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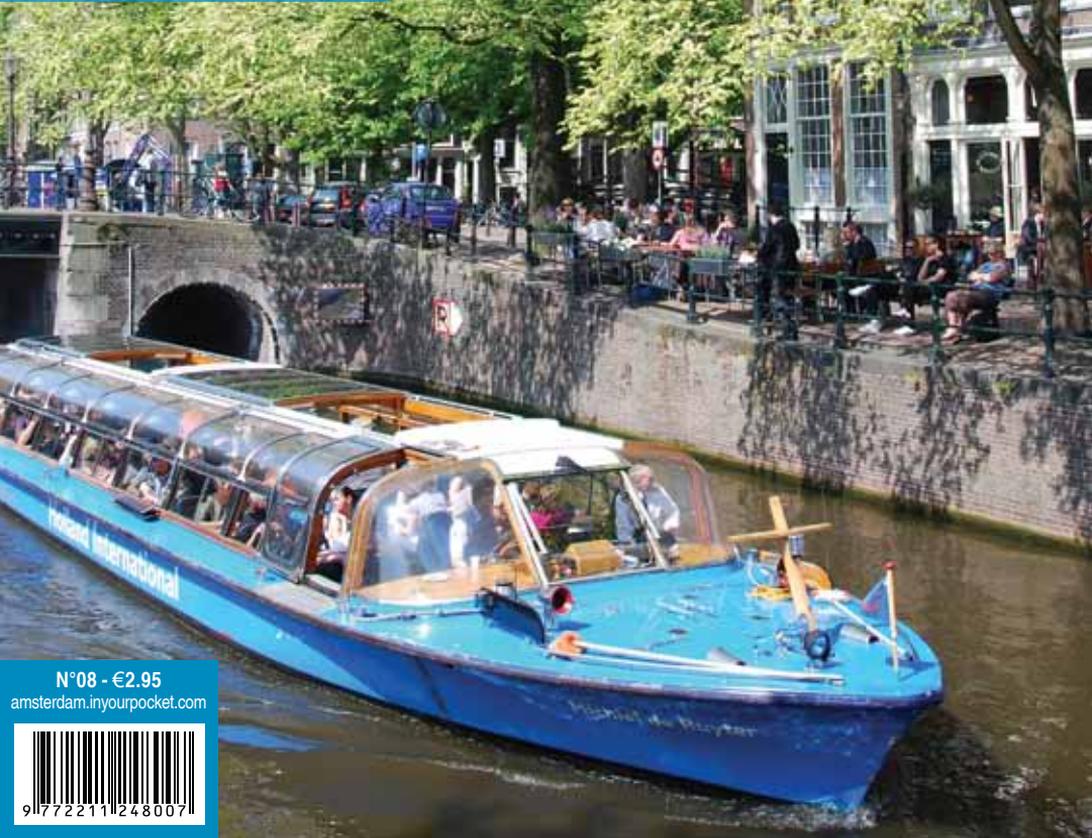
Spring 2013

Bet van Beeren

A brief look at the
Queen of the Zeedijk

Royal Changes

Celebrate Queen's Day and a
coronation this spring



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Although Amsterdam is now one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world, it wasn't always such a pillar of tolerance. Read about gay rights pioneer Bet van Beeren on p.103. Photo courtesy of Café 't Mandje

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If you're interested in Holland's monarchy then read all about the nation's royal family, past and present, on p.94. To find out more about this year's Queen's Day and Willem Alexander's coronation see p.21

Spring has arrived in Amsterdam and with it an unavoidable flood of tulip tourists. Yes, people just can't seem to get enough of this colourful flower that has long been both an economic resource and a symbol of the Netherlands. If you're one of these travellers then just look anywhere in the Central Station or in the Damrak for signs advertising trips to the legendary Keukenhof. If, however, you've come to the capital of Holland to experience everything it's got to offer, then you've come to the right place. Unlike other city guides, Amsterdam In Your Pocket is a complete guide to the entire city and its seven different districts, so you can find your way to the Museum Quarter in Zuid for 17th-century masterpieces or to Zuidoost for huge concert venues and even bigger shopping malls. You'll find what you need to enjoy the city's canals or the funky neighbourhoods of West, Oost and Nieuw-West. You can also discover a rural landscape of farms and charming villages just a short free ferry ride away in Noord, just beyond the Central Station.

You'll also find plenty of practical information in this guide, but thankfully it isn't just a boring collection of addresses. Read about gay rights pioneer Bet van Beeren who opened what could possibly be the world's first gay bar or take a look at our feature about Holland's royal family. Discover the joy that is Queen's Day and see how you can witness a coronation. This and much more is all at your fingertips with Amsterdam In Your Pocket.

Newsstand

"I had a good browse of the Amsterdam guide... Practical things, such as getting around, are covered in great detail and look bang up to date. Reviews of places to eat and drink are plentiful and knowledgeable, and there are informative reads on subjects such as Ajax football club..."

The Daily Mail

Cover story



Although Amsterdam has hundreds of sights and attractions worth visiting, in our humble opinion there's nothing better than a leisurely stroll along the Brouwersgracht or Brewers' Canal featured on this issue's cover to soak up some authentic local atmosphere. Naturally, a canal cruise is also always a good option.

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ESSENTIAL CITY GUIDES

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The World of In Your Pocket



It's now 21 years since we published the first *In Your Pocket* guide - to **Vilnius** in Lithuania - in which time we have grown to become the largest publisher of locally produced city guides in Europe. We now cover more than **75** cities across the continent (with **Tbilisi**, in **Georgia**, the latest city to be *pocketed*) and the number of concise, witty, well-written and downright indispensable *In Your Pocket* guides published each year is approaching **five million**. We also publish an **iPhone app**, including more than 40 guides, which can be downloaded for free from the *AppStore*. Search for 'YP Guides' by name.

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Editor's note

The editorial content of In Your Pocket guides is independent from paid-for advertising. Sponsored listings are clearly marked as such. We welcome all readers' comments and suggestions. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information at the time of going to press and assume no responsibility for changes and errors.

Arriving in Amsterdam is simple and no matter what mode of transportation you choose nearly all roads lead to the Amsterdam Central Station right in the heart of the city. From here it's usually only a short walk or tram ride to your hotel or hostel.

By plane

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS) is located less than 10km southwest of the city centre. It's one of the busiest airports in Europe receiving nearly 50 million passengers each year, but it's easy to navigate and pleasantly efficient. You'll find your luggage at one of 15 baggage belts and luggage trolleys are abundant and free. If you're planning on taking the train to Amsterdam, which is the easiest way to reach the city centre, you might want to buy a ticket at one of the yellow and blue machines next to the conveyor belts while you're waiting for your suitcase. The machines are fairly self-explanatory and available in English and you can pay for the short journey with a credit or bankcard. Once you clear customs you'll enter the large arrivals hall, which is essentially part airport, part train station, part shopping centre and part food court. Although located under one roof, the building is divided, nominally at least, into terminals 1 - 4. Just walk straight to the main hall to find most services that you might need including transportation to the city. An official **tourist information** centre is available in terminal 2 (open 07:00 - 22:00). **Luggage storage** and lockers are available downstairs between terminals 1 and 2. Lockers cost €6/24hrs and you can pay with a card or with coins. You can also leave your bags at the storage office for the same price, but it's only open from 06:15 - 22:45. A small bank of lockers is also available on the ground floor between terminals 3 and 4. Banks, **currency exchanges** and ATMs are plentiful so you won't have any problems getting money.

Getting to town: If you'd like a **taxi**, then head to the far right of the arrivals hall after clearing customs and you'll find a Travel Taxi office where you can order a cab and watch some TV until they call your name. **Buses** and **hotel shuttles** are available outside the terminal. Just walk straight through the arrivals hall and you'll see the stops outside with the names of the city's biggest hotels that operate their own shuttles. Each chain has its own schedule, which is clearly marked at the stop. You can also take the blue Connexxion Schiphol Hotel (www.connexion.nl) shuttle that stops at a number of large hotels along a planned route. A very long list of hotels is posted at the stand. A single ticket costs €15.50 and children 4 - 14 travel for half price. If your hotel isn't listed it's possible that it can be arranged. City bus Nr.197 departs regularly for Leidseplein in the centre of Amsterdam as do other buses to a variety of other destinations in Amsterdam.

If you're like most people you won't even leave the terminal and you'll head downstairs to catch a fast **train** that will take you to Amsterdam Central Station in 15 minutes for only €3.70. Just walk into the main hall to find a list of train departures. If you haven't already bought a ticket you can purchase one from one of the many ticket machines with a credit card. Just choose English as your language on the touch-screen then choose the following steps: single, destination A.Centraal, 2nd class, full fare, valid today and the number of tickets. Choose your method of payment, insert your credit card, enter your PIN, confirm the price and then wait for your ticket to be ed. Once you reach the Central Station see 'Arriving by train.' You can also buy train tickets at the Train Tickets & Services office but you'll pay an extra €0.50. ▶

Schiphol Amsterdam Airport Evert v/d Beekstraat 202, tel. (+31) 207 94 08 00/09 00 01 41, www.schiphol.nl.

By train

Amsterdam's Central Station is a monumental building that was completed in 1889. Although an incredible achievement in its own right, it was later criticised by urban planners for having cut off the city of canals from its most essential waterway, the River IJ. Prior to its construction many of the city's historic cafés were afforded an impressive vista of ships' masts bobbing up and down in the distance. Today, the massive edifice and its surroundings are a bit of a mess as the station is being renovated and retrofitted to accommodate a controversial new metro line.

You'll arrive at one of 15 platforms and then walk downstairs into the central hall, which is full of newsstands, kiosks, fast food restaurants and shops. A GWK Travellex (www.gwktravelex.nl - open 08:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 22:00) **currency exchange** and an ATM are available near the south city centre side between platforms 1/2 and 4/5. For **toilets** that cost €0.50 you have to go up to platform 2. At the far end of the same platform are a Burger King, Ben & Jerry's, an upmarket restaurant called 1e Klas (1st Class) and a bar, Café Balkon.

For **tourist information** we recommend you exit the building on the city centre side and walk across the street to the official tourist information centre (see Tourist information). Lockers for **luggage storage** are located on the far east side of the station, but it might take a while to find an empty locker and even more time to figure out how to use one. You can only pay with a credit card. Place your belongings in a locker and close the door. Find the nearest keypad that corresponds with the numbered section of lockers you have chosen. Confirm that the locker number listed is the locker you have chosen and then swipe your credit card. Just stick it in the slot and pull it out. A ticket good for 24 hours will be ed. When you want to remove your luggage just place the ticket into the slot and the door of your locker will automatically open.

Getting to town: You are in the very centre of town and all of Amsterdam lays before you. Many of the city's best, and worst, hotels are only a short walk from here, but if you're staying in another section of town such as the Museum District you can take one of the many trams outside. Buy a ticket from the driver for €2.60. He will activate the card for you, but you have to place it up against one of the ticket readers upon exiting the tram. If you plan on using public transport frequently in Amsterdam it might be worth buying an extended ticket. Exit the train station and walk across the street to the GVB office (open 07:00 - 21:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 18:00) to the left of tourist information to buy tickets. Free ferries to Amsterdam-Noord are available on the north side of the station on the River IJ. ▶

Tourist information

Tourist Information ATCB F-3, Central Station (Platform 2b), tel. (+31) 90 04 00 40 40, www.iamsterdam.com. The information centre in the train station can get quite crowded, so you might want to just cross the street and enter the white building to find yet another official information centre. Take some brochures, buy a guide or take a number if you'd like to talk to a staff member. They can give you ideas and advice about excursions, set you up with a map and help with plenty of other pressing questions. The office to the left can explain the public transportation system and sell you tickets for trams and buses. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 19:00, Sun 09:00 - 17:00. Also at A-1, Stationsplein 10; Schiphol Airport (Arrivals 2). 

Amsterdam is a wonderfully walkable city and many of its major sights are located in or near the city centre. Public transportation is excellent and we don't recommend driving within the ring of canals. Naturally, cycling is the preferred Dutch method of travel and some would say it's the only way to truly experience the city.

Public transport

GVB (www.gvb.nl) is Amsterdam's public transportation company and it provides integrated metro, tram and bus service throughout the city and its surrounding areas. Since 2010 a comprehensive OV-chipcard ticket system allows you to travel on the metro, trams, buses and even trains using just one card. There are a variety of OV-chipcard options and you can upload them with travel credits at special machines located at stations and even in most supermarkets. You can purchase OV-chipcards for 24, 48, 72, 96, 120, 144 and 168 hours, which afford you unlimited travel on all trams, buses, metros and night buses and an economical way to explore the city. A one-hour OV card can be purchased onboard from GVB drivers and conductors, but a premium is charged for this ticket. It costs €2.70 for one hour of unlimited travel on different buses and trains in the city that begins once you board your selected mode of transportation and check in by placing it next to the scanners near the doors. You must also scan your card when leaving the vehicle.

Bicycle rental

There are many ways to see Amsterdam and its surroundings but our favourite option is to hire a set of wheels. Amsterdam also has plenty of places to park your bike for free, but be sure to remember where you left it. All told, Amsterdam commuters cycle more than 2,000,000km every day!

Amsterbike H-4, Plet Heinkade 11a, tel. (+31) 204 19 90 63, www.amsterbike.eu. Bike and scooter rental.

► Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Wed, Sat, Sun. Prices: €8.50/3 hours, €12.50/day.

Black Bikes F-9, Lijnbaansgracht 282, tel. (+31) 206 70 85 31, www.black-bikes.com. A full day bike rental will set you back only €10 and it has the longest opening hours in the city. ► Open 08:00 - 20:00, Sat, Sun 09:00 - 19:00. 

Holland Rent a Bike A-2, Damrak 247, tel. (+31) 206 22 32 07. Although the name may not be the most original, this company's service is outstanding. It rents and repairs bikes, steps and scooters. ► Open 07:00 - 19:00, Sat 08:00 - 18:00, Sun 09:00 - 18:00. 

King Bikes Kerkstraat 143 HS, tel. (+31) 204 22 10 26, kingbikes.nl. You can expect service with a genuine smile at this bike rental agency and you can even buy food and drinks at its mini-supermarket to replace all of those calories you'll burn off while pedalling around Amsterdam. Best of all, you can rent a normal bike without any flashy colours or other visible signs that would identify you from a distance as yet another foreign tourist who doesn't know how to ride a bike. Rent here and blend in with the locals. ► Open 09:00 - 22:00. 

Mac Bike H-5, Waterlooplein 199, tel. (+31) 204 28 70 05, www.macbike.nl. For more than two decades Mac Bike has been renting bikes to Amsterdam's tourists and with four locations around town, it's handy too. It also sells and repairs bicycles and offers tours of the city. For 2 euros you can also buy an art-based map. The goal of the map is to offer a few hours of an enjoyable bike ride in an insightful and appealing way. The attention is focused on art in public spaces, sightseeing and architectural artwork.

► Open 09:00 - 17:45. Also at F/G-3, Stationsplein 5; F-8, Weteringschans 2; D-8, Marnixstraat 220.



Tour boats on the Damrak

M.Zaprawskis

Mike's Bike Rental Shop G-7, Kerkstraat 134, tel. (+31) 206 22 79 70, mikesbiketoursamsterdam@yahoo.com, www.mikesbiketoursamsterdam.com. Mike's Bikes is famous all over Europe for its sightseeing tours, but we recommend its beach cruisers with special tires that hardly ever go flat. Each bike also comes with two locks, which isn't a bad idea in Amsterdam where bike theft is as common as dope smoke. ► Open 09:00 - 18:00. (€5 - 15). 

Rent a Dutch bike E-8, Overtroom 45, tel. (+31) 206 83 33 69, www.dutchbikeamsterdam.nl. This place has everything from bikes and scooters to tandem, cargo or kids' bikes. Deposit and ID required. ► Open 09:00 - 18:00. Also at Reguliers Dwarvsstraat 97. 

Star Bike G-4, De Ruyterkade 127, tel. (+31) 206 20 32 15, fax (+31) 206 25 06 08, info@starbikesrental.com, www.starbikesrental.com. Blend in perfectly with the locals on a traditional Dutch Sparta 'black bike'. They even include picnic baskets! ► Open 08:00 - 19:00, Sat, Sun 09:00 - 19:00. Prices: half a day for €5, full day for €7. 

Boat rental

Boaty Jozef Israelskade, tel. (+31) 627 14 94 93, info@boaty.nl, www.boaty.nl. Why take a canal boat tour when you can rent your own boat and ferry around your friends? You don't even need a licence to drive these electric powered vessels! The company is located near the Hotel Okura on the Jozef Israelskade.

Canal Bike H-8, Weteringschans 26-1hg, tel. (+31) 90 03 33 44 42, info@canal.nl, www.canal.nl. Rents pedal boats for Amsterdam canals near the Rijksmuseum.

Sloep Delen C-6, Nassaukade 69, tel. (+31) 204 19 10 07, info@sloepdelen.nl, www.sloepdelen.nl. This company rents 15 electric boats from two locations at Nassaukade 69 and at Borneosteiger 1. You can reserve a date and time online. All boats are powered by (environmentally friendly) electricity and they're easy to navigate even without any prior experience. ► Open 10:00 - 22:00. €50/hour.

Metro

The metro is fast and efficient. It's a combination of underground subway and light rail on the surface (*sneltram*). Only some 3.5km of track between the Central Station and the Amstel are actually located underground. The four metro lines all depart from Central Station and head out to their final destinations at Westwijk, Gein, Gaasperplas and Isolatorweg. A new line to Noord will be added in the future, hence all of the construction around town.

Buses

City buses are primarily used to reach outlying suburbs or as a final option once the trams have stopped running. Night buses operate from midnight until 07:00 with routes connecting Central Station, Rembrandtplein and Leidseplein.

Car rental

Europcar Schiphol Airport (Aankomstpassage 10), tel. (+31) 203 16 41 90, www.europcar.com. Cars from €40/day. ▶ Open 06:30 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 07:00 - 23:00. Also at E-9, Overtroom 197.

Sixt Rent a car F-5, Prins Hendrikkade 20a, tel. (+31) 206 24 29 55, www.sixt.nl. Straight opposite Central Station this company rents all kind of cars and vans. Also at Schiphol Airport and other Amsterdam locations. ▶ From €33 a day.

Ferries

Most Amsterdam ferries are available behind the Central Station and connect the city centre with Amsterdam Noord on the other side of the River IJ. In total there are six ferry lines which transport pedestrians, bicycles and sometimes mopeds. Most of the lines are free with the exception of the Javaveer (Java ferry). A single crossing costs only €1 though and children under the age of six, dogs, buggies and bicycles can cross free of charge.

Amsterdam Passenger Terminal 0-1, Piet Heinkade 27, tel. (+31) 205 09 10 00, www.ptamsterdam.com. Passenger Terminal Amsterdam hosts more than 250,000 people every year. The striking architectural monument is within walking distance of the Central Station and only 25km from the North Sea. The cosy hallway offers a giant chess game, some food venues, a functional kids corner and a luggage room with instructions in six languages. ▶

Petrol stations

Texaco D-7, Marnixstraat 250. ▶ Open 24hrs. Also at Sarphatistraat 225. Open 07:00 - 21:00.

Taxis

You don't have to search far if you want to travel by taxi in Amsterdam. About 3500 taxis are active in the city. These taxis can be hailed on the street or found at one of more than 50 official taxi ranks. The ranks, identifiable by blue boards, can be found near tourist attractions such as the Dam, Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein. In addition to hailing taxis on the road, it's also possible to order a taxi by phone. Each taxi in Amsterdam must have a taxi meter on board. When a journey is charged with the taxi meter running, the customer pays a fixed flag-down rate, which includes the first 2km of the journey. The flag-down rate is a maximum of €7.86. After the first 2kms, a price per kilometre is charged of a maximum of €2.30/km.

Connexion Cateringweg 12, Schiphol, tel. (+31) 883 39 47 41, ahs@connexion.nl, www.schipholhotelsuttle.nl. Connexion is the biggest passenger transportation company in the Netherlands and has fixed prices from Schiphol Airport to Amsterdam from €32 - 42. You can also book a shared taxi ride on a minibus to one of 110 selected hotels in Amsterdam for €15.50. Tickets are available at platform A7 or at the Connexion Desk in Arrivals 4 opposite Starbucks. ▶ Open 06:00 - 21:00.

Electric Taxi Company Taxi-E Tel. (+31) 881 00 44 44, www.taxi-e.nl. This cab company uses environmentally-friendly electric cars. Free wi-fi is included in the price, credit cards are accepted and it offers cheap rates to the airport. ▶

TCA Taxi Tel. (+31) 207 77 77 77, www.tcataxi.nl. This 24-hour taxi company has stands at the Central Station, Leidseplein, Stopera City Hall, Westermarkt, Frederiksplein and Haarlemmerplein, but you can also call them and order a cab any time of the day or night. Drivers are safe and reliable and all of TCA's cars have permits that allow them to ride on tram tracks, which is essential during rush hour. ▶ Open 24hrs.

Watertaxi F-5, Stationsplein 8, tel. (+31) 205 35 63 63, www.water-taxi.nl. Water taxis can pick you up and drop you off at virtually any waterside address throughout Amsterdam and its environs including the smallest of Amsterdam canals. ▶ Prices: €1.75 - 2.25/minute. Maximum 8 people.

Trains

Train travel in the Netherlands is really the best option for getting around and there are three types of trains available. The High-Speed line covers larger distances quickly, which is ideal when travelling to Germany, Great Britain or Belgium, while the Stoptrein, not surprisingly, makes frequent stops between bigger cities. Finally, the Intercity offers fast connections between Dutch cities. Most of the stations are centrally located. You can easily find all train departures as well as ticket price information at www.ns.nl. The yellow timetables in the station show departure times and platform numbers. The route is shown at the top of each board. Tickets come in many forms. You have plenty of choices varying from singles and day returns, a weekend return or a day travel card. There are NS ticket machines at every station. You can pay cash or use a Maestro PIN at the NS Tickets & Service desk at major stations and the machines at Schiphol Airport and Amsterdam Central also accept credit cards.

Trams

Amsterdammers love their trams and you should, too! They provide the best way of getting around the city and run from 06:00 - 00:30. You shouldn't have to wait longer than 10 minutes at any tram stop. One-hour tickets for journeys across the city can be bought from newsagents or tram drivers. They cost €2.70, but if you plan on travelling a lot you're better off purchasing a 24-hour ticket for €7. You have to touch the scanner near the doors of the tram when entering and exiting the vehicle.



Take a free ferry across the River IJ

M.Zaprawski



Haarlem, with its attractive cityscape, is one of the most beautiful and oldest cities in the Netherlands. It is a pleasant city situated on the river Spaarne. Haarlem has a beautiful, historical city centre with many places of interest and a great variety of shops, cafés and restaurants. Moreover, Haarlem is traditionally a city of art and culture. Just a few kilometers away lies the North Sea with its splendid beaches. All of this makes Haarlem a wonderful place to be, only 15 minutes away from Amsterdam.

Monuments and almshouses

As you approach the city, the appearance of the Haarlem skyline in the distance offers an awe-inspiring sight, with its tallest landmark, St Bavo's Church dominating the cityscape. The inside of this church is also worth a look. It houses the famous Müller organ and tombs of well-known Haarlem citizens from the Golden Age, such as Frans Hals, Pieter Teyler and Pieter Jansz. Saenredam. But the city has many more stunning monuments, such as the Weighhouse, St John's Church, which houses the Municipal Archives of Noord-Holland and St Bavo's Cathedral at Leidsevaart.

Haarlem also boasts a staggering twenty-two courtyards with almshouses. They are a reminder of days gone by. Many of the courtyards with almshouses have since been modernised or demolished, but the remaining ones are havens of tranquillity in the middle of a bustling city. The oldest and the newest courtyard with almshouses in the Netherlands stand side by side in the city centre.

Museums and galleries

Haarlem has more than fifteen museums, which all house unique collections. The revolutionary painting style of the Dutch Golden Age first took root in Haarlem. Haarlem's best known painter from this era is Frans Hals after whom the Frans Hals Museum was named. Besides the world-famous paintings of members of the civic guard by Frans Hals, the museum houses a fine collection of art treasures from the Golden Age.

In 2013, Haarlem celebrates the centenary of the Frans Hals Museum with a special exhibition 'Frans Hals. Eye to Eye with Rembrandt, Rubens and Titiaan' and a Frans Hals Festival.



Teylers Museum is the oldest museum in the Netherlands (1779) and is nominated for the World Heritage Site of UNESCO. The interior of the museum, with the Oval Room as the jewel in its crown, is a work of art in itself. A visit to Teylers Museum takes you on a voyage of discovery through the ages, from minerals and fossils to drawings and paintings, scientific instruments, farthings and coins.

The Dolhuys, the Dutch national museum of psychiatry, offers an interactive experience of the history of psychiatry. De Hallen Haarlem is a museum of modern art that often features high-profile exhibitions. Haarlem also boasts several leading galleries, each with its own individual style.

Shopping

Haarlem is a paradise for shoppers. So it's no wonder that the city has been voted best shopping city in the Netherlands three times. The historical centre offers a diversity of shops. In addition to the high street, which houses the most important international retail chains, there are many delightful side streets with smaller shops. Haarlem really does surprise! Exclusive home furnishing shops, trendy fashion boutiques, shops that sell antiques and collectables, and a large range of specialist shops are all to be found in the charming and traffic-restricted city centre. Parking is available in the car parks situated on the edge of the central shopping area. Grote Markt is a ten-minute walk away from Haarlem station.

Food and drink

Haarlem has a large number of cafés and restaurants. These can be found near the city's squares, on the banks of the Spaarne and in the picturesque shopping streets. The main square in the old city centre is also a gastronomic paradise for foodies. The same applies to the area around the Spaarne and Botermarkt. Nearly all international cuisines are represented in Haarlem; from French to Spanish and Thai to Indonesian.

Nightlife

Haarlem has a lively city centre where there is always plenty going on. The four main cultural events venues in Haarlem (Stadsschouwburg Haarlem, Philharmonie, Toneelschuur and Patronaat) offer high-quality theatre, dance, film and music programmes. There are also many annual events and festivals in Haarlem, take a look at the calendar.

Accommodation

With so much to see and do in the vibrant city centre of Haarlem, you could easily spend a few days here. There is certainly no shortage of great places to stay in Haarlem. From intimate bed & breakfasts in magnificent buildings to luxury four-star hotels.

More information: www.haarlem.nl

Calendar of events

23 March-28 Jul	Exhibition: 'Frans Hals. Eye to Eye with Rembrandt, Rubens and Titiaan'
20-21 April	Flower Parade
30 April	Queen's Birthday
5 May	Bevrijdingspop
9-14 May	Frans Hals Festival
20 May	Street Organs
24-25 May	Flower Market
25 May	Edit Festival
8 June	Haarlem ShoppingNight
15-16 June	Houtfestival
21-30 June	International Choir Festival

Tourist information

Tourist Information Office Haarlem, Verwulf 11 (opposite V&D), 2011 GJ Haarlem, T +31 (0)900-616 16 00, E info@vwwhaarlem.nl, www.haarlem.nl

Pick up lots of brochures, the Haarlem Guide and a free citymap. Or book a guided tour or one of the special packages.
Open 9:30-17:30, Mon 13:00-17:00, Sat 10:00-17:00. Closed Sun.



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HARLEM

HAARLEM.NL

Read on and find out why the Dutch can smoke joints, but can't operate bicycles while intoxicated. Plenty of other funny facts about the Netherlands are available here.

Alcohol

Amsterdam is famous for its cafés and restaurants so you're never far from a tasty brew or a glass of wine. Heineken, Amstel and Bavaria are the nation's biggest brewers but other large local brands include Grolsch and Hertog Jan. A wide variety of excellent Belgian brews are also on offer at most bars, but keep an eye out for cafés selling beer from Amsterdam's own microbreweries 't IJ and De Prael. No trip to Amsterdam would be complete without a visit to one of the ancient bars at the beginning of the Zeedijk that specialise in locally distilled liqueurs and Dutch gin known as jenever. You must be at least 16 years old to drink beer or wine and 18 to imbibe spirits. If you look too young you'll be carded, so always bring identification. This holds true for supermarkets and off-licences, too. If you're a little too tipsy you'll probably be asked (firmly, yet kindly) to leave the premises and if you don't cooperate you could end up spending a night sobering up in a drunk tank.

Cycling

Being one of the smaller nations in the world, which is basically as flat as a pancake, the Netherlands is an attractive country for cyclists. Add to that an unbelievable selection of cycling paths and you'll see why the Dutch love their bikes so much. Unfortunately, riding a bike in big cities like Amsterdam can still be a nerve-racking experience. Cars, trucks, trams, buses, scooters and even pedestrians can all serve as terrifying obstacles that seem to pop up into your field of vision from nowhere, but other cyclists can also be just as dangerous. Although parents are confident enough in bicycle safety to attach carts to their bikes to transport their children around town, loads of other cyclists ignore traffic rules and basically ride wherever they like often causing mayhem on the streets.

Drugs

It comes as no surprise that in many places in the Netherlands coffeeshops sell marijuana and other so-called soft drugs to Dutch residents. And you may have also heard that dealing or possessing hard drugs is forbidden. You can be arrested for it and punishments are no laughing matter. Unfortunately, recent legislation on a national level has made the legality issue a little hazy. Although it is technically forbidden to serve non-residents, most coffeeshops in Amsterdam still sell their wares to tourists.

Market values

McDonald's Big Mac	€3.25	\$4.22	£2.83
Loaf of white bread	€0.55	\$0.71	£0.48
Snickers bar	€0.75	\$0.97	£0.65
0.7L of vodka	€7.99	\$10.38	£6.95
0.5L bottle of local beer	€0.54	\$0.70	£0.47
20 Marlboros	€4.80	\$6.23	£4.17
Public transport ticket	€2.70	\$3.51	£2.35
Cinema ticket	€9.00	\$11.69	£7.83
1l of petrol	€1.82	\$2.36	£1.58

Exchange rates (as of 14.03.2013)

US\$1 - €0.77, **£1** - €1.15, **¥100** - €0.80, **AUD\$1** - €0.80

Electricity

The electrical current is 220V AC, 50Hz. European plugs are a must.

Health & Safety

Amsterdam is a relatively safe city for both residents and tourists, but you should watch out for pickpockets and shady people offering drugs. Obviously, don't leave your belongings unattended and use common sense. There is a large police presence on the streets, especially around the Red Light District. It sounds silly, but people do occasionally fall into canals, sometimes with their bikes. Bicycle theft is fairly common which is why most rental companies offer insurance and require security deposits.

Language

Dutch is an Indo-European Germanic language that is mostly spoken in the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname (South America). It is closely connected to the Low German dialects which by now have largely been flooded by official German. These dialects managed to keep a number of proto-Germanic characteristics and for this reason Dutch as a language is a living fossil. It represents a group of important dialects that were spoken by the founders of the Frankish Empire and the Saxons. The latter group were the founders of the English language as it is spoken today, hence Anglo-Saxons. Afrikaans, as it is spoken in South Africa, is descended from the 17th-century version of modern Dutch. To the dismay of language purists, many English words have been integrated into Dutch. Moreover, many youth are responsible for a shift in the language. This isn't something recent. In the first half of the 19th century, students already started thinking up their own words that have now been adopted for decades and are listed in the Netherlands' most renowned dictionary, *Dikke van Dale*. Recently the 'Dutch-language' hip hop band De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig (Today's Youth) provided a bombardment of words that are hardly ever understood by anyone over the age of 30. Most Dutch have a more than fairly healthy command of the English language. Many will also be adept at other European languages with German being the most commonly spoken. Mastering the Dutch language can be a terrifying ordeal, but learning a few key phrases will make things easier and might even win you a few friends and admirers.

Local time

From 28 March to 31 October, the Netherlands is in the Central European Summer Time Zone, or GMT+2. During the rest of the year the clock ticks according to the Central European Time Zone, or GMT+1.



A big pile of souvenirs

Lya Cattel

National holidays

On public holidays shops and museums often close earlier and some stay closed the whole day. Schools, city councils, post offices and banks are closed and some shops and restaurants may also close.

January 1	New Year's Day (Nieuwjaarsdag)
March 29, 2013	Good Friday (Goede Vrijdag)
March 31, 2013	Easter Sunday (Pasen)
April 1, 2013	Easter Monday (Pasen)
April 30	Queen's Day (Koninginnedag)
May 1	Labour Day (Dag van de Arbeid)
May 4	Remembrance of the Dead (Nationale Herdenking)
May 5	Liberation Day (Dag van de Vrijheid)
May 9	Mother's Day (Moederdag)
May 13	Ascension Day (Hemelvaartsdag)
May 23 - 24	Whitsun (Pinksteren)
June 20	Father's Day (Vaderdag)
June 26	Veterans' Day (Veteranendag)
September 21	Budget Day (Prinsjesdag)
December 5	St. Nicolas (Sinterklaas)
December 25 - 26	Christmas (Kerstmis)
December 31	New Year's Eve (Oudejaarsdag)

Money

Since 2002, a large part of the European Union has adopted the euro as its local currency and the Netherlands is no exception. One euro contains 100 euro cents. There are coins of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 euro cents, and also of 1 and 2 euro. Banknotes are available with the following values: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500. Although a collection of €200 and €500 bills in your wallet might make you feel like Bill Gates, bear in mind that they're almost never accepted in shops or restaurants. You can exchange and withdraw money at most large banks; there are plenty in the centre of Amsterdam. All Dutch banks accept Visa and MasterCard at their cash dispensers, but bear in mind that ATMs are ridiculously scarce in Amsterdam often leading to huge queues near hot spots like Leidseplein. At the train station you can find a GWK Travelshop (Stationsplein, open Mon - Sat 08:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 22:00). Many restaurants, hotels and shops accept Visa and MasterCard, but to avoid disappointment, be sure to carry some money with you as some bars only accept cash and others require a minimum purchase of €15 - 20 to use a card.

Prostitution

It may surprise you to know that the profession that has helped to make Amsterdam a household word across the globe, only became legal in 2000. For years, the Dutch did what they always do when confronted with a sticky social problem. The police simply turned a blind eye to the practice and tolerated it. The cops in the Red Light district only rousted sex workers if they became too aggressive with passers-by showing off body parts or tapping on the glass. Today, window shopping on the Oudezijds Achterburgwal is a popular tourist attraction, but please bear in mind that these ladies are there to make a living and are not part of some open-air zoo. Be respectful and, whatever you do, don't take any photographs up close. Use a zoom lens from a distance if you want some photographic evidence of your visit to Europe's erotic pleasure capital. For more information see Nightlife.



Spring fun fair on Dam Square

Roads

For a country as small as the Netherlands, there are a ridiculously high number of asphalt roads and motorways. Every town, village or hamlet can be reached from the black ribbon that never seems to be more than a few kilometers away. The majority of Dutch drivers never break the speed limit, and considering the severity of traffic fines, this seems wise enough. Driving through a red light? This will cost you €160. Driving too fast within city limits? Be prepared to pay €180! And as soon as you exceed the maximum speed by 50km/h you'll lose your driving licence and be fined. Within city limits you must drive 50km/h, outside city limits 80 and on motorways 100 or 120 (check the road signs). In the Netherlands you must drive on the right side of the road, and you're not allowed to cycle on motorways! You don't want to know how many tourists are plucked off the road by police each year.

Smoking

Until recently, smoking was very popular in the Netherlands, but since the introduction of the smoking ban on July 1, 2008, smoking has become a lot less common. These days you can have a wild night out and come home without your hair and clothes reeking of cigarette smoke. For some this is an enormous benefit and others (read: smokers) find it a pain and banish themselves to the many smoker's rooms in the country. Thanks to unclear rules you may suddenly find yourself in a smoke-filled pub. This is usually in bars with just a single staff member: the boss. Or you may find yourself in a pub that flouts the ban on smoking. This will not have any consequences for you. If you light a cigarette in a pub and the manager tolerates this, then the manager will receive a fine upon inspection. The Netherlands is of course also known for its wafts of marijuana. For more information see 'Drugs'.

Tipping

Tipping, if deserved, is up to the diner and both 10% or a rounding up of the bill is acceptable.

Post offices

TNT (Post Office) F-5, Singel 250, www.tntpost.nl

You can buy stamps at most newsstands and drop off your postcards in the orange TNT boxes around town in the *overige* slot or go straight to this centrally located post office. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 13:30. Closed Sun. [\[Map\]](#)

1000 - First Settlements

Looking for land, farmers from Utrecht make their way to the marshy area known as Aemstelle. By digging drainage canals, the swampy land is slowly reclaimed. The farmers and fishermen, who make their homes on both banks of the Amstel River, build their houses on mounds to stay above the water.

1250 - Dam on the Amstel River

Around 1250, a dam was constructed on the Amstel, from which Amsterdam derived its name. The dam, which was financed by the Lords of Amstel, connected the two banks of the Amstel River. On this dam, which was slowly expanded over time, the centre of what would later become Amsterdam arose.

1275 - Toll Privileges of Floris V

The Toll Privilege, which was written in 1275 by Floris V in Leiden, is the oldest document in which Amsterdam is mentioned. The document was written after Floris' soldiers wreaked havoc in the small village. By way of compensation, the inhabitants were granted the right to move goods within the county of Holland without paying fees.



1452 - The Great Fire

Around 1400, Amsterdam had grown into a city of about 3000 inhabitants. Since all of the houses were made of wood and built right next to one another, there was a constant threat of fire. In 1452 a great fire broke out that destroyed two thirds of the city. As a consequence, it was decided that houses should be built of stone. However, these 'heavy' houses sank into the boggy soil. To prevent this, long wooden piles were subsequently used as foundations.



1482 - City Walls

Amsterdam was late in getting its own city walls. Prior to this the city's residents had to make do with the occasional defensive moat or earthen wall. The municipality eventually decided to build walls for fear of looters from Gelderland and Utrecht. Apart from the extra security provided by the wall, it also showed outsiders that Amsterdam was an independent community with its own governance.

1578 - Amsterdam becomes Protestant

After the beginning of the Dutch revolt, Amsterdam remained loyal to the Spanish king. However, Protestant rebels led by William of Orange ruled the area surrounding Catholic Amsterdam. On 26 May 1578, a shift took place that forced the Catholic city council and the Catholic clergy to leave the city. Amsterdam joined the revolt and grew into an economic superpower partly due to the arrival of merchants from the southern Netherlands. Catholics would build clandestine churches throughout the city.



1602 - Founding of the VOC

The Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC or United East Indian Company) is founded. Amsterdam is the main partner in this multinational commercial enterprise. For a long time the VOC controls the lucrative trade between Asia and Europe. In the 17th and 18th centuries it is the largest trading company in the world. In Asia the VOC acts as a representative of the State-General. This first multinational is empowered to create local governments in its colonies, to administer justice, mint coins and to negotiate treaties with foreign powers.



1613 - Canal Construction

The strong growth of both Amsterdam's economy and its mushrooming population causes overcrowding and poor sanitation. In 1613 the municipality decides to initiate the first major expansion of the city. A series of canals were constructed to supply badly needed housing, docks and warehouses. The world famous canals like Herengracht, Prinsengracht, and Keizersgracht are dug around the old medieval city in semicircles. The band of canals has been on the UNESCO list world heritage list since 2010.



1620 - Construction of the Westerkerk

Reformed Protestantism becomes the most important religion in the Dutch Republic during the 17th-century Golden Age. Catholic churches were converted, but new ones were needed for the growing numbers of Protestants. The most prominent of these new houses of worship is the Westerkerk. When it was completed in 1631 it was the largest reformed church in the world and the tallest building in the city at nearly 84m.

1648 - Construction of the City Hall

The old Gothic city hall had become too small for the largest centre of trade in the world. The city council commissioned Jacob van Campen to design a new city hall, which would reflect Amsterdam's expanded power and glory. In 1648 construction began. To guarantee a stable foundation, no less than 13,659 piles were driven into the ground. Many artists were involved in decorating the classicist building, which was completed in 1665.



1808 - King Louis Napoleon Bonaparte

With help from the French Revolutionary Army, the Batavian Republic was proclaimed in 1795, but Napoleon Bonaparte had his own ideas and put an end to the fledgling republic in 1806 and named his brother Louis Napoleon King of Holland. The king, who initially resided in Utrecht, makes Amsterdam the capital and the centre of his new government. King Louis Napoleon claims the grand city hall as his own personal residence on the Dam.



1864 - Palace of the People

Even in slightly backward Amsterdam, signs of modernity slowly seeped in. The new symbol of the spirit of the age – a building for everyone – was erected on Frederiksplein, in large part due to the efforts of Jewish physician Samuel Sarphati. However, the building, which was inspired by the Crystal Palace in London, burnt down in 1929.



1928 - Olympics in Amsterdam

In 1928, Amsterdam secures the honour of hosting the Olympic Games. For some time Amsterdam becomes the centre of the international world of sports. It was a huge success in the Netherlands generating great interest from the general public and great accomplishments by local athletes. The refurbished Olympic Stadium is still the proud symbol of this golden era.



1934 - Revolt in the Jordaan

In the 1930s the economic crisis caused unprecedented unemployment in Amsterdam. This, in combination with harsh government austerity measures caused a tense atmosphere in the city. Eventually, this combustible cocktail was ignited and desperate labourers took to the streets in protest, which quickly led to fights with the police. The situation escalated and the army was brought in to restore order. During the five-day revolt, five people were killed.



1940 - Persecution of the Jews

Soon after Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands, Jews became the victims of the occupiers. Many Jews were arrested and disappeared into concentration camps. A general strike was organised in Amsterdam on 25 February 1941 in protest. The February Strike was put down violently and despite this outcry, most Jews in Amsterdam – including Anne Frank – did not survive the war.



1945 - Hunger Winter

In the harsh winter of 1945 the food supply to Amsterdam was nearly completely cut off for fear of air raids or commandeering by the German occupying forces. By the end of September, the shop shelves were already empty and prices on the black market skyrocketed. The lack of food, combined with the intense cold and lack of fuel, led to desperate attempts to get supplies from the countryside – so called hunger journeys – as well as mass mortality among Amsterdam's residents.



1964 - Johan Crujff and Ajax

Johan Crujff makes his début on the first team of Ajax. With his club he wins the European Cup final against the Greek side Panathinaikos in 1971. After his transfer to FC Barcelona Crujff still celebrates major successes, and to the Catalan people he is known as El Salvador. In 1974 the footballer, number 14, manages to reach the World Cup final, together with the Dutch team. After a career as a football player and trainer 'skinny Jopie' is named European Football Player of the 20th century.



1965 - 'Het Lieverdje' and the Provos

The Provos movement started in 1965. These young anarchists protested in playful ways against what they considered to be narrow-minded bourgeois society. These provocateurs focused on issues like the environment, women's emancipation, changes in the arts and free love. They frequently gathered around the statue of 'Het Lieverdje' (the Sweetheart). On 13 May 1967, the movement claimed victory and disbanded. Its goal had been achieved: the authorities were in complete disarray.



1980 - Squatters Riots

In the weeks leading up to the crowning of Princess Beatrix, a variety of conflicts erupted between squatters in Amsterdam and the police and tensions kept rising. The situation exploded on the day of the coronation, which resulted in one of the worst riots in Dutch history. Squatters protested against a lack of housing, unemployment and the royal coronation and got into fights with the police.

1996 - Gay Pride

Gay Pride is the highlight of the year for homosexuals in Amsterdam. During the first weekend of August, a party is held in the inner city, where participants show pride in their sexual orientation. The highlight of the week-long festivities is the parade on the canals, also called Canal Pride. There are also many street parties. Photo by T. Pouw



2000 - Development of Zuidas

The Zuidas (South Axis) is Amsterdam's financial and educational centre located in the south of the city. Although the 670-acre area is still being developed, 400 companies and institutions have already settled here including the head offices of various multinationals and a university. Housing, shops, schools, theatres and museums will also become an integral part of Zuidas, which has placed an emphasis on sustainability and accessibility for all.



Amsterdam has no shortage of concerts, festivals and exhibitions. For a complete list of what's on in the Dutch capital this summer see our 'Amsterdam calendar of events' feature.

Ballet & Opera

Het Muziektheater Amsterdam H-6, Waterloooplein 22, tel. (+31) 205 51 81 17, www.hetmuziektheater.nl. This fairly modern building from 1986 is the home of the Dutch National Ballet and The Netherlands Opera. The architectural highlight of the Amsterdam Music Theatre is its curved front façade that faces the Amstel River housing 14-metre-high open foyers.

Cinemas

Het Ketelhuis C-4, Pazzanistraat 4, tel. (+31) 206 84 00 90, www.ketelhuis.nl. One of the first cinemas in Amsterdam to specifically promote Dutch films, Het Ketelhuis has graced the Westergasfabriek for over a decade. Set in a rather spacious former warehouse, it offers Dutch and foreign arthouse movies, Q&As, debates and even dance events. The atmosphere is a bit frigid and dark due to all the space, but once you grab a Belgian beer at the bar you'll feel fine.

► Open 16:00 - 01:00, Wed, Fri 14:00 - 01:00, Sat 12:00 - 03:00, Sun 10:30 - 03:00. 

Pathe Arena Arenaboulevard 600, tel. (+31) 900 14 58, www.pathe.nl. One of three places in the Netherlands that has a giant IMAX screen. The digital sound is also a big bonus. ► Open 11:30 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 09:30 - 24:00. (€5 - 13). 

The Movies D-4, Haarlemmerdijk 161 - 163, tel. (+31) 206 38 60 16, www.themovies.nl. An institution in Amsterdam since 1912, The Movies is a bit old fashioned, but that's also its biggest attraction. Take in independent films or hang out at its bar or restaurant.

Classical music

Het Concertgebouw F-9, Concertgebouwplein 10, tel. (+31) 206 71 83 45, www.concertgebouw.nl. Since 1888 this beautifully designed architectural masterpiece has been the leading classical concert hall in town.



American pop star Lana Del Rey will perform at the Heineken Music Hall on May 29 at 20:00. Photo courtesy of www.positivus.com

Rock, folk, jazz & More

Mar	Date	Time	Event	Venue
	21	19:00	Bullet for My Valentine & Halestorm. €25	MW
	21	23:30	Drum 'n' bass/dubstep. Cable. €5	MW
	21	20:30	Electro. Example. €15	PA
	22	19:30	Blues. Black Rebel Motorcycle Club. €35	PA
	24	19:30	Pop. 3FM presents Emell Sandé. €30	PA
	27	19:30	Hip hop. Lil' Wayne with special guests Mac Miller & 2Chainz. €39 - 45	ZDO
	28	0:00	Dancehall/hip hop. Jamrock Round 3 with DJ Jah, DJ D-Train, DJ Prime and more. €11	MW
Apr	5	21:00	Luminosity Trance Gathering. Hard trance & progressive. €25	WG
	5	20:12	Folk. Frederique Spigt & regular guitarist Jan van der Meij. €10 - 36	CG
	6	22:00	Qapital. Hardstyle specialists from Q-dance with yet another concept, this time exclusively for the Ziggo Dome: Qapital. €52.50 - 67.50	ZDO
	6	22:00	De Nachtspele (Night Games): Stuntman edition. Dress code: Jackie Chan, Evel Knievel, Johnny Knoxville, Houdini, etc.	WG
	9	19:30	Pop. Ellie Goulding & Charli XCX. €15	PA
	13	15:00	Frozen Planet. The hit BBC show at the Ziggo Dome featuring the Gelders Orchestra. €22.50 - 42.50	ZDO
	15	20:30	World music/reggae. Sun Araw (USA) and Subbacultcha! €10	MZ
	16	20:00	Rock. Counting Crows. €52	HMH
	25	20:15	Jazz. Ebony Band presents Da-Da-Dancing. €24	MZ
	27	20:30	Dancehall/reggae/electro. Major Lazer with opening act Cashmere Cat. €18	PA
	27	22:00	House. I Am Hardwell. €39.50	HMH
	29	20:30	Electro. Tim Hecker (Canada). €10	MZ
	29	22:30	Jazz. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra meets José James. €42.50	CG
	29	22:00	Drum n bass/dubstep. RFLX. Netsky (live), Sub Focus 7 ID, Cookie Monsta vs. Funtcase & more. €36	HMH
	29	22:00	Techno. Dave Clarke presents @ Klinch. €27	MW
May	7-12	20:00	Nina Simone: (A)Live. €23.50	WG
	8	19:00	Rock. Kaiser Chiefs. €29	MW
	10	20:00	Blues. Joe Cocker with opening act Landmark 105. €49	HMH
	11	21:00	The More Socially Relevant Music Ensemble. €16.50	WG



Brit rockers *MUSE* will perform at the Amsterdam Arena on June 4 at 19:00. Photo courtesy of www.positivus.com

Rock, folk, jazz & More

11	19:30	Punk. Pennywise: Old Man Markley. €22.50	MW
15	20:15	Jazz. Rita Reys. €20	PA
17	19:30	Electro/pop. Crystal Fighters. €19	PA
19	20:15	Jazz. Joe Lovano & the Metropole Orchestra. 50 years of John Coltrane ballads. €18.50	MZ
22	20:30	Jazz. Gare Du Nord. €22.50	MW
24	19:30	Drive Like Maria & Green Lizard. €12.50	MW
28	20:30	Jazz. The Bad Plus. €26	MZ
29	20:00	Singer/songwriter. Lana del Rey. €35	HMH
30	22:00	House. Club Tribe. UK Sound with Gerben Louw, Henriques Ventura, D'a & Workman. €10	SK

June

1	23:30	Vunzige Deuntjes XL (Dirty Beats). €13.50	PA
2	11:00-12:00	Jazz. Metropole Orchestra & Duke Ellington. €18 - 21	CG
2	20:00	Rock. Rush - Clockwork Angels Tour. €62	ZDO
2	19:30	Lucinda Williams - An Intimate Evening with Lucinda Williams ft. Doug Pettibone. €27.50	PA
4	19:00	Rock. Muse. €45 - 65	AA
5	20:00	Singer/songwriter. Neil Young & Crazy Horse on the Alchemy Tour. €59 - 69	ZDO
8	20:00	Toto - 35th Anniversary Tour. €49	ZDO
8	19:30	Rock. The Zombies. Time of the Season and She's Not There. €25	PA
12	20:00	Rock. Rod Stewart. €49 - 65	ZDO
24	20:00	Rock. Dead Can Dance. €49	HMH
25	20:00	Blues. The Moody Blues : the Voyage Continues - Highway 45 Tour. €39 - 59	HMH
29	20:00	Jazz. Caro Emerald & The Metropole Orchestra. €32 - 55	CG

Venues

AA	Amsterdam Arena	
MT	Amsterdams Marionetten Theater	
BK	Bethanienklooster	LM De La Mar Theater
DM	De Melkweg	
HMH	Heineken Music Hall	HT Hermitage
CG	Het Concertgebouw	
MA	Het Muziektheater Amsterdam	
JE	Java Eiland	
TC	Koninklijk Theater Carré	
LME	Landgraaf Megaland	MW Melkweg
VL	Museum van Loon	
MZ	Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ	
ND	NDSM-werf	PA Paradiso
RM	Rijksmuseum	SB Stadsschouwburg
SM	Stedelijk Museum	SK Studio K
VM	Verzetsmuseum	WG Westergasfabriek
ZDO	Ziggo Dome	

Clubs & Live music

Amsterdam Arena J-6, 's-Gravesandestraat 51, tel. (+31) 208 50 24 00, www.hotelarena.nl. Not to be confused with the Ajax football arena, this multifunctional place houses a hotel, restaurant and café and also opens a couple of nights a week as a club in the former St. Elisabeth's Hospital.

Heineken Music Hall U-1, ArenA Boulevard 590, tel. (+31) 900 68 74 24 2, www.heineken-music-hall.nl. The Heineken Music Hall consists of two big stages, but the larger one with 5,500 seats, nicknamed the Black Box, is known throughout Europe for its great acoustic sound. It's the only venue in the Netherlands that's designed especially for amplified pop music and more than 600,000 music lovers attend a broad range of concerts here every year.

Melkweg E-8, Lijnbaansgracht 234a, tel. (+31) 205 31 81 81, www.melkweg.nl. Since 1970 Melkweg has been one of the best known cultural centres in the Netherlands. Five artistic disciplines are available under one roof: music, dance/theatre, film, photography and media art. Concerts, dance events, theatrical and dance performances, films, festivals and photo exhibitions are staged in five halls and several small rooms.

Paradiso F-8, Weteringschans 6 - 8, tel. (+31) 206 26 45 21, www.paradiso.nl. Up-and-coming bands play in the small room while big names perform in the main hall of this former church. Kings of Leon, The White Stripes and even Lady Gaga have all played here.



British rock band *Kaiser Chiefs* will perform at Melkweg on May 8 at 19:00. Photo courtesy of www.positivus.com

Ballet, dance & Theatre

Mar	Date	Time	Event	Venue
	23-31	19:30	Ballet. The National Ballet performs Romeo & Julia. €18 - 74	MT
	24, 31	14:00	Ballet. The National Ballet performs Romeo & Julia. €18 - 74	MT
	24	15:00	Puppet theatre. The Travels of Doctor Faust. €16 - 29.50	MT
	25	20:00	Theatre. Long Life by the New Rigga Theatre (in English). €12.50 - 27.50	SB
	25	20:00	Musical theatre. Miss Montreal - s-ss-ssanne. Theatre Tour. €19 - 26	TC
	26	20:00	Musical theatre. Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story with singer Tim Akkerman as the legendary Buddy Holly. €17 - 43	TC
	27	19:00	Theatre. Strange Interlude by the National Toneel & Johan Doesburg (in English). €10 - 32.50	SB
	Apr			
	2	20:00	Musical theatre. BLØF in concert. €19 - 39	TC
	4	20:00	Soul Celebration. Swing, glitter & glamour. €17 - 32	TC
	8	20:30	Dance. Conny Janssen Dances : Zout. €10 - 32.50	SB
	11-13	20:00	Musical. We Will Rock You the musical. €35 - 55	HMH
	11, 18	20:00	Theatre. Husbands by the Theatregroup Amsterdam & Ivo van Hove. €19.50 - 32.50	SB
	13-14	15:00, 21:30	Dance. Nachtparade by the DOX theatre group. €11.50 - 14	MA
	14, 26	15:00	Puppet theatre. The Travels of Doctor Faust. €13 - 29.50	MT
	15	20:30	Theatre. Sécheresse et Pluie by Ea Sola. €10 - 30	SB
	16	20:30	Dance. Dutch Dance Theatre 2 & Holland Symfonia. €12.50 - 35	SB
	18-20	20:00	Stand-up. Eddie Izzard: Force Majeure World Tour 2013. €39	HMH
	23	20:00	Musical theatre. Julien Clerc - Pianist. Listen to the chansonnier known for Hélène, This Melody & Ce n'est Rien. €40 - 49	TC
	23	20:00	Dance. Rosas, Ictus & Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker: Drumming (live). €16 - 35	SB
	May			
	1, 5, 9, 12	13:30 & 18:00	Musical theatre. De Nederlandse Opera presents Die Walküre. €15 - 140	MA
	2, 9	20:00	Theatre. All My Sons by Theatregroup Amsterdam & Thibaud Delpout. €19.50 - 32.50	SB
	5	19:00	Dance. Dutch Dance Theatre with choreography by Sol León & Paul Lightfoot. €32 - 34	TC
	5-6	20:30	Ballet. Le Chat Noir by the Scapino Ballet Rotterdam. €10 - 30	SB

Ballet, dance & Theatre

	6-31	20:00	Musical theatre. De Nederlandse Opera presents Verdi's La Traviata. Exact dates: 6, 8, 10, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 31. €15 - 140	MA
	20, 26	13:30	Musical theatre. De Nederlandse Opera presents Verdi's La Traviata. €15 - 140	MA
	13	20:00	Dance. Ward/Ward & Ann van den Broek - The Red Piece. €10 - 27	SB
	16	20:00	Theatre. Theatre Group Amsterdam: After the Rehearsal/Persona. €20.50 - 33.50	SB
	19	15:00	Puppet theatre. The Travels of Doctor Faust. €13 - 29.50	MT
	21-25	20:00	Cabaret. Hans Liberg: Ick Hans Liberg. Mixing music with jokes and story telling (in Dutch). €18 - 37.50	LM
	26	15:00	Choir. Young@Heart (USA). €19 - 39	TC
	28	20:30	Musical theatre. Moby Dick. €10 - 30	SB
	June			
	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9	20:00	Musical theatre. HF & The Dutch Opera present Sunken Garden. €50 - 60	SB
	4, 7, 10, 13, 17, 20, 23	17:30	Musical theatre. De Nederlandse Opera presents Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. €15 - 140	MA
	23	13:30	Musical theatre. De Nederlandse Opera presents Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. €15 - 140	MA
	15, 18, 19, 21, 22	20:15	Dance. The National Ballet, Shen Wei & David Dawson. €15 - 48	MA
	16	14:00	Dance. The National Ballet, Shen Wei & David Dawson. €15 - 48	MA
	20	20:00	Musical theatre. HF & Theatregroup Amsterdam & Thomas Ostermeier: De Meeuw. €19.50 - 32.50	SB



De Nederlandse Opera will perform Verdi's *La Traviata* several times in May at Het Muziektheater Amsterdam.
Photo by Klaus Lefebvre

Festivals & Special events

Mar Date	Time	Event	Venue
22	22:00	VOLT Warehouse Edition. Techno at the industrial location of the NDSM wharf. Line-up to be announced. €10 - 15	ND
28, 30	22:00	Techno. Awakenings Easter Special. Line-up: Tim Wolff, Nina Kraviz, Marcel Dettman, Ben Klock, Speedy J, Gary Back & Blawan. €37.50	WG
29	22:00	Techno. Awakenings Carl Cox & Friends (Adam Beyer, Jon Rundell, John Digweed and more)	WG
30	22:00	Techno. Lebensgefahr T3chno. More techno from the likes of Ici Sans Merci, Bram Fiddler, Mirella Heimgartner, Van Nooj, Gideon Johnson, Rydel and more. €17.50	WG
30	22:00	DGTL : The Spring Festival. Line-up: John Talabot, DJ Koze, Huxley, Dekmantel Soundsystem, Steffen Bennemann, Damian Lazarus and many more. €39 - 44	ND

Apr 3-7		World Minimal Music Festival. Over three days the city will be bulking with minimal highlights from around the globe. Make sure to checkout the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ or if you feel like travelling a bit, the Muziekgebouw in Eindhoven	MZ
27	16:30 - 20:30	Top Gear Live. Car show with the real Clarkson, May and Hammond featuring exotic cars, ricers, stunts and racing. €44 - 99	ZD
30	14:00	Queensday 2013. Since Her Royal Highness abdicated, making way for King Willem-Alexander I, the name of the fest will change next year but the atmosphere and enormous number of people dressed in orange won't. Expect lots of partying, drinking and dancing in the streets. City-wide street market and pre-parties on April 29	CC

May 5		Vrijstaat Amsterdam. Liberation Day calls for a trade market! This and more at the Vrijstaat Amsterdam remembrance IJ-Hallen flea market. Extra special stuff at extra special prices. Free admission	ND
11-12		The 2013 UEFA Europa League final at Amsterdam Arena	ND
15	20:45	Pacha Festival. Following the world's most renowned club brand Pacha. Celebrate the second edition of this dance music festival on the Java Island. €49.50	JE



The kids will love to see a performance of *The Remarkable Journey of Doctor Faust* at the Amsterdams Marionetten Theater. Photo by Gitte Clemens

Festivals & Special events

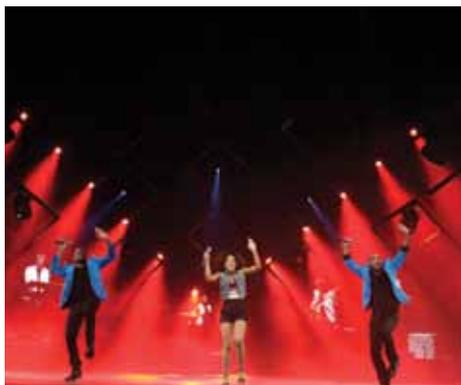
24-26	18:30	London Calling featuring Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Two Gallants, Echo Lake, Evans the Death, The Family Rain, Swim Deep, Team Ghost and more. €35	PA
June 14-16		Pinkpop. Holland's biggest pop/rock festival. This year's line-up includes Green Day, the Killers, Ben Howard, Kensington, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Queens of the Stone Age and more. Tickets €85 - 165	LME

Concert halls

Amsterdam Music Theatre (Muziektheater Amsterdam) H-6, Waterlooplein 22, tel. (+31) 205 51 81 17, www.muziektheater.nl. This is the home of both the Netherlands Opera and National Ballet. Watch world-class performances here or take a tour of the place on Saturdays at noon. ▶ Guided tour admission (Sat 12:00): €6.  **Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ O-1, Piet Heinkade 1, tel. (+31) 207 88 20 00, www.muziekgebouw.nl.** The Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ specialises in current musical developments in the form of festivals, multimedia concerts and exhibitions. Also the venue for contemporary and classical music in the Netherlands. ▶  **Paradiso F-8, Weteringschans 6 - 8, tel. (+31) 206 26 45 21, www.paradiso.nl.** Paradiso's mission is to offer more than just live music by exploring the borders of pop culture and to be a stage for alternative events and projects like fashion shows, films and even science lectures. Still, most people come here for the cool live bands. **Ziggo Dome U-1, De Passage 100, www.ziggodome.nl.** Amsterdam's ultra-modern concert venue in Zuidooost has already hosted such acts as Sting, Pearl Jam and Madonna.

