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You’re nursing a drink in a canal café when you hear Bach. A man with a wild hairdo is playing organ and trumpet on a nutshell of a boat, while his feet do the steering. Only in Amsterdam…

… and back by popular demand. After a few years’ pout, this beautiful city has found its old self – quirky, creative and open-minded. Yet beneath the self-assured exterior, mental notes are everywhere. Not long ago the Netherlands swung towards the right, with crackdowns on immigration, religious freedom and red-light districts. Even in freewheeling Amsterdam, people were asking themselves: is too much tolerance a bad thing?

You can breath easy: the soul-searching is over. The core values of Dutch society that we knew and loved have emerged intact. Newcomers who integrate are welcome; practising a faith is OK, as is the right to turn away from it. You like reefer madness? Fine, let’s hit a coffeeshop. A studded jockstrap for skate night? No problem, that’s crazy enough. Tolerance hasn’t gone out of fashion, it’s just had a makeover.

The city’s gorgeous looks haven’t faded either. The moments you spend ogling the old merchants’ villas, the Jordaan’s charming lanes or the lush Vondelpark are as magical now as in centuries past. The cafés are full, the museums are littered with Golden Age art and everyone still parties like there’s no tomorrow. Amsterdam is a delight to visit any time of year, but it’s hard to trump Queen’s Day, the world’s biggest party-cum–garage sale. In summer there’s an endless parade of festivals and events such as the Holland Festival, the Roots Music Festival and the outrageous Gay Pride parade, as well as delightful concerts on canal stages.

This city is too relaxed to stop being fun. To join in, all you need to pack is a few days’ attitude.
Amsterdam is so incredibly well organised that you won’t need to plan ahead (much). Getting there is a cinch, the handsome canal-laced centre is compact and easy to explore, and regardless of the season there’ll be oodles of things to do. The city is extremely popular with visitors, so booking accommodation is likely to be your most demanding task. A key thing to bear in mind: while it’s possible to ‘do’ the Dutch capital on a busker’s income, you’ll breathe easier with a medium-sized wallet.

WHEN TO GO

Try as you will, there’s not really a bad time to visit Amsterdam. In any given month the festivals and celebrations will keep you going nonstop, and in a rare lull there are plenty of museums and exhibitions to hold your interest. When the weather warms up, Amsterdammers rejoice by flocking into the streets, canals and parks, and cafés happily move their seating outdoors.

The summer agenda teems with open-air concerts, theatre and festivals, often free. The party to end all orange parties is Queen’s Day on 30 April, an unforgettable experience. Major cultural events include the Holland Festival and Roots Music Festival in June, Julidans in July and the Uitmarkt in August. Outdoors enthusiasts will want to take in National Cycling Day or one of the road races throughout the year.

A few of the events listed in the following section are out of town but are worth the trip. See p246 for a list of public holidays – when the city has a tendency to shut down. Accommodation is cheapest from November to December, and can fall to ludicrously low levels in the bigger hotels in January and February.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The annual calendar is a never-ending procession of parties, exhibitions, concerts, festivals, sports challenges and other events almost without let-up during the entire year. Things slow down a little after New Year’s as the city nurses its collective head.

January

JUMPING AMSTERDAM
www.jumpingamsterdam.nl
One of the top equestrian sports events in Europe, held at the RAI (p131) convention centre in late January.

February

CARNAVAL
www.carnaval.in.nl
Enjoyed with extreme gusto in southern Holland, Carnaval is a Catholic tradition that goes down well with Amsterdammers who happen to like partying in silly costumes.

COMMEMORATION OF THE FEBRUARY STRIKE
Held on 25 February, wreaths are laid at the Dockworker monument in the former Jewish quarter, in memory of the 1941 general strike against the Nazis.

March

STILLE OMGANG (SILENT PROCESSION)
On the Sunday closest to 15 March, Catholics walk along the Holy Way (the street ‘Heiligeweg’ is a remnant) to commemorate the Miracle of Amsterdam (see the boxed text, p73).

October

NATIONAL MUSEUM WEEKEND
Usually held on the second weekend of October, with free entry to all museums and the crowds to match.

KONINGINNEDAG (QUEEN’S DAY)
www.koninginnedagamsterdam.nl
Celebrated on 30 April – actually the birthday of Juliana, mother of the current Queen Beatrix – Queen’s Day is an uproarious madhouse and highlight of the annual calendar. A ‘free market’ is held throughout the city, meaning anyone can sell anything they like, and the vast terrain of sidewalks (staked out by vendors well ahead of time) becomes a comical open-air showroom of items ranging from precious heirlooms to outright junk. Grab your orange wig and suspenders and hang on tight for musical revelry, rivers of beer and about two million happy visitors. And expect to walk a lot, as the streets are too packed for the buses and trams to run.

WORLD BOOK CAPITAL
www.amsterdamwereldboekenstad.nl
As Unesco’s World Book Capital of the year, Amsterdam plays host to a gaggle of literary events such as exhibitions, a children’s parade and readings by famous authors in crowded bookshops. From 23 April 2008 through to 22 April 2009.

JUNE

HOLLAND FESTIVAL
www.holnfstvl.nl
For all of June the country’s biggest music, drama and dance extravaganza practically takes over Amsterdam. Highbrow and pretentious meet lowbrow and silly.

VONDELPARK OPEN-AIR THEATRE
www.openluchttheater.nl
A popular Amsterdam tradition featuring classical music, dance, musical theatre, cabaret and children’s shows in a wonderful park setting. Early June through to mid-August.

OPEN GARDEN DAYS
www.opentuinendagen.nl
On the third weekend in June, the public has a unique opportunity to view some 30 gardens of private homes and institutions along the canals.

ROOTS MUSIC FESTIVAL
www.amsterdarmroots.nl
A lively, week-long extravaganza of world music, theatre, dance and film held at the Tropenmuseum, Concertgebouw and other key venues in late June.

PARKPOP
www.parkpop.nl
Europe’s largest free pop festival is also one of its best organised and, with crowds of up to 200,000 partying fans, it needs to be. Last Sunday in June, at Den Haag’s Zuiderpark.
INTERNATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL FESTIVAL
www.itsfestival.nl
For 10 days around the end of the month, Dutch and international drama students strut their stuff.

July
JAZZ OP HET DAK
www.e-nemo.nl
High-flying concerts pull big talent to the sloping roof of the NEMO museum (p69). First weekend of July.

5 DAYS OFF
www.5daysoff.nl
Electronic music festival with dance parties at the Melkweg, Paradiso and the Heineken Music Hall the first week of the month.

OVER HET IJ FESTIVAL
www.overhetij.nl
Large-scale theatre, music and fine arts do, in off-beat venues at the NSDM shipyards in Amsterdam-Noord, for 10 days in early July. Always fresh and exciting.

JULIDANS
www.julidans.nl
Renowned dance festival with influential choreographers. It draws some 20,000 visitors during the first half of July, all the more remarkable given it takes place at small venues around town.

NORTH SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL
www.northseajazz.nl
The world’s largest indoor jazz festival takes place in Rotterdam’s renowned Ahoy complex in mid-July. The performers’ list reads like a ‘who’s who’ of jazz, and many of the musicians play venues in Amsterdam as well.

ROBECO SUMMER CONCERTS
www.robecozomerconcerten.nl
Annual showcase of classical concerts featuring up-and-coming talent and a spate of events in the Concertgebouw (p199). Mid-July through August.

INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK
www.amsterdamfashionweek.com
The Netherlands’ top fashion event features catwalks, films and parties galore during the last 10 days of the month; it takes place on Museumplein and in the Westergasfabriek.

August
AMSTERDAM PRIDE FESTIVAL
www.weareproud.nl
The rainbow flag blankets Amsterdam the first weekend of the month, with oodles of parties and special events. The climax, the Gay Pride Parade, is the world’s only waterborne spectacle of its flesh-bearing kind.

PARADE
www.mobilearts.nl
In the first half of the month, this old-time funfair and theatre festival at Martin Luther King Park is a magnet for small fry and parents alike.

DANCE VALLEY
www.dancevalley.nl
Held mid-August on a fairground at Spaarnwoude, near Amsterdam. Tens of thousands groove in circus tents as celebrity DJs spin their spells.

GRACHTENFESTIVAL (CANAL FESTIVAL)
www.grachtenfestival.nl
This music festival delights with classical concerts around the Canal Belt in the second half of August. The Prinsengracht Concert takes place on barges in front of the Hotel Pulitzer.

HARTJESDAGEN ZEEDIJK
www.zeedijk.nl
Held on the third Monday and the weekend before it, this festival, dating back to medieval times, features street theatre, a transvestite parade and all kinds of costumed extroverts on Zeedijk and Nieuwmarkt.

uitmarkt
www.uitmarkt.nl
For the last weekend of August, local troupes and orchestras present their forthcoming repertoires free of charge in the Eastern Docklands. It’s a bit like Koninginnedag in April, but Uitmarkt is more relaxed.

September
OPEN MONUMENTENDAG
www.openmonumentendag.nl
Registered historical buildings are thrown open to the public on the second weekend of September.

JORDAAN FESTIVAL
www.jordaanfestival.nl
The third weekend of September, with music, amateur contests and other festivities around the Westerkerk and elsewhere in the charming Jordaan district. Hundreds of small boats take to the canals.

DAM TOT DAMLOOP
www.damloop.nl
This is a 16km foot-race between the Dam in Amsterdam and the Dam in Zaandam. Expect up to 20,000 runners and many times that in spectators. Third Sunday of the month.

ROBODOCK FESTIVAL
www.robobdock.org
Powerhouse theatre and multimedia events with a postindustrial flavour. Third weekend of September.

AMSTERDAM UNDERGROUND FESTIVAL
www.amsterdamunderground.nl
A four-day celebration of the subterranean city at the end of September, with theatre, music, film, dance and art events. Its sunken locations have included the interiors of bridges, a tunnelling site for the North–South metro line and a mysterious passage directly beneath the IJ river tunnel.

October
AMSTERDAM MARATHON
www.amsterdammarathon.nl
Thousands of runners lope along the canals in this epic race that begins and ends at the Olympic Stadium. Held mid-month, with several types of runs.

November
MUSEUM NIGHT
www.n8.nl
Some 40 museums stay open late with live music, DJs and a liver-wilting array of after-parties. First Saturday of the month.

CANNABIS CUP
www.hightimes.com
Hosted by High Times magazine, this far-out festival doles out awards for the nicest grass, biggest reefer and the best ‘pot comedian’. Held in mid-November, complete with hemp expo and fashion show.

SINTERKLAAS PARADE
St Nicholas arrives by boat from Spain in mid- to late November (see the boxed text, above).

December
NEW YEAR’S EVE
Organised fireworks displays over the Amstel and elsewhere around town. The
Dutch are absolutely mad about pyrotechnics, making even the most informal celebrations a spark-showering spectacle (try Nieuwmarkt).

**COSTS & MONEY**

The cost of living is about average for a northern European city, but less expensive than London or Paris. If you’re coming from the UK, prices may look the same numerically but the exchange rate on the pound usually makes Amsterdam a bargain. That said, it’s disturbingly easy to spend more money than you planned on, though with a few simple measures you can stop the rot.

Accommodation will likely be your major expense. Although budget lodging can be relatively inexpensive, you’ll pay dearly for anything of quality. Booking package deals, taking advantage of internet discounts and visiting in the low season can drastically cut your hotel bill. Prices ease slightly in the budget and midrange brackets as you move away from the old centre, and though you’re slightly further away from the action, the standard of facilities tends to go up.

The majority of hostels charge around €20 to €25 for a bed, though at rock-bottom you can find digs from around €17. Budget hotels charge around €55 to €80 for a basic double. A room in a midrange hotel or B&B goes for €80 to €160 for a standard double, with the average somewhere around €125. For a flashy boutique or luxury hotel, expect to pay from €200, though things start to get really comfy around €250 (see also p211).

As for food, you’ll find lots of cafés and restaurants with three- or four-course meals anywhere from €18 to €40, though most will be around €25 to €35, and the bill can easily be more in swanky places. You can economise by taking your main meal at lunchtime, as €5 to €10 or so will buy a daily special and a drink, and then having a snack for dinner.

Self-catering is an attractive option, as delis and supermarket chains like Albert Heijn stock sandwiches and prepared meals (see p158). A consolation is the reasonable price of drinks in bars and cafés, though wine tends to be overpriced in a land of beer-lovers.

Museums can be a drain on resources at about €10 a pop for the top exhibitions, but discounts are available – see p245 for discount cards, special passes and packages. Remember that many of the summer festivals cost nothing to attend (see p16), and some cultural institutions offer free treats such as the lunchtime concerts at the Concertgebouw (p199).

Public transport is remarkably cheap, costing from €0.90 per regular journey in the city centre using a stripkaart or OV-chipkaart (see p245), and bicycle rental will only set you back €7 to €10 per day. If you’re looking to save money, avoid taxis! Fares vary but are generally €3.40 at the drop and another €1.94 per kilometre, and the total bill mounts quickly. Petrol (gasoline) is among the priciest in Europe at around €1.40 per litre of unleaded but, then again, you’ll hardly need a car once you’re in Amsterdam.

To sum up, budget travellers staying in hostels or cheap hotels, eating in modest restaurants and visiting a museum or two should be able to scrape by on €40 to €60 a day. Staying in midrange hotels and eating in midrange restaurants equates to €80 to €100 a person per day in peak season. From around €150 per day, you can stay in four- and five-star hotels, dine at fancy restaurants and hire a private boat, provided a few others chip in.

**HOW MUCH?**

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<td>€1.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glass of Heineken</td>
<td>€2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kroket sandwich at van Dobben</td>
<td>€2</td>
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<tr>
<td>One hour of parking</td>
<td>€3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strippenkaart (15-strip ticket for public transport)</td>
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<td>Cinema ticket</td>
<td>€8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robust bicycle lock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rijsttafel dinner at Tjujh Maret Indonesian restaurant</td>
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<td>Tip in a public toilet</td>
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**INTERNET RESOURCES**

Amsterdam is a pretty switched-on place and the web, eureka, is a fertile source of information. Here’s a selection of relevant sites, some for practical planning, others for feeding your head.

http://homepage.mac.com/schuffelen Dutch pronunciation (MP3s to download).

www.amsterdamtourist.nl The tourist board’s answer to iamsterdam.com.

**ADVANCE PLANNING**

Before you head to Amsterdam, note that hotels book up fast in high season or around big events like trade fairs, so try to book your accommodation well ahead of time. The hotel-booking function at www.iamsterdam.com gives a quick idea of availability on a certain date, although as with most online hotel services, not all places are listed.

Read the Amsterdam Weekly (www.amsterdamweekly.nl) to see what’s on in the way of festivals and special events. You might also check the sked at the RAI convention centre (p131), which puts on interesting trade fairs. Football fans scan for matches of leading Dutch teams on www.soccerway.com. Apart from the events themselves, you’ll get clues about the crowd levels in town and the demand for hotel rooms.

Be sure to check the weather reports and tailor your activities (eg rain = museums, sun = canal-hopping). Pack layers of clothing and a raincoat, bearing in mind the Dutch weather is notoriously fickle and there can be chilly spells even in summer.

When planning to dine out it pays to reserve ahead in popular restaurants, sometimes several days ahead of time (see p157). And last but not least, take a pair of earplugs to ensure a good night’s sleep.

www.amsterdamweekly.nl Good feature articles and catch-all listings.

www.bma.amsterdam.nl Amsterdam Heritage and its historical buildings.

www.expatica.com For expats and all those who strive to be one.

www.iamsterdam.com Excellent site run by the city of Amsterdam.

www.iens.nl Top dining-out pages with ratings and reviews.

www.panoramsterdam.com For 360-degree views of your favourite city.

www.startamsterdam.com Link-rich site for art, culture and places of interest.

www.underwateramsterdam.com Alternative listings, with a bit of everything.

www.amsterdamheritage.com Historical buildings.

www.amsterdam-day.com Top things to do in the day.

www.amsterdam-weekly.nl Good feature articles and catch-all listings.

www.iamsterdam.com The tourist board’s answer to amsterdam.com.


www.amsterdam-tourist.nl The tourist board’s answer to iamsterdam.com.

**SUSTAINABLE AMSTERDAM**

Amsterdammers are acutely aware of the strains on their fair city, and though visitors aren’t expected to go overboard, your contribution to a cleaner environment will be much appreciated. You can start by keeping your ‘carbon footprint’ as small as possible (ie by taking a low-emission train to your destination, or ride-sharing by car).

The petite city centre is tailor-made for bicycles and foot traffic. Once you’re here there’s little need for a car, which anyway is more a curse than a blessing in the quaint but perennially clogged lanes of the Canal Belt. The efficient web of bus, tram and metro lines is a much better option and feeds seamlessly into the national transport system. Amsterdam’s long-standing policy of curbing motor-vehicle use reduces not only congestion, but air pollution (electric cargo trams are being launched in 2008 for the very same reason).

Most glass bottles carry a deposit, returnable to supermarkets for a refund. Disposable bottles (both glass and plastic) can be deposited into bottle banks located around town. Recyclable paper containers are becoming more common too (see p43).
Jeremy Gray

Born in Louisiana of English parents, Jeremy went to university in Texas and has since lived in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. When he first visited Amsterdam in 1998, it immediately felt like home, so he upped and moved to a flat in the Eastern Islands. Soon Jeremy was lingering with the locals in brown cafés, bumping on his bike along the canals and toe-tapping to jazz at the Bimhuis. He admires the Dutch for their bubbly gezelligheid, spontaneity and openness – and fondly recalls how a near-stranger revealed that she was the test-tube child of his landlord’s girlfriend’s father. The only Calvinist finger-wag came from his barber, for not supporting the local pub. Jeremy now lives in Berlin, where he divides his time between travel writing, photography and documentary film. He returns to Amsterdam as often as possible just to see gorgeous canals. You can find more of his work at www.jeremyjgray.com.

JEREMY’S TOP AMSTERDAM DAY

There’s no beating an early stroll when the old merchants’ homes of the Canal Belt glow softly in the morning light. First stop is a café in the Negen Straatjes district, to say dag to the owner and catch up on the papers before poking round the interesting shops nearby. The organic stalls are open at the lovely Noordermarkt, so I can pick up kitchen herbs, ripe Gouda and a bosje (bunch) of flowers; all go in the bicycle basket. Got bread and some osseworst as well so I phone the sweetie and meet in the Vondelpark for an impromptu picnic. In the afternoon we check out a photo exhibition at FOAM. Then it’s off to the shop Concerto to pick up a CD, followed by a biertje at a café in the Utrechtsstraat where we end up staying for dinner. A concert at club Paradiso, followed by a cocktail at a bar-nightclub near Leidseplein, rounds off an ideal day in the canal city.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Will Salter

In the last 12 years, Will has worked on assignment in over 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Antarctica and the Pacific. He has produced a body of award-winning work that includes evocative images of travel, portraits and sport. He sees photography as a privilege, a rare opportunity to become intimately involved in people’s lives. Will is based in Melbourne, Australia, with his wife and two children.

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BACKGROUND

HISTORY

FROM THE BEGINNING

Originally, the region that spawned a giant trading community was an inhospitable patchwork of lakes, swamps and peatland, at or below sea level; its contours shifted with the autumn storms and floods. The oldest archaeological finds here date from Roman times, when the IJ river lay along the northern border of the Roman Empire. Too busy elsewhere, and no doubt put off by the mushy conditions, the Romans left practically no evidence of settlement.

Isolated farming communities tamed the marshlands with ditches and dykes. Between 1150 and 1300 the south bank of the IJ was dyked from the Zuiderzee westwards to Haarlem. Around 1200, a fishing community known as Aemsteldamme – ‘the dam built across the Amstel’ – emerged at what is now the Dam. On 27 October 1275, the count of Holland waived tolls for those who lived around the Amstel dam, allowing locals to pass the locks and bridges of Holland free of charge, and the town of Amsterdam was born.

EARLY TRADE

Farming was tricky on the marshland, and with the sea on the doorstep, early residents turned to fishing. But it was commercial trade that would put Holland on the map. While powerful city-states focused on overland trade with Flanders and northern Italy, Amsterdam levelled its sights on the maritime routes. The big prizes were the North and Baltic seas, in the backyard of the powerful Hanseatic League, a group of German trading cities.

Ignoring the league, Amsterdam’s clever vrijbuiter (booty-chasers) sailed right into the Baltic, their holds full of cloth and salt to exchange for grain and timber. It was nothing short of a coup. By the late 1400s, nearly two-thirds of ships sailing to and from the Baltic Sea were from Holland, mostly based in Amsterdam.

Already strained to capacity, the original harbour on the Damrak and Rokin was extended north into the IJ river, near what is now Centraal Station. Canals were dug to the warehouses in today’s Medieval Centre. By this time sailors, merchants, artisans and opportunists from the Low Countries (roughly present-day Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) made their living here.

At the time, Amsterdam was unfettered by the key structures of other European societies. With no tradition of Church-sanctioned feudal relationships, no distinction between nobility and serfs, and hardly any taxation, a society of individualism and capitalism slowly took root.

INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC

More than being about religion, the Protestant Reformation was also a classic power struggle between the ‘new money’, an emerging class of merchants and artisans, and the ‘old money’, the land-owning, aristocratic order sanctioned by the established Catholic Church.

TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1150–1300</td>
<td>Dams are built to retain the IJ river between the Zuiderzee and Haarlem. A tiny community of herrings fishermen settles on the banks of the Amstel river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220</td>
<td>A barrier dubbed ‘the Dam’ is built at the mouth of the Amstel river to control the tidal waters of the Zuiderzee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1275</td>
<td>Amsterdam is founded after the count of Holland grants toll-free status to residents along the Amstel. The city gains its first direct access to the ocean via the Zuiderzee, now the IJsselmeer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1380</td>
<td>Canals of the present-day Medieval Centre are dug. Amsterdam flourishes, winning control over the sea trade in Scandinavia and later gaining free access to the Baltic, breaking the Hanse monopoly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1452</td>
<td>Fire devours the timber frames and thatch in future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1519</td>
<td>Spain’s Charles V is crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Treaties and dynastic marriages make Amsterdam part of the Spanish empire, with Catholicism the main faith. Protestants are tolerated in Amsterdam.</td>
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The Protestantism that took hold in the Low Countries was its most radically moralistic stream, known as Calvinism. It stressed the might of God and treated humans as sinful creatures whose duty in life was sobriety and hard work. The Calvinists stood for local decision-making – a sign of things to come in Dutch ‘polder’ society – and had a disdain for the top-down hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Calvinism was a key to the struggle for independence from King Philip II of Spain. Philip, a fanatically devout Catholic, had acquired the Low Countries in something of a horse trade with Austria. His efforts to introduce the Spanish Inquisition, centralise government and levy taxes enraged his subjects and, even worse, awoke a sense of national pride. After 80 years of rebellion, the Spanish finally threw in the towel and signed the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

With mighty Amsterdam on their side, the seven northern provinces declared themselves to be an independent republic, led by William the Silent, the seed that grew into today’s royal family. (He was dubbed ‘the Silent’ because he wisely refused to enter into religious debate.) The Seven United Provinces became known to the outside world as the Dutch Republic – or simply ‘Holland’ because that province dominated. Within Holland, Amsterdam towered over all the other cities put together.
GOLDEN AGE (1580–1700)
Amsterdam grew rapidly. In the 1580s, land was reclaimed from the IJ and Amstel to create the present Nieuwmarkt district. Two decades later, work began on the Canal Belt that more than tripled the city’s area.

By 1600, Dutch ships controlled the sea trade between England, France, Spain and the Baltic, and had a virtual monopoly on North Sea fishing and Arctic whaling. Jewish refugees taught Dutch mariners about trade routes, giving rise to the legendary United East India and West India Companies. Tiny Holland burned brightly; for a while it ran rings around the fleets of great powers, which were too slow or cumbersome to react.

Amsterdam’s fortunes rose when Antwerp, its major trading rival in the Low Countries, was retaken by the Spaniards. Half the population of Antwerp fled, and merchants, skippers and artisans flocked to Amsterdam, bringing entire industries with them such as printing and silk-weaving. Persecuted Jews were welcomed from Portugal and Spain, and Germany proved a ready source of sailors and labourers. Later, a second wave of Jews arrived from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as persecuted Hugenots from France. In the absence of an overriding religion, ethnic background or political entity, money reigned supreme.

By 1620, Dutch traders were exploring the far corners of the earth. They rounded the tip of South America, naming it Cape Horn after the city of Hoorn, north of Amsterdam. They expelled the Portuguese from the Moluccas, also known as the Spice Islands, in present-day Indonesia, and set up outposts in the Pacific and Americas. By 1641 the Dutch had taken control of Formosa and garnered sole trading rights with Japan.

Their good luck continued, and in 1652, Dutch sailors captured the Cape of Good Hope and booted the Portuguese out of Ceylon soon after. They also explored the coastlines of New Zealand, named after the Dutch province of Zeeland and New Holland (now Australia), but found nothing of value there.

By this point the Dutch had more seagoing merchant vessels than England and France combined. Half of all ships sailing between Europe and Asia belonged to the Hollanders, and exotic products became commodities – coffee, tea, spices, tobacco, cotton, silk and porcelain. Amsterdam became home to Europe’s largest ship-building industry, and as wages remained low, investment capital flowed in.

In 1651 England passed the first of several Navigation Acts that posed a serious threat to Dutch trade, leading to several thorny, inconclusive wars on the seas. Its competitors sussed out Holland’s trade secrets, regrouped, and reconquered the sea routes. In one nasty encounter, the Dutch lost the colony of New Amsterdam (New York City) to the British. Louis XIV of France seized the opportunity to invade the Low Countries two decades later, and the few short decades of prosperity known as Golden Age ended.

WEALTHY DECLINE (1700–1814)
While the Dutch Republic didn’t have the resources to fight France and England head-on, it had Amsterdam’s money to buy them off and ensure freedom of the seas.

As the costs mounted, Amsterdam went from being a place where everything (profitable) was possible, to a lethargic community where wealth creation was a matter of interest rates. Gone were the daring sea voyages, achievements in art, science and technology, the innovations of government and finance. Ports such as London and Hamburg became powerful rivals.

The decline in trade brought poverty, and exceptionally cold winters hampered transport and led to serious food shortages. The winters of 1740 and 1763 were so severe that some residents froze to death.

Amsterdam’s support of the American War of Independence (1776) resulted in a British blockade of the Dutch coast followed by British conquests of Dutch trading posts around the world, forcing the closure of the West India and East India Companies.

In 1794 the French revolutionary troops invaded the Low Countries. The Dutch Republic became a monarchy in 1806, when Napoleon nominated his brother Louis as king. Two years later the grand city hall on the Dam, symbol of Dutch merchant wealth and power, was made his palace (now the Royal Palace, p67). Napoleon soon dismissed his brother and annexed Holland into the French Empire.

Britain responded by blockading the Continent and occupying the Dutch colonies. Amsterdam’s great trade and fishing industries ground to a halt, and people turned increasingly to agriculture for a living. Holland’s commercial hub quickly became a sleepy market town.

After Napoleon’s defeat in 1813, Amsterdam’s trade with the world recovered only slowly; domination of the seas now belonged to the British.
### HISTORY BUFFS’ BIBLES

- **The Embarrassment of Riches**, by Simon Schama, is an epic account of Dutch culture in the Golden Age, using art to mirror a nation with all its neuroses and religious idiosyncrasies. Masterfully written and full of off-beat themes such as the popularity of breakfast paintings.
- **Amsterdam: The Brief Life of a City**, by Geert Mak, is an engaging, awesomely researched book that combines a broad historical narrative with anecdotes about Amsterdam’s more riveting characters. One of the country’s leading journalists, Mak does not shy away from showing uncomfortable truths, be it in trade, war, religion or government.
- **Tulip Fever**, by Deborah Moggach, offers a feel for Amsterdam proper around the time when Rembrandt was at his peak and tulips were worth more than their weight in gold. A nice bonus is the reproductions of Dutch paintings in some editions.
- **Max Havelaar**, by Multatuli, is written by a colonial administrator and Amsterdam native, who went by the pen name of Multatuli (see p95). This classic depicts the hypocrisy of Dutch coffee traders in Java. The book shocked Dutch society, and then the government into revising colonial policy in Indonesia.

### NEW INFRASTRUCTURE (1814–1918)

Amsterdam in the first half of the 19th century was an uninspiring place. Its harbour had been neglected, and the sandbanks in the IJ proved too great a barrier for modern ships. Rotterdam was set to become the country’s premier port.

Things began to look up as the country’s first railway, between Amsterdam and Haarlem, opened in 1839. Trade with the East Indies was the backbone of Amsterdam’s economy, and a canal, later extended to the Rhine, helped the city to benefit from the Industrial Revolution underway in Europe.

The diamond industry boomed after the discovery of diamonds in South Africa. Amsterdam again attracted immigrants, and its population doubled in the second half of the 19th century. Speculators hastily erected new housing beyond the Canal Belt – dreary, shoddily built tenement blocks.

In 1889 the Centraal Station was built on several artificial islands in the IJ, seen as a symbolic severing of Amsterdam’s historical ties with the sea. Towards the end of the 19th century, some of the city’s waterways and canals were filled in for hygienic reasons (such as cholera epidemics) and to create roads.

The Netherlands remained neutral in WWI, but Amsterdam’s trade with the East Indies suffered from naval blockades. There were riots over food shortages. An attempt to bring the socialist revolution to the Netherlands was put down by loyalist troops.

### BOOM & DEPRESSION (1918–40)

After the war, Amsterdam remained the country’s industrial centre. The Dutch Shipbuilding Company operated the world’s second-largest wharf and helped carry a large steel and diesel-motor industry. The harbour handled tropical produce that was processed locally, and the harbour handled tropical produce that was processed locally, and the Netherlands remained neutral in WWI, but Amsterdam’s trade with the East Indies suffered from naval blockades. There were riots over food shortages. An attempt to bring the socialist revolution to the Netherlands was put down by loyalist troops.

