



Amsterdam

📍 020 / POP 780,600

Includes »

Sights	41
Activities	70
Tours	70
Festivals & Events	72
Sleeping	72
Eating	81
Drinking	88
Entertainment	92
Shopping	94

Best Places to Eat

- » Piet de Leeuw (p84)
- » Gartine (p81)
- » Latei (p82)
- » De Kas (p87)
- » Van Dobben (p84)

Best Places to Stay

- » Cocomama (p77)
- » Collector (p79)
- » Backstage Hotel (p77)
- » Hotel Résidence Le Coin (p73)
- » Hotel Brouwer (p73)

Why Go?

Amsterdam works its fairy-tale magic in many ways: via the gabled Golden Age buildings, the glinting boat-filled canals, and especially the cosy, centuries-old brown cafes, where candles burn low and beers froth high. Art admirers will be hard-pressed to ogle a more masterpiece-packed city, thanks to rich collections at the Rijks, Van Gogh, Stedelijk and Hermitage museums. Music fans can tune into concert halls booked solid with entertainment from all over the globe. And hedonists? Amsterdam's risqué side beckons, from the women in the Red Light District windows to the cannabis-selling coffeeshops (though these pursuits are facing more and more restrictions).

The city is remarkably intimate and accessible, its compact core ripe for rambling. You never know what you'll find among the atmospheric lanes: a hidden garden, an antique book market, a 17th-century distillery – always worlds within worlds, where nothing ever seems the same twice.

When to Go

Summer is the peak time, when cafe terraces boom and festivals rock almost every weekend. Locals go on holiday in late July and August, so you might find your favourite restaurant closed. Visitor numbers start to taper in October, and by November off-peak rates begin in earnest. Ice skating, fireplace-warmed cafes and queue-less museums ease the chilly days from December through February. Crowds start coming back in March around Easter, and amass in full force around King's Day (27 April), Remembrance Day (May 4) and Liberation Day (May 5).

History

Around 1200, a fishing community known as Aemstelredamme – ‘the dam across the Amstel river’ – emerged at what is now Dam square. The town soon grew into a centre for sea trade. Unfettered by high taxes and medieval feudal structures, a society of individualism and capitalism took root. The modern idea of Amsterdam – free, open, progressive – was born.

The city flourished during the 17th century Golden Age. Merchants and artisans flocked in, Rembrandt painted, and city planners built the canals. By the next century though, international wars and trade competition stagnated the local economy.

In 1806 Napoleon's brother Louis became king of Holland. He eventually moved into the city hall on Dam square and transformed it into the Royal Palace. Infrastructure projects such as Centraal Station, the Rijksmuseum and harbour expansion followed later in the 19th century.

WWI and the Great Depression took their toll in the form of food shortages and increasing poverty. WWII brought hardship, hunger and devastation to the local Jewish community during the Nazi occupation. Only one in every 16 of Amsterdam's 90,000 Jews survived the war.

During the 1960s, Amsterdam became Europe's ‘Magic Centre’: hippies smoked dope on the Dam and camped in Vondelpark. In 1972 the first coffeeshop opened, and in 1976 marijuana was decriminalised

to free up police resources for combating hard drugs.

By the 1990s the city's economy had shifted to white-collar jobs and a thriving service industry, while gentrification increased. The ethnic make-up had changed too, with non-Dutch nationalities (particularly Moroccans, Surinamese and Turks) comprising more than 45% of the population.

Two high-profile murders and protests over immigration marked the first years of the 21st century. Recently Amsterdammers have turned their attention to a new metro line, massive artificial suburban islands and other grand urban projects. The Red Light District clean-up and coffeeshop closures also occupy local politics.

Sights

Amsterdam is compact and easy to roam on foot. Hop on the occasional tram if you need a rest. The major sights are clustered in the city centre or within a few kilometres, such as the Old South's art museums (3km from Centraal Station).

For more in-depth explorations, pick up Lonely Planet's *Amsterdam* city guide or *Pocket Amsterdam* guide.

MEDIEVAL CENTRE

Amsterdam's heart beats in its tourist-heavy medieval core. The Royal Palace rises up here, but the main thing to do is wander the twisting lanes past 17th-century pubs, hidden gardens and eye-popping speciality

AMSTERDAM IN...

Two Days

On day one, goggle at the masterpieces in the **Van Gogh Museum** and **Rijksmuseum**, side by side in the Old South. Spend the afternoon in the city centre getting a dose of Dutch history at the **Dam**, **Amsterdam Museum**, **Begijnhof** or **Royal Palace**. At night venture into the eye-popping **Red Light District**, then sip in a brown cafe like **In 't Aepjen**. Start the next day browsing the **Albert Cuypmarkt**, Amsterdam's largest street bazaar. Make your way over to the Southern Canal Belt and peek in **Museum Van Loon**, the **Kattenkabinet** or another opulent canal house before taking a **canal boat tour**. At night party at hyperactive, neon-lit **Leidseplein**. Check at the **Uitburo** for concerts or show tickets; **Paradiso** and **Melkweg** host the coolest agendas.

Four Days

On day three head to the Western Canals and immerse yourself in the **Negen Straatjes**, a tic-tac-toe board of oddball speciality shops. The haunting **Anne Frank Huis** is nearby, and is a must. Spend the evening in the **Jordaan** for a *gezellig* dinner and canalside drinks. Begin the following day at **Museum het Rembrandthuis**, then mosey over to the Plantage for the **Amsterdam Tattoo Museum** and **Brouwerij 't IJ**, an organic beer-maker at the foot of a windmill.