Classical & Opera

Mar	Date	Time	Event	Venue
	23	20:15	Classical. Quirine Viersen back with Mozart. € 27 - 32	CG
	24	19:30	Classical. KCOV Excelsior presents Matthäus Passion. €33 - 39	CG
	25	20:15	Classical. Veronika Eberle and friends. €40	CG
	26	20:15	Classical. Carte Blanche for conductor Mariss Jansons: Bayerische Rundfunks. €35 - 91	CG
	27	19:30	Classical. Pierre-Laurent Aimard and his greatest solo works. €29	MZ
	28	21:00	Classical. Pekka Kuusisto shows audiences how big his living room really is. Chamber music with a Finnish folk twist. €19	CG
	28	20:15	Classical. Asko Schönberg & the Dutch National Opera Academy. €24	MZ
	30	20:15	Classical. The Nederlands Chamber Orchestra. Much ado about nothing. €39	MZ
	31	14:00	Classical. Theremin. The Theremin is an instrument that's played without touching it. Featuring Thorwald Jørgensen and pianist T'hijn Vermeulen. For tickets visit www.hermitage.nl . €15	HT
Apr	1	14:15	Classical. Händel's Messiah by Pieter Jan Leusink. €50 - 55	CG
	3	20:15	Minimal. Kronos Quartet (USA) & Ben Frost (Australia): Different Trains. €29.50	MZ
	4	19:15	Classical. Asko Schönberg, Cappella Amsterdam & the Court Music Troupe of the National Gugak Centre. €24	MZ
	5	20:30	Electro/Jungle. Konono No. 1 (COG) - Minimal Jungle. € 24,00	MZ



Soul Celebration will entertain crowds with soul, swing, disco, glitter and glamour on April 4 at Koninklijk Theater Carré. Photo by Sven Hoogerhuis

Classical & Opera

7	14:00	Classical. The Byzantium Slavic choir lead by Alesia Shayeva will perform Russian Orthodox songs and Slavic folk as well as some Russian Easter songs. Visit www.hermitage.nl for tickets. €15	HT	
7	20:15	Classical. Nelson Freire : master pianist and music connoisseur. €29 - 49	CG	
10	20:15	Classical. Kelly God and Paolo Giacometti perform Wagner & Strauss. €34	MZ	
11	20:30	Classical. Concertgebouw Classics celebrates spring (with optional dinner beforehand). €35 - 50 or €93.50	CG	
12	20:15	Classical. Richard Wagner and Mariss Jansons. €10 - 90	CG	
14	15:00	Members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra perform Schubert & Goldmark. €25	BK	
18	20:15	Classical. New Ensemble presents Premiere Night. €10 - 24	MZ	
19	20:15	Classical. Dutch Brass Ensemble perform Mozart's Die Zauberflöte. €34	MZ	
20	14:15	Classical. Jussen Brothers & Barbara Hannigan in Britten. €28 - 33	CG	
21	15:00	Classical. Röntgen String Trio's: Lendvai String Trio. €25	BK	
24	20:15	Classical. DoelenKwartet. Adams, Zuidam & Tsoupani. €24	MZ	
28	14:00	Classical. Recital Zarembo by pianist and musicologist Olga de Kort-Koulikova. Visit www.hermitage.nl for tickets. €15	HT	
May	1	12:30	Free lunch concert. Enjoy a free concert every Wednesday. The National Youth String Orchestra lead by Bas Wieggers	CG
	2	20:15	Classical. Ives Ensemble - Piet-Jan van Rossum & Alberto Giacometti. €24	MZ
	3	20:15	Classical. Louter Schumann : Love & Passion. €11 - 46	CG
	8	20:15	Classical. Matangi Quartet: Twisted Blues with Twisted Ballad. €24	MZ
	10	20:15	Classical. Liza Ferschtman performs Bachs sonates & partitas on violin. €29.50	MZ
	15, 16	20:15	Classical. Concertgebouw Orchestra, Hebert Blomstedt & Hannes Minnaar. €31 - 121	CG
	19	15:00	Classical. Ensemble Amsterdam: Argentina. €25	BK
	19	20:15	Classical. Joe Lovano and the Metropole Orchestra honour 50 years of John Coltrane's ballads. €18.50	MZ
	21	20:15	Classical. Stabat Mater: Freiburger, Carolyn Sampson & Robin Blaze. €35 - 79.50	CG

Classical & Opera

22	19:30	Classical. Ribattuta Ensemble & Herman van Gunsteren: Venetian Vesper. €24	MZ
24	20:15	Classical. Combattimento Consort Amsterdam : Classic Salzburg. €34	MG
26	14:00	Classical. Misha Fomin & Alexey Naumenko perform Rachmaninov & Prokofiev. Visit www.hermitage.nl for tickets. €15	HT
31	20:15	Classical. The Brothers Kuijken and the world of Rameau. €10-40,50	CG

June

2	15:00	Classical. Trio Jankovic, Giacometti & Thompson perform Brahms. €25	BK
3	20:15	Classical. Britten's Spring Symphony. €10 - 72	CG
5, 6	20:15	Classical. Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel in the New World. €31 - 90	CG
8	20:15	Classical. Britten, Pressler & the Belcea Quartet. €10 - 45	CG
12	20:15	Classical. Rolando Villazon congratulates Verdi. €41 - 91	CG
15	14:15	Classical. Janine Janens performs Bruch, Schumann & Strauss. €28 - 33	CG
23	20:15	Classical. Pianoduo Katia & Marielle Labèque. €29 - 49	CG

Theatres & Music venues

Amsterdamse Bos Openluchttheater De Duizendmeterweg 7, Amstelveen, tel. (+31) 206 43 32 86, www.bostheater.nl. This outdoor theatre has hosted more than 40 shows each summer since 1985. It can accommodate up to 1500 music lovers and theatre-goers.

Bijlmer Parktheater Anton de Komplein 240, tel. (+31) 203 11 39 30, www.bijlmerparktheater.nl. This has been the biggest theatre in Zuidoost since 2009. ▶ [CC](#) [P](#)

Carre I-7, Amstel 115, www.theatercarre.nl. In 1993 a large renovation transformed Carré from a circus with a small capacity to a large theatre. Ballet and musicals are its main attractions today as well as one man shows in Dutch. Open also in summer.

Compagnietheater Kloveniersburgwal 50, tel. (+31) 205 20 53 20, www.compagnietheater.nl. From 1793 - 1995 this beautiful building was used as a church, but now it's home to a modern theatre.

DeLaMar Theater F-8, Marnixstraat 402, tel. (+31) 900 33 52 62 7, delamar.nl. This theatre has two different halls, which can host up to 1500 people. The flashy building near Leidseplein attracts attention as well as hoards of visitors and a flurry of international and national performers and dance companies.

Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam F-8, Leidseplein 26, tel. (+31) 206 24 23 11, www.ssb.nl. Since 1894 culture lovers have enjoyed theatre performances and concerts in the baroque Great Hall and more recently in the Rabohall of Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam.

Theater Bellevue F-8, Leidsekade 90, tel. (+31) 205 30 53 01, www.theaterbellevue.nl. Formerly known as the *place* for famous Dutch politicians to give speeches, it's now a theatre with a big and a small hall.

Tickets

Tickets for events are best bought at the venue itself or at TicketMaster (www.ticketmaster.nl) outlets. You can buy tickets by phone or pick up reserved tickets from selected VVV Outlets, TicketShops (Amsterdams Uitburo, Leidseplein 26; Amsterdam Concerto, Utrechtsestraat 52 - 60; Amsterdam Pico Records, Bijlmerplein 520) and Free Record Shops (Le v Swindenstraat 43; Bijlmerplein 992; Ferdinand Bolstr. 79; Kalverstraat 32; Kinkerstraat 115; CS Stationsplein 15).



De Nederlandse Opera will perform Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre* on May 1, 5, 9 & 12 at Het Muziektheater Amsterdam. Photo by Ruth Waltz

Last Minute Ticket Shop F-9, Leidseplein 26, www.lastminuteticketshop.nl. Theatre tickets for half price? The Last Minute Ticket Shop sells tickets for selected performances with a 50% discount on the day of the performance. Each day there's a new selection of theatre performances and concerts. A surcharge of €2.25 is added to the price and you can't reserve or order tickets online or by phone. ▶ Open 12:00 - 19:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. Also at the Public Library Ticket Shop Desk, H-4, Oosterdoksade 143; VVV Amsterdam Tourist Office Ticket Shop Desk, B-1, Stationsplein 10. [CC](#) [CC](#)

Exhibitions

Exhibitions	Venue
Permanent exhibit about life during WWII , focusing on the Resistance and it's brave fight against Hitler. Open 10:00 - 17:00, Sat 11:00 - 17:00. €4.50 - 8	VM
Stedelijk Museum . Permanent collection. The biggest museum of modern and contemporary art in Holland houses works by Appel, Chagall, Van der Elsken, De Kooning, Warhol and many others. Open Open 10:00 - 18:00, Tue, Wed 11:00 - 17:00, Thu 11:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. €7.50 - 15	SM
De Meesterwerken Special . Over 400 masterpieces from the 17th century on display at the Philipszaal of the Rijksmuseum. Open 09:00 - 18:00. €14	RM
World of Ajax walk-in tour. Learn about the history of Holland's biggest football club Ajax and it's legends. Weekly tours at 11:00, 12:30, 14:30 and 16:30; weekends at 11:30, 12:15, 13:30, 14:45 and 16:30. €10 - 12	AA
Mike Kelley . The recently deceased Mike Kelley was named as one of the most influential artists of the past few decades. The travelling exhibition will visit the biggest venues in the world, starting at the Stedelijk. On display until April 1. Open 10:00 - 18:00, Tue, Wed 11:00 - 17:00, Thu 11:00 - 22:00. Closed Sun. €7.50 - 15	SM
Adriaan Dortsman - De Ideale Gracht (The Ideal Canal). An exhibition dedicated to the 17th-century architect and his greatest achievements in Amsterdam architecture. On display until June 8. Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Tue. €6 - 8	VL

Amsterdam Centrum is the district that most of the city's visitors want to see and it's also the place where most people end up arriving. The Central Station is the city's most renowned and popular transport hub and all of the city centre lies before it. Centrum, as it's called, is actually quite large, so you may want to use public transportation to get around, but with a comfortable pair of trainers all of its sights and sounds can be covered on foot. The infamous Red Light district with its bars and window shopping is only a short walk across the square from the station as are the Zeedijk with its restaurants and Chinatown. The world famous belt of canals, or simply the Grachtengordel, is also just a hop, skip and a jump from here not to mention the Dam and Leidse Square (Leidseplein). The popular Jordaan neighbourhood in the west is full of bohemian cafés, bars and shops, while the Plantage area in the east is home to some of the city's best attractions including the Artis Zoo and the Hortus Botanical Gardens.

Getting there

If you're already in Centrum there's a good chance that you arrived at the Central Station. From here you can take trams No.1, 2 or 5 to the canals and Leidseplein. Trams No.13 and 17 will take you to the Jordaan, while tram No.9 will take you to Rembrandtplein in the east and farther afield to the Plantage area.

Accommodation

Centrum truly has it all from hostels and cheap 2-star accommodation to award-winning design hotels, but room rates can be obscenely high so book well in advance.

Cream of the crop

InterContinental Amstel Amsterdam I-8, Professor Tulpplein 1, tel. (+31) 206 22 60 60, amsterdam.intercontinental.com. Have you ever wondered where stupendously wealthy people who own their own Mediterranean islands stay when they visit Amsterdam? Well we're not positive, but this über-luxurious hotel would certainly have to be near the top of the list. Already a hotel in 1867, the building gracefully combines antique interior design elements with modern conveniences, so you can enjoy regal surroundings without feeling like your trapped in a museum where you're not allowed to touch anything or to raise your voice. A health club with a swimming pool is also at your disposal as well as a restaurant, brasserie and bar. ▶ 79 rooms (executive from €473, junior suites from €585, suites from €702).                 ★★★★★

Renaissance Amsterdam Hotel A-1, Kattengat 1, tel. (+31) 206 21 22 23, www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/amrsd-renaissance-amsterdam-hotel. This luxurious five-star hotel, which is part of the Marriott group, offers over 400 modern, tastefully decorated rooms in the city centre only a five-minute walk from the Central Station. Spread out over several buildings, the hotel was completely renovated in 2009 and its accommodation includes all of the amenities one would expect from a five-star hotel including king size beds, wireless internet access, climate control, large flat screen TVs and a few extras like bathrobes, slippers and fresh fruit. A Mediterranean restaurant, a traditional brown café and a hip cocktail bar are also at your disposal as well as a health club and a conference centre located in a converted Lutheran church across the street that dates back to 1668. ▶ 402 rooms (402 Total rooms). 402 rooms (deluxe from €269, club level from €329, junior suites from €409, royal suites available).                 ★★★★★

Symbol key

	Air conditioning		Child-friendly
	Conference facilities		Credit cards
	Fitness centre		Facilities for the disabled
	Free wireless internet		Guarded parking
	Home delivery		Live music
	Outside seating		Pets allowed
	Sauna		Smoking section
	Swimming pool		Takeaway

Upmarket

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Amsterdam Centraal Station G-4, Oosterdoksstraat 4, tel. (+31) 205 30 08 00, www.placesdoubletree.com/amsterdam-centraal-station. This huge hotel offers over 500 spacious rooms in a modern glass and steel building on the water near the Central Station. All accommodation includes tasteful décor with neutral colours, wall-to-wall carpeting, floor-to-ceiling windows with excellent views, iMac computers with free wi-fi, refrigerators and private bathrooms. Executive rooms and suites have the added benefit of complimentary mini-bars, breakfast and a morning newspaper. The massive structure also houses a gym, conference facilities, a lobby bar, a café and the rooftop Sky Lounge that affords patrons unparalleled vistas of Amsterdam. ▶ 553 rooms (doubles/twin from €204, executive from €254, suites from €354).                 ★★★★★

Hotel Die Port van Cleve Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 176 - 180, tel. (+31) 207 14 20 00, www.dieportvan-cleve.com. This classic Amsterdam hotel is the place to go if you really want to immerse yourself in Dutch culture and history. Each of its 122 rooms includes some reminder of the nation's Delft Blue porcelain tradition, its brasserie is famous for its local cuisine, not to mention its steaks, and the Blauwe Parade bar looks more like a museum than a popular watering hole. The latter boasts a famous 19th-century tile fresco and offers jenever and traditional liqueur tastings. Although the general ambience puts one in a more antique frame of mind, the accommodation includes all of the usual 21st-century amenities like flat screen TVs and free wi-fi. Dam Square is only a stone's throw from the hotel and the Central Station is only a short walk or tram ride away. ▶ 122 rooms (doubles/twin from €145, superior from €165, executive from €185, suites from €215).                 ★★★★★



Even dogs dress up in orange for Queen's Day in April

Boutique & Design hotels

Hotel V H-9, Weteringschans 136, tel. (+31) 206 62 32 33, www.hotelv.nl. Conveniently located along a tram line on the edge of the ring of canals in the city centre, this three-star boutique hotel makes it clear that interior design is of the utmost importance and this is already evident in the unusual lounge area that's dominated by a funky fireplace partially surrounded by a big leather couch. All of its rooms are decorated in a modern style and they're equipped with big flat screen TVs, free wi-fi and private bathrooms. In keeping with its eco-friendly reputation, the hotel offers a complimentary breakfast cooked with fair trade products and its bar serves organic beer and spirits. ▶ 48 rooms (singles from €69, doubles from €79, large doubles from €99).  ★★★

Mid-range

NH City Centre Amsterdam A-3, Spulstraat 288 - 292, tel. (+31) 204 20 45 45, www.nh-hotels.com. This large hotel is housed in an historic Art Deco building in the heart of the city centre, hence its rather apt name. All of its 209 rooms are decorated in a similar style, which is characteristic of NH hotels. The interiors offer contemporary furnishings with an occasional flourish of colour like a red duvet in otherwise neutral surroundings. Naturally, flat screen TVs, writing desks and wireless internet access come standard as well as private bathrooms. Best of all, if you appreciate fine dining you can also visit its d'Vijff Vlieghe restaurant across the street which offers upmarket cuisine, a 17th-century interior and no less than four original Rembrandt etchings. ▶ 209 rooms (standard rooms from €129, superior from €159, triples from €174).  ★★★

WestCord City Centre Hotel Amsterdam A-1, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 50, tel. (+31) 204 22 00 11, www.westcordhotels.nl. The modern, some would say stylish reception area and restaurant with red leather couches and black and grey walls hint at the hotel's recent renovations. Although some standard rooms remain, we recommend upgrading to a deluxe room which are only slightly more expensive and include sleek décor in addition to the usual three-star amenities like wireless internet access, phone, safe, hair dryer, tea kettle, etc. The bathrooms are separated from the bedroom by a frosted glass partition and inside all of the fixtures are either glass or steel. Take a seat on translucent plastic chairs or hop in a bed that faces the opposite direction of what you'd expect toward a large flat screen TV mounted on the wall. ▶ 106 rooms (106 Total rooms). 106 rooms (20 standard from €80, 86 deluxe from €100). Breakfast: €15.  ★★★

Budget

Hotel Clemens E-5, Raadhuisstraat 39, tel. (+31) 206 24 60 89, www.clemenshotel.com. As with many two-star Amsterdam hotels, you have to ascend a steep set of stairs to reach reception, but once inside you probably won't be disappointed. Each of its nine rooms is slightly different, but as a general rule the budget rooms are smaller and share toilets and showers out in the corridor, while the deluxe rooms are a bit bigger and have a few added amenities like private bathrooms. All rooms include TV, phone, hair dryer, small refrigerator and safe. Although not exactly fashionable, the accommodation here has a bit of old world elegance and breakfast is served in the cosy reception area whose main attraction is an electric faux fireplace. Unfortunately, one of the rooms we visited smelled a bit musty, but that appeared to be a fluke. ▶ 9 rooms (2 singles €55, 4 doubles €70 - 110, 3 triples €150).  ★★

Queen's Day and a coronation

Queen's Day is celebrated on April 30 each year throughout the Netherlands, but Amsterdam is the best place to enjoy the festivities. It's essentially a massive outdoor street party where you'll see locals dressed in Dutch orange lining the canals or manning boats on the water. Although the Dutch have celebrated Queen's Day since the late 19th century, when it was called Princess' Day, it gained its current title and date of celebration in 1948 when Queen Juliana ascended the throne. This year's celebrations will be all the more festive, because Willem-Alexander's coronation will also take place on April 30. After the ceremonies at the Royal Palace on Dam Square the new king and his wife, Queen Maxima, will set sail on the River IJ. In the future the holiday will be known as Koningsdag or King's Day and will be celebrated a few days earlier on April 27, the king's birthday.



Tourist Inn A-1, Spulstraat 52, tel. (+31) 204 21 58 41, www.tourist-inn.nl. Part hotel, part hostel, the aptly named Tourist Inn offers clean recently renovated singles, doubles and triples with flat screen TVs, wireless internet access, air conditioning and private bathrooms with shower and hair dryer or slightly cheaper rooms with shared toilets and showers. Six-bed dorms with clean bunk beds, TVs, lockers and wi-fi are also a bargain and the shared toilet and shower facilities are clean and modern. ▶ 22 rooms (singles, doubles and triples from €60, dorm beds €20 - 35/person). 

Bed & Breakfast

La Vie En Rose B&B and Apartments A-1, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 90B, tel. (+31) 651 59 57 87, www.amsterdamapartmentlavirose.com. Conveniently located in an historic Amsterdam building between the Central Station and Dam Square, La Vie en Rose offers two beautifully decorated and affordably priced apartments that include loads of modern amenities like flat screen TV, stylish furniture and décor, kitchenette and free wireless internet access. Thankfully, many of the original design features of the interiors have also been preserved so you can enjoy the best of both worlds. Amsterdam has some strange rules regarding its buildings, so a maximum of only two people are allowed to stay in each apartment. ▶ (2 apartments from €115). 

Hostels

Bob's Youth Hostel A-1, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 92, tel. (+31) 206 23 00 63, www.bobsyouthhostel.nl. Only a short walk from the Central Station, this legendary Amsterdam hostel is one of the few of its genre that specialises in walk-in business, so as long as you show up before evening there's a good chance you'll get a bed here even on a weekend. Rooms are often located in a nearby building with stairs so steep you'd think the Hillary Step was at the top. Rooms are basic with bunk beds, but each dorm has its own washroom. Unfortunately, there was no hot water when we stayed there. Perhaps it just takes a really long time to reach the third floor. ▶ 144 beds (dorm beds €18 - 23). 

Amsterdam Centrum has plenty of tourist traps, but the following is a tiny selection of some of our favourite restaurants. For hundreds more restaurant reviews visit www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com.

Bagels

Bagels & Beans A-2, Raadhuisstraat 18, tel. (+31) 206 38 07 88, www.bagelsbeans.nl. We're not exactly sure where the beans fit into the equation, but if you like plain, whole wheat, tomato, everything, cinnamon and even gluten-free (whatever that means) bagels with a wide variety of toppings from hummus, tuna salad or Parma ham to traditional cream cheese, then head over to this popular chain of bagel bistros. You can also drink freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, although, try as we might, we can't seem to find the appeal of cucumber juice. You can also take advantage of free wifi. ▶ Open 09:01 - 17:32, Sat, Sun 09:58 - 18:02. Also at Keizersgracht 504, tel. (+31) 203 30 55 08; Haarlemmerdijk 122, tel. (+31) 203 30 41 02. Open 08:59 - 17:31, Sun 10:02 - 17:01; Ferdinand Bolstraat 70, tel. (+31) 206 72 16 10. Open 08:31 - 17:32, Sun 08:58 - 18:01; and many other locations. (€5).   

Tony's NY City Bagels H-5, Jodenbreestraat 15, tel. (+31) 204 21 59 30, www.tonysnycitybagels.nl. Not far from the Rembrandt House, this self-proclaimed New York bagel shop offers a variety of bagels with even more toppings from traditional cream cheese to guacamole. Order a cold sandwich or tuna melts and BLT bagels or you can try brownies, cookies and delicious carrot cake. If you'd rather eat at home take a bunch with you for €0.90/bagel or €8.50 for 10. Naturally, coffee, tea and juice are also available in this bright yellow bistro with high ceilings and views of the street. Order and pay at the counter. ▶ Open 08:00 - 18:00, Sat 08:30 - 18:00, Sun 09:30 - 18:00. (€2 - 5).

Barbecue

Café de Klos F-7, Kerkstraat 41 - 43, tel. (+31) 206 25 37 30, www.beiaardgroep.eu. Although this place looks like an authentic Dutch brown bar with solid wood furniture, wood panelling and imitation Dutch master paintings collecting dust on their chunky frames, the staff assured us that it's actually a restaurant specialising in barbecued meat of all kinds. Order huge servings of spare ribs, smoked chicken, sirloins, t-bones, lamb chops and prime rib guaranteed to make a vegetarian salivate. A decent selection of beer is also on draught including microbrews from De Bekeerde Suster, which is owned by the same people. ▶ Open 16:00 - 24:00. (€12 - 22).



A deep-fried snack is a rite of passage in Holland

Brazilian

Do Brasil F-8, Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 86, tel. (+31) 206 22 63 32, www.dobrasil.nl. A lot of cows sacrificed their lives to create the interior of this steakhouse and Brazilian restaurant. Although it appears that most people opt for the cheaper grilled meat specials like unlimited spare ribs, some more authentic dishes such as *tutú mineiro* (grilled pork sausages, fried eggs, rice, vegetables and black beans) can be had for roughly €20. Real Brazilian Brahma beer is also available for a tidy sum of money, so you might want to stick with the Dutch stuff. Photos of carnival stars line the walls, but it's the furry hides covering all of the seats that really grab your attention. ▶ Open 13:00 - 23:00. (€15 - 20).   

Cafeterias

De Bijenkorf Kitchen A-2, Dam 1, tel. 900 09 19 (toll call), www.debijenkorf.nl. Pass some of the world's biggest brands like Vuitton and Gucci on your way to the top floor of this posh department store to reach De Bijenkorf Kitchen - an upmarket cafeteria that offers a stylish, modern interior and views of Amsterdam. The Asian stand cooks stir fries to order, the seafood stand boasts oysters and sushi, you can order pizzas and pasta at the Italian counter and steaks at the grill. A much-coveted outdoor terrace with limited seating is connected to the bar area. Needless to say, the Kitchen also offers plenty of ice cream, cake and coffee. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00, Mon, Sun 11:00 - 19:00, Thu, Fri 10:00 - 21:00. (€5 - 12).  

Chinese

New King B-1, Zeedijk 115 - 117, tel. (+31) 206 25 21 80, www.newking.nl. We were a little apprehensive when we encountered New King, because unlike so many other restaurants in Chinatown, this one actually looks stylish with light coloured wood panelling, red banners of Asian comic book characters eating food and dark brown wallpaper that looks like snakeskin. Thankfully, this wasn't a case of interior design prevailing over substance. The Mandarin and Indonesian cuisine is delicious and the prices are surprisingly reasonable, too! Order whole fish, steaming bowls of seafood, crispy duck and pork, dim sum and some more exotic dishes like frog legs. ▶ Open 11:30 - 24:00. (€12 - 18). 

Coffee & Tea

Greenwoods English Tearoom A-2, Singel 103, tel. (+31) 206 23 70 71, www.greenwoods.eu. This tiny little café is much more than a tearoom, although tea certainly is its speciality. Take a seat in its cosy, rustically decorated interior and order a hot drink with something sweet, sample one of its healthy sandwiches or try a delicious breakfast like the omelette with mozzarella and chorizo sausage, full English or eggs Benedict. Space is limited, especially at the weekend when droves of people come here for brunch, so it would be wise to call ahead and make a reservation. During the summer Greenwoods also has a lovely terrace on the canal. ▶ Open 09:30 - 17:00, Fri, Sat, Sun 09:30 - 18:00. (€5 - 9). 

Theehuis Himalaya B-1, Warmoesstraat 56, tel. (+31) 206 26 08 99, www.himalaya.nl. For nearly three decades this place has been a peaceful oasis in the most hectic part of Amsterdam. Not just a bookshop with a spiritual angle, Himalaya also serves plenty of organic delicacies. Bagels, juice, cake and many kinds of tea are all trademark's of this colourful café, but don't forget to leave some room for its delicious banana cake. A view of the water is yet another bonus. ▶ Open 10:30 - 18:00, Mon 12:00 - 18:00, Thu 10:30 - 17:30, Sat 10:00 - 17:30, Sun 11:30 - 17:00.   

Diners

Studio 2 A-3, Singel 504, tel. (+31) 206 23 91 36. This cosy little café offers great views of the bustling Flower Market outside, not to mention excellent traditional Dutch dishes like green pea soup, omelettes, pancakes, apple pie and, like most places, an English breakfast for tourists. The food is incredibly cheap by city centre standards, but if you're not hungry it's also a good place to take a break from shopping and sightseeing with a coffee or a beer. ▶ Open 09:30 - 17:30. (€5 - 8). [CC]

Dutch

D'Vijff Vleeghen A-3, Spuistraat 294 - 302, tel. (+31) 205 30 40 60, www.thefivefles.com. Don't let the odd 'insect' theme throw you. The Five Fles is actually an upmarket restaurant housed in an historic building on the Spuistraat. Although starters begin at around €20 a piece, you should bear in mind that it boasts four original Rembrandt etchings, not to mention a Golden Era interior of Delft tiles and gilt leather walls. Chef Jeroen Groot specialises in Dutch cuisine with a modern twist like suckling pig cutlets with vadouvan gravy or maybe sweetbread with stewed cheek of veal. ▶ Open 18:00 - 22:00. (€30). [CC]

't Lieverdje A-3, Singel 415, tel. (+31) 625 58 11 56, www.tlieverdje.nl. This unpretentious café and bar named after a famous statue of a small boy located around the corner serves up classic homemade Dutch dishes like *stamppot*, haring and apple pie as well as Indonesian-style fried rice for affordable prices. A good selection of strong Belgian beers and the locally made De Prael brew are also at your disposal but bear in mind that the resident cat might choose to sit in your lap if you're male. Apparently, it doesn't like women or so the owner claims. A pleasant rustic interior with large brass candelabras and even an antique chandelier guarantee a cosy stay here, but remember that during peek eating times you'll have to sit at the bar if you only want a drink. Tables are reserved for hungry patrons. On Fridays happy hour begins at 20:00. ▶ Open 11:00 - 21:00. (€6 - 12). [T]

Fast food

Doner Ovas E-4, Haarlemmerdijk 30, tel. (+31) 203 30 23 99. Haarlemmerdijk is a popular transit route for cyclists on their way to the city centre and after a night on the town this place is a good stop-over for a kebab or some other greasy Turkish treat. Unlike many similar places, which often excel at sticky floors, unfriendly staff and nonexistent décor, Doner Ovas is the pinnacle of cleanliness and boasts impressive Oriental chandeliers. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 02:00. (€3 - 6). [CC] [T]

Grill Steakhouse Mama F-8, Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 56, tel. (+31) 206 20 48 28. The exalted name is a little optimistic and the faux brick walls aren't fooling anyone, but the shoarma is pretty good, even at a steep €5 for a small pita. That said, the sauce is truly spicy and the staff are constantly in motion cutting meat and serving inebriated pub crawlers in the middle of the night. ▶ Open 19:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 19:00 - 04:00. (€5 - 7). [T]

Manneken Pis A-1, Damrak 41, www.mannekenpis.nl. Named after the Belgian capital's favourite little urinating rascal, this fast food fries shack on the Damrak has become an Amsterdam institution. Order your deep-fried potatoes in three sizes and one of 16 sauces is included in the price from traditional mayonnaise to an Indonesian peanut satay condiment. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00. (€3 - 5). [T]



Hanging around in the Red Light District

Ice cream

Metropolitan Deli Warmoesstraat 135, tel. (+31) 203 30 19 55, www.metropolitandell.nl. Although most venues on Warmoesstraat lure you inside with large beer selections, erotic gadgets or a whiff of pot smoke, Metropolitan Deli tempts passers-by with a flowing chocolate fountain and a huge display of freshly made gelato in dozens of flavours from pistachio and hazelnut to cheesecake and even *stroomwafel* (caramel cookie). You can also buy gourmet chocolates and chocolate flavoured beer! Recommended. ▶ Open 09:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 01:00. [CC] [T]

Indian

Gandhi A-1, Damrak 54, tel. (+31) 206 38 32 22, www.indianrestaurantgandhi.com. Gandhi is a top-notch Indian restaurant with attentive staff who serve tasty traditional Indian curry dishes in a room with no windows and hardly any decorations. However, the real surprise is its tacky location only a five-minute walk from Central Station. You could easily walk past this hidden treasure, so look for a sauna next to the entrance. Try the combination menus, which are good value for money. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 03:00. (€13 - 17). [CC] [T]

Indonesian

Kantjil & de Tijger A-3, Spuistraat 291 - 293, tel. (+31) 206 20 09 94, www.kantjil.nl. Stylish, yet casual, Kantjil & de Tijger is a good option if you're in the mood for tasty Indonesian cuisine from local favourites like a variety of rijsttafels and nasi going to delicious desserts such as the green Javanese pancake with coconut and palm sugar syrup. The exotic smells of the sauces and seasonings are the first thing one notices upon entering as meals are prepared in an open-plan kitchen to the left. ▶ Open 16:00 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 23:00. (€10 - 25). [CC] [T]

Pelanggi B-3, Rembrandtplein 16, tel. (+31) 204 20 06 70. This candlelit Indonesian restaurant offers great views of Rembrandtplein and an extensive list of traditional dishes as well as a variety of so-called 'rice tables' starting at around €30 for two people. If you're a novice you can always choose the daily special, which usually includes a curry, a satay, veggies in sauce and, of course, rice. The interior isn't exactly noteworthy and we were charged a whopping €3 for a small cola, which seemed a bit steep. Had the staff not been so helpful and polite we might have caused a ruckus. At that price we could have ordered a beer! ▶ Open 17:00 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 22:00. (€12 - 18). [CC] [T]

Pancakes

The Pancake Bakery E-4, Prinsengracht 191, tel. (+31) 206 25 13 33, www.pancake.nl. Although this cellar pancake house feels a bit like a tourist trap, especially given its close location to the throngs of visitors at the Anne Frank House, it serves scores of authentic Dutch pancakes and omelettes and that's pretty much it. In other words, a very simple, yet popular concept. Each of its marble-topped tables has a big ceramic bucket of local syrup with a wooden spoon as well as a container of powdered sugar, the walls are covered in Amsterdam memorabilia and the low timber ceilings are simply charming, but the aroma of pancakes on the griddle can be a little overwhelming by the kitchen. Order them with bacon, onions and cheese, with ice cream and cinnamon or dozens of other toppings either sweet or savoury. Tea, coffee and beer are also available. ▶ Open 12:00 - 21:30. (€8 - 15).

Pizza

La Perla D-5, Tweede Tuindwarsstraat 14, tel. (+31) 206 24 88 28, www.pizzaperla.nl. A couple of guys frantically stoke a wood-fuelled brick pizza oven to keep up with the large demand for thin-crust pizzas that have locals queued up outside. But this isn't a fancy, sit-down establishment, although it does offer two counters and some stools, which are almost always occupied. On weekend nights, people order their gourmet pizzas baked with real *Mozzarella di Bufala di Campana* cheese and then sip a glass of wine or an Italian Dolimiti micro brew outside until one of the master bakers runs over with their order. Most people eat it right here on the street. ▶ Open 17:00 - 22:00. (€10 - 12). 

Quick eats

Amarylles B-3, Singel 540, tel. (+31) 206 22 49 47. Located on the same canal as the Flower Market, this small café offers a little bit of everything from full English breakfasts around the €10 mark and burgers with fries to classic Dutch peasant food like *uitsmijter*, pea soup with sausages and plenty of pancakes for surprisingly reasonable prices. Half a dozen small tables line the sidewalk out front where you can sip a German Warsteiner brew or a morning cup of Joe. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. (€6 - 12). 

Burger Bar A-3, Reguliersbreestraat 9 BG, tel. (+31) 203 30 59 68, www.burger-bar.nl. To put it simply: the best burgers in Amsterdam. Why go for the rainforest-cutting fast food chains next door when Burger Bar makes the next best thing to a burger off the barby. Its niche is a simple create-your-own burger concept where you choose the type of meat you want (Irish beef, Black Angus, Philly steak or even Kobe), then your toppings and finally some fries and a drink. Sometimes annoying techno music seems to clash with the atmosphere, but given the quality of the burgers, we'll forgive them. ▶ Open 11:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 04:00. Also at Kolksteeg2, tel. (+31) 206 24 90 49.     

Café DECK5 H-4, Oosterdok 2, tel. (+31) 205 31 32 33, www.e-nemo.nl. Although you shouldn't expect haute cuisine, this café is located on the rooftop terrace of one of Amsterdam's most unusual buildings - the NEMO Science Centre. You can order sausage rolls, hot dogs, sandwiches with tuna, ham, eggs or cheese or sample one of four day-glow coloured slush puppy drinks, while admiring an amazing view of the city centre. Beer and wine is also available as well as ice cream and desserts, but bear in mind that you have to climb the walkway from the rear of the building, unless you want to buy a ticket to the museum. ▶ Open 12:00 - 16:00. Closed Mon. (€2 - 4). 

FEBO B-1, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 33, tel. (+31) 206 26 03 60, www.febode-lekkerste.nl. This chain of snack bars, or rather snack shops, offers deep-fried croquettes, frikandel and burgers promptly placed into vending machines right after being made, which is why it's often the recipient of contempt by both Amsterdammers and tourists. But then again, sober people aren't FEBO's target audience. After a few beers and a few joints when hunger strikes you'll probably want to avoid the crowds and get the cheapest food available as quick as possible. If you're worried about the quality, don't put too much thought into it as you'll probably forget about in the morning, unless, of course, you've got some major heartburn. Also available at many other locations throughout town. ▶ Open 12:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 04:00; and many other locations. (€1 - 3).  

Thai Bird Snackbar B-1, Zeedijk 77, tel. (+31) 204 20 62 89, www.thai-bird.nl. This place doesn't care about its interior, because it's concentrated all of its focus on the delicious Thai food served here. It's a busy place where you eat, rather than relax, but the beef in red curry and coconut milk more than makes up for a little bit of stress. You might spot this snack bar from a distance by the crowd lingering outside waiting for their take away or an unlikely seat inside at one of four tables. If you'd prefer a proper sit down meal with higher prices then try its restaurant across the street. ▶ Open 14:00 - 22:00. (€9 - 12).    

Vlaamse Friteshuis A-1, Voetboogstraat 33, tel. (+31) 206 24 60 75. Difficult to find, Vlaamse Friteshuis might draw your attention with the crowds of people standing around on this quiet street eating fries. Why so popular? In our humble opinion it serves up the best fries in Amsterdam. And it sticks to what it's good at because fries are all that it offers. Various sauces are also available and if you're up for a real Dutch adventure go for the Oorlog, which is half mayonnaise and half satay (peanut sauce) topped with chopped onions. ▶ Open 12:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun. (€4 - 7). 

Soup

Soup En Zo H-5, Jodenbreestraat 94a, tel. (+31) 204 22 22 43, www.soupenzo.nl. This place specialises in delicious, if expensive, gourmet soups from simple potato with Roquefort cheese to Surinamese brown bean soup with chicken. You're guaranteed at least eight different choices and they're served in four sizes from something that resembles a children's cup to a large container, but bear in mind that the location on N. Spiegelstraat only offers takeaway. ▶ Open 11:00 - 20:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 19:00. (€4 - 8).



As soon as the sun comes out so do the locals

Steakhouses

Argentino Luna D-5, Lindengracht 152, tel. (+31) 206 27 41 49, www.restaurantluna.nl.

Uruguayan footballer Luiz Suarez's shirt decorates one of the walls of this wonderful restaurant. It's not big and the tables are really cramped, but that seems only to contribute to the cosy atmosphere. South Americans from all over the Netherlands come here for the imported steaks prepared by Argentinian grill masters and a cold Quilmes beer. We recommend the entrecote steak with Roquefort sauce and the Argentinian coffee with a shot of Legui liquor. Enjoy live music on Fridays and Saturdays.

► Open 17:00 - 23:00, Sat 11:00 - 23:00. (€25 - 30).



La Brasa B-1, Zeedijk 97, tel. (+31) 203 30 63 31, www.labrasa.nl/.

It's hard to choose a steakhouse in Amsterdam, as they are located on nearly every street corner, but this one has certainly tried to get a leg up on its competition as far as interior design goes. Every square meter of this place from the walls to the ceiling is covered in wide, roughly cut wooden planks, wagon wheels serve as chandeliers and cowhides dangle from every available surface like the set of an old western. You can of course get steaks of varying sizes and cuts, but we recommend a splurge as the special is tasty, but on the small side. Tuna steaks, prawns and other seafood are also on offer as well as Argentine beer.

► Open 12:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 01:00. (€12 - 24).

Sushi

Zushi G-7, Amstel 20, tel. (+31) 203 30 68 82, www.zushi.nl.

If you're either colour blind or careful with your money, you're better off avoiding this modern restaurant. Your bill is determined by the colours of the plates you choose from the conveyor belt. Anyone who's keen on Japanese cuisine will enjoy this stylishly furnished restaurant with a great view of the Amstel and its extraordinary sushi and other traditional dishes. It's not the cheapest, but definitely one of the best of its genre. ► Open 12:00 - 23:00. (€20 - 25).

Thai

Bird B-1, Zeedijk 72 - 74, tel. (+31) 206 20 14 42, www.thai-bird.nl.

This Thai restaurant was one of the first ethnic eateries to open at the Zeedijk in the 1990s and to this day it claims to prepare authentic meals that are even better than the stuff you'd get in Thailand. A bold statement to be sure, but it might just be true. Waiters in traditional dress serve some of the best fresh green and red curries you can get in Amsterdam with as much white rice as you can eat. The interior is rather less authentic, but even Christmas lights mixed with plastic Buddhas can't spoil a truly satisfying meal at Bird. ► Open 17:00 - 23:00. (€12 - 17).



There are many ways to get around the city

Song Kwae B-2, Kloveniersburgwal 14a, tel. (+31) 206 24 25 68, www.songkwae.nl.

This restaurant has been serving Thai dishes on the Nieuwmarkt since 1995. Try delicious, snappy servings of traditional curries and rice in an authentic atmosphere that includes loud screams from the kitchen, Thai pop music and an androgynous waiter/waitress. Song Kwae's only flaw is not the restaurant itself, but it's lesser competitors in the same neighbourhood that vie for its customers. ► Open 13:00 - 22:30. (€12 - 17).

Tibetan

Snow Lion E-4, Haarlemmerstraat 50, tel. (+31) 204 22 77 76.

The otherwise ordinary interior of this restaurant is punctuated by colourful images of the Buddha on one side and the Dalai Lama on the other. The waitress dressed in traditional garb had decidedly Tibetan features, which gave us our first clue that we may have come to the right place. Order classic drinks like butter tea or something with a little more kick and then move on to vegetarian or meat dishes with curry, noodles or rice or try the 'special' beef dish which was incredibly spicy. But don't worry. The staff are kind enough to ask how hot you like your food when they take your order. Complimentary spicy, deep-fried noodles on each table were also a nice touch. ► Open 16:00 - 22:00. (€15).

Tibet Restaurant B-1, Lange Nieuzel 24, tel. (+31) 206 24 11 37, www.tibet-restaurant.nl.

Despite its uninspired name, the Tibet Restaurant offers a truly diverse selection of Himalayan specialties and even some politically incorrect Chinese Sichuan dishes. The menu also provides plenty of inane comments about the food that are meant to be funny, but unfortunately come up a little short in the humour department, but since our sizzling pork was truly delicious and spicy, we'll take those comments at face value. The interior contains murals of Tibetan landscapes, a huge photo of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the obligatory portrait of the Dalai Lama and a disturbing photo of an unwashed Tibetan child that will make you want to cry. ► Open 15:00 - 24:00. (€10 - 16).

Turkish

Güllüoğlu B-3, Reguliersbreestraat 7, tel. (+31) 203 20 42 00, www.gulluoglu.nl.

All the goodies that the Turkish culinary tradition has to offer can be found at this popular Amsterdam institution. Since 1871 Güllüoğlu has used its secret family recipes to create wonderful handmade desserts like baklava. The exquisite flavour of these recipes have become so beloved that Güllüoğlu has the honour of calling itself the biggest baklava baker in the world with establishments in dozens of countries including Libya. You can also enjoy other pastries, pies and cakes and all can be enjoyed with real Turkish coffee. The restaurant, café and shop is tastefully decorated with a mixture of European and Ottoman features.

► Open 09:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 22:00.

Vietnamese

Vietnam Restaurant B-1, Zeedijk 57, tel. (+31) 206 38 62 34, www.restaurant-vietnam.nl.

This green and gold restaurant won't win any awards for interior design, but it does have some Asian influences here and there like porcelain idols and bamboo over the bar. Although it offers plenty of Chinese dishes too, like Peking duck and *egg foo yung*, it also offers Vietnamese classics like *pho* soup and *bun thom* *thit nuong cha gio* which really isn't as complicated as it sounds. It's basically vermicelli with roast pork, shrimp, spring rolls and lettuce served in a big bowl with a vinegar chilli sauce on the side. Bear in mind that some of the noodle dishes, like the one just mentioned, are served cold. ► (€8 - 18).

Cafés

Amsterdam café culture is simply fantastic. You can sit in an historic establishment that's over 100 years old or sip a special coffee poured by a professional barrista.

Beurs van Berlage A-2, Damrak 277, tel. (+31) 205 31 33 55, www.beursvanberlage.nl/cafe. If you'd like to see where locals eat, drink and chat over beer, wine, breakfast food and gourmet sandwiches, then this little slice of history housed in the monumental Beurs van Berlage building is the place to go. Not only can you get a good meal, but you can also admire this legendary example of Amsterdam School architecture and design from the inside with its vaulted ceilings and characteristic tile tableaux by Jan Toorop. The acoustics of the hall makes for a boisterous meal among Amsterdammers, but bear in mind that it's often difficult to get a seat at lunch, unless you visit the outside terrace in summer.

► Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. (€8 - 15). ☺☺☺

Café de Zwart A-3, Spuistraat 334, tel. (+31) 206 24 65 11. This tiny, classic old word café boasts an intricate, multi-coloured tile floor, dark wood paneling and inlaid parquet table tops. A full bar of spirits is manned by a mustachioed gentleman in a crisp white shirt from whom you can order coffee, tea and a good selection of local and Belgian draught beers. Snacks like tostis and liverwurst sandwiches are also on offer as well as a large outdoor terrace with great views of the hubbub on the square. Given its prime location, Café de Zwart's food and drink are surprisingly cheap. ► Open 09:00 - 01:00. ☺

Café Fonteyn B-2, Nieuwmarkt 13 - 15, tel. (+31) 204 22 35 99, www.cafefonteyn.nl. The faded floral print wallpaper and wobbly chairs might make one suspect that Fonteyn has fallen on hard times, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. A laid back atmosphere, a good selection of beers including one or two brews from the IJ brewery and a huge summer terrace on the Nieuwmarkt make it popular with locals and tourists alike, especially bohemian 20-somethings. You can also order vitamin drinks, 100% fruit juices like apple-rhubarb and cocktails after 16:00. Sandwiches and Dutch snacks can also be had, but it doesn't serve proper dinners. An iced cappuccino does, however, hit the spot on a hot day. ► Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 03:00. ☺☺☺

Café Heffer A-1, Oudebrugsteeg 7, tel. (+31) 204 28 44 88, www.heffer.nl. Although lots of establishments claim to be 'grand cafés' in Holland, Heffer truly lives up to this illustrious title. Porcelain beer taps, ceramic jenever jugs, antique tile floors and gigantic chandeliers hanging from high ceilings make this elegant place a favourite among beer connoisseurs who need a break from dusty brown bars. The selection of brews is excellent, but many people come for the delicious cuisine and great desserts. Live sports are often shown on the big screens. ► Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 03:00. (€5 - 15). ☺☺

Café Kobalt E-4, Singel 2a, tel. (+31) 203 20 15 59, www.cafekobalt.nl. Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner and late night cocktails, this incredibly popular eating and drinking establishment is located in a medieval building with, rough, worn floors, ancient timber ceilings and columns and a typically gabled exterior not far from the station. Locals know that a table reservation is a wise choice in the evening and even in the afternoon if one wants to enjoy affordable Dutch and international cuisine not to mention a good selection of draught beers from the Amsterdam IJ brewery. You can also listen to DJs on Friday nights and live jazz on Sundays from 17:00. ► Open 08:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 08:00 - 03:00, Sun 10:00 - 01:00. (€8 - 15). ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺



Spring day on the Singel canal

Café Scheltema A-2, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 242, tel. (+31) 206 23 23 23. This classic Dutch café, brown bar and beerhall is so authentic it's a virtual museum of Amsterdam eating and drinking culture. Its worn wooden tables, floors and wall paneling have been around for ages, not to mention the antique memorabilia that seem to cover every available space. An old stove in the centre of the room keeps patrons warm on cold days or perhaps its the jenever and a good selection of Low Country beers that keeps the chill away. Snacks, sandwiches, soups and local main courses are available as well as salads but we recommend the French onion soup or one of its hearty country-style omelettes. ► Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sat 10:00 - 21:00, Sun 11:00 - 21:00. (€7 - 18).

Café Schiller B-3, Rembrandtplein 24, tel. (+31) 206 24 98 46, www.cafeschiller.nl. Café Schiller is an average sized eating and drinking establishment with a big history and a favourite among young and old Amsterdammers, as well as a hang out for the city's fourth estate - the stingiest lot of tipplers you'll find, unless of course they've already had few. Old portraits of venerated men adorn its elegant walls, yet the atmosphere is friendly, relaxed and open. The whole range of IJ microbrews is available in bottles and the wine list is simple and within reach of average citizens and lowly travel writers. The cuisine is more upmarket and you can try suckling pig, cod fillet stuffed with oysters or fillet mignon for roughly €20. ► Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri 16:00 - 03:00, Sat 13:00 - 03:00, Sun 13:00 - 01:00. (€15 - 20). ☺☺

De Kat in de Wijngaert D-4, Lindengracht 160HS, tel. (+31) 206 22 45 54, www.dekatindewijngaert.nl/. This casual café and bar is often full at the weekend when many a local comes in for a big breakfast, a beer and the day's paper. Seating at one of half a dozen worn wooden tables is limited so singles are encouraged to belly up to the long, red granite counter for food and drink or a cup of coffee and some pleasant conversation. Try one of its toasted sandwiches or a Dutch fry up. ► Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 02:00. (€7 - 12). ☺

George Deli U.S.A. H-6, Utrechtsestraat 17, tel. (+31) 203 30 01 71, www.cafegeorge.nl. This impressive bistro not far from Rembrandtplein is located above the posh Marqt supermarket and it offers a black and white interior that includes a huge counter bar and tabletops made of marble. You can drop by any time of the day and order great breakfasts like eggs Benedict or Florentine, freshly made sandwiches from classic Rubens and BLTs to lox and bagels or spend a little more money and splurge on oysters (in season) with a glass of Champagne or shot of Grey Goose vodka. Gourmet coffee and tempting desserts like brownies and carrot cake are also on the menu. ► Open 09:00 - 17:00. (€5 - 10). ☺☺

Once again, the following is but a fraction of the nightlife reviews that we've covered in Amsterdam Centrum. For a full list of pubs, clubs and Red Light hot spots as well as videos visit www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com.

Bars

Biblos F-7, Lijnbaansgracht 243, tel. (+31) 206 26 21 70. It would take the better part of a day just to describe all of the junk and clutter that hangs from the ceiling and walls at Biblos, but here it is in a nutshell: two canoes, 100 or so licence plates from around the globe, currency both young and very old, boxing gloves, boat oars, ski poles, bowling pins and lots and lots of vinyl records. What else can we say about the atmosphere? It's smoky, packed with both foreigners and locals and fun. Although plenty of beers and cocktails are available, shots seem to be popular. ▶ Open 21:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 21:00 - 04:00. 

Café de Koe E-7, Marnixstraat 381, tel. (+31) 206 25 44 82, www.cafedekoe.nl. We really like this laid back place where you can enjoy a good brew or cocktail with a board game during the day or attempt to mark your territory among dozens of rowdy patrons at night. It's kind of like walking into a friend's house party except your best buddy probably doesn't have a giant white mural of a cow in his living room or glittering wallpaper plastered to the ceiling above his bar. Alternative rock tunes enjoy a prominent position here, which is a good thing, but the tempting smells from the restaurant below can bring on a premature case of the munchies. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00. 

Café Emmelot B-1, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 52, tel. (+31) 206 22 16 26. This little pub's popularity is no doubt due to its good location on a major Red Light thoroughfare near some of the best window shopping, although you could make the argument that the loud 1980s music really brings 'em in. Others probably appreciate that the smoking ban isn't enforced here, but we personally only came for the cheap late night drinks and the pool table. In any event, Emmelot also provides a big TV and if you beg the bar staff they might even put on a football match. Ladies need to ask for the key to crapper at the bar, but the men's trough is open to all. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. 

Café Heuvel G-9, Prinsengracht 568, tel. (+31) 206 22 63 54. Although it appears to be just another tame Amsterdam canal-side café in the afternoon, where you can enjoy a good brew and a snack with a pleasant view, at the weekend this place is so packed with 20- and 30-somethings that you have to be a magician or contortionist just to squeeze past the masses to get to the bar. So if you like crowds of fun, inebriated folks after midnight, then by all means join the party. The interior is decorated with old photos and the occasional fresh flower, but otherwise doesn't differ much from other brown bars in the area. ▶ Open 14:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 14:00 - 03:00. 

Café Mooy A-1, Kolksteeg 12, tel. (+31) 206 24 02 94. This historic bar has been around since 1726, but unlike many of its brethren, this brown bar has adjusted to the times. Now this could be good or bad depending on your point of view, but we certainly winced having seen a beautiful, Delft tile fireplace desecrated by the placement of slot machines on either side of it. However, everyone who enters is greeted with a heartfelt *goede avond!*, the music is generic enough to please most tastes and a pool table is always a major plus in our estimation. The beer selection is also pretty decent, Dutch snacks can be arranged and its open late. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 03:00. 



Nothing but blue skies and sunshine in Amsterdam

Café Sound Garden D-6, Marnixstraat 164 - 166, tel. (+31) 206 20 28 53, www.cafesoundgarden.nl. Being old Seattle sound enthusiasts ourselves, we had to come to this dive bar to see what all the fuss was about. Would you believe it that as we walked in, Soundgarden was blaring from the speakers? Okay, it was actually Audioslave, but pretty damn close. If you'd like to see what an old squatter's bar probably looked like before they sold out (but with more Americans), then this is the place to go. You can play pool or foosball inside or hit the private canal-side terrace, which must infuriate the posh neighbours next door in the evenings when things heat up. Inside there's also a smoking room, not to mention a huge painting of Henry Rollins performing in naught but his undies. ▶ Open 15:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 15:00 - 03:00. 

Weber E-8, Marnixstraat 397, tel. (+31) 206 22 99 10, www.hotelweber.nl. Weber is billed as a club/bar for an alternative crowd loth to listen to pop and techno music on their night out and we'd have to agree. At the weekend it's packed, quite stuffy and quite hard to get into and even harder to get out. New Wave and indie music icons line one wall, while the other boasts three portraits of American astronauts and what appears to be the head of a water buffalo. Alternative indeed. Seating on faux leopard skin seats in the cellar is often easier to find. ▶ Open 19:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 19:00 - 04:00. 

Beer bars

Beer Temple A-2, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 250, tel. (+31) 206 27 14 27, www.beertemple.nl. The word temple isn't mere hyperbole. If you're into American craft brews you might just be tempted to drop to your knees in awe and reverence at the sight of the huge blackboard that lists hundreds of beers by such brewing heavyweights as Samuel Adams, Saranac, Anchor, Brooklyn and Flying Dog. Roughly 20 beers are available on draught, including the house Tempelbier, but most are in bottles. If you've had your fill of ales and IPAs, you can try some rare and exotic libations like the 32% Tactical Nuclear Penguin brew. Good pub grub like wings, burgers, hot dogs and Trappist cheeses can also be had here. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri 16:00 - 03:00, Sat 14:00 - 03:00, Sun 14:00 - 22:00. 

Café Belgique A-2, Gravenstraat 2, tel. (+31) 206 25 19 74, www.cafe-belgique.nl. A couple of tables, a few stools at the bar, two benches outside and that's about it for seating in this tiny brown bar specialising in delicious Belgian brews too numerous to mention by name. Rest assured, that if you're a beer connoisseur the only complaint you'll have here is that the glasses are too small. Perhaps that's a blessing given that most of the suds sold here weigh in somewhere just below the 10% alcohol mark. Recommended. ▶ Open 14:00 - 01:00. 

Billiards & Pool

Balls F-6, Reguliersdwarsstraat 37. Three red felt pool tables on the second floor of this bar for €2 per game.
 ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 03:00.

The Pool Hole A-3, Voetboogstraat 3, tel. (+31) 203 30 08 13, www.thepoolhole.com. Unlike most pool halls, this one has plenty of areas where you can sit down and relax without the unmistakable clack-clack of billiard balls smacking into one another. That said, this partially sunken cellar offers half a dozen tables and a laid back Bohemian atmosphere with good tunes on the sound system and lots of candlelight.
 ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. ☑

Brew pubs

De Bekeerde Suster (De Beiaard) B-2, Kloveniersburgwal 6 - 8, tel. (+31) 204 23 01 12, www.beiaardgroep.eu. Although this pub and microbrewery is part of a chain of restaurants and cafés, its worn wooden interior is warm and inviting and, with the exception of the tiled area in the back that houses the copper beer vats, looks like its been here for many years to say the least. In addition to local and Belgian beers, The Converted Nun offers her own brews including a blonde, a triple bock, a white beer and a seasonal beer, all of which you can taste before ordering. Food is also available including daily specials for just under €10. ▶ Open 15:00 - 01:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 01:00.