The 1920s were boom years. KLM (Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij; Royal Aviation Company) began the world’s first regular air service in 1920 between Amsterdam and London, from an airstrip south of the city, and bought many of its planes from Anthony Fokker’s factory north of the IJ. There were two huge breweries, a sizable clothing industry and even a local car factory. The city hosted the Olympic Games in 1928.

The world Depression in the 1930s hit Amsterdam hard. Make-work projects did little to defuse the mounting tensions between socialists, communists and a small but vocal party of Dutch fascists. The city took in 25,000 Jewish refugees fleeing Germany; a shamefully large number were turned back at the border because of the country’s neutrality policy.

### WWII (1940–45)

The Netherlands tried to remain neutral in WWII, but Germany invaded in May 1940. For the first time in almost 400 years, Amsterdammers experienced war first-hand.

Few wanted to believe that things would turn really nasty (the Germans, after all, had trumpeted that the Dutch were of the ‘Aryan brotherhood’). However, in February 1941, dockworkers led a protest strike over the treatment of Jews, commemorated as the ‘February Strike’ (see p16). By then, however, it was already too late. Only one in every 16 of Amsterdam’s 90,000 Jews survived the war – one in seven in the Netherlands – the lowest proportion of anywhere in Western Europe.

The Dutch Resistance, set up by an unlikely alliance of Calvinists and Communists, only became large-scale when the increasingly desperate Germans began to round up able-bodied men to work in Germany.

Towards the end of the war, the situation in Amsterdam was dire. Coal shipments ceased, many men aged between 17 and 50 had gone into hiding or to work in Germany, public utilities halted, and the Germans began to plunder anything that could assist their war effort. Thousands of lives were lost to severe cold and famine. Canadian troops finally liberated the city in May 1945, in the final days of the war in Europe.
HISTORY

BACKGROUND

The women’s movement began a campaign that fuelled the abortion debate. It spawned (see p30)

Amsterdam became Europe’s ‘Magic Centre’, an exciting place where almost anything was possible. The late 1960s saw an influx of hippies smoking dope on the Dam, sleeping in the Vondelpark and tripping in the nightlife hot spots. At the universities, students demanded a greater say and, in 1969, occupied the administrative centre of the University of Amsterdam. Vondelpark and tripping in the nightlife hot spots. At the universities, students demanded a greater say and, in 1969, occupied the administrative centre of the University of Amsterdam. The women’s movement began a campaign that fuelled the abortion debate.

In the 1970s a housing shortage fuelled speculation. Free-market rents – and purchase prices – shot out of reach of the average citizen. Many young people turned to squatting in buildings left empty by (assumed) speculators. Legislation made eviction difficult, giving rise to knokploegen (fighting groups) of track-suited heavies sent by owners to evict squatters by force. These new squatters, however, defended themselves with barricades and a well-organised support network.

‘Ordinary’ Amsterdammers, initially sympathetic towards the housing shortage, became fed up with the squatters, and by the mid-1980s, the movement was all but dead. Squatting still takes place now, but the rules are clear and the mood is far less confrontational.

NEW CONSENSUS (1982–2000)

Twenty years after the cultural revolution began, a new consensus, epitomised by the amiable mayor, Ed van Thijn, emphasised a decentralised government. Neighbourhood councils were established with the goal of creating a more liveable city: integrating work, schools and shops within walking or cycling distance; decreased traffic; renovation rather than demolition; friendly neighbourhood police; a practical, nonmoralistic approach towards drugs; and legal recognition of homosexual couples. Social-housing construction peaked, with 40,000 affordable apartments easing the plight of 100,000 house hunters.

A combined city hall and opera house opened in 1986 on Waterlooplein, although opinions remain divided on its architectural success. Today it’s known as the Stopera (p79) – a contraction of stadhuis (city hall) and opera, or of ‘Stop the Opera’ to its detractors.

JEWISH AMSTERDAM

It’s hard to overstate the role that Jews played in the evolution of civic and commercial life of Amsterdam. The first documented Jewish presence goes back to the 12th century, but it was expulsion from Spain and Portugal in the 1580s that brought a flood of Sephardic Jews (Jews of Spanish, Middle Eastern or North African heritage) refugees.

As in much of Europe, Jews in Amsterdam were barred from many professions. Monopolistic guilds kept most trades firmly closed. But some Sephardim were diamond cutters, for which there was no guild. Other Sephardic Jews introduced printing and tobacco processing, or worked in similarly unrestricted trades such as retail on the streets, finance, medicine and the garment industry. The majority, however, eked out a meagre living as labourers and small-time traders, and lived in the Nieuwmarkt area, which developed into the Jewish quarter.

Yet Amsterdam’s Jews enjoyed freedoms unheard of elsewhere in Europe. They were not confined to a ghetto and, with some restrictions, could buy property. Although the Protestant establishment sought to impose restrictions, civic authorities were reluctant to restrict such productive members of society.

The 17th century saw another influx of Jewish refugees, this time Ashkenazim (Jews from Europe outside of Iberia), fleeing pogroms in Central and Eastern Europe. Amsterdam became the largest Jewish centre in Europe, some 10,000 strong by Napoleonic times.

The guilds and all remaining restrictions on Jews were abolished during the French occupation, and Amsterdam’s Jewish community thrived in the 19th century.

All that came to an end, however, with World War II. The Nazis brought about the nearly complete annihilation of Amsterdam’s Jewish community. Before the war, about 140,000 Jews lived in the Netherlands, of which about 90,000 lived in Amsterdam, comprising 13% of the city’s population. Only about 5000 of these Amsterdam Jews survived the war, barely one in 16.

Today there are roughly 41,000 to 45,000 Jews in the Netherlands; nearly half of them live in Amsterdam. Among Dutch Jews, the vast majority identify themselves as Jewish, although only about one-quarter belong to synagogues. More than half are nonpractitioners.

The first years of the new century have been ones of darkness and light for Amsterdam. After smouldering for years, a noisy debate erupted over the Netherlands’ policy towards newcomers, which quickly led to a tightening of immigration laws. The limits of tolerance, a core value of Dutch identity, were called into question. Pim Fortuyn, a right-wing politician, declared the country ‘full’ before being assassinated in 2002 (see p44).

Social tensions flared in the wake of the Fortuyn murder, and the atmosphere darkened further as the Netherlands slid into recession following 9/11. The number of people leaving

THE NETHERLANDS’ drugs laws distinguish soft from hard drugs; possession of small amounts of marijuana is decriminalised. The Neighbourhood district becomes a battleground for squatters and police over the construction of the metro.

Queen Beatrix marries German diplomat Claus von Amsberg; the coronation is disrupted by a smoke bomb and riot on the Dam. The term ‘proletarian shopping’ (looting) enters the national lexicon.

Same-sex marriage is legalised in the Netherlands, the first country in the world to do so. In the next few years Belgium, Spain, Canada and South Africa follow suit.

Leading politician Pim Fortuyn, a hard-liner on immigration and integration, is assassinated. The ruling Dutch parties shift to the right after suffering major losses in the national election.

Activist filmmaker Theo van Gogh, a fierce critic of Islam, is assassinated, touching off intense debate over the limits of Dutch multicultural society.

The ruling coalition falls on a no-confidence motion against the immigration minister. After a see-saw election campaign the CDU is confirmed as the largest party, and Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende forms his fourth cabinet.
the country reached a 50-year high, albeit most departed for economic and family reasons. The mood was edgy, like a cauldron about to boil over.

It finally did in the autumn of 2004, when the filmmaker Theo van Gogh – known for his anti-Muslim views – was brutally murdered on an Amsterdam street (see the boxed text, p.23). In a city famous for tolerance of other cultures, what did it mean that a native Amsterdammer, albeit of foreign descent, was behind this crime?

The leading political parties in the Netherlands responded with a big shift to the right. Many Dutch pondered whether immigrants were trying to force the traditions of their home countries onto the Netherlands. A poll in 2005 found that a majority of Dutch citizens favoured the banning of Islamic head scarves for public servants. The flow of immigrants has slowed to a trickle, yet more than 4% of the national population is still without Dutch nationality.

The clouds began to part in 2006. With immigration slowed, a sense of normalcy returned to everyday life, and the Dutch turned their sights to familiar issues such as health care and social services. Tourism and the economy have picked up, flashy new developments have sprung up around the perimeters of the city, and a new metro (underground) line is under construction from Amsterdam-Noord to the city’s World Trade Centre. For the first time in years, according to local polls, the majority of Amsterdam’s residents are happy with their jobs and have cause for optimism.

### CULTURE

Make no mistake, the Dutch have a flair for social engineering. The same nation that built its living rooms on a drained seabed also invented verzuiling (see p.44). This meant not only more churches, but also separate radio stations, newspapers, unions, political parties, sport clubs and so on. The idea got a bit out of hand with pillarised bakeries, but it did promote social harmony by giving everyone a voice.

Although the pillars are less distinct today, they left a legacy of tolerance. Eccentric conduct in public might go without comment, hence the Dutch saying: ‘Act normal, that’s crazy enough.’ Then, in a period of heightened social tensions a few years ago, two high-profile murders seemed to spell an end to a libertarian society (see the boxed text, p.44). Amsterdam – the liberal city par excellence – was deeply troubled for a while.

But let’s face it, tolerance is as Dutch as herring and ice skating, and what’s more it’s good for business. The same applies to its gezelligheid, that easy intimacy that comes out at the drop of a hat (see the boxed text, p.182). Where other nations struggle to get the words out, the Dutch are irrepressibly sociable. Flight attendants leaving Amsterdam brace for garulous Dutch congregating in the back of the plane, drinking and talking up a storm. Yet most people also value their privacy, and prefer to entertain friends at home.

The Dutch also have a moralistic streak (coming from the Calvinists) and a tendency to wag their fingers. It’s still a different story in the workplace; relatively old-fashioned (see the boxed text, p.28). Amsterdam – the liberal city – was deeply troubled for a while.

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### A BRIEF GUIDE TO DUTCH WOMEN

Marije, 30, is a doctor at one of Amsterdam’s leading hospitals. Originally from the southern province of Brabant, she moved to Amsterdam recently after her studies at the University of Utrecht. We picked her brains for a profile of the Dutch female (listen up guys).

How are Dutch women different from women in other industrialised countries?

There is a lot of emancipation. Many women in Holland try to combine a family with working life. But if you compare it with the Belgians, though, I think the Belgians do a nicer job, in sharing their family tasks. In Holland there somehow is still a strong tradition of the woman looking after the family, whereas the man works more.

How do Dutch women dress? What is Dutch-specific?

I think Dutch women do not really like to dress up. If you go out in Amsterdam, you see that people dress nicely, but it’s nothing really fancy. We’re really down to earth in that sense, more into leisure wear – no high heels all day because they’re uncomfortable. Having bicycle-friendly clothes is part of it. But on ball nights for students, you have to dress up and ride a bicycle, so it’s really funny to see a guy in a white tie and a girl in evening dress on a bicycle.

What do Dutch women like in men?

What some Dutch women daydream of is someone like Casanova, who really treats them like a woman and makes them feel special. But if you do that as a man, you’re a macho type. I think Dutch women will find out they can’t take it because they’re way too emancipated for that. It’s really hard to find a balance. They want macho but they can’t be with a macho, because women have strong opinions of their own, how to organise their lives and so on. I think that’s what Dutch women prefer. What they want in the end is someone to share the tasks at home. A really macho type is perhaps good for a short time, but not for life. It’s hard for Dutch women to have a man who tells them what they can and cannot do.

Is a Dutch woman likely to ask a man out?

Most Dutch women are rather traditional in that respect. It’s still part of the game that most women prefer being asked out, though it’s not forbidden to ask a guy out. Most Dutch women wait for men to take the first step.

Are women here materialistic?

I don’t think so. For example, if you look at Dutch housing, it’s not so good compared to other countries because the supply of nice and affordable places to live is very small. We’ve just kind of accepted it. For example, I rent a 25 square metre bedroom-living room, and share the bathroom and kitchen. I’m all right with that. I don’t need a lot of space or a lot of fancy stuff.

Do Dutch women spend more than they used to on personal care?

I think it depends on the era. In the ’90s we had a grunge period, and there wasn’t so much make-up around. There were a lot of spinnewevers (literally ‘weaving women’) with knitted sweaters and big boots. But now it’s back in fashion to look nice and wear make-up, so it may just be a fashion thing. I think you also see that people dress up more in the south of Holland. In Amsterdam, it’s less so; more down to earth.

How equal are women to men in the business sphere?

It’s true, in management it’s still a man’s world. Maybe because it’s hard to get into higher management working part-time, as many Dutch women do. But in Dutch medicine there’s a big change underway. The majority of the doctors are still men, but among medical students the ratio of female to male students is something like 70:30.

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By the same token, marijuana and hashish are legal. You want to get high? Go ahead. Yet if you think everyone here gets stoned, you’re wrong. Only a fraction of the population smokes dope, fewer people than in Britain, the USA and France, where drug policies are much stricter. On the other hand, the ‘harder’ drugs such as heroin, LSD, cocaine and ecstasy are outlawed, and dealers are prosecuted.

If you’ve seen workmen lay cobblestones in Amsterdam, you’ll appreciate the Dutch have a great love of detail. Statistics on the most trivial subjects make the paper (eg the number of
Golden Age (17th Century)

When the Spanish were expelled from the Low Countries, the character of the art market changed. There was no longer the Church to buy artworks and no court to speak of, so art became a business, and artists were forced to survive in a free market – how very Dutch. In place of Church and court emerged a new, bourgeois society of merchants, artisans and shopkeepers who didn’t mind spending money to brighten up their houses and workplaces. The key: they had to be pictures the buyers could relate to.

Painters became entrepreneurs in their own right, churning out banal works, copies and masterpieces in factory-like studios. Paintings were mass-produced, sold at markets alongside furniture and chickens. Soon the wealthiest households were covered in paintings from top to bottom. Foreign visitors commented that even bakeries and butcher shops seemed to have a painting or two on the wall. Most painters specialised in one of the main genres of the day.

Then there was Rembrandt van Rijn (see the boxed text, below), who defined easy classification. The greatest and most versatile of 17th-century artists, he excelled in all artistic categories. Sometimes he was centuries ahead of his time, particularly with the emotive brush strokes of his later works.

Another great painter of this period, Frans Hals (1581/85–1666), was born in Antwerp but lived in Haarlem, just west of Amsterdam. He devoted most of his career to portraits, dabbling in occasional genre scenes with dramatic chiaroscuro. His ability to capture his

REMBRANDT: LAUDED, REVILED, GENIUS

The 17th century’s greatest artist, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) grew up a miller’s son in Leiden, but had become an accomplished painter by his early twenties.

In 1631 he came to Amsterdam to run the painting studio of the wealthy art dealer Hendrick van Uylenburgh. Portraits were the studio’s cash cow, and Rembrandt and his staff (or ‘pupils’) churned out scores of them, including group portraits such as The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp. In 1634 he married Van Uylenburgh’s niece Saskia, who often modelled for him.

Rembrandt fell out with his boss, but his wife’s capital helped him buy the sumptuous house next door to Van Uylenburgh’s studio (the current Museum Het Rembrandthuis, p78). There Rembrandt set up his own studio, with staff who worked in a warehouse in the Jordaan. These were happy years: his paintings were a success and his studio became the largest in Holland, though his gruff manner and open agnosticism didn’t win him dinner-party invitations from the elite.

Rembrandt became one of the city’s biggest art collectors; a master manipulator not only of images, the painter was also known to have his own pictures bid up at auctions. He often sketched and painted for himself, urging his staff to do likewise. Residents of the surrounding Jewish quarter provided perfect material for his dramatic biblical scenes.

In 1642, a year after the birth of their son Titus, Saskia died and business went downhill. Although Rembrandt’s majestic group portrait The Nightwatch (1642) was hailed by art critics (it’s now the Rijksmuseum’s prize exhibit), some of the influential people he depicted were not pleased. Each subject had paid 100 guilders, and some were unhappy at being shoved to the background. In response, Rembrandt told them where they could shove their complaints. Suddenly he received far fewer orders.

Rembrandt began an affair with his son’s governess but kicked her out a few years later when he fell for the new maid, Hendrickje Stoffels, who bore him a daughter, Cornelia. The public didn’t take kindly to the man’s lifestyle and his spiralling debts, and in 1656 he went bankrupt. His house and rich art collection were sold and he moved to the Reizigersgracht in the Jordaan.

No longer the darling of the wealthy, Rembrandt continued to paint, draw and etch – his etchings on display in the Rembrandthuis are some of the finest ever produced. He also received the occasional commission, including the monumental Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis (1661) for the City Hall, although authorities disliked it and had it removed. In 1662 he completed the Staalmeesters (the ‘Synods’) for the drapers’ guild and ensured that everybody remained clearly visible, though it ended up being his last group portrait.

The works from a later period show that Rembrandt had lost none of his touch. No longer constrained by the wishes of clients, he enjoyed new-found freedom; his works became more unconventional yet showed an ever-stronger empathy with their subject matter, as for instance in A Couple: The Jewish Bride (1665). The many portraits of Titus and Hendrickje, and his ever-gloomier self-portraits, are among the most stirring in the history of art.

A plague epidemic in 1663–64 killed one in seven Amsterdammers, including Hendrickje. Titus died in 1668, aged 27 and just married, and Rembrandt died a year later, a broken man.

**ARTS**

Strange how some of the world’s best-known artists get by on just one name, like Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Even without this duo, the Netherlands have contributed more than their fair share of famous painters to the world’s pantheon of art. The influence of these masters runs like a red thread through Dutch history and along the way, fostered a huge respect for artistic expression – music, the performing arts, graphics, photography and multimedia, for starters.

So in Amsterdam, it comes as little surprise to find the fine-arts scene is second to none, with an astounding 40,000 performances and events every year. This is a creative centre rather than just a caretaker of past traditions, and the enthusiasm shows on a daily basis.

In other cities, streets are named for political leaders or wealthy landowners, but Amsterdam has an entire section of town with streets named for artists and musicians. You only need to see the crowds at the concert halls, arts festivals, theatres and museums to gauge how much the arts matter to the everyday resident.

**PAINTING**

With a line-up that includes Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Jan Vermeer, the Dutch Masters are some of world’s best-known painters. Understanding them requires a bit of history, with roots going back to a time when Italy was the centre of the art world and painters would go there to study.

**Flemish & Dutch Schools**

Prior to the late 16th century, when Belgium was still part of the Low Countries, art focused on the Flemish cities of Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp. Paintings of the Flemish School featured biblical and allegorical subject matter popular with the Church, the court and to a lesser extent the nobility, who, after all, paid the bills and called the shots.

Among the most famous names of the era are Jan van Eyck (1385/90–1441), the founder of the Flemish School who was the first to perfect the technique of oil painting; Rogier van der Weyden (1400–64), whose religious portraits showed the personalities of his subjects; and Hieronymus (also known as Jeroen) Bosch (1450–1516), with macabre allegorical paintings full of religious topics. Pieter Breugel the Elder (1525–69) used Flemish landscapes and peasant life in his allegorical scenes.

In the northern Low Countries, artists began to develop a style of their own. Although the artists of the day never achieved the level of recognition of their Flemish counterparts, the Dutch School, as it came to be called, was known for favouring realism over allegory. Haarlem was the centre of this movement, with artists such as Jan Mostaert (1475–1555), Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) and Jan van Scorel (1494–1562). Painters in the city of Utrecht were famous for using chiaroscuro (deep contrast of light and shade), a technique associated with the Italian master Caravaggio.

**DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT**

| Figures are for Amsterdam unless otherwise noted. |
| Population: 743,000 |
| Netherlands population: 16,370,000 |
| Population aged 34 and younger: 47% |
| Single-person households: 55% |
| Households of couples without children: 20% |
| Households of couples with children: 15% |
| Single-parent households: 10% |
| Number of nationalities in Amsterdam: 174 |
| Non-Western foreigners: 34% |
| Western foreigners: 14% |
| First generation with non-Dutch backgrounds: 28% |
| Ethnic Moroccans: 65,000 |
| Ethnic Surinamese: 70,000 |
| Ethnic Turks: 38,000 |
| Native Dutch: 383,000 |

pigeons on the Dam this year, incidence of rubbish being put out early), and somewhere down the line it feeds mountains of bureaucracy. That said, when the system breaks down the Dutch are happy to improvise a solution; this has to do with their history of juggling diverse interests.

Last but not least, the Dutch are famously thrifty with their money – and they often don’t know what to think of this. In one breath they might joke about how copper wire was invented by two Dutchmen fighting over a penny – and in the next, tell you that they don’t like being called cheap.
THEO VAN GOGH

Obituaries for Theo van Gogh, famously murdered on an Amsterdam street in November 2004, refer to him as a filmmaker, but that’s too simple. He was a provocateur, personality, gadabout and, above all, deeply charismatic.

Van Gogh was born in Den Haag in 1957 (a distant relative of that other Theo van Gogh – the painter’s brother) but made his home in Amsterdam. When, as a young man, he applied for admission to the Dutch Film Academy, he was rejected and advised to see a psychologist. His first film, Lüger (1980), included images of a pistol being inserted into a woman’s vagina and (faked) footage of kittens in a clothes dryer. After the premiere, one audience member spat in Van Gogh’s face.

He made 25 films over the years, some of little distinction, although his greatest box-office success O6 (also called 1-000 in some territories; 1994), about a phone-sex relationship, was the top-grossing Dutch film of the year.

He enjoyed spending as much time in front of the camera as behind it, especially the act of tweaking others about the nose. He appeared on a ‘VIP’ version of Big Brother. In articles and speeches and on his website The Happy Smoker (he chain-smoked), he took positions at odds with most people in the Netherlands – in favour of cruise missiles, George W Bush, the war in Iraq – and predicted the assassination of Pin Fortuny (p44). He enraged the local Jewish community by saying that they made too much of Auschwitz.

But his most famous diatribes – which ultimately did him in – were reserved for Muslim immigrants, regularly referring to Moroccans as ‘goatf**kers’. His last book, Allah weet het beter (‘Allah knows best’; 2003), was as cynical as the title implies.

Submission: Part I was Van Gogh’s last film, four stories in 11 unflinching minutes showing how verses from the Koran could be used to justify violence against women.

Yet for all Van Gogh’s biting and bluster, the moments immediately before his death were telling. After he was knocked off his bike by the first bullet, he is quoted as saying to his attacker: ‘We can still talk about it’. For details of the murder, see p44.

subjects’ expressions was equal to Rembrandt’s, though he didn’t explore their characters as much. Both masters used the same expressive, unpolished brush strokes and their styles went from bright exuberance in their early careers to dark and solemn later on. Hals’ work was also admired by the 19th-century Impressionists. In fact, his The Merry Drinker (1630) in the Rijksmuseum’s collection, with its bold brush strokes, could almost have been painted by an Impressionist.

Hals also specialised in beautiful group portraits in which the participants were depicted in almost natural poses, unlike the rigid line-ups produced by lesser contemporaries – though he wasn’t as cavalier as Rembrandt in subordinating faces to the composition. A good example is the pair of paintings known collectively as The Regents & the Regentesses of the Old Men’s Alms House (1664) in the Frans Hals Museum (p292) in Haarlem. It was a space Hals knew intimately; he lived in that almshouse, and now it’s the museum.

The grand trio of 17th-century masters is completed by Johannes (also known as Jan) Vermeer (1632–75) of Delft. He produced only 35 meticulously crafted paintings in his career and died poor with 10 children; his baker accepted two paintings from his wife as payment for a debt of more than 60 guilders. Yet Vermeer mastered genre painting like no other artist. His paintings include historical and biblical scenes from his earlier career, his famous View of Delft (1661) in the Mauritshuis in Den Haag, and some tender portraits of unknown women, such as the stunningly beautiful Girl with a Pearl Earring (1666), also in the Mauritshuis.

Vermeer’s work is known for serene light pouring through tall windows. The calm, spiritual effect is enhanced by dark blues, deep reds, warm yellows and supremely balanced composition. Good examples include the Rijksmuseum’s The Kitchen Maid (also known as The Milkmaid, 1658) and Woman in Blue Reading a Letter (1664), or, for his use of perspective, The Love Letter (1670). The Little Street (1658) in the Rijksmuseum’s collection is Vermeer’s only street scene.

Around the middle of the century, the focus on mood and subtle play of light began to make way for the splendour of the baroque. Jacob van Ruysdael (c 1628–82) went for Italianate landscapes. Van Ruysdael’s pupil Meindert Hobbema preferred less heroic, more playful scenes full of pretty bucolic detail. (Note that Cuyp, Hobbema and Ruysdael all have main streets named after them in the Old South and De Pijp districts, and many smaller streets here are named after other Dutch artists.)

The genre paintings of Jan Steen (1626–79) show the almost frivolous aspect of baroque. Steen was also a tavern-keeper, and his depictions of domestic chaos led to the Dutch expression ‘a Jan Steen household’. A good example is the animated revelry of The Merry Family (1668) in the Rijksmuseum; it shows adults having a good time around the dinner table, oblivious to the children in the foreground pouring themselves a drink.

18th & 19th Centuries

The Golden Age of Dutch painting ended almost as suddenly as it began, when the French invaded the Low Countries in 1672. The economy collapsed and the market for paintings went south with it. Painters who stayed in business concentrated on ‘safe’ works that repeated earlier successes. In the 18th century they copied French styles, pandering to the awe for anything French.

The results were competent but not ground-breaking. Cornelis Troost (1697–1750) was one of the best genre painters, sometimes compared to the British artist William Hogarth (1697–1764) for his satirical as well as sensitive portraits of ordinary people; Troost, too, introduced scenes of domestic revelry into his pastels.

Gerard de Lairesse (1640–1711) and Jacob de Wit (1695–1754) specialised in decorating the walls and ceilings of buildings – de Wit’s trompe l’oeil decorations (painted illusions that look real) in the Theater Instituut Nederland (p91) and Bijbels Museum (p95) are worth seeing.

The late 18th century and most of the 19th century produced little of note, save for the landscapes and seascapes of Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819–91) and the grritthy, almost photographic Amsterdam scenes of George Hendrik Breitner (1857–1923). They appear to have inspired French Impressionists, many of whom visited Amsterdam.

Jongkind and Breitner reinvented 17th-century realism and influenced the Hague School of the last decades of the 19th century. Painters such as Hendrik Mesdag (1831–1915), Jozef Israels (1824–1911) and the three Maris brothers (Jacob, Matthijs and Willem) created landscapes, seascapes and genre works, including the impressive Panorama Mesdag (1881), a gigantic, 360-degree cylindrical painting of the seaside town of Scheveningen viewed from a dune.

Without a doubt, the greatest 19th-century Dutch painter was Vincent van Gogh (1853–90), whose convulsive patterns and furious colours were in a world of their own and still defy comfortable categorisation. (A Post-Impressionist? A forerunner of Expressionism?) For more about his life and works, see the Van Gogh Museum (p109).

De Stijl

In his early career, Piet Mondriaan (1872–1944) – he dropped the second ‘a’ in his name when he moved to Paris in 1910 – painted in the Hague School tradition, but after flirting with Cubism he began working with bold rectangular patterns, using only the three primary colours (yellow, blue and red) set against the three neutrals (white, grey and black). He named this style ‘neo-Plasticism’ and viewed it as an undistorted expression of reality in pure form and pure colour. His Composition in Red, Black, Blue, Yellow & Grey (1920), in the Stedelijk Museum’s collection, is an elaborate example.

Mondriaan’s later works were more stark (or ‘pure’) and became dynamic again when he moved to New York in 1940. The world’s largest collection of his paintings resides in the Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum) in his native Den Haag.

The famously strict artist was one of the leading exponents of De Stijl (The Style), a Dutch design movement that aimed to harmonise all the arts by bringing artistic expressions back to their essence. Its advocate was the magazine of the same name, first published in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931). Van Doesburg produced works similar to Mondriaan’s, though he dispensed with the thick, black lines and later tilted his rectangles at 45 degrees, departures serious enough for Mondriaan to call off the collaboration.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, De Stijl also attracted sculptors, poets, architects and designers. One of these was Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964), designer of the Van Gogh Museum and several other buildings, but best known internationally for his furniture, such as the Red Blue Chair (1918) and his range of uncomfortable ziggurat seats that, viewed side-on, formed a ‘Z’ with a backrest.
One of the most remarkable graphic artists of the 20th century was Maurits Cornelis Escher (1902–72). His drawings, lithos and woodcuts of blatantly impossible images continue to fascinate mathematicians: a waterfall feeds itself; people go up and down a staircase that ends where it starts; a pair of hands draw each other. You can see his work at Escher in het Paleis in Den Haag.

CoBrA & Beyond

After WWII, artists rebelled against artistic conventions and vented their rage in abstract expressionism. In Amsterdam, Karel Appel (1921–) and Constant (Constant Nieuwenhuis, 1920–2003) drew on styles pioneered by Paul Klee and Joan Miró, and exploited bright colours and ‘uncorrupted’ children’s art to produce lively works that leapt off the canvas. In Paris in 1949 they up with the Danish Asger Jorn (1914–73) and the Belgian Corneille (Cornelis van Beverloo, 1922–), and together with several other artists and writers formed a group known as CoBrA (COPENHAGEN, BRUSSELS, AMSTERDAM). It’s been called the last great avant-garde movement.

Their first major exhibition, in the Stedelijk Museum in 1949, aroused a storm of protest (‘My child paints like that too’). Still, the CoBrA artists exerted a strong influence in their respective countries even after they disbanded in 1951. The CoBrA Museum (p131) in Amstelveen displays a good range of their works, including colourful ceramics.

Contemporary Dutch artists are usually well represented at international events such as the Biennale in Venice and the Documenta in Kassel. Look out for the installations of Jan Dibbets (1941–) and Ger van Elk (1941–), who mix photography, painting and sculpture, as well as the wry graphic illustrations of Marthe Röling (1939–). Among the younger generation, the artist duo Liet Heringa (1966–) and Van Kalsbeek (1962–) are known for their moody, free-form sculptures, Michael Raedecker (1963–) for his dreamy, radiant still lifes, Roger Braun (1972–) for industrial realism and Melvin Moti (1977–) for films of spookily lit objects (think exploding soap bubbles).

