



Friesland (Fryslân)

Includes ➔

Leeuwarden (Ljouwert)	195
Waddenzee Coast ...	198
Harlingen (Harns) ...	198
Southwestern Friesland	199
Sneek (Snits)	199
Hindeloopen (Hylpen)	201
Frisian Islands	201
Vlieland	202
Terschelling	203
Ameland	204
Schiermonnikoog...	205

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Restaurant By Ús (p197)
- ➔ De Tjotter (p199)
- ➔ Café-Restaurant de Hinde (p201)
- ➔ De Walrus (p200)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel-Paleis Stadhoudelijk Hof (p196)
- ➔ 't Heerenlogement (p199)
- ➔ Hotel Pension van der Werff (p206)

Why Go?

At first, Friesland seems typically Dutch: it's flat, it's green and there are plenty of cows (the namesake black-and-white variety). But explore a bit and you'll find its differences. For one, the province has its own language, as you'll see on road signs.

Even by Dutch standards, Frieslanders are a very self-reliant bunch. Here they didn't just have to build dykes to protect their land, they had to build the land as well. North Friesland segues into the Waddenzee in such a subtle way that the transition from watery mud to muddy water is elusive – albeit Unesco recognised. Across this shallow body of water stretches what is arguably the country's supreme summertime destination: the slender Waddenzee Islands, each an appealing combination of forest, dunes and glorious beaches, ripe for exploration and threaded with many miles of cycling paths.

At the province's centre is Leeuwarden, the sort of beguiling old Dutch town where you soon settle in and have a favourite cafe. Elsewhere, craggy old fishing villages like Hindeloopen are finding new life as evocative tourist destinations.

When to Go

- ➔ Summer is the obvious time to visit Friesland. Water sports such as sailing on the IJsselmeer are at their peak and offshore islands have the most to offer.
- ➔ Arrive on Terschelling in late June for the anything-goes Oerol festival or make it to Sneek in August for its major late-summer sailing event.
- ➔ Off-season old towns like Leeuwarden and Harlingen reward as well with moody canals and riveting museums.
- ➔ If conditions are just right in winter – deep frozen, that is – the nation pauses for the province-spanning ice-skating race known as the Elfstedentocht.



Friesland Highlights

- 1 Exploring the excellent museums and shady backstreets of **Leeuwarden** (p195).
- 2 Finding your own little piece of solitude on the isle of **Schiermonnikoog** (p205).

- 3 Kicking back in **Hindeloopen** (p201), a timeless coastal town.
- 4 Cycling through the sand dunes of **Terschelling** (p203).
- 5 Spending your days

enveloped in nature on **Ameland** (p204).

- 6 Watching boaters navigate the old canals of **Harlingen** (p198).
- 7 Taking to the waters of the myriad lakes around **Sneek** (p199).

History

Having dredged their home out of the Waddenzee armload by armload, the Frisians are no strangers to struggling with their natural environment.

Farming, fishing and shipbuilding have been the area's principal activities for centuries, and made Friesland one of the wealthiest regions in the Netherlands in the pre-republic era. The Frisians became integrated further into Dutch society – not entirely willingly –

in 1932 when the Afsluitdijk (Barrier Dyke) opened, closing the Zuiderzee. This provided better links to Amsterdam and the south but was devastating for small fishing villages, who suddenly found themselves sitting beside a lake.

Language

Frisians speak Frisian, which is actually closer (in some ways) to German and Old English