico Tech in Socorro (one hour drive to the South) and Los Alamos National Lab (two hours drive to the North). I had a quiet Sunday in Albuquerque and strolled in the city center, which has an American Indian architecture. It was a gorgeous weather and there was an Indian music and dance festival going on. Very pleasant. I also found some souvenirs for my grandsons.

Most of my evenings are spent on doing emails in a hotel room. I am not much of a TV watcher but if I were, I would have had a hard time watching TV in US. There are tens of channels, many of them specializing in specific programs: cooking, history, religion, sport, weather, music, animals, tourism, congress, fashion, etc. But, a 30-minute program easily takes one hour because of all the commercials. Once I quickly zipped through 54 channels and 28 of them were showing commercials at the same moment!

After lecturing in Socorro on Monday and in Los Alamos on Tuesday, I drove back to Albuquerque to fly to next stop: Austin, Texas. Although Albuquerque and Austin are not small cities and are not far from each other, still there are no direct
flights between them. Most airlines have a hub (a large city from which they operate) in every region and to travel in that region, one always has to fly via that hub. So, to go to Austin, I had to fly into Houston, or Denver, or Salt Lake City, or some other large city in the area (depending on the airline) and from there to Austin. This means that flying within US may actually take a lot of time. So, I started in Albuquerque at 5 pm, changed plane in Houston, and by the time I arrived in Austin, picked up the car, and got to the hotel, it was midnight! I would have probably arrived earlier if I had driven. The hotel was a bed and breakfast which had no reception in the evenings. I had instructions where to find the key to my room, which was in a one-story villa in a residential area. But, I could not find the key and I didn’t dare to look around the house too much as I looked very suspicious and I had been warned that in Texas they might shoot at you at night if not at the right house! So, finally, I gave up and using my GPS started to find hotels nearby and called to find which one had a room for me. Finally, I found a room at Super 8 Motel and it was 1:30 am by the time I lied down on my bed!

Visit to the University of Texas, Austin was very good. I had two full days there and I got to meet many of the staff and graduate students doing research in porous media. There are strong porous media groups in departments of Geosciences, Civil Engineering, Mathematics, and Petroleum Engineering, with some of the most well-known names in porous media research. There are a large number of Iranians among the professors and PhD students of Petroleum Engineering. Professor Kamy Sepehrnoori took me to a Persian restaurant. That was very nice. Another nice thing was that my wife’s cousin lives in Austin. So, I spent a good part of Saturday with her and her family, visiting the Botanical Garden and having lunch at a Texas barbeque restaurant.

On Saturday afternoon, I flew to New Orleans. Again, I had to change plane in Houston. The plan was to go to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge (an hour drive from New Orleans). But, I decided to stay overnight in New Orleans to visit the city on Sunday. This was a good decision. New Orleans has an old part (the French Quarter), which is very nice. It has a lively atmosphere, with lots of jazz music, and other street performances (including many fortune tellers). From New Orleans I went to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge (April 2-3); then to University of Florida, Gainesville (April 3-5); and from there to Florida International University in Miami (April 5-7). On Saturday, my host Mike Sukop took me to hiking the Florida Trail, which starts at the Southern end of the Everglades. We hiked 8 miles in about three hours. It was beautiful.

From Miami, I went to Princeton, where I stayed with very good friends Lin and Mike. They are wonderful hosts. In Princeton, I took time to walk around the city to bring back fond memories from the time I studied there.

After three days in Princeton, I went to Clemson University, on April 11, to give a lecture during their yearly Hydrogeology Symposium. But, as I said, in US, it is not easy to get from one place to another, even if they are not far. I had to drive for about an hour and half from Princeton to the Newark airport, fly to Atlanta, and then drive more than two hours to Clemson. After lecturing on April 12th, I went back to Holland on the same day. This was a very busy tour!