PHOTOGRAPHY

For obvious reasons photography does not have the history of painting in Amsterdam, but what it lacks in longitude it makes up for in latitude. The area of the Jordaan around the Elandsgracht brims with photography studios and small galleries, while the museums FOAM (p99) and Huis Marseille (p95) specialise in photography.

Portraiture is a major theme of contemporary Dutch photography. The most famous living photographer from the Netherlands is probably Anton Corbijn (1955–), known for his portraits of celebrities and musicians such as Naomi Campbell, Mick Jagger and Martin Scorsese, often in his trademark grainy black-and-white.

Rineke Dijkstra (1959–) creates unflinching head-on portraits, both analytical and empathetic, of common people such as soldiers carrying rifles and folks in bathing suits on the beach. Hellen van Meene’s (1972–) portraits are more intimate, such as a series commissioned by the New York Times featuring pubescent Japanese girls, innocent with a tinge of eroticism. Inez van Lamswaerde (1963–) and Vinoodh Matadin (1961–), both born and educated in Amsterdam, create shoots for exhibitions and advertising campaigns, at turns grim and glamorous.

Amsterdam-based Aernout Mik (1962–) has exhibited in Europe and North America with film installations known for their combining of studies in group dynamics with a sculptor’s sense of space. Marijke van Warmerdam (1959–), based in Amsterdam and New York, creates absurdist loops of everyday life in repeating sequences — eg the Japanese technique of bowing.

MUSIC

The dour church elders began to allow organ music in churches in the 17th century, as it kept people out of pubs. With the possible exception of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), an organ player in the Oude Kerk with an international reputation as a composer and a strong following in Germany, Amsterdam has contributed relatively little to the world’s music heritage.

Today, however, the world’s top acts appear here regularly and local musicians excel in (modern) classical music, jazz and techno/dance. In summer, free jazz, classical and world-music performances are staged in the Vondelpark, and free lunch-time concerts are held at various venues throughout the year. The Uitmarkt festival (p18) at the end of August also provides lots of free music. For more about music venues see p197, and check the free entertainment papers for details.

Classical

The Netherlands has orchestras in cities throughout the country, but Amsterdam’s Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, p199) towers over them all, not least because of the near-perfect acoustics of its winning concert hall, the Concertgebouw (p111). The orchestra’s director since 2004 is Marijs Jansons, whose long list of credentials includes the Pittsburgh Symphony. The orchestra also frequently performs abroad, matching works by famous composers with little-known gems of the modern era. If you’re looking to catch one of the top-flight soloists in the world, head here first.

The Concertgebouw is only one of several venues in town for classical music. Chamber music plays in the Beurs van Berlage, and very often the city’s extant or converted churches host concerts. Check listings.

For ‘old music’ you shouldn’t miss the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, concentrating on the music of the 17th and 18th centuries (Bach, Vivaldi and Handel; venues vary). The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (ABO) and Choir, conducted by Ton Koopman, tackled an enormous task of recording all existing cantatas of JS Bach. The ABO tours internationally but, when home, can often be seen performing at the Concertgebouw. Koopman also conducts the Radio Chamber Orchestra and guest conducts with orchestras worldwide.

Performances by the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra are often recorded for radio and TV; one of its former artistic directors, Frans Brüggen, also works with the Orchestra on 18th-century pieces.

The Nederlandse Opera is based in the Stopera (officially called the Muziektheater; p200), where it stages world-class performances, though its forays into experimental fare stir up the inevitable controversy.

Modern Classical & Experimental

The new Muziekgebouw aan ’t IJ (p125) is the venue for this sort of work which seems to thrive in Amsterdam. This iconic building occupies a prime spot on the waterside, near the Passenger Ship Terminal.

Dutch modern composers include Michel van der Aa, Louis Andriessen, Theo Loevendie, Merlijn Twalhoven, Klaas de Vries and the late Ton de Leeuw. Worthwhile performers include the Trio, Asko Ensemble, Ives Ensemble, Nederlands Kammerkoor, Nieuw Ensemble, the Mondriaan Kwartet and the Schönberg Quartet.

Jazz

The Dutch jazz scene has produced some mainstream artists in recent years. Among gifted young chanteuses are Fleurine, Ilse Huizinga and the Suriname-born Denise Jannah, who records for Blue Note and is widely recognised as the country’s best jazz singer. Jannah’s repertoire consists of American standards with elements of Surinamese music.

Astrid Seriese and Carmen Gomez operate in the crossover field, where jazz verges on, or blends with, pop. Father and daughter Hans and Candy Dulfer, tenor and alto saxophonists respectively, are a bit more daring. Dad, in particular, constantly extends his musical boundaries
by experimenting with sampling techniques drawn from the hip-hop genre. Candy is better known internationally, thanks to her performances with Prince, Van Morrison and Pink Floyd, among others, which have introduced her to a wide audience.

Trumpeter and Jordaan native Saskia Laroo mixes jazz with dance, but still earns respect in traditional circles. Other leading jazzers are bass player Hein van de Geyn, guitarist Jesse van Ruller and pianist Michiel Borstlap, winner of the Thelonious Monk award. Borstlap was commissioned by the Emir of Qatar to write the world’s first opera in Arabic.

An effervescent soloist on the flute is Peter Guidi, who set up the jazz programme at the Muziekschool Amsterdam and leads its big band, Jazzmania. Other big bands of renown are the Willem Breuker Kollektief and Contraband, both enjoying a reputation for experimentation. The most important jazz venue is Bimhuis (p197) in the Muziekgewoon aan ‘t IJ. A number of smaller clubs congregate in the streets east of the Leidseplein. For the biggest names in town, check out the North Sea Jazz Festival (p18) every summer in Rotterdam.

**Pop & Rock**

Chances are you’ve heard oldie hits by Dutch bands such as ‘Radical Love’ by Golden Earring, ‘Venus’ by Shocking Blue or ‘Hocus Pocus’ by Jan Akkerman’s Focus. The highest-profile Dutch rock star, Herman Brood, captured punk hearts with His Wild Romance at the end of the ’70s. Later, the Dutch became pioneers in club music, fusing techno and industrial into the dark, hyperactive beat that became known as ‘gabber’.

Nowadays Amsterdam is the pop capital of the Netherlands, and talent is drawn to the city like moths to a flame. It is a major hub of the DJ trade, not just for the Netherlands but for the world. Top names on the international circuit include Tiësto, Armin van Buuren, Marco V and Ferry Corsten. You can find them at venues large and small in town, although tickets sell out fast.

Hot news of the pop scene include the Britpop-inspired Mohke, singer-songwriter Marike Jager, the punk-jazz group Malkovich as well as those dance-rock mavens, the Melomanics. Among rappers, the popular Moroccan-Dutch artist Ali B has recently teamed up with top-40 star Jager, the punk-jazz group Malkovich as well as those dance-rock mavens, the Melomanics. Among rappers, the popular Moroccan-Dutch artist Ali B has recently teamed up with top-40 singer Marco Borsato, a fixture at pop festivals. Also look out for the Dutch-rapping Osdorp Posse, Brainpower, and Blaxter.

Some oldie bands still on the circuit include the garagerock outfit Claw Boys Claw, and the pop legends Doe Maar and Trécckerke Kecks, who were among the first to break through with lyrics in Dutch, rather than English.

Pop festivals come out of the woodwork in the warmer months: Pinkpop (p17) in Landgraaf and the gargantuan Parkpop (p17), which draws around 350,000 ravers to Den Haag. Dance Valley (p18) in Spaarnwoude near Amsterdam pulls up to 100 live acts and DJs.

**World Music**

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam offers a wealth of world music. Suriname-born Ronald Snijders, a top jazz flautist, is a frequent highlight as is the venerable Chris Hinz, another flautist with an eclectic repertoire that ranges from New Age to Tibetan music.

The bulk of world repertoire from Amsterdam is Latin, ranging from Cuban salsa to Dominican merengue and Argentinean tango. But Fra-Fra-Sound is a big band that blends jazz with drum’n’bass and ‘60s Go-Go. It recorded and samba with DJ rubs on the turntable. It has strong ties with the equally eclectic New Cool Collective, a 19-piece big band that blends jazz with drum’n’bass and 60s Go-Go. It recorded a soundtrack for the live-action version of the film The Jungle Book to rave reviews.

Sources to check out while you are in Amsterdam include the foundation Marmoucha (www.marmouche.nl), which organises 60-odd Moroccan performances a year; Lazziz (for Arabian dance music, often at Paradiso), Que Pasa (Spanish ska, reggae and more, often at Melkweg) and Club Mahsen (Turkish dance music, at various locations). See p196 for details of club venues.

The Amsterdam Roots Festival of world music happens at different locations every year in June, but centres on the Oosterpark – see www.amsterdarmsroots.nl for details. The Tropeninstituut Theater (p199) often hosts non-Western music concerts.

**CINEMA**

Dutch films haven’t exactly set the world on fire, though this has more to do with the language barrier and funding problems in a modest distribution area than with lack of talent.

In the mid-1990s, the Dutch government introduced tax shelters to encourage private investment in Dutch film, which led to a mini-boom in the industry. Lightweight fare such as Costa! (2001), about Dutch teenagers on holiday in a Spanish resort, recently proved that Dutch films crafted for the domestic audience could be commercially viable. The film spawned copycat films such as Volle Maan (Full Moon) and a TV sitcom.

The best-known Dutch director is Amsterdam-born Paul Verhoeven, who was famous at home long before making Hollywood blockbusters such as Total Recall, Basic Instinct and Starship Troopers. Lately Verhoeven returned to the Netherlands to shoot Black Book, the highest-grossing Dutch film ever (see p40 for an interview with him).

Look out for screenings at the key film festivals: the Rotterdam International Film Festival in February, Utrecht’s Netherlands Film Festival in September (with the Golden Calf awards, the ‘Dutch Oscars’), and Amsterdam’s excellent International Documentary Film Festival in November. Handily for foreign visitors, movies are rarely ever dubbed into Dutch, but subtitled (see p200 for cinema venues).

The following is a shortlist of critically acclaimed Dutch films, both contemporary and historical, that afford insights into Dutch society.

Amsterdamned, directed by Dick Maas, 1987. A skin-diving serial killer is chased through Amsterdam’s canals by a detective hampered by his fear of water. Essentially a B-grade thriller peppeled up by great shots of Amsterdam.


Dwe Aanslag (The Assault), directed by Fons Rijmaenders, 1986. A physician spends his adult life investigating why his neighbours betrayed his family in WWII. Based on a best-selling novel by renowned author Harry Mulisch, it was nominated for an Academy Award.


Fanfare, directed by Bert Haanstra, 1958. Made by one of the greats of Dutch documentary film, this classic satire is about two amateur brass bands vying for a government grant in a small Dutch town.

Interview, directed by Theo van Gogh, 2003. Low-key account of a war correspondent conducting an interview with a soap opera actress. Attracted little attention until after the filmmaker’s death (see the boxed text, p34); an American remake was released in 2007.


Tursk Fruit (Turkish Delight), directed by Paul Verhoeven, 1973. A distressed sculptor (Rutger Hauer) picks up numerous women to forget the loss of his wife. The most successful Dutch film of the ’70s, it’s regarded as a modern classic.

Zus & So, directed by Paul van der Oest, 2001. Comedy about three sisters who plot to sabotage the engagement of their gay brother for material gain. Also Oscar-nominated.

Zwartboek (Black Book), directed by Paul Verhoeven, 2006. This action-packed story explores some of the less heroic aspects of the Dutch resistance in WWII. Launched the international career of today’s hottest Dutch actor, Carice van Houten.

**THEATRE**

Amsterdam has a rich theatrical tradition dating back to medieval times. In the Golden Age, when Dutch was the language of trade, local companies toured the theatres of Europe with the tragedies of Vondel, the comedies of Bredero and verses of PC Hooft. They’re still performed locally, even if there’s precious little in English translation.

When it’s not touring abroad, De Dogtroep stages fancy and unpredictable ‘happenings’ in quirky venues such as the Passenger Ship Terminal. Each show is supported by flashy multimedia effects and technical gadgetry, with every set specially developed by a team of designers and...
BEHIND THE BLACK BOOK: THE PAUL VERHOEVEN INTERVIEW

Before he traded Holland for Hollywood in the mid-1980s, Paul Verhoeven left his mark on Dutch cinema with acclaimed films such as Turkish Fruit and Soldier of Orange, his first wartime drama. In an interview with Lonely Planet, the director of RoboCop and Basic Instinct talks about his fascination with the Dutch resistance and his 2006 hit movie, Black Book.

Why was there so much time between the making of Soldier of Orange and Black Book?

When it’s about realistic movies, I try to do a lot of research. I look at photos, documentaries, newsreels and hundreds of books. I did the same this time, together with my scriptwriter, Gerard Southean. We co-wrote Soldier of Orange and Black Book. We’re both history buffs, and it was a pleasure to dive into the archives at the Institute of War Documentation in Amsterdam. We did that very thoroughly in the late ‘70s, for the Soldier of Orange.

A lot of the details in Black Book happened in 1944–45. But our hero in Soldier of Orange was the author of the autobiography, Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema, portrayed by Rutger Hauer. He left Holland in 1941–42 and only came back after the war. So basically that period, that strange, dark, shadowy period of betrayal, collaboration and executions left right, where Den Haag – where I was living at the time – was the centre of the German occupying government and the Dutch National Socialist Party in Holland.

What did you do with all the research that you weren’t able to use?

I couldn’t use a lot of things I knew for Soldier of Orange, simply because they hadn’t happened yet. In 1941–42 there wasn’t much violent confrontation between the Dutch and the Germans. A lot of Dutch felt, ‘Let’s see how it goes.’ Many people weren’t too upset by the occupation, were thinking, ‘Well maybe Holland will become a part of Germany, perhaps that’s fine.’ Also they were trying to see whether it would all be combined into a kind of European Union. In fact, the Dutch National Socialist Party tried to do that at the time.

But the fireworks happened later, when the Germans realised they were losing the war. The Resistance in Holland became a really powerful force and was continuously sabotaging and shooting Germans. But that started only after the German defeat at Stalingrad. Only then did people in Holland start to think, the Germans can be defeated, and asked for weapons from London and became more violent and confrontational. That period is Black Book.

You have described Black Book as a correction to the Soldier of Orange. In what sense?

I would say it’s more the other side of the story. Soldier of Orange is based on historical biographical material; there aren’t enormous lies there. Soldier of Orange is pretty much the reality of that person at that time. But it was more a correction historically, because Soldier of Orange wasn’t the entire war. Soldier of Orange is the beginning of the war, Black Book is the end of the war.

Dance

Amsterdam’s National Ballet (www.het-nationale-ballet.nl) performs mainly classical ballets, but also presents 20th-century works by Dutch choreographers such as Rudi van Dantzig and Toer van Schayk. The Ballet has helped launch the careers of promising dancer-choreographers such as John Wismans and Fred Brandsen, now the artistic director.

The Netherlands is also a world leader in modern dance, and many innovative performances can be seen throughout the year. The troupe of the Netherlands Dans Theater in Den Haag leaps and pirouettes to international audiences.

There are also many smaller dance companies such as Introdans, which can truly be described as poetry in motion. The Holland Festival in June is the main platform for premieres of new works by top choreographers, while Amsterdam’s Julidans festival (p18) in July brings dancers together from all over the world. The International School Festival held in June is devoted more of its programme to dance, and performances are often held in one of the theatres along Nes (p77).
ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

Much of the Amsterdam region is polder, land that once lay at the bottom of lakes or the sea. It was reclaimed by building dykes across sea inlets and rivers, and pumping the water out with windmills (later with steam and diesel pumps). Without these techniques the Netherlands would be a much smaller, and certainly wetter, place than it is today.

Polders were created on a massive scale: in the 20th century, huge portions of the former Zuiderzee (now the IJsselmeer, a lake closed off from the sea by a dyke) were surrounded by dykes and the water was pumped out to create vast swaths of flat and fertile agricultural land. Opened in 1986, the province of Flevoland, northeast of Amsterdam, would be the last province.

To let loose, your best bet is the large open field of Museumplein (p111), or the lovely Vondelpark (p115) nearby, both just south of the city centre. A short ride away is the Amsterdamse Bos (p131). Don’t neglect the large and lovely Artis Zoo (p121), the city’s first park, in the Plantage district. You can also seek out the leafy refuges called hofjes (inner courtyards), especially in the Jordaan district (see the boxed text, p85).

GREEN AMSTERDAM

The city centre is both very green and very much not. The central streets of Damrak, Rokin and Spuistraat, for example, feel like brick jungles, but virtually any canal is a lush green belt. In residential areas, nifty garbage receptacles are built right in to the sidewalk. A truck comes along, the receptacles rise out of the ground and are replaced.

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

For many people, the dream of a cozy home with a canal view remains just that: a dream. Amsterdam’s rents are the fourth-highest in Europe; only London, Paris and Rome are more expensive. A cramped, reasonably central one-bedroom apartment will cost €450 or more a month, and although cheaper options are available through housing corporations, residents face a wait of up to five years.

No wonder Amsterdam’s urban planners are constantly looking for extra space. Millions are being invested to renovate housing in older districts such as Amsterdam-Oost, but this alone won’t be enough: by 2030 the city’s population is expected to swell by 100,000.

Help is on the way. The shores along the IJ river are becoming the city’s new dormitories. Thousands of homes have emerged in the Eastern Docklands, a former industrial area. North-west of Centraal Station – itself getting a big makeover (see p70) – lies the Westerdokseiland, an imposing clutch of flats, offices and cafés embracing a pleasure harbour; to the northeast is Oosterdokseiland, an A1 office location with housing and a home to the new Openbare Bibliotheek (Amsterdam public library; p71). Across the river in Amsterdam-Noord there’s Overhoeks, a housing estate on the old Shell Oil compound that will soon border the future Filmmuseum (p115). Long shunned by Amsterdammers and city planners alike, Amsterdam-Noord may be the urban hot spot of tomorrow, especially once the new metro line is completed.

This is a departure from not so long ago, when satellite communities such as Almere and Purmerend were seen as the solution. Residents are now being lured no further than the outskirts for fresh, open-layout designs, with all the mod cons and public transport links.

The Noord/Zuidoost (north-south metro line) neatly ties into these plans. When completed in 2013, the extension will cut travel times between Amsterdam-Noord and the southern districts, changing the way many people live and work. The route also runs through the Zuider (‘south axis’), a minimetropolis that is the city’s answer to London’s Canary Wharf.
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Amsterdam is the capital city, and it certainly looks and feels like one. But due to a quirk of history, the functions of state are actually 60km away in Den Haag (The Hague).

The national government is presided over by the prime minister, currently Jan Peter Balkenende, in a coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Christian Union (CU) parties, and the labour party (PvdA). Regarded as squeaky clean in Amsterdam, Balkenende has seen the political landscape shift markedly but managed to form a fourth cabinet (in as many years) following a surprise re-election in November 2006. A previous cabinet was brought down earlier that year by a crisis surrounding Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a parliamentary member and critic of Islam (see the boxed text, below). Ali, who was born in Somalia, resigned after it was revealed she provided false information to the Dutch authorities when applying for asylum.

The opposition is made up of seven parties including the centre-right, market-friendly People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), as well as two vocal right-wing parties, the Socialist Party (SP) and the PVV (Party for Freedom). The head of the PVV, Geert Wilders, is considered by many to carry the torch of Pim Fortuyn, the right-wing populist assassinated in 2002.

The national government has made some conciliatory noises on immigration recently, for example by granting an amnesty in 2007 to 30,000 immigrants without papers to give them a chance to be registered legally. Still, the admission of immigrants is now restricted to a few narrow categories, such as people whose skills serve the ‘national interest’.

Other key issues include a new smoking ban in restaurants, bars, and cafés, due to come into force in mid-2008 as well as the ongoing containment of coffeeshops. The city of Rotterdam is closing over one-third of its coffeeshops, saying they are too close to schools; Amsterdam, with 200 coffeeshops of its own, has decided not to follow suit – for now.

Amsterdam’s mayor, currently Job Cohen, is appointed by the monarchy. The 45-member city council is elected to four-year terms by the city’s 15 boroughs. Since the 2006 election, which showed a strong shift back to the left, the government is run by a coalition of the PvdA and GroenLinks (Green Left Party), with four parties holding seats in opposition. Council members receive an allowance for their work and not a salary, as it is performed on a volunteer basis. The council meets every second Wednesday in public session.

The city is further divided into boroughs, each with its own council and its own political flavour. Frequently, the locals inform councillor to solve problems of mutual concern, even without any government input. A good example is the Night Mayors, a board of volunteers organised by a city-centre councilman to promote Amsterdam’s nightlife and mediate between the entertainment industry and the authorities.

MEDIA

It makes sense that the world’s first museum devoted to news photography, News Photo (p34) opened here. Amsterdammers are media savvy and voracious readers. All you need to do is go to a café with a reading table to see. Whether it’s a newspaper picked up on their commute or the latest hot blog, people are, above all else, aware. It makes this small city seem even smaller.

Of the 35 or so daily newspapers published in the Netherlands, some of the most important are based or have bureaus in Amsterdam. De Telegraaf is the country’s biggest-selling newspaper and the closest thing to a tabloid you’ll find. The NRC Handelsblad is the intellectual paper, while readers of the Volkskrant are decidedly left of centre.

Het Parool is Amsterdam’s afternoon newspaper, the one to grab to know what’s happening in town. Its Saturday Supplement has a great entertainment section. And if you want to impress an Amsterdammer, say the restaurant you’ve chosen for dinner was rated nine out of 10 by Johannes van Dam, the paper’s food critic.

The fastest-growing sector belongs to four free daily papers: Metro, Spits, De Pers and Dag, all of which are distributed from train-station stands. With a circulation of half a million copies daily, Metro alone is a force to contend with. Visitors will have little trouble finding English-language publications such as Time, Newsweek, the International Herald Tribune and many UK-based dailies. Many are also popular among Dutch readers. See p248 for further info.

Dutch TV tends not to travel well abroad, mostly due to the language, but foreign-language remakes of Dutch shows are enormously popular. Many visitors expect Dutch TV to be stuffed to the gills with porn, but it just ain’t the case. The reality-TV craze began here with Big Brother, produced by Endemol, now based in Amsterdam. Big Brother was swiftly copied in the UK, Germany and the USA – and has spread to places as diverse as Brazil, Mexico and Africa. Its latest creation is the controversial Gouden Kooi (Golden Cage), a tempestuous soap opera cum reality show where participants are locked up together in a house for year. One resident regularly ordered the services of prostitutes. Endemol is also behind such international hits as Fear Factor, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition and Ready, Steady, Cook.

Of the local TV stations, AT5 is the partner-friendly takes thanks to its wall-to-wall coverage of local news. For a dose of Amsterdam attitude, tune in to low-budget MokumTV, on the air with local documentaries and unvarnished opinions since 1982. The state-owned networks are Ned 1, Ned 2 and Ned 3, which battle it out with commercial channels such as NET5, the loud ‘n’ sassy Yorin and Veronica, and the RTL empire.

You can also find plenty of foreign channels on cable, including the BBC and CNN, and the sky’s the limit via the satellite services at many hotels.

LANGUAGE

When you come from a tiny country with a long history of trade, you learn to adapt or wither.

Amsterdam has always looked outward, and as a result most people you will encounter

(Continued from page 44)
in the city speak English very well. Foreign films and TV are shown with Dutch subtitles, and the Dutch have long used other languages in their dealings overseas. Many websites (especially tourist publications) are published in English, with the occasional publication in German, French, Italian and, increasingly, Turkish and Arabic.

Part of the reason for this outward focus may be that the Dutch language is confounding. Many linguists believe that Dutch is a close relative to English, but it won’t be apparent to the uninitiated. If you’ve studied German, Dutch will make sense grammatically, and once you get past some spelling differences you’ll probably be able to get the gist of it, especially written. Spoken Dutch is another matter entirely – its pronunciation is a minefield of diphthongs (vowel combinations), throat-clearing g’s and ch’s, rolling r’s and v’s that sound like f’s.

The Dutch speak English so well that visitors will rarely have the opportunity to practice Dutch. When they do, the most valiant attempts at pronunciation will probably be met with quizzical looks. Nevertheless, a few words in Dutch are always appreciated, especially the phrase Spreekt u Engels? (Do you speak English?) with older people. Foreigners who have settled in the Netherlands report that speaking Dutch, while hardly compulsory, warms their Dutch friends and colleagues.

For a brief guide to Dutch and some useful words and phrases, see the Language chapter (p258), and check language courses on p245. For more extensive coverage of the language, pick up Lonely Planet’s Western Europe Phrasebook.
Arcam (p70), the comely architecture centre at the harbour’s edge.
It is difficult not to be struck by Amsterdam’s well-preserved beauty; the lovely canal scenes depicted in centuries-old paintings are remarkably unchanged. Historian Geert Mak once described Amsterdam as ‘a Cinderella under glass’, spared as it was from wartime destruction and ham-fisted developers. The comely old centre has no fewer than 7000 historical monuments, more humpback bridges than Venice and more trees per capita than Paris. Unlike many capitals, Amsterdam has few grand edifices to trumpet. There is hardly the space for a Louvre or Westminster Abbey, which anyway would be out of keeping with Calvinist modesty. But you’ll be pressed to find another city with such a wealth of residential architecture, and with an appeal that owes more to understated elegance than to power and pomp.

Amsterdam’s beauty was built on freedoms – of trade, religion and aesthetics. Many of its gabled mansions and warehouses were erected by merchants in the Golden Age, with little meddling by city hall. Thus its leading citizens determined the look of the city, an early urban experiment.

Dutch architecture today is one of the country’s most successful exports, with names such as Rem Koolhaas and Lars Spuybroek popping up on blueprints from Shanghai to Stuttgart. Back home, rivalry can be intensely local as talents in Amsterdam and Rotterdam jostle for a spot in the architectural pantheon.

ARCHITECTURE IN AMSTERDAM

MIDDLE AGES

Around the year 1200, Amsterdam was a muddy little trading post on the Amstel river. The soft marshland couldn’t support brick, so the earliest houses were made of timber, often with clay and thatched roofs – similar, actually, to ones still standing in Amsterdam-Noord. Even these modest abodes would list into the soggy ground.

A disastrous fire burnt down much of the city centre in the 15th century, and wood was sensibly outlawed as a main building material. There was plenty of clay to make brick, but this was too heavy, let alone stone.

The engineers solved the problem by driving piles into the peat. So timber gave way to heavier brick, and thatched roofs were replaced by sturdier tile. Eventually brick and sandstone became de rigueur for everything.

Only two early houses with timber façades have survived to this day. In a lovely courtyard near the Spui, the house at Begijnhof 34 (Map pp62–5) is the oldest preserved wooden house in the country, dating from 1465. The other specimen can be found at Zeedijk 1, home of the In’t Aepjen café (p183), from the mid-16th century.

The city’s oldest surviving building is the Oude Kerk (Old Church, 1340; p75), a fine specimen of Dutch brick Gothic style. The second-oldest is the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church; p66), a late-Gothic masterpiece from the early 15th century. You can clearly see how, over time, the Catholic choir and altar ceded ground to the Protestant pulpit. In both churches, notice the wooden roof frames.

Another classic of the era is the Montelbaanstoren (p82), one of the city’s signature buildings and a Rembrandt favourite. The octagonal steeple was designed by master architect Hendrick de Keyser to house a clock that’s still in use today.

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GABLES, HOISTS & HOUSES THAT TIP

Among Amsterdam’s great treasures are the magnificent gables, the façades at roof level that adorn the elegant houses along the canals. The gables hid the roof from public view and helped to identify the house until 1795, when the French occupiers introduced house numbers. Gables then became more of a fashion accessory.

There are four main types: the simple spout gable, with diagonal outline and semicircular windows or shutters, that was used mainly for warehouses from the 1580s to the early 1700s; the step gable, a late-Gothic design favoured by Dutch Renaissance architects; the neck gable, also known as the bottle gable, a durable design introduced in the 1640s; and the bell gable, which appeared in the 1660s and became popular in the 18th century.

Many canal houses deliberately tip forward. Given the narrowness of staircases, owners needed an easy way to move large goods and furniture to the upper floors. The solution: a hoist built into the gable, to lift objects up and in through the windows. The tilt allowed loading without bumping into the house front. Some properties even have huge hoist-wheels in the attic with a rope and hook that run through the hoist beam. The forward lean also makes the houses seem larger, which makes it easier to admire the façade and gable – a fortunate coincidence for everyone. Other house features included wall tablets; see the boxed text, p48.

top picks

SeeWorthy Buildings

Oude Kerk (p75)
Nieuwe Kerk (p66)
Royal Palace (p67)
Rijksmuseum (p111)
Het Schip (p130)
Muziekgroef aan ’t IJ (p125)
DUTCH RENAISSANCE

As the Italian Renaissance filtered north, Dutch architects developed a rich ornamental style that merged the classical and the traditional, with their own brand of subtle humour. They inserted mock columns, known as pilasters, into the façades and replaced the old spout gables with step gables (see the boxed text, p47). Sculptures, columns and little obelisks suddenly appeared all over the Canal Belt. Red brick and horizontal bands of white were all the rage too.

The best-known talent of this period was Hendrick de Keyser (1565–1621), the city sculptor. He worked with Hendrick Staets, a Canal Belt planner, and Cornelis Danckerts, the city bricklayer, to produce some of the city’s finest masterpieces.

Every student of Dutch architecture knows the Bartolotti House (p94), a design by De Keyser, who also put his stamp on three ‘directional churches’: the Zuiderkerk (Southern Church; p80) and Westerkerk (Western Church; p93), both Gothic in flavour, and the Noorderkerk (Northern Church; p85), built for poor Jordaaners, and laid out like a Greek cross inside, a veritable revolution at the time.

De Keyser also created the landmark Munttoren (Mint Tower; Map pp62–5; cnr Rokin & Singel). The national mint was moved here ahead of advancing French troops in 1673, but had little time to print any currency.

Also attributed to De Keyser is the Rasphuis Gate (p73). Halfway along Heiligeweg, it once led to the Rasphuis, a model penitentiary where inmates would ‘rasp’ (scrape) Brazil wood for the dye industry.