De Bierfabriek A-3, Rokin 75, tel. (+31) 205 28 99 10, www.bierfabriek.com. This huge beer hall is so large it has entrances from two parallel streets. Two of the brews on offer are produced on the premises, the dark and slightly sweet Nero and the reddish and fruity Rosso, while the pilsner is made by the family-owned ALFA brewery. In addition to the usual snacks and salads, a few main courses listed on the blackboard are available, but you'd be mad not to try the Cornish game hens, which you can see (and smell) roasting behind a large glass partition. Whole peanuts are piled on each table, too, but don't be afraid to throw the shells on the floor. The staff actually encourages this! You can also skip the middleman and choose a table with your own beer tap. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri 16:00 - 03:00, Sat 14:00 - 03:00, Sun 14:00 - 01:00. ☑

Proeflokaal de Prael B-1, Oudezijds Armsteeg 26, tel. (+31) 204 08 44 70, www.deprael.nl. Hidden in a narrow alley between two of the city centre's busiest pedestrian streets you'll find the tasting room of the De Prael microbrewery. Sample all of the company's beers in an atmosphere that's too hip and positively overwhelming to describe. Three levels of old mismatched furniture, white tiles, faux Persian rugs, wooden tables and beer memorabilia await you in a space that's industrial, old-fashioned and modern all at once, not to mention the actual brewery itself visible behind a glass wall. Good pub grub is also on the menu and rock tunes dominate the soundtrack. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. Closed Mon. ☑

Brown bars

Café Brandon E-5, Keizersgracht 157, tel. (+31) 654 34 71 36. This classic brown bar is popular with both young and old, but tourists are seldom seen here. Perhaps it's the lack of a TV or the whiff of cigarette smoke that discourages them from entering. Maybe the sight of rugs as tablecloths is off-putting. In any case, it's a good place to meet locals, especially in the evening when it fills up, and the location is picturesque to say the least. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. ☑

Café Karpershoek A-1, Martelaarsgracht 2, tel. (+31) 206 24 78 86. It could very well be that you have to be a person of the male persuasion to appreciate this bar. Around since 1606 or 1629, depending on whom you talk to, it considers itself to be Amsterdam's oldest bar and after checking out the shabby furniture and sand-worn floors it won't get any argument from us. Roughly 400 years ago sailors and other rough characters could sit here and admire the view of the ships on the IJ way before the train station cut off this port city from the water. Today you can sip a local beer or jenever here with middle-aged men who kiss one another on the cheek in manly fashion. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00.

Café Pieper F-8, Prinsengracht 424, tel. (+31) 206 26 47 75. According to the plaque on the wall, and the bartender, this ancient bar on the picturesque Prinsengracht has been around since 1665 and having a look around the place the only things that would make you think otherwise are the modern music, current events posters and the shiny coffee machine. Everything else in this classic brown bar, including its worn floorboards, low timber ceiling and faded stained glass windows, looks its age. Order a tasty local beer or maybe a La Chouffe by the gas fire on a typical wet and rainy Amsterdam day or grab a seat outside for a little sunshine and a smoke.
 ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. ☑

Café Slijterij Oosterling H-7, Utrechtsestraat 140, tel. (+31) 206 23 41 40. This wonderful bar has been serving thirsty Amsterdammers since 1877. A mix of young and elderly patrons play cards, sip jenever or knock back strong Belgian and Dutch double bocks here under the shadow of a huge antique ad for Oosterling liquors at the far end. Huge barrels of spirits decorate the right-hand wall and hang precariously over the heads of the local clientele, but the bar's most curious feature is the height of its hip-high bar with matching stools that look like a Tolkien-inspired tavern expecting Hobbits for happy hour. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00, Sun 13:00 - 20:00.

De Pilsener Club (De Engelse Reet) A-3, Begijnsteeg 4, tel. (+31) 206 23 17 77. Tucked away in a tiny alleyway off the Kalverstraat, this simple brown bar is perhaps best known for the fact that it really has no bar to speak of. Polite male gentlemen in neckties pour a wide variety of delicious brews from a back alcove/closet area lending this dark room an odd, yet old world atmosphere. The peeling wallpaper, wrinkled lithographs of Amsterdam and sand-covered floor only add to the feeling that De Pilsener Club is a time capsule that only locals and the occasional wayward tourist bother to enter. But in our opinion, it's a welcome respite from the international chains and big brands that line the city's main shopping artery outside. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00. Closed Sun.



Some brown bars also offer excellent summer terraces

Bubbles & Wine bars

Mulliner's Wijnlokaal F-7, Lijnbaansgracht 266/267, tel. (+31) 206 27 97 82, www.mulliners-wijnlokaal.nl. The first thing we noticed upon entering this wine bar, apart from the refined atmosphere, the polished wooden bar and the green leather benches that put one in mind of an English gentleman's club, was the smell of garlic. Escargot was being prepared along with a myriad of other delicious tapas, but Mulliner's main focus is of course wine in all its lovely incarnations. Order a bottle or a glass from the month's specials on the blackboard and relax in this candlelit room to the soothing sounds of classical music. ▶ Open 17:00 - 24:00. Closed Mon. 

Vyne E-7, Prinsengracht 411, tel. (+31) 203 44 64 08, info@vyne.nl, www.vyne.nl. Although wine is still considered a poor relative of beer in Dutch bars, this attitude has been slowly changing over the past few years. Here, however, at the stylish and trendy Vyne, that most ancient of alcoholic beverages takes centre stage and the warm interior is reason enough for a visit. One wall consists entirely of a lounge sofa, while the other side of this long narrow room is a large depository for thousands of bottles of wine. Running the length of the wine bar in the middle of the room is a table with space enough for you and 99 of your friends. ▶ Open 18:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 01:00, Sun 16:00 - 22:00.  

Casinos & Gambling

Holland Casino F-8, Max Euweplein 62, tel. (+31) 205 21 11 11, www.hollandcasino.nl. Located on the water between Leidseplein and the Rijksmuseum, this stylish casino has plenty of eating and drinking options and a great summer terrace. Inside you'll find well-known games like poker, roulette, black jack and loads of slot machines in two separate halls and focused gamblers seated in expensive leather chairs doing battle with machines with imaginative names like Rich Girls, King Kong Cash, Outback Jack and Cash Fever. Convenient mini-guides offering quick courses in gambling are available for beginners who don't know the rules. ▶ Open 12:00 - 03:00.      

Clubs

Barkode B-3, Wagenstraat 3-7, tel. (+31) 206 20 13 75, www.barkodeamsterdam.nl. This club which opened at the end of 2012 calls itself the 'home base of techno, tech-house and deephouse' and that's actually no exaggeration. A visit to Barkode is going back to basics on the three levels. You might expect the club, which is the successor of what was once Club Home near the Amstel to be bigger, but the atmosphere is intimate and clearly for lovers of international techno acts with parties like Raven is Leven and Nachtkollege. If you like your music to be bubbly and smooth, this is not the place for you. ▶ Open 23:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 23:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Sun. 

Bitterzoet A-1, Spuistraat 2, tel. (+31) 204 21 23 18, www.bitterzoet.nl. Popular with young urbanites, Bitterzoet is a club that specialises in live music with an edge from hip-hop to indie rock. Pay your admission on the ground floor, then head downstairs to drop off your coat and then go up another set of stairs past the toilets to reach the main dance hall or keep going up to the balcony bar area and a separate smoking room. The dark interior and its stained glass windows of devils as DJs and angels fornicating lends the place an underground sacrilegious air that no doubt appeals to large crowds that congregate here for concerts and party nights. ▶ Admission: €5 - 10. 

Club Escape B-3, Rembrandtplein 11, tel. (+31) 206 22 11 11, www.escape.nl. Don't let the name fool you. When partying in Amsterdam, there's no real escaping this large collection of clubs, subtly situated at the Rembrandtplein. Since 1986, Escape has been successfully run by twin brothers. The shrill house music in Escape Club won't appeal to everyone, but you can move on to four other separate areas: Deluxe, Studio, Caffé and Lounge. Feeling fooled anyway because you're caught between high school students and tourists? For more class, you can always escape to Jimmy Woo's. ▶ Open , Thu 23:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 23:00 - 05:00, Sun 23:00 - 04:30. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed. 

Nachttheater Sugar Factory F-7, Lijnbaansgracht 238, tel. (+31) 206 27 00 08, www.sugarfactory.nl. We're more at home at a punk rock show than a house club, but even we could sense that something special was afoot at the Sugar Factory. A diverse crowd of teens through 40-somethings genuinely appreciate the professional international DJs from as far away as the States, who know how to get a crowd moving here. The style is casual so don't worry about your trainers and leave your D&G gear at home. This isn't exactly the place for the superficial glitterati. Sugar Factory is all about the music. Belly up to the bronze-covered bar, order a drink and join the action. Unlike the crowded faux clubs on Leidseplein blasting Top 40, this place is the real deal. ▶ Open Thu, Sun 21:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 21:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed. Admission: €5 - 12. 

NEW

NYX G-8, Reguliersdwarsstraat 42, www.clubnyx.nl. Where one falls, another rises from its ashes. The notorious Club Exit died an early death and now there's a new kid in town: NYX. The numerous glow-in-the-dark stairs, the techno blasts and live music on different levels as well as the wood, rusty metal and concrete graffiti-clad walls of this gay-friendly venue put one in mind of a Berlin squat, which is a refreshing deviation from most of Amsterdam's polished hotspots. Visit NYX for an adventure and to mingle with the clientele, which is neither exclusively gay or straight, but beware of stealthy and not-so-stealthy looks. ▶ Open Thu 23:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 23:00 - 05:00. 

Winston Kingdom A-2, Warmoesstraat 131, tel. (+31) 206 23 13 80, www.winston.nl. The sleaziness of touristy Warmoesstraat, Amsterdam's notoriously naughty street, might make one think twice about a visit to Winston Kingdom, but that would be a mistake. This dark graffiti-sprayed club actually offers decent dance nights and smashing live performances from tomorrow's big indie and electro acts. Filled with a surprising mix of lost tourists and music-loving locals, this is an excellent escape from the Warmoes, but there's plenty of sleaze to find here too, if you're really looking for it. ▶ Open 21:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 21:00 - 05:00. Admission: €5 - 10. 



You can always find an impromptu concert in Amsterdam



Café culture on the Spui

Cocktails

Door 74 B-3, Reguliersdwarsstraat 741, tel. (+31) 634 04 51 22, www.door-74.com. Talk about a hidden gem! You'll definitely walk past this place a few times before realising there's a doorbell and a mysterious big black door worth noticing. But it's not just a trendy concept or an attempt to be hip. Inside you'll be moved by excellent drinks, including vintage Champagnes if you can afford them, attentive bar staff, free olives and nuts and a fun speakeasy atmosphere. But don't forget to make a reservation or you'll have to queue up with all the others ringing the doorbell. ▶ Open 20:00 - 02:00.  

Dvars B-3, Reguliersdwarsstraat 44, tel. (+31) 203 20 91 05, www.dvars.nl. According to Dvars, it's not just a location, it's a family. This place has attitude and it's going to need it occupying the spot where the legendary gay-friendly bar Arc and the short-lived Eve had their adventures. Unlike the rest of the Reguliersdwarsstraat, however, the bustling Dvars sports a rather mixed audience who appreciate the enormous aquariums stocked with tropical fish and the provocative pictures on the walls. One thing that can't be ignored is the the brightly lit interior that makes you feel as if you've stepped into a microwave oven. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00. Closed Mon.

Hiding in Plain Sight H-5, Rapenburg 18, tel. (+31) 625 29 36 20, www.hpsamsterdam.com. This prize-winning cocktail bar right at the edge of the city centre oozes atmosphere from the brownish coloured bar and the exclusive 1920s-style living room to the aptly named cocktails (the Coco Chanel, the Pink Lady, the Brooklyn) and the live music from the house band, not to mention the stylishly dressed owners Guillermo and Vera. The place is often packed and reservations are required if you're coming with a group so it's definitely no longer hidden. ▶ Open 18:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 18:00 - 03:00. Closed Sun. 

SkyLounge G/H-4, Oosterdoksstraat 4, tel. (+31) 205 30 08 00, doubletree.hilton.com. One of the best views of the historic heart of Amsterdam can now be found at SkyLounge. This trendy cocktail bar on the 11th floor of the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel is a purveyor of delicious and expensive drinks, but the terrific view of the city centre is actually priceless. Fortunately, the staff are a little slow at this altitude so you can make your elaborate cocktail last quite a while at this breathtaking location. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00.         

Jenever bars

De Drie Fleschjes A-2, Gravenstraat 18, tel. (+31) 206 24 84 43, www.dedriefleschjes.nl/. Ancient black bottles of Bols the size of basketballs collect dust behind the bar, a lit candle deposits layers of wax on top of a ceramic beer tap and jenever barrels large and small line the wall on the opposite side of the room from floor to ceiling. Men and women of all ages sip classic spirits from tiny glasses or delicious Belgian brews at this tasting bar whose sand-covered floor has been trod since the 17th century. The liqueur casks aren't just for decoration either. Local companies own them and their employees unlock them when they come here to unwind. Dutch snacks like cheese, sausages and *bitterballen* are also available. ▶ Open 12:00 - 21:00, Sun 15:00 - 20:00.

Proeflokaal De Ooievaar B-1, Sint Olofspoort 1, tel. (+31) 204 20 80 04, www.proeflokaaldeooievaar.nl. On the modern nightlife front this tiny one-room bar in the Red Light district can hardly compete with neighbouring sports bars and coffeeshops. It offers no TV, no internet connection and no ganja. People here actually have to talk to one another to pass the time while sipping one of dozens of traditional jeneveres that line the walls of this ancient bar and this is precisely why we like it. The barman wears a necktie and offers a smile and a chat to anyone who comes in not to mention a boiled egg from the bar - a local tradition. You can also have a beer here, but enjoy this endangered slice of the past before someone opens a kebab joint or a sex shop here. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 03:00.

Live music

Alto Jazz Café F-8, Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 115, tel. (+31) 206 26 32 49, www.jazz-cafe-alto.nl. This legendary Amsterdam club is about as long as a train car, but perhaps even narrower. You'll definitely have to make some physical contact with other music enthusiasts to get to the stage where live jazz, funk or salsa acts perform every night in front of a packed crowd of hipsters, locals and foreigners in the know. It's dark the way a jazz club should be and has something of a clandestine speakeasy feel to it. There's no cover charge, but even simple drinks like a Jack and Coke can set you back dearly. ▶ Open 21:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 21:00 - 04:00. 

Bourbon Street F-7, Leidsekwuisstraat 6 - 8, tel. (+31) 206 23 34 40, www.bourbonstreet.nl. This place actually looks a bit like a barn on the inside with the exception of the musical instruments hanging from the rafters. At the weekend it's hard to manoeuvre through the sea of bodies assembled here to listen to blues and rock bands and the bouncers don't seem to have any qualms about letting as many people in as is physically possible, but at least you're getting real entertainment for your €5 cover and not the blaring Top 40 and techno at neighbouring bars. If you'd like to use the toilet, try coming on a weeknight. Live music every evening. ▶ Open 22:00 - 04:00, Fri, Sat 22:00 - 05:00. Admission: €3 - 5. 

The Waterhole E-8, Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 49, tel. (+31) 206 20 89 04, www.waterhole.nl. This is the kind of place where you would expect Jim Morrison (or someone like him) to be a regular. A true roadhouse. It's dark, loud and little bit smoky and every square meter of wall space is covered either in booze bottles, rock posters, graffiti or musical instruments. Listen to live music from folk and blues to rock nearly every night, shoot pool on three tables or order a Bavaria draught, which is nothing special, but plenty of good beers are available in bottles. If you need another excuse to come, it also offers a good happy hour until 21:00 on weeknights. ▶ Open 14:00 - 03:00.   

Pubs

Café Thijssen E-4, Brouwersgracht 107, tel. (+31) 206 23 89 94, www.cafethijssen.nl. Named after the bloke whose statue graces the square outside, this friendly neighbourhood pub is frequented by people of all ages and stripes and is known for its impressive beer selection and huge, yet casual terrace that instantly quadruples the bar's capacity each summer. The interior is pure *bruin café* with a long bar that is only knee-high on one side. No matter, tiny stools were added to compensate for the lack of altitude. A huge cupboard is stocked with board games from checkers and chess to Risk and that old school classic - Boggle. Some snacks, sandwiches and breakfasts can also be had and wi-fi is available, but bear in mind that Thijssen only accepts cash. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00, Fri 08:00 - 03:00, Sat 07:30 - 03:00, Sun 09:00 - 01:00.  

CREA Café B-3, Turfdraagsterpad 17, tel. (+31) 205 25 14 23, www.creacafe.nl. Known as the café of the Cultural Centre for Students in Amsterdam (CREA), you can find throngs of artistic students here drinking mint tea with honey and the occasional member of the elder generation sipping dark beers. Expect a gorgeous view of the canals, sofas to chill and friendly service, but when ordering from the decent lunch menu make sure to ask for the small sandwich instead of the large one as they're pretty much the same size. Check out the schedule on its website for wicked student performances. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Sun 11:00 - 19:00. (€11 - 18).     

De Koningshut A-3, Spuistraat 269, tel. (+31) 206 24 99 98, www.haesjeclaes.nl. There are so many pubs, shops and cafés on the Spuistraat, that it's easy to miss this little gem, but definitely keep your eyes open if you like cosy pubs with an excellent selection of beer including the powerful Zatte from the Amsterdam IJ brewery. The interior is not unlike a brown bar, with perhaps the exception of the mounted stag's heads, the TV, which is only tuned on for local sporting events, and the old leather headrests that line the wall. You can order a full menu of classic Dutch cuisine and finger food from the Haesje Claes restaurant next door. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00.  

Old Sailor Pub B-1, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 39A, tel. (+31) 206 24 77 39. Just look for the neon Popeye sign to find this popular Red Light district pub. Inside you won't see sea captains with eye patches or other old salts, but rather tourists and stag parties drinking heavily or watching sports on TV or both. If it weren't for the crowds one might even admire the maritime interior of model sailing vessels, chandeliers made from ship's wheels and nautical lamps. Most people, however, come here for the cheap drinks. ▶  



Have a seat by a canal and watch the world go by

Live sex shows

Casa Rosso B-2, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 106 - 108, tel. (+31) 206 27 89 54, www.casarosso.nl. This iconic live sex theatre provides continuous action for as long as you like. The programme varies over the course of the evening and ranges in theme from simple strip numbers and couples fornicating on a rotating bed to lesbian lovers and vibrator acts. The theatre can seat up to 180 people but you might prefer the balcony seating if you don't want to volunteer for one of the participatory shows. There are no happy endings or facials so you can sit as close to the stage as you like. If you purchase the more expensive €50 ticket you get coupons for four complimentary drinks, which isn't a bad deal when one considers that cocktails are included in the price and not just draught beer. Taking photos and filming are prohibited. ▶ Open 19:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 19:00 - 03:00. Admission: €35; €50 including four drinks. 

The Bananen Bar & Club B-1, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 37, tel. (+31) 206 27 89 54, www.bananenbar.nl. What heterosexual member of the male gender hasn't heard of the famous Banana Bar in Amsterdam where the girls are lusty and the boys are often drunk? Downstairs for €50 you can drink all you can swill for one hour on the lounge bar with a variety of talented women who can do all kinds of interesting things with ping pong balls, markers and of course bananas. Upstairs is the club, which has a, shall we say, more dignified atmosphere where guests pay €10 admission to sit by the pole where beautiful women show their moves in various states of undress. Ordering drinks is mandatory and you can also pay for individual lap dances, which are a lot steamier than the ones we remember receiving at the clubs in the Jersey Shore of our youth. ▶ Open 20:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 20:00 - 03:00. Admission: bar €45, club €10.

Sports bars

Players A-2, Warmoesstraat 170, tel. (+31) 204 20 05 63, www.amsterdam-dam.com. You'll find this cellar sports bar full of foreign men watching football on SkySports only a stone's throw from Dam Square. Occasionally you'll even see a bored spouse or girlfriend faking enthusiasm for the match of day. The louder-than-life commentary and the giant photos of the terraces almost make you believe that you're in the stadium. In any event, it's a great place to watch sports, it's open very late and it pours Guinness and Kilkenny brews, not to mention pitchers of local Bavaria. Pool tables are also available. ▶ Open 19:00 - 03:00, Fri 16:00 - 04:00, Sat 12:00 - 04:00, Sun 12:00 - 03:00. 

Whisky bars

Whiskycafé L&B F-8, Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 82 - 84, tel. (+31) 624 55 41 62, www.whiskyproeverijen.nl. Look up at the nearly unending choices of whisky on offer on the blackboard, take a deep breath and find your favourite scotch. The aptly named Whiskycafé has over 1500 different single malts, bourbons and sour mashes from around the world including famous highland spirits as well as drinks from obscure Japanese distilleries. Squeeze in around the central bar and ponder the possibilities, but don't worry. You won't get dirty looks from the staff if you order one of its excellent beers or wines. You can also attend one of its frequent tastings to learn more about quality whisky. ▶ Open 20:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 20:00 - 04:00. 

From historic canal houses and royal palaces to world-class museums, Amsterdam's city centre has it all.

Essential Centrum

The Old Church (De Oude Kerk) B-1, Oudekerksplein 23, tel. (+31) 206 25 82 84, www.oudekerk.nl/infoeng.htm. Although no one knows for certain, it's believed that Amsterdam's oldest stone building, the Oude Kerk, was erected at the end of the 13th or possibly the beginning of the 14th century. The important edifice wasn't only used for religious purposes and often served as a safe for precious documents, a treasury and also a homeless shelter as the city's indigent were allowed to spend the night here until the Calvinists came to power in the 16th century. It was also the place where couples had to register their intentions to marry as Rembrandt and his bride Saskia did in 1638. She's buried on the far end of the building opposite the entrance. The historic monument and its wooden ceiling were on the verge of collapse in the 20th century and it was finally closed in 1951 for lengthy restoration. In 1979 it was again opened to the public and is now one of the city's most visited attractions. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00, Sun 13:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €5, children 12 and under free.

Brewery & Distillery tours

Brouwerij De Prael B-1, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 30, tel. (+31) 204 08 44 70, www.deprael.nl. You can take a tour of the small premises in the Red Light district and learn about the brewing process followed by a beer in its new tasting room which has a view of all the brewing action. The owners also contribute to society by employing people who have a tough time finding work elsewhere. The brewery makes about eight different beers and you can buy all kinds of De Prael merchandise in its shop. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Buildings

The Mint Tower (Munttoren) B-3, Muntplein. The Mint Tower is one of the city's most visible landmarks and anyone who has visited the Flower Market or done some shopping on the Kalverstraat has definitely noticed this unique bell tower with a clock on each of its four sides. Originally a gate called the Regulierspoort that was part of Amsterdam's fortified city wall, it was destroyed during a fire in 1618, but rebuilt two years later in Amsterdam Renaissance style by the eminent Dutch Golden Age architect Hendrick de Keyser, who also built the Westerkerk and Zuiderkerk among other famous edifices scattered about the city. It gained its name in the 17th century when the French occupied parts of the Netherlands forcing the Dutch to move their coin minting operations to this location. The adjoining building was erected in the 19th century.

The Weigh Station (De Waag) B-2, Nieuwmarkt 4, www.indewaag.nl. This is the most magnificent of the city's remaining medieval gates. Built in 1488, St. Anthony's Gate (Sint Anthonispoort) eventually became an official weigh station for merchants, its original purpose as a defensive structure having become obsolete. A number of local guilds also moved into the building and each one had its own entrance. One of the halls was occupied by the Surgeons' Guild that occasionally dissected a freshly executed criminal, a popular event that was open to the public. Weigh stations and guilds also fell out of fashion over time and the building was used for several different purposes over the years, but since 1996 it has housed a swanky Dutch restaurant with a great summer terrace on the Nieuwmarkt. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00.

Canal tours

Amsterdam Canal Cruises G-8, Stadhouderskade 550, tel. (+31) 206 26 56 36, www.amsterdamcanalcruijes.nl/. This company has been giving tours of the Amsterdam canals for over 40 years. Its six boats depart from the landing opposite the Heineken Experience..

Blue Boat Company F-8, Stadhouderskade 30, tel. (+31) 206 79 13 70, www.blueboat.nl. If you'd prefer a relaxing canal tour then book a lunch or dinner cruise, but if you're searching for something a little different try a cabaret, casino or wedding tour. Tours last either 75, 90 or 120 minutes. ▶ (€7 - 15). ☑

Gray Line A-1, Damrak Pier 5, tel. (+31) 205 35 33 08, www.grayline.com. Make sure you're at the right landing as the multinational Gray Line has three different departure points. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00. Tickets: €13 - 22. ☑ ☑ ☑

St. Nicolaas Boat Club F-7, Leidseplein 12, www.amsterdamboatclub.com. Short on cash but still want tour the canals? Hop on board of the Saint Nicolaas Boat Club. This is a group of crazy and stubborn volunteers that have operated a couple of boats since 1997 as a non-profit organisation. They're not professionals, but their boat rides are more fun than most ordinary tours. Who else allows you to smoke and drink along the way? Part of the fun is that the boats are open to all elements, so make sure you wear appropriate clothing. Officially these boats have been illegal for the past 15 years, but because all passengers are 'close friends' of the captain, the cops can't do anything. There's no fixed schedule so stop by Leidseplein 12 for information. Tipping is allowed and greatly appreciated (around €10/person).

Centrum attractions

Ajax Experience B-3, Utrechtsestraat 9, www.ajax.nl. The Ajax Experience takes visitors on a journey through time. Obviously, much emphasis has been placed on its international successes and its record 31 league titles. Every eight minutes a group departs under the guidance of an employee in club colours. The first highlight is the life sized portraits of heroes from the glory days accompanied by important facts from the past. All kinds of high-tech interactive devices bombard each visitor with a sensory overload of information and if you think you're good with a ball, you can test your skill in several different rooms where your technical ability and the speed of your shot are measured. Needless to say the tour ends in a shop filled to the brim with all kinds of football souvenirs. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Fri 10:00 - 21:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults €17.50, children 4 - 12 €12.50. ☑



De Waag on the Nieuwmarkt is a popular meeting place

Madame Tussauds Amsterdam A-2, Dam 20, tel. (+31) 205 22 10 10, www.madametussauds.com. In 1836 at the tender age of 74, Marie Tussaud opened her first location in London proving that people have always been fascinated with celebrities and that the present obsession with Hollywood stars and pop musicians isn't just a fad. Queues at the Amsterdam Tussauds can be a bit long at lunchtime, but that's because everyone is photographed before taking the lift upstairs where you'll be entertained by a light and sound show dedicated to the Golden Age of the city in the 17th century. This is followed by a maze of rooms featuring life size wax figures of your favourite heads of state, actors, rock gods, artists and footballers. Have your photo taken with the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Madonna, Pablo Picasso or Winston Churchill. You'll no doubt also be blown away by what a tiny pip-squeak Lenin was or that Ronaldinho's teeth really are that big! ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:30. Admission: adults €19 - 21, children 5 - 15 years €14 - 16, children 4 and under free. Last admission at 17:30.  

Churches

Noorderkerk E-4, Noordermarkt 48, tel. (+31) 206 26 64 36, www.noorderkerk.org. As the population of the new Jordaan neighbourhood began to explode in the 17th century, the city decided to build a new church for its lower class protestant residents. Hendrick de Keyser, the illustrious designer of the nearby Westerkerk, was tasked to create the building and it was finally completed in 1623 in all its odd octagonal glory. Inside the black gravestones that pave the floor have been polished smooth by centuries of foot traffic from its devoted parishioners. Although the interior is rather plain, and even the huge windows have only clear glass, the massive pipe organ is a sight to see. ▶ Open, Mon 10:30 - 12:30, Sat 11:00 - 13:00, Sun 13:30 - 17:30. Closed Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri.

The Parrot: Church of Sts. Peter and Paul (De Papegaai) A-3, Kalverstraat 58, tel. (+31) 206 23 18 89, www.nicolaas-parochie.nl. In stark contrast to the non-stop racket heard from shoppers outside on the tireless Kalverstraat, this well-hidden church is a small oasis of peace and quiet. Its clandestine appearance is intentional as it was one of several underground Catholic churches that had to conceal their existence from Protestant persecution, hence its code name - the Parrot. It is typically narrow, like most Amsterdam buildings, which is the reason for the extensive seating galleries overlooking the main hall from above. Although its interior isn't as grand as other Catholic churches in the area, it's a quiet escape from the hordes of people stuffing their faces at McDonald's across the street. Just look for the tile mosaic to find the entrance. ▶ Open 10:00 - 16:00, Sun 09:45 - 13:30.



It's tulip time again in Amsterdam

Museums

Amsterdam Museum A-3, Kalverstraat 92 / Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 357, tel. (+31) 205 23 18 22, www.amsterdammuseum.nl. Although there are many cities in Europe and the Netherlands with histories stretching much farther into the past, Amsterdam's story is unique and unusual and worth discovering at this fascinating and eclectic museum. Follow the development of this powerful port through medieval artefacts and art from ancient shoes dating back to the 14th century and the oldest known map of the city by renowned cartographer Cornelis Antonisz to period furniture and paintings collected by wealthy Amsterdammers of the Golden Age. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €10, children 6 - 18 years €5, children 5 and under free.  

Amsterdam Tulip Museum E-5, Prinsengracht 116, tel. (+31) 204 21 00 95, www.amsterdamtulipmuseum.com. Learn about the fascinating history of the tulip from its humble origins along the Silk Road of Central Asia to its current status as a somewhat common, mass-produced flower that is still a cornerstone of the Dutch economy and a symbol of national identity for the people of the Netherlands. Although the museum isn't very big and is essentially a small exhibit in a shop cellar, it isn't expensive and its owner, who also sells bulbs upstairs, is passionate about the tulip and provides a much-needed history of one of the nation's most profitable commodities. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. Admission: adults €4, children free.

Anne Frank House (Anne Frank Huis) E-5, Prinsengracht 263 - 267, tel. (+31) 205 56 71 05, www.annefrank.org. There are very few people who aren't acquainted with the tragic story of Anne Frank - a brave girl who dreamed of becoming an author while in hiding from Nazi persecution. The diary of her time spent in the secret annex was published in 1947 and later translated in over 65 languages. The popularity of her work is reflected in the huge queues outside this museum that has been teaching Amsterdam's visitor's about the Holocaust, the story of the Frank family and their desperate struggle to survive and the evils of anti-Semitism and racism since 1960. Inside you'll walk through the warehouse where workers attended to their business every day completely unaware that several people were hiding upstairs. Bear in mind that mobile phones must be switched off inside and that backpacks must be held in your hands as space is often limited and the exhibits could be damaged by an errant bag. ▶ Open 09:00 - 21:00, Sat 09:00 - 22:00. Admission: adults €9, children 10 - 17 years €4.50, children nine and under free.  

Houseboat Museum (Het Woonbootmuseum) E-6, Prinsengracht 296K, tel. (+31) 204 27 07 50, www.houseboatmuseum.nl. The owner of this converted freighter that dates back to 1912 knows a thing or two about houseboats as he lived onboard for 22 years before moving ashore with the rest of the land lovers in Amsterdam. He now runs this museum which receives over 38,000 visitors each year who are curious to see how people can use a boat as a permanent residence. Start with an amusing slide show of houseboats on the canals during all seasons and the perils and maintenance involved in this unique way of life. View pictures and scale models and discover interesting facts about the waterways of the city such as the average depth on an Amsterdam canal (it's 2.8m). A children's corner is available where the little tykes can draw boats and you can also enjoy a cappuccino or a cup of tea in the living room. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults €3.50, children €2.75.

Museum of Bags and Purses (Tassen Museum Hendrikje) H-7, Herengracht 573, tel. (+31) 205 24 64 52, www.museumofbagsandpurses.com. What began as Hendrikje Ivo's obsession with purses blossomed into the world's largest collection of handbags and purses with over 4,000 exhibits spanning 500 years. Located in a prestigious 17th-century home that once belonged to the then mayor of Amsterdam, the museum begins on the top floor where you can view satchels, boxes and letter cases from the 16th - 19th centuries made from every material imaginable including ivory, tortoiseshell, leather, lace, silk, straw and wood. 20th-century exhibits include funky Art Deco purses as well as famous designer bags like Louis Vuitton, Pierre Cardin, Versace, Dior, Gucci, D&G and many others. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €7.50, children under 12 free. 

Royal Palace Amsterdam (Koninklijk Paleis Amsterdam) A-2, Dam, tel. (+31) 206 20 40 60, www.paleisamsterdam.nl. It's hard to miss the Royal Palace on Dam Square. When the building was first opened to the public as the Town Hall in 1655, its lavish interior decorated with paintings by Ferdinand Bol and Rembrandt was considered to be the eighth wonder of the world. After meandering through a few dull corridors you'll finally walk upstairs to the main hall where your jaw is guaranteed to drop. Seldom have we seen so much polished marble in one place, not to mention six giant crystal chandeliers hanging from the timber ceiling covered in frescos high above the inlaid maps and nautical and astronomical charts in the floor. ▶ Open 12:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €7.50, children 5 - 16 years €6.50, children under 5 free.

Van Loon Museum (Museum Van Loon) G-7, Keizersgracht 672, tel. (+31) 206 24 52 55, www.museumvanloon.nl. This magnificent building owned by the Van Loon family trust has a rich and storied history and is one of the few remaining examples of authentic Dutch golden age homes in Amsterdam. It was rented by renowned Rembrandt apprentice Ferdinand Bol soon after its construction in 1671 but passed on to different owners over the centuries until it was purchased in 1884 by the Van Loon family whose most illustrious ancestor Willem van Loon co-founded the Dutch East India Company. Although the family was one of the city's wealthiest, they cultivated a tradition of opening up their home to show off its splendour and this tradition has survived to this day. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Tue. Admission: €7.

Places of interest

Czaar Peterstraat K-4/5, Czaar Peterstraat. A street named after royalty brings with it some expectations. Russian tsar Peter the Great visited Amsterdam in the 17th century, hence the name, and he was a huge fan of all things naval and was no doubt impressed by the Dutch East India Company based in the area. Today this charming street packs an impressive number of shops, hairdressers, coffee houses, art galleries and foreign food joints, but the selection isn't as regal as one might expect. Nonetheless, it's worth a look if you're in the area. ▶

Eastern Islands (Oostelijke Eilanden) I/J-4, Oostelijke Eilanden. There's one thing at which the Dutch truly excel: turning water into land. Large parts of the Eastern Islands (Kattenburg, Wittenburg and Oostenburg) were reclaimed from the River IJ in the 19th century and the Dutch East India Company also had its headquarters here. Impressive buildings like the Maritime Museum stand alongside charming homes, but bear in mind that the neighbourhood may be pretty, but there's not much else to do here apart from admiring the scenery. ▶



The National Monument is one of the focal points of the city

Entrepotdok I/J-6, Entrepotdok. Escaping the pull of the Artis Zoo, the Red Light District and other major tourist attractions is difficult, but a brief walk down the Entrepotdok might bring you back to your senses. There's not much to do around here, so you're forced to admire the long row of 300-year-old warehouses that line the canal. The buildings are architecturally similar and are all named after Dutch and Belgian cities. After a brief walk back in time, you can return to Amsterdam's finest. The Artis Zoo is located just on the other side of the water. ▶

Flower Market (Bloemenmarkt) A/B-3, Singel (Bewteen Koningsplein and Muntplein). The Flower Market is a tourist attraction and a functioning market in one. Although it's often called the world's only floating flower market, most of the browsing takes place on dry land as the stalls are located on barges moored on the Singel. You can buy bulbs and seeds for all kinds of plants and flowers and we have to admit that we've also picked up a Venus flytrap kit here, which was a huge hit with kids. The sellers will also send bulbs to your home address abroad and they know which countries don't allow the importation of plant materials, so you don't have to worry about having your purchase confiscated at customs. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:30, Sun 11:00 - 17:30. 

Statues & Monuments

National Monument (Nationaal Monument) A-2, Dam. It's hard to miss the central monument on Dam Square that's often occupied by people of all ages and nationalities sunning themselves, reading books or just relaxing. The brainchild of renowned Dutch architect J.J.P. Oud (1890 - 1963), the National Monument made of white travertine was unveiled in 1956 as both a memorial to all Dutch men and women who suffered under the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and to the nation's liberation. A number of statues and reliefs symbolise the resistance experienced by all members of society from labourers to the intelligentsia and the lions on either side represent the Dutch nation. The giant pillar rises to a height of 22m.

The Little Darling (Het Lieverdje) A-3, Spui. At the centre of the Spui, a small square surrounded by some excellent beer bars and bookshops, is a stylised brass statue of a boy with a naughty smile that hints that he's up to no good. The Little Darling, Dear or Sweetheart is the Dutch version of Dennis the Menace, Calvin (of Calvin and Hobbes), Max and Moritz and countless other fictional depictions of mischievous boys popular in all cultures. Erected on the Square in 1960 with funds provided by a tobacco company, the statue became a rallying point for the Provos, a counter-culture movement that protested against pretty much all of the successes and failures of the 1950s.

Shopping

You can shop for the big brands on the pedestrian Kalverstraat, try the boutiques in the Jordaan or find something exotic in Chinatown around the Nieuwmarkt.

Alcohol, beer & Wine shops

Cracked Kettle A-3, Raamsteeg 3, tel. (+31) 206 24 07 45, www.crackedkettle.com. This cosy shop that's decorated in rustic fashion offers a great variety of boutique wines and specialty beers. ▶ Open 12:00 - 20:00. [CC]

Le Cellier A-2, Spuistraat 114, tel. (+31) 206 38 65 73, www.lecellier.nl. This place offers an incredible selection of liquor, whiskey, wine and other alcoholic beverages. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Mon 11:00 - 18:00, Sat 09:30 - 17:30. Closed Sun. [CC]

Antiques & Art

Gastronomie Nostalgie A-3, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 304, tel. (+31) 204 22 62 26, www.gastronomie-nostalgie.nl. Not surprisingly, this shop specialises in antique cutlery, silverware, crystal, porcelain, old drinking mugs and lots of other items that have to do with eating and drinking. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00.

The Totalitarian Art Gallery F-4, Singel 87, tel. (+31) 653 69 36 94, www.sovietart.com. This gallery and antique shop sells an eclectic selection of unusual art and memorabilia from the Soviet era including paintings, signs, toys and busts of Stalin. ▶ Open 12:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed.

Books

The Book Exchange B-2, Kloveniersburgwal 58, tel. (+31) 206 26 62 66, www.bookexchange.nl. Second-hand English-language books from fiction and history to current events for good prices. Book exchanges also possible as the name suggests. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 11:30 - 16:00.

Waterstone's A-3, Kalverstraat 152, tel. (+31) 206 38 38 21, www.waterstones.nl. An outstanding selection of English language literature including books on travel, history and politics not to mention contemporary fiction, classic novels, magazines and newspapers on four floors. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:30, Mon 10:00 - 18:00, Thu 09:30 - 21:00, Sat 10:00 - 19:00, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. [CC]

Cheese

Amsterdams Kaashuis A-1, Haringpakkerssteeg 10, tel. (+31) 206 24 10 06. Although it looks like a tourist trap, where else can you watch cheese being made in the centre of Amsterdam? Cheese, chocolates and other souvenirs are sold here and it's also a good place to taste cheese for free. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Thu 10:00 - 21:00. [CC]

Chocolates & Sweets

Jordino E-3, Haarlemmerdijk 25, tel. (+31) 204 20 32 25, www.jordino.nl. Find incredible creations made by master chocolatiers from chocolate truffles and moulded animals to high-heeled shoes and even mini-Louis Vuiton purses made of chocolate. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00, Mon, Sun 13:00 - 19:00.

Puccini Bomboni E-5, Singel 184, tel. (+31) 204 27 83 41, www.puccinibomboni.com. The chilli, Cointreau and other exotic bonbons don't come cheap but you won't regret the expense. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Mon, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. [CC]

Delftware

Jorrit Heinen Delft Shop E-6, Prinsengracht 440, tel. (+31) 206 27 82 99, www.jorritheinen.com. An official dealer of Royal Delft porcelain from cutesy souvenirs and tiles to upmarket vases and flatware. It also has an outlet in the historic Munttoren (Mint Tower). ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. Also at Muntplein 12, tel. (+31) 206 23 22 71. [CC]

Fashion

290 Square Meters H-6, Houtkopersdwarsstraat 3, tel. (+31) 204 19 25 25, www.290sqm.com. Located in an old bank vault near the Waterlooplein, 290 Square Meters was founded by Ido de Voos in 2001. Over the years 290 has grown into an internationally recognised creative retail space with a *curated* collection of men's, women's and children's fashion as well as jewellery, scents, books, watches and footwear. It also stocks hard-to-find customised by such names as Nike. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Sun. [CC]

Gifts & Souvenirs

Heineken Brandstore G/H-7, Amstelstraat 31, tel. (+31) 205 30 47 70, www.heineken.com/brandstore. A heaven for Heineken lovers, this massive glass and steel shop on two and half floors sells everything from typical beer souvenirs like t-shirts, bottle openers and glasses to mini-keg coolers, giant bean bags and even sports jackets and dresses with the famous red star logo. Oh, and they also have a huge selection of chilled Heineken beer in special design bottles and lots of cool gadgets. ▶ Open 12:00 - 20:00, Mon, Sun 13:00 - 20:00. [CC]

Markets

Waterlooplein Market (Waterloopleinmarkt) H-6, Waterlooplein, www.waterloopleinmarkt.nl. This flea market is the place to go if you're into hip and retro curiosities like vintage and secondhand clothing, a wide variety of antiques and old vinyl records. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Music shops

Concerto H-7, Utrechtsestraat 52 - 60, tel. (+31) 206 23 52 28, www.concertomania.nl. Possibly the city's, and perhaps the nation's largest collection of new and used CDs, DVDs and vinyl spread out across five buildings: one for classical, another for world music and jazz, one for pop/rock, one dedicated to dance music and yet another to vinyl and used CDs. Amazing! ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Thu 10:00 - 21:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. [CC]



Lots of bulbs at the Flower Market

Amsterdam souvenirs

Ajax memorabilia Back in its heyday, when Ajax, the local football club, was among Europe's elite teams, loads of merchandise was produced and that tradition hasn't subsided. For the best Ajax souvenirs visit the Ajax Experience at Rembrandtplein.



Birthday calendar What? A calendar with all the birthdays of friends and family filled in, and all that hanging on a wall in the toilet? The Dutch are crazy like that. If you want to adopt this weird custom you can buy all sorts of themed calendars in almost every tourist shop near the Dam or Rokin.

Cheese If you don't include French, Danish or Tibetan yak cheese, there is indeed no cheese like Dutch cheese. For the best big chunks of Gouda, goat or sheep cheese go to Cheese & More on Leidsestraat. For gourmet cheese try Reypenaer (Singel 182). Our personal favourite would have to be Oude Amsterdam Kaas (Old Amsterdam Cheese) sold at all local cheese shops.

Clogs & Wooden shoes It's a typical tourist thing to do. Buy a pair of uncomfortable wooden shoes that you'll put away in a dark closet as soon as you're back home. But if you really want a pair, try Otten & Zn in De Pijp.

Delftware The factory in Delft isn't exactly close to Amsterdam, but Delfts Blauw (blue porcelain) is sold everywhere in Amsterdam. Find a tourist shop and go wild with the little cute statues. We particularly like the Christmas ornaments at Jorrit Heinen (Prinsengracht 440) and Rinascimento (Prinsengracht 170).

Drop Why do the Dutch try to inflict the 'great' liqueur taste of a typical Dutch drop on every tourist or foreign friend/enemy? Be sure to pack your own pack of these black sweets before a local tries to shove some down your throat. You can find them at every supermarket and at HEMA.

HEMA stuff It looks like a very cheap Harrods, with its minimalist aisles and seemingly random homebranded products like stationery, bike pumps, gold paint, Jip and Janneke merchandise, a photo service and, behold, brandless cheap clothes. Yet HEMA remains one of the strongest and most popular Dutch chains, and there's a reason: it's cheap and it's accepted! You don't need to wear a disguise to shop here.

Stroopwafels It looks like a gooey biscuit that's been run over, but it's actually delicious. One of the most exported products among people visiting their friends and family abroad (because it's small, easy to transport and very tasty), you can find them at any supermarket and most souvenir shops.

Straddling the east end of the city centre and the west end of Amsterdam East, the Plantage is one of Amsterdam's prettiest and most affluent neighbourhoods. It's home to leafy boulevards, a host of cultural institutions and museums, as well as the Artis Zoo and the Hortus Botanical gardens. The area began as a new housing development in the late 17th century, but its reclaimed swamps didn't appeal to everyone, so it was designated as a special park area where Amsterdammers could relax in the great outdoors without the sights and smells of the city. For a time it even became a hotspot for illegal prostitution, drinking and nightlife, but it eventually evolved into a cultural centre popular with writers, artists and wealthy Jews. Unfortunately, this vibrant religious community was nearly destroyed during the Holocaust, but many of its most precious buildings and monuments like the Portuguese Synagogue have survived and even experienced a revival. Explore museums, admire natural beauty and enjoy excellent café culture in the Plantage

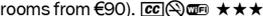
Arriving in the Plantage

You can easily reach the Plantage on foot, but if you'd like to save some time then you can take either tram No.9 from the Central Station or tram No.14 from Dam Square to the Plantage Kerklaan stop.

Hotels

Although the Plantage is a posh section of town, it's also known for its budget hotels, some better than others.

Amsterdam Hotel Parklane I-6, Plantage Parklaan 16, tel. (+31) 206 22 48 04, fax (+31) 206 26 78 27, info@hotel-parklane.nl, www.hotel-parklane.nl. Located only steps away from the Hortus Botanical Gardens and the Artis Zoo in the prestigious Plantage neighbourhood, this two-star hotel could be a good, economical option if you'd like to stay in a posh area for a decent price. The old manor house is no longer as grand as it once was, but some of its 19th-century character remains in its singles, doubles and triples. All of its 12 rooms include coffee and tea sets, a refrigerator and a private bathroom and some also have good views. ▶ 12 rooms (doubles from €75). 

Hotel Alfa Plantage I-6, Plantage Middenlaan 26, tel. (+31) 206 23 57 83. This so-called budget hotel isn't exactly the height of fashion, but its location is excellent, especially if you enjoy green surroundings and close proximity to the Artis Zoo and Hortus Botanical Gardens. All of its simple rooms look a bit outdated, yet the private bathrooms have been upgraded and some even include bathtubs. So if you're looking for affordable accommodation in this area you could certainly do worse. ▶ 21 rooms (doubles from €69, superior rooms from €90). 

Lancaster Hotel Amsterdam I-6, Plantage Middenlaan 48, tel. (+371) 205 35 68 88, info.lancaster@hampshire-hotels.com, www.edenlancasterhotel.com. Located just opposite the Artis Zoo in the prestigious Plantage neighbourhood, this three-star hotel is housed in an historic building, yet its rooms have been upgraded to modern standards. All of its non-smoking accommodation includes tasteful interior design with warm beige and brown autumnal colours as well as flat screen TVs, wiring desks, coffee/tea sets and safes. Unfortunately, the toilets are positioned right next to the showers and are only separated from one another by a curtain and internet access costs extra. ▶ 91 rooms (doubles from €69, superior from €89). 

Cafés & Restaurants

The Plantage has plenty of eating and drinking options from trendy cafés to proper restaurants.

Bloem I-6, Entrepotdok 36, tel. (+31) 203 30 09 29, www.bloem36.nl. Space here is limited both inside and out on the terrace near the draw bridge, but the good location and smooth service make it worth the wait. The speciality of the house is the cheese fondue and people with big appetites can even order extra free of charge. Apart from this, the menu is a bit limited so if you're not into *fromage*, this probably isn't the place for you. That said, the pastries served here are absolutely delicious. ▶ Open 07:30 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 24:00. (€14 - 19).

Café Koojsje I-6, Plantage Middenlaan 37, tel. (+31) 203 20 08 17, www.koojsjeamsterdam.nl. Located on a busy corner near the Artis Zoo, this classic Dutch café offers a large central bar with plenty of places to sit, wooden benches lined up against the walls, some leather couches for lounging, big windows with views and plenty of outside seating. Koojsje is chock full of authentic local ambience enhanced by pleasant background music that's interesting, but not distracting. You can order breakfast food, soups and sandwiches from morning until the afternoon and more substantial meals in the evening, but a selection of beer and wine can be had whenever you like. If you're in the mood for something sweet, try the carrot cake. ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 03:00. (€7 - 15).

Coffee to Walk I-5, Plantage Middenlaan 44, tel. (+31) 611 51 00 53, info@coffeetowalk.nl, www.coffeetowalk.nl. Opposite the entrance to Artis Zoo is an espresso bar with the unusual name of Coffee to Walk. Don't worry, it also offers a cosy place to sit down and consume your drink. Free wireless internet, a selection of international newspapers, fresh bread, smoothies, works of art on the wall, a kids' corner and even a travel agency are all at your disposal to ensure that you're never bored here. ▶ Open 08:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 08:00 - 17:00. (€3 - 7).

De Pizzabakkers I-6, Plantage Kerklaan 2, tel. (+31) 206 25 07 40, www.depizzabakkers.nl. This trendy pizzeria has lots of wooden shelves and counters painted a flat grey and a solitary crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Part of the ground floor also serves as a storage area for the heaps of firewood that fuels the oven. Roughly a dozen thin-crust pizzas are served here including vegetarian options and you can sip a cappuccino, prosecco or Perali beer while you wait for your food. The Pizza Bakers only accept credit or bank cards so put that cash back in your wallet. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 23:00. Also at S-4, Overtoom 501, tel. (+31) 206 18 65 54; D-4, Haarlemmerdijk 128 tel. (+31) 204 27 41 44. (€9 - 14).

Elkaar (Each Other) J-6, Alexanderplein 6, tel. (+31) 203 30 75 59, info@etenbijelkaar.nl, www.etenbijelkaar.nl. Although this French and Mediterranean-inspired restaurant hasn't been awarded a Michelin star yet, it has been quite close for years. Of course cooking at such a high level breeds expectation and this brings in a certain kind of clientele who don't seem to mind a juicy bill at the end of the evening or taking out a second mortgage to pay for one of the vintage bottles on its wine list. But for anyone who can afford it, this cosy restaurant guarantees a first-class culinary experience. Delicious dishes and tasteful furnishings lay the groundwork for a pleasant night out with other foodies or a special occasion with friends or family. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. (€25).

Helena Primakoff K-4, Lijndenstraat 28, tel. (+31) 648 95 96 94, helenaprimakoff@yahoo.com, www.helenaprimakoff.nl. Let's be honest here. There aren't too many reasons to visit Czaar Peterstraat, a recently renovated street, with perhaps the exception of its shops and interesting history. Another reason would be Helena Primakoff for breakfast, simple lunches or just a quick coffee. Located on an intersection in a small building, the majestic feel of the place is surprisingly grand. You'll find some locals here 'working' on their laptops, but overall, it never really gets too busy here. ▶ Open 08:30 - 16:30, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 16:30.

Koffiehuis van den Volksbond I-4, Kadijkplein 4, tel. (+31) 206 22 12 09, www.koffiehuusvandenvolksbond.nl. For a one-time den of communists and unionised dockworkers, this cute little brick building with a tiled roof is pretty expensive with international fare just under €20. It's a famous meeting place for the Reds of old, but if any of those idealists had actually met a real communist of the Soviet species, they would have soiled themselves and become bankers, venture capitalists or maybe even restaurateurs. Perhaps they did. In any event, the shabby, Spartan interior and lonely heating stove certainly give off an air of Marxism and Leninism. ▶ Open 18:00 - 22:00, Sun 17:00 - 21:00. (€15 - 20).

Paerz I-6, Entrepotdok 64, tel. (+31) 206 23 22 06, www.paerz.nl. If you'd like to visit this small, distinctive restaurant, which has only 17 tables, we recommend you make a reservation. Paerz consists of different levels and there's a terrace near the water, so the staff probably do a half marathon each night just bringing orders to the patrons. This is perhaps also the reason why waiting for service is an inherent part of a night out at this cosy and tasteful restaurant. The menu may be simple, but everything that the passionate chef prepares tastes delicious. It's a bit pricey, but fortunately the cheap house wine is beyond reproach. ▶ Open 18:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon, Tue.

Rosa en Rita K-4, Conradstraat 471, tel. (+31) 611 12 23 73, reserveren@rosaenrita.nl, www.rosaenrita.nl. At Rosa en Rita you don't have to work your way through an elaborate menu. Steak and pizza is basically all you can get at this industrial-style restaurant located on an area formerly used by a Dutch shipbuilding company. But in our experience smaller menus often guarantee that the food is fresh and that seems to be the case here. If you're curious about the name Rosa and Rita, they're not the owners. Rosa and Rita are actually the names of two Royal Dutch Shell oil tankers. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. (€20).



One of the city's many bridges near the Hermitage

't IJ brewery tour

If you're feeling a little parched on a Friday or Saturday afternoon, then take a tram to the Plantage for a microbrewery tour, a few beers and some snacks in the shadow of one of the city's few remaining windmills. As the afternoon wears on, the voices of Dutch speakers gradually get drowned out by the din of tourists and foreign beer enthusiasts who have come to this iconic building next to the historic De Gooyer windmill to take advantage of the brew tour that's held here in English every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 16:00 (15:30 in Dutch). Tickets, which are actually plastic tokens good for a tour and a beer, go on sale at 15:00 on those days so it's best to get here early to sample at least one brew before you learn about how the amber nectar is made. The seating in the tasting room is limited, which is why there are another dozen or so picnic tables outside. What could be more Amsterdam than sipping a locally produced beer with a sausage and cheese plate next to a giant windmill only a short tram ride from touristy Leidseplein?

Inside, hundreds of beer bottles from around the globe collect dust on dozens of shelves above the tasting room's white tiled walls. Usually at least six of the beers that are produced on the premises are available for consumption and at a much lower price than you would pay for the same beverage at a typical Amsterdam café. The wimpier pilsner can be had for only €2, while the Natte (6.5% alcohol), Ywit (7%), Zatte (8%), IJPA (8%), Columbus (9%) and Struis (9%) cost a little more but are still a bargain at €2.60.



At 16:00 the tour is announced and people begin to gather at the far end of the bar by the green door, which still lists opening times for the former bathhouse that once occupied the premises. In fact, the tiled building that offers plenty of water pressure and lots of drainage was a natural choice for a brewery. A long line of excited, slightly inebriated happy and hoppy people file in to learn about the brewing process. Your tour guide, who is also an employee of the brewery, will explain the significance of the ingredients (water, hops, barley and yeast) and the science of creating this incredible drink next to the mash tank. He or she will show you the rest of the brewing process as well as the bottling area and in about 45 minutes you'll be returned to the tasting room where you can sample more brews or have a snack. Although it's not really advertised, the brewery also sells t-shirts and other souvenirs. Just ask one of the staff about it. For more information visit www.brouwerijhetij.nl.

Brouwerij 't IJ

K-4, Funenkade 7, tel. (+31) 203 20 17 86, www.brouwerijhetij.nl. Open 15:00 - 20:00.

Nightlife

Although the Plantage was known as a bawdy area back in the 19th century, today it's known for its traditional brown bars and the unforgettable IJ microbrewery.

Brouwerij 't IJ K-5, Funenkade 7, tel. (+31) 203 20 17 86, www.brouwerijhetij.nl. You really have to want to find this place. Thankfully, we did, but our thirst for new brews is, of course, the stuff of legends. Just look for the giant windmill about a 20-minute walk northwest of the Artis Zoo along the Hoogte Kadijk to find this microbrewery offering at least six unique beers including something akin to a pilsner as well as the spicy (in their words) Columbus, which has an alcohol content of 9%. The tasting room is functional and doesn't offer much decoration or seating which is why most people choose to imbibe at the picnic tables outside. Beers are remarkably cheap, but only snacks are available so you might want to pace yourself. Visit its website for information on brewery tours and merchandise. ▶ Open 14:00 - 20:00.

Café Eik en Linde I-5, Plantage Middenlaan 22, tel. (+31) 206 22 57 16, www.elkenlinde.nl. Although the original 'Oak and Lime' café opened in 1865 in what is now the Artis Zoo, its current incarnation a couple of blocks away has been around since 1967. This classic brown bar is more spacious than similar establishments and you even have to go outside to smoke! Some excellent brews are available in bottles and on draught for decent prices and you can order soups, omelettes, steaks and other traditional Dutch food. Relax on an intricately carved wooden bench, pet the bar's cat that often sleeps by the window or try to figure out how locals can play pool on a table without pockets. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri 11:00 - 02:00, Sat 14:00 - 02:00. Closed Sun.

De Groene Olifant (The Green Elephant) J-6, Sarphatistraat 510, tel. (+31) 206 20 49 04, info@degroeneolifant.nl, www.degroeneolifant.nl. A real elephant would never fit in the interior of this tiny old-fashioned pub. Still virtually every square centimetre of space has been filled with replicas of this cleverest of animals that never forgets. Like real elephants, De Groene Olifant has no enemies, only friends. Even though this warm place where everyone seems to know each other is filled with locals, it's easy for an outsider to become part of the inside crowd by strategically placing himself at the bar. And if you were to get bored with conversation, there's certainly plenty to look at. ▶

Kriterion I-7, Roetersstraat 170, tel. (+31) 20 623 1708, info@kriterion.nl, www.kriterion.nl. Entering this perpetually busy place for the first time could cause some confusion. Is this an art house cinema or a student bar operated by students? The short answer is, both. Kriterion's history with beer, film and students dates back to the end of World War II when university students founded a cinema to earn some money to pay for their tuition fees. Now one of the most popular cinema hangouts in Amsterdam where you can watch movies for low prices, the place oozes a unique cool, yet accessible vibe. Whether you consider yourself culturally highbrow or pub-like lowbrow, you're always welcome here. ▶ Open 10:30 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:30 - 03:00.

Discover more about
the Plantage at
www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com

Sightseeing

The Plantage has an incredible concentration of museums, historical monuments, cutting-edge architecture and beautiful parkland all in one neighbourhood.

Amsterdam Central Public Library (Centrale Bibliotheek) H-3, Oosterdokskade 143, tel. (+31) 205 23 09 00, info@oba.nl, www.oba.nl. This modern glass building between the Central Station and the NEMO Science Centre was completed in 2007 and is now the largest public library on the European continent. It offers seven floors of cutting edge design as well as a café, a restaurant and books in English, not to mention internet access. It's also open every day until late, but you need an OBA library card, which costs €15/year, to use most of the facilities. Even if you don't feel like coughing up the cash to become a member it's an interesting building to explore. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00.

