



# Northeast Netherlands

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## Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Cafe Wolthoorn (p214)
- ➔ De Pintelier (p214)
- ➔ Café de Sleutel (p214)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Prinsenhof Groningen (p213)
- ➔ Auberge Corps De Garde (p212)
- ➔ Stee in Stad (p212)

## Why Go?

Few travellers venture to this far corner of the Netherlands, but they're missing out on the country's rural heart, a place where traditions are kept alive and prehistoric relics dot the landscape.

The provincial capital of Groningen is a buzzing, youthful city. Museums, restaurants, bars, theatres, canals, festivals – it's the cultural point of reference in the north and makes a fine base for further exploration.

On the nearby coast you can try the strangely intriguing pastime of *wadlopen* (mudflat-walking). Or head to Bourtange, on the eastern border with Germany; its hefty defences are just as forbidding now as they were in the 16th century. To the south, the province of Drenthe is like a great garden with shifting tableaux of sheep pastures, stream-cut peat bogs, marshlands and old forest, much of it accessible only by bike or on foot. As a bonus, *hunebedden* (neolithic burial chambers) are scattered amidst the province's eastern hills.

## When to Go

- ➔ Summer is the obvious time to visit. The long days provide a surfeit of light that fades ever so slowly into dusk and the cafe terraces overflow with high spirits well into the night. Groningen punctuates this with Noorderzon, an August festival of arts and frolic.
- ➔ Spring and autumn have their own charms, when you'll see few other visitors.
- ➔ In winter an abundance of cultural venues make indoor alternatives.



## Northeast Netherlands Highlights

- 1 Experiencing northern culture at its best in vibrant **Groningen** (p208).
- 2 Stomping out a muddy trail on the **Wadden mudflats** (p216).
- 3 Walking the fortified

ramparts of 16th-century **Bourtange** (p216).

4 Wondering at the **hunebedden** (p218), mighty stone dolmens dotting the landscape.

5 Roaming the beautiful marshlands of

**Dwingelderveld National Park** (p218).

6 Pondering the traumatic, not-so-distant past at **Kamp Westerbork** (p218).

7 Cycling the rural byways of **Drenthe** (p217) province.

## GRONINGEN CITY

050 / POP 200,336

Looking at a map of the Netherlands, Groningen seems a long way from anywhere – but looks can be deceiving.

This vibrant, youthful city is very much part of the comings and goings of the country, and has all you'd expect of a progressive metropolis. Its student population (which has been around since 1614 when the university opened) of 40,000 ensures a healthy,

hedonistic nightlife exists alongside the museums its more mature, established residents (think professors) demand.

Groningen was already an independent city-state and key trading centre by the late Middle Ages; the Martinitorren stands as a reminder of this early boom. The iconic church tower was one of the few remnants of the Golden Age to survive fierce fighting late in World War II before Groningen's liberation on 17 April 1945. Now an ambitious