Wall tablets were used to identify houses

WALL TABLETS

Before street numbers were introduced in 1795, many Amsterdam homes were identified by their wall tablets. These painted or carved stone plaques were practical decorations that earmarked the origin, religion or profession of the inhabitants. Beautiful examples of these stones are still found on many buildings along the main canals. Occupations are a frequent theme: tobacconists, milliners, merchants, skippers, undertakers, even grass-mowers.

The tablets also provide hints about the city’s past. A stone depicting a mail wagon at Singel 74 commemorates the start of postal services between Amsterdam and Den Haag in 1660. Further down the street, there’s one portraying the scene of Eve tempting Adam with an apple, harking back to a fruit market of yesteryear. Many plaques celebrate the lives of famous citizens, such as maritime hero Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter and biologist Jan Swammerdam. The most appealing, however, recall the domestic life and vocations of the age; for examples, see www.amsterdamsegevelstenen.nl.

Key commercial buildings include the Greenland Warehouses (Map pp62–5; Keizersgracht 40-44). Whale oil was a sought-after ingredient for soap, lamp oil and paint, and wells in these warehouses held 100,000L of the precious stuff. Nowadays they’re chic apartments, the façade is well maintained.

The wonderful Huis aan de Drie Grachten (House on the Three Canals, 1609; Map pp62–5; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 329) marks where the three burgwallen (fortified embankments) meet. Note the house’s steep gables, leaded glass windows and handsome shutters.

DUTCH CLASSICISM

During the Golden Age of art in the 17th century, architects such as Jacob van Campen, Philips Vingboons and his brother Justus decided to stick to Greek and Roman classical design, dropping many of De Keyser’s playful decorations.

Influenced by Italian architects, the Dutch made façades look like temples and pilasters like columns. All revolved around clever deception. Neck gables with decorative scrolls came into fashion, often crowned by a temple-like roof. Garlands appeared under windows, and red brick, which was prone to crumbling, was hardened with dark paint.

The most impressive example of Dutch Classicism is Van Campen’s city hall (now the Royal Palace, p67). The largest city hall in Europe, it was given a precious shell of Bentheim sandstone and a marble interior inspired by the Roman palaces.

The Vingboons designed the Bijbels Museum (p95), the White House (now also part of the Theater Instituut Nederland, p93) and the fine example at Keizersgracht 319 (Map p92).

Justus Vingboons’ Tripenhuis (p79) is about as austere as it gets. Built in 1660–64 for the wealthy Tripp brothers, who made their fortune in metals, artillery and ammunition, the most striking hallmarks are up at roof level – chimneys shaped like mortars.

Later in the 17th century, façades became plainer as the pendulum shifted to sumptuous interiors. Adriaan Dortsman, a mathematician by training, was a leader of this austere style. Dortsman’s greatest hits include the Ronde Lutherse Kerk (Round Lutheran Church; p73) and the Museum Van Loon (p99).

18TH-CENTURY ‘LOUIS STYLES’

As Holland’s trading might faded, the wealthy fell back on fortunes amassed in the mercantile era. Many invested or turned to banking, and conducted business from their opulent homes. Traders no longer stored goods in the attic because they could afford warehouses elsewhere.

The Gallic culture craze proved a godsend for architect and designer Daniel Marot, a Hugenot refugee who introduced matching French interiors and exteriors to Amsterdam. Living areas were bathed in light that fell through sash windows on white stuccoed ceilings. As the elegant bell gable became a must, many architects opted for the next big thing, a horizontal cornice.

The dignified façades and statuary of the Louis XIV style hung on until about 1750. In rapid succession it was followed by Louis XV style – rocco rocks, swirls and waves – and Louis XVI designs, with pilasters and pillars making a comeback.

The towering Westerkerk (p93)
Standing in front of the late-Louis-style Felix Meritis Building (p94), step back and note the enormous Corinthian half-columns, with a pomp that architect Jacob Otten Husly was skilled in imparting.

The Maagdenhuis (Map pp62–5) on the Spui, designed by city architect Abraham van der Hart, is a more sober brand of this classicism. Built in 1787 as a Catholic orphanage for girls, the building is now the administrative seat of the University of Amsterdam.

19TH-CENTURY NEOSTYLES

After the Napoleonic era, the Dutch economy stagnated, merchants closed their pocketbooks and architecture ground to a halt. Seen as safe and saleable, neoclassicism held sway until the more prosperous 1860s, when planners again felt free to rediscover the past.

The late 19th century was all about neo-Gothic, harking back to the grand Gothic cathedrals, and the neo-Renaissance. It was around this time that Catholics regained their freedom to worship openly, and built churches like mad in neo-Gothic style.

A leading architect of the period was Pierre Cuypers, the man known for skilful design blur on several neo-Gothic churches, something he had in common with CH Peters. Their contemporary AC Bleijs created some of the greatest commercial buildings of the era.

Pierre Cuypers designed two of Amsterdam’s iconic buildings: Centraal Station (p70) and the Rijksmuseum (p111), which both display Gothic forms and Dutch Renaissance brickwork. A similar melange is CH Peters’ general post office, now Magna Plaza (p72).

The ebullient neo-Renaissance façade of the former milk factory (Map pp100-1; Prinsengracht 739-741) was built in 1876 to a design by Eduard Cuypers (Pierre’s nephew).

Bleijs designed the high-profile St Nicolaaskerk (p71) as well as the intimate PC Hooft Store (1881; Map pp100-1; Keizersgracht 508). The latter, a Dutch-Renaissance throwback with a Germanic tower, was built to commemorate the 300th birthday of the poet and playwright Pieter Cornelisz Hooft.

The façade of AL van Gendt’s Concertgebouw (p111) is neoclassical, but its red brick and white sandstone are all Dutch Renaissance.

Around the turn of the century, the neo-Goths suddenly fell out of favour as Art Nouveau spread its curvy plant-like shapes across Europe.

Art Nouveau’s influence can be seen in the Greenpeace Building (Map p92; Keizersgracht 174-176). The towering edifice was built in 1905 for an insurance company, and its tiled façade shows a guardian angel who seems to be peddling a life policy.

Other Art Nouveau structures are the Amsterdam American Hotel (p99) and the riotous Tuschinski Theater (p200).
FUNCTIONALISM

As the Amsterdam School built, a new generation began to rebel against the movement’s impractical and expensive methods. In 1927 they formed a group called ‘de 8’, influenced by the Bauhaus, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.

Architects such as Ben Merkelbach and Gerrit Rietveld believed that form should follow function and advocated steel, glass and concrete. The Committee of Aesthetics Control didn’t agree, however, which is why you’ll see little functionalism in the Canal Belt.

After WWII, entire suburbs such as the sprawling Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam-Zuidoost were designed along functionalist lines. By the late 1960s, however, resistance would grow to such impersonal, large-scale projects.

Rietveld left Amsterdam the Van Gogh Museum (p109), where the minimalist, open space allows the artist’s works to shine. You can enjoy coffee inside his M Café (p169). Aldo van Eyck’s work also remains controversial, with critics arguing it looks out of place against the 17th- and 18th-century surrounds; his designs include the Moederhuis (Map p122; Plantage Middenlaan 33), built for ‘fallen women’.

THE PRESENT

Since the 1970s, designers have lent human scale to the suburbs by integrating low- and medium-rise apartments with shops, schools and offices. In the Plantage district, a must-see is the enormous Entrepotdok (p123). Sprawling half a kilometre along the former loading dock, the crusty shipping warehouses have been recast as desirable apartments, studios and commercial spaces. Nearby, the Eastern Docklands was full of derelict industrial buildings until the 1980s and early ‘90s, when they got a new lease on life.

Looking southeast from Centraal Station, you can’t overlook the green copper snout of NEMO (p69), a science museum designed by Renzo Piano that resembles the prow of a ship. The cubic glass shell of the Muziekgebouw (p123) stands not far to the north, on the IJ waterfront. Clad in a voluptuous body of aluminium and glass, Arcam (Architectuur Centrum Amsterdam; p70) is a tribute to the city’s architectural prowess.

The Eastern Harbour District is home to the innovative community called IJburg (Map p58-9), which will eventually house many thousands of residents on a string of artificial islands. It’s linked to the mainland by the curvaceous Enneüs Heerma Brug, now dubbed Dolly Parton Bridge by locals. Amsterdam-Zuidoost prides itself on the Living Tomorrow Pavilion (p131), a ‘smart’ building with talking appliances by star architect Ben van Berkel.

Sweeping new projects are underway outside the old centre. On the shores of the IJ stands the Oosterdokseiland, a row of landmark buildings that includes the new city library, and the Westerdokseiland, a harbour that has been repurposed for work, play and sleep. On a former industrial estate across the IJ river, smart housing blocks and office towers are springing up at the Overhoeks development.

On the southern ringway, the hi-tech business district of Zuidas (‘south axis’) is positioning itself as a rival to London’s Canary Wharf. One of the more intriguing sights out here is the ING House (Map pp58-9; Amstelveenseweg 500), a shoe-shaped, glass-clad complex on stilts – truly a bank with a sole.

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top picks

- Van Gogh Museum (p109)
  Admire the vivid swirls of a tortured genius.
- Oude Kerk (p75) and Nieuwe Kerk (p66)
  Pick out centuries of glorious detail.
- Southern Canal Belt (p98)
  Bask in the magnificent canal architecture.
- Museum Het Rembrandthuis (p78)
  Visit the inner sanctum of a master painter.
- Red Light District (p74)
  Loosen your tie in the controlled sleaze.
- Vondelpark (p115)
  Kick off your shoes in Amsterdam’s answer to Central Park.
- Anne Frank Huis (p93)
  Relive the horrors from a young girl’s diary.
- Amsterdams Historisch Museum (p68)
  Lift the veil on a storied past.
- Jordaan district (p84)
  Explore the incredibly cozy lanes and cafés.
- Artis Zoo (p121)
  Stroll through a rainforest or African savannah.
NEIGHBOURHOODS

If you could pick a shape for Amsterdam, what could possibly be more fitting than a bicycle wheel? Or at least half of one, as if sliced in two by a passing tram.

The old city is bathed by rings of canals known as the Grachtengordel (Canal Belt). Think of the main train station, Centraal Station, as being the hub of the wheel, with streets running out like spokes and linking the canals together. Once you know this much, you won’t get lost (often). It also helps to remember the sequence of the main canals, from the centre moving outwards: Singel, Herengracht, Keizersgracht, Prinsengracht and Singelgracht.

The oldest districts are also the most central, and we’ve divvied them up into three areas on the City Centre map. A good place to start your exploration is the Medieval Centre, home to many top sights such as the Royal Palace, the Nieuwe Kerk and the Amsterdams Historisch Museum. The city’s intellectual life happens around the Spui, a leafy main square flanked by cafés and bookshops.

The Red Light District has been catering to worldly vices for centuries. Apart from the come-hither looks and giant joints, you’ll find the magnificent Oude Kerk and lesser-known assets such as a clandestine church-museum. Surprising for some, this old sailor’s quarter is quite picturesque. Apart from a Gothic weigh house and a café-lined square, Nieuwmarkt holds the keys to the Rembrandthuis – the master painter’s studio – as well as to intriguing old synagogues and museums in the old Jewish quarter.

Moving outward, the Western Canal Belt is filled with stately mansions and home to the Anne Frank Huis. The towering Westerkerk, with its famous carillon and pot-bellied crown, is one of Amsterdam’s signature buildings. Nearby you’ll find the city’s most alluring shopping in the Negen Straatjes, a tightly woven web of boutiques and specialist vendors. The houses become larger and more affluent in the Southern Canal Belt, where you’ll find party zones around Rembrandplein and Leidseplein, art and antiques in the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, and charming shops and restaurants along Utrechtsestraat.

To the west of the Canal Belt, the popular Jordaan is a former workers quarter teeming with cosy pubs, cafés and galleries. Short on conventional sights, yes, but there’s no better place to lose yourself for an afternoon’s leisurely stroll. The offbeat Pianola Museum located here invites you to step back in musical history.

The Vondelpark is a green lung with personality. This English-style landscape park is replete with quaint features: a teahouse shaped like a flying saucer, a thatched colonial restaurant and a shell-like amphitheatre for summer plays. In fine weather it’s always a hive of activity.

The renowned Van Gogh and Rijksmuseum collections, as well as the Concertgebouw music hall, are in the genteel neighbourhood Old South, a few minutes’ walk south of the centre. Amsterdam’s well-to-do reside here in handsome villas, and frequent the exclusive garment shops in PC Hoofstraat. Next door, ethnic meets trendy in De Pijp, an up-and-coming neighbourhood with the famed Albert Cuyp Market and eateries serving cuisine from the former colonies.

Immediately to the east of the Southern Canal Belt lies the Plantage, the former gardens that now host the lively Artis Zoo, the country’s oldest animal park. The district segues into the old warehouse hubs of the Eastern Islands and Eastern Docklands, artificial islands that have been graced with attractive modern buildings such as the Muizieggebouw aan ‘t IJ, a state-of-the-art performance hall. The highlight of the rambling Oosterpark district is the excellent Tropenmuseum.
## CITY CENTRE

Drinking & Smoking p180; Eating p158; Shopping p137; Sleeping p212

The city’s golden egg hatched at a weir built across the Amstel river. Two streets called Damrak (p70) and Rokin (p69), which run north and south from the Dam, formed the Amstel’s final stretch. East of the Damrak-Rokin axis is the ‘Old Side’ of medieval Amsterdam, while the west bank is the Nieuwe Zijde (New Side). One of many oddities you’ll discover in this quirky city is that the ‘New Side’ is actually older than the ‘Old Side’; their names come from the parishes around the Oude Kerk (Old Church, p75) and the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church, p66).

Although it’s hard to imagine now, the Damrak was Amsterdam’s first harbour, a long, busy tongue of water where ships unloaded spices, salt and coffee. Soon the ships grew too large for the Dam and tied up to palisades along the outer harbour, and then unloaded onto lighter, to be ferried up the canals. Today, Damrak is an agonising stretch of gaudy souvenir and sex shops, exchange bureaux, cheap restaurants and dumpy hotels, although the city is constantly fighting to make it more respectable.

The bottom of the Damrak ends in the Dam (p69), the hallowed spot where the original dam was built. (Put ‘Amstel’ and ‘Dam’ together, and you’ve got the city’s name.) South of the Dam, the Damrak sheds its gutter qualities and becomes Rokin. Once a large canal, most of the Rokin was filled in during the 19th century, and quickly distanced itself from the seedy Damrak. It has a number of fine office buildings (including the modern Options Exchange at No 61), prestigious shops (such as the wood-panelled tobaccoist Hajenius at No 92) and art dealers.

Amsterdam’s modest Red Light District has been lubricating libidos since the 14th century. Ships would drift into the Ouderkerk’s Achterburgwal canal to unload their wares, and as soon as the ropes were set, the sailors would jump off and head for the next distillery or bordello. Many would squander their earnings in a few weeks and slink back to the ship, cursing their bad luck.

Quicker than you can say la plus ça change, you’ll see that liquor and sex are still the main squeezes. Only the presentation has got more sophisticated; what seems rough and seedy is actually slick and regulated. It’s a big money-spinner so the city does its best to keep everybody happy. If you’d like to get a taste of the Red Light District without going all the way, take a quick walk down Oude Nieuwstraat.

A main artery of the Red Light District is Zeedijk (p76), the original sea dyke that guided sailors from the mouth of the Amstel to Nieuwmarkt Square. The street was the first port of call after long sea voyages, and has a colourful history stocked with volumes of wine, women and song. Its great variety of entertainment – including brown cafes, gay bars, late-night hang-outs and music clubs – means it’s buzzing pretty much around the clock. The Zeedijk used to be a virtual no-go area, but today it’s quite safe thanks to the surveillance cameras and frequent police patrols.

Nieuwmarkt is a district as historic as anything you’ll find in Amsterdam – Rembrandt painted canalscapes here, and Jewish merchants generated a fair share of the city’s wealth – yet many locals associate it with recent conflict. In the 1970s Nieuwmarkt’s reputation had bottomed out. It had become the centre of Amsterdam’s heroin trade, and drug dealers and mobsters controlled the streets. Things got so bad that the mayor basically threw in the towel, recommending people visit a miniature model of Nieuwmarkt (at the Madurodam amusement park near Den Haag) rather than risking personal harm.

As if that wasn’t enough, a bitter conflict emerged over plans for a new metro line that would require the destruction of many homes. (Just for the record, the city won.) For a reminder, check out the giant black-and-white photos in the metro station at Nieuwmarkt.

The turning point came when a policeman was murdered by a drug addict – not the best advertisement for a city just getting its head around the tourist trade. The police stepped in and the Nieuwmarkt was saved, not just in miniature. You might still encounter junkies, particularly along Geldersekade to the north of the square, but nowadays they’re few and far between.

The area southeast of here, the ‘new’ canals (Nieuwe Herengracht, Nieuwe Keizersgracht and Nieuwe Prinsengracht), intersected by the Weesperstraat traffic artery, was where the canal-belt project petered out around 1700. The canals on this far side of the Damrak were less in demand among the city’s wealthy residents, and went to charities or were settled by well-off Jews from the Jewish quarter.

## ITINERARY BUILDER

The table below allows you to plan a day’s worth of activities in any area of the city. Simply select which area you wish to explore, and then mix and match from the corresponding listings to build your day. The first item in each cell represents a well-known highlight of the area, while the other items are more off-the-beaten-track gems.

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MEDIEVAL CENTRE

The charming thing about Amsterdam’s medieval heart is its remarkable state of preservation. The city slowly grew in layers around the leaf-shaped harbour, and although there have been countless changes – various canals have been filled in and modern streets like Kalverstraat scarcely betray their gristy roots – the overall layout and dimensions are little changed since the 17th century. The

happily result? The district has the air of a living museum, and certain vistas look cut out of a Golden Age landscape.

NIEUWE KERK

Map pp62-5

New Church; 638 69 09; www.nieuwekerk.nl; the Dam; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-15yr £10/ free/7.50; 10am-6pm Fri-Wed, to 10pm Thu

On the Dam, this 14th-century basilica is the historic site of Dutch coronations; the stained glass over the main entrance

recalls Queen Wilhelmina, who ascended the throne in 1898, aged 18. Exhibitions and organ concerts are held here, but it no longer functions as a church.

The interior is plain, but several key furnishings – the magnificent oak chancel, the bronze choir screen and the massive gilded organ (1645) – alone justify a visit. Naval hero Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, as well as poets Joost van den Vondel and Pieter Cornelisz Hooft are among the luminaries buried here.

ROYAL PALACE

Map pp62-5

Koninklijk Paleis; 620 60 40; www.koninklijkhuis.nl; the Dam; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-16yr & senior £4.50/free/3.60, adult ticket with audio tour £6.50

Today’s Koninklijk Paleis began life as a glorified stadthuis (town hall) of republican Amsterdam, completed in 1665. The architect,Jacob van Campen, spared no expense to display Amsterdam’s wealth in a way that rivaled the grandest European buildings of
top picks

MEDIEVAL CENTRE

- Nieuwe Kerk (p66) Take in a concert or an exhibition at the coronation church of Dutch royalty.
- Royal Palace (p67) Feel positively regal inside the lavishlly decorated salons.
- Civic Guard Gallery (below) See the original giants of Dutch homeland security in ruff collars.
- Begijnhof (right) Spend a quiet interlude in this courtyard of historic almshouses and churches.
- Amsterdamse Historisch Museum (right) Follow the twists and turns of city history over seven eventful centuries.

hoofddorp

The day. The great burgerzaal (citizens hall) that occupies the heart of the building was envisioned as a schematic of the world, with Amsterdam as its centre. Look carefully and you’ll see motifs representing the four elements: birds (air), fish (water), fruit (earth) and fire. On the far wall, a clock is constantly set to 11 o’clock, indicating that justice is possible even at the last hour.

Also worth noting are the balcony room, from where important announcements were made, and the council chamber, with its elaborate paintings and murals depicting themes of giving advice, including owls and a Jacob de Wit painting of Moses.

A century and a half after it was built, the building later passed to the House of Orange before the national government bought it in 1935. Officially Queen Beatrinx lives here and pays a symbolic rent, though she really lives in Den Haag.

At the time of writing, the Palace was closed till mid-2008 for a revamp; ring or check the website for updates.

CIVIC GUARD GALLERY Map pp62-5
☎ 523 18 22; Kalverstraat 92; admission free;
10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

The enormous tableaux here are exclusively of medieval guards in group portraits, a captivating subgenre of Dutch painting.

Divisions such as voetboog (large crossbow) and kloveniers (hackett) protected the city and played a large part in deploying the Spanish government. Technically, everyone had to serve in these guard units, although participation in the portraits was voluntary, as each member paid his own way. The size of the paintings was determined by the wall space in the guardhouses where the portraits were to be hung. Together with the Rijksmuseum’s collection, this display is the largest of its kind and definitely not to be missed.

BEGIJNHOF Map pp62-5
☎ 622 19 18; www.begijnhofamsterdam.nl;
admission free; 8am-5pm
This enclosed former convent dates from the early 14th century. It’s a surreal oasis of peace, with tiny houses and postage-stamp gardens around a courtyard.

The Beguines were a Catholic order of unmarried or widowed women who cared for the elderly and lived a religious life without taking monastic vows. The last true Beguines died in the 1970s.

Contained within thehof is the charming Begijnhof Kapel, a ‘clandestine’ chapel where the Beguines were forced to worship after their Gothic church was taken away by the Calvinists. Go through the dogleg entrance to find marble columns, wooden pews, paintings and stained-glass windows commemorating the Miracle of Amsterdam.

The other church in the Begijnhof is known as the Engelse Kerk (English Church), built around 1392. It was eventually rented out to the local community of English and Scottish Presbyterians – the Pilgrim Fathers worshipped here – and still serves as the city’s Presbyterian church.

Also note the house at No 34; it dates from around 1425, making it the oldest preserved wooden house in the country.

AMSTERDAMS HISTORISCH MUSEUM Map pp62-5
Amsterdam Historical Museum; ☎ 523 18 22; www.ahmn.nl; Kalverstraat 92; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-18yr €7/free/3.50;
10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun

Housed in the old civic orphanage, this museum takes you through all the fascinating twists and turns in Amsterdam’s convoluted history. Begin with the large-screen TV depicting an aerial view of the city’s evolution, from tiny settlement on the mouth of the Amstel, as it was filled in to create the metropolis. You’ll find models of old homes, religious objects (including some relating to the Miracle of Amsterdam; see the boxed text, p73) and a detailed history of Dutch commerce. Later sections cover the world wars, the spread of bicycle use and even a re-creation of the original Café Het Mandje, a touchstone in the gay-rights movement.

Outside, be sure to visit the courtyard (note the cupboards in which the orphans stored their possessions) and view the amaz-

ing portraits in the Civic Guard Gallery (opposite).

DAM Map pp62-5
The southern part of this famous square was the divine spot where Amsterdam was founded around 1270, and the rest is chequered history. But few people know that long before it hosted fun fairs, the square was split into sections called Vissersdam, a fish market where the Bijenkorf department store now stands, and Vijgendam, probably named for the figs and other exotic fruits unloaded from ships. Markets and events have been held here through the ages, including executions – you can still see holes on the front of the Royal Palace where the wooden gallows were affixed. From the 19th century onward the Dam became a sort of national square, meaning that when there’s a major speech or demonstration, it’s held here.

BEURS VAN BERLAGE Map pp62-5
☎ 530 41 41; Damrak 243
Named after architect HP Berlage (see p51), this landmark building from 1903 was once the leading stock and commodities exchange. The plans show Berlage’s humour and an almost perverse willingness to show the guts of a building, such as the exposed steel struts and giant screws of the main hall. Trading quickly outgrew the beurs, however, and moved to the nearby Effectenbeurs less than two decades later.

The Beurs van Berlage is now home to the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and hosts museum exhibitions. In the Beurs’ van B Café (p182), stop to ponder the 1903 murals by Jan Toorop, representing past, present and future.

ROKIN Map pp62-5
South of the Dam, this street is part of the route most visitors take from Centraal Station into town, the name being a corruption of ‘Rok-’in’, or inward reach. In the early 16th century, the northern part was the site of the first Amsterdam stock exchange, which played a big part in spinning Golden Age riches. The Rokin is now in the grip of the underground construction of a new metro line, which has brought forth a number of archaeological finds from the Amstel’s old river bed. At the intersection of Rokin and Grimburgwal stands a statue of Queen Wilhelmina on horseback, a reminder of the monarch’s trots through Amsterdam during official processions.

SPUI Map pp62-5
Flanked by bookshops and cafés, this broad square split by tramlines is most closely associated with the 1960s, where the ‘Provos’ (p70), of the political counterculture, staged some of their mischievous pranks. The statue in the middle is a playful urchin called Lieverdje (Little Darling), a gift from a cigarette company. The Spui was a body of water until the 1880s, and is now the site of Sunday book and art markets (see p151).

STEDELIJKE MUSEUM CS Map pp62-5
☎ 573 29 11; www.stedelijk.nl; 2nd & 3rd fl, Post CS Bldg, Oosterdokskade 5; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-16yr & senior €9/free/4.50; 10am-6pm
The modern classics here are among the world’s most admired, amassed with great skill by postwar curator Willem Sandberg. The permanent collection includes all the blue chips of 19th and 20th century painting – Monet, Van Gogh and Picasso among them – as well as sculptures by Rodin, abstractions by Mondriaan and Kandinsky, and much, much more.

For the time being, only temporary exhibitions are held in this former post-office tower. At the time of writing it was due to close in October 2008, but selected treasures will be exhibited at different venues including the Van Gogh Museum through to the end of 2009, when the main Stedelijk Museum building (p113) on Museumplein is set to reopen after a lengthy renovation.

NEMO Map pp62-5
☎ 531 32 33; www.e-nemo.nl; Oosterdok 2; adult/child under 4yr/student €11.50/free/6.50; 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, plus Mon Jul & Aug
Perched atop the entrance to the U-Tunnel is the wedge-shaped museum of science
and technology, the largest in the Netherlands. Italian architect Renzo Piano (whose works also include the Centre Pompidou in Paris) conceived of this design as the inverse of the tunnel below it. It’s really meant for kids, but grown-ups will probably enjoy it too. There are loads of interactive exhibits, drawing with a laser, ‘anti-gravity’ trick mirrors and a ‘lab’ where you can answer such questions as ‘How did Lieberdje in Paris) conceived of this design as the inverse of the tunnel below it. It’s really meant for kids, but grown-ups will probably enjoy it too. There are loads of interactive exhibits, drawing with a laser, ‘anti-gravity’ trick mirrors and a ‘lab’ where you can answer such questions as ‘How did
AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 1: STEVE KORVER  Simon Sellars

Steve Korver is the editor of the super periodical Amsterdam Weekly and the irreverent and informative Time Out Amsterdam. Who could be better qualified, then, to give me the inside dirt on this wonderful city?

What’s your favourite part of Amsterdam?

It varies and stretches further afield day by day as the inner city gets more and more ‘organised’. I like those funky bits that were always easy to find in De Pijp and Jordaan and along the waterfront but are now getting scrubbed cleaner than clean. But the stereotypes are still nice: the canal girdle remains one of the planet’s most painfully scenic places, especially when the water glows purple just before dawn.

Speaking of stereotypes, what’s the least applicable?

The whole sex, drugs and rock’n’roll thing – it’s there but mostly for the tourists.

Has Theo van Gogh’s assassination (see the boxed text, p44) changed the disposition of Amsterdam and its people as much as we’ve been led to believe?

It was our September 11 – it only took that one death in this tiny country to have a similar effect. But after the initial hysteria flamed by populist politicians, things have mellowed and people are doing what they’ve done here forever: gathered as many parties around a table to talk, talk, talk… and, hopefully, hash out solutions.

Do you have a favourite ‘Amsterdam experience’?

Shooting the shit with friends on a terrace on one of those first sunny days of spring.

Your favourite nightspot?

I’m not telling. Everyone’s got to find their own. But do try to go local rather than endlessly circling around the Red Light District’s inner pit. The Melkweg and Paradiso still rule, but there are a lot of new, smaller venues like Sugar Factory, Bitterzot and Nieuwe Anita that are pumping both live music and good ol’ fashioned cosiness back into the mix. As for coffeeshops: remember: you can do takeaway, kids!

Any foodie tips?

Fish stalls, for deep-throatting herring – the poor, working person’s sushi. Perfect for people on the move.

Can you tell me Amsterdam’s best-kept secret?

Nope.

What are your favourite local slang or swear words?

Too many to list: just pick a disease, any disease. It’s ever evolving, here: today’s curse is tomorrow’s Ajax football chant.

‘Amsterdam equals bicycles’ – so says the tourist board. What’s the downside?

Tourists on bikes thinking they are in Disneyland, totally oblivious to the fact that basic traffic rules and precautions are just as relevant here as in any other city. Just because it all looks so cute, it doesn’t mean you can’t become road pizza. The same goes for pedestrians. And it’s not just stoned backpackers – visitors just forget to look both ways before crossing a street. Theories abound as to why, but I haven’t figured it out yet.

How has living in Amsterdam changed you?

It’s probably slowed me down to enjoy the smaller, more social things in life – doing business over a coffee and a beer instead of over a desk.

Describe Amsterdam Weekly for someone new to it.

We are an English-language alternative weekly but we still use plenty of Dutch – especially when it’s funny. We seek to be attached to the city and not detached. Our prime directive is to provide a paper for culturally savvy Amsterdammers to help plan their wacky weekends and go deeper into the cultural workings of this very special city. Oh, and we like to kick city hall’s ass on occasion, whenever they think they can change things from above and not from the ground up.

Describe your daily, if you will, ritual?

I’m not telling. Everyone’s got to find their own. But do try to go local rather than endlessly circling around the Red Light District’s inner pit. The Melkweg and Paradiso still rule, but there are a lot of new, smaller venues like Sugar Factory, Bitterzot and Nieuwe Anita that are pumping both live music and good ol’ fashioned cosiness back into the mix. As for coffeeshops: remember: you can do takeaway, kids!

Any foodie tips?

Fish stalls, for deep-throatting herring – the poor, working person’s sushi. Perfect for people on the move.

Can you tell me Amsterdam’s best-kept secret?

Nope.