ARCAM Amsterdam Centre for Architecture I-5, Prins Hendrikkade 600, tel. (+31) 206 20 48 78, www.arcam.nl. Designed by René van Zuuk, the futuristic building on the River IJ that looks like something out of a sci-fi film is actually the fitting home of the Amsterdam Centre for Architecture that hosts regular exhibitions on urban planning, architecture and design. Its chief aim is to promote a new view of city living and visitors can not only take in its informative exhibitions, but also gain inspiration for their own homes by looking at a large collection of books and magazines about architecture and interior design. ▶ Open 13:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. Admission: free.

Artis Royal Zoo I-5, Plantage Kerklaan 38 - 40, tel. (+31) 90 02 78 47 96, www.artis.nl. Founded in 1838, the Artis Royal Zoo is the oldest zoo in the Netherlands and home to roughly 700 species of fauna and 200 species of flora. The sprawling park not only offers a huge collection of exotic animals from near and far, but also an impressive aquarium as well as a zoology museum. Many of the strange beasts that inhabit the zoo live outdoors so you can see camels lounging in the sand or Japanese macaques jumping about. Walk past lions, elephants, buffalo and giraffes in their enclosures or head over to the top-notch reptile house to see pythons, giant tortoises and crocodiles or all manner of creepy-crawlies in the Insect House. You can also view nocturnal creatures in the Jungle by Night exhibit, chimpanzees in the monkey house and strange forms of life from the planet's oceans in the aquarium. Two cafés and a large children's playground are also available. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Admission: adults €18.95, children 3 - 9 years €15.50.



You'll find all kinds of creatures at the Royal Artis Zoo

De Gooyer Windmill K-5, Funenkade 5. Amsterdam's tallest windmill is conveniently located next to the IJ brewery, so once you've admired its octagonal shape you enjoy a tasty and affordable beer right next door. Built in 1725 as a flour mill, De Gooyer no longer serves its original purpose and, unfortunately, isn't open to the public.

Dutch Resistance Museum (Verzetmuseum) I-5, Plantage Kerklaan 61, tel. (+31) 206 20 25 35, www.verzetmuseum.org. The Dutch Resistance Museum chronicles the lives of both average and extraordinary citizens during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. It begins with an overview of the political and economic climate of one of the few European democracies left on the continent on the eve of war and the surprise of being invaded despite its neutral status. Although the occupation is initially perceived as benign, it soon becomes clear that the nation's sovereignty is gradually being stripped away and some of the Dutch begin to resist. It is these brave souls to whom the museum is dedicated. View photos, films, war footage and simple household items that illustrate the nation's struggle to aid the Allies. Resistance took many forms from wearing a simple lapel pin or hiding resistance fighters or Jews from the Nazis to organising strikes to disrupt war operations and devising unparalleled financial schemes to fund the resistance movement. The museum also offers displays on Dutch collaborators, the Holocaust in the Netherlands and the war and its consequences for Dutch colonies abroad. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00, Mon, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €8, children 7 - 15 years €4.50, children 6 and under free.

Gassan Diamonds H-5, Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173 - 175, tel. (+31) 206 22 53 33, www.gassandiamonds.nl. Learn everything about 'a girl's best friend' in this family-owned diamond factory where you can take a free tour of the premises in dozens of different languages and buy something bright and sparkly for your significant other in one of its showrooms. Although you're by no means obligated to purchase anything, we recommend a visit to any young man who plans on buying an engagement ring at some point in his life. They'll teach you about the four 'Cs' - colour, clarity, carat and cut - and how to spot a fake so you don't get ripped off elsewhere. Watch diamond cutters and polishers ply their trade and finish your experience with a complimentary cup of coffee or tea and a Dutch cookie at its Delftware shop next door. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Admission: free.

Hermitage Amsterdam H-6, Amstel 51, tel. (+31) 205 30 74 88, www.hermitage.nl. Russia's most illustrious museum has a subsidiary in Amsterdam, which is housed in a beautiful 17th classical-style building called the Amstelhof that was once a home for poverty-stricken elderly women. Since 2009, the building has hosted periodic themed exhibitions that display some of the Hermitage's most prized possessions from stunningly preserved artefacts of the ancient world to masterpieces of European art. Permanent exhibits dedicated to the Amstelhof and the Russian royal family are also available. The Hermitage will host amazing works from the Van Gogh Museum until April 25, 2013 as well as an exhibition entitled *Peter the Great, an Inspired Tsar* until September 13, 2013. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €15, children 17 and under free.

Hermitage Parish Gardens (Diaconietuin) H-7, Amstel 51, tel. (+31) 205 30 87 51. After enjoying the art at the Hermitage don't forget to pay a visit to the serene Parish Gardens outside. Once used as a field for bleaching laundry in the 19th century when the building was used as an orphanage, the garden was recently upgraded with new grass, beautiful chestnut trees and stone benches.



Beautiful scenery at the Hortus Botanical Gardens

Hortus Botanical Gardens (Hortus Botanicus Amsterdam) H-5, Plantage Middenlaan 2a, tel. (+31) 206 25 90 21, www.dehortus.nl. Located in the quiet neighbourhood of the Plantage, the Hortus Botanical Garden has been fascinating naturalists, botanists and fans of beauty for over 300 years making it one of the oldest such gardens in the world. Although only a little over one hectare in size, Hortus boasts over 4,000 species of plants from around the globe throughout its gardens and greenhouses, nearly all of which are open to the public. It specialises in cycads, or palm trees, the oldest of which was brought to the Netherlands on a V.O.C. ship centuries ago and has had a home at Hortus since 1856. You can wander around the grounds and view beautiful flowers, carnivorous flora, a rare Australian pine thought extinct until 1994 and even a redwood tree, which, if allowed to grow on its own, might just change the city's skyline in a few generations. You can also walk through the tropical and desert greenhouses, but don't miss the butterfly house. You can also buy plants at its shop or have lunch at its café. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €8.50, children 5 - 14 years €4.50, children 4 and under free.   

Jewish Historical Museum (Joods Historisch Museum) H-6, Nieuwe Amstelstraat 1, tel. (+31) 205 31 03 10, www.jhm.nl. This extensive museum dedicated to Amsterdam Jewish life opened in 1987 and is spread out over what used to be four different synagogues. Begin your journey in the oldest building erected in 1660, which was abandoned for nearly 30 years after WWII until it was finally restored to its former glory. This section of the museum chronicles the earliest years of Jewish settlement in Amsterdam and you can view an impressive array of religious items, holy texts and ancient books as well as a giant silver menorah nearly 2m tall! You can also sit down as if you were a worshipper and watch videos about various rituals and traditions. On the second floor, which was originally used by the female congregation, you can view paintings by famous Jewish artists such as Josef Israels and learn about the large migration of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, Poland and Lithuania who came to Amsterdam to escape persecution. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €12, children 13 - 17 €6, children 6 - 12 €3, under 6 free.   

Kromhout Shipyard Museum (Werfmuseum 't Kromhout) J-5, Hoogte Kadijk 147, tel. (+31) 206 27 67 77/(+31) 206 25 03 02, www.machiekamer.nl/museum. Every Tuesday you can peruse lots of old engines, tools, boats and spare parts at this working shipyard where maritime vessels are still renovated and made seaworthy. You really have to be a fan to enjoy this museum, but it's an easy detour from the IJ brewery at the end of the street in case you need some added incentive to make the journey out here. ▶ Open Tue 10:00 - 15:00. Closed Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun.

Moses & Aaron Church (Mozeshuis/Mozes & Aäronkerk) H-5, Waterlooplein 205 - 207, tel. (+31) 206 22 13 05, www.mozeshuis.nl. Open for exhibitions, concerts and visitors, the Moses House and its classical facade on Waterlooplein is hard to miss. Inside you'll find whitewashed walls and hardwood floors, but your gaze will no doubt be drawn to the stunning marble altar or the 14 depictions of the life of Christ that cover the interior. Not unlike many other Catholic churches, it began its existence as a clandestine church, but was finally built out in the open after the ban on the Roman faith was lifted in 1795. It's no longer used as a church, but is still worth a peek if you're in the neighbourhood. A plaque outside proudly states that the illustrious composer Franz Liszt performed here in 1866. ▶ Open 12:00 - 17:00.

Muiderpoort J-6, Alexanderplein. Although it looks a bit odd and archaic at its current location on Alexanderplein, this impressive gate was once a symbol of the city's grandeur and even Napoleon made a point of riding through it when he entered Amsterdam in 1811. Built in 1770 to replace an existing gate that had succumbed to the ravages of time, it was designed in Louis XVI style with Doric friezes and all kinds of other embellishments meant to impress. Today it's hard to imagine its purpose as a gate, since the narrow bridge created for horse-drawn traffic that led to it no longer exists, but it's still an interesting bit of local history that's worth a look.

National Maritime Museum Amsterdam (Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum Amsterdam) I-4, Kattenburgerplein 1, tel. (+31) 205 23 22 22, fax (+31) 205 23 22 13, info@hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl, www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl. In the 17th century the Netherlands was one of the wealthiest and most important nations in the world and this was in large part due to its maritime prowess. No other country in the world has as many ships sailing the seas of the globe as Holland. After thorough renovations, the Maritime Museum once again demonstrates how the sea has defined Dutch culture. Stimulating, interactive exhibits bring 500 years of maritime history to life. The significance of this industry in the modern age is also explained in a clear and concise manner. Children will also love the museum, especially the replica of the famous VOC (Dutch East India Company) ship. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Admission: €15, children 5 and over €7.50.   

NEMO Science Centre H-4, Oosterdok 2, tel. (+31) 205 31 32 33, info@e-NEMO.nl, www.e-NEMO.nl. Look for the big green building jutting out into the water to find this fun science centre that will make you wish you were a kid again. The sounds of children's laughter and unreserved awe will accompany you on a variety of levels where visitors can learn about science without the boring textbooks and teachers. Make giant soap bubbles, generate electricity or lots of other hands on activities on the first floor and watch Rube Goldeberg-like machines on the second or learn how objects can be moved with light. You can also see how fuel engines work or touch a real, 4.65 billion-year-old meteorite; discover why teenagers look, feel and act the way they do; see how our daily lives will change in the future with new and advanced technologies; and lots of other interesting stuff. You can also bring your own lunch and eat it in the cafeteria or buy some food on the top floor terrace café that offers a great view of the city. A good museum shop is also available where you can buy science experiments and other fun souvenirs for kids. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: €13.50, children 3 and under free. 



The National Maritime Museum

Oosterkerk J-5, Kleine Wittenburgerstraat 1, tel. (+31) 206 27 22 80, www.oosterkerk-amsterdam.nl. Although Amsterdam is littered with churches old and new representing a wide variety of Christian denominations, some no longer function as houses of worship and the Oosterkerk or Eastern Church is one such building. Built in the 17th century as a protestant church by architects Daniël Stalpaert and later Adriaan Dortsman this unusual edifice on the canal was based on the shape of the Greek cross. Today, it's a cultural centre for the local community and often hosts concerts and art exhibitions. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Portuguese Synagogue (Portugese Synagoge) H-5, Meester Visserplein 3, tel. (+31) 206 24 53 51, service@jhm.nl, www.portugesesynagoge.nl. Most European capitals were hardly an ideal place for Jews to call home in medieval times, but no city was more tolerant of this ethnic group than Amsterdam in the 17th-century. As the city prospered, its population grew by leaps and bounds and among its many new arrivals were Jews from around the continent looking for a better life. They completed work on this synagogue in 1675 and since then it has served as a centre for Jewish life in Amsterdam housing also offices, archives, ritual baths and a rabbinate. Although the synagogue is currently being restored, it's still open to the public and an audio guide will acquaint you with the building's long history. The ticket price includes admission to the Jewish Historical Museum nearby. ▶ Open 10:00 - 16:00. Closed Sat. Admission: adults €12, children 13 - 17 €6, children 6 - 12 €3, under 6 free.

Stopera Amsterdam Music Theatre (Het Muziektheater) H-7, Waterlooplein 22, tel. (+31) 205 51 81 17, www.het-muziektheater.nl. No matter how you get to Waterlooplein from Rembrandtplein, either on foot or by tram, you can't help but notice the curved modern structure on the left as you cross the bridge. Although opened in the late 1980s, the building, or at least the idea of an opera house, had been on the city's drawing board since 1915. Eventually, it was decided that a new edifice could house both the new opera and the new city hall, but bickering about the project continued for decades and became somewhat of a joke among locals until its construction began in 1981 amid protests from squatters, Provos, leftists and other layabouts. Opened in 1986, the Amsterdam Music Theatre is home to both the opera and the ballet, while the adjoining city hall opened its doors in 1988. ▶ Guided tour admission Saturdays at 12:00: €6.

The Hollandsche Schouwburg Theatre I-5, Plantage Middenlaan 24, tel. (+31) 205 31 03 80, www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl. From 1892 - 1941 the Hollandsche Schouwburg was a popular Dutch theatre, but after the Nazi occupation of Holland it became a segregated Jewish theatre and later a notorious assembly point for mass deportations of people to concentration camps. Today it's a museum dedicated to the tens of thousands of Amsterdam Jews whose lives were snuffed out during the Holocaust. Inside is an eternal flame surrounded by 6,700 engraved surnames of entire families that were murdered. A door leads out to a stark courtyard memorial to these unfortunate souls. A permanent exhibit that illustrates the persecution of the Jews and the contributions of the Dutch Resistance through photographs, film and documents is available upstairs. ▶ Open 11:00 - 16:00. Admission: free. ☎

The Rembrandt House Museum (Rembrandthuis) G/H-5, Jodenbreestraat 4, tel. (+31) 205 20 04 00, fax (+31) 205 20 04 01, museum@rembrandthuis.nl, www.rembrandthuis.nl. This historic house was bought by one of the Netherlands' most illustrious native sons in 1639 for the impressive sum of 13,000 guilders at a time when a day labourer was content to make 300 guilders in a year. Unfortunately, scandal and disgrace made him unpopular and work became scarce. He was unable to cover the loan and went bankrupt in 1656. His possessions were auctioned off and he moved to more modest lodgings on the Rozengracht. An audio guide will take you through the house, which is reconstructed to look exactly as it did when Rembrandt was at the peak of his career. View the foyer where he exhibited his work for potential buyers, his living quarters complete with funny box bed, the attic where his apprentices worked, his curiosity room and of course his studio. Staff also demonstrate how etchings were mass-produced using copper plates. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €10, children 6 - 17 years €3, children 5 and under free. ☎

Waterlooplein H-6/7, Waterlooplein. Located in the heart of what used to be Amsterdam's thriving Jewish Quarter, this square is now better known for its flea market where you can search for vintage and secondhand clothes, a wide variety of antiques, old vinyl records and lots of other hip and retro curiosities in the shadow of the imposing Moses and Aaron Church next door. The city's best Jewish attractions like the Portuguese Synagogue and the Jewish Historical Museum are also only a stone's throw away, not to mention the underground Tun Fun children's play park.

Wertheim Park I-5, Between Nieuwe Herengracht, Plantage Parklaan & Plantage Middenlaan.

This small patch of green opposite the Hortus Botanical Gardens offers plenty of benches and views of the nearby canal that marks one of its boundaries. One shady corner is also the unlikely resting place for the ashes of Dutch victims of the Holocaust covered by blue glass, which is deliberately fractured to represent the symbolic cracks in the peaceful sky that was forced to watch the atrocities committed on the ground below. You can't miss the park, as it is guarded by two large sphinxes at the gate. ▶ Open 07:00 - 21:00.







In the aftermath of WWII Amsterdam was in desperate need of new housing. By 1951 work began on the garden suburb of Tuinstad Sloterveer, the first of five new neighbourhoods that were added to the west end of the city. Today, Sloterveer, Geuzenveld, Slotervaart, Overtoomse Veld and Osdorp comprise the urban district of Nieuw-West. A spacious design with plenty of greenery is characteristic of these new neighbourhoods, which all surround the peaceful waters of the Sloterplassen lake.

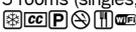
Getting there

Nieuw-West's main train station is Amsterdam Lelylaan, which has great connections with Central Station and Schiphol. The green metro line 50 is probably the easiest way to get to Nieuw-West from the railway stations at Zuid and RAI. Along the way it passes six metro stations in Nieuw-West. Many trams also travel to Nieuw-West including No.13 (Geuzenveld), Nos.7 and 14 (Sloterveer), No.17 (Osdorp Dijkgraafplein), No.1 (Osdorp de Aker) and No.2 (Nieuw Sloten). All, with the exception of Nos.7 and 14 (Dam), depart from Central Station.

Accommodation

Nieuw-West offers a smattering of all types of accommodation from budget hotels that have seen better days to upmarket 4-star rooms as well as luxurious apartments.

Upmarket

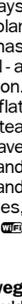
Best Western Blue Square Hotel N-2, Sloterveerlaan 80, tel. (+31) 205 06 37 17, www.bluesquarehotel.nl. Although Best Westerns have a reputation for offering fairly standard, affordable accommodation, Blue Square has separated itself from the pack by focusing on modern ways to minimise its carbon footprint including the use of solar panels and other green, energy saving measures. This has earned them the right to call themselves a Green Key hotel - a prestigious title for environmentally sound accommodation. 175 singles, doubles, triples and quads are available with flat screen TVs, free wireless internet access, safe, coffee/tea sets, air conditioning and private bathrooms. Some also have views of the Erasmus Canal. A restaurant serving lunch and French and Chinese cuisine for dinner is also available and a tram stop is a short walk away. ▶ 175 rooms (singles, doubles, triples and quads from €109).  ★★☆☆

Mercure Amsterdam Airport M-4, Oude Haagseweg 20, tel. (+31) 206 17 90 05, www.mercure.com. If you'd like to live in style close to the airport, this huge hotel, which also boasts a view of the Oeverlanden Nature Reserve, is a good option. All of its 152 rooms are stylishly decorated with bright white walls and autumnal colours. You can also expect all of the usual four-star amenities like climate control, TV, mini-bar, safe, trouser press and wireless internet access. A hotel bar is also at your disposal as is the Wines & Dishes restaurant that specialises in light, healthy cuisine. Free parking and a free shuttle service to Schiphol are also nothing to sneeze at. ▶ 152 rooms (standard from €94, superior from €125).  ★★☆☆

For a complete list of Amsterdam Noord reviews visit www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com

Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Child-friendly
 Conference facilities	 Credit cards
 Fitness centre	 Facilities for the disabled
 Free wireless internet	 Guarded parking
 Home delivery	 Live music
 Outside seating	 Pets allowed
 Sauna	 Smoking section
 Swimming pool	 Takeaway

Ramada Apollo Amsterdam Centre N-2, Staalmeesterslaan 410, tel. (+31) 202 07 00 00, www.apollohotelsresorts.com. Europe's largest Ramada hotel overlooks the Rembrandt Park, not to mention most of Amsterdam, and offers a whopping 446 recently refurbished rooms. Although most of the standard, deluxe and executive rooms are similar in style, you can also upgrade your stay to a corner room with panoramic views of the city. A fitness centre with a sauna is available to all guests as well as a 17th-floor restaurant with views guaranteed to make your jaw drop. Free wifi is also included in the price of a room and a Schiphol shuttle can be reserved for a mere €5. A large number of parking spaces are also on hand if you plan on driving. ▶ 446 rooms (standard from €105, deluxe from €120, executive from €135). 

WestCord Fashion Hotel Amsterdam N-3, Hendrikje Stoffelstraat 1, tel. (+31) 208 10 08 00, www.westcordhotels.nl. Located at the south end of the Rembrandt Park, this four-star design hotel has plenty to offer the discerning traveller who demands more than just a place to lay his head. All rooms are stylish, yet playful and even cosy unlike similar establishments that rely on minimalism to be trendy. Naturally, the usual amenities are available including flat screen TV, climate control, mini-bar, phone, coffee/tea set, private bathroom and free wifi. And a design hotel wouldn't be complete without a hot cocktail bar so head to the 10th floor to have a drink with the beautiful people at the Skyy Bar. A large wellness centre with a swimming pool and steam rooms is also at your disposal. ▶ 260 rooms (twin and doubles from €119, triples from €179, suites from €385).  ★★☆☆

Boutique hotels

Dutch Design Hotel Artemis N-4, John M.Keynesplein 2, tel. (+31) 207 14 10 00, www.artemisamsterdam.com. Other Amsterdam hotels may claim to be boutique or design hotels, but this incredibly modern building has been created from top to bottom solely by Dutch designers and artists. Everything in this hotel incorporates some aspect of inspiring new Dutch design from its 256 rooms and 11 meeting rooms to the food and cocktails served at its fantastic restaurant and bar, De Stijl. The accommodation is luxurious to say the least with modern, yet natural furnishings, floor-to-ceiling windows and standard amenities such as wifi and large flat screen TVs. Naturally, art is displayed throughout the hotel and it also offers a great summer terrace on the water. ▶ 256 rooms (superior from €89, business from €139).  ★★☆☆



Gemeente Amsterdam

Stadsdeel Nieuw-West

The Nieuw-West district of Amsterdam is known for its beautiful green spaces. It's an area of rich contrasts. On the one hand it's full of space, water and green park land, but on the other it's a combination of densely populated neighbourhoods full of families with many children. Its multiple new housing estates make Nieuw-West a striking area for modern architecture.

With the Sloterpas and the Nieuwe Meer this district has splendid recreation areas within its boundaries. The district also has eleven parks and beautiful cycling and walking routes. The Tuinen van West, the most western part of the district, is currently being developed into a new recreation area.

Nieuw-West is a multicultural district comprised of 144 different nationalities and this is reflected in its speciality shops. The district also attracts artists and creative people who easily mingle with its other residents. The De Meervaart Theatre, the oriental Shoperade and the large number of shops make the Osdorp plein the heart of Nieuw-West's shopping district.

Nieuw-West also hosts lots of events including this summer's Loveland, Sloterpas and West Beach Film festivals and in October 2012 Nieuw-West will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its existence.

Mid-range

Bastion Hotel Amsterdam Centrum - Zuidwest M-3, Hendrikje Stoffelsstraat 60, tel. (+31) 206 69 16 21, www.bastionhotels.nl. Bastion is a clean and affordable hotel and despite the fact that it's close to the busy A10 motorway, its 90 standard rooms are completely insulated from the noise. That said, you shouldn't expect much in terms of interior design as Bastion owes its popularity to its simplicity, although the free wi-fi is a big extra. The breakfast is probably its best feature and it includes freshly baked rolls.

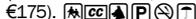
► 90 rooms (deluxe rooms from €94, suites from €144).
 ★★★

Remco Hotel Amsterdam West M-3, Reimerswaalstraat 5, tel. (+31) 204 10 80 00, www.hotelamsterdamwest.nl. The façade of this hotel looks a little drab at first glance and the accommodation could use a new coat of paint, but thankfully the rooms themselves are spacious and well-equipped with large flat screen TVs and huge double beds. The large, clean bathrooms are also a big bonus and little extras like free wireless internet access, cheap rates, free parking and friendly staff make this hotel very good value for money. ► 179 rooms (standard double/twin from €48, superior double/twin from €59, triples from €69, quads from €74).
 ★★★

Budget

Hotel Nieuw Slotania N-2, Slotermeerlaan 133, tel. (+31) 206 13 45 68, www.nieuwslotania.nl. Light sleepers might look for more peaceful accommodation, because this basic hotel is located on a busy intersection and if the traffic noise doesn't keep you awake, the sounds from the bar beneath just might. Despite the noise, it's not a bad place to stay if you're on a budget. The friendly staff and the comfortable and recently refurbished rooms are reason enough to book a night here. Free wi-fi is a good bonus and the city centre is 25 minutes away by tram. ► 115 rooms (singles from €49, doubles/twin from €59, triples from €59, quads from €79).


Apartment rental

World Fashion Apartments N-3, Koningin Wilhelminaplein 272, tel. (+31) 203 01 39 33, www.worldfashionapartments.com. If you're one of those travellers who prefers to cook his own meals and avoid the often sterile and generic accommodation offered by standard hotels, you can book one of the many luxury apartments offered by this company in Nieuw-West. Stay in a studio apartment for as little as €135/night or choose a swankier penthouse apartment for considerably more money. ► 60 apartments (studio from €135, two-room from €155, three-room from €175).




Urban landscape on the water

Restaurants

Nieuw-West has a bit of everything from upmarket hotel restaurants with trendy chefs and simple takeaway joints to ethnic eating experiences like popular Chinese and Turkish cuisine as well as more exotic fare such as Libyan and Moroccan.

Arabic

Syriana Akersluis 8, tel. (+31) 206 69 09 03, www.syriana.nl. Just as Amsterdam is a melting pot of different cultures, so is Syriana. Thousands of Arabs live in this city and its near surroundings, so it's a no-brainer that it should have a proper restaurant serving Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian and Iraqi cuisine, but you'll have to travel a ways to find it. We'll give you a hint. Just look for a cheese factory and a windmill. An eastern atmosphere prevails here and you can enjoy an Arab-style high tea, water pipes and even belly dancers at the weekend. ► Open 12:00 - 22:00. (€16 - 21).


Barbecue

BBQ at Fashion Hotel Amsterdam N-3, Hendrikje Stoffelsstraat 1, tel. (+31) 208 10 08 00, www.westcordculinair.nl. When the weather cooperates, Amsterdam's one and only Fashion Hotel throws a weekly à la carte BBQ on Friday night on the terrace of its restaurant. But if being surrounded by hipsters and other fashion victims makes you nervous, you might want to grill your own meat at home as only the in-crowd hangs out on grill nights. And don't expect burgers or hot dogs. That would be to simple and ordinary. Expect entrecote, prawns, fish served whole with their heads and tails and other fancy fare that you wouldn't find at a typical barbecue. The staff does all of the grilling, so men are forced to hang out with their ladies and talk about less manly topics than the proper way to cook beef. ► Open , Fri 18:00 - 22:30. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat, Sun.


Chinese

Choi Yuen N-2, Burg. Rendorpstraat 17-19, tel. (+31) 206 13 19 60, www.choiyuen-amsterdam.nl. This Chinese restaurant can be found in a rather bleak location, but it's much better than your average Asian joint. Unfortunately, not as far as the décor or originality are concerned. This smallish eatery is bursting at the seams with the usual 'Made in China' stuff with the utterly kitschy blue 'antique' vases as the pinnacle of poor taste. Fortunately, the menu offers plenty of surprises. With no less than 21 house specials there's enough to choose from, although our favourite is still the so-called *secret of spicy ox*, if only for its enticing and enigmatic name. ► Open 16:00 - 22:00. (€13 - 18).


Coffee & Tea

coffee@last N-3, Koningin Wilhelminaplein 60-62, tel. (+31) 206 15 44 40, www.coffeeatlast.nl. A large red leather lounge sofa seems to be the main attraction in this trendy, industrial-style café, where clever nick-nacks have been placed seemingly carelessly on and next to its wooden tables. But appearances can be deceiving and, as it turns out, every single detail is deliberate. coffee@last certainly doesn't serve 'ditch water', as the Dutch would say, but proper coffee with creamy milk toppings instead of the whipped air that other java joints pass off as a cappuccino. Obviously all of these chic surroundings and quality coffee come at a price. ► Open 08:30 - 17:30, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.




The kids have plenty to do in Nieuw-West as well

Coffee Mania N-3, Ottho Heldringstraat 3, tel. (+31) 207 60 03 61, www.coffeeman.nl. Coffee Mania is one of the coolest hot spots in Nieuw-West. As there is no Starbucks in this part of town, this trendy coffee place has developed into a central meeting point for people who need their daily shot of caffeine. The black gold takes central stage here in many different ways including the walls, which are decorated with beautiful drawings and interesting trivia about the world's most popular drink. Seven kinds of coffee are on offer and you can also get a cheap breakfast, several home-made soups and a delicious Turkish *tost* with spicy sausages, which we can't recommend enough. ▶ Open 08:00 - 17:00, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun. (€4 - 7). 

Fast food & Takeaway

Asmin Aftaal N-2, Plein '40 - '45. Possibly the best kebab in Amsterdam can be found at a hidden local takeaway counter under the Tangiers grocery store. A trip to Asmin is definitely worth it for the budget traveller as a doner will set you back only €1.20 and a durum can be had for as little as €2.50. Situated just outside the Amsterdam ring, Asmin is located in the Plein '40 - '45 market that caters to the large numbers of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants that live in the neighbourhood. And since you'll be the only tourist queued up here for a delicious, inexpensive kebab you'll soak up some local flavour that many Amsterdammers haven't even experienced. ▶ Open 12:00 - 18:00. 

De Patatza(a)k (The Chip Shop) M-4, Langsom 5, tel. (+31) 206 69 18 68. Tourist attractions always bring along a number of other businesses that want to profit from the money tourists generate and the bars and restaurants around the Sloten Mills are a perfect example. However, not everybody wants a big lunch or dinner in which case De Patatzaak is a good option. The chips we got served are by no means the best in Amsterdam, although locals apparently rave about them. Snacks and sandwiches are also available and the fantastic view of the historic premises is an extra bonus. ▶ Open 11:30 - 20:30. (€2 - 5). 

McDonald's Schiphol Noord Loevesteinse Randweg 230, Schiphol, tel. (+31) 206 57 00 45, www.mcdonaldsschiphol.nl. This is by far the most interesting of the three McDonald's outlets in and around Schiphol Airport. The burgers don't taste any different, nor is the interior, but its location right next to the Buitenveldertbaan, one of the six runways at Holland's biggest airport, will appeal to planespotter everywhere. Separated from the aviation action by only a thin partition, you can see a plane up close and personal every three minutes. Enormous windows and a massive terrace with binoculars aid the experience. Screens inside display the names and destinations of all of the arriving and departing aircraft. ▶ Open 09:00 - 24:00. Also at the food court in Terminal 3 and Terminal 2. 

Greek

Plato M-2, Confuciusplein 12, tel. (+31) 206 13 39 33, www.grieksrestaurantplato.nl. Although we aren't exactly culinary experts like the people who write the Michelin guide, we don't think that Plato will ever win a top prize for their simple cuisine, but then again, that's never been the goal of its friendly owners. You can, however, enjoy good, wholesome Greek food for a very reasonable price in this cosy restaurant. The outdoor café, the free aperitif and the sincere, personal service are all Plato's main strengths. ▶ Open 17:00 - 23:00. 

International

Coco's Keuken N-3, Saskia van Uijlenburgkade 170, tel. (+31) 207 67 03 87, www.cocoskeuken.nl. 'Just good food in the neighbourhood' is Coco's slogan. It has to be said that this is quite a modest motto when you consider that the food in this local restaurant is close to perfection. With pure, healthy and fresh ingredients the cooks create basic dishes with a creative flare and all of these are served by friendly staff in plain, yet cheerful surroundings. Rumour has it that chef Youssef is your man if you want something that's not on the menu. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00. Also at N-2, Gerrie Knetemannlaan 170; N-3/4, Ottho Heldringstraat 13 d. (€10 - 14). 

De Halve Maen M-4, Sloterweg 1345, tel. (+31) 206 15 38 21, www.dehalvemaen.com. Just opposite Nieuw-West's biggest tourist attraction, the Sloten windmill, you'll find yet another crowd pleaser: De Halve Maen (The Half Moon). This historic pub wouldn't look out of place in the English countryside with its cosy furnishings, warm atmosphere and attentive and friendly staff who make sure that virtually everyone leaves here in a good mood. Although the surroundings and the building are typically Dutch, the menu is varied and includes a bit of everything. A sign at the entrance advising burglars to look elsewhere makes it clear that not everyone is welcome, but that probably doesn't apply to you. ▶ (€5 - 20). 

Het Rijk van de Keizer L-2, Joris van den Berghweg 101-111, tel. (+31) 204 97 75 06. Het Rijk van de Keizer (The Emperor's Empire) has been housed in this former ammunition warehouse for over a decade, after an ill-fated squat in the heart of the Jordaan neighbourhood. The atmosphere is still as relaxed and easygoing as when its idealistic founder started the concept of combining food and theatrical elements in 1996. These days the Rijk van de Keizer has developed into a location for meetings, parties and weddings, at an intimate outdoor location, but it's also possible just to drop by for a quick bite to eat. Cantina is a small country house, hidden between the meadows, where the chef uses organic produce from its own vegetable garden. Every last Sunday of the month you can take part in a joint dinner, if you can manage to drag yourself out of your hammock. ▶ Check its website for current opening hours. 

The Colour Kitchen N-2, Jan Evertsenstraat 747, tel. (+31) 204 48 66 11, www.thecolourkitchen.com. Whatever you decide to eat here, make sure you leave room for one of the best desserts we've tried in Amsterdam in the past year. The cardamom coconut cake is even better than the name suggests. There's a lot to savour at this industrial style restaurant where 160 guests can simultaneously enjoy its international cuisine and the friendly staff at this multicultural venue is just as diverse in ethnicity as its varied menu. We also recommend the Peking duck croquettes and bean soup. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00, Sat 17:00 - 23:00. Closed Sun. 

Thai

Suvarnaphum N-3, Johan Huizingalaan 250, tel. (+31) 206 17 66 20, www.suvarnaphum.nl. Although the location of this restaurant is hardly encouraging, Suvarnaphum is worth a visit. If this small restaurant on a somewhat boring shopping street were situated by the canals of the city centre people would be queued up outside every day. Whether you order food to take away or have a sit down meal at one of its 33 seats, the large servings of tasty food couldn't be better and you'd have a hard time finding a more authentic place anywhere in Amsterdam. The staff can be a bit curt and the loud TV could definitely be turned down a few notches, but we like it all the same. Even if you do find fault with Suvarnaphum, you should probably keep it to yourself as the chef used to be a kick boxer. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:00. (€14 - 18).

Turkish

Ada N-2, Jan de Jonghkaade 82, tel. (+31) 208 46 77 03, www.adalunchrestaurant.com. If decent cuisine for an affordable price is paramount to you, as it is to many Dutch people, and you appreciate excellent, attentive service, you could do much worse than a trip to this Turkish restaurant, which has plenty of atmosphere. Some people might find the romantic interior a bit over the top, but others will enjoy small details like having the door opened for you and being helped into your coat. You can order affordable platters and tasty grilled dishes in this upgraded kebab joint, but we recommend the lentil soup and the *cag kebabi* (spicy lamb). The large windows and view over the water is another bonus. ▶ Open 09:00 - 24:00. (€10 - 16).

Konak Restaurant N-2, Burgemeester de Vlugtlaan 81-83, tel. (+31) 206 13 29 89, www.konakrestaurant.nl. If you're planning on taking the architectural walking tour organised by the Van Eesterenmuseum in Nieuw-West, Konak is the nearest option to have a bite afterwards. Naturally, it would be best if you like lamb, because the delicious aroma of this tasty meat can't be avoided at this Turkish restaurant. The cheap plastic covering the table linen is cheesy to say the least, but the daily specials are definitely budget friendly, so if you'd like to save some euro then give it a shot. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00. (€7 - 12).

Meram M/N-2, Slotermeerlaan 111, tel. (+31) 204 47 03 70, www.restaurantmeram.nl. For a Turkish restaurant in this area, Meram has a surprisingly pleasant interior. It's modern, sleek and not at all what we expected. Like at most Turkish restaurants, the staff seems to consist solely of men, but these guys are neatly dressed in black. They serve grilled Anatolian cuisine as well as a variety of salads, soups, sandwiches and tapas made from fresh ingredients from local suppliers. The huge terrace overlooking the market is a great place for people watching, but bear in mind that a variety of weirdos seem to pass by every few minutes. No matter. The staff will make short work of them. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 03:00. (€8 - 13).

Sahan M-3, Tussen meer 66, tel. (+31) 203 34 32 86, www.restaurantsahan.nl. On your way to Sahan, you might get the feeling that you've missed the exit, but keep going and you'll eventually find authentic Turkish cuisine in this rather cheerless area. Although the name Sahan refers to the copper plates used for cooking in the Turkish countryside, the restaurant is far from traditional. Expect spacey lighting, red and white leather chairs and 'modern' portions that would hardly satisfy hard working Anatolian peasants. That said, the food is simply delicious and the prices are surprisingly reasonable. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:30.

Nightlife

You can sit back and enjoy a beer at a local pub with the regulars, enjoy a trendy cocktail at an elevated height with views of the city or muster the courage to visit a club that was once a funeral home.

Bars

Cafe Slotterplas N-2, Burg. Rendorpstraat 1-3, tel. (+31) 206 14 41 07, www.cafeslotterplas.nl. In this guide a review of a restaurant, pub or hotel rarely exceeds 120 words, but fortunately we need no more than 80 for this bar. This corner pub serves plenty of draught beer and the interior doesn't warrant much description. To the left of the entrance you'll find the bar and on the right are some bare chairs with flaking paint. It appears that everybody knows each other and they simply ignore newcomers hoping that they'll leave as soon as possible. In short, you won't find any atmosphere here, not even with a microscope. Don't bother! ▶ Open 15:00 - 01:00, Thu 13:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 15:00 - 03:00.

Clubs

VLLA N-3, Willem Roelofsstraat 9, tel. (+31) 646 10 82 72, www.vlla.nl. It's usually fairly straightforward to classify a restaurant or club, but VLLA is an exception to the rule. This cultural haven wears so many hats it's hard to describe. It's a Dutch lunchroom, a restaurant, a theatre and a bar and children also haven't been forgotten at this former funeral home. Where silence and grief once prevailed, the tunes of up-and-coming bands can be heard in what used to be the morgue. If that sends a chill down your spine just consider the reasonable prices and the currently cosy atmosphere of this renovated space. If it were located in the centre of Berlin VLLA would be an instant success, but in Amsterdam it's as yet one of the city's last undiscovered little gems. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 10:00 - 24:00.

Cocktails

Skyy Bar N-3, Hendrikje Stoffelsstraat 1, tel. (+31) 208 10 08 00, www.skyybar.nl. On clear days you can see the sea from here but on most evenings the trendy Skyy Bar (their spelling) is a popular haven for stargazers looking for celebrities here on earth. The immediate surroundings of this hotel bar are pure paradise for anyone who wants to catch a glimpse of the fashion world. Whatever your reason for coming here it's a good place to visit even if you just want to have a look at the beautiful girls in sexy outfits while sipping a cocktail or some champagne. We recommend the surprisingly affordable *porn star martini*, which is a tasty drink indeed. ▶ Open 17:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 02:00.



Outdoor nightlife in Nieuw-West

Although Nieuw-West is a fairly new district of Amsterdam, having only been created in the 1950s, it has more than its fair share of sights and attractions. You can take your pick of parks and gardens including the central Sloterpark and its large lake or visit one of Amsterdam's most impressive windmills, which is open to the public every day.

Brewery & Distillery tours

Brouwerij De 7 Deugden L-2, Osdorperweg 578 achter, tel. (+31) 651 64 81 15, www.de7deugden.nl. Amsterdam's latest addition to the beer brewing industry is brouwerij De 7 Deugden (The 7 Virtues), which is tucked away on the outskirts of New West. Although all of the machinery and equipment doesn't occupy more space than a large garage, the beer is simply wonderful. Owner Garmt is one of those guys who could no longer resist the tempting call from his inner self and we'd just like to personally thank the beer gods for this fortuitous wake-up call. His contribution to a happier life for Amsterdammers is a selection of six beers, all of which have a unique taste. The seventh brew, which makes the name of this brewery sound more logical, is a seasonal beer. This is largely reliant on the time of the year, Garmt's mood or whatever else influences his creative mind and palate. If you'd like to take a tour of the place you have to call ahead and arrive in a group of at least four people. For €5/person you can taste all six regular brews served with three types of cheeses. You can't go wrong with that!

► Open 09:00 - 17:30, Mon, Fri 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun. ☺ ☎ ☑

Buildings

De Huygens Airbase (Vliegbasis De Huygens) N-2, Jan Evertsenstraat 717, www.vliegbasis.biz. Plane spotters needn't visit De Huygens Airbase. Despite the confusing and somewhat far-fetched name, this business complex has *absolutely* nothing to do with aviation. The only similarity that the designers of this concept could come up with is that flying broadens your horizons. Although that seems like a weak justification, that's exactly what dozens of creative entrepreneurs who have taken refuge here do. One, however, would have to admit that De Huygens has made its mark on the area's surroundings since it was built in 1968. The robust building offers nearly 6,000m² of office space divided into smaller units over four floors and a thorough renovation hasn't hurt the complex either. The generous use of light at De Huygens Airbase has given it a tougher appearance, which of course befits the manly and sexy image of airmen and pilots that the marketing gurus were hoping to emphasise.



Spring arrives in Nieuw-West

Sloten Windmill (Molen van Sloten) M-4, Akersluis 10, tel. (+31) 206 69 04 12, www.molenvanloten.nl. Nearly 100 years ago, the Netherlands boasted over 10,000 windmills. This invention, which was originally Japanese, is now internationally associated with Holland. Unfortunately, less than 1,000 are left, but several are still located on the outskirts of Amsterdam and the surrounding region. One of the most beautiful ones, Molen van Sloten, is located at a picturesque spot on the edge of Nieuw-West. This type of windmill, called a Stellingmolen, was used to keep the water level low in the neighbouring areas. It's also the only windmill in Amsterdam which is open every day and even the disabled can take a tour of this beautiful building from 1846 by taking the lift to the upper floors. Many couples have also been married at this Amsterdam landmark. ► Open 10:00 - 16:00. ☺

The 1800 Rods (De 1800 Roeden) L-2, Joris van de Berghweg 101-111, tel. (+31) 206 71 42 44, www.1800roeden.nl. The strategically located De 1800 Roden (The 1800 Rods) was actually built in 1900 as a part of the Stelling van Amsterdam military defence line. These days the former ammunition arsenal happens to function as a breeding ground for creativity. Although its chief purpose was once the city's defence, these remarkable buildings have now been converted into modern offices and workshops. The spacious complex covers an area of nearly two hectares and includes an amphitheatre. ►

Museums

Cornelis van Eesteren Museum (Van Eesterenmuseum) N-2, Burgemeester de Vlugtlaan 125, tel. (+31) 204 47 18 57, www.vaneesterenmuseum.nl. When politicians, housing cooperatives and the residents of Nieuw-West came to realize that their part of town played an important role in cultural history, they decided to partly designate the western suburbs as a protected area and call it a museum. Today the museum displays local architecture and the work of Cornelis van Eesteren in particular. It has become a platform for debates, lectures, excursions, conferences, seminars and exhibitions that relate to urban planning, architecture and general life in the western suburbs of Amsterdam. Every Friday and Saturday at 14:00 you can learn more about local architecture and take a guided tour of the area. It starts at the museum and lasts roughly 1.5 - 2 hours. If, however, those days are inconvenient you can pay an extra €35 and schedule a tour for a more suitable time. ► Open Fri, Sat 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun. Admission: adults €5, children under 12 free. ☺ ☎ ☑

Parks & Gardens

De Bretten Garden Allotments (Volkstuinpark De Bretten) M-1, Seineweg 16, tel. (+31) 206 13 45 89, www.tuinparkdebretten.nl. Russians have their dachas, but the Dutch have garden sheds. Traditionally the Dutch also like to spend a lot of time gardening. At the De Bretten Garden Allotments these two passions are cleverly combined. A total of 203 gardens, which are maintained usually by Amsterdam's eldest generation, can be viewed here. The result is an area where each square centimetre has been meticulously cultivated. Between April 1 and the end of September some city dwellers flee the lunacy of the city and actually move into this compound, which includes a drawbridge and mini windmills! Foreigners who are fascinated by the Dutch garden phenomenon can easily spend half a day here enjoying typically Dutch values like order, cleanliness and the need to meticulously maintain your own property. Every piece of this property is subsequently fenced off and the result is lots of intersecting straight lines.

Lake Sloterpas (Sloterpas) M-3, Sloterpas. The history of the Sloterpas goes back centuries. In 1644, the Slootermeer, a shallow peat lake, was reclaimed with the help of windmills. Over 300 years later the reclaimed land was dug up and once again turned into a lake as part of the 1935 General Expansion Plan for the area. The excavation was necessary to raise the surrounding area so new housing estates like Slotermeer, Geuzenveld, Slotervaart and Osdorp could be built. It also made it possible to create a large park and recreation area in the middle of the new neighbourhoods. The fertile top soil of peat and clay was used to raise the area around the lake. The Sloterpas is a popular body of water, especially on the southeastern side, for sailing, canoeing, fishing and diving.

Overlanden Nature Reserve (De Overlanden) N-4, Nieuwe Meer, www.oeverlanden.nl. The Netherlands is hardly known for its hot summers, but when the mercury does rise for a few days or perhaps even a week, you can forsake the heat and the stagnant canals of the city centre and visit the De Overlanden Nature Reserve. Over 40 species of birds call this small piece of wilderness home, which is great for ornithologists, but the reserve also borders a big lake that's perfect for swimming. Three small beaches are also available for sunbathing and relaxing, but you can forget about tanning your nether regions as De Overlanden is very popular with families and local teenagers. Take tram No.2 to the Slotervaart hospital and walk south for roughly 10 minutes.

Rembrandt Park (Rembrandtpark) N-3, Orteliuskade, www.rembrandtpark.org. One of Holland's most famous painters, Rembrandt van Rijn, had a park named after him centuries after his death. This spacious green space is located at the border between the old city and the estates of the 1950s and 1960s. The park is cut in half by the Postjesweg and the many lakes and open fields that surround it create a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere. A great variety of sculpture, a zoo and the best kids' playground in Amsterdam are just some of the attractions of this central urban oasis.

Sloter Park (Sloterpark) M-3, President Allendelaan 3. The Sloter Park, which measures an impressive 91 hectares, is the largest park in Amsterdam. This green urban landscape is best explored by bike, although you can discover some good places on foot as well. Try the popular 5.8km Sloterpas Tour, which takes you through a changing landscape guaranteed to keep you interested in your surroundings. The park was created using the excavated top soil of the former Sloterdijkmeer Polder. In the very north western corner is a piece of land which has remained untouched since it was designed in the 1950s and it has gradually developed into the Het Ruige Riet (The Rough Reeds) nature reserve.

Places of interest

artKitchen Gallery L-2, Joris van den Berghweg 101, tel. (+31) 206 22 34 22, www.artkitchen.nl. The artKitchen Gallery is housed in a cultural entrepreneurship area called the 1800 Roeden. This is a collection of old warehouses in the middle of the meadows of Nieuw-West. Originally they were used as storage for ammunition and as a laboratory, but in 1984 the site lost its military purpose. The middle section of Hall A has been converted to exhibition space and also houses the office of the artKitchen. The gallery offers a selection of contemporary art consisting of a wide variety of work by Dutch and international artists. The artKitchen Gallery organises at least six exhibitions a year and is very active with local projects and art fairs at home and abroad.
 ▶ Open 13:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Sun. 



A day at the beach at the Nieuwe Meer

De Nieuwe Meer N-4, Tjotterspad. Originally De Nieuwe Meer was a simple lake, but since the 1960s the body of water has increased dramatically in size as its precious sands were dredged to create the foundations for the surrounding neighbourhoods. Some parts are more than 35m deep and ideal for fish species like perch, pike, whitefish and even eels, but there are virtually no water plants in De Nieuwe Meer. This is due to its steep banks and the waves caused by the wind and pleasure boats. The New Lake is very popular with yachtsmen and fishermen and it gets especially busy in the summer. There are several marinas and at the weekend and in summer a ferry link connects the northern and southern shores with the Amsterdam Forest. De Nieuwe Meer is located between Amsterdam and Schiphol and is connected to the canals and streams of Amsterdam via other lakes. When the weather's good it's also a great spot for a refreshing swim.

Moskee N-4, Ottho Heldringstraat / Henri Dunantstraat. If you haven't got the right address of this mosque, you might be walking around looking for it for quite some time. There are no minarets or other typical visuals characteristic of many Muslim places of worship. The mosque is a mix of traditional and modern architecture and consists of two storeys. The total surface area of this house of prayer, which is built of blue bricks, covers 790m². Another characteristic element of so many mosques abroad, a loudspeaker to call the faithful to prayer, is conspicuously missing. The creation of this mosque was the fervent wish of many of the Islamic inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Overloos Ferry (Veerpont Overloos) M-4, Anton Schleperspad 10, www.rederij-overloos.nl. If you can't swim 800 metres, or you don't want to, you can safely cross the Nieuwe Meer by boat between April and September. This seasonal ferry has been running since 1990 and thousands of people use it every year. The Amsterdam Forest, with all its bars and restaurants, tourist attractions and natural beauty, is now a lot more accessible for the residents of Nieuw-West due to this nostalgic ferry crossing. ▶ Open Sat 12:00 - 18:00, Sun 13:00 - 19:00 from April 15 - October 15. Admission: adults €1, children €0.50, bicycles €0.50. 

Sloter Park Swimming Pool (Sloterparkbad) M-2, President Allendelaan 3, tel. (+31) 205 06 35 06, www.sloterparkbad.nl. Since it opened in 2001, the Sloter Park Swimming Pool has been considered to be one of the best and biggest swimming centres in the Netherlands. It's located at the western edge of the Sloterpas and it also hosts two excellent festivals: Loveland in August and West Beach Film Festival in September. Take tram No.7 or 14 from the city centre to the pool. ▶ Admission: €4.40. Opening hours vary so check its website for exact schedules. 

The Freedom Carillon (Het Vrijheidscarillon) N-2, Plein '40-'45. Two dates in May are important dates in Dutch history. On May 10, 1940 the Nazis invaded Holland and on May 5, 1945, World War II ended for the Dutch people when Adolf Hitler's troops surrendered. The Freedom Carillon was designed to keep the memory of these significant pages of Dutch history alive in the memories of future generations. In 1952, a belfry consisting of four columns and 31 clocks was manufactured at the behest of the National Remembrance Committee. Nine small clocks bear the national motto *Je Maintiendrai*, which means 'I will endure'. The striking monument has been located in Nieuw West since 1960, after a short period of time on the Dam. Today, you can find it on Plein '40-'45 in Slotemeer. The square is surrounded by streets named after Dutch resistance fighters from World War II and every year on May 4 at exactly 20:00 a big ceremony is held here to remember Dutch casualties of war.

Westgaarde Cemetery (Uitvaartpark Westgaarde) L-3, Ookmeerweg 273 - 275, tel. (+31) 204 10 66 66, www.westgaarde.nl. This may sound rather morbid, but quite a few people who visit Westgaarde Cemetery do so to rest, but not in peace, so to speak. The spacious park is an ideal haven for people who enjoy plant and animal life as Westgaarde is an unspoiled slice of nature home to many different species of birds. There are also many attractive monuments at the cemetery including a powerful tribute to one of the biggest disasters in Dutch aviation history that occurred in 1977. The Tenerife Monument is itself reason enough to visit Westgaarde, although De Tulp (The Tulip), a collection of stained-glass name plates, is an impressive tribute to the deceased as well. Since 1996 it's also possible for Ajax supporters to show their eternal love for this legendary Dutch football team by having their ashes scattered on a patch of grass from Ajax's old stadium. Even the old Ajax players' bench has been moved here! ▶ Open 07:30 - 18:00. [P]

Statues & Monuments

The Staalman Bear (Beer de Staalman) N-4, Ottho Heldringstraat. 'Meet you at the bear' is a popular expression with kids in Nieuw-West. The biggest bear in Amsterdam was erected here in the Staalman Park, a central park south of the Sloterpas, in 2011. This gigantic animal was created after the artist spent several sessions consulting with local kids. The massive 10m-long, 26 tonne heavyweight bear is made of iron and concrete and has quickly become an icon in the neighbourhood. Much development has gone on here recently including new buildings and a large influx of people into the area. The pillow underneath his claws symbolises the vulnerable situation in which people place themselves when moving from place to place.



Is it art or is it a fountain? Or both?

Shopping

Although by no means a shopper's paradise, Nieuw-West does have some authentic stores worth visiting.

Delicatessens & Ethnic food

De Boterbloem L-3, Lutkemeerweg 262, tel. (+31) 206 10 08 21, www.debeterbloemamsterdam.nl. You can buy organic food just behind one of Amsterdam's most beautiful cemeteries at De Boterbloem. For how much longer, nobody knows, because the city council wants to build an industrial area here, so if you're into fresh, healthy food you better get here in a hurry. Organic bread, honey and other regional food are also served here. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sun 13:00 - 17:00. Closed Tue. [P] [W]

Keurslager Peter van Poorten N-2, Burg. de Vlughtlaan 162-164, tel. (+31) 206 13 15 75, vanpoorten.keurslager.nl. Ever since 1988 many a meat lover in Amsterdam has taken a detour to Burgemeester de Vlughtlaan. Butcher Peter van Poorten is an expert who spends six days a week passionately preparing top quality cuts of meat. Both his *rookworst* (smoked sausage) and roast beef have been awarded prizes several times by independent juries consisting of fellow butchers: the greatest compliment a professional can receive. ▶ Also at T-2, Van Limburg Strumstraat 113. [A] [W] [P] [W]

Gifts & Souvenirs

The Store! M-4, Langsom 20, tel. (+31) 204 08 35 00, www.tv-thestore.nl. Out in the far west of Sloten, this fancy and fashionable lifestyle store sells lots of unusual interior design and kitchen accessories as well as bags and jewellery. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue.

Jewellery & Watches

Juwelier Nusselein N-2, Burg. De Vlughtlaan 194 - 198, tel. (+31) 206 13 23 71, www.nusselein.nl. This has been one of the best places to go for personalised jewellery since 1966. You'll get excellent quality and great service and it also does repairs. ▶ Open 09:15 - 17:45, Thu 09:15 - 17:45, 19:00 - 20:45, Sat 09:15 - 16:45. Closed Sun, Mon. Also at Kinkerstraat 284-28. [W]

Secondhand shops

Kids & Queens Rietwijkerstraat 32. This secondhand shop has a large selection of fashionable clothes for women and children.

Speciality shops

Naaimachinehandel Wildschut N-2, Burgemeester de Vlughtlaan 25 - 27, tel. (+31) 206 14 91 78, www.naaimachines.nl. Whatever sewing machine you're looking for, if these guys don't have it, then it was never invented. Expect great service too. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:30, Thu 09:00 - 20:30, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Supermarkets

Albert Heijn M-3, Osdorpplein 469, tel. (+31) 206 19 39 44, www.ah.nl. The biggest and most prestigious Dutch supermarket brand in the Netherlands has outlets everywhere including this huge space in this shopping centre. ▶ Open 08:00 - 22:00, Sat 07:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 21:00. [W] [P] [W]



For centuries the north section of the city was an area that most Amsterdammers weren't too keen on. It seems that everything unwanted was 'dumped' here, from the gallows in medieval times to the polluting ship building industry much later. Extensive social housing projects attracted large numbers of financially challenged people exacerbating the stigma that was already attached to Amsterdam's largest administrative district. Today Noord, or simply North, is one of the most vibrant areas of the Dutch capital. More and more people have begun to appreciate the unique merits of this territory beyond the River IJ. With this in mind we've put together a small guide to this interesting urban and rural zone that's usually overlooked by most tourists. All you need to do is to take one of the free ferries behind the Central Station and 10 minutes later you'll be able to explore Noord and its surroundings. Take a small river cruise on a boat that offers an all-you-can-eat pancake buffet, do some cycling in the pristine countryside, bring a towel and swim trunks and take a dip at one of the area's swimming pools or visit a festival and see why Noord has become the sizzling new hub of Amsterdam's creative community. There are three different ferries that will take you over the River IJ in just a few minutes and bring you to Amsterdam-Noord completely free of charge. The departure landing is located just behind the Central Station.

Accommodation

From hotels and cosy B&Bs to camping and luxury hotels, the north side of the River IJ has plenty to offer.

Upmarket

NH Galaxy Amsterdam M-2, Distelkade 21, tel. (+31) 206 34 43 66, www.nh-hotels.com. The recently renovated NH Galaxy Hotel is true to its name, because the world's at your feet in this four-star hotel. The breakfast buffet is well stocked and the spacious rooms not only have cutting-edge interior design, but are also fitted with king-sized beds and luxurious bathrooms. The friendly staff and its private parking also add extra value to this design hotel and thanks to the shuttle bus, which is free of charge, the centre of Amsterdam is only a short ride away. If you don't like the idea of going too far from the hotel at night, there's actually plenty on offer in the way of recreation and restaurants in the direct vicinity of the hotel. ▶  ★★★

Mid-Range

Bastion Deluxe Hotel Amsterdam Centrum - Noord M-3, Rode Kruisstraat 28, tel. (+31) 206 32 31 31, www.bastionhotels.nl. Located next to the Volewijkspark and the Vliegenbos nature area of Amsterdam Noord, you're never far from flora and fauna when you stay at the Bastion Hotel. Standard rooms live up to their modest name and include TV, safe, private bathrooms and coffee/tea sets, while deluxe rooms offer a bit more space and have the added advantage of a mini-bar. Although wi-fi is available throughout the hotel for free, guests also have access to a computer in the lobby if they don't have their own laptops. A restaurant, bar and smoking lounge are at your disposal, not to mention free parking - a rarity in Amsterdam. ▶ 68 rooms.  ★★★

For a complete list of Amsterdam Noord reviews visit www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com

Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Child-friendly
 Conference facilities	 Credit cards
 Fitness centre	 Facilities for the disabled
 Free wireless internet	 Guarded parking
 Home delivery	 Live music
 Outside seating	 Pets allowed
 Sauna	 Smoking section
 Swimming pool	 Takeaway

Hotels

Amstel Hotel M-2, NDSM-Pier 3, tel. (+31) 206 26 42 47, www.amstelhotel.nl. This ship is safely moored at the NDSM pier. In the past this colossus was a riverboat and most guests spent their time on deck. If you simply need somewhere to crash after a night on the town and you're looking for free parking, this is the place. Small cabins with thin walls and claustrophobic bathrooms come standard at this hotel. The lack of luxury and privacy may not be to everyone's liking, but if you need relatively cheap accommodation and you don't mind living on the water, book a room at the back where you have a great view of the River IJ. Unfortunately most other rooms face a grey wall. ▶ 175 rooms (157 doubles €60 - 120, 18 triples €89 - 150). 

Chambre Boot N-4, Schellingwouderdijk 410, tel. (+31) 624 64 52 80, www.chambreboot.nl. For all the landlubbers who got seasick on the ferry to Amsterdam Noord, this place isn't for you. If, on the other hand, you don't mind waking up with a panoramic view of the River IJ, staying at Chambre Boot will be a unique experience. This boathouse is a former Jazz club turned into an attractive bed and breakfast. Although the owners live in the boat next door, you'll have the whole house to yourself. The vessel has a wonderfully bright living room with kitchen, a separate bedroom and a small terrace. On the downside, the location at the edge of town next to a noisy highway bridge is not the best. ▶ 1 boathouse (€75 - 90). 



