



The Netherlands

Includes »

Amsterdam.....	852
Zaanse Schans.....	864
Alkmaar.....	864
The Randstad.....	864
Haarlem.....	864
Leiden.....	866
Den Haag.....	867
Delft.....	870
Rotterdam.....	871
Utrecht.....	876
The Delta Region....	878
Middelburg.....	879
Deventer.....	880
Maastricht.....	880

Why Go?

Great Dutch artists Rembrandt, Vermeer and Van Gogh have spanned the centuries, and touring the Netherlands you'll see why. Discover clichés such as tulips and windmills, or stroll canals in the midst of 17th-century splendour in beautiful small towns such as Leiden and Delft. Of course, enticing Amsterdam's phenomenal and diverse nightlife is world-famous, from its throbbing clubs to quaint brown cafes.

The locals live on bicycles and you can too. Almost every train station has a shop to rent a bike – you'll soon be off on the ubiquitous bike paths, wherever your mood takes you.

Finally there's the Dutch themselves. Warm, friendly and funny, you'll have a hard time being alone in a cafe as someone will soon strike up a conversation, and usually in English. Revel in Amsterdam, don't miss exquisite Maastricht or pulsing Rotterdam, and pick a passel of small towns to add contrast. It's a very big small country.

Best Places to Eat

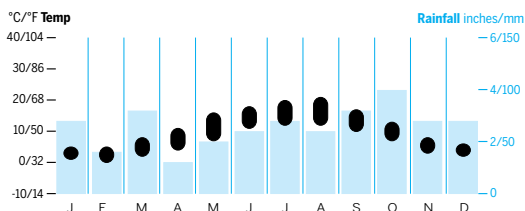
- » Blauw (p878)
- » De Dames Proeverij (p867)
- » De Ballentent (p875)
- » Gadjah Mas (p882)
- » Van Dobben (p859)

Best Places to Stay

- » Cocomama (p858)
- » Hotel de Emauspoort (p870)
- » Hotel New York (p874)
- » Kruissherenhotel (p881)
- » Stempels (p865)

When to Go

Amsterdam



Mar–May

Holland explodes in colour as billions of bulbs bloom.

Jul Mild summer

temps and lots of daylight keep you outside cycling and drinking.

Dec–Feb The

Dutch passion for ice skating is on display on canals nationwide.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** euro (€)
- » **Language** Dutch, English widespread
- » **Money** ATMs common, cash preferred for small purchases
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 41,526 sq km
- » **Capital** Amsterdam
- » **Country code** 31
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82
Canada	C\$1	€0.77
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78

Set Your Budget

- » **Double room** €80–150
- » **Two-course meal** €15
- » **Heineken** €3
- » **Bicycle hire** €10 per day

Resources

- » **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/amsterdam) Destination information, bookings, forum and more.
- » **Netherlands Board of Tourism** (www.holland.com) Comprehensive tourist information.
- » **Windmill Database** (www.molendatabase.nl) Get the spin on windmills across the Netherlands.

Connections

Train connections to neighbouring countries are good. Amsterdam is linked to Cologne (2½ hours) and Brussels (two hours on the Thalys/Fyra high-speed line), where you can connect with Eurostar to London. Maastricht is right on the Belgian and German borders; connections to Cologne and Brussels take 1½ hours. It would be easy to put together a circle itinerary that includes the wines of the Moselle Valley in Germany and the beers of Belgium.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend three days canal exploring, museum hopping and cafe swooping in Amsterdam. Work your way through the ancient towns of the Randstad and the modern vibe of Rotterdam, and save a day for the grandeur of Maastricht.

Two Weeks

Allow four days for Amsterdam's many delights, plus a day trip to the old towns of the north, such as Edam, and a day or two exploring some of the region's smaller towns. Then add a day each at beautiful Delft, regal Hague, cute Utrecht, Rotterdam, and the monumental Delta Project. Finish off with two days in Maastricht.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Vlaamse frites** The iconic French fries smothered in mayonnaise or myriad other gooey sauces.
- » **Beer** While the big names like Heineken are ubiquitous, small brewers like Gulpen, Haarlem's Jopen, Bavaria, Drie Ringen, Leeuw and Utrecht are the best.
- » **Gouda** The tastiest varieties have strong, complex flavours and are best enjoyed with a bottle of wine or two. Try some *oud* (old) Gouda, hard and rich in flavour and a popular bar snack with mustard. *Oud Amsterdammer* is a real delight, deep orange and crumbly with white crystals of ripeness.
- » **Indonesian** The most famous dish is *rijsttafel* (rice table): an array of spicy savoury dishes such as braised beef, pork satay and ribs served with white rice.
- » **Erwtensoup** Pea soup rich with onions, carrots, smoked sausage and bacon. Ideally a spoon stuck upright in the pot should remain standing (not served in summer).
- » **Kroketten** Croquettes are dough balls with various fillings that are crumbed and deep-fried; the variety called *bitterballen* are a popular brown cafe snack served with mustard.