What are your favourite local slang or swear words?

Too many to list: just pick a disease, any disease. It’s ever evolving, here: today’s curse is tomorrow’s Ajax football chant.

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VOMITING THE HOST

The Miracle of Amsterdam had a rather unappetising start.

In 1345 the final sacrament was administered to a dying man, but he was unable to keep down the Host (communion wafer) and – there’s no way to put this delicately – vomited it up. Here’s the miracle part: when the vomit was thrown on the fire, the Host would not burn. Shortly thereafter, a chapel (demolished 1908) was built on the site across Kalverstraat from what’s now the museum and it soon became a pilgrimage area; the final approach is along the street now known as Heiligeweg.

In the Amsterdams Historisch Museum is a wooden chest reported to have once contained the Host. In 1578, when Catholic property was parcelled out, the chest ended up in an orphanage, and several children are said to have been cured of illnesses by sitting on it.
FROM OUD AMSTERDAM TO NIEUW AMSTERDAM
Among the wall plaques on the Schreierstoren, one explains that the English captain Henry Hudson set sail from here in 1609 in his ship the Halve Maen (Half Moon). The Dutch East India Company had enlisted him to find a northern passage to the East Indies, but instead he ended up exploring the North American river that now bears his name. On the return voyage his ship was seized in England and he was forbidden to sail again to a foreign nation.

The maverick Hudson disregarded the order. Commissioned by powerful private investors from Britain and Russia, he sailed to America in search of the elusive Northwest Passage. Though an accomplished navigator, the headstrong Hudson hardly endeavored himself to his crew, who mutinied in the summer of 1611. The hapless Englishman and a handful of others were set adrift in a rowboat in what’s now known as Hudson Bay, where they are presumed to have died.

In any event, Hudson’s reports about the island at the mouth of the Hudson River made it back to base. The Dutch soon established a fort on an island called Manhattan that flowered into a settlement called Nieuw Amsterdam; in 1626 an agent of the recently established Dutch West India Company purchased the island from Native Americans for 60 guilders (often cited as the equivalent of US$24!). In 1664 the West India Company’s local governor, the imperious, fanatically Calvinist Pieter Stuyvesant, surrendered the town to the British, who promptly renamed it New York. Stuyvesant retired to the Lower Manhattan market garden called Bouwerij, now known as the Bowery.

Fun fact: Manhattan’s Wall St, one of the centres of world finance, was originally the site of a fortified wall erected by the Dutch to keep out the British.

It may not be in the same league as the British Museum or the Louvre, but the manageable scale of this museum makes it far more accessible.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  Map pp62-5  8 525 23 01; Singel 421-425; 8 30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun
Today’s library is a concrete hulk, not nearly the beautiful building you’d expect from such a historic site, but its background is fascinating. Citizens militias used to meet here: the ‘hand-bow’ (handboog) militia in No 421, and the ‘foot-bow’ (voetboog) militia in No 425, which also served as headquarters for the West India Company. Now you know where the names of the nearby streets Handboogstraat and Voetboogstraat come from. Their firing ranges at the back reached to Kalverstraat.

SCHREIERSTOREN  Map pp62-5
Prins Hendrikkade 94-95
This prominent brick tower dating from around 1480 – the oldest of its kind still standing – was once part of the city’s defences. Its name comes from an old Dutch word for ‘sharp’, for this sharp corner that jutted out into the IJ. Tourist literature prefers to call it the ‘wailing tower’ (from schreien, to weep or wail) and claims that sailors’ wives stood here and cried their lungs out when ships set off for distant lands. There’s even a fake plaque dedicated to the women. The tower now houses an attractive café  (8 428 82 91).

RED LIGHT DISTRICT
If you’re expecting a outright cesspool, think again: the atmosphere here is much more laid-back than in red-light districts elsewhere, and definitely less threatening. Crowds of sightseers, both foreign and local, mingle with pimps, drunks, weirdos and drug dealers – and it’s no big deal. Salvation Army soldiers trawl for lost souls; police on patrol chat with the prostitutes. (Where else can you witness live-and-let-live quite like this?) One more thing: look up at the gorgeous gables and you’ll realise this district is stunningly attractive. Its lovely architecture simply gets lost in the shuffle.

The best routes for wicked window-shopping are along Oudezijds Achterburgwal and in the alleys around the Oude Kerk, particularly to the south. You can shuffle through the dark, medievally claustrophobic Trompettersteeg, which ends abruptly at an interior gallery of prostitutes, cloying named La Vie en Rose  (Map pp62-5).

Before you go, pause for a moment by the statue of Nelle  (Map pp62-5), erected in 2007 on Oude Kerk square as a nod to ‘sex-industry workers’ worldwide. In the cobblestones nearby there’s a bold statement, a golden torso of a naked woman held by a groping, padlocked hand. The torso mysteriously appeared one day, was removed by police and then put back as most people seemed to like it.

At Zeedijk 63, the legendary Café Het Mandje  (Map pp62-5) was the city’s first gay and lesbian café, founded in 1927. The owner was a leather-clad biker named Bet van Beeren, who, apart from sheltering Jews in WWII, was notorious for cutting off men’s ties for interior decoration. When Bet died, her body was laid out on the billiard table for three days’ mourning.

Warmoesstraat  (p77) occupies an original dyke along the Amstel, making it one of the town’s oldest streets. It runs parallel to the Damrak behind the former warehouses that line the east bank of the river. Here you’ll notice that the Red Light District is more than the sum of its tawdry parts. It’s lot nicer than it used to be and has a rather well-kept, self-deprecating feel which of course blends nicely with commerce. The cheap hotels and restaurants, coffee-shops, gay-oriented leather joints and sex shops are like parts of a stage set.

OUD KERK  Map pp62-5
Old Church; 8 625 82 84; www.oudekerk.nl; Oudekerksplein 23; adult/concession €4.50/3.50; 11am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun; tower per person €5; every 30min 1-5pm Sat & Sun
The city’s oldest surviving building (1306) embodies a huge moral contradiction: it’s in full view of the Red Light District, with passers-by getting chatting up a throw from the church walls. But that’s not all: this Gothic-style church has one of the finest carillons in the country, the city’s oldest church bell (1450) and a stunning Müller organ. Check out the lovely 15th-century carvings on the choir stalls, some of which are downright rude. Many famous Amsterdammers lie buried here under worn tombstones, including Rembrandt’s first wife, Saskia van Uylenburgh. A Dutch Reformed service is held at 11am Sunday (doors close at 11am sharp).

MUSEUM AMSTELKRING  Map pp62-5  8 624 66 04; www.museumamstelkring.nl; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40; adult/child 5-18yr/ student €7.50/5; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun, longer hours for special exhibits
Hidden in the depths of the Red Light District, this fascinating museum has a single exhibit – an entire church, as it turns out. Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder (Our Dear Lord in the Attic) was founded after 1578, when Calvinist rulers outlawed public worship of the other religion. You’ll find the city’s richest

RED LIGHT DISTRICT FAQS
- Year prostitution was legalised in the Netherlands: 1810
- Year brothels were legalised: 2000
- Percentage of the Dutch public that claims to have ‘no problems whatsoever with prostitution’: 78%
- Percentage of working prostitutes born in the Netherlands: 5%
- Estimated percentage of prostitutes working illegally in the Netherlands: less than 5%
- Number of windows: approximately 380
- Number of prostitutes working each day in the windows: 1000 to 1200, comprising day, evening and night shifts
- Average rental cost per window (paid by prostitute): €40 to €100 per day, depending on location
- Typical base cost for either ‘oral favours’ or a ‘quickie’ in the Red Light District: €30
- Typical base cost for both: €50
- Typical duration of encounter with prostitute: 15 minutes
- Percentage of business from British clients: about 40%
- Most likely time to see prostitutes with Dutch patrons: Monday morning (when many businesses and most shops are closed)
- Do prostitutes pay taxes? Yes
- Are condoms required by law? Yes, but it’s virtually impossible to find a prostitute who’ll work without one
- Is there a union? Yes
- Are medical checkups required? Yes
- Is pimping legal? No
- Is trafficking in prostitutes legal? No
- Penalty for either of the above: maximum six years
- Are accommodations made if a patron can’t perform? No
- What happens if a patron gets violent? Prostitutes’ quarters are equipped with a button that, when pressed, activates a light outside. The offender had better hope that the police get there before the Hell’s Angels do.
- What’s the maximum fine for offering pay to a prostitute? €100
- Is prostitution legal in the Netherlands? Yes
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- Why red light? Because it’s flattering. Especially when used in combination with black light, it makes teeth sparkle. Even as early as the 1300s, women carrying red lanterns met sailors near the port. Try it for yourself sometime.
collection of Catholic art, and a fantastic labyrinth of tiled staircases, cubbyhole quarters and items pertaining to the Miracle of Amsterdam (p73). Once upstairs, you’ll see that the church itself is unexpectedly grand, with marble columns, steep gallery and a surprisingly good organ.

ZEEDIJK Map pp62-5
The curvy lane called Zeedijk is one of Amsterdam’s oldest and its most notorious. Initially a shipping district, it was a respectable place to be until the 17th century, when the richer folk moved to fancy homes along newly dug canals such as Herengracht. After that it turned to come-hither entertainment for sailors, and things went rapidly downhill. In the 1960s and ’70s the Zeedijk was riddled with drug dealers and street crime, but a clean-up campaign has left the street much safer than it was, with lively cafés, bars and eateries and a very mixed crowd of visitors bumping over the storied cobblestones.

PROSTITUTION INFORMATION CENTRE Map pp62-5
£ 420 73 28; www.pic-amsterdam.com; Enge Kerksteeg 3; noon-7pm Tue-Sat or by appointment
Spin, curiosity and respect – things this refreshing centre has none of, plenty of, and hopes to earn. Established by a former prostitute and staffed by sex workers, the centre caters to study groups from around the world, including several police academies. It organises evenings workshops and private tours by a former sex worker (£12.50 per person, reservation-only), as well as offering a limited souvenir trade. For a small donation you can view a re-creation of a prostitute’s working quarters, view historical photos and browse the enlightening reading material.

GUAN YIN SHRINE Map pp62-5
Fo Guang Shan He Hua Temple; £ 420 23 57; www.ibps.nl; Zeedijk 106-118; admission free; noon-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun
Europe’s first Chinese Imperial-style Buddhist temple is dedicated to Guan Yin, the Buddhist prophet. The ornate ‘mountain gate’ – an intriguing concept in the narrow confines of the Zeedijk, let alone in horizontal Holland – refers to the traditional setting of Buddhist monasteries. The middle section set back from the street was designed along principles of feng shui. Make a donation, light an incense stick and ponder the thousand eyes and hands of the Bodhisattva statue. Traditional Chinese-style recitations of the sutras (sayings of the Buddha) are held every Sunday at 10.30am and are open to the public.

HASH & MARIJUANA MUSEUM Map pp62-5
£ 623 59 61; www.hashmuseum.com; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 148; admission £5.70; 10am-10pm
Did you know that the first recorded use of marijuana was in ancient China? Or that Queen Victoria is said to have used marijuana for menstrual cramps? Just a couple of essential facts we learned at this simple exhibit, which feels like the back annex of a devoted user. Learn the basics of pot botany, the link between cannabis and religion, and the history of Amsterdam’s coffee-shops. You can watch the plants grow in a greenhouse, and slowly understand why time feels different here.

CASA ROSSO Map pp62-5
£ 627 89 54; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 106-108; admission with/without drinks £45/30; 8pm-2am
In a quarter full of lurid logos, the pink elephant wearing a green tie doesn’t quite capture the essence of this one. So we’re going to tell you: live sex on stage, or, as we once heard a Casa Rosso Barker put it, ‘Quality sleaze and filth!’ Acts can be male, female, both or lesbian (although not gay… sorry, boys!). Performers demonstrate everything from positions of the Kamasutra to pole dancing, incredible tricks with lit candles, and moves readily associated with competitive figure skating. Other acts are comedic, some maybe intentionally so. You may even catch a good old-fashioned stripe tease.

Nearby, Casa Rosso runs two imaginative sex shops at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 46 and 76.

EROTIC MUSEUM Map pp62-5
£ 624 73 03; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 54; admission £5; 11am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat
Ho hum. Your usual assortment of bondage exhibits, erotic photos and cartoons. Although this museum has the advantage of location, it’s less entertaining, not as well laid out, more expensive and a little seedy when compared with the Sexmuseum Amsterdam (p71) on the Damrak.

WARMESSTRAAT Map pp62-5
Amsterdam’s earliest canals grew out from the river like the roots of a tree, and War- messtraat was one of the first streets to follow. Like Zeedijk (opposite), by the 1980s the Warmesstraat was caught in a downward spiral of drugs and petty crime but has got its act together, thanks to frequent policing (note the CCTV cameras). Some people think things have gone too far: the leather bars, coffee-shops and fetish shops here now have a squeaky-clean ‘safe sex’ look to them, and any sign that blocks a historic gable stands to be removed.

OUDEMANHUISPOORT Map pp62-5
Btwn Oudezijds Achterburgwal & Kloveniersburgwal
On the corner of Oudezijds Achterburgwal stands a distinctive gateway with spectacles over the pedestal. This is precedence of its role as an almshouse for the elderly, built here in 1601 from the proceeds of a public lottery. It’s now the seat of the University of Amsterdam and closed to the public, although you can wander the courtyard. Note the bust of the learned Roman goddess Minerva over the courtyard entrance.

NIEUWMARKT
In the 17th century, ships would sail from the IJ down to Nieuwmarkt (New Market) to take on board new anchors and unload produce. Today this square east of the Red Light District is a bright, relaxed place ringed with cafes, shops and restaurants. It is also a hub of the city’s amazing New Year celebrations. Although Nieuwmarkt is very much an open space – arguably the grandest in town after the Dam – nobody adds the word plein (square) to the name. It’s a little confusing because the whole neighbourhood to the east and southeast is also known as Nieuwmarkt.

CANAL KNOWLEDGE
In Dutch, a canal is a gracht (‘khrakht’), and Amsterdam has an awful lot of them, more even than Venice or Hamburg. The best-known canals form the central Grachtengordel (Canal Belt); to the wandering visitor they’re like lifelines, because the subtle turns in the centre can throw your inner compass out of whack. What’s more, the Canal Belt reads like a history book.

The extents of the medieval city were marked by the Kloveniersburgwal – a burgwal was a fortified embankment, bristling with rifles of the Kloveniers guards – and Geldersekade (aude means ‘quay’, with more rifles) on the Oude Zijde. The Singel (moat) on the Nieuwe Zijde held the third major line of defence. By the early 16th century, a city wall stood here with fortified gates at strategic points. You can still see some of the gates today, though the walls were largely torn down as the city burst its boundaries. Expansion continued until it was clear that stop-gap measures (such as artificial islands) would not be enough. In the 17th century, decades of back-breaking labour produced the Canal Belt, a grand semicircle west and south of the Medieval Centre that was destined to become ruling-class property.

The semicircular canals formed a huge ring, cut by canals radiating from the middle like spokes on a wheel. Starting from the core, the major semicircular canals are the Singel, Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Prinsengracht. An easy mnemonic is that, apart from the singular Singel, these canals are in alphabetical order. Obvious though it may seem, it took us years to figure this out.

From west to east, the major radial canals are Brouwersgracht, Leidsegracht and Reguliersgracht, also in alphabetical order. East of the Reguliersgracht is another waterway that looks like a very broad canal; this is the river Amstel, and it ends in the IJ, the river that forms the northern border of the city centre. The Canal Belt is enclosed by the Lijnbaansgracht and a zigzag-patterned canal originally called the Buitensingel (outer moat), now known as the Singelgracht.

An interesting quirk: many streets in modern Amsterdam also bear the name ‘gracht’. That’s because they were originally canals as well, but they’ve since been filled in for reasons of sanitation or ease of transportation. Other streets have ‘dwars’ in their names, to indicate that they intersect (or intersected) with a canal, so Leidsedwarsstraat meets up with the Leidsegracht.

A secondhand book market has operated in the passage since the mid-1700s (see p151).

NES Map pp62-5
Beyond the glare of the Red Light District runs the dark, narrow lane called Nes, home to theatres for over 150 years. In 1614, Amsterdam’s first bank opened in a pawsheen here, at No 57. One of the more sizzling performance stages in town is Frascati (p202).
The centre of attention is the grand fairytale Waag (Weigh House, right), that was once a defensive post in the wall surrounding the city. The square is lined with cafes, bars and restaurants. To the south, at the end of St Antoniesbreestraat, stands the renowned Rembrandthuis (right), with an impressive collection of the master’s sketches and paintings. The area around the Waterlooplein flea market (p80) is closely associated with the Jewish community. Until WWII the main street, Jodenbreestraat, was where many Jewish shops were located, often stacked practically upon one other. Songs echo in diamond workshops here and in the nearby Uilenburgstraat. Jews here enjoyed more freedom than elsewhere in Europe and turned Amsterdam into a centre not only for precious gems but also tobacco, printing and clothing. Few of the open-air markets they brought to town still survive (see p151).

It is here that you’ll find several important sites of Jewish interest, including synagogues, current and former, as well as the Jewish Historical Museum. The controversial Stopera, the combined city hall and opera, remains a talking point among critics, as does the St Antoniesbreestraat, an aesthetically challenged stretch of housing.

The busy roundabout east of the Mozes en Aäronkerk (p82) is Mr Visserplein. LE Visser was a Jewish president of the Supreme Court (‘Mr stands for meester, which means master’, the Dutch lawyer’s title) who was dismissed by the Nazis. He refused to wear the Star of David and berated the Jewish Council for helping the occupiers carry out their anti-Jewish policies. He died before the Germans could take their revenge on him.

Nearby, south of the Portuguese synagogue, is the triangular Jonas Daniel (JD) Meijerplein, named after the country’s first Jewish lawyer (whose actual name was Joune Rintel). This man did much to ensure the full emancipation of the Jews in the Napoleonic period. On the square, Mari Andriessen’s Dockworker statue (1952, Map pp62–5) commemorates the general strike that began among dockworkers on 25 February 1941 to protest against the treatment of Jews. The first deportation roundup had occurred here a few days earlier. The anniversary of the strike is still an occasion for wreath-laying, but has become a low-key affair with the demise of the Communist Party.

**top picks**

**NIEUWMARKT**

- **Museum Het Rembrandthuis (right)** View an unparalleled collection of sketches by the master painter in his personal studio.
- **Joods Historisch Museum (opposite)** Follow the heartrending success, and the haunting downfall, of Amsterdam’s Jewish community.
- **TunFun** (p80) Give the little ones a romp in this centre of childhood fantasy.
- **Portugeuse-Israeleit Synagoge (opposite)** Breathtaking temple of prayer for the Sephardic community.

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TAKING A NAP

It is widely known that Amsterdam (and indeed more than half the Netherlands) lies a couple of metres below sea level, but when’s the last time you heard anyone ask which sea level? In fact, sea level varies around the globe and even around the Netherlands. The average level of the former Zuiderzee, in the lee of Holland, was slightly lower than that of the North Sea along Holland’s exposed west coast.

A display in the arcade of the Stopera shows the ins and outs of Normal Amsterdams Peil (NAP; Normal Amsterdam Level), established in the 17th century as the average high-water mark of the Zuiderzee. This still forms the zero reference for elevation anywhere in the country and is also used in Germany and several other European countries.

Water in the canals is kept at 40cm below NAP and many parts of the city lie lower still. Water columns represent different sea levels, as well as the highest level of disastrous floods in 1953 (4.55m above NAP). Information sheets explain the details.

you’ll find a display on NAP water levels (see the boxed text, above).

WATERLOOPLEIN  Map pp62-5

This square was once known as Vlooienburg (‘flea town’), a good description for the wares on offer here today (p151). The street market was started in 1880 when two canals were filled in, and Jewish traders living around the neighbouring Jodenbreestraat were allowed to vend their wares here. It was so successful that in 1893 it became a daily market, apart from on the Sabbath (it’s now closed on Sunday only).

Since the 1980s the square has stood in the shadow of the Stopera, but the market is usually jam-packed with sharp-eyed customers seeking antique knick-knacks, imitation Diesel jeans and cheap bicycle locks (highly recommended).

TUNFUN  Map pp62-5

☎ 689 43 00; www.tunfun.nl; Mr Visserplein 7; adult & child under 1yr/child 1-12yr free/€7.50; 10am-6pm (last entry 5pm)

This cool indoor playground is located in a former traffic underpass, an unused eyesore for over a decade. These days kids can build, climb, roll, draw, jump on trampolines and play on a soccer pitch. There’s even a children’s disco – this is Amsterdam – and a café serving poffertjes (little pancakes). Kids must be accompanied by an adult. It gets rather busy when the weather’s bad.

PINTOHUIS (OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK)  Map pp62-5

☎ 624 31 84; www.oba.nl; St Antoniesbreestraat 69; admission free; 2-8pm Mon & Wed, 2-5pm Fri, 11am-4pm Sat

The street that runs from Nieuwmarkt Sq towards Waterlooplein is St Antoniesbreestraat, once a busy street that lost its old buildings during the construction of the metro line. One of the original buildings still standing is the Pintohuis, once owned by a wealthy Sephardic Jew, Isaac de Pinto, who had it remodelled with Italianate pilasters in the 1680s. It’s now a bibliotheek (library) – pop inside to admire the beautiful ceiling frescos while you can, for it’s threatened with closure.

ZUIDERKERK  Map pp62-5

☎ 552 79 87; Zuiderkerkhof 72; admission free; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat

Near the Pintohuis, a passageway through the modern Pentagon housing estate leads to the Zuiderkerk, the ‘Southern Church’ built by Hendrick de Keyser (p48). His tower, 1m off plumb, dates from 1614. This was the first custom-built Protestant church in Amsterdam – still Catholic in design but no choir. The final church service was held here in 1929 and at the end of WWII it served as a morgue.

Now thoroughly modern inside, the Zuiderkerk houses the Municipal Centre for Physical Planning and Public Housing, displays on urban planning and the occasional art exhibition.

OOSTINDISCH HUIS  Map pp62-5

East Indies House; Oude Hoogstraat 24

This is the former office of the mighty VOC, the Dutch East India Company (which was the very first multinational). You could easily walk past it, as there’s no sign or plaque to identify it. This sweeping complex, built between 1551 and 1643, was attributed to Hendrick de Keyser, the busy city architect. On the Kloveniersburgwal side you can see that the gables defy convention by tilting backward, making

AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 2: PETER MOSKOS  Simon Sellars

Peter Moskos, along with Toine Rikken, founded the St Nicolaas Boat Club in 1997, a boat-tour company that provides an alternative angle on Amsterdam and its waterlogged history. I asked Peter to regale me with his unique perspective.

Favourite area of Amsterdam?
On a boat in the IJ. There’s no better place to understand the importance of water and shipping to Amsterdam’s history – plus it’s beautiful out there.

And your least favourite?
Any big, ugly road with too many cars, although architecturally every place has something interesting and can tell you something about urban planning.

What’s the biggest misconception about Amsterdam?
That it’s the world’s sex capital. It’s not – the Dutch just have the sense to put it all out in the open and capitalise on it.

What Amsterdam-specific film or book would you recommend?
The film Amsterdamned is fun, with a great high-speed boat chase, but it doesn’t depict anything of reality. Simon is the best Amsterdam film ever – and maybe the best-ever Dutch movie. Jan-Willem van der Wettering’s cop stories are pretty good, but Geert Mak’s Amsterdam is the single best book about the city.

Your favourite Amsterdam bar and coffee shop?
Any brown cafe in the Jordaan is great – get a jenever and a beer and talk with the locals. The coffee shop De Rokerij has a supercool atmosphere – sort of how I imagine a 19th-century Chinese opium den would have been. And of course my brother’s bar at Boom Chicago, because that’s his home base for our boats.

What about restaurants?
Semhar on the Mamistraat – the only Ethiopian restaurant in town that makes its injera bread with teff, the traditional Ethiopian flour. Semhar is distinctive in a city that has a great variety of food but very few truly memorable restaurants. I like the herring stands on bridges. A broodje haring is a very cheap lunch – so Dutch, and you just can’t get it anywhere else. Eel is also delicious.

What’s Amsterdam’s best-kept secret?
Co-ed, naked saunas that aren’t sleazy. I like Fenomenen out past Vondelpark – essential when the weather is bad.

Favourite local slang or swear words?
I’m trying to get ‘spotterend’ back into the vocab – it’s a very uncool way of saying ‘cool’. But the Dutch have a shortage of swear words, so they often resort to English.

What’s your strangest Amsterdam bike story?
A guy wearing a jockstrap on rollerblades. He used to be everywhere, even in the cold weather. He disappeared a couple of years ago. Perhaps he caught pneumonia and passed on.

What annoys you the most about Amsterdam: the dog shit, the service or something else?
Taxis. Avoid them like dog shit. But the dog-shit problem is basically a thing of the past – if you have a problem with it now, you should have seen how it was before. I really have to say the bad service, without a doubt – it’s legendary.

How has living in Amsterdam changed you?
It’s made me realise that bikes are the best form of urban transit possible. And that, basically, this is a city that works.

Describe the St Nicolaas Boat Club for someone new to it.
We’re a friendly entry point to understanding Amsterdam from the greatest perspective of all: the canals. We offer cosy rides with knowledgeable pilots, and all we ask for is a donation at the end.
them seem much larger. Pass through the carved Tuscan entrance vault to reach the grand inner courtyard, and on the opposite side you’ll spy a small VOC emblem above the door. The mighty VOC sailed into rough waters and was dissolved in 1798.

MOZES EN AÄRONKERK Map p62-5
Moses & Aaron Church; 622 13 05; www.mozeshuis.nl; Waterlooplein 205
This neoclassical Catholic church, built in 1841 on the northeastern corner of Waterlooplein, shows that this wasn’t exclusively a Jewish area. It replaced the ‘clandestine’ Catholic church that occupied two houses named Mozes and Aaron in what is now the rear of the church along Jodenbreestraat (note the wall tablet of Moses above the street corner). Despite its impressive organ, it is no longer used as a church, but rather by social, cultural and educational organisations which often hold exhibitions. Otherwise, the church is generally closed to the public.

MONTELBAANSTOREN Map p62-5
Montelbaan Tower; Oude Schans 2
The lower part of this striking tower was built to strengthen Amsterdam’s eastern defences in 1512. Positioned on the old city wall, it gave sentries a good view of suspicious characters on the wharves along Oude Schans. The octagonal base and open wooden steeple were added in 1606, to dampen the bells on the clock after the neighbours complained. Just a few years later the tower began to list under the weight, but residents attached cables and pulled it upright. The elegant tower has two sets of bellwork, four clock faces and a nautical vane like the one on the top of the Oude Kerk.

2 Oude Kerk The venerable Oude Kerk (p75) is your unlikely gateway to the Red Light District proper. At the nearby Prostitution Information Centre (p76) you can pick up maps to your desires or see what a sex worker’s quarters look like from the inside (without paying for the sex worker, but please leave a donation for the centre).

3 Museum Amstelkring North of here is the Museum Amstelkring (p75), an average-looking canal house that has a surprisingly beautiful house of worship on the top floor. Before being turned into a museum in 1888, this clandestine church was one of the relatively few places in Amsterdam where Catholicism could be practiced.

4 Oudezijds Achterburgwal A jump over to the Oudezijds Achterburgwal and then south takes you past the low-key Erotic Museum (p76), the famous Casa Rosso (p76) erotic theatre and the Hash & Marijuana Museum (p76).

5 Nieuwmarkt In Nieuwmarkt you’ll find the historic and multitowered Waag (Weigh House; p78). Heading south from Nieuwmarkt, along Kloveniersburgwal, note the impossibly narrow Kleine Trippenhuis. Nieuwe Hoogstraat leads you to the elegant Zuiderkerk (p80), with the 17th-century Pintohuis (now a library; p80) nearly opposite.

6 De Sluyswacht Across the Oude Schans, De Sluyswacht (p184) makes an ideal beer break, with a classic view of the canal and the Montelbaanstoren (left). The Museum Het Rembrandthuis (p78) is across the street.

7 Jodenbreestraat A sweep down Jodenbreestraat takes you past the Mozeshuis Aäronkerk (left), a one-time clandestine Catholic church that was expanded in grand style, with large sandstone columns and twin belfries. About 100m southeast is the Joods Historisch Museum (p79), a moving collection of art, icons and historical objects from Amsterdam’s storied Jewish past.

8 Waterlooplein market This renowned flea market (p151) faces the Stoppa (p79), the modern opera house cum city hall. On a sunny day it’s fun to peruse the vintage clothes, antiques and bicycle parts on display under the vendors’ canopies, the air thick with the scent of frites. Your shopping finished, cross the bridge over the Zwanenburgwal.

9 Puccini Bomboni Chances are the chocolaty aroma of Puccini Bomboni (p142) will suck you inside the shop; its dozens of delectable, freshly made varieties have killed many a diet. Along Straalstraat there’s also Droog Design (p142), whose clever innovations turn tired old living rooms into sleek exhibition spaces.

10 Oudemanhuispoort book market Head north along Kloveniersburgwal and turn into the covered arcade joining Oudezijds Achterburgwal, passing the pretty inner courtyard of the University of Amsterdam to reach the Oudemanhuispoort book market (p151). A fixture since 1897, stacks of used titles (sometimes quite rare) are sold from the wooden chests bolted to the walls.

11 Huis aan de Drie Grachten Carry on past the quaint Huis aan de Drie Grachten (House on the Three Canals; p48), which in the 16th century housed a brewery owned by Amsterdam’s enterprising mayor. You can inspect the classy jewellery shops along Grimgrubwal, including Hans Appenzeller (p141).

12 Allard Pierson Museum Finish your walk with a visit to ancient Egypt in the Allard Pierson Museum (p73), which has galleries full of fascinating items.
NEIGHBOURHOODS   JORDAAN

Drinking & Smoking p185; Eating p161; Shopping p142; Sleeping p214

Though gentrified today, the Jordaan was a rough working-class district in the early 17th century. As the Canal Belt was extended, it became clear that a place was needed to house all the artisans, canal-diggers, carpenters, bridge-builders and stonemasons employed by the rich. So the city’s architects got to work and quickly drove in the first stakes.