The Overhoeks Tower beyond the Wilhelmina dock



Gemeente Amsterdam

Stadsdeel Noord

Amsterdam North

Amsterdam North is hot! Separated from the Amsterdam city centre by the River IJ, Amsterdam North is a mixture of historic and modern architecture, waterways, green spaces and tranquil nature reserves. Where ships were once built on the river bank, the NDSM terrain is now a breeding ground for hundreds of artists and creative businesses. Festivals and events are organized here throughout the year and creative projects like the Tolhuis Garden, the M-lab and the EYE film institute are also a hotbed of activity.



Rural North

Amsterdam North also has a rural side begging to be explored. The villages of Durgerdam and Schellingwoude are situated at the water's edge and Holysloot, Ransdorp and Zunderdorp rise from pastoral meadows. An ideal area for cycling, boating, inline skating and hiking, discover the truncated tower of Ransdorp, the whisper boats at Holysloot and the yacht marinas among the picturesque wooden houses of Schellingwoude and Durgerdam.

The Districts and Dikes

Between the northern bank of the IJ and rural North you'll find the villages of Nieuwendam and Buiksloot located on the ancient Waterland Sea dike. Each year these so-called dike villages are visited by thousands of foreign visitors. The Garden villages of Tuindorp Oostzaan and Tuindorp Nieuwendam are also architectural treasures not to be missed.



Accommodation & Dining

You'll also find 25 B&Bs, 4 hotels, 2 campgrounds and 7 yacht marinas in Amsterdam North, not to mention plenty of restaurants and pubs for all tastes and budgets.

Bed & Breakfast

Amsterdam Farmland M-5, Bloemendalergouw 18, tel. (+31) 621 28 68 77. Let's begin with two remarks about the name. First, this B&B is not located in Amsterdam, but in Ransdorp, a picturesque little village just outside the north of the city. Secondly, if lots of cows and meadows signify farmland to you, then they've hit the nail on the head. If rural solitude and the beauty of the local wetlands sounds enticing, than Amsterdam Farmland is a great place to stay. The friendly hosts offer a bright, spacious and well-designed studio that's attached to their house. A generous breakfast, bicycles and a panoramic view of grazing herbivores are all included in the price. ▶ 1 room (studio €120). 

B&B Durgerdam Countryside N-5, Durgerdamweg 35, tel. (+31) 204 28 66 15, www.bbdurgerdam.nl. Durgerdam is a picturesque village only a 30-minute bike ride from central Amsterdam and this friendly B&B is located at the edge of the village facing the natural beauty of the protected Wetlands. Lots of space and privacy will make you feel at home and you can either stay in the large studio at the back of the owner's house or in a separate holiday home in the garden. Both have a private garden next to a wide ditch, which is great if you're travelling with kids. Breakfast is served each morning but you can also cook your own meals in the kitchenette. ▶ 2 rooms (€80 - 100). 

B&B Het Zunderdorpshartier M-4, 't Nopeind 10b, tel. (+31) 623 74 05 60, www.zunderdorpshartier.nl. Het Zunderdorpshartier is a new addition to the expanding list of excellent B&Bs in rural Amsterdam. The hosts have transformed a shed in the garden of their farmhouse into an attractive guest room, which features a living room with a well equipped kitchen and a separate bedroom. Although a bit cramped, the house can be rented for up to four guests and the attached garden makes it a good option for families with children. If it's full you can try your luck with the neighbours at B&B Biest-Stro who offer very similar accommodation. ▶ 1 rooms (€70 - 75). 

De Blauwe Polder M-4, Termietergouw 7b, tel. (+31) 204 94 51 72, www.blauwepolder.nl. Instead of staying in Holland's largest city, you could reside in a tiny village that is home to more cows than people. The village of Zunderdorp is surrounded by a typically Dutch polder landscape, yet it's just a short bike ride away from Amsterdam's highlights. De Blauwe Polder offers four slightly different apartments, which all have well equipped kitchenettes, TVs and wireless internet access. Bicycles can be rented and golf clubs are also available in case you want to hit the links at the next door golf course. The small garden has fixed barbecues, so don't forget to buy steaks before cycling home! ▶ 4 apartments (€75 - 90). 

Camping

Camping Vlieggenbos N-3, Meeuwenlaan 138, tel. (+31) 206 36 88 55, www.vlieggenbos.com. If you're tired of steep prices for accommodation in the city centre, we suggest you take a 10-minute bus ride to Vlieggenbos, a 62-acre forest across the water from the Central Station. You can pitch a tent, park your camper or rent one of its cabins for a reasonable price during the spring and summer months. A gift shop, restaurant, laundry and other services are also available. During the day take bus No.32 or 33 (06:00 - 24:00) or bus No.361 at night (24:00 - 06:00) from the Central Station to Vlieggenbos. The campsite is only 200m from the bus stop. ▶ 30 cabins (4-person cabin €71 - 74; tents €2 - 5; camper sites €23 - 25). Open April - September. 

Cafés

If you're looking for a delicious espresso with a view of central Amsterdam across the river or an historic café that's been in operation for generations, Amsterdam Noord has it covered.

Cafe 't Sluisje N-3, Nieuwendammerdijk 297, tel. (+31) 206 36 17 12, www.hetsluisje.nl. This remarkable building is located in one of the most scenic areas of Amsterdam-Noord. At an intersection of age-old water routes that farmers once used to bring their milk to the centre of town by boat, passers-by can now enjoy a cup of coffee or a glass of Nobeltje, a liqueur from the island of Ameland. Unfortunately, there aren't many sailors left in this historical part of Amsterdam, but apart from that this family-run business is authentic and nostalgic. The menu on the other hand is completely contemporary with chic dishes like warm goat's cheese salad and smoked salmon with capers. Make sure you get here early, as the large garden and terrace on the dike fill up quickly. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 02:00, Sun 12:00 - 23:00. Closed Mon. (€5 - 8). 

Koffiehuis De Klaproos (The Poppy) M-2, Klaprozenweg 60, tel. (+31) 206 37 65 12. For over 50 years the De Klaproos coffee house has been serving food and drinks on the Klaprozenweg, one of the busiest roads in Amsterdam-Noord. But for the past few years this nostalgic living room-like pub, which you might expect to find in the middle of the Jordaan instead of next to a public racetrack, has been run by Anita and Nancy. The kitschy lights, bottles of Heineken and particularly the loudspeakers that blast out the latest Dutch hits, create a fun local atmosphere typical of Amsterdam. Hungry guests can try the homemade meatball sandwich or the steak Stroganoff served with bread. ▶ Open 07:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun. 

Plek M-2, Tt. Neveritaweg 59, tel. (+31) 202 90 00 20, plek.nl. Only a stone's throw from Plek, which is housed in former shipping containers, are the headquarters of HEMA, a big Dutch retail chain which has built an empire on its sale of *rookworst* (smoked sausage). However, forget these mass-produced specimens, because this is the hottest spot in Noord for an authentic thick slice of bread with a homemade sausage and sauerkraut. Humus on sourdough bread is a popular alternative for non-carnivores and the romantic view of River IJ is the prefect excuse to come here just before sunset. ▶ Open 10:30 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:30 - 03:00. (€5 - 8). 



Noord has lots of cafés on the water

Restaurants

Noord has a little something for everyone from ultra hip fine dining to a boat that serves pancakes.

Asian

Mei Wah M-3, Bulkslotermeerplein 102, tel. (+31) 206 37 07 85, www.meiwah.nl. Like many Asian restaurants in the Netherlands, Mei Wah offers a mixture of Chinese and Indonesian cuisine. Most customers order takeaway, but the restaurant is also a good place to enjoy a plate of *nasi* or a Cantonese *egg foo young*. In fact, the elegantly decorated restaurant is pretty much the exact opposite of the shopping centre in which it's housed. On the bright side, there are a lot of dishes to choose from, but then again this sometimes causes confusion with the cook, who managed to mix up our order. Vegetarians should also be vigilant as we've heard some rumours that small pieces of pork or chicken have been found in some of the supposedly meatless dishes. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 22:30. (€15 - 20).

Fast food

Haring Naatje N-3, Purmerplein. If you're brave enough to try Dutch raw herring for the first time, there's no better place lose your virginity than at this authentic local fish stall. It's traditional, not only due to its Dutch flag decorations, but also because all of the seafood sold here is fresh and caught in the North Sea. Authentic in this case also means that you shouldn't expect anything more than tasty takeaway snacks. If the thought of raw herring seems to stimulate your gag reflex, but you'd still like to try some typically Dutch seafood, you could order the *kibbeling* (deep fried cod) or smoked mackerel. ▶ Open , Wed, Thu, Fri 10:00 - 17:30, Sat 10:00 - 16:30. Closed Mon, Tue, Sun. (€2 - 3).

French

Chef's Table N-2, Asterweg 14, tel. (+31) 203 34 06 72, www.chefs-table.nl. Although not the cheapest place to have a meal in Amsterdam-Noord, in our humble opinion this restaurant is definitely a contender for a Michelin star. In this trendy, yet warm environment you'll be spoiled by culinary masterpieces with a refined French twist, ranging from the cold lobster soup to fried scallops. Don't be deterred, or put off, by the rather chilly industrial surroundings. Chef's Table is an absolute hit within the Amsterdam restaurant scene. And although you'll probably leave a tidy sum of money here, at least the parking is free, a pleasant break from the astronomical prices you're forced to pay in the city centre. ▶ (1 course €25, 3 courses €40).

Indonesian

Puspita N-3, Purmerplein 5, tel. (+31) 206 36 82 15. Virtually every Indonesian restaurant in Holland is stuffed full of wooden carvings, 'authentic' wajang dolls and pictures of rice fields. Fortunately Puspita is one of the rare exceptions. On the other hand, the interior puts one in mind of a bourgeois Dutch pub with old fashioned chairs and horrible lace curtains. As far as food goes, however, this small restaurant gets top marks and the rice table is brilliant and better than what passes for traditional Indonesian cuisine in the centre of town. You do need to go through a bit more effort to walk across the red carpet, but the ever enthusiastic staff will see you off when you leave. We recommend the *bakso ikan* fish soup. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:00. (€8 - 15).



Etcafé Het Dijkhuis occupies prime real estate in Noord

International

Café Modern N-2, Meldoorweg 2, tel. (+31) 204 94 06 84, www.modernamsterdam.nl. To begin with, Café Modern is not a café, but a restaurant where you can enjoy a fantastic five-course set dinner. Its bright interior is decorated in a modern style, yet we were somehow overwhelmed with a feeling of nostalgia. The decor reminded us of our primary school canteen, but the tablecloths and the absence of screaming children brought us back to reality. The table d'hôte menu changes every week, so once you've spoiled your taste buds, you can treat them to something totally different just days later. At first we were astonished to see an enormous vault near the toilets downstairs, but the staff later informed us that the building used to be a bank. ▶ Open 19:00 - 24:00. Closed Sun. (€40).

De Proeverij N-4, Schellingwouderdijk 339. You can buy fresh organic bread, creamy cheese, tender meat, fresh fish and seasonal vegetables at the market or, if these ingredients make your mouth water but you don't feel like cooking, you could have a meal at De Proeverij that's located in the same building. There are four daily specials that change depending on what's fresh and in stock, but the set menu also offers plenty of tasty choices. The chef, however, could use some more spices and the staff are so friendly it's almost annoying. That said, the servings are quite large and a BBQ is available on Sundays. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. (€5 - 12).

Etcafé Het Dijkhuis L-3, Kanaaldijk 119, Watergang, tel. (+31) 204 03 13 86, www.eetcafedijkhuis.nl. Just a few kilometres from the busy A10 motorway, you'll find a completely different world. More than a century ago the horses used by stage coaches received a well-deserved rest here. As their owners also fancied some food and a drink, the Dijkhuis was set up as a tavern. The view of the canal and the fields from the enormous terrace or the spacious conservatory is simply fabulous and the disinterested staff serve an assortment of international dishes. ▶ Open 17:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 14:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. (€18 - 22).

EYE Bar-Restaurant N-2, IJpromenade 1, tel. (+31) 205 89 14 02, www.eyebarestaurant.nl. This restaurant is located inside the impressive EYEFilm institute. The terrace provides incredible views of the River IJ and the wait staff are friendly and attentive, but the food isn't as impressive as the building in which this establishment is housed. Although the homemade croquettes are really delicious. The EYE Bar-Restaurant is in fact more of a restaurant than a bar, although we'd feel more comfortable recommending it as a good place to have a beer or a cocktail. In any case, even if you're not planning to eat or drink here, the modern building in the shape of an eye is worth a visit. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:30 - 23:30. (€10 - 15).

Het Schoolhuis M-5, Dorpsstraat 38, Holysloot, tel. (+31) 204 90 44 14, www.schoolhuisholysloot.nl. Yes, places that immediately make you feel at home and which are as comfortable as a hot bath still do exist. For the past few years this historic school building from 1875 has housed a hidden gem. While many Amsterdam restaurants resemble an assembly line, the Schoolhouse exercises old-fashioned values like a love of cooking and a mandatory pampering of its customers. Consumers who prefer trends over quality, might want to give this excellent establishment a pass, but if you enjoy really good food then by all means give it a shot.

► Open 11:00 - 22:00, Wed 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Tue. (€20).

Hotel de Goudfazant N-3, Aambeelstraat 10 H, tel. (+31) 206 36 51 70, www.hoteldegoudfazant.nl. First of all, the Golden Pheasant Hotel isn't actually a hotel, but rather a restaurant named after a line of Jacques Brel's chanson *Les Bourgeois*. Secondly, it's not an ordinary eatery, but an enormous top-quality restaurant located in a former garage. The interior hasn't changed much since those days, so you should prepare yourself for the peculiar experience of eating in an industrial setting. Although the menu can be a bit hard to decipher and it usually takes a while before the friendly staff serves your meal, the food is simply superb. The *hemelse modder* (heavenly mud) dessert in particular is worth the extra half hour you'll need to spend on the treadmill. Finding the restaurant isn't easy but just ignore the parking barrier and keep walking until you get there. ► Open 18:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. (€18).

IJ Kantine M-2, Mt. Ondinaweg 15 - 17, tel. (+31) 206 33 71 62, www.ijkantine.nl. You can enjoy the overwhelming view of the boats on the ever-busy River IJ through the immense windows of this industrial building, which has an excellent location, especially in summer. Inside you're plunged into a warm mix of nostalgic industrial elements, poetic announcements on the wall, one of the best stocked bars in Amsterdam and the latest design architecture which is so colourful it almost hurts the eyes. As far as food is concerned, there are better restaurants around, but this trendy and sophisticated location shouldn't be overlooked for a romantic night out or an evening cocktail. ► Open 09:00 - 22:00. (€15 - 20).

Place du Nord N-3, Pummerplein 8, tel. (+31) 206 36 01 54, www.placedunord.nl. Since 1928 Place du Nord has been a renowned, family managed restaurant that serves unpretentious traditional fish and meat dishes and even vegetarians will feel at home here with the good selection of soups and salads on offer. The staff manages to create a homey and informal atmosphere in a bizarre space furnished with witches on broomsticks, extinct dodos, love-sick chickens and copper pans. Despite the odd surroundings, you'll no doubt enjoy a good meal at this cosy restaurant. ► Open 17:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat, Sun 17:00 - 22:30. Closed Mon. (€19 - 25).

Wilhelmina-Dok N-2, Noordwal 1, tel. (+31) 206 32 37 01, www.wilhelmina-dok.nl. If you'd like to admire one of the most beautiful views of Amsterdam by night, you should reserve a table next to the large windows of this restaurant that looks like someone's living room. That said, the wide terrace is also an ideal spot to have a cocktail or a cool white beer (the Secret of the Smit) with some snacks or small dishes like roasted pumpkin and outstanding goat's cheese. Sadly, the main courses aren't as good as the appetisers, but did we mention that Wilhelmina-Dok has incredible views? ► Open 11:00 - 24:00. (€16 - 18).



Noord goes orange on national holidays

Pancakes

De Pannekoekenboot M-2, Ms. van Riemsdijkweg, tel. (+31) 206 36 88 17, www.pannekoekenboot.nl. The Pancake Boat can't be compared in any way to the traditional tour boats that roam the busy Amsterdam canals. Even its route is completely different from those of its competitors. This floating double-decker doesn't follow the usual ring of canals, but takes you past all of the architectural masterpieces of Amsterdam North instead. But most of the people on board probably couldn't care less where the boat's headed as their focus is on the enormous servings of pancakes on offer. The main draw of this floating food factory is the all-you-can-eat pancake meal. Bon voyage and bon appetit! ► Tours begin at 13:30, 16:30 and 18:00 and cost as low as €10 depending on the tour. Closed Mon, Tue.

Seafood

Stork N-3, Gedempt Hamerkanaal t/o 96, tel. (+31) 206 34 40 00, www.restaurantstork.nl. Even though Amsterdam's largest seafood restaurant opened as recently as 2011, Stork already enjoys quite a large and loyal following. Classic dishes like oysters, swordfish, sea bass, lobster and all kinds of other delicacies from the aquatic world are given a new dimension here and the industrial furnishings add to its potential. The lighting from the large windows is beautiful and almost artistic and the massive outdoor terrace is super trendy. Unfortunately, at times the waiters seem to get lost in this enormous space, which may mean that your delicious oven-baked dish might have to be sent back to the open-plan kitchen for a re-heat. ► Open 11:00 - 22:30. Closed Mon. (€19 - 23).

Turkish

Elmas N-2, Spreeuwenpark 1, tel. (+31) 206 36 33 29, www.restaurantelmas.nl. There are exactly 110 dishes listed on the menu at Elmas, a modern Turkish restaurant in a multicultural neighbourhood that offers the best cuisine the Anatolian peninsula has to offer. Luckily the menu's neatly ordered, so it's easy to find your favourites among the many options. The only typically Turkish elements found here are the large number of plates depicting well-known towns east of the Bosphorus, which adorn the walls. Elmas is also a good option for a big breakfast before a day of sightseeing in Noord and a daily all-you-can-eat buffet for €6.50 is always available. ► Open 09:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 03:00. (€9 - 15).

Nightlife

Nothing can beat central Amsterdam for nightlife, but if you're looking for a laid back local pub devoid of tourists, Noord might be the place for you.

Pubs

Cafe Bascule M-3, Buikslotermeerplein 10, tel. (+31) 206 34 04 47. Dutch insiders will notice the typical Amsterdam accent spoken here, the unmistakable songs of folk singer André Hazes played here and the slight dislike for everyone who isn't born in Amsterdam oozing from the staff and patrons at Cafe Bascule. It's an old-fashioned and cosy local pub, with an emphasis on the word local. It's a good place to see what authentic Dutch pubs are like and the drinks and snacks are reasonably priced. However, given the overly orange decoration we'd err on the side of caution and not wear a German football jersey here. ▶ Open 08:30 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 08:30 - 02:00, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. [📍] [📞]

Cafe De Mazzel L-2, Stentorstraat 5, tel. (+31) 206 33 70 51. Situated in the heart of a blue collar district, this bar offers nothing exciting in terms of design. It's just a good place for a cold beer and the most delicious bitterballs in Amsterdam-Noord. In our opinion, that's already enough reason to visit this simple bar. The pool table and the dartboard also seem to keep the regulars happy. ▶ Open 13:00 - 19:00, Sat 13:00 - 03:00, Sun 13:00 - 24:00. [📍]

Cafe Koffiehuis Blokker N-2, Mosveld 49, tel. (+31) 206 36 97 39. Despite the fact that its name means 'coffee house', its popularity has nothing to do with a good cup of Joe. This pub is a meeting place for guys from the neighbourhood who enjoy a game of cards, a spin at the slot machine and a chat about the latest news from the area over a few pints. Friendly folks and a pleasant atmosphere are the hallmarks of this place, but you probably shouldn't disturb the card players in the heat of a game. The terrace provides a view of the Mosveld Square outside, which sounds more picturesque than it actually is. ▶ [📍] [📞]

Cafe 't Eitje N-3, Motorwal 280, tel. (+31) 206 34 17 38, www.cafeteitje.nl. If there were prize for the ugliest bar exterior, Cafe 't Eitje would be a strong contender. That's also the reason why you'll be so astonished by the classic interior, which features three dart boards and a pool table. In fact, a local dart club plays its matches at this friendly establishment and despite the unattractive location it can get quite busy here. Cafe 't Eitje literally translates as 'Cafe the Egg' and it's located right next to Cafeteria de Kip, which means 'Cafeteria the Chicken'. For a moment we wondered which of the two came first, but we decided to leave this age-old question alone. ▶ [📍]



Traditional house in Schellingwoude

Ajax & Amsterdam Noord

Over the years many districts in Amsterdam have been home to Ajax, the Dutch capital's football giant. Most diehard fans believe that De Meer, which has now been demolished, was the best location. On the other hand, the current stadium - the Amsterdam Arena - has become a virtual Mecca for football enthusiasts. That said, few people realise that Amsterdam-North is the true cradle of this world famous club.

'Footh-Ball Club Ajax' - with its original spelling mistake - was forced to leave its playing field at the end of the Overtoom Road in 1900, because the pitch was to become a new neighbourhood of residential homes. The club decided to change its name (dropping the spelling mistake) into Football Club Ajax and rented a pitch on the Middenweg - now called the Hagedoornweg - on an empty polder in Buiksloterham in Amsterdam-North.

Amsterdam North became the home turf of Ajax, which was still relatively unknown in the early 20th century. Many supporters still regard the first pitch in North, located at what is currently called the Hagedoornweg, 'the place where it all started'. All home games were played on this simple field. Later Ajax moved to another pitch in North. With this location came creature comforts like changing rooms for the players in what could best be described as a vacant shed. Unfortunately, the location wasn't the best as the players had to walk at least 15 minutes from the ferry landing to the ground. (Photo: Ajax archives)



In 1901 Ajax moved again, but this time to the Laanweg, which was much closer to the ferry. Unfortunately it had no changing shed, so the boys had to rough it again. Many supporters loved the adventure of taking the ferry to the home games, as 'North' was considered to be out in the sticks. But once again Ajax left for greener pitches in 1907, due to the building of a new housing estate, which marked the end of Ajax's adolescence in North. AFC Ajax later reached their full potential at De Meer and the Amsterdam Arena.

Fancy a day spent picnicking in a park or wandering around a sculpture garden? Curious why Amsterdam Noord has a monument to Atatürk and only one official museum? Read on.

Buildings & Architecture

Het Kraanspoor M-2, Kraanspoor. It's usually standard practice to construct buildings vertically, but in Amsterdam-Noord the world of architecture has been turned upside down. With Het Kraanspoor architect Trude Hooijkaas designed the largest, and possibly the most beautiful block of flats in the Netherlands. The narrow track of land where shipbuilding cranes once swayed back and forth has been transformed into a giant transparent building. The 270m-long horizontal structure is an impressive mixture of the old NDSM shipyard and a modern glass structure suspended above concrete pillars forgotten by time.

Tuindorp Nieuwendam M/N-3, Purmerplein. The city began building extensive housing projects during a period of booming economic growth and prosperity around the year 1900 to cope with a skyrocketing population. English style garden villages were built and Nieuwendam is the most beautiful of the lot. Prior to World War II, Tuindorp Nieuwendam was even considered to be the prettiest garden village in Europe specially built for workers. The lively central square is called Purmerplein and it's surrounded by characteristic low level houses and plenty of green areas. The raised gatehouses at the Purmerweg shield the streets behind them from passers-by and traffic creating an intimate atmosphere. Nearby Tuindorp Oostzaan is also picturesque and not without its charms.

Van der Pekbuurt N-2, Van der Pekstraat. The Van der Pek neighbourhood is probably the best example of the genuine old Amsterdam-Noord, which is now emerging as a popular place to live due to recent renovations. Although a stone house with a garden in the middle of a city seems like a rather standard situation today, a 100 years ago this definitely wasn't the case. On the pretext of creating a green environment for every worker in the rapidly expanding shipbuilding industry, small garden villages were built by the city. The tiny one-storey homes with private gardens are now once again in demand and the neighbourhood is a perfect place for cyclists.

Wooden Houses M-3, Nieuwendammerdijk. Although most of the standard guidebooks are quick to point out that Amsterdam has only two wooden houses left, that's definitely not the case. Unfortunately, these so-called travel writers never made it to the other side of the River IJ, an indivisible part of the Dutch capital where more than 160 classic wooden homes still remain. Bundled together in little photogenic streets alongside picturesque dikes like the Buiksloterdijk, Schellingwouderdijk and the beautiful Nieuwendammerdijk, all are easily accessible by bike. Most of these forgotten testaments to an Amsterdam nearly lost were built in the 17th and 19th centuries, the two eras in which the dikes flourished.



Idyllic landscape in Ransdorp

Churches

Buiksloterkerk M-2, Buiksloterkerkpad 10, www.buiksloterkerk.nl. The Buiksloterkerk was built at a time when religion was still part of nearly everyone's daily life. Since 1710 this huge building has been located in this pastoral setting, which is a testament to the area's rural past. Another church existed on the same spot prior to the construction of this house of worship, but today the church functions as a venue for various cultural events.

De Vermaning M-3, Meerpad 9, www.vdga.nl. The smallest church in Amsterdam is located in Noord and was built for a small community of Mennonites who were unable to attend Sunday services on the other side of the IJ. The wooden hall is an exact replica of the original church that was unveiled here in 1843. The tiny house of worship also made headlines in 2001 when it became the first congregation to allow gay people to marry.

Kerk Zunderdorp M-4, Achterlaan 20, Zunderdorp, www.kerkzunderdorp.nl/. If someone ever organises a competition for the Most Beautiful Church in the Netherlands, this white-brown building will be a strong contender if not for its architectural splendour, then at least for its idyllic location. This place is remarkably quiet, although the bleating sheep and clucking chickens nearby create a very Dutch atmosphere. But a plaque commemorating World War II victims and the bricked up windows hint that this place hasn't always been so peaceful. If you'd like to enjoy this beautiful spot permanently, it's possible to reserve a space under the poplars and chestnut trees in the cemetery. Services are held every Sunday morning at 10:00.

Museums

Amsterdam North Museum (Museum De Noord) N-3, Zamenhofstraat 28a, tel. (+31) 630 97 56 02, www.museumamsterdamnoord.nl. There are over 40 museums in Amsterdam, yet there's only one in Noord. Even though the history of Amsterdam North stretches back much further than that of the settlement on the other side of the River IJ, Amsterdam's largest district didn't get its own museum until 2009. Located in the former public baths of the Vogelenuit, one of the characteristic garden cities of Noord, the museum tells the interesting story of this part of the capital. The museum also offers plenty of maps for guided or independent walking and cycling tours that will help you explore the attractions of Noord and its surrounding wetlands. From July 7th until late September the museum will host an exhibition dedicated to 100 years of marriages in Noord. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00, Fri 14:00 - 17:00. Admission: €4.

Parks & Gardens

Noorderpark M-2/3, Wingerdweg, www.noorderpark.amsterdam.nl. For decades the heart of Amsterdam North was a messy combination of two parks (the Florapark and Volewijkspark), a canal and a busy through road. A few years ago the administration decided to drastically change the area to give Amsterdam's northernmost region a fresh, modern look. The two parks were harmoniously merged to create a green oasis nearly the size of the Vondelpark in the Museum district (45 hectares). A large stage for events, concerts and festivals is also scheduled to open in the middle of the park in the near future, but right now it's already an excellent place to kick back and relax. The landscape of trees and fields is perfect for picnics and plans for walking and biking routes are also in the works.



The quaint village of Durgerdam

Vliegenbos N-3, Meeuwenlaan, tel. (+31) 204 94 13 42, www.vliegenbos.info. Amsterdam's oldest forest just celebrated its 100-year anniversary. This large nature area in the middle of Amsterdam Noord was created in 1912 by socialist politician W.H. Vliegen, who strongly lobbied for the creation of a recreation park for the working class. Ever since the first trees were planted, the deciduous forest has largely been left to its own devices and today it's home to frogs, salamanders, bats and several bird species. You can also spot wild mushrooms or just enjoy a quiet stroll in Amsterdam's own nature park. You can visit Vliegenbos from all directions but the main entrance is from Meeuwenlaan. ▶

Places of interest

Durgerdam N-5, Durgerdam. After about half an hour of cycling through Noord, your pedalling will be rewarded by the sight of one of the most beautiful villages in the region. Durgerdam is a tiny hamlet on the shores of the IJsselmeer, where you can view some traditional wooden houses, a Protestant church dating from 1687 and a landscape of wetlands and polders. Another attraction is Durgerdam's marina, where you can gaze at luxurious yachts and envy the people entering the private sailing club. Historically, the village was closely linked with the former Zuiderzee (now IJsselmeer) and for centuries the Durgerdamers worked in shipping, fishing and trade in general. Today, it's the quiet and the beauty of the water that attracts visitors to this lovely little settlement.

EYE Film Institute N-2, IJpromenade 1, tel. (+31) 205 89 14 00, www.eyefilm.nl. EYE is the only institute in the Netherlands that collects and displays film-related ephemera like photographs, posters, soundtracks, equipment and directors' archives. It's collection spans the entire length of film history from silent films to the newest digital productions. Every year the collection expands as more films, Dutch and foreign, new and old, are added. Although it was once housed in the Vondel Park, it has moved to its new ultra-modern building in Amsterdam North and has quickly become the star of the docks. Called the 'heart of film', the huge white spaces covering over 1200m² provide numerous interactive and educational film projects, while four theatres - each different in size and theme - bring you the latest art-house films and old classics. This summer, a Stanley Kubrick exhibition will grace a floor of the EYE, but many people take the free ferry here for the gorgeous view from its café and outdoor terraces. Who knew that the Central Station could look that pretty from afar? Especially at night. ▶ Open 09:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 22:15.

Maritime Quarter N-4, NDSM-Pier. What do boats like the Pollux, a magnificent steel three-masted schooner, the Amstel Botel, a former riverboat cruise ship that was transformed into a 3-star hotel, and the Sirius, a famous Greenpeace ship, have in common? Nothing, despite the fact that they're all moored adjacent to the NDSM shipyard in the Maritime Quarter, a striking collection of ships and buildings situated around a long jetty. Other impressive vessels include the red Irish lightship Finley that attracts cultural party-goers from around the city, the old Russian submarine and the wooden Mahu M880 minesweeper. Right next to the ferry is the platform for De Pannenkoekenboot (Pancake Boat) where hungry diners can enjoy a cruise and an all-you-can-eat pancake experience.

NDSM-werf (NDSM shipyard) M-2, NDSM-werf. An excursion just west of the NDSM shipyard is a must for anyone with a taste for modern architecture. For 60 years a massive shipping industry called the NDSM-shipyard wharf home. Countless vessels left these legendary wharves, a part of the Dutch seafaring tradition that had lasted for centuries and made Amsterdam one of the planet's economic powerhouses. But nothing lasts forever and the shipping industry suffered greatly during the economic recession of the 1970s, which had a profound effect on Amsterdam-Noord and its residents. In 1984, the shipyard finally closed its doors, but the misery caused by unemployment and the loss of a proud livelihood sowed the seeds of today's rebirth. The shipyard has been converted into a cultural venue that has become one of Amsterdam's hottest entertainment centres. Concerts, festivals and theatre are held amid a landscape of monumental industrial buildings.

Waterland Recreation (Waterland recreatie) Drs. J. v. Disweg 4, Broek in Waterland, tel. (+31) 204 03 32 09, www.fluisterbootvaren.nl. Broek in Waterland is one of the most beautiful and well-kept secrets in Holland lined with colourful waterways and wooden houses from the 17th century. Silent electric boats are an excellent way to travel through this protected area, but a kayak or canoe is might be more suitable to the adventurous traveller. ▶ Boat rental from €10. Open April - September Tue - Sun 10:00 - 18:00. Take the Amsterdam C5 free ferry to Amsterdam Noord, exit the ferry and follow signs for Broek in Waterland.

Sightseeing tours

IJ-Buurtveer F-4, De Ruyterkade Steigers 14, tel. (+31) 203 20 58 42, www.move-amsterdam.nl. Take a ferry tour on the River IJ through Amsterdam Noord that begins at the ferry terminal at the Central Station. The boat tour takes about 1.5 hours and is available every Sunday during the summer months. On deck you can enjoy a cup of coffee while viewing the northern part of the Dutch capital. A few Sundays a year, you can also sail to Pampus Island in the IJsselmeer. ▶ Tickets: adults €7.50, children €5, bicycles and dogs €2.50.

Wetlands Safari Tel. (+31) 653 55 26 69, info@wetlandssafari.nl, www.wetlandssafari.nl. Although many people visit Amsterdam for the city centre's canals and architecture, an entirely different world awaits you just on the other side of the River IJ behind the Central Station. Wetlands Safari offers five-hour canoe or electric motorboat tours of Amsterdam Noord's precious wetlands, which includes occasional stops to learn about unique flora and fauna found in the area from a professional English-speaking guide. Along the way you'll also pass quaint former fishing villages full of beautiful 17th-century architecture. Your guide will meet you behind the Central Station. ▶ Five-hour tours: adults €43, children (7 - 16) €27. No tours on Saturdays.



Butcher Henk en Lily Oostwaal N-3, Purmerplein 26. Dogs aren't welcome here, which probably comes as no surprise considering that it's a butcher shop. The whole selection of meat is on display in more than 100 different containers. A paradise for carnivores! ▶

Keramiek Atelier Marjoke de Heer N-4, Schellingwouderdijk 243, tel. (+31) 204 90 49 39, www.marjoke-deheer.com. If you're interested in ceramics you can watch the artist at work here or have a look at the gallery of finished products. The gallery is open on weekends or by appointment. ▶ Open Fri 13:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu.

Landmarkt Amsterdam N-4, Schellingwouderdijk 339, www.landmarkt.nl. Quite a few farmers grow organic produce in the immediate suburbs of Amsterdam and many of these small farms prefer to sell their produce to Landmarkt instead of the faceless corporations that supply supermarket chains. This spacious indoor hall is heaven on earth for foodies and anyone who appreciates fresh food, but unlike similar organic markets the bread, meat, fish, vegetables and other daily necessities are hardly more expensive than the stuff you'll get at a regular shop. If you're hungry you can try some of the free samples on display. The photos in the *Hall of Fame* at the entrance display images of the people serving you inside. ▶ Open 08:00 - 20:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00.

Noord for kids

Noord isn't just for cyclists, architecture aficionados and festival-goers. Children and teenagers can learn how to grind and ollie at a skatepark or search for hidden treasure in the nearby wetlands.

Pirates Tour Kanaaldijk 32a, Landsmeer, tel. (+31) 880 06 44 55, www.landschapnoordholland.nl/Pirantocht.

Just like true pirates, children can also be adventurous and search this wetlands area for real treasure. Up to five children and one adult can take a rowboat and look for clues until they find the pot of gold. Perfect for a slightly different children's birthday party. ▶ Open 10.00 - 17.00. Closed Mon. (€20/boat for 2 hours).

Skatepark Amsterdam M-2, T.T. Neveritaweg 15a, tel. (+31) 641 70 07 67, info@skateparkamsterdam.com, www.skateparkamsterdam.nl. On the second floor of this historic shipbuilding hangar, you'll find a 2,000m2 floating skate park. At a height of over 7m, this is a paradise for skating and rollerblading enthusiasts. There's a separate stand where spectators can watch their offspring or other young speed fanatics and it's also possible to take lessons.

▶ Open 15:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 20:00. Closed Mon. Admission: €5.50.

Amsterdam East, or simply Oost (pronounced 'oast'), is an incredibly diverse district of the Dutch capital that encompasses neighbourhoods that couldn't be more different from one another. The recently built IJburg island, which is still under construction, is a largely residential area that is home to modern architecture, a main street called IJburg-Iaan filled with cafés and shops and a public beach only minutes from the city centre, while the areas known as Indische Buurt and Dapperbuurt in the Zeeburg district are populated by immigrants from all over the world and their children. Dapperbuurt hosts a huge market on one of the few streets in the region not named after an Indonesian island and is the ideal locale to try a Moroccan cookie or a real Turkish kebab. The KNSM and Java islands in the Eastern Docklands of the city once supported a huge working harbour, but are now mostly home to affluent Amsterdammers. Finally, a trip to Oost wouldn't be complete without a visit to one of the trendy cafés on Linnaeusstraat by the Oosterpark or the authentic pubs of the Watergraafsmeer around Middenweg.

Getting there

Most of Amsterdam East can be easily reached by public transport. To visit IJburg simply take tram No.26 from the Central Station. For Indische Buurt, Dapperbuurt, Flevopark and Watergraafsmeer you can take trams No.7 or 14 from Leidseplein. For KNSM and Java islands take tram No.10 to the last stop.

Accommodation

Amsterdam East has a bit of everything in terms of accommodation from recently opened design hotels to modern hostels with 500 beds.

Upmarket

Eden Amsterdam Manor Hotel P-2, Linnaeusstraat 89, tel. (+31) 207 00 84 00, www.edenamsterdammanorhotel.com. This massive brick building that was once a hospital where legendary footballer Johan Cruyff was born, was completely renovated and opened as a luxury hotel by the Eden Group in the summer of 2010. Given its historical significance to Amsterdam, much of the hotel has been decorated with the city's iconic triple X symbol, including the carpets, the walls and even the duvets on the beds. Although the façade is a stark reminder of the building's past, the interior and the 125 rooms within are completely modern and conform to the latest 21st-century design trends. Accommodation includes all of the luxurious amenities you would expect and the layout of the junior suites is often unique as most hotel rooms don't place large, rotating flat screen TVs at the foot of their beds. An Italian restaurant, a bar and conference facilities are also available. ▶ 125 rooms (superior rooms from €80, deluxe rooms from €100, junior suites from €140).  ★★ ★

Hotel Arena O-2, 's-Gravesandestraat 51, tel. (+31) 208 50 24 20, www.hotelarena.nl. This historic former orphanage built in 1890 is not only a good place for sleeping but also for meals, meetings, drinks and a good night out. The Arena Hotel offers 116 spacious and comfortable rooms that are similar in style and seem to differ from one another only in size. They are a successful mix of nostalgic, yet stylish elements and modern, trendy furnishings. Unfortunately, the rooms that face the street can be rather noisy at times.

▶ 116 rooms (deluxe, studio and suites €159 - 259). 

Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Child-friendly
 Conference facilities	 Credit cards
 Fitness centre	 Facilities for the disabled
 Free wireless internet	 Guarded parking
 Home delivery	 Live music
 Outside seating	 Pets allowed
 Sauna	 Smoking section
 Swimming pool	 Takeaway

Mid-range

Hotel Casa 400 Amsterdam O-2 & O-3, Eerste Ringdijkstraat 4, tel. (+31) 206 65 11 71, www.hotelcasa400.nl. Sandwiched between the picturesque Frankendael Park and the Ringdijk in Amsterdam East, this trendy design hotel has everything the style-conscious traveller might need from its minimalist-inspired accommodation with extra-long beds to its popular restaurant and cocktail bar. The Amstel train and metro station is only a short walk away, so all of Amsterdam is within easy reach, but free wi-fi ensures that you can interact with the world without leaving your room. A room for the physically challenged is also available and the entire hotel is wheelchair accessible. ▶ 520 rooms (.  ★★ ★

Lloyd Hotel P-1, Oostelijke Handelskade 34, tel. (+31) 205 61 36 36, www.lloydhotel.com. Once used as accommodation for emigrants waiting for their ship to depart, this monumental building overlooking the water dates back to the 1920s, but it was given a complete overhaul by a number of popular Dutch designers before it was re-opened as a hotel in 2004. The hotel has a unique concept as it offers rooms of varying styles and levels of comfort for guests of all tax brackets. Stay in a five-star suite with loads of space, a huge bathtub and a grand piano or choose a Spartan, yet chic room with a bed, table, water view and shared bathrooms and toilets in the corridor. A restaurant, bar, conference rooms, a library and free wireless internet access are also at your disposal in the Eastern Docklands of Amsterdam. ▶ 117 rooms (117 doubles €80 - 300).  ★★ ★

Hostels

Stayokay Amsterdam Zeeburg P-2, Timorplein 21, tel. (+31) 205 51 31 90, www.stayokay.com. This colossal brick building complete with clock tower was once a technical school, but since 2007 has been one of the largest and most modern hostels in Amsterdam. Its 500 beds are spread throughout its doubles, quads and six-bed dorm rooms all of which include a Spartan interior with an orange and grey colour scheme, new metal bunk beds, a sink and a separate shower and toilet. Security isn't a problem as guests can only access the corridor where their own room is located, but unfortunately you'll have to stow your important gear in lockers on the ground floor. A large café is also available as well as a bar that serves pitchers of beer for under €10, but if you're looking for great local brews, the IJ brewery is only a short walk away. ▶ 500 beds (beds in six-bed dorms from €9, beds in four-bed dorms from €11, doubles from €32, quads from €42). 

Cafés

Café Kanis & Meiland P-1, Levantkade 127-HS, tel. (+31) 204 18 24 39, www.kanisenmeiland.nl. As far as we're concerned you can skip the coffee as java is hardly the biggest attraction at this place located in the inner harbour. Friendly staff, an interesting view and cosy décor are the main assets of this place that exudes a small village vibe. Kanis & Meiland, a phonetic pronunciation in Dutch of KNSM island, also attracts its patrons with an interesting menu and although the district isn't even two decades old, this stylish local boasts a steady clientele including Dutch celebrities that you probably wouldn't recognise. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:30. (€15 - 20). 

Café Kuijper P-2, Linnaeusstraat 79, tel. (+31) 206 65 19 26, www.cafekuijper.nl. At the weekend it's pretty much standing room only at Café Kuijper where the music can scarcely be heard above the din of boisterous conversations energised by great draught brews from the JJ, Jopen and Texels breweries. If the crowds bring out your inner claustrophobia then go for a smoke or some fresh air out on the terrace. The features of the interior that stand out most would have to be the blue floral tiles, the strange, metallic lamps dangling from chains above the bar and a huge map of Amsterdam on the wall in the back, not to mention the golden palm trees. Snacks, soups, salads and sandwiches are also available. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. (€5 - 10). 

Caffe Milo P-2, Linnaeusstraat 71H, tel. (+31) 204 63 80 27, www.caffemilo.com. What this popular café lacks in size, it more than makes up for with its style and lively atmosphere. A shiny copper coloured bar with matching lamps is stocked with all the top shelf liquor you could ask for, which comes in handy on Wednesday evenings from 18:00 when all mixed drinks are two for one. Take a seat on plush brown leather benches and order breakfast food, sandwiches and soups for lunch or something more substantial like a Black Angus steak with truffle sauce for dinner. A good selection of beer, a sunny outdoor terrace and free wi-fi are a few more reasons to drop by. ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00, Sat 09:00 - 03:00, Sun 10:00 - 01:00. (€7 - 18). 



De Ysbreeker O-2, Weesperzijde 23, tel. (+31) 204 68 18 08, www.deysbreeker.nl. This popular space underwent a huge renovation in 2010 and today it's difficult to categorise. It's a café, a cocktail lounge, a reading room, a bar and a proper restaurant all in one. You can enjoy fresh oysters on the terrace overlooking the Amstel, sip an espresso inside while surfing the net or order tasty international cuisine in the evening with friends. The incredible interior of high vaulted ceilings, stained glass, hardwood floors and huge windows is impressive and the selection of local Amsterdam brews in bottles by 't IJ and De Prael keeps us coming back for more. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 08:00 - 02:00. (€8 - 20). 

With the trendy restaurants of the IJburg, Java and KNSM islands, the laid back cafés of Linnaeusstraat and the authentic ethnic eateries of Indische Buurt, you're never far from a good meal in Amsterdam East.

Asian

MChi R-2, IJburglaan 1295, tel. (+31) 207 76 60 04, www.mchi.nl. Although Asian restaurants are seldom stylish, usually relying on red lanterns and paintings of dragons for interior design, MChi has put a lot of thought into its modern and trendy décor. Just look at the huge wall-length photo of the toothless old-timer holding chopsticks and a beer in his hands and the minimalist gold and black interior that's occasionally disrupted by an orchid or a bamboo plant. The Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese cuisine is also surprisingly affordable given its location in a trendy neighbourhood and its elegant surroundings. Try the Sambal drunken prawns. ▶ Open 17:00 - 24:00. Closed Tue. (€10). 

Sweet Asia P-2, Eerste van Swindenstraat 463-465, tel. (+31) 204 63 80 20, www.sweetasia.nl. If you're a fan of Asian cuisine served quickly then this might be the place for you. It's nothing fancy, but you can order Chinese, Indonesian and Malaysian in this small venue that offers ample table seating and some stools at the counter. Sweet Asia also provides a delivery service in the evening if you live in the vicinity and if you're into Surinamese food presented in Dutch fashion - on a roll - then look no further. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00, Sun 13:00 - 22:00. (€7 - 12). 

Bakeries

Öz Saray Patisserie P-2, Javastraat 121, tel. (+31) 206 65 06 72, www.ozsaray.nl. The huge selection of delicious, neatly stacked Turkish cookies in the shop front window will lure you in with their sugary goodness and the strong coffee and tea will no doubt make you want to linger. If cookies really aren't your thing Öz Saray also provides over a dozen different kinds of baklava and it even serves its customers breakfast until 12:00 every day. It also specialises in cakes for special occasions like birthdays and weddings. ▶ Open 09:00 - 20:00. Closed Sun. 

Chinese

Kota Radja P-2, Insulindeweg 505, tel. (+31) 206 68 49 72, www.kotaradjaamsterdam.nl. Kota Radja is the swankiest Chinese restaurant in the area offering amazing wall reliefs of ancient stone bridges and an Asian pastoral existence. The interior is certainly formal, despite the typically kitschy red lamps, but you shouldn't feel obligated to dress up. The chefs specialise in Cantonese dishes as well as tasty Indonesian fare for reasonable prices. ▶ Open 15:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 22:00. (€10 - 15). 



A sunny day on the island of IJburg

Coffee & Tea

Koffie in Oost P-2, Linnaeuskaade 1A, tel. (+31) 207 76 44 87. Although this cosy café isn't particularly large it has managed to maximise its space by offering seating on the ground floor, upstairs and in the cellar. Exposed brick and bone white walls are spruced up with fresh cut tulips, stained glass and enormous shop front windows that bathe Coffee in East in lots of natural light during the day. Drink gourmet coffee or tea with a slice of chocolate cake or an everything bagel smothered in cream cheese or other tasty toppings like lox, matured cheese and hummus. ▶ Open 08:00 - 17:00, Sat 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 10:00 - 17:00. ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

Ludwig Coffee Bar P-2, Eerste van Swindenstraat 547, tel. (+31) 646 41 80 31, www.ludwig-coffeebar.nl. Although many eating and drinking establishments on this street are either fast food joints or ethnic cafés, Ludwig has a trendy, modern feel to it and could easily hold its own in Amsterdam's more fashionable city centre. Wide wooden benches, coffee brown walls covered in photos and a water-colour of a civet cat, leather chairs and industrial-style lamps hanging from incredibly high ceilings all make this a pleasant place for an excellent cappuccino and a slice of carrot cake or maybe a goat cheese *pappini*. ▶ Open 08:00 - 18:00, Sun 09:00 - 18:00. ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

Ethiopian

Ibssa O-2, Blasiusstraat 62, tel. (+31) 206 63 39 63, www.restaurantibssa.nl. Although you may feel a little uneasy about dining at a restaurant serving cuisine from a country where millions of people are starving as a result of a drought, we recommend you put aside your squeamishness and visit this simple Ethiopian restaurant, which looks and feels like somebody's living room. The décor may not be Ibssa's biggest attraction, but the food most certainly is and despite its simple menu you won't go home hungry. It's also one of the few places in town where it's impolite not to eat with your hands! ▶ Open 17:00 - 22:00. (€9 - 15). ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

French

Lloyd Restaurant P-1, Oostelijke Handelskade 34, tel. (+31) 205 61 36 36, www.lloydhotel.com. Located in the colossal 1920s building that houses the unique Lloyd design hotel, this bright, modern restaurant specialises in affordable French and Mediterranean cuisine made, when possible, with fresh local ingredients including free range eggs. Try the traditional *coq au vin*, a platter of oysters and homemade pâté or perhaps something a bit simpler like poached eggs and toasted sandwiches. A good selection of beer and wine is also available. ▶ (€8 - 15). ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

International

1900 P-2, Hogeweg 48, tel. (+31) 206 63 10 16, www.1900caferestaurant.nl. Although the majority of patrons in this cosy restaurant seem to be women, the lowest room is actually a so-called gentlemen's room, which can be turned into a kids room when needed, or perhaps the other way around. The fact remains that this former Ajax supporters' pub hasn't lost its loyalty to Amsterdam's football power, especially when one spots the enormous mirror bearing the club's logo in the men's room. Students can enjoy a discounted dish of the day every Monday - Thursday on the floor above, while regular visitors pay full price for their pasta linguine on the ground floor. Unfortunately, the sickly sweet music can be a little off-putting at times, but the wine list is fantastic. ▶ Open 08:30 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 22:00. (€20 - 23). ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓



Fine dining and views at Restaurant Merkelbach

Baut O-3, Wibautstraat 125, tel. (+31) 204 65 92 60, www.bautamsterdam.nl. Although head chef Michiel van der Eerde has plied his trade at some of Amsterdam's best restaurants, his latest endeavour is a much more simple and casual affair. From opening until 13:00 you can order croissants, yoghurt and desserts, but for lunch a variety of soups, salads and bruschettas with different toppings are available. In the evening you can travel the world with refined, yet affordable dishes from a number of world cuisines and at night you can stay for cocktails, but do it quick as its countdown clock, which you can see on its website, is marking time until it closes at the end of 2014. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. ☑

Badhuis Javaplein P-2, Javaplein 21, tel. (+31) 206 65 12 26, www.badhuis-javaplein.nl. This is one of the coolest bar/restaurants you'll find in East Amsterdam. Opened as a public bathhouse in 1942, it was finally closed in 1980s when it apparently became more common for locals to bathe in their own homes. Today its hip design attracts fans of good style as well as good food and drink and its patrons can enjoy lunch and dinner not to mention tasty cocktails and uncommon beers like Texels and Jopen. The seats by the fireplace are highly coveted in the winter, while the purple tables and chairs sandwiched between ivy-covered columns on the terrace are always full on sunny days. The food ranges from salads and its signature Aberdeen Angus burger to rib-eye steaks and rabbit stew. A kids menu is also available. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 03:00. (€6 - 17). ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

De Ponteneur P-2, Eerste van Swindenstraat 581, tel. (+31) 206 68 06 80, www.ponteneur.nl. Unlike many restaurants in the Dutch capital, this one has an abundance of space and incredibly high ceilings confounding the notion that Amsterdam cafés have to be claustrophobic. The refined menu is creative and offers such delicacies as lamb tournedos and homemade wild boar pate with toast and cranberry chutney and we particularly enjoyed the shot of cauliflower soup we were given to whet our appetite. Affordable daily specials are listed on the blackboard above the open-plan kitchen and a great selection of beer is also available. ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 02:00, Sun 10:00 - 01:00. (€12 - 15). ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓

Mövenpick Hotel Amsterdam City Centre Restaurant O-1, Piet Heinkade 11, tel. (+31) 205 19 12 00, www.moevenpick-hotels.com. The home-made Swiss apple pie is reason enough to visit this fancy restaurant on the ground floor of the even fancier Movenpick Hotel. The daily special is good value for money, but a pint of the excellent JJ brew will cost you a hefty €6. Luckily the *lady beer* and *bit-terballen* won't cost you a fortune. Forgetting your troubles and the rest of the world is easy to do when you relax in one of its comfortable leather sofas. ▶ ☞ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☓ ☓ ☓ ☓ ☓ ☓

Pizza

Beyzadem P-2, Javastraat 28, tel. (+31) 206 65 90 55, www.restaurantbeyzadem.nl. With a name like Beyzadem and its location alongside dozens of other kebab shops one might wonder why we've added this place to the pizza section. Despite its Turkish origins and the fact that it serves tasty shoarma, kebabs and affordable mixed grill dishes, it also happens to bake dozens of delicious pizzas from traditional Italian classics like *stagioni*, *quattro fromaggi* and *frutti di mare* to more appropriate choices like the pizza shoarma, our favourite by far. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. (€7 - 12). 🍷 🍴

Palermo P-2, Niasstraat 16, tel. (+31) 206 63 86 85. This tiny pizzeria offers limited seating and half a dozen candlelit tables in an interior decorated with old chianti bottles, but you can also order your tasty thin-crusts to take away or, if you live you're staying in the area, have them delivered between 17:00 - 23:00. In the spring and summer you can also take advantage of its summer terrace that offers views of children playing in the park across the street. ▶ Open 14:00 - 01:00. (€7 - 10). 🍷 🍴

Pizza Heart R-2, Pampuslaan 34, tel. (+31) 204 16 52 25, www.pizzaheart.nl. This tiny white and red tiled pizzeria offers dozens of Italy's most famous export, but you might have to enjoy them on the wooden benches outside as there are only two small tables along the wall inside. All of the usual types of thin-crust pizzas are available for roughly €10 each or you could try one of its calzones. We personally liked the *fantasia* with goat cheese, zucchini and cherry tomatoes, but you can also order some pasta, a salad or a small pizza from the kids menu. ▶ Open 17:00 - 22:00. (€8 - 12). 🍷 🍴

Steakhouses

Pompstation P-2, Zeeburgerdijk 53, tel. (+31) 206 92 28 88, www.pompstation.nu. If you're looking for a hip eatery in Oost, you'll find few better places than Pompstation. Although not exactly a traditional steak house, it does offer an extensive menu of meat dishes including a whole kilo's worth of Cote de Boeuf and a dry aged Hereford from Uruguay. Naturally, these extraordinary slabs of beef come with a considerably higher price tag, but the unbeatable ambience is also included in the bill. The Pump Station is in fact a fully functioning industrial monument dating back to 1920, which is worth a visit for its unique interior alone. The eccentric staff seem to each have their own little quirks, but a more considerate attitude would definitely benefit this establishment. ▶ Open 17:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 02:00. Closed Mon, Sun. (€19 - 25). 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍴



Unusual views from a local café in Oost

Seafood

Visgilde IJburg R-2, IJburglaan 655, tel. (+31) 204 16 02 65, www.ijburg.visgilde.nl. When you're this close to the water it's only natural to have a craving for seafood and this shop, deli and snack bar can certainly help. Order fish to take away or get something deep-fried or on a roll for roughly €5. In keeping with the theme, a partition that looks like a wave separates diners from one another. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Mon 10:30 - 18:00, Sat 08:30 - 17:30. Closed Sun. (€5). 🍷 🍴

Turkish

Kervan Restaurant P-2, Dapperplein 25, tel. (+31) 206 68 58 28, www.kervan.nl. It's only natural that a multicultural neighbourhood such as this would have its very own Turkish restaurant. Unlike many of the simple kebab shops on the main street, Kervan is a proper venue for dining on delicious lamb filets with a strong coffee before returning to the mayhem of the market outside. You can, of course, also take advantage of its popular terrace when the weather's good. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Sun 13:00 - 24:00. (€8 - 14). 🍷 🍴

Mesken R-2, IJburglaan 1491, tel. (+31) 204 16 16 49, www.restaurantmesken.nl. This so-called Turkish grill and lounge surpasses its humble slogan. Not only does it offer kebabs and other delicious dishes from the Anatolian peninsula like *patlican guveç* (stewed lamb with eggplant and assorted vegetables), but it also provides an interesting, almost stylish interior on two floors. Since it's open late by local standards, you can also drop by for a midnight *shisha* and tea and ponder the photos of men in fezzes on the wall. ▶ Open 13:00 - 01:00. Also at P-2, Sumatrastraat 35, tel. (+31) 20 694 02 77. Open 12:00 - 01:00, Fri 15:00 - 03:00, Sat 12:00 - 03:00. (€7 - 15). 🍷 🍴

Upmarket restaurants

Restaurant De Kas (The Greenhouse) P-2, Kamerlingh Onneslaan 3, tel. (+31) 204 62 45 62, www.restaurantdekas.nl. When was the last time you dined in a giant refurbished greenhouse with its very own brick smokestack? Done that? Was it located in a city park and has its own private summer terrace and hedge garden? If your answer is still 'yes' then you've probably been to this hip, upmarket restaurant specialising in rustic Mediterranean cuisine that's made with only the freshest of ingredients. The setting in the Frankendael Park is stunning and the food is excellent, but you'll have to trust the chef as the menu changes every day. Choose a two-course meal at lunch for €37.50 or a three-course dinner menu for €49.50. ▶ Open 12:00 - 14:00, 18:30 - 22:00, Sat 18:30 - 22:00. Closed Sun. 🍷 🍴

Wilde Zwijnen P-2, Javaplein 23hs, tel. (+31) 204 63 30 43, www.wildezwijnen.com. This stylish restaurant behind the bathroom on Javaplein is a bit more upmarket than most eateries in the area, but every neighbourhood needs a special place for foodies and fine diners. Patrons can choose from a 3- or 4-course chef's menu for €29.50 and €35.50, respectively, or try one of a few signature dishes from its small a la carte menu including its namesake - the wild boar. Credit cards aren't accepted, so bring cash or a bank card. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00. Closed Mon. (€20 - 30). 🍷 🍴

Although most of Amsterdam's visitors rarely stray beyond the confines of the Grachtengordel for nightlife, Amsterdam East has both raging underground clubs as well as traditional pubs dripping in history and Dutch *gezelligheid*.

Bars

De Biertuin P-2, Linnaeusstraat 29, tel. (+31) 206 65 09 56, www.debiertuin.nl. The Beer Garden serves a number of brews from Amsterdam's IJ brewery as well as other tasty offerings by their brewers from the Benelux region and all of them are poured in a bright and airy space that is nearly always laden with the perfume of roasting chickens that rotate on spits next to the bar. This is, of course, its speciality and a bargain at just under €14. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00.

Cafe Leentje O-2, Wibautstraat 85, tel. (+31) 206 65 13 20. Non-smokers might want to give this pub a wide berth, although the enormous ashtrays are worth a look for curiosity's sake. This popular student hangout creates a thick smoke screen several nights a week, but when you can actually catch a glimpse of the décor you'll see that it's a colourful mix of styles featuring old ship components, a miniature plane and dozens of foreign car number plates. It's obvious from the fact that the billiard cues are used for other purposes other than playing pool that present-day students can be quite innovative. ▶

Café Pleinzicht P-2, Borneostraat 112, tel. (+31) 206 94 13 59. This cosy neighbourhood pub only consists of one dark room, but its winding bar snakes around the place creating plenty of places to sit. Heineken beers are available on draught, but some good Belgian brews are available in bottles. Don't be deceived by the pool cues and balls painted on the windows. The old-timers who hang out here were probably in short pants when this place boasted a proper felt table. An outside terrace on the square tempts passers-by in the summer months. ▶ Open 14:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 14:00 - 03:00.