Pleasant the Jordaan was not, at least in the beginning. All those smelly, noisy or otherwise useful but disgusting industries that were banned from the centre – tanneries, breweries, sugar refineries, smithies and coopers, among others – set up shop here just outside the town walls, and thrived. The quarter drew working talent from around Europe at a time when Amsterdam was practically a city-state, with the deep pockets to match.

The name ‘Jordaan’ wasn’t used until the 18th century, and its origin is unclear. Some believe it comes from the French jardin (garden), as many Huguenots – religious refugees known as the French Calvinists – settled in the market gardens beyond the city walls. Many streets here are named after trees and flowers. But some historians contend that the name had biblical connotations and referred to the Jordan River.

For centuries this was a boisterous quarter whose colourful, outspoken residents were notoriously difficult to govern. Many people were poor. By the early 20th century one in seven Amsterdammers lived in the Jordaan, and up to 1000 people were packed into small city blocks in appalling conditions.

Riots occurred on a regular basis. The infamous Eel Uprising of 1886 left 25 people dead after police intervened in a game of eel-pulling. Then came the Potato Uprising, a major protest over jobless benefits and a series of other incidents that felt like civil war. Roads were tarred because brick paving could be used as projectiles during riots.

Around the same time, many of the Jordaan’s ditches and narrow canals were filled in to improve sanitation. Their names still recall the grachten (canals): Elandsgracht, Lindengracht, Palmgracht and Rozengracht, now a major thoroughfare. Bloemgracht (p87) was the grandest of the canals and, for that reason, was never filled in. Many wealthy artisans built smaller versions of the patricians’ canal houses on the Bloemgracht.

In the 1960s and ’70s the Jordaan lost much of its working-class character as residents moved to more spacious digs in the suburbs. In came the students, artists and tertiary-sector professionals (read: yups, or yuppies), which caused some growing pains (see the boxed text, p108). Some changes have left the area south of Rozengracht, for instance, was renowned for its workshops and artists’ studios, and many galleries are still located there today.

A certain misty-eyed, heart-on-your-sleeve romance pervades the district. This is the Amsterdam of accordian ballads, where daily life played out on the streets, houses were tiny but tidy, and life was either joy or tragedy. The songs bring to mind the lace curtains and window-box geraniums where Auntie Cori watched the street with the help of a spy mirror (spy mirror) attached to the window-sill. It was also the picture of the neighbourhood as social unit, where everyone did absolutely everything together – living, working, shopping, schooling and entertainment.

Such popular conventions still hold true, as you will discover when you wander the narrow lanes. Take your time and don’t worry if you get lost (which you will); there are plenty of inviting pubs and restaurants, offbeat shops and weird little art galleries to grab your attention.

The area doesn’t hold many official sights, but a worthy exception is the Pianola Museum (opposite), where dozens of old player pianos are fired up for in-house demonstrations. Probably the city’s most charming open-air market, the Noordermarkt (p151), is held at the northern tip of the district by the Noorderkerk.

A caretaker of sentimental value is Johnny Jordaanplein, a shady little square situated just west of Prinsengracht, at the corner of Elandsgracht. That colourful painted hut – a municipal transformer station – proudly displays the lyrics ‘Amsterdam, wat bent je mooi’ (Amsterdam, how beautiful you are) from a song by Johnny, the greatest expression of Jordaan’s ethos since the last riots. Behind the hut you’ll find members of the Jordaan musical hall of fame, cast in bronze.

Haarlemmerdijk, the extension of the main thoroughfare Haarlemmerstraat, was part of the original sea dyke and the road to Haarlem. Warehouses sprang up as well; many have been converted to romantic housing. With train lines and expressways, this district has reverted to its more intimate character, and recent years have seen it boom as a centre for the same sorts of quirky shops, pubs and restaurants that characterise the Jordaan.

BROUwersGRacht Map p86

Pretty as a Golden Age painting, the ‘Brewers Canal’ took its name from the many breweries located here in the 16th and 17th centuries. Goods such as leather, coffee, whale oil and spices were stored and processed here in giant warehouses, such as those with the row of spout gables at 188–194. Amsterdam’s last distillery of jenever, De Ooievaar, was located on the corner of Driehoekstraat. The Brouwersgracht was voted ‘most beautiful street’ in Amsterdam by newspaper Het Parool in a 2007 readers survey, and is a great place to stroll (see p89), not to mention see the waterbank action on Queen’s Day (p17).

NOORDERKERK Map p88

Northern Church; ☎ 626 64 36; Noordermarkt 48; admission free; 10.30am-3pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 11am-1pm Sat, 10am-noon & 7-8.30pm Sun Near the northern end of the Prinsengracht, this imposing Calvinist church was completed in 1623 for the ‘common’ people in the Jordaan. (The upper classes attended the Westerkerk further south.) It was built in the shape of a broad Greek cross (four arms of equal length) around a central pulpit, giving the entire congregation unimpeded access to the word of God in suitably sober surroundings. This design, unusual at the time, would become common for Protestant churches throughout the country.

NOORDERMARKT Map p88

Northern Market; Noorderkerkplein;  ▼ markets 8am-1pm Mon, 10am-3pm Sat A market square since the early 1600s, the plaza in front of the Noorderkerk now hosts several lively markets a week. Monday morning there’s a flea market with wonderful bargains; early on Saturday morning there’s a bird market (in cages, a holdover from the former livestock market), followed till early/mid-afternoon by a boerenmarkt (farmers market) with herbs and organic produce. There’s a nice selection of cafés surrounding the square, including Winkel (p163) on the southwest corner, home of some of the city’s best apple pie.

PIANOLA MUSEUM Map p86

☎ 627 96 24; www.pianola.nl; Westerstraat 106; adult/child under 12yr/student & senior ES/5/4; 2-5pm Sun This is a very special place, crammed with Pianolas from the early 1900s. The museum has a stock of 50 Pianolas, although only a dozen are on display at a given time, as well as nearly 20,000 music rolls. There’s even a player pipe organ. Every month player-piano concerts are held, featuring

HOFJES

A charming legacy of the Jordaan are its many hofjes, the courtyard homes built by wealthy benefactors to house elderly people and widows – a noble act in the days before social security. Some hofjes are real gems, set back from the street with lovely private gardens and beautifully restored houses. Unfortunately, many courtyards became such tourist magnets that residents complained, and they were closed to the public (a big exception being the Begijnhof, p68). However, if you should find any of the following open, try to take a discreet peek. The oldest hofje is the Lindenhofje (Lindengracht 94–112), dating from 1614; the Suykerhofje (Lindengracht 149–163) is a charming hofje founded in 1670. Karthuisje (Karthuizerstraat 89–171) is a hofje for widows, dating from 1650 and on the site of a former Carthusian monastery.

Claes Claesz Hofje (1e Egelantiersdwarsstraat 3), also known as Anso’s Hofje, has three courtyards dating from around 1630. St Andrieshofje (Egelantiersgracht 107–141), the second-oldest surviving hofje, was finished in 1617, and founded by cattle farmer Jeff Gerritzoon. Venetiaje (Elandstraat 106–136) was founded in the mid-1600s by a merchant who traded with Venice, and features a very pretty garden.

top picks

JORDAAN

• Wander the delightful backstreets for one-of-a-kind shops, galleries and cafés full of gezelligheid.
• Noordermarkt (left) Browse the Jordaan’s leafiest, most adorabe street markets for crumby cheeses and exotic herbs.
• Pianola Museum (below) Listen to rare musical gems immortalised for the player piano.
• Houseboat Museum (p88) Experience the charms and challenges of life on the canals.
• Hofjes (below) Explore the manicured gardens of these time-warped courtyards.
• Brouwersgracht (left) Inspect handsome old warehouses on what is surely Amsterdam’s comeliest canal.

Hofje, hofje is the comeliest canal.
anything from Mozart to Fats Waller and rare classical or jazz tunes composed especially for the instrument. The curator gives demonstrations with great zest.

**AMSTERDAM TULIP MUSEUM** Map p86

Tel 020 421 00 95; www.amsterdamtulipmuseum.com; Prinsengracht 112; adult/child €2/free;  
10am–6pm Tue–Sat

Sponsored by a bulb-growing company, this small, rather clinical exhibit traces the prince of petals from its beginnings in Turkey. Displays cover Tulipmania (p90), bulbs as food in the war years, and present-day scientific methods of growing and harvesting. A highlight is the tulip paintings by 17th-century painter Judith Leijster, a student of Frans Hals (p33). The gift shop is one-stop shopping for all your tulip souvenirs.

**EGLANTIERSGRACHT** Map p86

Many parts of the Jordaan are named after trees and flowers, and this canal takes its name from the eglandine rose, or sweetbrier. (You can see its dainty pink petals and hooked prickles in many a Jordaan garden.) Built for artisans and skilled tradesmen, the houses here are scaled-down versions of those in the Western Canal Belt. There are many hofjes (court-yards) in the Jordaan, including the St Andrieshofje at Eglantiersgracht 107–141 (see the boxed text, p83).

**BLOEMGRACHT** Map p86

In the 17th century the ‘Herengracht of the Jordaan’, as the gorgeous Bloemgracht was called, was home to paint and sugar factories, and boasted a large number of fine gabled houses. A striking example is De Drie Hendricken, built in a sober Renaissance style. The gable stones above the ground floor depict a townsman, a farmer and a seafarer. Artists also lived on Bloemgracht, including Jurriaan Andriessen, whose work is displayed in the Rijksmuseum.
OHH JORDAAN, HOW LUVVERLY YOU ARE

Eibert Draisma is the author of Jordaancanon, a potted history of this popular district to the west of Amsterdam’s centre. Draisma has worked at the local community centre, the Wijkcentrum Jordaan, for the past quarter-century. He and his colleague Wim Wassenaar chatted about what makes the Jordaan so special.

What’s the biggest change you’ve seen in the Jordaan over the last couple of decades?

Draisma: It’s much better now. It was a dilapidated slum area until the ‘80s. What a huge difference! The neighbourhood looks really nice now, and people want to live here again.

How many original Jordaaners still live here?

Draisma: Maybe 15% born and bred. It’s a group that’s slowly dying out, but in recent years some of the ‘indigenous’ have moved back.

Where did the rebellious attitude of the Jordaaners come from?

Draisma: Resistance to injustice, poverty and oppression. Other areas also suffered, but the Jordaan of the late 19th century was a densely populated district with deplorable conditions — large families in tiny, run-down homes.

And are they still rebellious?

Wassenaar: Last year Jordaaners were up in arms over plans to redig a canal on the Elandsgracht, with an underground parking garage. The residents weren’t asked for approval, only the population of Amsterdam as a whole found it a good idea. And the plan was eventually called off (smile).

What do you think of the Jordaan’s new residents, the yuppies?

Draisma: It’s been said that the Jordaan is no longer what it was — a volksbuurt, a district for the common people. But this talk is exaggerated. If you look at the city’s figures you’ll see that the overwhelming majority of Jordaan residents have quite average incomes. Wealthy people have also moved in, but it’s a limited group. You notice this on the street, and it makes for a nice mix of people. Sure, there are complaints about the rich and yuppies, but that’s all part of the Jordaan.

When does everyone not get along?

Draisma: The carillon of the Westerkerk plays a little melody every 15 minutes, even at night. People new to the area are woken up, get irritated and complain to the local council. The old Jordaaners say the carillon is a part of the neighbourhood. ‘If the carillon is turned off at night, then we’ll lie awake,’ they say. You can’t touch the carillon, and if you do, there’ll be a huge performance and discussions with a lot of verbal abuse.

Wassenaar: When people buy a new home here they have to fit in quickly, go through a sort of citizenship course. If they don’t make an effort to participate they get looked at strangely. If you want to feel at home, you have to get to know your neighbours. The Jordaan lifestyle isn’t for everyone.

I understand the Jordaan is still the most densely populated neighbourhood of the Netherlands.

Draisma: Yes, it’s amazing. Because when you walk around it feels a bit like a village, with all the greenery, potted plants and little gardens. I think the Jordaan should be used more often as a model of compact, livable neighbourhood planning. But it’s difficult to reproduce the Jordaan elsewhere. In other parts of the city there are more tourist attractions, but it the little things that are nice here — the lanes, the old façades, the funny little shops. Visitors like all of this, think it’s gezellig (cosy). The Jordaan is certainly not spectacular, but it has charm.

What’s the biggest challenge to the Jordaan at the moment?

Draisma: That people with lower incomes still be able to afford to live here. There’s an enormous pressure on rents due to the popularity of the area.

HOUSEBOAT MUSEUM Map p86

427 07 50; www.houseboatmuseum.nl; Prinsengracht, opposite No 296; adult/child under 152cm £3/2.50; 2h 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 11am-5pm Fri-Sun Nov-Feb, closed most of Jan

This quirky museum, a 23m-long sailing barge from 1914, offers a good sense of how gezellig (cosy) life can be on the water. The actual displays are minimal, but you can watch a slide show of houseboats pretty and ghastly, and inspect the sleeping, living, cooking and dining quarters with all mod cons. In case you were wondering, houseboat toilets used to drain directly into the canals, but now most have sewerage hook-ups.

STEDELIJK MUSEUM BUREAU AMSTERDAM Map p86

Municipal Museum Office; 422 04 71; www.smba.nl; Rozenstraat 59; admission free; 2h 11am-5pm Tue-Sun

Don’t blink or you might walk right past this unobtrusive outpost, a ‘project space’ of the leading Stedelijk Museum; it’s in a one-time clothing workshop on a very quiet block. Exhibits here — from painting and sculpture to new media and installation pieces — mix contemporary artists who have some connection to the city with some ‘international context’. Shows change about every couple of weeks; ring to make sure it’s not closed while changing exhibitions.

HAARLEMMEPOORT Map p86

Haarlem Gate; Haarlemmerplein

Once a defensive gate to the city, the Haarlemmeapoort marked the start of the busy route to Haarlem, a major trading route. The structure was finished just in time for King William II’s staged entry on his 1840 coronation, hence its little-known official name of Willemspoort (see the plaque inside). Traffic no longer runs through the gate since a bypass was built over the Westerkanal. Today this grand archway is home to apartments with an alluring view of the canal and Westerpark beyond.

JORDAAN

Walking Tour

1 Noorderkerk Begin at the Noorderkerk (p85), site of Amsterdam’s most attractive farmers market (p151). The impressive, cross-shaped church was revolutionary at the time, providing the working-class congregation of the Jordaan with alter views from four transepts.

2 Brouwersgracht Head north along the Prinsengracht to pretty Brouwersgracht. Fall into a terrace chair at Het Päpenland (p86) and order a coffee. As you move east along Brouwersgracht, you’ll spy a statue of educator Theo Thijssen scrutinising a pupil’s work, and the fantastic old warehouses Groene & Grauwe Valk (Green & Grey Falcon), their huge red shutters swung open on five floors.

3 Rapenhojje At the second drawbridge, turn left into the wide, shady Palmgracht, and look out for the modest red door to the Rapenhojje, at Nos 28–38, watched over by a coat of arms and a white porthole window. This placid little courtyard was home to one of Amsterdam’s oldest almshouses (1648).

4 Palmwarsstraat This part of the Jordaan has a village-like character, and moving south along Palmwarsstraat you’ll pass tiny food shops frequented by the locals. Note the stone tablet of the ‘white fat pig’ over the butcher-deli at 2e Palmwarsstraat.

5 Westerstraat Soon you reach Westerstraat, a main drag of the Jordaan, with the quirky Pianola Museum (p83), and such alluring places for a bite or drink as Café ’t Monumentje (p186) or Cinema Paradiso (p162).
TULIPMANIA

When it comes to investment frenzy, the Dutch tulip craze of 1636–37 ranks alongside the South Sea Bubble of 1720, the Great Crash of 1929, Enron and the Netherlands’ home-grown Ahold scandal. Tulips originated as wildflowers in Central Asia and were first cultivated by the Turks, who filled their courts with these beautiful spring blooms (‘tulip’ derives from the Turkish word for turban). In the mid-1500s the Habsburg ambassador to Istanbul brought some bulbs back to Vienna where the imperial botanist, Carolus Clusius, learned how to propagate them. In 1590 Clusius became director of the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden – Europe’s oldest botanical garden – and had great success growing and cross-breeding tulips in Holland’s cool, damp climate and fertile delta soil.

The more exotic specimens of tulip featured flirly petals and ‘flamed’ streaks of colour, which attracted the attention of wealthy merchants, who put them in their living rooms and hallways to impress visitors. Trickle-down wealth and savings stoked the taste for exotica in general, and tulip growers arose to serve the demand.

Ironically, the flirly petals and colour streaks were symptoms of a virus – healthy tulips at the time were solid, smooth and monotone; the virus itself wasn’t discovered until the 20th century. In the 17th century Holland’s most beautiful tulips were heavily cross-bred, making them even more susceptible to the virus and difficult to cultivate, and their blossoms unpredictable.

A speculative frenzy ensued, and people paid top florin for the finest bulbs, many of which changed hands time and again before they sprouted. Vast profits were made and speculators fell over themselves to outbid each other. Bidding often took place in taverns and was fuelled by alcohol, which no doubt added to the enthusiasm.

At the height of the Tulipmania in November 1636, a single bulb of the legendary Semper Augustus variety fetched the equivalent of 10 years’ wages for the average worker; a couple of Viceroy bulbs cost the equivalent of an Amsterdam canal house. One unfortunate foreign sailor made himself rather unpopular with his employer by slicing up what he thought was an onion as a garnish for his herring. An English amateur botanist, intrigued by an unknown bulb lying in his host’s conservatory, proceeded to bisect it, and was put in jail until he could raise an astronomical 4000 guilders.

Of course, this bonanza couldn’t last, and when several bulb traders in Haarlem failed to fetch their expected prices in February 1637, the bottom fell out of the market. Within weeks many of the country’s wealthiest merchants went bankrupt and many more people of humbler origins lost everything. Speculators who were stuck with unsold bulbs, or with bulbs that had been reserved but not yet paid for (the concept of options was invented during the Tulipmania), appealed for government action but the authorities refused to become involved in what they considered to be gambling. Thus the speculation ended.

However, love of the unusual tulip endured, and cooler-headed growers perfected their craft. To this day, the Dutch continue to be the world leaders in tulip cultivation and supply most of the bulbs planted in Europe and North America. They also excel in other bulbs such as daffodils, hyacinths and crocuses.

So what happened to the flirly, flirly tulips of the past? They’re still produced but have gone out of fashion, and are now known as Rembrandt tulips because of their depiction in so many 17th-century paintings.

6 Garden Quarter At the 2e Anjeliersd warstraat, turn left to enter what locals call the ‘garden quarter’ of cozy, ivy-clad lanes and diminutive squares. Het Oud-Hollandsch Snoepwinkel ketje (p143) is stacked high with glass jars of traditional sweets like cinnamon sticks and liqueurice.

7 Bloemgracht Carry on south over the Eglantiersgracht to the stunning elm-lined waters of the Bloemgracht (p87). Plant your feet on the bridge facing east, and drink in the view. The steeple of the mighty Westerkerk (p93) pokes over the rooftops. Among the distinctive buildings is De Koophandel, a tall, incredibly narrow old warehouse at No 49.

8 Rozengracht At busy Rozengracht, sink into a colourfull pillow at speciality shop Christodou lou & Lamé (p144). Looming over the street are the enormous towers of the former Catholic church De Zaaler, now a mosque. At No 184 is the Bij ons in de Jordaan (death house), where the master painter died in 1669 (see the plaque).

9 2e Rozendwarssstraat Turn south into 2e Rozendwarssstraat. This part of the Jordaan is a mad jumble of styles, and though the winch beams may appear decorative, they still see plenty of active duty. Further along, you’ll find intriguing shops such as Fotografia (p141) and Petsalon (p145), and also a rare lesbian café, Saarein (p206).

10 Johnny Jordaanplein What better place to conclude this tour than Johnny Jordaanplein, a tiny square dedicated to the singer of schmaltzy tunes such as Bij ons in de Jordaan. There are bronze busts of Johnny and other immortals, but the real star here is the colourully util hut splashed with nostalgic lyrics.

WESTERN CANAL BELT

Drinking & Smoking p187; Eating p161; Shopping p145; Sleeping p215

The canals bordered by the Brouwersgracht and Leidsegracht (to the north and south respectively), the Singel to the east and the Prinsengracht to the west, are among the most gorgeous areas of town, for residents and visitors alike. They are filled with stately homes, refined museums and businesses, intimate cafés and some of the city’s finest speciality shops.

This elegant area has its origins in the end of the 16th century, when the city burst its medieval walls as refugees flooded in: Jews from Portugal and Spain, and Protestants from Antwerp. In the 1580s new land was reclaimed from the IJ and the Amstel for the east side of town. In 1613 the authorities embarked on an ambitious plan that would triple the city’s area, with canals spraying to the west and the south.

The blueprint was drawn up by the city architect, Hendrick Jacobsz Staets, and, oddly enough, the result resembled half of a bicycle wheel, comprising semicircular and radial canals with bridges and connecting roads. Collectively, these new canals have come to be called the Grachtengordel (Canal Belt), the layout you see today.

The plan called for the whole city to be enclosed by a new outer moat, a zig-zaggng canal now known as the Singelgracht. The moat’s outer quays became the Nassaukade, named for the Dutch royal House of Orange-Nassau, the Stadhouderskade (for the magistrates) and Maurituskade (for Maurits of Nassau, who played a pivotal role in liberating the Netherlands from Spanish rule). Work began at the Brouwersgracht and headed south. Parcels of land were sold along the way to finance the project, buildings arose gradually, and the Western Canal Belt was completed by 1625.

Society here was clearly divided into haves and have-nots. Before the completion of the Western Canal Belt, merchants lived more or less in their warehouses, mingling with their labourers and suppliers in the thick of the city’s activities. Businesses that could be annoying or offensive were banned, and bridges were fixed to exclude large vessels, though this didn’t prevent barges from unloading and loading goods at the warehouses.

The wealthiest residents escaped the sweat and the stench by building mansions along the Herengracht, named after the Heeren XVII – ‘17 Gentlemen’ – of the United East India Company. Almost as swanky was the Keizersgracht (Emperor’s Canal), a nod to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I.

The Prinsengracht – after William the Silent, Prince of Orange and the first Dutch royal – was designed as a slightly cheaper canal with smaller residences, warehouses and workshops. It also acted as a barrier against the crusty working-class quarter beyond, the Jordaan. Today the Prinsengracht is the liveliest of Amsterdam’s inner canals, with shops and cafés for enjoying life’s summer charms. Though on the small side, apartments are relatively affordable by canal standards, and houseboats line the quays.

At the northern end of the Canal Belt, the Brouwersgracht (the Brewers’ Canal) was named after the breweries that used to operate here. It’s one of the most picturesque canals in town and a great place for a stroll, although it wasn’t always so: throughout most of its history it was an industrial canal full of warehouses, workshops and factories banned from the residential Canal Belt. Note the almost uninterrupted row of former warehouses from No 172 to No 212. Houseboats add to the lazy, residential character.

The western part of the district is larded over by the Westerkerk (p93), with its enormous blue-crowned steeple and gigantic square, which is home to the Homomonument (p95). The area’s biggest draw is the Anne Frank Huis (p93), which has excerpts of the famous diaries and some of the original furnishings of the Frank family in hiding.

Within the southern reaches of the Western Canal Belt, one of the most delightful areas is the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys), the tic-tac-toe board of Amsterdam shopping. The names of the lanes come from the trades once practiced here, mainly for animal furs and products (ie the Wolvenstraat, or Wolf’s Street).

The Negen Straatjes are bounded by Reestraat, Hartenstraat and Gasthuismolensteeg to the north, Prinsengracht to the west, Singel to the east and Runstraat, Huidenstraat and Wijde Hieleest to the south. The straatjes are full of quirky little shops dealing in antiques, fashions, housewares and one-offs including everything from toothbrushes to antique eyeglass frames. It’s all peppered with pubs, cafés and informal dining.
It was in this dark and airless house...
ANNE FRANK
Anne Frank's father, Otto, was a manufacturer of pectin (a gelling agent used in jam) who had the foresight to emigrate with his family from Frankfurt to Amsterdam in 1933. In December 1940 he bought what is now known as the Anne Frank Huis on the Prinsengracht and moved his business here from the Singel. By then the German occupiers had already tightened the noose around the city's Jewish inhabitants, and even though he signed the business over to his non-Jewish partner, Otto was forced to go into hiding in July 1942 with his family – his wife and daughters Anne (aged 13) and Margot (16).

They moved into the specially prepared rear of the building, along with another couple, the Van Daans, and their son Peter, and were joined later by a Mr van Dussen. The entrance hid behind a revolving bookcase, and the windows of the annex were blacked out to prevent suspicion among people who might see it from surrounding houses (blackouts were common practice to disorient Allied bombers at night).

Here they survived until they were betrayed to the Gestapo in August 1944. The Franks were among the last Jews to be deported and Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in March 1945, only weeks before it was liberated. Otto was the only member of the family to survive, and after the war he published Anne's diary, which was found among the litter in the annexe (the furniture had been carted away by the Nazis). Addressed to the fictitious Kitty, the diary – written in Dutch – traces the young teenager's development through puberty and persecution, and displays all the signs of a gifted writer in the making.

In 1957 the then owner donated the house to the Anne Frank Foundation, which turned it into a museum on the persecution of Jews in WWII and the dangers of present-day racism and anti-Semitism.

The diary, meanwhile, has taken on a life of its own. It's been translated into some 60 languages and was made into a stage play performed in 34 countries, a 1959 Hollywood movie and a 2001 British movie. The diary has been reissued every year (admission free; 11am-6pm Tue-Sun)

FELIX MERITIS BUILDING Map p92
≠ 623 13 11; www.felix.meritis.nl; Keizersgracht 324; box office 9am-7pm

This centre for the performing arts was built in 1787 by Jacob Otten Husly for an organisation called Felix Meritis (Latin for ‘Happy through Merit’), a society of wealthy residents who promoted the ideals of the Enlightenment through the study of science, arts and commerce. The colonnaded façade served as a model for that of the Concertgebouw, and its oval concert hall (where Brahms, Grieg and Saint Saëns performed) was copied as the Concertgebouw’s Kleine Zaal (Small Hall) for chamber music.

Nowadays the reconstituted Felix Meritis Foundation promotes European performing arts and literature. On a sunny morning the café’s huge windows make for comfy reading.

NETHERLANDS MEDIA ART INSTITUTE Map p92
≠ 623 71 01; www.montevideo.nl; Keizersgracht 264; adult/student €2.50/1.50; gallery 1-6pm Tue-Sat & 1st Sun of month

From the hilarious and the ridiculous to the deep and the experimental, there’s always something interesting in this gallery’s changing exhibits. Don’t expect to see works by the hit-makers or TV directors of tomorrow, though. The institute is specifically about video as art; there’s an artist-in-residence program if you get inspired. The collection numbers some 1500 works, assembled since the institute was established in 1978. The mediatheek (admission free; 1-5pm Mon-Fri) works like a library, complete with librarians to advise you.

HOMOMONUMENT Map p92
Cnr Keizersgracht & Raduussstraat

Behind the Westerkerk, this 1987 cluster of three 10m x 10m x 10m granite triangles recall persecution by the Nazis, who forced gay men to wear a pink triangle patch. One of the triangles actually steps down into the Keizersgracht, and is said to represent a jett from which gays were sent to the concentration camps. Others interpret the step-up from the canal as a rising symbol of hope.

Just south of the Homomonument is the Pink Point (noon-6pm Mar-Aug, limited hours rest of year). Part information kiosk, part souvenir shop, it’s a good place to pick up gay and lesbian publications, and news about parties, events and social groups.

HUIS MARSEILLE Map p92
≠ 531 89 89; www.huismarseille.nl; Keizersgracht 401; adult/child under 17/yr/student €5/free/3; 11am-6pm Tue-Sun

This well-curated photography museum stages large-scale, temporary exhibitions, drawing from its own collection as well as hosting travelling shows. Themes might include portraiture, nature or regional photography, spread out over several floors and a ‘summer house’ behind the main house.

Huis Marseille also has a noteworthy building. The name refers to its original owner, a French merchant in 1665, and the original structure has remained largely intact. It retains some antique touches such as the 18th-century fountain in the library, and a painting of Apollo, Minerva and the muses in the garden room.

MULTATULI MUSEUM Map p92
≠ 638 19 38; www.multatuli-museum.nl; Korsje- spoortsteeg 20; admission free; 10am-5pm Tue, noon-5pm Sat & Sun (closed Sat Jul & Aug)

Better known by the pen name Multatuli – Latin for ‘I have suffered greatly’ – novelist Eduard Douwes Dekker was best known for Max Havelaar (1860), about corrupt colonialists in the Dutch East Indies. Dekker himself worked in colonial administration in Batavia (now Jakarta), and the book made him something of a social conscience for the Netherlands. This small but fascinating museum-home chronicles his life and works, and shows furniture and artefacts from his period in Indonesia.

HUIS MET DE HOOFDEN Map p92
House with the Heads; Keizersgracht 123

A shining example of Dutch Renaissance style, this whimsical structure has a beautiful step gable with six heads at door level representing the classical muses. Folklore has it that the heads depict burglars, de-captitated in quick succession by a fearless maid as they tried to break in. The façade veritably drips with decorations – lion masks, obelisks and vases – as well as the famous heads (match ’em up): Apollo, Diana, Ceres, Bacchus, Minerva and Mars.

The building now houses the Bureau Monumentenzorg, the city office of monument preservation.

BIBELS MUSEUM Map p92
Bible Museum; ≠ 624 24 36; www.bibelsmuseum.nl; Herengracht 366-368; adult/child under 12/yr/child 13-17/yr/student €7.50/free/3.75; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11-5pm Sun

This place first gained notoriety thanks to a dedicated minister, Leendert Schouten, who built a scale model of the Jewish Tabernacle described in Exodus. Now on the museum’s 3rd floor, the model is said to have attracted thousands of visitors even before it was completed in 1851. Another large exhibit examines the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem from Christian, Jewish and Muslim perspectives. A collection of Dutch Bibles includes a Delft bible printed in 1477. On the ground floor you can sniff scents mentioned in the Good Book and stroll through a garden of biblical trees.

POEZENBOOT Map p92
Cat Boat; ≠ 625 87 94; www.pozenboot.nl; Singel, opposite No 40; admission free (but donations encouraged); 1-3pm

This boat on the Singel is a must for cat-lovers…and hell for mouse-lovers. It was founded in 1966 by an eccentric woman who became legendary for looking after
several hundred stray cats at a time. The boat has since been taken over by a foundation and holds a mere few dozen kittens in proper pens, ready to be spayed, neutered, implanted with an identifying computer chip (as per Dutch law) and, hopefully, adopted out.

**VAN BRIENENHOFE** Map p92
Prinsengracht 89-133; open to the public; 6am-6pm
This charming courtyard was named in the late 18th century for Jan van Brienen, who bought the Star Brewery located here, one of 13 breweries in town at the time. (The place is still called De Star hofje by many.) It was turned into an almshouse for older residents, and although not dirt poor they had a clear division of labour: the women cleaned house for the single men, who in turn toted water buckets from the outside pump (topped by a curious lantern). There’s also a manicured garden.

If hofjes grab you, be sure to visit the Jordaan (p85).

**DE RODE HOED** Map p92
The Red Hat; 623 56 06; www.rodehoed.nl; Keizersgracht 102; admission free; 8.30am-5.30pm, except during special events
De Rode Hoed is a cultural centre that occupies three glorious 17th-century canal houses. Its line-up includes lectures by world-renowned authors and debates on the topics of the day, sometimes in English. It’s worth a visit, even when nothing’s on, to view the three-storey main auditorium, which was once the largest clandestine church in the Netherlands. De Rood Hoed – ‘the Red Hat’ – was named for the hat shop once located here (spot the tile on the façade that identified the place).

**VEDDY CIVILISED WESTERN CANALS**

**WALKING TOUR**

1 The Dam
Much more than the birthplace of Amsterdam, today the Dam (p69) is dominated by the Royal Palace (p68), worth a visit for its grand interior and art collection. To the right, the impressive Nieuwe Kerk (p65) often stages excellent exhibitions, while Madame Tussauds Amsterdam (good for kids; p71) is to the left.

2 Magna Plaza
Head west, and across Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal you’ll see the massive shopping complex Magna Plaza (p72) – check out its atrium lobby and, if you like, dozens of shops.

3 Torensluis
Continue west and then head north towards the Torensluis, the bridge over our first canal, the Singel. If you’re craving coffee and apple pie, Villa Zeecitz (p159) has some of the best in town. The bridge features a statue of the Dutch literary giant Multatuli; there’s a museum (p95) dedicated to him a few blocks north.

4 Brouwersgracht
The Singel soon intersects with the pretty Brouwersgracht. Cross over Brouwersgracht and walk west to the head of the Herengracht, one of our favourite views in town, with boats passing in three directions.

5 Westindisch Huis
To the north is Herenmarkt, with the 17th-century Westindisch Huis, the former head office of the Dutch West India Company. It was here that the booty of Admiral Piet Heyn, the great naval hero, was stored after his men captured the Spanish silver fleet off the coast of Cuba.

6 Keizersgracht
Turning south, cross the Brouwersgracht into the Keizersgracht. You’ll soon spot the imposing Greenland Warehouses (p48) and, further on, the curious Huis Met de Hoofden (House with the Heads; p95), with carvings of Apollo, Ceres and Mars.

7 Prinsengracht
At peaceful Leiegracht, by the Greenpeace Building (p50), head to Prinsengracht to pass the Anne Frank Huis (p98) and the soaring tower of the Westerkerk (p93). Behind it is Karin Dann’s quietly moving Homomonument (p95) and, at Westermarkt 6, the house where René Descartes stayed during his sojourn in Amsterdam. Further south on Prinsengracht is Van Puffelen (p188), an atmospheric brown café.

8 Felix Meritis Building
Back on Keizersgracht, you can’t miss the quirky Felix Meritis Building (p94), a one-time enlightenment society turned alternative theatre. After WWII this monumental, columned edifice served as the head office of the Dutch Communist Party – that is, until 1981, when the party’s dramatic collapse prompted a move elsewhere.

9 Spui
Cross the canals again and head east to the Bijbels Museum (p95), with its impressive models of biblical sites, en route to the Spui (p69) for a coffee or beer or weekend book and art markets. The Begijnhof (p68) is just off the square.

10 Amsterams Historisch Museum
The Amsterdam’s Historical Museum (p68) is just up the alley, along with the group portraits that fill its Civic Guard Gallery (p58). A former orphans home, the museum is the best place to understand Amsterdam’s peculiar evolution from obscure trading post to Golden Age arts hub and now the service-oriented metropolis it is today.

11 Kalverstraat
The busy shopping street Kalverstraat (p73) leads you back to the Dam. For a short course on Dutch football legends, seek out the hallowed halls of Het Oranje Voetbal Museum (p73).
SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

Drinking & Smoking p189; Eating p166; Shopping p148; Sleeping p217

If the Western Canal Belt is upscale and refined, the Southern Canal Belt is more diverse and populist, though no less stately. The Southern Canal Belt spans the area from the radial Leidsegracht in the west to the Amstel in the east, anchored by two key nightlife districts: Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein. In between are the elegant antique and art shops of the Spiegel Quarter, the gay nightlife hub on the Reguliersdwarsstraat, and the Golden Bend (p103), a stretch along the Herengracht that makes some Western Canal Belt houses look like servants’ quarters.

The canal project, which began with the Western Canal Belt, stopped at the Leidsegracht in 1625 because of lack of funds, but was picked up again at a later date. Even then, work on the southern section progressed much more slowly; it took 12 years to construct the western canals, but to extend the Canal Belt all the way to the Amstel took another 40. The Canal Belt was to have continued across the Amstel to the eastern IJ, but the only one ever completed was the Nieuwe Herengracht.

A very short walk west of the Amstel, Rembrandtplein (p104) is a hub of café culture and nightlife of any stripe. You won’t have any trouble finding a café or a restaurant on Rembrandtplein or on neighbouring Thorbeckeplein. Many are large and spill onto the sidewalks, but our favourite is the more intimate Café Schiller (p191), an Art Deco marvel that’s popular with the pre-theatre crowd. De Heeren van Aemstel (p198) is a fun place to kick back a beer or to catch a performance. Utrechtsestraat, off the southeast corner of Rembrandtplein, is the city’s best row of restaurants.

For the gay scene head north on Halvemaansteeg and to the Amstel for a cluster of bars and cafés, or a block west across Vijzelstraat to the always busy Reguliersdwarsstraat; the friendly lesbian café Vivelavie (p206) is just east of Rembrandtplein.

The street running west from Rembrandtplein is Reguliersbreestraat. Before the construction of the Canal Belt, the monks of the Regulier (Regular) order had a monastery outside the city walls roughly where Utrechtsestraat now crosses Keizersgracht, which explains the frequent use of the name in this area. Reguliersbreestraat is pretty busy, but on the southern side of the street you can see the Tuschinskitheater (p206), opened in 1921 and still the most glorious cinema in the country. The building’s blend of Art Deco and Amsterdam School architecture, with its recently refurbished interior, is a visual feast. Inquire about tours.

Southwest of Rembrandtplein, Thorbeckeplein is named after Jan Rudolf Thorbecke, the Liberal politician who created the Dutch parliamentary system in 1848. His statue faces outwards from the square, although he might have enjoyed its leafy car-free atmosphere. There are a number of cafés and clubs on both sides of the square, plus a weekly art market (10.30am-6pm Sun-Mar-Oct), which offers mostly modern pictorial work.

A small statue by the Amstelkerk (p104) commemorates Professor Kokadorus, aka Meijer Linneweiler (1867–1934), the Dutch colourful market vendor Amsterdam has known. People would buy anything from spoons to suspenders (‘to hang up your mother-in-law’) just to watch his performances interlaced with satirical comments about politics. Amsterdam has a long tradition in creative vending, and if you understand Dutch, you can pick up some great lines in the markets of the Jordaan.

The square around the Amstelkerk was kept free of construction, as another church was to have been built there. The funds never materialized, and the square called Amstelveld remains open and pleasant. A Monday market has been operating here since 1876, even before the one on Thorbeckeplein. This lively ‘free market’ had vendors from out of town peddling a wide range of goods, and it still operates as a garden market (3-6pm Mar-Dec) in the summer months, focusing on plants and flowers. An antiquities and collectibles market (9am-6pm) has started on the last Friday of the month in warmer months. In summer the Amstelveld is a pleasant space where children play soccer, dogs run around, and patrons laze in the sun at the café Janvier (p191) against the south side of the Amstelkerk.

Even if you have neither the inclination nor the money to buy art, luxury antiques or collectables, it is well worth taking a look at Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (which begins at the Herengracht) and its pretty extension the Spiegelgracht (which ends across from the Rijksmuseum). Many of the shops and galleries here in the Spiegel Quarter feel like museums in their own right.

LEIDSEPLEIN Map p100-1
A one-stop shop for party-goers, this hyperactive square is a major tram intersection and a litmus test for nightlife at any given time. On its eastern side stood the Leidsepoort (Leiden Gate), demolished in 1870, where farmers would leave their horses and carts before entering town. The strip of greenery with large chestnut trees on the other side of the Singelgracht is sweetly called ‘Leidsebosje’ (Leiden Wood).

There’s something here for everyone. The sidewalk cafés at the northern end of the square are perfect for watching street artists and eccentric passers-by. There are countless pubs, clubs and a smorgasbord of restaurants. Entertainment venues radiate from its centre, and nearby Kerkstraat has some trendy gay establishments.

FOAM (FOTOGRAFIE MUSEUM AMSTERDAM) Map pp100-1
The only reason this gorgeous hotel (see p217) got its Yankee-Doodle label is because the architect, CAA Steinneweg, studied hotel design in the United States. Steinneweg made sure the style (mostly Viennese Renaissance actually) was adorned with abundant Americana—life-sized Indian chiefs and their squaws as well as a 4m heraldic eagle over the entrance. That building was demolished in 1900, but the magnificent structure you see today is broadly similar, if less bomatic. The brilliant Café American (p190) in Art Deco style was added in 1927, and still looks much like it did then.

DE APPEL Map p100-1
Despite its location in the antiques street of the Spiegel Quarter, this contemporary arts foundation is anything but old-fashioned. Rather, it’s a large art and media space with ever-changing exhibits of contemporary works: installation pieces, painting, sculpture and multimedia. Themes vary, but the aim is always to present something not otherwise readily available to the Dutch public. Phone or check the website to find out what’s on.

MUSEUM VAN LOON Map p100-1
Our favourite house-museum in town, this opulent residence was built in 1672 for a...
SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

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IT’S FREE

SOUTH WOMEN 1

IT’S FREE

GOLDEN BEND
Map pp100-1
Gouden Bocht; Herengracht btwn Leidsestraat & Vijzelstraat
The Golden Bend is about the most prestigious stretch of real estate in Amsterdam, a monument to the Golden Age, when the city was the capital of all things, to the feline presence in art. The collection includes a nice selection of 19th-century magazine covers and circus posters.
THE WINNER BY A NARROW MARGIN

Canal-boat commentators like to point out the narrowest house in Amsterdam, explaining that property was taxed on frontage – the narrower the house the lower the tax, regardless of height. But each guide seems to have a different ‘narrowest’ house. So which is it?

The house at Hooftstraat 22, east of the Dam, is 2.02m wide and 6m deep. Occupying a mere 12 sq metres, it could well be the least space-consuming self-contained house in Europe. The house at Singel 7 appears narrower still, just a door and a slim 1st-floor window, but canal-boat commentators fail to point out that it’s actually the rear entrance of a house of normal proportions. On the other side of Singel, at No 144, is a house that measures only 1.8m across the front, though it widens to 5m at the rear.

GEELVINCK HINOPEN HUIS Map pp100-1
★ 639 07 47; www.geelvinckhinopenhuis.nl; Herengracht 518; adult/child under 6yr/student €4/free; ✈ 11am-5pm Sun

East of the mayor’s residence at No 502 stands this 17th-century house with stylish rooms, a formal garden and art in the carriage house. Though not quite as impressive as Museum Van Loon or Museum Willet-Holthuysen, it’s more serene, and definitely worth a look, especially if you can organise a private tour for your group on a weekday. Note: the entrance to the museum is around the back at Keizersgracht 633.

REMBRANDTPLEIN Map pp100-1

Originally called Reguliersplein and then Botermarkt, after the butter markets held here until mid-19th century, this square takes its name from the statue of the painter erected in 1876. He’s gazing pensively towards the Jewish quarter where he lived until circumstances forced him to the Jordaan.

Rembrandtplein soon evolved into a nightlife hub as various cafés, restaurants and clubs opened their doors. It’s almost genteel during the day, though often heaving with visitors. On the north side of the square, De Kroon (p191), one of the grandest cafés in town, is from 1898. Opposite, Café Schiller (p191), from 1892, is renowned for its fabulous Art Deco interior, including lead-light glass windows.

GIJSBERT DOMMER HUIS Map pp100-1

Amstel 216

Look closely, ladies and gentlemen, at the façade of this sober residence known locally as the ‘House with the Blood Stains’. As he lost his marbles, six-time mayor and diplomat Coenraad van Beuningen scribbled graffiti here in his own blood, and his unfathomable message – including Hebrew letters and obscure cabbal symbols – from the 17th century is still faintly visible. Well-to-do businessman Gijsbert Dommer commissioned this house from 1671, but the mad mayor is better known today.

BLAUWBRUG Map pp100-1

Built in 1884, one of the city’s most striking bridges replaced an old wooden version that connected these shores of the Amstel since the 17th century. Inspired by the Alexander III bridge in Paris, it features tall, ornate street lamps topped by the imperial crown of Amsterdam, fish sculptures and foundations shaped like the paws of a medieval ship.

REGULIERSGRACHT Map pp100-1

This peaceful canal was dug in 1658 to link the Herengracht with the canals further south. It was named after an order of monks whose monastery was located nearby. It rates right up there with Amsterdams prettiest canals, and through a quirk of construction you can peer through the arches of at least seven bridges, a fact not lost on canal-boat operators. A number of houses along here have intriguing gables, tablets and fancy decorations (see p107).

AMSTELKERK Map pp100-1
★ 520 00 70; Amstelteld 10; admission free; ✈ 9am-5pm

The unique, pinewood Amstelkerk was erected in 1668 as a noodkerk (makeshift church) under the direction of the city architect, Daniël Stalpaert. The idea was that the congregation would have somewhere to meet while a permanent church arose next to it. Plans for a stone church were abandoned in the 1840s, and the Amstelkerk’s square interior was updated with neo-Gothic alterations, including a pipe organ. The building now houses the offices of a local city restoration group, and is a popular concert venue. The seats under the shady plane trees at the adjacent bar-restaurant Janvier (p191) are a wonderful place to nurse a drink.

DE DUIF Map pp100-1
The Dove; ☑ 520 00 70; Prinsengracht 756; ☑ services 10am Sun

In 1796, shortly after the French-installed government proclaimed freedom of religion, De Duif was the first Catholic church to be built with a public entrance for over two centuries. These days De Duif is no longer Catholic but Ecumenical, and it’s also a venue for concerts, opera and private events. If you’re able to peek inside, check out the clay friezes of the Stations of the Cross on the right-hand wall. The pulpit carvings are of St Willebrordus of Utrecht, and the organ is a sight in its own right, reaching clear to the vaulted ceiling.

MAGERE BRUG Map pp100-1

Skinny Bridge; Amstel river, btwn Kerkstraat & Nieuwe Kerkstraat

This undeniably picturesque bridge is the site of many a Dutch wedding photo. Dating from the 1670s, the nine-arched structure has been rebuilt several times, in both concrete and timber. It’s still operated by hand and remains photogenic even at night, when 1200 tiny lights make the bridge look like a Christmas confection. You can spot it in many films, including the James Bond thriller Diamonds are Forever. Stand in the middle and feel it sway under the passing traffic.

AMSTELSLEEZEN Map pp100-1

Amstel Locks; Amstel river, nr Theater Koninklijk Carré

These impressive sluices, or locks, date from 1674 and allowed the canals to be flushed with fresh water from lakes north of the city, rather than salt water from the IJ, an innovation that made the city more liveable. They were still operated by hand until recently. Four times a week in summer, and twice a week in winter, the locks are shut while fresh water flows in. The sluices on the west side of the city are left open as the stagnant water is pumped out to sea.

KONINKLIJK THEATER CARRÉ Map pp100-1
★ 524 94 52; www.theatercarre.nl; Amstel 115-125; ✉ box office 4-8pm

This esteemed theatre was built in 1887 by the Carré family, who had started their career years earlier with a horse act at the annual fair. The first structure was of wood, and eventually rebuilt in concrete because of the fire hazard, as early performances for 2000 spectators were lit by gas lamps. The classical façade is richly decorated with faces of jesters, dancers and theatre folk. Today the Carré books high-calibre musicals, theatre and dance events, and its Christmas circus is regarded as a seasonal highlight.

top picks

FOR CHILDREN

- Vondelpark (p115) A hot favourite with the small fry, this park near the old centre is replete with leafy picnic spots, playgrounds and duck ponds.
- Kinderkookkafé (p171) Put the kids to work on their own gourmet creations, and take a load off.
- Amsterdamse Bos (p131) A huge recreational area with a forestry museum, a petting zoo and energy-burning munadows.
- Tram Museum Amsterdam (p131) Take a historic tram complete with clanging bells from the Vondelpark to the Amsterdamse Bos.
- NEMO science and technology centre (p69) A tailor-made, hands-on science fun fair useful for answering all those How and Why questions.
- Troepenmuseum (p128) The children’s section devoted to exotic locations is a hit in any language.
- Joos Historisch Museum (p79) The kids’ section on Jewish life in Amsterdam is accessible and fun.
- Arts Zoo (p121) Theextrot monkeys, shimmying fish and the planetarium will keep those young eyes shining for hours.
- Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum (p124) The old mastd ship is staffed with costumed hosts who always put on a grand show.
- Civic Guard Gallery (p68) A bite-sized gallery of giant paintings guaranteed to awe the young ‘uns.
- Canal bike (p122) Take a unique pedal-powered ride through the city’s beautiful canals.
- FunFun (p80) Set ‘em loose for a romp in this underground all-round pleasure centre.
- Koninginnedag (Queen’s Day; p171) Kids of all ages revel in the madness of 30 April, the country’s biggest party.
This authoritative pile began life in 1666 as an orphanage designed for 800 occupants, but by the early 19th century more than half the city’s 4300 orphans were crammed in here. A royal decree finally relocated them to other towns, amid cries that children were being stolen. The building’s current scowl, in sober neoclassical, is from an 1829 renovation after the orphanage was closed. You can wander inside, but as a rule you won’t get beyond reception unless you have, er, official business. At the time of writing the court was due move into a fancy new office in Westerdoekiland (see p52) in 2010.

A MEDLEY OF MUSEUMS

Whether it’s modern art or art about cats, stately homes or tropical cultures, stories of historical tragedy or miracles of modern technology, Amsterdam offers a range of museums for any taste (visit www.amsterdammuseums.nl).

Most of the leading museums in town display captions in English. If captions are in Dutch only, you can usually get an English-language brochure (often free) or borrow a binder explaining the exhibits. Many museums have pleasant cafes with gardens or courtyards – good places to relax or read up.

As to be expected, weekends tend to be the busiest times, along with Wednesday afternoons when many primary schools have the afternoon off and children are herded into museums. The most common museum closing day is Monday. A handful of museums offer free entry, but most charge admission. Adult admissions run from about €2.50 to €10, which is pretty reasonable by the standards of world capitals; special exhibitions may cost extra. Discounts are available for those aged over 65 (though rarely) or under 18, for students and holders of other types of cards and passes (see p245).

If you plan to be in the Netherlands for a while, get the Museumkaart (Museum Card; 0900-404 09 10, per call €0.35; www.museumkaart.nl; over/under 26yr €35/17.50 plus €4.95 fee for first-time registrants), which gives you free (mostly) or discounted (occasionally) admission to several hundred museums around the country for a year. It’s valid for most museums in Amsterdam, although not the Anne Frank Huis or the Royal Palace. After five or six museums the card will have paid for itself. Inquire at participating museums.

If you are making just one quick trip to Amsterdam, you might consider the I Amsterdam Card (per 24/48/72hr €33/43/53). It includes many of the same museums as the Museumkaart (though, again, not the Anne Frank Huis or the Royal Palace), a free canal cruise, freebies and discounts at a number of shops and attractions and a transit pass good for anywhere the GVB goes. The pass can come in handy: although Amsterdam is not an enormous city, a half-hour walk between museums can certainly eat into your limited time. The I Amsterdam Card is available at tourist office locations (p255). The Rede?I Lovers Museumboat day pass (p250) is also worth considering for the discounts it offers.

SOUTHERN CANAL BELT STROLL

Walking Tour
1 Spiegel Quarter Set off at the Singelgracht near the Rijksmuseum (p111) and head north into the nexus of art and antique shops, the Spiegel Quarter, along the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat. Historic prints, paintings and period furnishings can be found along this attractive lane in galleries such as EH Ariëns Kappers (p148) and Jaski (p148).

2 Golden Bend One of Amsterdam’s swankiest patches of real estate, the aptly-named Golden Bend (p103) on Herengracht is awash with classical French flourishes. No other part of Amsterdam exudes more Golden Age wealth. The statue-studded mansion at Herengracht 475 belonged to art collector Jan Gildemeester; a painting in the Rijksmuseum depicts him proudly showing his collection to visitors.

3 Bloemenmarkt The bustling Bloemenmarkt (Flower Market; p95) is a reminder of what it means to have Tulip Fever. Rounding the eastern end of the market you’ll immediately see one of Amsterdam’s most enduring embankments, the striking Munttoren (Mint Tower; p148), which turned out precious little cash before falling into French hands.

4 Amstel river From the tower, head east along the Amstel river to take in the grand Hotel de l’Europe (p212), where polished skiffs moor at the terrace restaurant. This is a good spot to stand on Queen’s Day, when boats bend over backwards to pass the low-lying bridge connecting to Muntplein.

5 Rembrandtplein At the bridge, turn south into tiny Halvemaansteeg (Half-Moon Lane) and the beating heart of the entertainment district around Rembrandtplein (p104). As you cross the square, stop to admire the statue of master painter Rembrandt. If it’s coffee ‘n’ cake time, best make a beeline to De Kroon (p190) one of the most stylish ‘grand cafés’ equipped with an alluring upstairs terrace.

6 Reguliersgracht Saunter over shady Thorbeckeplein to the Herengracht, lean on the bridge and sigh over the goofy postcard vista of Reguliersgracht, aka the canal of the seven bridges (p104). Sights include the corner house at Reguliersgracht 92, decorated with the statue of a stork that canal-boat drivers fantasise had to do with...
SOUTHERN CANAL BELT STROLL

WALK FACTS
Start Spiegel Quarter
End Pata Negra
Distance 4.2km
Duration 1½ hours

midwifery. The house at Reguliersgracht 34 has an unusual twin entrance and an eagle gable for the original owner, Arent van den Bergh (arend is a Dutch word for eagle).

7 15 Bridges Where the Keizersgracht and Reguliersgracht join up, there’s a scene to outdo the mere seven bridges before; here you can count more than twice that number as you peer east–west and north–south. The beautiful carved wooden façade at Reguliersgracht was made by a carpenter. A few steps further south you’ll come to the Amstelkerk (p104), the curious wooden church with a belfry that still looks quite makeshift.

8 Amstel river From here, head east down this quiet section of the Prinsengracht till you reach the shores of the Amstel river. From this vantage point you can admire the comely Magere Brug, and beyond the sluizen (locks), the neon-lit roof of the Koninklijk Theater Carré (p105), the premier stage for musicals.

9 Pata Negra Now you can settle down to tapas and sangria at Pata Negra (p168), where the after-work crowds gather under the suspended garlic and shanks of cured ham. Then catch a tram or bus from Frederikplein.

OLD SOUTH

Drinking & Smoking p191; Eating p170; Shopping p152; Sleeping p219

This wedge-shaped district is one of Amsterdam’s most genteel. It is roughly bordered by Stadhouderskade to the north, the Vondelpark to the west and Hobemakade to the east. It’s also variously known by its landmarks: some call it the ‘Museum Quarter’ (for the Rijks, Stedelijk and Van Gogh Museums), the ‘Concertgebouw area’ or the ‘Vondelpark area’. All are worthy emblems.

The origin of this gentility goes back to real estate. By the 1860s the Canal Belt was no longer sufficient for the population needs of this city, rapidly expanding with the industrial revolution.

If the Canal Belt was the essence of urban planning, this round of expansion was a pure expression of market capitalism. Cheap tenement housing was built across Hobemakade in the neighbourhood that came to be known as De Pijp, but wealthy investors wanted an upmarket neighbourhood for themselves and saw to it that tenement blocks and businesses were prohibited on this side. Instead, they thought it a suitable spot for a grand national museum (the Rijksmuseum) and an equally grand new concert hall (the Concertgebouw).

In the centre of it all is the Museumplein (p111), a large, grassy park bordered by a clutch of illustrious museums: the Rijksmuseum (p171), the Van Gogh Museum (below) and the Stedelijk Museum (p113). Off the southern fringe stands the grand entrance of the Concertgebouw (p111). Dotted in and around Museumplein is a wealth of shopping and dining options, and some lovely places to stay. The district also possesses some stunning buildings in the Amsterdam School style.

Museumplein was laid out to host the World Exhibition in 1883, but gained its lasting title only when the Rijksmuseum was opened two years later. One of many face-lifts lifted a triangle of turf at the southern end, dubbed the ‘ass’s ear’ for its shape; it’s a popular spot for sun worshippers. There’s a large supermarket, Albert Heijn, concealed below.

For as long as anyone can remember, the square has been used for concerts, special events and political demonstrations. At other times it’s a relaxing place to hang out, play hacky-sack, skateboard (ramp provided), toss a Frisbee or enjoy a picnic. In winter the long concrete pond is transformed into a festive skating rink. Near the pond you’ll find a tic-tac-toe board that plays musical notes when you step on the different squares.

Many of the streets around the Museumplein are named for exemplary Dutch artists, musicians and writers. Pieter Cornelisz (PC) Hooftstraat between Stadhouderskade and the Vondelpark is the shopping street for the cream of society and the nouveau riche. (Sport utility vehicles are sometimes called ‘PC Hooft tractors’ for this reason.) You’ll find some of the world’s leading brands here, both in shops of their own name and in others, as well as a few surprisingly friendly cafes for a break. PC Hooft (1581–1647) was the son of a mayor of Amsterdam who grew up to become a historian, author and founder of a literary society that included Joost van den Vondel and Vondelpark fame. We wonder what Hooft would have made of such blatant commercialism.

Van Gogh Museum Map p110
☎ 570 52 00; www.vangoghmuseum.nl; Paulus Potterstraat 7; adult/child under 12yr/child 13-17yr €10/free/2.50, audio or palmtop tour 6€; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat-Thu, to 10pm Fri
Next to the Stedelijk Museum building is the Van Gogh Museum, one of Amsterdam’s must-sees. Opened in 1973 to house the collection of Vincent’s younger brother Theo, it consists of about 200 paintings and 500 drawings by Vincent and his friends and contemporaries, such as Gauguin, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec and Bernard.

Vincent van Gogh was born in 1853 and had a short but astonishingly productive life. Through his paintings, the museum chronicles his journey from Holland (where his work was dark and sombre) to Paris where, under the influence of the Impressionists, he discovered vivid colour. From there he moved to Arles, where he was incredibly productive, often completing a canvas every day.

Astoundingly, Van Gogh was self-taught as a painter and had a career that spanned less than a decade. A volatile character liable to mood swings, he famously cut off his ear after an argument with Gauguin. In 1890, while in the depths of depression, he finally committed suicide. He would come to be regarded as a giant among artists but during his lifetime Van Gogh sold only a single painting.

Famous works on display include The Potato Eaters (1885), an example of his sombre Dutch period, The Yellow House.
OLD SOUTH

INFORMATION
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Openbare Bibliotheek C4
US Consulate A4
Zuiderbad F2

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House of Bols C2
Philips Wing of Rijksmuseum C2
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Museum Square Hotel ..B3
Xavier Hollander Bed & Breakfast ..C5

See Vondelpark & surroundings Map p116
See De Pijp Map p119

RIJKSMUSEUM Map p110
Paulus Potterstraat
This vast, open park behind the Rijksmuseum was cleverly redeveloped in 1999–2000 and today is one of Amsterdam’s busiest open spaces. Beneath the park are a car park and a supermarket, while back at street level there is a café, a skate ramp and a large, sparkling pond (perfect for ice-skating in winter).

CONCERTGEBOUW Map p110
671 83 45; www.concertgebouw.nl; Concertgebouwplein 2-6; ticket prices vary; box office 10am-7pm

The literal name ‘Concert Building’ scarcely does justice to this amazing facility, which attracts some 850,000 visitors a year to 800 shows. This makes it the busiest concert hall in the world but, refreshingly, it hasn’t lost its common touch.

The Concertgebouw was completed in 1888 to a design by Pierre Cuypers, who also designed Centraal Station four years later. Both buildings are a mixture of neo-Gothic and Dutch Renaissance. The neo-Gothic elements (towers, stained-glass windows) brought a hailstorm of criticism from Protestants including the king, who dubbed the building ‘the architect’s palace’ (Cuypers was Catholic, and proudly so in his approach to architecture).

MUSEUMPLEIN Map p110
Paulus Potterstraat
This vast, open park behind the Rijksmuseum was cleverly redeveloped in 1999–2000 and today is one of Amsterdam’s busiest open spaces. Beneath the park are a car park and a supermarket, while back at street level there is a café, a skate ramp and a large, sparkling pond (perfect for ice-skating in winter).

The Rijksmuseum was conceived as a repository for several national collections, including art owned by the royal family. The collection includes some 5000 paintings, most importantly those by Dutch and Flemish masters from the 15th to 19th centuries. The emphasis, naturally, is on the Golden Age.