Clubs

Canvas op de 7e O-2, Wibautstraat 150, tel. (+31) 207 16 38 17, www.canvas7.nl. If you happen to be in Amsterdam Oost for the day make sure to visit this building - during the day or night - and take the lift to the 7th floor for one of the best panoramic views of the city anywhere. While you're up there absorb the atmosphere of the club, and, if you're up for it, take a bite of the ridiculously cheap, yet surprisingly tasty food. The cafeteria look of the place can throw you off, but the dance nights at the weekend feature old-school hip hop, soul, and jam sessions that will quickly make you forget about the surroundings. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri 11:00 - 03:00, Sat 12:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. Admission: €8.



Smoked herring at the Dapperstraat Market

Dauphine O-3, Prins Bernhardplein 175, tel. (+31) 204 62 16 46, www.club-dauphine.nl. This place is reminiscent of a classy New York supper club. Host Martijn Roos organises jazz and soul funk jam sessions on Fridays, while a superb house band and regular appearances by famous Dutch guests like Candy Dulfer entertain on other dates. Due to the included dinner, arriving guests usually have to stand around the tables until they're shoved aside after the second set. This means that for a time it can get pretty crowded and uncomfortable, but at least you can finally dance after the posh, corporate type diners have had their fill! ▶ Open Fri 20:30 - 02:00. Admission: €15 at the door or €7.50 after 23:30.

Hotel Arena Club O-2, 's-Gravesandestraat 51, tel. (+31) 208 50 24 00, www.hotelarena.nl. If God were indeed a DJ, as UK dance act *Faithless* once proclaimed over and over again in their song, he'd be playing at Hotel Arena's club housed in a church chapel that's still adorned with the remnants of its former function as a religious venue. Every weekend the club offers three spacious halls full of music. Be sure to check its online calendar of events before you go because you never know what you might walk into. Some nights it's RnB and on others it's techno. ▶ Open , Fri, Sat 22:00 - 04:00.

Studio/K P-2, Timorplein 62, tel. (+31) 20 692 04 22, www.studio-k.nu. Disguised as one of the foremost arthouse cinemas in Amsterdam, this club in East comes to life after the last weekend screenings have been shown. Entirely run by students, expect dubstep or modern jazz to ravish your calves during dance nights in one of three halls. Pay special notice to the quality of the sound played here as it's crystal clear and seems to completely surround you. Tired? Lounge in the way too brightly-lit areas downstairs. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00.

Trouw O-2, Wibautstraat 127, tel. (+31) 20 4637788, www.trouwamsterdam.nl/en. If this popular club puts one in mind of a giant factory that's probably because it used to be one. The Dutch daily Trouw was printed in this former warehouse in a past life, before it became a restaurant as well as a club and a space for art projects. A Mediterranean menu of organic snacks can serve as the prelude to an awesome and creative evening out followed by hip monthly techno events such as BAF (an open minded techno and performance party), Rauw (electro galore), PechuKuchaNight (smart and quick presentations on innovative subjects) or simple movie night. Visit its website for upcoming events, exhibitions, concerts and opening hours. ▶

Pubs

Elsa's Café P-2, Middenweg 73, tel. (+31) 206 68 50 10, www.elsascafe.nl. This boisterous pub and café is steeped in history having served as a tavern since the late 19th century and as a meeting place for Ajax supporters before the venerated stadium just down the road was torn down. The walls are plastered with old photos, posters and memorabilia, the tables are worn from years of use and the bar at the back is always abuzz with the activity of both patrons and staff. Considering its excellent selection of Dutch microbrews like t IJ, Texels and Jopen, it's no wonder it's still a popular place to watch football matches. A large terrace with views of the park across the street is a big bonus and a full menu of hearty meals like t-bone steaks, spare ribs and Wiener schnitzel will satisfy even the biggest of carnivores. In short, if you're looking for great local atmosphere, this is the place to go. ▶ Open 11:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00, Sun 13:00 - 01:00.

Sightseeing

Given its huge size, the district of Amsterdam Oost has a diverse selection of sights from an authentic Dutch distillery in a beautiful park to the colossal Museum of the Tropics.

Brewery & Distillery tours

't Nieuwe Diep Distillery (Distilleerderij 't Nieuwe Diep) P-2, Flevopark 13, tel. (+31) 204 65 02 22, www.nwediep.nl. Located in a renovated pumping station on the water near the entrance to the Flevopark, this small distillery is partly owned by former archaeologist Kees Filius who has a passion for the Dutch tradition of distilling spirits. Disappointed that many of the mainstream Dutch distillers had forsaken the ancient art of distilling that had been practiced during Holland's golden age, he and his business partner decided to create their own jenever, bitters, eau de vie, liqueurs and fruit jenever according to long forgotten recipes that were unearthed from old books and documents. After years of trial and error the 't Nieuwe Diep Distillery now produces roughly 100 of its own spirits made in small batches at this wonderful and historic location where even Rembrandt once painted its sublime view. A tour of the facilities is available every Friday at 16:00, but you can visit its tasting room on weekdays and sample the goods for yourself or buy a bottle to bring home as the perfect Amsterdam souvenir. ▶ Tasting room: open May - September 15:00 - 20:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 20:00, closed Mon; October - April 15:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 18:00, closed Sun. Distillery tour every Friday at 16:00. ☒

Buildings

Badhuis Javaplein P-2, Javaplein 21, tel. (+31) 206 65 12 26, www.badhuis-javaplein.nl. Although this wonderful building is now a trendy restaurant and cocktail bar, it was originally opened in 1942 as one of Amsterdam's last public bathhouses. Exactly 40 years later it became abundantly clear that most people preferred to bathe at home and it was closed only to reopen as a Hindu temple and then a thrift shop. Its latest incarnation as a popular hotspot is perhaps fitting as the old bathhouses not only functioned as hygienic necessities, but also as community meeting places. Women used to shower where the original white tile wall still stands behind the bar. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 03:00. ☒ ☒ ☒

CMA Building P-2, Beijersweg 28, tel. (+31) 206 68 38 00, www.cmazaal.nl. This historic building run by the Continental Music Association was built in 1893 and was originally used by the Oostergasfabriek as part of the city's gasworks. The impressive edifice eventually fell into disrepair when Amsterdam finally switched over to natural gas, but was saved in the 1980s. The building is now a theatre and a reception hall for special events so if you're looking for an interesting wedding venue or a place to hold a corporate event the main hall with its traditional interior might be a good option. ▶

Karel Appel House P-2, Dapperstraat 7, tel. (+31) 655 87 19 74, www.karelappelhuis.nl. One of the original founders of the CoBrA (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) art movement was born in this house in 1921. Although originally named Christiaan Karel Appel, he later dropped the first name and became a star of the Dutch art scene. His works are now exhibited at prestigious museums around the globe including the Guggenheim in New York. The local De Key housing association and the DUS Architects firm have redesigned the building's interior creating a mini-museum in honour of Appel. Just look for the bronze apple on the façade that states: Karel Appel Was Hier. ▶

Loods 6 P-1, KNSM-Laan 143, tel. (+31) 204 18 20 20, www.loods6.nl. Originally built in the early 20th century by the KNSM shipping company, Loods 6 served several purposes over the years from a warehouse and a ferry passenger terminal to free housing for squatters and artists. During the 1990s the building was finally saved from ruin and reopened as a chic home for shops, art galleries and cafés and it still serves this purpose today. ▶

Witsen House (Witsenhuis) O-2 & P-2, Oosterpark 82A, tel. (+31) 299 37 14 71. Although this small museum may be of more interest to Dutch art students and budding writers, if you arrange a visit in advance you can take a tour of the building where renowned local canal painter Willem Witsen (1860 - 1923) once lived. The building was donated to the state after his death and it now houses a small museum with works by Witsen and period furniture. The house also offers temporary lodging to promising writers and has done so for decades. Perhaps the view of the Ooster Park across the street inspires them. ▶ Open by appointment only.

Churches

The Courtyard Church of the Martyrs of Gorcum (De Hofkerk Martelaren van Gorcum) P-2, Linnæushof 94, tel. (+31) 206 65 38 30, www.hofkerk.nl. Tucked away in a courtyard across the street from the Frankendael Park, this imposing church is dedicated to the Martyrs of Gorcum - 19 Dutch Catholic clerics who were hanged by the Calvinists in the 16th century for refusing to abandon their beliefs in the sacrament and the pope as the head of the church. Designed by A.J. Kropholler (1881 - 1973), a follower of iconic architect H.P. Berlage, the massive brick church, monastery and school buildings were built between 1924 and 1928. If you'd like a tour of the church call the number listed above and reserve a time.

Museums

Museum of the Tropics (Tropenmuseum) P-2, Linnæusstraat 2, tel. (+31) 205 68 82 00, www.tropenmuseum.nl. Housed in a monumental building that is also home to the Royal Tropical Institute, this museum is a must for students of anthropology and ethnography and anyone who appreciates non-Western cultures. Unlike many museums that are simply a catalogue of artefacts from ancient times and extinct civilisations, the Tropics Museum not only offers examples of antique art, but also household items and objects used in the daily lives of vibrant, living cultures throughout the tropical regions of the world from Indian Bollywood posters to African ads for hair salons. A cafeteria serving food and drink from the regions covered in the museum including South East Asian beer like Singha and Chang is also available as well as a museum shop selling interesting gifts. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €9, children 6 - 17 years €5, children 5 and under free. ☒ ☒



The cavernous hall of the Museum of the Tropics

Press Museum (Persmuseum) P-1, Zeeburgerkade 10, tel. (+31) 206 92 88 10, www.persmuseum.nl. For immediate release! Anyone interested in Holland's fourth estate should make the trip to the docklands of Amsterdam East to visit this fascinating museum dedicated to Dutch journalism. You can learn about the long history of media in the Netherlands through a variety of intriguing displays. Take a look at newspapers and magazines that date back to the early 17th century, view colourful advertising and posters, have a laugh after perusing loads of political cartoons and browse through historic photographs. Naturally, all of these items are on display to teach every new generation about the importance of a free press. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sat. Admission: adults €4.50, children 13 - 18 €3.25. 

So Far Dutch Funeral Museum (Nederlands Uitvaart Museum Tot Zover) P-3, Kruislaan 124, tel. (+31) 206 94 04 82, www.totzover.nl. For many people death and dying is a subject best avoided, but the Dutch Funeral Museum called Tot Zover (So Far) tries to break this taboo by offering explanations of traditions and customs surrounding death, burials and the process of grieving in the Netherlands. Its collection includes old hair paintings, death masks and lanterns, bits of film, coffins and urns and a large number of miniature hearses. Cremation is also covered in detail, as well as the process of decomposition experienced by a corpse once it's buried. Modern funeral rituals of different cultures are also discussed, but if it's all too tough to handle you get some fresh air in the adjacent cemetery. Complimentary audio guides cover the museum as well as the cemetery. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults €5.50, children over 12 €2. 

Parks & Gardens

Flevo Park (Flevopark) P/Q-2, Between Valentijkade, Flevoweg and Zuiderzeeweg, www.flevopark.nl. What was once the final resting place for many of the city's Jewish population is now an expansive park and nature reserve criss-crossed by walking and cycling paths. A few itinerant old buildings also dot the landscape, but it seems that nature has reclaimed much of the area, including most of the old cemetery where roughly 200,000 people were buried, although some of its headstones are now being restored. A large swimming pool is also located within the precincts of the park complex, but most people seem to come here to jog or walk their dogs. Another reason to come, however, is to visit the fantastic 't Nieuw Diep Distillery (open 15:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 18:00; closed Mon) located in a former pump house. A playground is also available, not to mention the Zeeburg campground at the far end of the park, and ornithologists often drop by to catch a glimpse of rare and protected birds here. ▶ Open from sunrise to sunset.

Frankendael Park (Park Frankendael) P-2, Middenweg 72, www.park-frankendael.nl. Unlike other parks in Amsterdam that have been created for the public good by the city or philanthropists, Frankendael Park is the only one that is actually a former country estate dating back to the 17th-century. In fact, the original residence is still located in the park near the Middenweg, but it now serves as an exhibition hall and a venue for various cultural events. All other such summer residences built by wealthy Amsterdammers have been lost to time and so-called progress. Outside you'll find plenty of green space and water, not to mention two of the area's best restaurants. De Kas is located in a converted greenhouse surrounded by a manicured garden, while Merkelbach is housed in the coach house of the main building. ▶



The tasting room at the 't Nieuwe Diep Distillery

Ooster Park (Oosterpark) O-2 & P-2, Between Mauritskade, Oosterparkstraat and Linnaeusstraat.

Just beyond the Artis Zoo you'll find this pleasant park in the Watergraafsmeer neighbourhood of East Amsterdam. It was designed by prolific Dutch landscape architect Leonard Anthony Springer (1855 - 1940) at the close of the 19th century. Unlike modern parks that often make room for basketball courts, football pitches and other public facilities, Springer attempted to create a public space that was as close to nature as possible. The park also includes a large pond and a monument dedicated to the abolition of slavery in the Dutch colonies in 1863. ▶

Places of interest

Betondorp P-3, Between Middenweg, Kruislaan and Goolseweg. When housing became scarce in the early 20th century, Amsterdam's city fathers decided to build new low-cost residential areas in the Watergraafsmeer neighbourhood of Amsterdam East, which was still quite rural at the time. The projects designed by many architects, including Dick Greiner, J.B. van Loghem and Willem Greve, were made of prefabricated concrete materials, hence the area's name, Betondorp, or Concrete Village. Johan Crujff, Holland's most famous football player, also grew up in this unusual neighbourhood. This collection of unique streets and houses was finally renovated for posterity in the early 1980s. ▶

Blijburg R-2 & R-3, Muiderlaan 1001, tel. (+31) 204 16 03 30, www.blijburg.nl. The beach is the main attraction at Blijburg, although the experience of sunbathing on an artificial island in the IJmeer also attracts a fair share of people, not to mention the bar and the bonfire parties. The relatively small beach is only 250m long and 40m wide, so bear in mind that it can get quite crowded here on sunny days. Take tram No.26 from the Central Station to the end of the line. ▶

Dapperstraat Market (Dappermarkt) P-2, Dapperstraat, www.dappermarkt.nl. This neighbourhood market in Amsterdam East has been bringing a diverse community together since 1910. One of the oldest markets in the city, the Dappermarkt offers hundreds of street stalls run by a wide variety of merchants speaking languages from around the globe, from Morocco and Turkey to Suriname. Although not exactly the place to find that ideal kitschy souvenir, this authentic marketplace sells all manner of household goods, cheap clothing, second-hand fashion, fresh produce and local specialities like smoked fish and traditional herring. It was also voted the best market in the Netherlands in 2006 and 2007. ▶ Open 10:00 - 16:30. Closed Sun.

Java Island (Java Eiland) P-1, Javakade. Part of the so-called Eastern Docklands, this former harbour became obsolete when the piers became too small for large, modern ships to use. They were largely ignored for decades, but were eventually revitalised and redeveloped by renowned architect Sjoerd Soeters from 1991 - 2000. His idea was to create completely modern residential dwellings that mimicked the old canal houses of the Grachtengordel in the city centre. That's why many of the buildings are built right next to one another, but all are of similar, yet varying heights and sizes. Four canals were also dug essentially cutting the island into smaller pieces. These are now connected by pedestrian and bicycle bridges as well as larger bridges for cars. Today the island is home to affluent Amsterdammers who can often be seen hanging out at its cafés and boutiques. Take tram No.10 from Leidseplein to Azartplein or tram No.26 from the Central Station to the Rietlandpark stop. ▶

KNSM Island (KNSM-eiland) P-1, KNSM-iaan. Although this man-made island is now known as a residential area populated by yuppies, it was once a giant storage and industrial complex used by the Koninklijke Nederlandse Stoomboot-Maatschappij (Royal Dutch Steamboat Shipping Company) or simply KNSM for short. The loss of Holland's far-flung colonies after WWII and a new global shipping paradigm lead to the eventual abandonment of the area. It was later redeveloped as residential housing by famous architect Jo Coenen who transformed the massive original buildings of the KNSM into chic living spaces for affluent Amsterdammers. Today, there are plenty of chic cafés in the area to keep you occupied if you get tired of the surrounding architecture. Take tram No.10 from Leidseplein to Azartplein or tram No.26 from the Central Station to the Rietlandpark stop. ▶

Weesperzijde O-2, Weesperzijde. This picturesque street overlooking the Amstel was once used as a wharf, but later became a neighbourhood where wealthy Amsterdammers built large buildings with views of the water. In 1848, the KARZV De Hoop rowing society also built their clubhouse here near Burmanstraat and to this day you can still take rowing classes on the Amstel. The street is also home to dozens of popular cafés and shops. ▶

Statues & Monuments

Slavery Monument O-2 & P-2, Oosterpark. Located in the Ooster Park, this small monument dedicated to the abolition of slavery was unveiled in 2002. The stark figures that include a woman raising her hands up into the air like a bird are a reminder to the Dutch people that slavery was only abolished in Holland's colonies including Suriname and the Dutch Antilles as late as 1863. Perhaps they were trying to keep up with Abraham Lincoln who enacted the famous American Emancipation Proclamation a year earlier. ▶



Which way to Amsterdam East's islands?

Shopping

From local sweets shops to trendy interior design salons, Amsterdam Oost has it covered.

Antiques & Art

Atelier Fred Appel R-2, IJburglaan 748, tel. (+31) 613 53 06 74, www.fredappel.com. This gallery specialises in water colours, portraits and modern landscape paintings. Call or e-mail for an appointment.

Galerie Libbe Venema P-2, Hogeweg 2A, tel. (+31) 206 92 22 15, www.libbevenema.nl. This gallery sells paintings by deceased artist Libbe Venema from his earliest works in the 1960s to his last creations in 1994. ▶ Open Thu, Fri, Sat 13:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Sun.

Chocolates & Sweets

Banketbakkerij Schep P-2, Middenweg 57, tel. (+31) 206 65 16 72, www.banketbakkerijjschep.nl. The bakers at Schep have been creating delicious chocolates and cakes since 1939 and they can make a special cake for any occasion. ▶ 

C'est Bon P-2, Hogeweg 1A, tel. (+31) 206 94 17 62, www.cestbon.nl. This chain of gourmet shops sells all kinds of treats from chocolates and cookies to nuts, coffee, wasabi snacks and dried fruit. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun. 

Interior design & Furniture

Licht & Meubels P-2, Javastraat 113-115, tel. (+31) 203 34 27 35, www.lichtenmeubels.nl. Light & Furniture sells unique interior design objects including huge industrial lamps. ▶ Open 13:00 - 20:00, Sat 11:00 - 17:00, Sun 13:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. 

Secondhand & Vintage shops

Droomfabriek P-2, Transvaalkade 2, tel. (+31) 206 65 74 37, www.droomfabriekantiek.nl. This is the place to go for vintage handbags as well as antique brooches, necklaces, earrings and other costume jewellery. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:30. Closed Mon, Sun.

Specialty shops

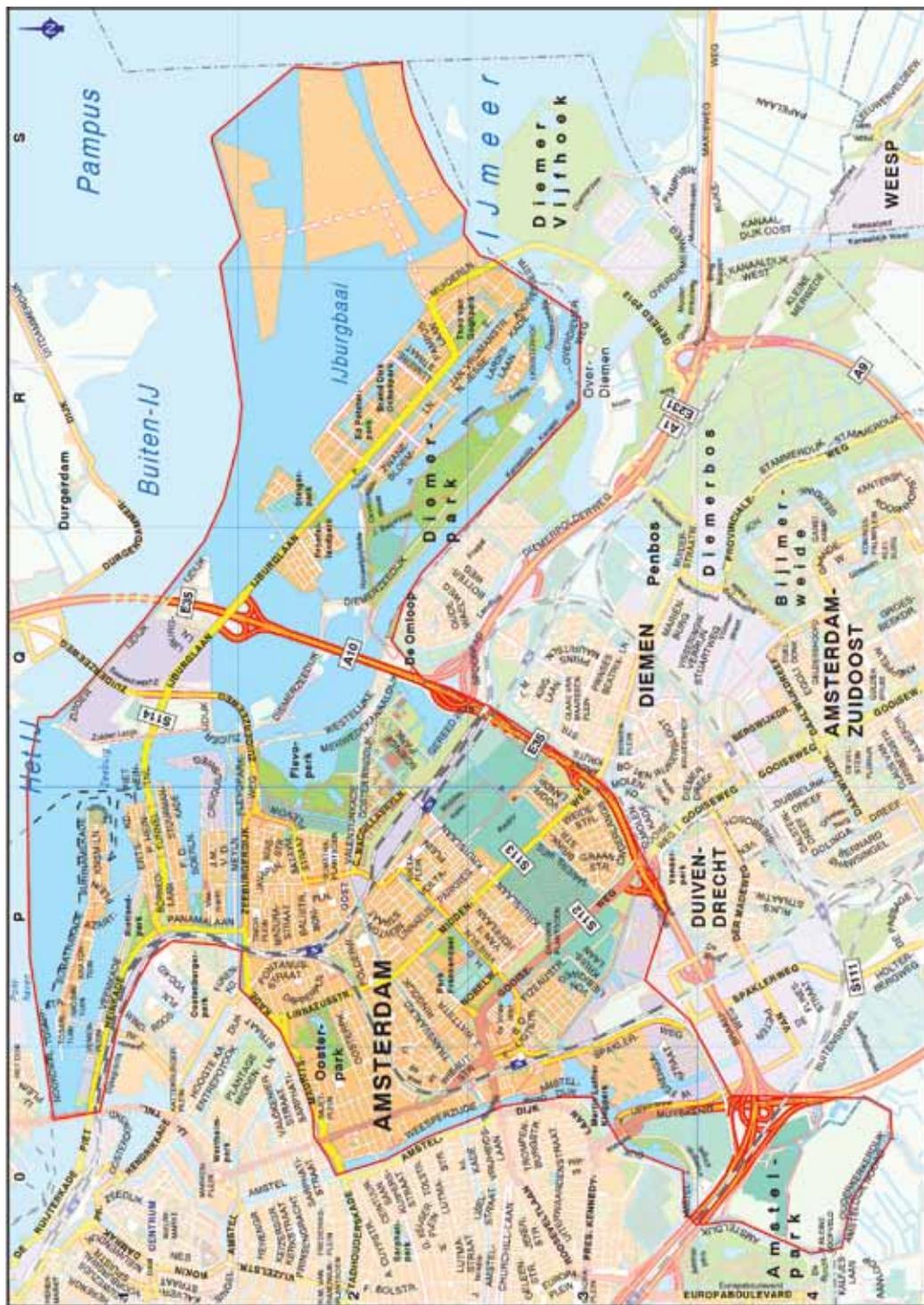
Game Mania P-2, Eerste van Swindenstraat 43, tel. (+31) 204 63 67 43, www.gamemania.nl. This place has everything for your Xbox, PlayStation or Wii. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Mon 12:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun. 

Snoek Strips en Games P-2, Linnaeusstraat 205, tel. (+31) 204 68 81 09. Buy boardgames, books, collectibles, action figures and dolls, comics and even the dream toy that we never got as children - a Star Wars X-wing fighter. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

The Read Shop P-2, Insulindeweg 478, tel. (+31) 202 05 02 27, www.readshop.nl/. Although the Dutch newspapers and books sold here may hold little interest for you, The Read Shop is also an official post office (open 09:00 - 17:00, Sat 10:00 - 16:00; closed Sun). ▶ Open 08:30 - 18:00, Sat 08:30 - 17:00. Closed Sun. 

Supermarkets

Biolicious R-2, Joris Ivensplein 56-58, tel. (+31) 204 16 70 84. This supermarket specialises in organic and eco-friendly food. ▶ Open 08:30 - 19:00, Sat 08:30 - 18:00. Closed Sun. 



Amsterdam West is both a residential and commercial district of the city sandwiched between four parks, the Vondel Park, Rembrandt Park, Erasmus Park and Westerpark, so you're never far away from a green space for a picnic, some good cycling or just a relaxing time spent on a patch of grass. The area around Overtroom is legendary for its restaurants that serve anything from Ethiopian to Iranian cuisine, not to mention its numerous shops, many of which specialise in cutting-edge interior design items for homes and offices. Eerste Constantijn Huyjensstraat and Belderdijkstraat are also home to cosy cafés and pubs, while the Westergasfabriek in the north of the district is a former industrial estate that has been converted into a creative cultural park full of galleries, clubs and restaurants - an absolute must-see in West!

Getting there

Amsterdam West is right next to the city centre, so if you don't mind a brisk walk you can get there on foot from the Central Station in about 30 - 45 minutes. Of course, not everyone wants to drag their luggage around town, so just take tram No.1 to reach Overtroom. For De Clercqstraat and Admiraal De Ruijterweg take tram No.13. For the Westerpark and Westergasfabriek take bus No.22 from the station to the last stop Spaarndammerbuurt and then walk the rest of the way.

Accommodation

Amsterdam West has accommodation for all budgets from luxurious suites with their own private gardens to Spartan 2-star rooms with very little frills but lots of value.

Upmarket

Sandton Hotel De Filosoof S-4, Anna van den Vondelstraat 6, tel. (+31) 206 83 30 13, www.sandton.eu/amsterdam. Located between busy Overtroom and the peaceful Vondel Park, the Philosopher offers 45 unique rooms each decorated in its own style, but all with a common theme of philosophy. You can expect the usual four-star amenities such as a TV, wireless internet, safe, writing desk, private bathrooms and in some cases wonderful views of the manicured garden below. Conference rooms are also at your disposal as well as a bar and lounge. Suites are located across the street and offer more space and views of the historic hotel's beautiful brick façade and its embellishments, which are either gargoyles or lions. ▶ 45 rooms (23 cosy rooms €84 - 93, 10 deluxe rooms €100 - 110, 12 suites €148 - 155).  ★★★

Boutique & Design hotels

Hotel Roemer T-4, Roemer Visscherstraat 10, tel. (+31) 205 89 08 00, www.vondelhotels.com. If we were incredibly wealthy, we wouldn't buy an apartment in Amsterdam. We would just move into the Hotel Roemer, a four-star boutique hotel with a personal approach to all of its guests. Spread out over two renovated mansions in the Museum District, this place is cosy and warm, yet also stylish and luxurious. In three of the rooms you'll have to make do with rainforest showers, but all others have their own private Jacuzzi and if you'd like a drink, don't bother looking for a mini-bar. Just pour yourself a cocktail from the fully stocked bar, which is included in the price. An iPod docking station, Nespresso machine, wi-fi and TV with DVD player are also standard amenities here and a cottage is available in the Zen-like garden behind the hotel. ▶ 23 rooms (doubles from €180, executive from €210, junior suites from €280).  ★★★

Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Child-friendly
 Conference facilities	 Credit cards
 Fitness centre	 Facilities for the disabled
 Free wireless internet	 Guarded parking
 Home delivery	 Live music
 Outside seating	 Pets allowed
 Sauna	 Smoking section
 Swimming pool	 Takeaway

Hotel Vondel T-4, Vondelstraat 26, tel. (+31) 206 12 01 20, www.vondelhotels.com. This fantastic boutique hotel located in a quiet Museum district neighbourhood is an excellent choice for anyone who requires accommodation with cutting-edge design. A unique blend of new and antique, European and Asian, Hotel Vondel offers four-star rooms with every imaginable amenity including flat screen TVs, wireless internet, iPod speakers and mini-bars as well as individually designed interiors and private natural stone bathrooms with walk-in rainforest showers and/or bathtubs. A private garden is also at your disposal as well as a trendy lounge and restaurant. ▶ 86 rooms (singles €85 - 120, doubles €90 - 130, triples €160 - 195, suites €380, executive rooms €115 - 165).  ★★★

NL-Hotel Leidseplein T-3, Nassaukade 368, tel. (+31) 206 89 00 30, www.nl-hotel.com. Although designed by a renowned Dutch architect, all of this wonderful hotel's 13 rooms have Asian influences such as bamboo plants or bonsai trees, not to mention a representation of the Buddha in each room as well as a photo of a flower as an homage to its location in Amsterdam. All of the usual amenities are included such as cable TV, wireless internet and modern bathrooms with frosted glass doors. Deluxe rooms also boast mini-fridges and coffee machines and one even has its own private Asian garden. All doors are equipped with security alarms in case you forget to close them completely and free coffee is always available in the reception area. Finally, the staff are genuinely friendly and the hubbub of Leidseplein is only minutes away. ▶ 13 rooms (singles €85 - 200, doubles €110 - 200).  ★★★

WestCord Art Hotel Amsterdam S-2, Spaarndammerdijk 302, tel. (+31) 204 10 96 70, www.westcordhotels.com. Located a short distance from the Westerpark, the trendy Westergasfabriek and impressive Amsterdam School architecture in the Spaarndammerbuurt, this four-star hotel offers 60 stylish rooms decorated in reds, greys and whites, all of which include modern, glass partitions separating the luxurious bathroom facilities from the living space. A restaurant and an art gallery are also located on the premises, but if this all sounds a little too rich for your blood then you can try its 130 three-star rooms next door. Free wireless internet access is available throughout the building. ▶ 60 four-star rooms/130 three-star rooms (doubles from €95, family rooms from €179, business from €265).  ★★★

For a complete list of Amsterdam
West reviews visit
www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com



Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel West



Amsterdam West is at the cutting edge of urban living. This vibrant district of the Dutch capital has taken steps to find the proper balance between what's necessary for a modern city and what's expected by its residents. The result is a variety of neighbourhoods that cater both to the needs of local businesses and to the people who live there. You'll find old factories and power stations converted into art galleries, clubs and restaurants, numerous green spaces for rest and relaxation as well as bustling shopping streets brimming with activity. Discover a district of Amsterdam that truly has it all.





A warm spring day in Amsterdam West

Mid-range

Eden Theatre District Hotel Amsterdam T-4, Nassaukade 387 - 390, tel. (+31) 206 07 79 00, www.edentheatretrichotel.com. With a location close to the shops and cafés of Overtoom, the nightlife of Leidseplein and the attractions of Museumplein, this three-star hotel probably doesn't have to do much advertising to fill up its 70 rooms spread across three buildings overlooking the canal that separates the city centre from its other districts. Its rooms are simple, but modern and include the usual amenities like TV, phone, safe and private bathrooms. The hotel is part of the salubrious Eden Group, so simple things that most people take for granted like internet access cost extra and the reception staff were a bit snooty when we dropped by, but that's fairly typical of many Amsterdam hotels. ▶ 70 rooms (singles from €44, doubles from €59, superior from €74). 

Espresso Hotel City Centre T-4, Overtoom 57, tel. (+31) 204 12 08 80, www.hotelespresso.nl. Conveniently located on Amsterdam West's main drag, Overtoom, this stylish, yet affordable hotel opened its doors at the end of 2012. All of its accommodation including twin rooms, doubles and triples are decorated in a similar style that features coffee-coloured floral wallpaper. Amenities such as flat screen TVs, climate control, free wireless internet access, laptop safes, coffee/tea sets and small private bathrooms all come standard and a great ground floor lounge with views of street is also at your disposal. ▶ 68 rooms (twin/doubles from €90, triples from €120). 

Hotel Europa 92 T-4, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat 103-105, tel. (+31) 206 18 88 08, www.europa92.nl. This family-owned three-star hotel only a few minutes' walk from Leidseplein, has now passed to the next generation and these two brothers have decided to completely remodel the building and its 47 rooms. Each room includes a large photo of a major European city as its central theme and includes cable TV, wireless internet access, phone, safe and a private bathroom with shower and hair dryer. A fabulous green courtyard decorated with a huge mural is available and you can choose to have your breakfast there. The owners pride themselves on their personal touch and even allow their guests to bring pets with them. A lift is also available - a rarity in local three-star hotels. ▶ 47 rooms (singles from €50, doubles from €80, triples from €100, suites from €130). 

Hotel Iron Horse T-4, Overtoom 33, tel. (+31) 202 62 92 20, www.hotelironhorse.com. When one looks at the quaint brick façade of this typically narrow building, one can hardly believe that a stylish, modern three-star hotel with an equine theme is housed inside its historic walls. Why a horse theme you might ask? It was formerly used as the headquarters for the Amsterdam mounted police. You can expect the usual amenities like flat screen TVs, free wi-fi, private bathrooms, phone and climate control. ▶ 42 rooms (singles from €76, doubles/twin from €85, triples from €113, family rooms from €142). 

Hotel Mosaic S-4, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat 14a, tel. (+31) 204 89 90 00, www.hotelmosaic.nl. This modern glass, stone and steel building is completely different from most of the lodgings in the area, which are usually housed in historic edifices. All of its 35 modern rooms offer flat screen TV, free wireless internet access, hardwood floors and bright beige interiors, private bathrooms, climate control and coffee/tea sets, which is important as the hotel doesn't offer breakfast or any meals for that matter. The hotel is located on the second floor of the building. ▶ 35 rooms (singles from €110, doubles from €145, triples from €215, quads from €280). 

Budget

Alp Hotel S-3, De Clercqstraat 52, tel. (+31) 206 12 12 10, www.alphotel.nl. This cosy hotel offers 16 rooms that have all been given names instead of numbers. Rooms are somewhat spacious and include amenities such as cable TV, wi-fi, safe, private bathrooms with showers and hair dryers and some accommodation even includes large balconies and whirlpool bathtubs. A private garden behind the hotel is at your disposal and guests are welcome to help themselves to coffee, tea and fresh fruit in the reception area free of charge. ▶ 16 rooms (doubles from €57, suites from €95). 

Hotel ABBA S-4, Overtoom 118 - 122, tel. (+31) 206 18 30 58, www.hotel-abba.nl. Located on a main artery of Amsterdam West, this budget hotel and its functional corridors and staircases may not look like much at first glance, but the rooms are actually quite spacious and some even include large balconies. The furnishings are simple and Spartan, but it has the bare necessities that most people require such as a TV and private bathroom with shower, not to mention closet space. It has no discernible connection to the Swedish super group, so don't expect disco balls or eight-track players blasting *Mamma Mia*. ▶ 36 rooms (budget rooms from €25, comfort rooms from €55). 

Hostels

Stayokay Amsterdam Vondelpark T-4, Zandpad 5, tel. (+31) 205 89 89 96, www.stayokay.com. Wouldn't it be great if you were allowed to stay at a cool hostel in the middle of Manhattan's Central Park? Well, you can't do that, but Amsterdam does have something pretty close. This chain of clean, modern hostels also has an outlet in the Vondelpark, which is basically the local equivalent of New York's famous green space. Stay in a variety of different dorms from 2-, 4- and 6-bedders to large dorms that include metal bunk beds, a sink and in-room showers and toilets, not to mention the standard orange and grey company colour scheme. A computer lounge for surfing the net is also available as well as a lively bar. ▶ 536 beds (beds in 10-bed dorms from €16, beds in six-bed dorms from €19, beds in four-bed dorms from €21, doubles from €53, quads from €82). 

Restaurants

Amsterdam West is a paradise for foodies and anyone who enjoys exotic cuisine!

African

Fenan Klein Afrika S-4, Jan Pieter Heijestraat 147, tel. (+31) 204 12 44 42. Klein, or small, could refer to the actual restaurant, which is undoubtedly on the tiny side, but it could also refer to the menu which shows a small glimpse of an entire continent's culinary traditions, especially those of East Africa. Order an Ethiopian St George beer while you ponder the choices in front of you before inevitably asking the friendly wait staff to recommend something authentic and tasty. We ended up getting the most bang for our euro by trying the *bebeayenetu*, which is a combination of different dishes served on a giant pancake of sorts. The atmosphere inside was vibrant, hot and humid, not unlike the stereotypical vision of sub-Saharan Africa. Only cash and bank cards are accepted. ▶ Open 17:00 - 23:00. ☑

Caribbean

Toko MC S-2, Polonceaukade 5 (Westergasfabriek), tel. (+31) 204 75 04 25, www.tokomc.nl. Ever had Caribbean fusion cuisine? Neither had we until we stopped by Toko MC. Located near the entrance of the Westergasfabriek, this sleek, modern space offers an unusual interior of yellow horizontal stripes on one wall and vertical black stripes behind the bar. You can order a calamari salad as a starter, jerked beef with sweet potato mash for a main and a delicious banana-coconut pancake for dessert or just sit on its summer terrace and sip an expensive passionfruit smoothie or one of its many good brews on draught. In the evenings a hip, arty crowd come here for cocktails, DJs and dancing. MC also organises theatre performances, club nights and festivals nest door. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 03:00. (€5 - 15). ☑☑☑☑

Chinese

Ah-Sang S-4, Overtoom 254, tel. (+31) 206 16 75 01. This neighbourhood establishment has pulled out all the stops to look like the quintessential cheesy Chinese restaurant complete with fake fruit trees, imitation jade decorations and boring oriental lamps. It seems that the only thing that's real is the staff and the fish in the aquarium by the bar. That said, if you're looking for Asian dishes and vegetarian cuisine that isn't bland, then Ah-Sang might be worth a brief detour. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:00. (€9 - 14). ☑



Amsterdammers love a good picnic

Coffee & Tea

De Koffie Salon S-4, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat 82, tel. (+31) 206 12 40 79, www.dekoffiesalon.nl. Look for the stained glass door and windows in shades of blue to find this lively café serving great coffee and tea as well as incredible cakes, pastries and croissants. Black and white photos of famous people slurping Java cover the far wall and seating is also available outside. The staff are up at the crack of dawn and still manage to serve you with a genuine smile, which is no mean feat in our book. ▶ Open 07:00 - 19:00. ☑☑☑☑

EspressoFabriek S-2, Gosschalklaan 7 (Westergasfabriek), tel. (+31) 204 86 21 06, www.espressofabriek.nl. Located right next to a popular park where children play football and parents picnic, the technologically advanced (and expensive) coffee machines at the EspressoFabriek are manned by professional baristas who obviously take pride in their work. They even offer seminars to anyone curious to know how to pour the perfect espresso. This isn't the place to go for a quick cup of Joe, but rather an establishment for true connoisseurs. Although it has only limited seating inside, a huge terrace is available when the weather permits. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 18:00. ☑

Greek

Mitsos Traiterie S-3, 2e Hugo de Grootstraat 25, tel. (+31) 206 84 23 44, www.mitsos.nl. This professional caterer offers the best dishes and delicacies from Greece at a reasonable price. Mitsos guarantees that the food will always be fresh and well-prepared, no matter what the occasion. And we're not kidding when we say that the superb *moussaka* was some of the best we've ever had. If you're not looking for takeaway, you can also sit down at the small restaurant and eat a meal on the premises. That said, although the Greek cuisine is fantastic, the tiny restaurant doesn't provide much ambience, so we recommend you bring it back to your hotel or have a picnic in a nearby park. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. (€10 - 12). ☑☑

Home delivery

Indian Express Pieter Langedijkstraat 37, tel. (+31) 206 12 84 88, bestellen.indianexpress.nl. This small restaurant in West also has a delivery service for the rest of Amsterdam. See its website for a menu. Main courses cost roughly €12 - 15. ▶ Open 16:30 - 22:30. ☑☑

New York Pizza S-3, Bilderdijkstraat 181, tel. (+31) 206 16 14 73/(+31) 900 01 02, www.newyorkpizza.nl. Although the city centre is littered with large outlets of this colossal Dutch pizza chain, this one is basically a base of operations for New York Pizza's delivery service in the area. That said, you can order takeaway here, too. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:30. ☑☑

Indian

Dosa S-4, Overtoom 146, tel. (+31) 206 16 48 38, www.dosaindianrestaurant.nl. Although this authentic restaurant serves familiar tandoori, biryani and curry dishes, it also claims to be the only place in town to serve South Indian *dosa* - a kind of pancake made of rice and lentil flour stuffed with all kinds of fillings. It also specialises in a wide variety of vegetarian cuisine, but you can also order plenty of lamb, chicken and seafood in this elegant space decorated with wood carvings. We particularly enjoyed the mild and creamy Goa-style king prawns. ▶ Open 16:00 - 23:30. (€13 - 18). ☑☑

Bella Stória S-2, Bentinckstraat 28, tel. (+31) 204 88 05 99, www.bellaistoria.info. It's fantastic southern Italian food that makes Bella Stória one of the better Italian restaurants in Amsterdam. The hosts not only brought their best cooking skills from the Mediterranean, they also brought their native land's warm hospitality. The friendly atmosphere ensures that you're only worry will be how to finish a generous serving of tasty pasta or pizza. We're not the first to discover its amazing fresh mozzarella, so it would be wise to book a table in advance.

► Open 11:00 - 23:30. Closed Mon, Tue. (€12 - 16). ☹

Jamaican

Planet Rose S-3, Nicolaas Beetsstraat 47, tel. (+31) 206 12 98 38, www.planetrose.info. The cheap chairs and tacky adverts make Planet Rose seem more like a snack bar than a Jamaican restaurant where the food is exceptional. Once inside it seems more like you're in the canteen of some obscure football team than in a real restaurant, but if you can ignore appearances, chef Mama-Rose will take you on a culinary journey through our planet's most relaxed island nation. Each dish on the menu comes with a personal story on its background and all taste delicious, especially the tender goat curry, jerked chicken and ackee and saltfish. ► Open 14:00 - 22:00. (€15). ☹ ☒ ☓ ☕ ☺

Lunchroom

De Bakkerswinkel West S-2, Polonceaukade 1, tel. (+31) 206 88 06 32, www.debakkerswinkel.nl. Call it a jewel for British high tea lovers or think of it as a hardcore franchise concept set up to seduce consumers into buying overpriced scones and tea. Either way, it's kind of easy to overlook *this* Bakkerswinkel (one of the three in Amsterdam), as it gets swallowed between other interesting buildings in this area. Nonetheless, the spacious multi-floored bakery and café displays a certain Dutch charm and offers you a generous selection of tasty sweet and savoury food. ► Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 18:00. ☒

Dish Global Kitchen S-4, Overtoom 255, tel. (+31) 206 16 58 35, www.dishglobalkitchen.nl. This modern eatery has put a fresh spin on the Dutch fascination with sandwiches. Its unique, colourful menu is divided into African, American, Asian and European sections and the dish you choose is then placed on either local country bread or black or white rolls. While our neighbours opted for the spicy Chinese chicken, we ordered the New York heavyweight - a meatloaf sandwich. Soups and delicious desserts can also be had as well as gourmet coffee. Eat up front by the massive windows for people watching or in the back near the open-plan kitchen. Only cash and bank cards are accepted. ► Open 10:00-16:00, Thu, Fri 10:00-16:00, 18:00 - 22:00, Sat 10:00-16:00, 18:00 - 22:00, Sun 11:00 - 16:00. (€5 - 7). ☒

North African

Rainarai S-2, Polonceaukade 40 (Westergasfabriek), tel. (+31) 204 86 71 09, www.rainarai.nl. It's no mirage. The lonely brick building at the far end of the Westergasfabriek is a cosy oasis from the otherwise bland surroundings of empty space on one side and boring residential housing blocks across the street. Let the aroma of North African spices emanating from the open-plan kitchen lure you inside for a culinary experience you won't soon forget. Although you can try traditional *tagines* as main courses, you might get a broader introduction to this exotic cuisine by ordering the chef's special *mezze* menu that includes five different dishes. In the summer you can also sit outside on carpets and enjoy a mint tea in the sun. ► Open 12:00 - 23:00. Closed Mon. (€20). ☒



A relaxing day out in the sun

Restaurant Zina S-3, Bosboom Toussaintstraat 70, tel. (+31) 204 89 37 07, www.restaurantzina.com. If you're looking for a sleek, modern version of a traditional North African restaurant then look no further than Zina, which means beauty. Chef and owner Ab Tili uses only the freshest ingredients to create his Tunisian and Moroccan masterpieces and all of these delicious lamb and seafood dishes are accompanied by North African wines. The dimly lit hall breathes elegance with long brass candlesticks on each table, Moroccan lamps on the ceilings and a general air of refinement. ► Open 18:30 - 24:00. Closed Mon. (€20). ☒

Organic

Van De Buurt S-3, Gerard Callenburgstraat 1, tel. (+31) 207 72 91 05, www.vandebuurt.nl. Those who never got over their fear of vegetables should face their demons and step into this trendy organic restaurant and discover that vegetarian cuisine doesn't have to be bland or boring. The menu changes quite often, but every day you can expect a cosy atmosphere and enthusiastic staff. One thing that we certainly learned is that organic food doesn't have to be expensive. ► Open 10:00 - 24:00. (€9 - 10). ☹ ☒ ☓

Pizza

De Pizzabakkers S-4, Overtoom 501, tel. (+31) 206 18 65 54, www.depizzabakkers.nl. This trendy pizzeria has exposed brick walls, lots of wooden shelves and counters painted a dull grey and a solitary crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Part of the ground floor also serves as a storage area for the heaps of firewood that fuels the oven. Roughly a dozen thin-crust pizzas are served here including vegetarian options and you can sip a cappuccino, prosecco or Peroni beer while you wait for your food. The Pizza Bakers only accept credit or bank cards so put that cash back in your wallet. ► Open 17:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 23:00. Also at I-6, Plantage Kerklaan 2, tel. (+31) 206 25 07 40. Open 11:00 - 22:00; D-4, Haarlemmerdijk 128 tel. (+31) 204 27 41 44. (€9 - 14). ☒ ☒

Thai

Sawaddee Ka T-4, Overtoom 49, tel. (+31) 206 12 75 37, www.sawaddeeka.nl. Wooden statues of Thai women greet you in the shop front window of this elegant restaurant that offers pink walls covered in traditional masks. All of the usual red, green and yellow curries are available and the soups are so big that they can easily serve as meals themselves requiring no side dishes. Although its popularity usually means that a dinner reservation is a good idea, Sawaddee Ka also offers takeaway and a delivery service. ► Open 16:00 - 23:00. (€10 - 15). ☒ ☒ ☒

Billiards & Pool

Club 8 S-3, Admiraal de Ruyterweg 56b, tel. (+31) 206 85 17 03, www.club-8.nl. It's difficult not to get distracted by all the sports on TV as you try to sink your own ball in this modern pool café. On the first floor you'll find a spacious, well-equipped club. ▶ Open 14:00 - 03:00, Fri 14:00 - 04:00, Sat 12:00 - 04:00, Sun 12:00 - 03:00.

De Keu T-4, Eerste Helmerstraat 5 - 7, tel. (+31) 202 30 05 51, www.dekeu.nl. There are dozens of pool tables and a great Bohemian vibe here at one of Amsterdam's oldest billiards halls. The walls are covered in old movie posters and there's always plenty of people hanging about with drinks in their hands. Open until the wee hours of the morning, the Cue is much more than just a place to play eight ball. It's also one of Amsterdam West's best late night hotspots. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00.

Plan B S-4, Overtoom 209, tel. (+31) 208 45 62 21, www.planovertoom.nl. Walk down a pleasant, brightly lit alleyway off of Overtoom to find what has to be the biggest pool hall and sports bar combination you've probably ever seen. A dozen tables are kept in the main hall of what used to be a church, while less ambitious patrons lay about on comfortable chairs and couches smoking and drinking to their heart's content. Live sports are shown on a number of TVs and are also projected onto a huge screen. ▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Wed 14:00 - 01:00, Fri 16:00 - 03:00, Sat 14:00 - 03:00. 

Clubs

Club 8 S-3, Admiraal de Ruijterweg 56b, tel. (+31) 206 85 17 03, www.club-8.nl. Club 8 is a restaurant, a pool hall and a graffiti-sprayed, accessible dance club on the upper floor that wouldn't be out of place in the Berlin underground scene. Although there's usually sports playing on the screens on the restaurant floor, you can always slip away upstairs where extravagant electro parties like UNK and 'F**k Yeah' take place. When you consider that you can enjoy dinner while playing pool or ping pong, Club 8 could be your ticket to an insane night out, especially if you're interested in avoiding the buzz of the city centre. ▶ Open 14:00 - 03:00, Fri 14:00 - 04:00, Sat 12:00 - 04:00, Sun 12:00 - 03:00. 

Club Lite S-3, Jan van Galenstraat 24, tel. (+31) 625 45 65 18, www.clublite.nl. Club Lite doesn't conform to the usual club etiquette practiced by similar establishments around the globe. Things start a bit earlier here and finish around 02:00, so your next day isn't ruined by lack of sleep and on every first Saturday of the month you can join the fun at its Chocolate Club events where tasty chocolate smoothies and fresh fruit juices are served to spare you a hangover the following day. That said, the only rule at its popular Nataraj parties is to have a good time with great DJs. ▶ Open 20:00 - 02:00. 

North Sea Jazz Club S-2, Pazzanijkstraat 1, tel. (+31) 207 22 09 80, www.northseajazzclub.nl. Whoever said jazz hands and trumpets are too 1920s, think again. An initiative by the organisation of the National Jazz Festival, this charming little club in the Westergas area lets you relive the old jazz days by bringing you the latest international and local jazz and big-band revelations. In addition to live music in a typical jazz setting of small tables, a small stage and an impressive bar, there's a more lounge-like late-night area where you can enjoy simple dinners, finger food and cocktails. On a hot summer day, the wooden terrace area is lovely, but it pales in comparison to the über cool jazz atmosphere inside. ▶ Open Thu 21:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 18:30 - 01:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Sun. 

WesterUnie S-2, Klönneplein 4 - 6, tel. (+31) 206 84 84 96, www.westerunie.nl. The Westergasfabriek isn't your standard Amsterdam club located near another touristy square. Located next to the green Westerpark just outside the city centre, this massive culture and entertainment complex spans several former factories from the 19th century, with multi-floored industrial spaces of over 2500 square metres. You can find a party for every audience including popular music festivals such as Pitch (in July), house fests like Strafwerk and queer-friendly Funhouse parties. Try not to get lost in the maze that is the WesterUnie building. The cool people who hang out here would enjoy that too much. ▶ 

Cocktails

Vibes S-4, Jan Pieter Heijestraat 137, tel. (+31) 207 89 52 09, www.wix.com/vibes137/vibes. Vibes is a pleasant exception to the rule that cocktail bars in Amsterdam have to be pretentious and expensive. Owner Marco has followed his own vision rather than using a snazzy advertising agency to shape his brainchild. The result is a colourful mix of modern and trendy styles and drinks for an average of about €6, which is cheap, by local standards anyway. The selection of almost 30 cocktails offers something for everyone, but we recommend the Good Vibes. ▶ Open 08:30 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 08:30 - 03:00. 

Underground

OT301 S-4, Overtoom 301, tel. (+31) 207 79 49 13, www.ot301.nl. By day, OT301 is a place for dance, krav maga, cooking and other workshops, documentary screenings and other cultural events, but by night it's a live music venue and club. Huddled between the shops of Overtoom, you might want to check out this formerly squatted space if you're looking for less mainstream entertainment away from Rembrandtplein. At the weekend you can enjoy dubstep and drum 'n' bass club nights and the De Peper vegan restaurant in the same building is a pleasant alternative to Amsterdam steakhouses and pancake joints! ▶ Opening hours vary depending on the event. 

Dutch pancakes

Although everyone knows that the Dutch can't get enough stinky cheese, not everyone knows that they're also nuts about *pannenkoeken* (pancakes). Now, before you get too excited, we must warn you that you shouldn't expect a giant stack of flapjacks smothered in butter and maple syrup if you order pancakes at a local restaurant. In fact, pancakes here often resemble a huge omelette filled with all manner of toppings from savoury ingredients like bacon, cheese and mushrooms to more conventional delights like fruit and berries. You should also bear in mind that the dark syrup on offer at traditional Dutch pancake joints isn't even remotely related to the maple tree. It's actually a strong, bitter kind of treacle (molasses) that's definitely an acquired taste, especially if you're expecting sweet, golden maple syrup. The Dutch also love their *poffertjes*, which are tiny silver dollar-sized spongy pancakes that are often dusted with powdered sugar.



Sightseeing

West isn't exactly overloaded with sights but it does have beautiful parks and the Het Schip Museum is a must for anyone who wants to learn more about Amsterdam School architecture.

Churches

Chassé Church (Chassékerk) S-3, Chasséstraat 62.

This former Roman Catholic church dates from the 1920s, but in the early 2000s the congregation moved out due to a lack of worshippers. The episcopate decided to level the church, but the local government prevented demolition as the building is a listed historical monument. In 2004, the church was briefly inhabited by squatters, but they were eventually removed by riot police. Shortly after that, a large real estate company bought the building, but due to the economic crisis they sold it to a wealthy businessman in early 2011. The current rumour is that the Chassékerk will be converted into a cultural centre, but for now that's just speculation. ▶

De Opstandingskerk N-2, Bos en Lommerplein 325.

Located right next to the A10 motorway, you'll find the Opstandingskerk (Resurrection Church), which is also known as the Coal Scuttle. In case you don't know what that is, and we have to admit that we also had to look it up, it's a bucket made especially for hauling coal from a shed to the heater. The introduction of natural gas in the 1960s put an end to most coal stoves in the Netherlands, and also the scuttle. But for many Dutch it's still a household name and it fits the shape of this 48m-high church tower perfectly. The building is made of red bricks with tall windows stretching all the way to the top. The peaceful atmosphere of the church is partly due to the austere furnishings, the white stucco and the light wood. It can seat over 450 worshippers.

Museums

Het Schip Museum S-2, Spaardammerplantsoen 140, tel. (+31) 204 75 09 24, www.hetschip.nl/nl/.

One of the crowning achievements of Amsterdam School architecture, this unusual building was erected in 1919 as proof that affordable working-class housing could not only be functional, but stylish. The historic edifice is still inhabited today, so you have to take a guided tour of the museum, which begins at a former post office decorated with funky tile work characteristic of this Dutch design movement. Guides will lead you around the building pointing out interesting features like the bay window that looks like a cigar, little windmills on the façade that symbolise the rural workers who came to work in the city's factories and the iconic tower, which is meant to be a beacon of socialism. You can also view an apartment that looks as it did in the early 20th century and take in an exhibit dedicated to Amsterdam School architecture and its most renowned adherents. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults €7.50. 



Brick architecture at Het Schip Museum



Picturesque bridge in West

Parks & Gardens

Erasmuspark R-3, Between Jan van Galenstraat and Erasmusgracht.

Named after the famous Dutch theologian, philosopher, author and Catholic priest Desiderius Erasmus (1466 - 1536), this peaceful park is perhaps best known for its impressive flower garden and the fact that it's completely surrounded by a canal that is home to interesting water plants. It's a good place for a picnic or a relaxing walk, but if you're a bit more active a football pitch is also available. ▶

Westerpark T-2, Between Haarlemmerweg and Zaanstraat.

If you keep following the popular Haarlemmerdijk shopping street in the Jordaan past the Haarlemmerplein you'll eventually run into Westerpark, which is flanked by a canal on one side and train tracks and housing estates on the other. On one end you'll find a water feature, a children's playground and lots of walking and bike paths, while the far side is a vast open space popular with picnickers and kids honing their football skills. Just beyond the park is the Westergasfabriek, a former industrial zone that has been reclaimed by cafés, clubs and galleries. ▶

Places of interest

Bredius Swimming Pool (Brediusbad) S-2, Spaardammerdijk 306, tel. (+31) 206 84 69 84, www.westerparksport.nl.

Despite Holland's unforgiving and unpredictable climate, outdoor pools do exist in Amsterdam. Fortunately, the Brediusbad is a heated pool located in a pleasant green area. The pool is open until the beginning of September and in summer it hosts as many kids and parents as it can. Bear in mind that the noise can be deafening at times, but the group lessons might offer some consolation. ▶ Open 07:00 - 10:00; 14:00 - 18:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. 

West's culture factory

Westergasfabriek N-1, Polonceaukade 27, tel. (+31) 205 86 07 10, www.westergasfabriek.nl.

At the end of the 19th century the Imperial Continental Gas Association (ICGA) built two coal gas factory complexes in Amsterdam. In 1992, the buildings were used temporarily for creative and cultural activities. Today creative entrepreneurs work in the renovated historic buildings and many high-profile events and festivals are held here. The Westergasfabriek is regarded as a model for redevelopment for other cities far beyond the borders of the Netherlands.

Spaarndammerstraat T-2, Spaarndammerstraat. A little street in the north end of West, the Spaarndammerstraat used to be a factory workers' street, but now houses a variety of little shops, green grocers, libraries and restaurants. Take a leisurely stroll outside the buzz of the city centre. The Spaarndammerstraat and its surroundings will make for an excellent non-traditional slice of the city far from its reputation as a Mecca for sin. In short, you can see how the locals live away from the canals and debauchery of Centrum and see some pretty spectacular 20th-century Amsterdam School architecture as well. ▶

SportPlaza Mercator: Jan van Galenbad Jan van Galenstraat 315, tel. (+31) 206 18 89 11, www.sportplazamercator.nl. If you'd like to stay in shape after a weekend bender in Amsterdam frequenting more bars than you can remember, you might try a refreshing swim. The SportPlaza Mercator, which was voted the best swimming pool in Amsterdam by local newspapers, lies just outside the centre in West and offers both indoor and outdoor pools for an affordable price of €4.60. You can also relax in the sauna afterwards and a fitness area is available next to the pool for true health enthusiasts and fitness fanatics. ▶ ☒

Statues & Monuments

De Populair T-2, Westerpark, www.depopulair.nl. The Westerpark is home to many trees, but De Populair is the only interactive one. Fed by solar energy, this metal tree made entirely of sustainable materials can be used to recharge mobile devices and it's also a wi-fi hotspot. It can even receive and speak tweets. If you'd like to hear the tree talk, just send a message to it @depopulair.nl. ▶

De Ratelaar S-3, Kwakersplein. Designed by Rob Cerneus, this striking bronze statue of a man wearing a simple suit and a cap may not ring any bells at first, but the noise-maker in his hand holds the key to his story. For decades, men like these would walk around Amsterdam's neighbourhoods causing quite a racket, but they were actually paid to do this. In fact, they were sanitation workers who let local residents know that they could bring their rubbish out onto the street to be collected. In 2007, this statue was erected to honour 130 years of sanitation services in the city. ▶

How to Meet an Angel Monument S-4, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat 38. If you take a stroll down Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat in West, you'll no doubt spot loads of interesting shops and cafés, but every once in a while don't forget to look up. High atop the building at number 38, which is home to the Mentrum Psychiatric Clinic, you'll also see an intriguing work of art created by Russian-American artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. The monument depicts a patient on the top rung of an extensive ladder ready to return to the world where he will be looked after by a guardian angel.



Look for unique details on West's buildings

Shopping

You won't find many chain shops in West, which is what we like about it. Overtoom, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat and Bilderdijkstraat are a good place to start.

Alcohol, beer & Wine shops

De Wijnrank S-2, Fannius Scholtenstraat 56, tel. (+31) 206 86 27 07, www.dewijnrank.nu. Not only can you buy quality wine and whiskey at this local shop, but also what could be Amsterdam's largest selection of organic wines from around Europe. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun.

Antiques & Art

Odds & Sods S-4, Overtoom 139, tel. (+31) 206 12 25 40, www.renatoperotti.com/oddsods. As the clever name would suggest, this small shop offers odd bits of 20th-century antiques and applied art including art nouveau, art deco and Amsterdam School items. ▶ Open 13:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Sun.

Pardoes S-4, Overtoom 214, tel. (+31) 206 83 91 15, www.pardoes.eu. This shop specialises in fully restored antique furniture and mirrors. Pardoes also offers tailor-made tables and customised wooden furniture. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Sat 11:00 - 17:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue. ☒

Interior design & Furniture

Design Overtoom S-4, Overtoom 371, tel. (+31) 206 89 81 50, www.designovertoom.com. Design Overtoom sells funky and stylish lamps, mugs, furniture and the like, but remember that hip interior design doesn't come cheap. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sat 11:00 - 17:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. ☒

Friday Next T-4, Overtoom 31, tel. (+31) 206 12 32 92, www.fridaynext.com. It's both an interior design shop and a café all in one so you can drink a peppermint tea while perusing hand bags, couches, coffee mugs and lamps. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. ☒☒☒☒

Secondhand shops

Tutti Frutti S-3, Bilderdijkstraat 147, tel. (+31) 206 12 18 54, www.tutti-frutti.tv. This cosy little shop deals in second-hand designer clothes and you can also sell your own garments if they conform to Tutti Frutti's high standards. Otherwise you can just search for that special dress, watch or brand name handbag you've always wanted. It offers huge sales in January and August. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Mon 13:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun. Also at S-3, De Clercqstraat 112.

Speciality shops

British General Stores S-4, Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat 94, tel. (+31) 206 83 61 91, www.britishstore.nl. If you have a hankering for a Crunchie, Curly Wurly or some good old PG Tips tea, then pay a visit to British General Stores. Owner Lin stocks a massive range of genuine British goodies including HP sauce, Heinz baked beans, Jelly Babies and great English sausages. ▶ Open 10:30 - 18:00, Mon 13:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:30 - 17:00. Closed Sun. ☒☒

Karibu Wereldboetiek S-3, De Clercqstraat 123, tel. (+31) 204 12 22 45, www.karibugallery.nl. This wonderful shop sells all kinds of fair trade art, interior design items and souvenirs from around Africa including decorative toys made from tin cans in Madagascar. ▶ Open 13:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun.

J.P. Heijestraat is named after doctor and poet Jan Pieter Heije (1809 - 1876). This typical Amsterdam street is always abuzz with activity and this is most likely due to the large number of authentic local shops, restaurants and pubs that call this street home. J.P. Heijestraat runs perpendicular to popular Overtoom and crosses the picturesque Jacob van Lennep canal. The street is lined with trees on both sides and is a good place to explore if you're looking for a real Amsterdam experience away from the well-beaten tourist trails of the city centre.

Cafés & Restaurants

Lavanta S-4, Jan Pieterheijestraat 125, tel. (+31) 207 71 59 05, www.lavanta.nl At first glance the idea of a Turkish delicatessen offering savoury and sweet treats on a fashionable shopping street full of young parents and yuppies might not sound all that unique, but this tiny purple shop is a cut above the rest. Sample delicious wraps, homemade cakes and authentic Anatolian cuisine with lamb and exotic spices. If you're still not convinced, then visit its website, which is like porn for foodies and gourmets. Now that's unique for such a small shop. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00. Closed Mon.

Saffraan Traiteur & Catering S-4, J.P. Heijestraat 128, tel. (+31) 206 85 55 40, www.saffraantraiteur.nl Even if you're not really into Mediterranean and Dutch cuisine, this charming little food shop will make your mouth water. The ever-changing daily menus, which start from €7, vary from pasta to potato dishes flavoured with tasty Moroccan spices or Italian herbs. Perhaps you're in the mood for something more substantial? No problem. Mashed potatoes with vegetables and sausage are guaranteed to warm you up on a cold winter day. Have a seat in the cosy shop filled with yummy food overlooking the kitchen or order it to go. Saffraan has everything you need for a perfect three-course meal at home, not to mention wine and cheese, and best of all there are hardly any dishes to wash afterwards! ▶ Open 16:00 - 21:30, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 21:30.

Shopping

Asahi Sports S-4, Overtoom 360, tel. (+31) 206 12 73 73, www.asahi.nl Located on the corner of J.P. Heijestraat and the bustling artery of Amsterdam West, Overtoom, this independent shop sells a wide variety of sports equipment and accessories. But bear in mind that this isn't the place for badminton rackets or croquet mallets as Asahi has been the go-to spot in the city for combat sports, fitness machines and nutritional supplements since 1974. So if you're looking for the best protein shake powders, a pair of new boxing gloves, some yoga gear, fitness literature, some free weights or the latest training equipment, this is the place for you. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Mon 13:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Big & Belg S-4, J.P. Heijestraat 83, tel. (+31) 206 12 65 04, www.bigenbelg.nl Not everyone appreciates the Intertoys toy stores of the world. In fact, some people would sooner set their vintage doll collections on fire than visit one of these huge chains owned by faceless multinational corporations. Luckily, there are still small independent toy shops like Big & Belg around that pride themselves on the quality of their dolls, games and action figures. This shop in the heart of Oud-West is chock full of toys including many hanging from the ceiling. It sells well-known brands as well as unique items, clothing and homemade jewellery. Take that, Toys R Us! ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

DOTshop S-4, Jan Pieter Heijestraat 108, tel. (+31) 206 12 90 16, www.dot-shop.nl One of five furniture shops of this chain in Amsterdam and Haarlem, DOTshop (Design on Textiles) sells its own line of fashionable design products. This shop in Oud-West is stuffed with a large number of sofas, tables, blinds, curtains, lamps and other home furnishings. Naturally, hip design doesn't come cheap, but this shop certainly fits in with the general atmosphere of this neighbourhood, which is stylish and trendy. You can try its other location at Van Woustraat 122 in De Pijp for 250m² of fashionable furniture. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun.

Jan Piet D.I.O. Drogisterij Body & Beauty S-4, Jan Pieterheijestraat 150, tel. (+31) 206 12 36 18, www.diodrogist.nl One can't help but notice the generic feel of most Dutch pharmacy chains like Kruidvat and D.A., but this little chemist's, which is now part of the larger D.I.O. chain, has still retained its age-old nostalgic Amsterdam vibe. Located on the hip J.P. Heijestraat shopping street, this is the place for your daily needs including medicine, cosmetics and other name brand hygiene products. It's a little bit hidden and you could easily walk right past it, but if you do then you won't hear the ladies at the counter greet you with a heartfelt 'good day'. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Loenatig S-4, Jan Pieter Heijestraat 79 - 81, tel. (+31) 203 30 18 33, www.loenatig.nl Looking for something unique to purchase in Amsterdam before you head home? This recently opened workshop and shop in Amsterdam West offers all sorts of creative fashion and accessories that are made by hand. You'll find baby clothing, bibs, booklets and silk screened t-shirts as well as other items such as fashionable jumpers and skirts. And if you're a little confused by another shop on the same street called Loenatig, don't worry. It's not a coincidence. That shop also sells loads of clothing made in this workshop. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:30, Sat 13:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. [Loenatig](http://www.loenatig.nl)

Wellness

Sun Mountain Studio S-4, Jan Pieter Heijestraat 90-III, tel. (+31) 647 43 88 80, www.sunmountainstudio.nl It might take you a while to find, so keep an eye out for the small Sun Mountain Studio logo on the door to find this unique establishment located on the third floor of a building on J.P. Heijestraat. Founder Zoe offers a variety of services including meditation workshops, massages and lots of other ways to ensure the health of both your body and mind, and perhaps your soul! Check her website for attractive offers, special theme days and workshop dates. If you're interested in healing your body through yoga and other alternative methods, this is the place to go for beginners as well as advanced practitioners. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun.



J.P. Heijestraat is full of great shopping opportunities

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app

Amsterdam Zuid, or South, is perhaps best known for its large concentration of superb museums, which is the reason so many hotels are also located here. It will come as no surprise then that the city's very own Rodeo Drive, P.C. Hoofstraat, which is occupied by brands such as Bulgari, Vuiton and Chanel, is surrounded by 4- and 5-star accommodation in Zuid. Just east of the so-called Museum Quarter you'll find the hip De Pijp district full of bohemian cafés, fun bars and unique shops. It's also home to the Albert Cuyp Market, packed with stalls selling pretty much anything. Just take tram No.2 or 5 to reach the heart of the district. For a map of Zuid see p.42.

Restaurants

Pasta Tricolore F-8, P.C. Hoofstraat 52, tel. (+31) 206 64 83 14. This self-proclaimed paninoteca and trattoria is like a shrine to Italian cuisine. Upon entering you'll be overwhelmed by the aromas of imported cheeses, fresh brewed espresso and cooked garlic. Choose from a wide variety of meats, olives, cheeses, pastas, salads and desserts from the deli or head to the back for incredible Italian sandwiches too numerous to mention here to eat on the premises or to take away. ▶ Open 09:00 - 19:00, Sun 12:00 - 19:00. (€4 - 6). 

De Spiegel F-8, Lijnbaansgracht 277, tel. (+31) 206 26 69 04. Within spitting distance of the Rijksmuseum, this cosy family-style restaurant and café has been serving pancakes and other international food since 1907. Take a seat under the hanging nick-nacks clinging to the ceiling and order a big burger, a healthy salad or a hot drink. The kiebitz (hot cocoa with rum and lots of whipped cream) really hits the spot on a cold and rainy Amsterdam day. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sun 10:00 - 16:00. (€8 - 12).





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 Home delivery	 Live music
 Outside seating	 Pets allowed
 Sauna	 Smoking section
 Swimming pool	 Takeaway

Sightseeing

Albert Cuyp Market H-9, Albert Cuypstraat, www.albertcuypmarkt.com. This vibrant daily market located in the bohemian De Pijp district is chock full of stands selling clothing, jewellery, fresh seafood like crab and lobster, flowers, lingerie, souvenirs, fresh fruit, hand bags, shoes, cheese and many more things you can't do without as well as plenty of food stalls. In short, it's more than a shopping opportunity, it's a bona fide tourist attraction ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun.

Coster Diamonds F-10, Paulus Potterstraat 2 - 6, tel. (+31) 203 05 55 55, www.costerdiamonds.com. Coster Diamonds is one of the oldest diamond factories in the world and its professional craftsmen have been cutting and polishing expensive jewels since Moses Coster opened his first shop on Waterlooplein in 1840. Today you can take a free tour of the factory, which moved to its current location in three mansions in the Museum district in 1970. You can learn nearly everything about diamonds here in a variety of languages and discover helpful tips about how the four Cs (carat, colour, clarity and cut) influence the price of each gem. You can also watch men practicing their trade, learn how to spot fake diamonds and view replicas of famous gems such as the Koh-I-Noor which was re-cut by Coster at the request of Queen Victoria. After a brief tour you'll be led upstairs to a diamond showroom where the owners hope you'll be tempted to buy a diamond of your own. At the end of a labyrinth of more shops you'll reach the Amsterdam Diamond Museum which charges admission, but you can also just exit the building if you've had enough sparkling carbon for one day. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Admission: free.

Diamant Museum Amsterdam F-10, Paulus Potterstraat 8, tel. (+31) 203 05 53 00, www.diamantmuseumamsterdam.nl. Start your tour of the museum with a film that illustrates how diamonds are formed and the science behind the process, how the first diamonds were discovered on the banks of Indian rivers thousands of years ago and how Europeans began to covet them and create some of the largest mining operations in the world. Move on to the exhibits that describe the polishing and cutting process, displays of replicas of famous jewels and explanations of the illegal trade in blood diamonds. You can also take a digital photo of yourself wearing a diamond encrusted crown which you can e-mail to friends and finish with the museum's most prized possession - the Coster Skull, which is an odd and truly bizarre gorilla skull covered in 17,000 small diamonds. A museum shop and café are also available. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Admission: adults €7.50, children 13 - 18 years €5, children 12 and under free. 

Heineken Experience G-9, Stadhouderskade 78, tel. (+31) 205 23 92 22, www.heineken.com/experience. If you'd like to see how one of the world's most popular beers is made and sample the finished product at its ultramodern bar, then look no further than the Heineken Experience, which truly is an experience. Although this tasty brew, which is distributed in over 170 countries around the globe isn't produced on the premises, you can take a tour and learn about the company's evolution from its founding in 1864 in Amsterdam to its current status as a multinational brand. View exhibits that chronicle Heineken's innovative leaps in both brewing technology and marketing that launched the famous red star logo on six continents. Pass the awards gallery and enter another room where the four basic ingredients of beer are explained and then move on to a large hall filled with giant copper vats where you can take part in the process by grinding malt. Next pass the stables where the Heineken Shire horses are kept, eventually making your way to the Brew You 4D experience where you see, feel and smell what it's like to be brewed from start to finish. Take a break at the tasting bar where a guide will pour you a brew. Proceed to the video room with green couches and a ceiling made of Heineken bottles, bottle your own personalised brew for €6, create your own video or move on to the STR bottle experience. At long last you'll reach the climax of the tour where you can enjoy two cold beers with dozens of other Heineken fans. Exit the experience via the Heineken shop where you can get pretty much anything with the Heineken logo on it. If you still haven't found the perfect souvenir then take the Heineken Shuttle Boat to the Heineken Brandstore near Rembrandt Square. ▶ Open 11:00 - 19:30 (last tour at 17:30). Admission: €17. 

House of Bols Cocktail and Genever Experience F-10, Paulus Potterstraat 14, tel. (+31) 205 70 85 75, www.houseofbols.nl. Founded in Amsterdam in 1575, the House of Bols is one of the world's oldest spirits makers, not to mention one of the oldest firms on record. Its renowned jenever recipe dates back to as early as 1664 and was introduced to the British roughly 25 years later where it was modified to English tastes and produced locally as gin. Although the venerable company moved away to a location near The Hague in 1969 it opened this amazing tasting experience and bartending school near the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam in 2007. The award-winning Genever Experience showcases the roughly 40 liquors it sells in 110 countries around the world as well as the wide varieties of jenever it produces. Take a self-guided, interactive tour and learn about the history of the House of Bols, discover the importance of both smell, taste and colour in the drinking process, practice your bartending skills in the flair simulator and, best of all, taste a delicious cocktail prepared by graduates of the upstairs drinks pouring school in the trendy Mirror Bar. Just choose your desired cocktail on the touch screen, print out the recipe and hand it to the bartender. Additional cocktails cost only €5 each so you can make an evening of it every Friday night! A souvenir shop sells all manner of gifts from personalised liquor bottles and clothing to Delftware spirits receptacles. ▶ Open 12:00 - 18:00, Fri 12:00 - 22:00. Closed Tue. Admission: €11.50. 

Vincent van Gogh

Van Gogh Museum F-10, Paulus Potterstraat 7, tel. (+31) 205 70 52 00, www.vangoghmuseum.com. This fantastic museum is closed for renovations until April 25, 2013, but in the meantime you can view Mr. Van Gogh's incredible works of art at the Hermitage Museum (see Centrum Plantage Sightseeing). ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Fri 10:00 - 22:00. 

Rijksmuseum F-9, Museumplein/Jan Luijkenstraat 1, tel. (+31) 206 74 70 47, www.rijksmuseum.com. This colossal building occupies nearly an entire city block and lies in stark contrast to most of the city's narrow canal-side abodes. View ancient weapons, gold and silver artefacts and of course an incredible collection of the nation's best old masters including Rembrandt, Vermeer, Bol and Steen. Scenes depict everything from biblical tales and windmilled landscapes to portraits and illustrations of 17th-century family life, not to mention exotic scenes from Holland's far flung Golden Age colonies. Some of the museum's most famous paintings like Rembrandt's *The Jewish Bride* and *The Night Watch* are also described in detail in laminated information cards, so you can take your time and discover interesting facts about each of these canvases. Queues can be long at peek times, mostly due to security checks, so plan accordingly. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Admission: adults €12.50, 18 and under free.

Stedelijk Museum F-10, Museumplein 10, tel. (+31) 205 73 29 11, www.stedelijk.nl. The Netherlands' most important museum for modern and contemporary art was in a coma for an unexpected eight years, but is once again open to the public. The entrance has moved from the street to the park side, which means that the cultural living room of Amsterdam now has its own chill-out and meeting area outside. The addition of a new building has doubled the size of the museum and the Stedelijk is now the proud owner of the largest exhibition space in Holland. It has no windows, which makes this 1100m² area also suitable for displaying digital and video art. The interior of the old and new buildings have been completely integrated, so you'll hardly notice where the 100-year-old edifice ends and the modern one begins. ▶ Open closed. Admission: adults €10, children 13 - 18 years €5, children 12 and under free. 



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Zuidoost is Amsterdam's most multicultural district. More than 130 nationalities live here and these diverse cultural backgrounds are reflected in its many festivals with foreign roots like the Summer Festival, which is spread across five weekends in July and August, and the Southeast Jazz Festival in August. And despite its many modern skyscrapers, Zuidoost, or de Bijlmer as the locals call it, can often feel like a small village. It boasts several parks and green spaces including the Gaasper Park, the crown jewel of them all. It's also a fairly new area, its first houses having been built as recent as 1968. Recent development around Ajax's stadium, the Amsterdam Arena, has led to a cultural renaissance, not to mention an economic boom. Amsterdam's biggest shopping centres and megastores are almost all located here and the Heineken Music Hall and the brand new Ziggo Dome are both state of the art concert halls attracting world renowned talent from around the globe. Take in a concert, spend the day shopping or just walk around and experience the diversity of this vibrant area that most tourists never see.

Getting there

Zuidoost can be easily reached by metro, train or bus. The easiest way to get here is to take a 20-minute metro ride from the Central Station. Yellow line 54 begins at the Central Station and ends at Gein, while green line 50 passes the western part of the city and has the same destination. Red line 53 follows the yellow line until Van der Madeweg and then travels east until it reaches the Gaasperplas.

Accommodation

Zuidoost has something for everyone, from futuristic four-star accommodation to Bed & Breakfasts.

Upmarket

NEW
Fletcher Hotel Amsterdam U-2, Schepenbergweg 50, tel. (+31) 203 11 36 70, www.fletcherhotelamsterdam.nl. This huge hotel is so modern it looks like it belongs in a science fiction movie. To find it just look for the shimmering blue polka-dotted column rising up from the Schepenbergweg. But the futuristic theme doesn't end there as all of the rooms also look like accommodation on the Starship Enterprise, but much more luxurious. That said, the see-through shower tube in the middle of the room might not be to everyone's liking or perhaps just the opposite. You can also enjoy excellent food and drink on the top floors of the building in either the Pi Sky Lounge or the Pi Sky Bar. In short, the hotel is an absolute must if you're into cutting-edge design. ▶ 120 rooms (doubles from €99).

Mid-range

Campanile Hotel & Restaurant Amsterdam Zuidoost V-1, Loosdrechtreed 3, tel. (+31) 206 96 11 29, www.campanile-amsterdam-zuidoost.nl. Amsterdam parking fees are among the highest in Europe, but fortunately you won't encounter this problem here as parking's free of charge, and secure. If, however, you don't have your own vehicle there's a metro station a short walk away, which means you can get to the centre of Amsterdam in 18 minutes flat. The friendly staff, free wireless internet, clean rooms with excellent mattresses, the varied breakfast buffet and the quiet location are a few more reasons to spend the night here. Sadly, the rooms are rather dated and are not particularly cosy, but otherwise you can't complain much. ▶ 73 rooms (singles and doubles from €93).

Symbol key

	Air conditioning		Child-friendly
	Conference facilities		Credit cards
	Fitness centre		Facilities for the disabled
	Free wireless internet		Guarded parking
	Home delivery		Live music
	Outside seating		Pets allowed
	Sauna		Smoking section
	Swimming pool		Takeaway

Bed & Breakfast

Yoga House V-1, Leerdamweg 471, tel. (+31) 206 97 26 49, www.yoga-house.nl. Three rooms with fairytale names like the Golden and the Flower room are available in this colourful house that owner Ilma calls the Yoga House. A communal living room with a kitchen and a balcony is available to all guests and the back garden is literally located on the Gaasperplas, one of the best park areas in this Amsterdam suburb. The Yoga House has a cosy atmosphere where you can also prepare your own meals and massages or yoga classes can be arranged if you reserve them in advance. A nearby metro stop is your ticket to the city centre of Amsterdam. ▶ 3 rooms (3 doubles €40 - 75 including breakfast).

Hostels

Hostelle U-2, Frankemaheerd 2, tel. (+31) 207 70 35 04, www.hostelle.com. Tired of bleary-eyed men who've had too much to drink or smoke leering at you as you return to your hostel? Don't feel safe staying at a dingy backpackers' hovel that caters to stag parties or dodgy drifters? No problem. This wonderful hostel designed by women for women offers stylish accommodation for ladies who'd like to avoid the lesser representatives of the male species. Stylish private rooms include ensuite facilities and amenities like shampoo and toiletries, while the dorms have in-room lockers and a shelf next to each bunk bed. Each room has a different theme so you can pretend that you're on the African savannah or in a Chinese palace. ▶ (8-bed dorms from €19/person, 6-bed dorms from €21/person, 4-bed dorms from €23, double rooms from €35). Breakfast: €5.

Camping

Camping Gaasperplas V/W-1, Loosdrechtreed 7, tel. (+31) 206 96 93 69, www.gaspercamping.nl. Nature lovers can't go wrong with Camping Gaasperplas. Amsterdam's biggest campground is spacious and well-designed and located in the far southeast of the city. But thanks to the metro station right next door, the bustling city centre is only a 20-minute ride away. And although this complex is huge with more than 410 plots for campers, caravans or motor homes, you'll always find a peaceful place to chill out as the campsite is situated on the edge of a 166 hectare park full of trees and flowering plants. The toilet and shower facilities are modern and extras include free wireless internet access and washing machines as well as driers. And if for some reason you don't want to cook in the great outdoors, a basic restaurant and a mini supermarket are available on the grounds. A nearby swimming area, water playground and barbecue sites are some more perks. ▶ Tent with 1 person €12, camper with 2 persons €23.50, caravan €28.



ZO! XXX

Zuidoost



Amsterdam Southeast is rapidly developing into a national hotspot for entertainment. Amsterdam Southeast is home to the Ajax soccer club, the Amsterdam Arena, Heineken Music Hall, Ziggo Dome and Pathé mega movie theatre.

There are mega store shopping facilities for sports, electronics, furniture and design. It's also an important Amsterdam business area home to many international companies.

Only a stone's throw from the city centre of Amsterdam and Schiphol Airport, you too can discover a 'New Amsterdam'. The 80,000 citizens of Amsterdam Southeast that come from diverse nations across the world will give you a warm welcome.

Don't forget to taste their food.



Royal changes

On April 30, 2013, the Netherlands will once again have a king on the throne: King Willem-Alexander. For the first time in 123 years a man will be the head of the Dutch monarchy. This also means an end to 33 years of Queen Beatrix's reign. The popular 75-year-old



head of state will step down, which makes her only the third monarch ever to abdicate in Holland. Usually the accession to the throne is usually regarded as a divine process, which doesn't occur until the previous king or queen has died. But Prince Willem-Alexander has already chosen the title of King Willem-Alexander. He is married to his Argentinian spouse Maxima and they have three children: Amalia, Alexia and Ariane.

In contrast to his famous forefathers who were the face of royalty in Holland until 1890, the eighth Dutch monarch didn't choose the expected title of King William IV. This is perhaps a symbolic break with the past as his three male predecessors had dubious reputations. King William I (1815 - 1840) is still mainly remembered as the man who enriched himself at the expense of the treasury, while King William II (1840 - 1849) was a notorious party animal. Unfortunately, he never dared to publicly admit his homosexuality. William III (1849 - 1890) really took the cake. His rather inelegant nickname was 'King Gorilla', a not very flattering pet name he earned with his outlandish public tantrums. He was a stranger to democratic manners and he regularly suggested that government ministers should be executed.

The four women (Emma 1890 - 1898), Wilhelmina (1890 - 1948), Juliana (1948 - 1980) and Beatrix (1980 - 2013) who took the throne after them, were much more popular with the common people. Beatrix was perhaps the most beloved monarch as she was fully dedicated to the people and Dutch society on the whole. Thankfully, Willem-Alexander has managed to swap his former image as a posh student for that of a much respected head of state and the scars his adolescent antics left on the Royal Family have faded with time. And although Willem-Alexander knows that a large segment of Holland's House of Commons would like to revise his job description, he has reconciled himself to his new role. While his mother was averse to all types of modern modes of communication famously shunning mobile phones, the new king has embraced technology. While in Antarctica, for example, Willem-Alexander blogged about the 'impressive landscape'.

Queen Beatrix has already made sacrifices after signing the Abdication Act. As head of state she 'earned' €5.2 million a year, but as princess she will only receive €470,000. She will, however, have access to a €1 million expense account in case she needs to go shopping. Willem-Alexander, once known as the Prince of Lager in his youth, is more fortunate. He has finally become king, but no less than nine other European heirs to the throne from Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Norway, the United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco and Belgium trail behind him in the royal waiting room awaiting their chance to do snatch his throne!

Restaurants

Zuidoost is known for its multicultural neighbourhoods, so it will come as no surprise that you can find anything from Chinese takeaways and Turkish kebab shops to Indonesian restaurants here.

Bagels

Bagels & Beans V-1, Bijlmerplein 561 B, tel. (+31) 203 65 33 81, www.bagelsbeans.nl. This huge chain of Dutch bagel joints has taken the Netherlands by storm and as much as we'd like to poke fun at this large food franchise we have to admit that, although the bagels here won't top the warm New York bagels of our youth, they're probably the best we've had on this continent. Naturally, a wide choice of coffee, tea and juice is also available as well as free wi-fi, so if you're in the area then drop by, power up your iPad and enjoy a tasty tuna melt bagel or something else from its large menu. ▶ Open 08:02 - 18:03, Sat 09:01 - 17:32, Sun 09:32 - 17:32. (€4 - 7).

Chinese

Asian Fantasy V-1, Bijlmerplein 561, tel. (+31) 206 96 82 42. The name Asian Fantasy might conjure up titillating ideas, but the location certainly doesn't. This Chinese restaurant is hidden away in a narrow alleyway off a popular shopping street, so if you're looking for a cosy place for a meal, you might as well keep on walking. On the other hand, the food is better than average and although a first look at the menu won't exactly supply any surprises, the chef can turn any dish into something spectacular. You won't find microwave stir fries with lots of sticky sauces made to suit Western tastes, but proper Asian dishes with authentic flavours. We recommend the spicy soups. ▶

Lucky Garden V-2, Snellerwaardgracht 7, tel. (+31) 206 97 72 34, www.luckygarden.nl. From the outside there's nothing enticing about Lucky Garden and its appearance might actually inspire the opposite. Once inside the average décor of common Asian kitsch furnishings won't impress you either. But once you've had a meal here, you're bound to come back and with a menu that may actually offer too many choices you can drop by 230 times and not eat the same dish twice. Our favourites include the spicier Szechuan dishes and the vegetarian stew. Lucky Garden's sincere and friendly service, which has been in the trusted hands of the Tang family for three decades, is yet another reason to give it a shot. We do, however, suggest a name change though as there doesn't seem to be a garden anywhere in sight. ▶ Open 15:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon. (€20 - 24).



Is it real or is it Photoshop?

Coffee & Tea

Starbucks U/V-1, Arena Boulevard 618, www.starbucks.com. Four stools, six tables, a leather couch and a simple seating area: that's all the décor this Starbucks has to offer. And of course a lot of good coffee. However, if you'd like to sit outside, that's possible as well in this station's refreshment room. It's also a good place for people not addicted to caffeine, as it has a wide selection of freshly squeezed smoothies and spicy drinks like chai tea. If you're simply looking for a snack, you could always gorge on some of the many cakes and pastries in the display cases, but you should avoid the seats near the front door on cold days, unless you're Inuit. ▶ Open 07:00 - 20:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. 

Fast food & Quick eats

Keurslager Wim Pouw V-2, W.c. Reigersbos 139, tel. (+31) 206 97 76 22, www.pouw.wimkeurslager.nl. Although it might be best to avoid this place on a bleak and chilly day when the automatic doors cause a draught that could flash freeze your spine, the considerate and courteous ladies behind the counter, who obviously enjoy their jobs, will make you feel welcome any time of the year. Due to their enthusiasm and encyclopaedic knowledge of the meat laid out before them, you're bound to end up with a lot more in your shopping bag than you probably anticipated. We recommend you order the beef carpaccio sandwich for a picnic in the park, because the butcher's shop isn't exactly the cosiest place to eat lunch.

King Doner U-1, Bijlmerplein 561E, tel. (+31) 206 96 60 00, www.kingdoner.nl. This restaurant seems to be a cut above the rest of the streetside vendors and small kebab joints that litter this area of town. Since 2004, the staff have made tasty kebabs right in front of you before quickly sending you off packing. If you don't mind the plain atmosphere you can also choose to relax and have a seat. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00, Sun 12:00 - 20:00.

McDonald's U-2, Muntbergweg 16-18, tel. (+31) 206 97 10 62, www.mcdonaldsrestaurant.nl. For years green activists, who seemed to think that this American hamburger chain was solely responsible for childhood obesity, the hole in the ozone layer and the Kennedy assassination, looked down on McDonald's. Their harsh criticism was not ignored by the multinational's management and since then the fast food leviathan has made some big steps forward. This particular branch in Amsterdam Southeast for example is the greenest Golden Arches in the world. Solar panels, solar collectors and a number of other inventive devices supposedly illustrate the company's concern for the environment. This obviously doesn't effect the flavour of a Big Mac or a McFlurry, so what about the obesity? Two fitness devices in the Gym & Fun corner enable you to burn off the calories you've just taken in. ▶ Also at Bijlmerplein 368. 

Vishandel E. Koning V-2, Reigersbos 167, tel. (+31) 206 97 37 75. Fishermen might as well stow away their rods and reels. This simple looking shop only offers a few stools for fast food diners, but it does provide many different varieties of fresh fish. Naturally you can also try that most dubious of local snacks, raw herring, and a deep fryer prepares other Dutch delicacies like *kibbeling* and *lekkerbek* (both are kinds of fish fried in batter). You can also take home and enjoy more sophisticated dishes like the king prawn boat colourfully presented on a bed of bamboo leaves.



They certainly know how to have fun in Zuidooost

Vishandel Theo van de Geest Bijlmerplein 862, tel. (+31) 206 97 33 30. Although not the cheapest place in the district to buy seafood, the Theo van de Geest fish shop is certainly one of the better stores of its genre in this area of Amsterdam. The raw herring, a Dutch favourite, is especially good here and the smoked fish is nothing to sneeze at either. ▶ Open 08:00 - 17:30, Sat 08:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

French

Langerlust Provincialeweg 24, tel. (+31) 203 42 04 40, www.langerlust.nl. This place deserves a pat on the back, if only because the national ban on smoking is strictly adhered to here. And few places in Amsterdam have better atmosphere than this eatery located in a nature reserve. The waiters aren't always as helpful as they could be, but they were obviously still being trained when we stopped by so we can overlook this shortcoming. We recommend the rustic burger, which can be washed down with a good house wine. The idyllic herb garden is also worth the trip. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 22:00. (€20 - 24). 

Ice cream & Frozen yoghurt

Australian Homemade U-1, Arena Boulevard 40 (kiosk 3), tel. (+31) 297 32 30 90, www.austriallianhomemade.com. This ice cream and bonbon chain which has branches in various countries throughout the world also has an outlet in Zuidooost. The ice cream is prepared with fresh ingredients and has, despite its name, no connection with Australia. In addition to the tasty ice cream, a variety of delicious chocolates are also sold here. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00. (€3 - 6). 

International

De Houten Vier V-2, Abcouderstraatweg 46, tel. (+31) 294 28 42 81, www.houtenvier.nl. As a travel writer you sometimes find a special place that you would rather keep to yourself for fear that an influx of customers might just be detrimental to the atmosphere of the restaurant. The clubhouse at the Olympus Golf Club, with its stylish interior is one such place. Despite the rather snobbish image of golfers in chequered plus-fours and funny shoes, this establishment offers top-quality signature dishes and excellent service within the relaxed wooden décor of the club canteen. The view of the fairways and greens of the golf course is breathtaking when viewed from the expansive terrace and if you think you may have had one too many, an alcohol meter is discretely located next to the toilets. ▶ Open 09:00 - 21:00. 

La Place Amsterdam Zuidoost U-2, Muntbergweg 22 - 24, tel. (+31) 203 65 53 30, www.laplace.nl. You'll find this large food court at the V&D department store only a stone's throw from the A9 motorway. La Place specialises in fresh produce varying from sandwiches with generous fillings to large portions of stir-fry dishes and the quality of the home-made soups is also better than average. Unfortunately, you'll have to put up with the atmosphere of the adjacent motorway, a view of the American golden arches and businessmen in a hurry who are keen to use the free wireless internet. ▶ Open 08:00 - 21:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 21:00. ☺ P ♻️ 🗑️ 🚰 📶

Japanese

Ich-i-e U-1, Arena Boulevard 175, tel. (+31) 206 91 02 31, www.ichi-e.nl. Liberally translated, the Japanese saying *Ich-i-Go Ich-i-E* means 'to enjoy the moment', which isn't really hard to do in this trendy, modern place. Whatever section you choose, the ground floor with its rotating bar, the first floor with its attractive tables or the top floor with the view and pleasant outdoor terrace, you're guaranteed to have a great experience. The décor is ultra trendy and although the dishes are slightly overpriced and the staff are still in nappies, the food is quite good. The real Japanese chefs (no foreign substitutes here) turn every sashimi and sushi dish into a small feast for the senses. ▶ Open 11:30 - 21:00. (€13 - 18). ☺ ♻️ 🗑️ 🚰 📶 📱 📺 📷

Lunchrooms

Absolute Taste U-1, Hoogoorddreef 7a, tel. (+31) 206 97 75 68, www.absolutetaste.nl. A fusion cuisine establishment is just what this area, which is dominated by Chinese restaurants, needed. Absolute Taste caters to professionals who work in the surrounding businesses, but that doesn't mean that you have to wear a tie to fill your belly at this cosmopolitan place. The interior is a mix of modern and Asian chic and we recommend the pasta with sautéed redfish fillet or one of its massive club sandwiches. When the sun comes out you can do this outside. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00. Closed Sat, Sun. (€14). ☺ ♻️ 🗑️ 🚰 📶 📱 📺 📷

Sweet Store V-1, Bijlmerplein 997, tel. (+31) 204 52 91 31. Few businesses have a more colourful atmosphere than Sweet Store where virtually every chair is in a different hue, some brighter than others. The menu also reflects this style with dishes from at least six continents and we thoroughly enjoyed the generously filled Surinamese sandwiches and home-made soups. If you find it odd that the boss occasionally corrects the chef or the waiters in public, bear in mind that all of the employees are part of a work experience project, so you're basically sitting in a kind of public classroom, but with lots of tasty and affordable food. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun. (€4 - 6). ♻️ 🗑️ 🚰 📶 📱 📺 📷



Zuidoost is a district full of contrasts

Café confusion

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a café as 'a small restaurant selling light meals and drinks' but also adds that in North America it's a 'bar or nightclub', while in South Africa a café is 'a shop selling sweets, cigarettes, newspapers, etc.' To add to this confusion it also mentions that the word is derived from the French meaning 'coffee' or 'coffee house.' Obviously in Amsterdam 'coffeeshops' are something entirely different. So perhaps the Anglo-Saxons are to blame and simply can't properly define this most popular of establishments. But surely the Dutch can, right? Well, not really. In fact, locals often refer to bars as cafés and, to add even more confusion to this complicated linguistic problem, they call what the English consider a café a lunchroom. Americans would probably call these lunchrooms cafeterias. Confused yet? In this guide we've tried to simplify things by listing places where you put your own food on a tray as a cafeteria and a café as a laid back venue that's good for a coffee and a light meal or breakfast. We've also made a category for classic cafés that includes historic institutions with lots of local colour. Naturally, you can find many of these café qualities at a diner or a greasy spoon, too, but we'll refrain from opening up that can of worms.



Surinamese

De Smeltkroes V-1, Bijlmerdreef 1289, tel. (+31) 204 95 20 76, info@smeltkroeszo.nl, www.smeltkroeszo.nl. Few bars and restaurants have been more aptly named than De Smeltkroes (The Crucible). Young yuppies, single pensioners and everyone in between enjoy the traditional Surinamese snacks that this spacious place has on offer. The walls are decorated with murals of rice fields, while the speakers spew out sickly sweet pop music. If you haven't got the money for a holiday to a far-off destination, but could nevertheless do with a short trip to an exotic place, you can drop by De Smeltkroes to sample unique atmosphere for only a few euros. ▶ Open 10:30 - 21:30, Sat 12:30 - 21:30. Closed Sun. ☺ ♻️ 🗑️ 🚰 📶 📱 📺 📷

Bike rental

Marc Bike Shop V-1, Hoekenrode 10A, tel. (+31) 206 96 78 80, www.marcbikeshop.nl. This bike shop next to the train station does it all. Since 2008 it has rented, sold, stored and repaired all kinds of bicycles. The bikes are well-maintained and easy to ride and they also come with a lock above the back tire. If you aren't familiar with these locks be sure to ask directions before you pedal off into the sunset. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☺ P

Nightlife

Zuidoost isn't exactly a hotbed of nightlife, because most people enjoy themselves at a concert at the Heineken Music Hall or the Ziggo Dome, but it does have a few interesting options.

Bars

Cafe Slotterplas N-2, Burg. Rendorpstraat 1-3, tel. (+31) 206 14 41 07, www.cafeslotterplas.nl. In this guide a review of a restaurant, pub or hotel rarely exceeds 120 words, but fortunately we need no more than 80 for this bar. This corner pub serves plenty of draught beer and the interior doesn't warrant much description. To the left of the entrance you'll find the bar and on the right are some bare chairs with flaking paint. It appears that everybody knows each other and they simply ignore newcomers hoping that they'll leave as soon as possible ▶ Open 15:00 - 01:00, Th 13:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 15:00 - 03:00.

Clubs

VLLA N-3, Willem Roelofsstraat 9, tel. (+31) 646 10 82 72, www.vlla.nl. It's usually fairly straightforward to classify a restaurant or club, but VLLA is an exception to the rule. This cultural haven wears so many hats it's hard to describe. It's a Dutch lunchroom, a restaurant, a theatre and a bar and children also haven't been forgotten at this former funeral home. Where silence and grief once prevailed, the tunes of up-and-coming bands can be heard in what used to be the morgue. If that sends a chill down your spine just consider the reasonable prices and the currently cosy atmosphere of this renovated space. If it were located in the centre of Berlin VLLA would be an instant success, but in Amsterdam it's as yet one of the city's last undiscovered little gems. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 10:00 - 24:00.

Cocktails

Sky Bar N-3, Hendrikje Stoffelsstraat 1, tel. (+31) 208 10 08 00, www.skybar.nl. On clear days you can see the sea from here but on most evenings the trendy Sky Bar (their spelling!) is a popular haven for stargazers looking for celebrities here on earth. The immediate surroundings of this hotel bar are pure paradise for anyone who wants to catch a glimpse of the fashion world. Whatever your reason for coming here it's a good place to visit even if you just want to have a look at the beautiful girls in sexy outfits while sipping a cocktail or some champagne. We recommend the surprisingly affordable *porn star martini*, which is a tasty drink indeed. ▶ Open 17:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 02:00.



Get your nails done in Zuidoost

Shopping

Other parts of the city may be famous for antiques and small boutiques, but Zuidoost is the place to go in Amsterdam for megastores that are nearly cities themselves.

Mega stores

Decathlon Arena U-1, Arena Boulevard 101, tel. (+31) 205 65 91 20, www.decathlon.nl. In 1976 this company was established as a hypermarket for sports gear. Enormous halls, plenty of parking spaces and a large selection of products for reasonable prices is what you get today. Even if you don't want or need to buy anything it's an excellent place just to browse and kill time for an hour or so. ▶ Open 09:30 - 19:00, Th, Fri 09:30 - 21:00, Sun 11:00 - 18:00.

IKEA U/V-2, Hullenbergweg 2, tel. (+31) 90 02 35 45 32, www.ikea.com. This Scandinavian phenomenon needs no introduction. Find all the beds, baths, sofas, furniture and Swedish meatballs you crave at its Amsterdam location in Zuidoost. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00, Sun 10:00 - 18:00.

Media Markt U-1, Arena Boulevard 123 - 125, tel. (+31) 205 64 16 16, www.mediamarkt.nl. This is probably the largest electronics shop in Amsterdam and it also has some of the longest opening hours in the city. Apart from all the necessary audio/visual equipment, Media Markt also has a wide variety of beauty and wellness gadgets. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Mon 10:00 - 20:00, Sat 10:00 - 19:00, Sun 11:00 - 19:00.

Perry Arena U-1, Arena Boulevard 51 - 53, tel. (+31) 204 09 42 27, www.perrysport.nl. Genuine Ajax fans will start to salivate when they visit the Perry mega store. In addition to the usual red and white jerseys and other merchandise, you can shop till you drop for sports equipment in this XXL shoppers' paradise. It's also perfect for people who love all kinds of outdoor gadgets, not to mention hikers, mountain climbers and camping enthusiasts. Buy a tent, a sleeping bag and a new backpack and see where the day takes you. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Mon 12:00 - 18:00, Th 10:00 - 21:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 11:00 - 17:00.

Villa Arena Woonmall U-1, De Entree 1, tel. (+31) 800 84 55 22 7, www.villaarena.nl. With a whopping four floors (and two extra parking ones), Villa Arena is the biggest speciality shopping centre of its kind in the country, featuring 60 shops selling everything you could possibly need or want that's related to home decorations and interior design. This futuristic building opened in 2001 and its 75,000m² are just begging to be explored. Plenty of space is available in the parking garages and if you're exhausted from all the shopping, the selection of restaurants is far better than the food court or fast food venue at your average shopping mall. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:30, Mon 13:00 - 17:30, Th 10:00 - 21:00, Sun 11:00 - 17:00.

Shopping centres

Amsterdamse Poort V-1, Bijlmerplein, www.amsterdamsepoort.nl. Over 230 shops are concentrated in this huge open-air shopping centre. Partly covered, partly open you can buy anything here from shoes and home furnishings to children's clothing or perhaps a new bike. A large number of food stores are also located at this massive mall and over 9 million people visit Amsterdamse Poort each year so they must be doing something right. Although it can be easily reached by public transport, the area is surrounded by huge parking garages. Don't leave without visiting the Shopperhal, this covered market resembles the multicultural society of this district the best. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Mon 12:00 - 18:00, Th 09:30 - 21:00, Sat 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Sightseeing

Zuidoost may not have the famous canals of the city centre, but it has cutting-edge, modern architecture and some impressive parks.

Buildings

Amsterdam Bijlmer-Arena Station U/V-1, Arena Boulevard. Amsterdam Bijlmer-Arena is much more than a public transportation hub. The use of first-rate building materials, its incredible scale and its meticulous design have all made it one of the city's most significant transportation links. When one looks at this futuristic building it's hard to imagine that less than four decades ago it was no more than a simple wooden ticket office. Bijlmer Station was opened in 1971 as a straightforward stop on the Amsterdam - Utrecht rail line. What's remarkable about this station is that at the time it was the only railway station in the Netherlands that hadn't been designed by a Dutch Railways architect, but rather by professional British architects. Since 2008, the station's had a total of eight tracks, two of which are for the metro system. The new station is located above the Arena Boulevard, which is 70m wide. This promenade is about 700m long and links the Amsterdamse Poort to the new centre area of Amsterdam South East. The design of the building is based on the idea of 'seeing and being seen'. The transparency of the building and the beautiful design of the station's roof, which is 200m long and reaches a height of between 20 and 30m, are some of the best features of this new building. Escalators and glass elevators bridge the height difference between the underpass and the higher platforms and tracks. The light surroundings and the generous use of glass afford travellers a good view, lots of comfort and a feeling of security. The glass arched roof, which contrasts with the dark sky at night, is supported by huge steel columns. Looking from beneath, the station seems to float, even if you haven't been to a local coffeeshop.

Heineken Music Hall U-1, Arena Boulevard 590, tel. (+31) 900 68 74 24 2, www.heineken-music-hall.nl. This is the only music venue in the Netherlands that was specially designed to create the best possible acoustics for pop and rock music. Built in 2001, the Heineken Music Hall has hosted an endless list of talented acts from Lou Reed and James Taylor to Limp Bizkit and Marilyn Manson. Although it offers two stages, its larger hall, which is known locally as the Black Box, can seat up to 5,500 spectators. During the course of a typical year the Heineken Music Hall hosts scores of concerts and events attended by over 600,000 music lovers. ▶



The hallowed ground where football greats Ajax play

ING Building U-1, Hoogoorddreef 888, www.ing.com. ING bank has a reputation for keeping up with architectural trends and the head office of this enormous multinational banking and insurance company at the southern end of Amsterdam has inspired such unfavourable nicknames as the shoe and the vacuum cleaner. A bit further east you'll find another architectural highlight that belongs to ING in the Amsterdamse Poort area of Amsterdam Zuidoost. The building, which was completed in 1987, accommodates 2,500 employees and consists of ten jointed towers of six to eight floors each, with hardly any vertical sections on the outside. With some imagination, you might even see a modern castle, or perhaps a rock. In any event, locals simply call it the Sand Castle due to the millions of bricks used in its construction and its sandy colour.

Ziggo Dome U-1, Arena boulevard 61-75, www.ziggo-dome.nl. The first artists to perform at the Ziggo Dome concert hall included such household names as Sting, Pearl Jam, Madonna and Radiohead. This is a good indication of the important role Ziggo now plays in the cultural and musical life of Amsterdam and the Netherlands. With a capacity for 17,000 people you wouldn't expect an intimate atmosphere here, yet somehow that's exactly what this Black Box, as it's already popularly known, has achieved. You won't find a centimetre of grey concrete anywhere and everything inside the hall is completely black. Another big and pleasant difference from typical halls is its upholstered chairs. The Ziggo Dome consists of a section with standing room and two rings. The ground level can accommodate 7,500 people and the rings can seat 4,830 and 4,700 visitors, respectively. During some of the less popular concerts, the higher rings are closed off with a black curtain. A hospitality room is located next to the large hall where artists can have their own after party. Even the number of toilets is flexible! ▶

Parks & Gardens

Bijlmer Park (Bijlmerpark) V-1, Flierbosdreef, www.bijlmerparkmijnpark.nl. The renovated Bijlmer Park is home to the famous Kwakoeifestival and it's also an obvious choice for a relaxing stroll on a sunny day in Zuidoost. Since over 8,500 trees were cut down to make way for the completion of the new park in 2011, not everybody was amused with this project. But the expansion of park and its waters has actually resulted in a wider diversity of flora and fauna. Tree-huggers can at least enjoy 130 different trees in the garden, each representing a nationality of the residents living in this part of town! ▶

Diemer Forest (Diemerbos) W-1, Muiderstraatweg. The recently created Diemer Forest is sandwiched between Amsterdam and the suburb of Diemen. When they started planting this forest in the early 1990s, hidden old tree trunks revealed to scientists that this polder must have been a forest many years ago as well. We will never know if the ancient ancestors of the Dutch enjoyed picnics at the tables here, or took leisurely strolls, bike rides, horse rides and walks through the swamp, but you can today! ▶

Gaasper Park (Gaasperpark) V/W-1, Between Loosdrecht dreef and Provincialeweg. This spacious park occupies the northern shore of Lake Gaasperplas, a man-made body of water that was created when the land was excavated to provide sand and earth for the new building projects in the area. The park came into being in the late 1970s and early 1980s and hosted the massive Dutch Floriade in 1982, an enormous flower and gardening event that is held once every 10 years. A large campground is also available in the park, but most people come here to go swimming and windsurfing or to rent a kayak for a few hours of fun on the water.

Places of interest

Arena Poort U-1, Arena Boulevard, www.arenapoort.nl. Holland's largest outdoor entertainment centre just got a little bigger with the recent opening of some new megastores. The Ziggo Dome, a new, modern concert hall, has brought even more action to this already lively area that also includes the Amsterdam Arena, Heineken Music Hall and Pathé Arena.

Lake Gaasperplas (Gaasperplas) V/W-1, Gaasperplas. Although the man-made Gaasperplas lies in a heavily populated area, this beautiful lake is still a perfect example of peace and tranquillity. The Gaasperplas recreation area consists of a large lake, several manicured gardens, children's playgrounds and plenty of lounge areas. The northern part was constructed in 1982 to host Floriade, the International Horticultural Exhibition. Only sail boats, row boats, windsurfers and fishermen can disrupt the peace here, as motorboats are prohibited. Over 165 acres of park land is available with broad lanes, unique vegetation, rose gardens and dune landscapes. You can easily spend a day in this area, but don't expect any flashy beach houses or food stalls, as in some of Amsterdam's other parks. You'll have to bring your own food for a picnic at the Gaasperplas. The swimming is great, but some people fear its great depth, which can reach over 35 metres. There's even a small nude beach on the northern side. Boats and canoes can also be rented and the park also hosts some great dance parties like Open Air and Gaasper Pleasure.

Pathé Arena U-1, Arena boulevard 600, tel. 09 00 14 58, www.pathe.nl. There are currently four IMAX cinemas in the Netherlands including this one in Amsterdam. In case you've been in a coma for the past 15 years, IMAX is a special movie format designed to display films on a much larger screen (22 x 16m) than at typical theatres. The chairs and the screen have also been adjusted for digital films so you basically feel like you're taking part in all the action. This is cinema as it was intended!

The Tree That Witnessed Everything (De boom die alles zag) V-1, Nellesteinpadijmer. On October 4, 1992, one of the largest air disasters in Dutch history took place here. A Boeing 747 cargo plane from of the Israeli airline El Al, crashed into two high rise apartment blocks in the Amsterdam district of Bijlmermeer. The plane was on its way from New York to Tel Aviv with a stopover at Schiphol. The disaster took the lives of 43 people including the three crew members and the only passenger on the plane. It's also possible that many more people were killed as the apartment blocks at Groeneveen and Klein-Kruitberg were known to be inhabited by illegal aliens. More than 100 apartments were destroyed and speculation arose that the plane had carried secret military cargo, which had been spirited away by Mossad agents after the crash. A tree, which had survived the crash and fire, was picked as a suitable place where survivors could share their grief. Every year the victims are commemorated here and during this remembrance planes aren't allowed to fly over Bijlmer, which is usually under a busy Schiphol flight path.

Sightseeing tours

Bijlmer Hans Mooren Experience V-1, Kruitberg 1005a, tel. (+31) 624 85 67 09, www.bijlmerexperience.nl. Hans Mooren has been giving guided bicycle tours of the Bijlmer neighbourhood for over 15 years to dispel the myth that this is an area of town plagued by social problems. You can also take a tour on a Segway or a scooter and you can customise your route to include ethnic eateries, mosques or art and architecture.



Public transport is never far away in Zuidoost

Bijlmer Tours W-2, Wethouder Seegersplein 14, tel. (+31) 207 78 61 31, www.bijlmertours.nl. Unfortunately, Bijlmer Tours doesn't organise guided tours for individuals or walk-ins, so you'll have to put together your own group of enthusiasts if you'd like to spend 2.5 hours listening to local expert Jenny. This gregarious woman has lived in the 'most diverse district in Amsterdam' for decades. The Bijlmer housing estate is perhaps best known for its high proportion of residents of varied ethnic backgrounds. More than 90,000 people live in Bijlmer representing more than 100 different nationalities. Obviously, this heady brew of different cultures and traditions makes for an interesting place to live. Some regard this as a blessing, while others consider it a nightmare, but with the help of this expert guide you'll learn about the background of this area that some regard as a problem. After hours of walking, biking or riding your scooter you can cast aside many of the prejudices that occupy the minds of many Amsterdammers regarding this vibrant district. In fact, as it turns out, Bijlmer can be a quiet estate with plenty of space and green areas for relaxing, but the highlight of the tour would have to be a visit to the mosque. The Tree that Witnessed Everything' near the high rise apartments also leaves a lasting impression. It's a symbol of the tragic plane crashed of 1992 that claimed the lives of at least 43 people here. What's perhaps best about this informative tour is that the guide truly shares her experiences and her love for this unique district in which she lives. The Dutch often call her our an 'exploration of their own country'.

Statues & Monuments

The Kiss (De Kus) V-1, Bijlmerdreef. Some people only see two winding steel pipes, while others immediately detect the deeper meaning that was intended by artist Jeroen Henneman when he designed The Kiss. The idea came to him as early as 1972 during a trip through Mexico, but his simple, yet powerful design was only erected on this public space at the Bijlmerdreef 10 years later in 1982. It's also one of the few statues that actually looks best when Dutch skies are completely grey, meaning most days.

The Pissers of Amsterdam (Les Pisseurs d'Amsterdam) V-1, Groesbeekdreef. At any time of the night or day there are always six guys urinating in public under the Groesbeekdreef. Usually this would translate into a €75 fine for the perpetrators, but they get away with it because they're statues. The Pissers of Amsterdam, a free translation of this controversial work of art, has been taking a perpetual leak since 2010. The life-size persons, self-portraits of the creator, are the brainchild of Belgian artist Pascale Tayou. This, of course, is an obvious homage to his native land's most famous statue, Manneken Pis in Brussels, yet somehow he has managed to turn a banal topic into a colourful entity.

If you're like many of Amsterdam's visitors, a ticket to an Ajax match would be at the top of your wish list of things to do in the Dutch capital. Unfortunately, this is seldom an option as games sell out quickly and the team probably didn't consult you before scheduling its season. In that case, a visit to the Arena, the hallowed home of the players in red and white, might be a good alternative.

You can join a guided tour of the stadium in South East five times each day after you've paid the €14.50 fee, which is, of course, much cheaper than a ticket to an actual match. Although the district once made headlines for its relatively high crime rates, all this is now a thing of the past. These days Zuidoost is one of the city's most lively districts. The area around the Arena in particular, has been given a great boost with the arrival of several large chain stores and shopping centres.

This neighbourhood is also crucial to the Dutch music scene since the Ziggo Dome, a cutting edge concert venue, was completed, but we digress. Back to football! The stadium is easily reached by metro or train from the Central Station. The super modern Amsterdam Bijlmer Arena station is worth a visit itself. From there it's only a few minutes' walk to the massive concrete monster, which was the first stadium in Holland to have a sliding, retractable roof. Prior to each game, the management consults weather reports and decides whether or not to open the stadium to the mercy of the fickle Dutch elements.

According to our guide Jim, the colossal stadium's roof can be opened in as little as 18 minutes. This chatty lad was as Dutch as can be, with red cheeks and a blond mop of hair. His genuine Amsterdam accent also betrays the fact that he is a so-called 'boy of the club'. During games, he and his mates can be found in section 410, the stand for the younger fans. The F-side is another notorious area of the arena that's traditionally occupied by die-hard fans.



Visit the Amsterdam Arena: the home of Ajax

But the suspense lasts a little longer as we were shown a short, informative film about Holland's most famous club. Then we all headed over to the players' tunnel where each person can almost feel what it's like to walk out onto the pitch and hear the roar of tens of thousands of screaming fans. From here you can take a look at the team's dugout and even touch the grass of this hallowed ground. If you're lucky and the players aren't training that day you'll also be lead into their locker room. You're next stop will be at the so-called Mixed Zone. After each match the two trainers give their opinions and comments about the course of the game and the result here. You'll probably also notice that the visiting team's trainer sits closest to the exit. The psychological message is clear.

When we took the tour the number of foreign visitors was surprising. In fact, the group was as diverse as the nationalities that play for Ajax. A quick check revealed that many of our fellow tourists hailed from South America and Asia, as well as nine different European countries. Naturally, even some Yanks from across the pond were in attendance. But none of this could phase our guide Tim. It's just another day at work for him. He confided in us that on some days he doesn't even need to speak Dutch, as the groups consist entirely of foreign fans. English is spoken during the tour, which can lead to amusing scenes when for example someone who can barely speak the language themselves, attempts to translate Tim's words to bewildered friends.

The same scenario is also played out by the Spaniards, Italians, French and Portuguese. There's always someone in the group who feels it's his duty to translate the guide's stream of words into his compatriot's language. But anyone can actually avoid all of this by simply downloading the Ajax Tour app to their smart phone. Then you'll have the whole history of the famous club in the palm of your hand.

Obviously, the climax of the tour is a visit to the actual stadium. Even if you're not a fan, it's still a brilliant feeling to set foot in the Arena, even when it's empty. At full capacity, 53,052 supporters sing, scream and yell from their brightly coloured seats. About an hour later you're back where you started, and the tour predictably ends at the club shop where you can express your newly acquired love for Ajax by purchasing lots of red and white souvenirs.

World of Ajax Tours (Amsterdam ArenA) U-1, ArenA Boulevard 1, tel. (+31) 203 11 13 36. ▶ Open 11:00 - 16:30 (except on event days). Admission: adults €14.50, children 5 - 12 years €9.50. Take metro line 54 from the Central Station to the Amsterdam Bijlmer Arena stop and then follow signs to Main Entrance E.

It's hard to imagine a more gay and lesbian friendly travel destination than Amsterdam. In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to officially recognise same-sex marriages. With rainbow flags on nearly every other street and the annual Gay Pride celebration, Amsterdam is the place to be for gays worldwide. The street parties, club events and exhibitions of Amsterdam Pride draw more than 350,000 participants and visitors each year. On the first Saturday in August, thousands of people line the Prinsengracht and Amstel River to watch the world's only pride parade on water. For gay nightlife on average days visit the Reguliersdwarstraat, prime hunting ground for upmarket clubs and trendy restaurants. Other gay-friendly areas include Kerkstraat with two gay hotels (The Golden Bear and Amistad) as well as a good cruise club, Warmoesstraat in the Red Light district (with cruise bars, a leather scene and a cinema) and the Zeedijk (home to some cosy local cafés). Last but not least there's a vast number of party places around the Amstel, Halvemaansteeg and Rembrandt Square.

Nightlife

Café Lellebel G-7, Utrechtsestraat 4, tel. (+31) 204 27 51 39, www.ellebel.nl. Just around the corner from busy Rembrandtplein you'll find an alternative to the square's legendary nightlife, which mostly consists of tourist pubs, techno clubs and meat markets. This self-proclaimed drag show bar is a cosy haunt that resembles a brown bar rather than a cutting edge design bar so popular with the gay scene these days. Transvestites, transgenders, lesbians and gays have enjoyed its unique atmosphere since 1997 and it always makes a good showing at the gay canal boat parade each year and is the place to go for karaoke every Tuesday night.
▶ Open 20:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 20:00 - 04:00. ☎

Café Rouge G-6, Amstel 60, tel. (+31) 204 20 98 81, info@caferouge.nl, www.caferouge.nl. Red like a cheap brothel, this unpretentious late night spot attracts a diverse crowd willing to party and score. A live DJ tries to please the crowd with a mixture of gay classics, Eurovision and modern pop. The walls filled with photos of Dutch and international royalty add to the campy atmosphere where anything can happen. Anything can also mean nothing, but on weekends and special days like Queen's Day it's a safe option for fun.
▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed. ☎☎☎

Café 't Mandje (The Basket) B-1, Zeedijk 63, tel. (+31) 206 22 53 75, www.cafetmandje.nl. This may very well be the oldest gay bar in the world. Opened in 1927 by local legend Bet van Beeren as a pub for everyone - gay, straight or otherwise - it was re-opened in 2007 by Bet's niece who continues the family tradition of offering a cosy space where people of any sexual orientation can enjoy a drink together. The bar was completely renovated and each piece of memorabilia was removed from the walls and then painstakingly returned to its original place. Although many gay bars today boast trendy interior décor, Café 't Mandje is an historic time capsule that more closely resembles a classic Dutch brown bar than a modern 'homo' hotspot. Drop by for a tasty beer and old rock music by the likes of Ray Charles and Otis Redding that emanate from an old jukebox. Recommended.
▶ Open 15:00 - 01:00, Tue 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 14:00 - 03:00, Sun 14:00 - 01:00. Closed Mon. ☎

Club Church F-7, Kerkstraat 52, www.clubchurch.nl. This is Amsterdam's ultimate cruising club with two floors of play and dance areas that offer changing theme parties and DJs every night. Free condoms throughout the venue and lots of more serious kinky toys are available for use including slings, private cabins and even a Saint Andrew's cross, which has nothing to do with heraldry and everything to do with bondage. Yep, you can get it as wild or rough as you'd like it, but it's probably not the best place to have your first gay experience and definitely not an appropriate venue to have an after-work drink with your straight business colleagues.
▶ Open 20:00 - 24:00, Thu 22:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 22:00 - 04:00, Sun 16:00 - 20:00. Closed Mon. ☎☎☎☎

De Spijker F-7, Kerkstraat 4, tel. (+31) 20 620 59 19. Located in a dark basement, the Spijker might not be as inviting as other bars in town, but those who make the effort are in for a surprise. At the back side of the bar, below two TV screens showing uninspired gay porn, is a pool table. This is the real gem, because it's an easy way of getting in contact with other patrons including, among others, some weirdos, some locals and loads of expats! Just write your name on the board and wait your turn. A small darkroom is available upstairs. And did we mention the gorgeous South-African bartender?
▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00. ☎☎☎☎

Montmartre B-3, Halvemaansteeg 17, tel. (+31) 20 620 76 22, www.cafemontmartre.nl. Always packed at the weekend, Montmartre can be a bit claustrophobic, but those who enjoy lots of bodily contact and flirting with the hot young boys in their teens and twenties that come here are in for a real treat. Cheesy pop and Eurovision make Montmartre a heaven for all Dutch queens, so bring your attitude, get drunk, croon with Sandra Kim and Kylie Minogue and dance the night away. You can also use its happy hour from 18:00 - 20:00 to get in the mood.
▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. ☎☎☎☎

Prik A-2, Spulstraat 109, tel. (+31) 203 20 00 02, www.prikamsterdam.nl. Prik, a relaxed and cosy café near Dam Square, is the ideal place to meet your friends, or even your grandmother, and have a drink to start the night off. Prosecco on tap, sexy cocktails, tasty finger food a live DJ and a good vibe will probably make you linger around longer than you might have planned. It was voted several times as the best gay bar in town and we can certainly see why. Prik rocks!
▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00. ☎☎☎☎

Reality B-3, Reguliersdwarstraat 129, tel. (+31) 206 39 30 12, www.barreality.freehomepage.com. Reality is a tropical-style ethnic bar. Customers tend to hail from exotic locales such as Suriname, the Caribbean and other hot destinations, so it's a bit alternative compared to the other places on Gay Main Street. Great music like salsa, merengue and calypso is also available for those who are fed up with the regular gay bubblegum. This might also be the place to see if the stereotypes about dark-skinned men and their toys are just a myth.
▶ Open 20:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 20:00 - 04:00. ☎☎☎☎

The Queens Head B-1, Zeedijk 20, tel. (+31) 204 20 24 75, www.queenshead.nl. At the head of the Zeedijk, a trendy street bordering the Red Light district, the Queens Head is an old time gay favourite with a loyal clientele. Friendly bar staff, chandeliers, drag nights and hilarious bingo nights on Thursdays are all major draws. Downstairs a cosy backroom with a romantic canal view is also available and live DJs spin music at the weekend. In short, it's a lovely place to actually meet other people.
▶ Open 16:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. ☎☎☎☎☎☎

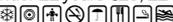
For more gay & lesbian info visit
www.amsterdam.inyourpocket.com



Lots of flags at Amsterdam's Gay Pride celebration

Vivelavie B-3, Amstelstraat 7, tel. (+31) 206 24 01 14, www.vivelavie.net. An institution in the Amsterdam gay-scene, this lesbian bar has been around for more than 30 years and is still alive and kicking! It has an unpretentious and cosy atmosphere with old Hollywood posters on the wall. Ladies meet their friends, talk, read, eat, sip their cocktails and dance in the late hours in this Art Deco-style space. The menu offers tapas, tosties and other finger food and the music varies from lounge and gay classics to upbeat and everything in between. Even gay men like it here! ▶ Open 12:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 04:00. 

Saunas

Thermos Sauna E-7, Raamstraat 33, tel. (+31) 206 23 91 58, www.thermos.nl. One of the biggest gay saunas in Europe, Thermos is a legendary gay Amsterdam institution. Tourists, chubbies, students and the occasional geriatric all mix in the labyrinth upstairs and the wet compartments on ground floor that include a swimming pool, dry sauna, wet sauna and whirlpool. The décor is still very much stuck in the 1970s and about as cosy as the interior of a nuclear power plant, but most men seem to focus on other things, which explains the cruisy atmosphere, especially at the weekend. An attached hair salon and beauty parlour is also available for those in need and free condoms can be found at the bar. ▶ Open 12:00 - 20:00. Admission: under 21 years €10, 22 - 25 years €14, and 26 and over €19. 

Information

Gay Tourist Information Centre (GAYtic) A-1, Spuistraat 44, tel. (+31) 203 30 14 61, www.gaytic.nl. This place offers lots of information about everything you'd like or need to know about the gay scene in Amsterdam from night clubs and parties to local shops and publications. You can also buy stuff at its Gays&Gadgets shop. ▶ Open 11:00 - 20:00, Sun 12:00 - 20:00. 

Pink Point & Homomonument E-5, Westermarkt to 9, tel. (+31) 20 428 10 70, www.pinkpoint.org. Pink Point provides general information about gay and lesbian Amsterdam. It's staffed by volunteers who can provide all kinds of information about gay organisations and about gay life in general in the Dutch capital and they also sell some of the coolest gay souvenirs in the country. The nearby Monument to Homosexuals or *Homomonument* was designed in 1987 by artist Karin Daan to inspire and support lesbians and gays in their struggle against discrimination. Sadly one of the three granite triangles is located right next to a public urinal. Talk about discrimination! ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. 

Bet van Beeren

Although Amsterdam is now one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world, it wasn't always such a pillar of tolerance. But one woman had an incredible influence on the Dutch capital and its residents. Bet van Beeren was born in 1902 and spent her childhood in the Jordaan district of Amsterdam, before opening her legendary bar 't Mandje, or The Basket, on the Zeedijk in 1927. Although the establishment was hardly advertised as a gay bar, it was a place where anyone gay, straight, bi or otherwise could have a drink, provided they behaved themselves. In those days the police could revoke a bar's license for promoting what we today would call a 'gay lifestyle', so Bet kept a close watch on her patrons making sure there weren't any obvious displays of affection between same-sex couples with perhaps the exception of Queen's Day – a tradition that began after WWII. On this magical day pretty much anything was possible and 't Mandje gained a reputation as the ultimate place to celebrate this Dutch holiday. That said, Bet usually took an interest in her patrons and if she observed anyone misbehaving, she would penalise them by cutting off an article of clothing with a butcher's knife, hence all of the ties nailed to the ceiling.

As time passed, Bet became one of the chief attractions of her bar and that's hardly surprising given her appearance and demeanour. An openly gay woman who drank like a fish and smoked like chimney, she was also known for her risqué wardrobe, which included a leather motorcycle jacket. This naturally raised a few eyebrows in her time, but she wasn't only the first person to open a gay-friendly bar in the Netherlands, but also the first Dutch woman to gain a driving licence.

The oldest of 12 children, Bet had a tough childhood and it's rumoured that she got drunk for the first time at the venerable age of 9. In the end, it was the drink that eventually claimed her life. It was not uncommon for her to knock back dozens of glasses of beer during a typical day at the bar, but this was simply part of her lifestyle and she enjoyed herself immensely while gaining the respect of her patrons and neighbours who often called her the Queen of the Zeedijk. When she passed away in 1967, she was laid out on the billiard table of the bar where 30,000 people paid their respects to her over the course of two days.

It was the end of an era and although her sister Greet carried on the traditions that she had begun at 't Mandje, the bar finally closed its doors in 1983. It looked as if Holland's first gay bar would become a mere footnote in Amsterdam's long history, but Bet's niece, Diana van Laar, re-opened the bar with the help of her husband in 2008. Each piece of memorabilia was photographed and removed from the walls and ceilings and then cleaned before being returned to its original place. Today, Café 't Mandje is still the ultimate venue to celebrate Queen's Day, but it's also a great place to soak up a slice of the city's history and to enjoy a tasty beer with new friends – gay or straight. Take a look at the vestiges of the past while listening to an Otis Redding or Ray Charles tune on the juke box and try to strike up a conversation with Diana or her husband. They might just show you Bet's room upstairs, which looks just as it did all those decades ago. A replica of the famous bar can also be viewed at the Amsterdam Museum. For more information visit www.cafetmandje.nl.

Whether you smoke the herb or not, coffeeshops in Amsterdam are a tourist attraction by themselves. Choose the right one and it'll be an experience you'll never forget. Choose the wrong one and you you'll probably forget that you were in Amsterdam altogether.

There are many different types of coffeeshops, for different kinds of people. Some look more like nightclubs, others like Tibetan monasteries (once you're stoned) and others like super-modern cafés. And in the summer, many have outside seating, sometimes near the canal.

Coffeeshops in Amsterdam have a particularly long history (Mellow Yellow was the first one in 1973), even during times of cannabis prohibition. The idea has been imitated across much of Europe, as well as the Americas, proof enough that the system works (for the 'evil' criminal gangs anyway).

Given the city's status as a major shipping hub and its maze of canals, it's not hard to imagine how drug trafficking in this city was an attractive option. Coffeeshops could easily be supplied straight from shipping containers via the many canals on small boats, and even emptied in the same manner should the authorities decide to pay a visit, before the premises had even been entered.

Today, they are mostly supplied by car, a much less romantic option. Naturally, one could dream up other ways, especially when sitting in the den of creativity that can be a coffeeshop...

After extensive wandering around (and getting lost in) Amsterdam, a list of dozens of coffeeshops (of the 280 available) not to be missed during your stay is provided here. They are selected from across the city, so that you're never at any point far away from one of these exceptional Dutch institutions.

Coffeeshops

Although the Netherlands was once known as a safe haven for people who enjoy the herb, conservative politics and a new national law have sent many a foreign toker looking for less turbulent shores to have a joint. A new national law states that only residents of Holland may buy and smoke soft drugs like marijuana and hash at coffeeshops. Although more strictly enforced in other areas of the country, the wise and commerce driven Amsterdammers have done what they usually do when they don't like a law. For the most part, the city and the police have turned a blind eye to this new law fearing a catastrophic loss of tourism euros. Obviously, when in doubt just ask the staff at a coffeeshop and hope for the best.



Amsterdam's most famous coffeeshop

Symbol key

Air conditioning	Child-friendly
Credit cards	Facilities for the disabled
Free wireless internet	Guarded parking
Home delivery	Live music
Outside seating	Pets allowed
Smoking section	Takeaway

Abraxas A-2, Jonge Roelensteeg 12 - 14, www.abraxas.tv. Down a side-street off one of the main boulevards in Amsterdam Centrum, you'll find this surprisingly cosy medium-size coffeeshop spread over several narrow floors. With extensive mosaics and elaborate décor, it includes large comfortable banquettes and pleasantly mellow lighting aided by candles on every table. Well organised and efficient staff make this an attractive option for a relaxed (but brief) break while touring the city's many delights. Longer stays at this coffeeshop will permit you a view of the souvenir shop as well as a comfortable smoking session. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00.

Amnesia E-5, Herengracht 133, tel. (+31) 204 27 78 74. The first thing to be said about this coffeeshop is that it's part of a chain which has received many Cannabis Cup Awards and therefore should be on the map for any connoisseur. Even if you're just eager to sit down in pleasant surroundings, this is a good option. With a view of the canal, down a quiet side street, this establishment boasts a pleasant décor of purple swirls and gold and black as well as equally pleasant and efficient staff. A choice of games will ensure your time at this coffeeshop is well spent, and outside seating in the summer makes this a prime summer coffeeshop. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00.

Barney's D-3, Haarlemmerstraat 105, tel. (+31) 204 27 94 69, www.barneys.biz. This coffeeshop review is more about the three establishments which are part of Barney's coffeeshop empire and all located on Haarlemmerstraat within close walking distance of each other. One venue is a coffeeshop, the other is a bar/restaurant and the final one is a souvenir shop/bar and smoke-room, meaning that in between these three places, you can smoke drink and eat to your heart's content in an attractive environment with a pleasant décor. Popular particularly with tourists, it provides its customers with arguably one of the best choices in life; get high and eat, get high and drink, or get high and have a coffee. And to get high with a bong or a vaporizer? So many wonderful choices to be made here, but once your desires have been met, it is always good to remember that the souvenir shop will provide you with numerous ways to annoy your boss/mother-in-law/ lecturer/ law enforcement agency (delete where appropriate). ▶ Open 07:30 - 01:00.

Bluebird B-2, Sint Antoniesbreestraat 71, tel. (+31) 206 22 52 32, www.coffeshopbluebird.nl. Bluebird might seem at first like a small coffeeshop, but the upstairs is substantially larger than the ground floor and the window-walls over the street are very effective in giving the place a light and airy feel, which also provides great people watching opportunities. These windows also provide the best lighting to the extensively intricate artwork covering the inside walls from top to bottom, forcing the eye (stoned or not) to wander endlessly. Games are also on offer like a pinball machine and the crowd is of a local variety with a mix of some tourists as well. The staff is friendly and outdoor roadside seating is available in good weather. ▶ Open 09:30 - 01:00.

Bulldog No. 90 B-2, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 90, tel. (+31) 206 25 98 64, www.thebulldog.com. Arguably the first ever coffeeshop in Amsterdam, this establishment combines cannabis history and getting high with an excellent central location. With seating overlooking the canal on the inside and seating on the edge of the canal outside, this coffeeshop is an ideal place any time of year. The décor of memorabilia like old photos, newspaper articles and the orange (you'll understand once you get here) tells the story of this venerated establishment, which gives off a pub-like atmosphere. Computers with internet access are available (for a fee) for any last-minute travel arrangements or any web addicts and the staff are friendly and helpful. Finally, the herb purchasing area is separate from the drinks area. A small, but important detail when you want to get your smoke on in a hurry. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒

Bulldog Palace F-7, Leidseplein 17, tel. (+31) 206 27 19 08. Fancy going down the police station for a spliff? Well in Amsterdam, you can, although the police station has been transformed into a multi-storey smoking, drinking and dancing venue. It's a large, spacious place with a pleasant conservatory style smoking area at the front and features two separate downstairs areas: one for weed and one for souvenirs. Upstairs is what can only be described as a dark nightclub with plenty of coloured lights jumping around, but that could have just been the effects of the haze. Alcohol including cocktails is available making it an ideal spot for hanging out and shooting some pool in the evening until the proper clubbing kicks off. Internet stations are also available for downloading that evening's soundtrack. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔ ☕ ☖

Coffeeshop 36 B-1, Warmoeestraat 36, tel. (+31) 206 24 24 93. Its canal view at the back sold us on this place and it's close to the station which is ideal if you're in Amsterdam only briefly. This coffeeshop is housed on several different levels, which isn't exactly an advantage if you're travelling with wheel-bound suitcases. (We like to get down to business as soon as we arrive). The low lighting, 'strategically' placed wrought-iron gates and the metal rock interior will suit some more than others, but the friendly staff and separation of weed and drink sales (rare so close to the station) make it a worthwhile addition to our list. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00.

Dolphins F-7, Kerkstraat 39, tel. (+31) 206 25 91 62. You won't find a place like this anywhere in Amsterdam or any other place on the planet for that matter. With an overwhelming marine theme and the friendly dolphin as your guide you can make a selection from the affordable and obviously placed menu, sit down at one of the many high quality vaporizers and just do your thing. The constant bubbling and of course your choice of herb will make you feel as if submerged in another world. If inhaling at a stool isn't your thing, there are large sofas to sink into and the friendly staff can ensure all your needs are met down here underwater, although you may have to swim to the surface (or the bar) to get served. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔ ☕ ☖

Funny People B-1, Nieuwebrugsteeg 24, tel. (+31) 206 23 86 63. This coffeeshop is a bit dark and on the small side, but the candles, comfy seating and cushions all ensure a relatively cosy experience and its located near the train station. The décor has no particular theme, but is still pleasing to the eye even before a smoke. A TV and some board games are available as well as a few snacks. A good choice to get a quick high while waiting for a train or hotel check-in. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00, Sun 09:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔



Joints, cocktails and palm trees. What more could you want?

Grasshopper A-1, Oudebrugsteeg 16, tel. (+31) 206 26 12 59, www.thegrasshopper.nl. This grand establishment is a one-stop shop for food, drink and smoke. It's close enough to the station for a one-hour stopover or you could even just grab a beer, a steak and a joint without even leaving the premises. The multiple floors cover each of these aspects and it has a pre-club feel in the evening with private booth tables, colourful lights and bar games like pool. The massive outdoor terrace overlooking the canal is one of the best spots in summer for boat, street and people watching and is, not surprisingly, incredibly popular with tourists. ▶ Open 08:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 07:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔

Greenhouse Centrum B-2, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 191, tel. (+31) 206 27 17 39, www.greenhouse.org. Part of one of the best coffeeshop chains, this establishment in a busy part of the city centre is quite busy itself and with good reason! The outside seating area next to the canal away from the main drag is an ideal spot for smoking on a sunny day. When the weather does go bad, however, its colourful interior is a pleasure for stoned eyes. The product sold here is some of the best in the Netherlands, not to mention the most varied, and well worth analysis under a microscope, which is conveniently found at the same counter. The lively atmosphere and large tables may not make it the best place for a relax and a read, but is probably more appropriate for meeting new people and perhaps planning a night out. ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00. ☑ ☒

Katsu H-10, 1e van der Helststraat 70, www.katsu.nl. Katsu's laid-back atmosphere and its impressive cannabis selection are just two reasons to head over to the De Pijp neighbourhood. The friendly owner has created an atmosphere where locals, and the occasional tourist, can feel at home while smoking a joint or taking a toke of a bong. To avoid confusion make sure that the staff weighs your goodies in front of you and skip the potent OG18 weed unless you're a very experienced smoker. According to new laws that will be implemented soon, it will be categorised as a hard drug. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 24:00, Sun 12:00 - 23:00. ☑

La Tertulia E-6, Prinsengracht 312, tel. (+31) 206 23 85 03, www.coffeeshopamsterdam.com. Open since 1983, one of the oldest coffeeshops in Amsterdam is also one of the most appealing and original for smokers and non-smokers alike. Apart from the relatively ordinary weed menu, the environment which the friendly mother and daughter create here, includes extensive detailed artwork on the outside as well as the inside, providing trippy experiences at every corner. The selection of drinks and inexpensive sandwiches and toasties is more extensive than in most coffeeshops in Amsterdam and the many plants, as well as the multiple levels and patio furniture make one feel as if they were picnicking in a garden. The outside seating next to the canal in a quiet area of the city makes for a relaxed break while wandering the beautiful surroundings. Don't leave without taken at least one bite from their delicious home-made weed brownies! ▶ Open 11:00 - 19:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☑

Lion of Judah (Bushman) B-1, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 47, tel. (+31) 206 24 27 23. Beware! If you can't relate to the Rastafarian way of life, you may not enjoy this coffeeshop. If, however, you'd like to embrace your inner Marley, then by all means pay a visit to Lion of Judah. The reggae music and black history décor as well as the real Rastafarian (or so it appears) serving you behind the bar will certainly help you to get closer to Jah with rather normal legal and de-criminalised products on offer here, *mon*. ▶ Open 12:00 - 01:00.

Magic A-3, Herengracht 287, tel. (+31) 206 13 95 96. This charming North African-style coffeeshop boasts computers with internet access and a pool table, along with other games, as well as large comfortable seating areas. The Moroccan tea will make you even more relaxed if you decide to spark up, particularly after the scenic walk to get to here. Far away from the main tourist areas you may find that this place is more appropriate when not alone. ▶ Open 10:00 - 01:00.

Noon F-8, Ziesenskade 22, tel. (+31) 206 23 02 22. Colourful, detailed décor and comfortable seating make this an ideal coffeeshop for relaxation. Stare at the murals, chat with locals or try the vaporizer while sitting at one of its large tables. There are internet-connected PCs, a TV and even a bicycle pump last time we checked, as well as the usual smoking paraphernalia. It's a good stop before a night of partying on Leidseplein.

Embracing the haze

You should also bear in mind that there are usually two types of weed sold; *haze*, which has high THC content and creates a strong stoned or high feeling; and *non-haze* which has a somewhat milder effect. The price difference may sometimes be quite substantial between these two types, as haze weed plants (usually strong sativas - for those in the know) are bigger and harder to grow properly than non-haze (usually strong indicas) plants. If you're a non-regular smoker, or even a regular hashish smoker, start with non-haze, and then perhaps try a haze joint to see how you feel. For regular (weed) smokers (close to daily), haze weed will show you how truly stoned you can get, but beware as some types may stick you to your chair, and you may drool (well, maybe not the second part).



Just follow your nose (and a few courful signs) Lya Cattel

Old Church B-2, Oudekerksplein 54, tel. (+31) 204 20 12 64. This coffeeshop is surprisingly hard to find given its position in the centre of Amsterdam, but the giant neon signs on the facade will certainly help. Slightly removed from the main canals and touristy streets, it still provides convenient access to the Red Light District. Its outdoor terraces are a pleasure to experience in the summer, but the odd rustic/Indian theme and the ordinary menus mean that the highlight of this coffeeshop is its outdoor terrace, and that's about it.

Paradox D-7, 1e Bloemdwarsstraat, tel. (+31) 206 23 56 39, www.paradoxcoffeeshop.com. Amsterdam used to boast over 1,000 coffeeshops, but these days only a quarter of these remain, including Paradox in the heart of the Jordaan, which has served as a haven for local smokers since 1991. Most tourists never set foot in this quiet place, even though it's more than worth a detour. Its walls are regularly decorated by promising young graffiti artists and the best works will make you feel like you're hallucinating even when you're not stoned. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00. ☑ ☑

Resin A-1, Hekelveld 7, tel. (+31) 204 22 98 38. Fairly spacious with a particularly original and green interior, this coffeeshop may provide a some pleasant respite during a visit to Amsterdam. Reflecting the theme of the famous Red Light District, a keen eye may be able to discern sex swings, but don't worry. Other seating is available in the form of sofa benches lining the wall. There are TV screens to catch your gaze and music with an electronic edge drones on in the background. The staff here aren't particularly friendly, but then again that's fairly typical of Amsterdam coffeeshops where the stoned customer is rarely king.

Rokerij IV E-7, Elandsgracht 53, tel. (+31) 206 23 09 38, www.rokerij.org. The latest addition to the Rokerij chain, this coffeeshop can be found in the scenic Jordaan district. Featuring coloured candles, wooden tables, cushion seating and a pleasant interior adorned with both Tibetan and Moroccan details, this coffeeshop could be the ideal place to play a game or two while making use of some of the bongs provided. The herbal menu here is exceptional and includes cannabis cup varieties and a good selection of drinks like fresh OJ.

Rusland B-2, Rusland 16, tel. (+31) 206 27 94 68. Rusland provides a pleasant break from the coffeeshop norm, although to no extreme extent. The extensive choice of 40 teas provides a world of fragrances to complement the other pungent herbs you can purchase here. A successful but original mix of Russian and Moroccan décor, a common cushioned seating area complete with a view onto the street and a friendly cat make this place an excellent environment in which to relax alone or with friends. You can also expect small wooden tables, golden ashtrays and many different levels to explore.

Siberie A-1, Brouwersgracht 11, tel. (+31) 206 23 59 09, www.coffeeshopsiberie.nl. Visit this coffeeshop on a Friday or Saturday and you'll be able to enjoy some live DJing with your smoke in a cosy atmosphere. Candles, art work, flowers on the tables as well as good music all contribute to the success of this converted garage. Some food is available, games are provided and the large wooden tables give all the space necessary to enjoy your time here without inconveniencing other patrons. Unlike its Russian namesake, it's located in the urban centre of the city. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 24:00. 

Smokey B-3, Rembrandtplein 24, tel. (+31) 206 23 72 44, www.smokey.nl. A large, sprawling affair on the Leidseplein, this formidable pub/pre-nightclub coffeeshop is a good place to start with (or without) friends before going on to the nightlife provided by this infamous party area. Similar to a big American-style bar its large number of chairs and tables are able to accommodate groups of any size, but this might not be the place for a quiet, comfortable smoke. However, if you do enjoy a toké with your party and would like to mix it up with both locals and tourists alike, you could hardly find a better venue.

Solo B-2, Korte Koningsstraat 2, tel. (+31) 206 24 06 45. Located near the quiet but picturesque Nieuwmarkt part of Amsterdam, this light and simply decorated coffeeshop is run by friendly staff. With one of the walls entirely covered in posters, your eyes may wander while having a toké here, as well as your ears thanks to the chilled music. It's a good place for a break while exploring one of the side streets nearby, but best of all, it provides free marshmallows in case you feel light-headed (a common side effect of the herb - well if it's good anyway), a little peckish or indeed, if you just fancy one. ▶ Open 10:00 - 24:00.

The Saint B-3, Regulierssteeg 2, tel. (+31) 644 14 53 29. Down a neat little side street in a corner of the city centre, this graffiti den-cum-coffeeshop (or the other way around) has its own resident tarantula. Have no fear. It's kept in a vivarium, but if you're lucky you'll arrive at feeding time which will definitely provide a particularly trippy experience, that is if the crazy artwork and mirrors don't get you going first. The staff are friendly and its distant location ensure a local clientele - an advantage if you're just looking for a quiet time. ▶ 



Smart & Head shops

Amsterdam Seed Center A-2, Gravenstraat 12, tel. (+31) 207 37 00 60, www.amsterdamseedcenter.com. Why buy untested and unproven weed when you can just buy seeds that have already been awarded the prestigious Cannabis Cup? If you live in Holland or another European country where it's legal to import cannabis seeds you can ask the knowledgeable staff here everything there is to know about cultivating this amazing plant. Unfortunately, US residents aren't allowed to bring any seeds home. The shop also sells books about growing cannabis and t-shirts made from hemp. Seeds can be ordered online and sent to your home country, but due to legal issues most countries outside the EU, including the USA, are excluded from this service. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00, Mon, Tue, Wed 10:00 - 19:00. Bag of 3 seeds €20 - 30. 

ASG Gifts (Allstar Genetics) B-2, St. Antoniesbreestraat 15, tel. (+31) 207 54 28 13. All the seeds you could need as well as some t-shirts and souvenirs can be found here near the Nieuwmarkt. ▶ Open 12:00 - 19:00. 

Elements of Nature A-1, Warmoesstraat 97, tel. (+31) 206 20 79 16. A smart shop where you can purchase mushrooms, seeds, smoking accessories, psychedelic herbs and other fun stuff. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 22:00, Sun 11:00 - 21:00. Also at Haringpakkerssteeg 11 - 13, tel. (+31) 204 21 58 85.

Hempshopper A-2, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 80, tel. (+31) 205 28 55 56, www.hempshopper.com. This shop specialises in seeds, hemp clothing and accessories as well as some practical purchases like vaporisers and bongs. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 22:00. 

Kokopelli B-2, Warmoesstraat 12, tel. (+31) 204 21 70 00, www.kokopelli.nl. If you're looking for entheogenics (otherwise known as psychoactive substances), herbal e's (also known as natural stimulants), seeds, vitamins, smart products, books and plenty of souvenirs, Kokopelli won't let you down. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00.

The Head Shop B-2, Kloveniersburgwal 39, tel. (+31) 206 24 90 61, www.headshop.nl. One of the city's oldest head shops, which has been in operation since 1968, still sells all manner of bongs, hash pipes and smoking accessories as well as incense and souvenirs. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Sat 11:00 - 19:00, Sun 12:00 - 19:00.

Weed tours

Ganja Tours Tel. (+31) 613 97 93 21, www.thebigtrip.us. If you're in a hurry or don't know which one of Amsterdam's 250 coffeeshops to try call Ganja Tours. They're experts in the field of cannabis consumption. During the tour you'll visit a few of the more unknown coffeeshops in town and learn a bit about current trends in the world of cannabis. Naturally, there's also plenty of time for smoking and you can ask the budtender questions. ▶ Walking and bike tours from €49 for four hours.

Looking for a place to take a swim? Want to burn off some carbs on the tennis court? Feel like a beer and some bowling? Read on.

Bowling

Knijl Bowling D-6, Scheldplein 3, tel. (+31) 206 64 22 11, www.knijlbowling.nl. A lane will cost you €21 - 28/hour depending on the day and time or you could come for disco bowling at the weekend from 23:00 for €11.50. ▶  
Lovers Powerzone G-4, De Ruyterkade 153, tel. (+31) 207 60 76 00, www.loverspowerzone.nl. Take advantage of six modern bowling lanes or challenge your friends to a game of laser tag. ▶ Open 16:00 - 22:00, Wed 12:00 - 22:00, Fri 15:00 - 01:00, Sat 11:00 - 01:00, Sun 11:00 - 22:00. Bowling: €22.50 - 27.50/hour, Laser tag: €9 - 16.   

Fitness & Gyms

Brightside Fitness Amsterdam C-9, Baarsjesweg 289HS, tel. (+31) 206 83 44 36, www.brightsidefitness.nl. This gym doesn't require a membership, so you can just pay as you go.
Sport City H-5, Jodenbreestraat 6, tel. (+31) 206 26 22, www.sportcity.nl. Although it's a member's club you can order a day pass via its website.
Sport City Wibautstraat J-8, Wibautstraat 224, tel. (+31) 204 65 56 66, www.sportcity.nl. Although it's a member's club you can order a day pass via its website.

Golf

Amsterdamse Golf Club Bauduinlaan 35, tel. (+31) 204 97 78 66, agc1934@wxs.nl, www.amsterdamsegolfclub.nl. This 18-hole golf course offers a popular club house where you can have breakfast, lunch and dinner or you can just skip it and hit the links. ▶ 
De Hoge Dijk Abcouderstraatweg 46, tel. (+31) 294 28 12 41, www.dehogedijk.nl. This 18-hole course is open from sunrise to sunset year-round, but a golf proficiency certificate (GVB in Dutch) is mandatory. ▶     
Golfbaan Amsterdam Bulkslootermeerdijk 141, tel. (+31) 206 36 10 10, www.golfbaanamsterdam.nl. You can play 9 holes for €24 - 31 or 18 holes €39 - 49, but if you'd like to save plenty of cash you can reserve an early bird tee time. ▶ 

Karting

Race Planet Amsterdam Herwijk 10, tel. (+31) 206 11 11 20, www.raceplanet.nl. The place to go in Amsterdam for indoor go-karting. It also offers specials for kids parties. ▶ Open 13:00 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 23:00.



Amsterdam is full of colourful characters

Lyra Cattel

Ajax & National team matches

Whether due to the magic of its illustrious past, the excitement of the famous arena or just as part of a football pilgrimage, Ajax still draws tens of thousands of tourists every year. There are a high number of season ticket holders, so only a few thousand seats are for sale for each game, which can be bought via the official Ajax site (www.ajax.nl). Unfortunately, even when a game has officially sold out, you'll often find lots of empty seats in the stadium as not all season ticket holders are completely loyal to their team. The matches, however, are seldom boring in large part due to Section 410. This part of the stadium is populated by mostly young fans that are the team's most die-hard supporters. This is in stark contrast to the official so-called core support of the F-side, which you can find behind the goal. They've recently been overshadowed by the young supporters of 410. Photo by Louis van de Vuurst

Amsterdam Arena Arena boulevard 1, tel. (+31) 203 11 13 33, www.ajax.nl, www.amsterdamarena.nl.



Upcoming matches at Amsterdam Arena:

02.03 The Netherlands vs. Estonia	AA
26.03 The Netherlands vs. Romania	AA
31.03 Ajax vs. Nijmegen	AA
07.04 Ajax vs. Heracles Almelo	AA
19.04 Ajax vs. SC Heerenveen	AA
05.05 Ajax vs. Willem II	AA
15.05 UEFA Europa League Final 2013	AA

Swimming pools

Het Marnix D-5, Marnixplein 1, tel. (+31) 205 24 60 00, www.hetmarnix.nl. Despite its small size, Het Marnix boasts two swimming pools, a spa, a health club and a restaurant. ▶    

Sloterparkbad M-2, President Allendelaan 3, tel. (+31) 205 06 35 06, www.sloterparkbad.nl. During certain hours of the day this swimming pool opens its doors to the public for recreational purposes.

Tennis courts

Frans Otten Stadion IJsbaanpad 43, tel. (+31) 206 62 87 67, info@fransottenstadion.nl, www.fransottenstadion.nl. Sign up for some court time, reserve a squash court or take a lesson and improve you backhand. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 09:00 - 20:00.  

Sportcentrum Amstelpark Koenenkade 8 (Amsterdamse Bos), tel. (+31) 203 01 07 00, info@amstelpark.nl, www.amstelpark.nl. Tennis anyone? Take your pick of 21 outdoor or 11 indoor courts. You can also play squash or take advantage of its fitness centre, spa, restaurant and sports bar in the lovely Amsterdam Bos. ▶ Open 08:00 - 23:00, Sun 08:00 - 20:00.    

Need to wash some clothes while you check your e-mail or find a doctor to bandage a sprained ankle? Looking for a place to entertain your children or maybe a pharmacy to keep your hangover in check? You'll find the answers here.

Bicycle repair

Het Zwarte Fietsenplan F-8, Lijnbaansgracht 282 - 283, tel. (+31) 206 70 85 31. Looking for replacement parts for your bike? Crashed into a car and need repairs? These guys will sort you out. ▶ Open 08:00 - 20:00, Sat 09:00 - 19:00, Sun 09:00 - 17:00. [C]

Currency exchange

GWK Travelex F-3, Stationsplein (Central Station), tel. (+31) 206 27 27 31, www.travelox.com/nl. If you plan on exchanging money, banks offer the best exchange rates and a smaller commission, but the GWK is the most convenient if you're heading to the train station. ▶ Open 08:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 22:00. Also at A-2, Dam 23 - 25; Kalverstraat 150; F-8, Leidseplein 31A; and F-7, Leidsestraat 103.

Dentists

Tandartsen aan de Herengracht F-6, Herengracht 318, tel. (+31) 207 51 27 17, www.tadh.nl. ▶ Open Mon, Thu, Fri 09:00 - 20:00, Tue, Wed 09:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.
Tandartsenpraktijk Amsterdam Noord N-2, Van der Pekstraat 92, tel. (+31) 206 34 15 75, www.tpan.tandartsennet.nl. ▶ Open 08:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

DVD rental

Cult Videotheek G-6, Amstel 7, tel. (+31) 206 22 78 43, www.cultvideotheek.nl. As the name suggests, this is the place to go to buy or rent cult classics. ▶ Open 16:00 - 21:00, Fri, Sat, Sun 15:00 - 22:00.

VideoLand D-7, Bilderdijkstraat 64, tel. (+31) 206 12 05 70, www.videoland.nl. This place offers everything from Hollywood blockbusters to art house flicks. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00.

Hairdressers & Barbers

Haarstudio IJburg X-1, IJburglaan 1283, tel. (+31) 204 16 20 30, www.haarstudioijburg.net. This hair salon services both men and women on IJburg's main drag. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 19:00. Closed Sun. [C]
Hair Police J-7, Tweede oosterparkstraat 36H, tel. (+31) 204 20 58 41, www.hairpolice.nl. The Hair Police specialise in dreads, extensions and braids as well as cuts and colouring. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Sun.



The Zeedijk is full of unique shops and cafés

Lya Cattel

Head 2 Head O-2, Eerste van Swindenstraat 46-D, tel. (+31) 206 92 73 78. This is a barber shop for real men where electric shavers are used more often than scissors. A haircut will set you back about €15.

Kinki Kappers D-3, Haarlemmerdijk 17, tel. (+31) 206 25 60 00, info@kinki.nl, www.kinki.nl. You'll feel like a fashion model at this trendy hair salon. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:00, Thu 09:30 - 21:00. Closed Sun.

Queens Hairstyle F-7, Herengracht 447, tel. (+31) 203 20 64 77, info@queenshairstyle.nl, www.queenshairstyle.nl. Although we never spotted any *blue bloods* here, this trendy salon is quite expensive! ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00, Thu 09:00 - 21:00, Sat 09:00 - 15:30. Closed Sun. [C]

Tommyz Toko Admiraal de Ruijterweg 85, tel. (+31) 206 38 78 72, info@tommyztoke.nl, www.tommyztoke.nl. Enjoy the art on the walls while you get a trendy haircut either by the owner Tommy or one of the other talented hairdressers. Be prepared to walk out feeling hipper than ever. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00, Mon, Tue 10:00 - 19:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun.

Hospitals

AMC (Academisch Medisch Centrum Universiteit van Amsterdam) Meibergdreef 9, tel. (+31) 205 66 91 11, fax (+31) 205 66 44 40, www.amc.uva.nl. ▶ Open 24hrs.

Prinsengracht Clinic F-7, Prinsengracht 769, tel. (+31) 205 99 41 00, fax (+31) 205 99 43 67, informatie@olvg.nl, www.olvg.nl.

Sint Lucas Andreas Ziekenhuis Jan Tooropstraat 164, tel. (+31) 205 10 89 11, ziekenhuis@slaz.nl, www.slaz.nl. ▶ Open 24hrs.

Key cut & Shoe repair

De Sleutelkoning D-3, Haarlemmerdijk 19, tel. (+31) 206 22 26 30, fax (+31) 206 24 10 34, www.desleutelkoning.nl. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Mon 12:00 - 18:00, Sat 11:00 - 15:00. Closed Sun.

Hakkey A-3, Rokin 108 - 110, tel. (+31) 206 22 24 57, info@hakkey.nl, www.hakkey.nl. Get your shoes repaired or copy your key while you wait. ▶ Open 09:00 - 20:00.

Laundries & Dry cleaners

Kleding reparatie & Stomerij de Rozengracht D-6, Rozengracht 216, tel. (+31) 206 27 14 69. You can get your clothes dry cleaned or get that button reattached to your favourite pair of pants here. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00.

Laundry & Things A-1, Warmoesstraat 30, tel. (+31) 614 03 28 03. Self-service washing machines starting at as low as €3 per load. ▶ Open 08:00 - 22:00.

Medina Wasserij P-2, Javastraat 92, tel. (+31) 206 94 71 56. Laundry and dry cleaning services on Javastraat. ▶ Open 09:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 22:00. [C]

Powders F-7, Kerkstraat 56, tel. (+31) 626 30 60 57, www.powders.nl. This is a full service or self-service laundry that offers free wi-fi, internet access and printing as well as drinks and snacks. ▶ Open 07:00 - 22:00.

Wash & Coffee G-9/10, Quellijnstraat 90, tel. (+31) 204 70 36 79, www.wash-coffee.nl. Just like the name says. ▶ Open 07:30 - 18:30. Closed Tue.

Wash@Net B-3, Amstel 30, tel. (+31) 204 28 62 35. Check your e-mail while you wash your clothes or bring your own laptop and use its internet connection.

Wash-o-Matic P-2, Javastraat 23, tel. (+31) 651 32 54 37. This self-service laundry is located on the neighbourhood's busiest street. ▶ Open 08:00 - 20:00, Sat, Sun 08:00 - 18:00.



Locals like to decorate their houseboats Ilse Ouwens

Libraries

Centrale Bibliotheek H-3, Oosterdokskaade 143, tel. (+31) 205 23 09 00, info@oba.nl, www.oba.nl. This modern glass building between the Central Station and the NEMO Science Centre not only has an interesting location but also books in English, internet access and it's open late. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00.

Opbare Bibliotheek Indische Buurt P-2, Javaplein 2, tel. (+31) 206 68 15 65, ibu@oba.nl, www.oba.nl. This library offers free wireless internet and views of the square. ▶ Open 14:00 - 20:00, Tue, Fri 10:00 - 17:30, Thu 14:00 - 17:30, Sat 11:00 - 16:00. Closed Sun.

Massage

Chinese Massage Centre Beijing A-2, Hasselaersteeg 14, tel. (+31) 623 33 52 16. Head, foot, neck or full body massages for the usual rates. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00.

Doctor Feel Good Scheidestraat 16, tel. (+31) 206 20 15 70, www.doctorfeelgood.nl. Although the owner of this fancy joint proudly presents her years of experience on her website where she 'worked with bands and celebrities all over the world', normal human beings are also welcome at this modern place. Bring plenty of cash though. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. Also at K-5, Czaar Peterstraat 108.

Koan Float F-7, Herengracht 321, tel. (+31) 205 55 03 33, info@koanfloat.nl, www.koanfloat.nl. This massage centre lets you relax by floating in warm water heated to 35.5C. ▶ Open 09:30 - 23:00.

Photic Medical Center Amsterdam D-8, Kinkerstraat 102 HS, tel. (+31) 206 12 82 77. Different types of massages or acupuncture can be arranged here from €20. Take tram Nr.17 to the Kinkerstraat stop. ▶ Open 10:00 - 21:00.

Medical & Wellness

Expat Medical Centre D-6, Bloemgracht 112, tel. (+31) 204 27 50 11, expatmc@planet.nl, www.expatmc.net. The English-speaking doctors here offer medical attention, physiotherapy and even psychotherapy and they accept EU health cards, too! ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun. On Saturdays and Sundays by appointment only.

Slotermeer Health Centre (Gezondheidscentrum Slotermeer) Burgemeester de Vlugtlaan 111, tel. (+31) 206 13 32 12, fax (+31) 206 11 97 60, www.gzc-slotermeer.nl. This multi-purpose health centre is run by a large team of qualified professionals. You can pick up a prescription, visit a physiotherapist, talk to a GP or have your teeth checked by a dentist. It also offers a gym if you'd like to stay healthy and avoid the doctors who work here. ▶



Pharmacies

DA Apotheek Leidsestraat F-7, Leidsestraat 74 - 76, tel. (+31) 204 22 02 10, apotheekleidsestraat@ezorg.nl, www.da-apotheekleidsestraat.apotheek.org. The pharmacy can be reached during the day via the entrance of the DA-drugstore at Leidsestraat around the corner. ▶ Open 09:00 - 21:50. Closed Sat, Sun.

Dam Apotheek A-2, Damstraat 2, tel. (+31) 206 24 43 31, damapotheek@ezorg.nl, www.dam-apotheek.nl. Centrally located pharmacy next to the Dam. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:30.

Molukken Kring-apotheek P-2, Molukkenstraat 81, tel. (+31) 206 65 40 36, info@molukkenapotheek.nl, www.molukkenapotheek.nl. Central pharmacy offering all of the usual in Oost. ▶ Open 08:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Wittop Koning Kring-apotheek S-4, Overtoom 81, tel. (+31) 206 16 36 10, info@wittopkoning.com, www.wittopkoning.com. A small pharmacy on Overtoom. ▶ Open 08:30 - 17:30, Sat 11:00 - 15:00. Closed Sun.

Photo services

Hema Fotoshop B-3, Kalverstraat 208, tel. (+31) 206 26 87 20, www.hema.nl. ▶ Open 09:30 - 18:30, Mon 11:00 - 18:30, Thu 09:30 - 21:00, Sat 09:30 - 18:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00.

Real estate

Direct Wonen E-8, Overtoom 47, tel. (+31) 206 16 16 66, www.directwonen.nl. If you're looking for an apartment, these guys may be able to help. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:30. Closed Sat, Sun.

Rots-Vast Groep A-3, Singel 370, tel. (+31) 206 39 11 49, www.rotsvast.nl. This experienced real estate company can help you buy or rent property in Amsterdam and many other cities in the Netherlands. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun. Also at Johannes Verhulststraat 30bg.

Relocation services

The Moving Company H-7, Prinsengracht 834-B, tel. (+31) 681 35 13 91, movingcompanyamsterdam@gmail.com, www.themovingcompany.nl. ▶ Open 08:00 - 16:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Wiggelaar E-6, Laurierstraat 33, tel. (+31) 204 20 50 00, www.wiggelaar.nl. ▶ Open 08:00 - 16:00. Closed Sat, Sun.



Amsterdam's iconic Beurs van Berlage building



Rembrandtplein in bloom

M.Zaprauskis

Spas & Beauty

City Street Spa G-8, Prinsengracht 764, tel. (+31) 202 21 41 02, www.thecitystreetspa.com. The Japanese-style City Street Spa is Amsterdam's latest attraction among the spa set. Apart from the usual treatments, you can also hire the whole place for €60/hour. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00.

Hammam Amsterdam C-3, Zaanstraat 88, tel. (+31) 206 81 48 18, www.hammamamsterdam.nl. The relaxing atmosphere of this single sex Near Eastern-style bath house can be enjoyed by all, but you must bring your own scrubbing glove and if you don't have one you're obligated to buy one for €5. Facilities include a sauna, Turkish steam bath, chill out areas, beauty treatments, massage, solarium and a café. ▶ For women open Tues - Fri 12:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 20:00, for men open Mon 12:00 - 22:00. Admission: adults €17, children 6 - 11 years €10.

Sauna Deco E-5, Herengracht 115, tel. (+31) 206 23 82 15, www.saunadeco.nl. The beautiful interior of this mixed sex Art Deco sauna was lovingly restored. Facilities include sauna, Turkish steam bath, chill out areas, beauty treatments, massage, solarium, fitness centre, café and an outside relaxation area. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00, Tue 15:00 - 23:00, Sun 13:00 - 10:00. Admission: €21.  

Spa Amsterdam Zuiver N-5, Koenenkade 8 (Amsterdamse Bos), tel. (+31) 203 01 07 10, www.spazuiver.nl. This exclusive spa provides a wide variety of pools, hot tubs, saunas, hammams and lounge areas both inside the complex and outside as well. Naturally, a range of massages, beauty treatments and wellness procedures are also on offer. ▶ Open 09:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 09:00 - 20:00.  

Tattoos & Piercing

Dermadonna Custom Tattoos B-2, Kloveniersburgwal 34, tel. (+31) 207 73 66 14, www.dermadonna.nl. Get a tattoo from real experts. ▶ Open 12:00 - 20:00.

Hanky Panky Tattooing B-2, Oudezijdsvoorburgwal 141, tel. (+31) 206 27 48 48, www.hankypankyattoo.nl. Tattoos in the Red Light district. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00.

Tattoo Palace B-3, Reguliersdwarstraat 91, tel. (+31) 206 38 44 48, calvo@xs4all.nl, www.tattooopalace.com. The tattoo artists have been at it here since 1989. ▶ Open 12:00 - 19:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 14:00 - 19:00.

Vets & Pets

Dierenkliniek De Jordaan D-4, 2e Goudsbloemdwarsstraat 19, tel. (+31) 204 23 61 04, www.dierenkliniekdejordaan.nl. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Medisch Centrum voor Dieren B-2, Isolatorweg 45, tel. (+31) 207 40 06 00, www.mcvoordieren.nl. A specialist clinic that also handles emergencies. ▶ Open 09:00 - 19:00, Sat, Sun 24hrs.

Amsterdam for kids

Although we wouldn't recommend a stroll with the kids around the Red Light district, except perhaps as a cautionary tale, Amsterdam does have plenty of options for the little ones. Here are some of the best.

Bounz M-2, Willinklaan 3-5, tel. (+31) 206 11 44 81, www.bounzsport.nl. What used to be a classroom for PE teachers in training has now been transformed into a large trampoline centre. Young and old enjoy jumping, back flipping and flopping on 32 connected trampolines.

▶ Open 13:00 - 19:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. Admission: €5.50/hour.  

Bouwspeelplaats 't Landje N-3, Rembrandtpark, tel. (+31) 206 18 36 04, imuls@impuls.nl, www.impuls.nl. Believe or not, but dads aren't allowed in this children's paradise. The management decided that their adult male presence was just too stern and would prevent kids from being, well, kids. 't Landje, which is located on a peninsula in Rembrandt Park, offers arts and crafts classes and other activities for children. ▶ Open 12:00 - 17:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:30. Closed Mon, Sun.    

De Ontdekhoeck N-2, Burgemeester Röellstraat 145, tel. (+31) 204 11 68 46, www.ontdekhoeck.nl. Children from the ages of 4 to 14 can have a blast at the inventor's workshop, experimenting, testing and discovering new things. More than 30 experiments are are at your disposal such as miniature bricklaying, making chips and making and playing street organ music.

▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults €8, children €10. 

De Pijp Petting Zoo (Kinderboerderij De Pijp) H-10, Lissy Ansinghstraat 82, tel. (+31) 206 64 83 03, www.kinderboerderijdepijp.nl. This petting zoo has been entertaining children in De Pijp since 1983 and is home to an amazing 50 different species of animals from goldfish and rodents to turtles and ducks. The usual ponies, donkeys, pigs, rabbits, goats and sheep are also on hand. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00, Sat, Sun 13:00 - 17:00. 

Speeluin Plan West S-3, Van Speijkstraat 65, www.aandeslaginspeeluin.nl. One of the city's best hidden secrets for kids can be found smack in the middle of West. In the vicinity of Van Speijkstraat number 65a is a gate, which leads to an enormous natural playground. With its climbing rock, water fountains, tree huts and a sports field measuring four hundred square metres, this green oasis is a paradise for children. Due to supervision and a litany of rules things are kept under control. ▶ Open 12:00 - 19:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. 

TunFun Speelpark H-5, Mr. Visserplein 7, tel. (+31) 206 89 43 00, www.tunfun.nl. If you can't find it just follow the steady stream of families, children's parties and school excursions into the depths of this enormous playground that includes slides, climbing labyrinths, painting workshops, trampolines and other attractions. The screams of the children can be a bit overwhelming at times but internet access and cans of beer at the café help keep the cacophony of pre-pubescent chatter at bay. Adults are only admitted with children and only have to pay an entrance fee for their kids. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. Admission: kids €7.50, adults free.  

Sometimes there's nothing better than replacing the hustle and bustle of a large city with the peace and tranquility of the seaside. Zandvoort is not only the closest North Sea beach to Amsterdam, but it's also one of Holland's most beloved resorts. The view of the North Sea will never disappoint and the fact that the beach at Zandvoort is one of the safest and cleanest in the country only adds to its popularity. But the beach isn't the only reason why people come here in droves. The town exudes a cosiness and a laid-back atmosphere that can't be beat, while the inspiring landscapes of the dunes at the Zuid-Kennemerland National Park are just magical. Holland's most famous race track is also located in Zandvoort and its seaside cafés and restaurants provide an unforgettable dining experience.

Arriving

Most visitors reach Zandvoort either by train or by car. From Amsterdam Central Station trains depart every half hour toward the Zandvoort aan Zee Station. The journey takes about 30 minutes and after a short interruption at Haarlem Station, the train brings passengers through the landscape of dunes at Zuid-Kennemerland to the beach town on the North Sea. During the summer months, an extra service is provided to and from Haarlem every 30 minutes. A one-way ticket to Zandvoort costs €5 from Amsterdam or €2.10 from Haarlem. Travelling by car to Zandvoort is a bit more complicated. Follow the highway to Haarlem, navigate through the city and find either the N201 or the N200. Both roads connect Haarlem with Zandvoort.

Accommodation

Due to many private B&Bs, it's not often difficult to find accommodation in Zandvoort. Look for the 'Zimmer Frei' signs at private houses if you're looking for a stay with a Dutch family. For more hotels visit www.inyourpocket.com/Netherlands/Amsterdam/Zandvoort.

Camping de Branding Boulevard Barnaart 30, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 237 51 68 00, www.campingdebranding.nl. If you don't have the cash to splurge on a luxury hotel in Zandvoort, but you'd like to be close to the sea then why not try this charming campground that is only steps away from the town's main attraction - the beach. You can pitch a tent, park your caravan or reserve one of its cottages that include bunk beds, a refrigerator and a gas stove top. You can also take full advantage of its other amenities including shared toilets and showers, a bar with free wi-fi and computers, a small supermarket and a playground for the kids. ▶ (tents €15 - 22, caravans €16 - 24, 2- or 4-person cottages €80 - 150).

Eating & Drinking

Beachclub Tien Strandweg 10, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 32 00, www.beachclubtien.nl. There are few things better in life than to put your feet in the sand and watch the sun sink into the North Sea while sipping a glass of wine. Sure, you get the same sunset at other beach pavilions in Zandvoort, but Beachclub Tien provides a collective sunset-watching atmosphere that can best be described as a daily ritual. Apart from the excellent view, this large, popular terrace offers a small playground for the kids, a building that can be rented for private parties, weddings or meetings, quick and friendly service, terrific meals and a warm ambience. The pavilion is located right in the middle of the beach near the casino. ▶ Open 09:00 - 24:00. (€18 - 20).

Que Pasa Playa Boulevard Paulus Loot (Paviljoen 6), Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 52 86, info@quepasaplaya.nl, www.quepasaplaya.nl. Just look for the bright yellow beach pavilion surrounded by lounge chairs and tropical kitsch to find this bar and restaurant with a slight Mexican or perhaps Spanish theme. The surroundings certainly put one in mind of the Costa del Sol and maybe even Cabo, but if you're hungry you're going to have to settle for affordable Dutch fare from chicken *satay* and grilled beef to salmon fillet and lots of salads. Naturally, plenty of toastsies and sandwiches are available as well as some options for the kids, but many people come here for the beach atmosphere and the drinks. ▶ Open 09:00 - 24:00. (€5 - 12).

Ristorante Andrea Kerkplein 9, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 46 70. This friendly restaurant serves fresh Italian food with a smile. Ristorante Andrea puts a lot of effort into its tasty dishes, but it could have done a bit more with its interior, which is ordinary and that's putting it mildly. On the other hand, the warm atmosphere and the Italian flavours will quickly make you forget about any expectations you might have about its décor. On a good day you can also enjoy your coffee or pasta on the sunny terrace and watch passers-by on Zandvoort's main pedestrian street. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. Closed Tue, Wed. (€12 - 15).

Coffeeshops

Yanks Indian Club Dorpsplein 2, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 92 99, www.yanks.nl. This place claims to be 'the biggest and best coffeeshop on the Dutch west coast' and after a visit to its huge premises we'd have to agree. It seems that every establishment that sells marijuana has to have some kind of theme to set it apart from the rest and Yanks is no exception. Pass its huge outdoor terrace and inside you'll find enough Native American and Wild West kitsch to create a set for a John Wayne film including huge tepees! Pool tables are also available as well as computers in case you want to high-mail your friends. ▶ Open 10:00 - 03:00.

Places of interest

Scuba Republic Boulevard Barnaart 12, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 237 43 30 00, www.scubarepublic.nl. Few might think of the North Sea as a haven for divers, but in fact the Dutch coast offers thousands of shipwrecks and unique underwater life that can only be admired below sea level. Scuba Republic offers diving trips in the North Sea and it's one of the few diving centres in the Netherlands where you can take PADI courses. An indoor diving pool is available and diving equipment can be either rented or bought here. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon.



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Shopping & Useful addresses

De Kaashoek Haltestraat 38, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 50 00. A Dutch town just isn't a proper Dutch town without a cheese shop. De Kaashoek is a cosy little establishment that sells all kinds of cheeses and a variety of other, typically Dutch, delicacies. Its assortment includes homemade soups and tasty sandwiches. ▶ Open 08:30 - 18:00. Closed Sun. [V]

Van den Berg Surf Passage 36, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 86 00, www.vandenbergsurf.nl. For anyone whose seen water sports enthusiasts in action and feel like riding a board themselves, Van den Berg Surf is a decent place to get the necessary equipment. This shop specialises in boards and gear for kite surfing, wind surfing and stand-up paddling. You can also buy swim trunks and other beach clothing. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Fri 10:00 - 21:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 11:00 - 17:00.

Tourist Information (VVV Zandvoort) Bakkerstraat 2/B, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 235 71 79 47, www.vvzandvoort.com. The tourist information office offers brochures, souvenirs and an enthusiastic staff. ▶ Open 09:00 - 17:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 11:00 - 16:00.

Bike rental

Behind the Beach Bike Rentals Haltestraat 51, Zandvoort, tel. (+31) 238 22 47 46, www.behindthebeach.nl. Riding a two-wheeler is the easiest way to explore Zandvoort. Behind the Beach rents various types of bicycles and scooters including mountain bikes, tandems, Segways, road bikes and even Indonesian rickshaws. Rental fees for a standard bicycle cost €10/day (if you return the bike before 18:00) or €12.50 for the full 24 hours. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. [CC]

Calendar of events

Date	Event
30.03 - 01.04	Visit www.vvzandvoort.com for more info Kruidvat Gillette Easter races are full of excitement and spectacle. Experience the beginning of the national racing season and enjoy a spectacular stunt show at Circuit Park Zandvoort
May 17-18	Battle of the Coast 2013 will be held in Zandvoort at The Spot beach club and in Haarlem. It's a 2-day Stand Up Paddle World Cup Event
18-20	The Pentecostal races are the climax of the month of May at Circuit Park Zandvoort. In addition to the Dutch Power Pack, there visitors can also watch the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge and the FR 1.6 NEC Junior
25-26	Cycling Zandvoort is a sport-filled fun weekend event for the whole family with a 24-hour race, a soapbox race, ATB Clinic, spinning marathon and much more at Circuit Park Zandvoort
31.05 - 03.06	Click festival: Weekender. Partying for three days and nights with a mind blowing line-up at a unique location: Circuit Park Zandvoort
June 28-30	Culinaire Zandvoort. Come and enjoy the culinary highlights of Zandvoort's restaurants



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