Pride of place is taken by Rembrandt’s Nightwatch (1650), showing the militia led by Frans Banninck Cocq, a future mayor of the city. The painting only acquired its name over time with a layer of grime (it’s nice and clean now). Other 17th-century Dutch masters include Jan Vermeer (The Milkmaid and Woman in Blue Reading a Letter), Frans Hals (The Merry Drinker) and Jan Steen (The Merry Family).

Other good sections are Sculpture and Applied Art (deelfware, dolls houses, porcelain, furniture), Dutch History and Asiatic Art, including the famous 12th-century Dancing Shiva. The museum’s famous print archives have some 800,000 prints and drawings.

Architecturally, the Rijksmuseum forms the gateway to the Museum Quarter. It was completed in 1885 to a design by Pierre Cuypers, who also designed Centraal Station four years later. Both buildings are a mixture of neo-Gothic and Dutch Renaissance. The neo-Gothic elements (towers, stained-glass windows) brought a hailstorm of criticism from Protestants including the king, who dubbed the building ‘the architect’s palace’ (Cuypers was Catholic, and proudly so in his approach to architecture).
AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM, PART 3: SEAN CONDON  Simon Sellars
Australian Sean Condon is the author of the bittersweet ‘nonfiction novel’ My ‘Dam Life, about his time in Amsterdam and his bemused efforts to adapt to the rhythms of Dutch life (the book was saddled with the Orwellian epithet ‘Down and Out In Amsterdam’ by one reviewer). I prodded Sean to give me his appraisal of this eccentric town.

Do you have a favourite part of Amsterdam? Anywhere to avoid?
My favourite is the Jordaan, because most of my friends live there. I dislike the main red-light area behind Warmoesstraat, because it’s usually full of louche drunken tourists who spoil the otherwise lovely, rosy ambience.

Pick an Amsterdam cliché – now debunk it.
There are far fewer Dutch doors than you’d think.

Describe your favourite, and least favourite, ‘Amsterdam experience’.
My favourite is riding anywhere, any time, in any weather – on a bike. My least favourite is encountering groups of the aforementioned louts.

Speaking of bikes, can there be anything funnier than a bicyclist giving a ride to a blowup sex doll?
Yes. Those big, wooden trays on the front of bikes, full of infants, that teachers use to transport kids from one place to another. Hilarious.

What book set in Amsterdam would you recommend for newcomers?
There are few that I know of. There’s Amsterdam, an excellent and lively history of the city by Geert Mak. Maybe Ian McEwan’s Amsterdam, but I haven’t read it. Some of the scenes early on in Ian Fleming’s Diamonds Are Forever are set in Amsterdam, and they’re cool.

You’re a writer – you must have a favourite Amsterdam bar.
Without doubt my favourite is Proeflokaal Fockink (p184), a tiny jenever bar founded in the 17th century. It’s congenial and a superb place to meet strangers. Every day I miss it and every day my liver thanks me that it’s now on the other side of the world.

Where do you like to eat in Amsterdam?
My favourite Amsterdam restaurant is De Rode Den Engel, but it’s in Antwerp, which should give you some idea of the culinary scene in Amsterdam. There is one place, on Leidsegracht, called Christophe (p163) – it’s excellent, but boy you’ll pay for it. Also the Gouden Reael on Prinseneiland used to be good – and it has a great setting, too.

Do you have a favourite local slang or swear word?
Jammer (shame).

Care to reveal Amsterdam’s best-kept secret?
No.

What annoys you the most about Amsterdam?
The appalling – and yet very expensive – food served by the rudest wait staff in Europe.

How did living in Amsterdam change you?
It introduced me to the world beyond Australia, and now that I’m back here, I kind of wish it hadn’t.

Describe My ‘Dam Life for someone who hasn’t read it.
Unfortunate cover, great book. A love story about both my wife, Sally, and Amsterdam.

Acoustics that are the envy of sound designers worldwide. Add in baroque trim, panels inscribed with the names of classical composers, a massive pipe organ and a grand staircase via which conductors and soloists descend to the stage, and you’ve got a venue where the best performers are honoured to appear.

In the 1980s the Concertgebouw threatened to collapse because its 2000 wooden piles were rotting. Thanks to new technology, the piles made way for a concrete foundation, and the building was thoroughly restored to mark its 100th anniversary. The architect Pi de Bruin added a glass foyer along the southern side that most people hate, though everyone agrees it’s effective.

HOUSE OF BOLS  Map p110
☎ 305 53 00; www.diamantmuseum.nl; Paulus Potterstraat 8; adult/child under 13yr/senior, student & child 13-18 yr €6/free/4; 9am-5pm
More of a showroom than a serious gem collection, Amsterdam’s diamond museum provides an interesting look at the history of the trade and the sparkling creations that have adorned the world’s rich and powerful. Almost all of the exhibits are clever re-creations, in glass cases spread over two floors. It’s run by Coster Diamonds (p154) next door, which kind of says it all.

STEDELIJK MUSEUM BUILDING
Map p110
Paulus Potterstraat 13
Built in 1895 to a neo-Renaissance design by AM Weissman, this is the permanent home of the National Museum of Modern Art, one of the world’s great collections. However, at the time of writing it was closed for renovation and expansion until the end of 2009. Until then its modernist statements will appear in a former high-rise post office near Centraal Station, and at exhibition spaces around town; for full details see p69.

ARTS & FLOWERS
Walking Tour
1 Museumplein Although the Rijksmuseum (p111) will be closed due to construction until late this decade, its grand exterior makes a great starting point. You’ll be looking out over Museumplein (p111), a monumental grassy expanse for lolling, strolling and open-air

WALK FACTS
Start Museumplein
End Vondelkerk
Distance 4km
Duration 1½ hours

ARTS & FLOWERS

COSTER DIAMONDS

COSTER DIAMONDS
concerts. To your right, on the corner of Hobbeemastraat, is Coster Diamonds (p154), where you can take a free tour – diamonds are a kind of art, aren’t they? Or you may prefer to continue along Paulus Potterstraat to the Van Gogh Museum (p109), with its modern, clam-like annex. The main building of the Stedelijk Museum (p113) is next door, though it’s closed for renovation till 2009.

2 Concertgebouw The neoclassical Concertgebouw (p111) is diagonally across Van Baerlestraat – check schedules for the free lunchtime concerts. Otherwise pick up a picnic at the big Albert Heijn supermarket on Museumplein.

3 Vondelpark Weave northwest through a quiet residential quarter. Shoppers may enjoy taking a detour to Pieter Cornelisz Hoofstraat, Amsterdam’s own little Regent St, towards the sprawling Vondelpark (opposite); highlights of the park include the rose garden and the open-air theatre (p202). Have a break and enjoy coffee and cake at parkside Café Vertigo (p192) at the Filmmuseum (opposite) or in ‘t Blauwe Theehuis (p171).

4 Vondelkerk Step out of the park to admire the horses at the Hollandsche Manege (opposite) and stop by the Vondelkerk (p117), a pretty 19th-century church that has been turned into an office complex. From here, you can head back into the park or along Vondelstraat towards the buzz of Leidseplein.

VONDELPARK & AROUND

Drinking & Smoking p192; Eating p170; Shopping p152; Sleeping p220
This pleasant, English-style park with ponds, lawns, thickets and winding footpaths was laid out on marshland in the 1860s and ’70s as a park for the bourgeoisie. It made up for the loss of the Plantage, the existing city park that became residential around this time. The Vondelpark was soon surrounded by upmarket housing. Long and thin – about 1.5km long and 300m wide – the park is named after poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), the Shakespeare of the Netherlands.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the authorities turned the park into a temporary open-air dormitory for the droves of hippies who descended on Amsterdam. The sleeping bags are long gone and it’s now illegal to sleep in the park.

The park is now used by one and all – joggers, in-line skaters, children chasing ducks or flying kites, couples in love, families with prams, teenagers playing soccer, even acrobats practicing or performing – and can be crowded on weekends, but never annoyingly so.

There always seem to be people performing in the park, and on a summer day a great place to follow the action is the upper terrace of Café Vertigo (p192). Also check out the open-air theatre (p202) and the lovely ponds and rose gardens.

VONDELPARK Map p116
As vital to Amsterdam as Rembrandt, canals and coffeeshops, on a sunny day there’s no place better than the Vondelpark. As people from all walks of life descend on this sprawling equivalent to New York’s Central Park, a party atmosphere ensues. Some kick back by reading a book, others hook up with friends to share a spiff or cradle a beer at one of the cafés, while others trade songs on beat-up guitars. The Vondelpark offers an abundance of ponds, lawns, gardens and winding footpaths that encourage visitors to get out and explore.

FILMMUSEUM Map p116
☎ 589 14 00; www.filmmuseum.nl; Vondelpark 3
Not a museum with displays as such, the Filmmuseum has a large collection of memorabilia and a priceless archive of films that are screened in two theatres, often with live music. One theatre contains the Art Deco interior of Cinema Parisien, an early Amsterdam cinema. The information centre (☎ 589 14 35; Vondelstraat 69-71; admission free; ☎ 1-5pm Mon-Fri) has loads of books and DVDs that can be viewed in booths.

The museum’s grand Café Vertigo (p192), with its theatrical balcony and expansive outdoor seating, is a popular meeting place overlooking the park. On summer evenings films are shown on the terrace.

At the time of writing the Filmmuseum was due to reopen in 2009 in a sleek new building in Amsterdam-Noord (Map p158-9).

HOLLANDSCHE MANEGE Map p116
☎ 618 09 42; www.dehollandschemanege.nl; Vondelstraat 140; ☎ 9am–10pm
Just outside the Vondelpark is the neoclassical Hollandsche Manege, an indoor riding school inspired by the famous Spanish Riding School in Vienna. Designed by AL van Gendt and built in 1882, the building was fully restored in the 1980s (but kept its charming horse-head façade). After you reach the arena, turn left and right again through the stable to the rear, up the stairs and into the café. You can sip a beer or coffee and, from the balcony, watch the instructor put the horses through their paces.

ORGELPARK Map p116
☎ 515 81 11; www.orgelpark.nl; Gerard Brandtstraat 26; tickets adult/child under 12yr/student & senior €12.50/5.75
Not a park as we know it, but a new stage for organ music located in a lovely restored church on the edge of the Vondelpark. The Orgelpark has three (soon to be four) big organs, and every year puts on over 100 events including concerts of classical, jazz and improvised music. Concerts are typically on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 8.15pm, and every Wednesday at 12.30pm there are free performances by organ students.

DE VONDELTUIN Map p116
☎ 664 50 91; www.vondeltuin.nl; Vondelpark 7; skate rental 1/2/3hr adult £5/7.50/10; Mar-Oct
Located near the Amstelveenseweg entrance at the southwestern end of the
FRIDAY NIGHT SKATE
This weekly event (www.fridaynightskate.com) is a great way to see the city. You’ll also get to meet new people: hundreds of in-line skaters (perhaps thousands in peak season) gather at 8pm near the Filmmuseum in the Vondelpark, for departure at 8.30pm. The route varies each week, but generally it’s between 15km and 20km; expect the whole skate to finish by 10.30pm.

Skaters should be advanced and able to brake well; bring a helmet and knee protection. Even so, organisers caution, skating is at your own risk. The skate is cancelled if streets are wet, meaning that on average it actually takes place about twice a month.

VONDELKERK Map p116
Vondelstraat 77; 8am-6pm
Architect Pierre Cuypers’ favourite church (1870–80), it suffered from a lack of funds during construction and a fire in 1904, and was marked for demolition in 1978. It’s a charming steepled church, featuring a fascinating series of shapes with an octagon at its base. People in the offices inside are happy to let you in for a peek.
DE PIJP

Drinking & Smoking p192; Eating p171; Shopping p153; Sleeping p222

De Pijp is called the ‘Quartier Latin’ of Amsterdam thanks to its lively mix of people: labourers, intellectuals, immigrants and prostitutes, and now gays, lesbians and an ever-increasing number of higher-income professionals.

Enclosed by the Amstel in the east, Stadhouderskade in the north, Hobbenakade in the west and the Amstelkanaal in the south, this district is a large island connected to the rest of the city by 16 bridges. The district’s name, ‘the Pipe’ (originally the ‘YY neighbourhood’), presumably reflects its straight, narrow streets that are said to resemble the stems of old clay pipes, but nobody really knows. There is a surprising number of attractions for an area that began as the city’s first 19th-century slum.

Its early shoddy tenement blocks, some of which collapsed even as they were being built in the 1860s, provided cheap housing not just for newly arrived workers drawn by the city’s industrial revolution, but also for students, artists, writers and other poverty-stricken individuals. In the 1960s and ‘70s many of the working-class inhabitants left for greener pastures and the government began refurbishing the tenement blocks for immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. Now these immigrants are also moving out and De Pijp is attracting a wealthier breed of locals who are doing up apartments and lending the neighbourhood a more gentrified air.

East of Sarphatipark (below), near the Amstel, is Kabouterhuis (Gnome House; Map p119; Centuurbaan 251-255). Its woodwork façade incorporates a couple of gnomes playing ball, a reference to the surname of the original owner, Van Ballegooijen (literally, ‘of ball-throwing’).

On the western border of De Pijp, and within view of the Rijksmuseum, there’s a little red-light district along Ruysdaelkade, opposite Hobbenakade.

ALBERT CUYPMARKT Map p119

Albert Cuypstraat; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat
Amsterdam’s largest and busiest market is legendary for its huge variety – aromatic stalls selling Dutch cheese, olives, herbs and spices, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables. Clothes and other general goods are on sale too, often cheaper than anywhere else. If you want to experience the ‘real’ Amsterdam at its multicultural best, you’re in the right place. The market was named after landscape painter Albert Cuyp (1620–91), whose paintings are in the Rijksmuseum.

The surrounding area teems with cosy cafés and eateries, many with an exotic flavour, as well as stylish shops and bars.

HEINEKEN EXPERIENCE Map p119

Tel: 523 96 66; www.heinekenexperience.com; Stadhouderskade 78; admission €11 (under 18yr only with adult supervision); 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-May, to 7pm daily Jun-Aug
Right on the site of the old Heineken brewery you can take a self-guided tour that’s tantamount to brew-worship. You can learn the history of the Heineken family, find out how the logo has evolved, and follow the brewing process from water all the way through to bottling. Along the way you can watch Heineken commercials from around the world, join a Heineken bottle on its life’s journey and drive a virtual dray horse.

If all this PR gets to be too much, you can drown your sorrows at free ‘tasting’ sessions at the end of the tour. Three glasses per person may be consumed – Homer Simpson would feel right at home. (Note: no smoking of any kind is permitted.) Allow 75 minutes for your visit, and expect lots of company; come before 11am to beat the crowds.

The actual brewery closed in 1988 due to inner-city congestion, and since then the building has been used only for tours and administration. The company’s directorate is in the low-key premises across the canal. Heineken beer is brewed at a larger plant in ‘s-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch), in the south of the country, and also at the largest brewery in Europe at Zoeterwoude, located near Leiden.

SARPHATIPARK Map p119

Centuurbaan; 24hr
This diverse little park was named after Samuel Sarphati (1813–66), a Jewish doctor, businessman and urban innovator. The grounds are a thoughtful mix of ponds,
DE DAGERAAD  Map p119
Dawn Housing Project; Pieter Lodewijk Takstraat; ☑️: open to the public
Following the key Housing Act of 1901, which forced the city to rethink neighbour-
hood planning and condemn slums, the Dageraad housing estate was developed for
poorer families between 1918 and 1923. One of the most original Amsterdam
School architects, Piet Kramer, drew up plans for this idiosyncratic complex in
collaboration with Michael de Klerk. The swirling contours of the main tower have
been compared to a butter churn.

Plantage, Eastern Islands & Eastern Docklands

Drinking & Smoking p192; Eating p173; Shopping p153; Sleeping p222

Immediately east of the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood lies the very leafy district known as the
Plantage.

The 19th-century discovery of diamonds in South Africa led to a revival of Amsterdam’s
diamond industry and the Jewish elite began to move into the Plantage (Plantation), where
they built imposing town villas.

Until then the Plantage was a district of parks and gardens, named after the plantations
the Dutch tended in their colonies. In the 18th century, wealthy residents rented parcels of land
here to use as gardens, and the area developed into a weekend getaway with teahouses, variety
theatres and other establishments where the upper class relaxed in green surroundings.

East of Centraal Station and north of the Medieval Centre, Nieuwmarkt and Plantage
areas, the islands of Kattenburg, Wittenburg and Oostenburg were constructed in the
1650s to handle the rapidly expanding sea-
borne trade.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) set itself up on the eastern island of Oostenburg,
where it established warehouses, rope yards, workshops and docks for the maintenance
of its fleet. Private shipyards and dockwork-
ners’ homes dominated the central island of
Wittenburg. City architect Daniel Stalpaert’s
Oosterkerk (1671) on Wittenburgergracht
was the last, and the least monumental, of the
four ‘compass churches’ (the others were the
Noorderkerk, Westerkerk and Zuiderkerk).

Admiralty offices and buildings arose on the western island of Kattenburg, and warships were
fitted out in the adjoining naval dockyards that are still in use today.

North and east of the Eastern Islands, the Eastern Docklands, a one-time shipyard and
warehouse district, sat derelict for decades, despite some excellent warehouse-style buildings.
Recently, though, it’s been the focus of a huge amount of attention from architects and archi-
ecture critics for its elaborate updates and extremely adventurous new construction. If you’re
looking for one place to see the cutting edge of Dutch – and indeed European – architecture,
this is the place to come. When complete, there will be more than 8000 dwellings and 17,000
inhabitants.

PLANTAGE

The key attraction here is the Artis Zoo (right); behind the characteristic eagle-topped gates
you’ll find Europe’s oldest zoo. The Hortus
Botanicus (p123) has been a herb garden since
1683 and is a repository of the valuable seeds
and plants brought back by ships of the Dutch
East India Company.

Across from the botanical garden lies the
Wertheimpark, a brilliant shady spot for laz-
ing by the canal Nieuwe Herengracht. It also
contains a memorial to the victims of the
Auschwitz concentration camp, their trag-
ey symbolized by shards of broken glass.

Nearby, you can delve into the history of
the Dutch resistance at the Verzetsmuseum
(p123).

ARTIS ZOO  Map p122
☎ 523 34 00; www.artis.nl; Plantage Kerklaan
38-40; adult/senior/child 3-9yr/child under 3yr
€17.50/16.50/14/free; ☑️ 9am-5pm, to 6pm in
summer

The world’s third-largest zoo (and the
oldest in mainland Europe) is the place
to bring children in Amsterdam. Laid out
in the former Plantage gardens, locals
as well as tourists visit to stroll the lush,
HORTUS BOTANICUS  Map p122

**625 90 21; www.hortus-botanicus.nl; Plantage Middenlaan 24; admission free; 11am-4pm, closed Yom Kippur**

This historic theatre – first known as the Artis Theatre after its inception in 1892 – quickly became a hub of cultural life in Amsterdam, staging major dramas and operettas. In WWII the occupying Germans turned it into a ‘show theatre’ for Jews, then a detention centre for Jews awaiting deportation. Up to 80,000 Jews passed through here on their way to the death camps.

In 1961 the building was demolished except for the façade and a bit of the interior, which became a memorial. Glass panels are engraved with the names of all Jewish families deported, and upstairs is a modest exhibit hall with photos and artefacts of Jewish life before and during the war.

**VERZETSMUSEUM** Map p122

**620 25 35; www.verzetsmuseum.org; Plantage Kerklaan 61; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-15yr €5.50/free/3; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat-Mon**

This museum shows, in no uncertain terms, how much courage it takes to actively resist an adversary so ruthless that you can’t trust neighbours, friends or even family. The exhibits give an excellent insight into the difficulties faced by those who fought the occupation from within – as well as the minority who went along with the Nazis. Topics include the concepts of active and passive resistance, how the illegal press operated, how 300,000 people were kept in hiding and how all this could be funded. Labels are in Dutch and English.

**ENTREPOTDOK** Map p122

Alexanderplein

The area east of the Plantage was the stomping ground of the VOC, aka the Dutch East India Company, which grew rich on sea trade in the 17th century. The VOC owned this 500m row of warehouses, conveniently located in a customs-free zone and the largest storage depot in Europe at the time. Some of the original façades have been preserved, and the facility has been converted into desirable
offices, apartments and nice cafés, with tables at the water’s edge (see p193).

DE GOOYER WINDMILL Map p122
Funenkade 5

This 18th-century grain mill is the sole survivor of five windmills that once stood in this part of town. It moved to its current spot in 1814, when the nearby Oranje-Nassau barracks were built and blocked the wind. The mill was fully renovated in 1925 and is now a private home. Alongside, the public baths were converted into the Brouwerij ‘t IJ (p192) in 1985. The mill makes a postcard canvas when seen from the central harbour, looking west down the Nieuwe Vaart canal.

MUIDERPOORT Map p122
Alexanderplein

This grand classical arch was built in 1770 as a gateway to the city. On the south side you’ll see the Amsterdam emblem of three St Andrews’ crosses, while on the other side there’s the previous emblem, of a cog ship. In 1811 Napoleon rode triumphantly through the gate with his royal entourage, and promptly demanded food for his ragged troops. The 1st floor, just under the grey dome, is now occupied by a financial advisors body.

EASTERN ISLANDS
When the Plantage was constructed in the 1680s, the original sea dyke was moved north to what are now the Hoogte Kadkijd and Laagte Kadijk (the high and low sections of the dyke). Apart from the impressive Scheepvaartmuseum (right), the only sight out here is Energética, a quirky array of transformers, street lamps and crackling generators.

ENERGETICA Map p122
422 12 27; Hoogte Kadijk 400; adult/child under 12yr €3/free; 10am-4pm Mon-Fri

Housed in a former power station, this quirky museum has a bewildering array of whizz-bang equipment that conjures up visions of mad scientists. Galleries are named after the equipment they display. In one of the 10 rooms you’ll find a model of a T-shaped prong, which is used to hold the propeller in place. Another contains a T-shaped prong, which is used to hold the propeller in place. Another contains an enormous V-shaped prong. There’s also an early refrigerator that resembles a brass cement-mixer. Its guides are volunteers, some of them retired engineers, and they’ll enthusiastically escort you through centuries of technological history.

NEDERLANDS SCHEEPVAARTMUSEUM Map p122
Netherlands Shipping Museum; 923 22 22; www.scheepvaartmuseum.nl; Kattenburgerplein 1; ship Amsterdam adult/child under 6yr/senior & child 6-17yr €4/free/4; 10am-5pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep–mid-Jun

Since 1981, this historic admiralty building has housed one of world’s most extensive collections of maritime memorabilia. Early shipping routes, naval combat, fishing and whaling are all explained in loving detail, and there are 500 models of boats and ships. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the museum was shut till mid-2009 for a major renovation.

You can, however, visit a full-scale replica of the United East India Company’s 700-tonne Amsterdam, one of the largest ships of the fleet. Actors in 18th-century costume re-create shipboard life, and you’ll see the Great Cabin is beautifully set for an elegant dinner. The ship is moored outside NEMO (p99).

WERF MUSEUM ‘T KROMHOUT Map p122
627 67 77; www.machinemuseum.nl; Hoogte Kadijk 147; adult/child €4.75/2.75; 10am-3pm Tue

On the outer side of the dyke is an 18th-century wharf that still repairs boats in its western hall. The eastern hall is a museum devoted to shipbuilding and even more to the indestructible marine engines that were designed and built here. Anyone with an interest in marine engineering will love the place; others will probably want to move on. Signage is almost entirely in Dutch only.

EASTERN DOCKLANDS
There are few sights in the Eastern Docklands, but all the new construction is well worth a look. A good place to start is the wavy roof of the Passenger Terminal, where huge cruise ships moor, and the sparkling performance halls of the Muziekgebouw aan ‘t IJ (opposite). The wonderful Press Museum (opposite) is full of colourful ad placards.

BICYCLES: THE MAN-MACHINE RULES
While researching this book, we couldn’t help but take notes on some of the better bicycle sightings on Amsterdam’s streets:

- A man with one leg in plaster pedalling his bike with the other leg, with crutches strapped to his back.
- A man riding a bike with a blow-up sex doll strapped to his back.
- Four drunks riding one bike.
- A woman riding a bike while wearing stilettos and with her G-string showing.
- A girl riding side-saddle while kissing the boy piloting the bike.
- A customised bicycle modelled after Dennis Hopper’s hog in Easy Rider.
- A man riding with one hand while holding a plate-glass window with the other, seemingly oblivious to the threat of severed arteries in the event of emergency braking.
- A man who must have been over 100 years old riding a bicycle at about 2km/h.
- A woman riding a bicycle weaving and wobbling all over the place, her vision almost totally obscured by a massive bunch of flowers.
- A group of kids playing football while riding bicycles.
- Numerous mothers riding three-wheelers with toddlers in a barrow attached to the front or in a box towed along behind.
- A bicycle barrelling down a side street with no-one on it.
- An abandoned bicycle that looked as though it had been twisted into a figure 8.
- A bicycle up a tree.
- Bicycles in canals.
- Dutch police riding the same crappy bicycles as everyone else.
- Almost everyone steering their bikes with one hand and talking on a mobile phone or eating a sandwich with the other, while perilously weaving in and out of trams, trucks and cars.

Tips
- When you don’t ride, don’t play the dumb tourist and stand in the city’s dedicated bike lanes staring at the sights: you’ll be knocked over by a speeding bike before you can say ‘moedereneuker’, because here you give way to them.
- When riding, watch for cars. Cyclists have the right of way, except when vehicles are entering from the right, although not all motorists respect this. Also watch for dumb tourists (see above).
- Watch out for tram tracks – if your wheel gets caught in one, you will break your bones.
- By law, after dusk you need to use lights on your bike (front and rear) and have reflectors on both wheels.
- Always lock your bike securely. Bike theft is rampant.

Fast Facts
Amsterdam has 400km of bike paths, identified by signage and their reddish colour. There are an estimated 600,000 bicycles in Amsterdam at any given time. The bike-parking garage at Centraal Station has space for 2500 bicycles.

Find a Bike
- Visit the Fietsfabriek (p153) for custom bicycles.
- Combine two Dutch passions, beer and bicycles: hire a Fietscale (p185), a mobile, pedal-powered bar that seats up to 17 people per bike, with a big beer keg attached. One pedals, the other sits at the bar and drink.

See p240 for a list of bike-rental shops.

MUIRKEGBOUW AAN ‘T IJ Map p122
Tickets 788 20 00, office 788 20 10; www.muziekgebouwnl; Piet Heinakde 1; bldg admission free, performance prices vary; ticket office noon-7pm Mon-Sat

The bold and beautiful ‘Music Building on the IJ’ brings the long-standing theatre Js-breker (which changed its name to the new building) and the jazz house Bimhuis (p197) under one roof. This performance complex was some 20 years in the making, and designed by the Danish firm 3XNielsen.
The caretaker of Dutch journalism history, this museum is loads more interesting to non-Dutch speakers than it may sound. Housed in sleek new premises, it has a large collection of historic newspapers (going all the way back to 1600), political and editorial cartoons and press photos, as well as a great stock of old publicity posters, many of them quite amusing.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE EASTERN DOCKLANDS

Cycling Tour

1 Lloyd Hotel Arrive by tram 26, take a moment to explore the lobby bar and shop of the landmark Lloyd Hotel (p223). As you pedal along Borneokade, across the shipping channel you’ll see former warehouses used by the cocoa trade, while closer in are large yachts and commercial vessels.

2 Scheepstimmermanstraat Once you round the end of the island onto Stokerkade, you’ll get a good view across the former shipping channel to Scheepstimmermanstraat, a fascinating collection of houses where owners were free to build to their own designs, making it the most colourful and diverse group of houses in this district. You can cross the little footbridge in the middle of the channel to see the homes from the front (although they’re better viewed from the water side).

3 Red footbridge You won’t be able to ride a bike across the red footbridge – you’ll barely be able to walk it – but it certainly demands a look-see. Take a left on Stuurmankade and head west. Take the flat bridge at Kwarterveenstraat.

4 Whale The footbridge deposits you by the Whale apartment building (1999), the landmark of Sporenburg Eiland. Its sloping roof and base make it seem more imposing than its dozen stores would suggest, but also somehow more open and airy. From here make a dogleg left and then right, and you’re on the Verbindingsdam to KNSM Eiland, named for the Royal Netherlands Shipping Company.

5 Piraeus Once over the bridge, follow the path to the right towards Levantkade. The heavy black buildings on the left are the stark Piraeus housing complex by Hans Kolhoff and Christian Rapp.

6 Barcelonaplein Head around the inlet at Levantplein, and you’ll see Bruno Albert’s Barcelonaplein with its wrought-iron ‘gate’ spanning the entire height of the façade. This ‘superblock’ (170m long) is built in neoclassical style and has a round plaza at its centre. The harbour views are quite sought-after by young professionals.

7 Venetië Continue on Levantkade to the end and the Venetië housing complex (1996). This giant ring of white single-family homes bristles with balconies, loggias and voids in between to create a feeling of space and comfortable asymmetry.

8 Azartplein From Venetië, head west along KNSM-Laan. The apartment buildings on the right are named for Greek philosophers, giving a whole new meaning to ‘neoclassical’. The broad artery of KNSM-Laan will take you to Azartplein, where you can catch a path through the residential neighbourhood that runs next to Sumatrakade. This route gives a good impression of what it’s like to live in these communities, with kids playing and locals localising.

9 Jan Schaeferbrug The path ends near the Jan Schaeferbrug, the bridge named for an activist city councillor who famously said ‘You can’t live in claptrap’. You can take the bridge back toward Piet Heinkade (turn right and it eventually drops you at Centraal Station).

CYCLE FACTS

Start Lloyd Hotel
End Jan Schaeferbrug
Distance 6km
Duration 2½ hours
OOSTERPARK & AROUND

Drinking & Smoking p194; Eating p174; Sleeping p224

Named after the lush English-style landscape park at its centre, the southeastern district of Oosterpark was built in the 1880s. The large eponymous park was the first laid out in Amsterdam.

At the time, the city’s diamond workers suddenly found they had money to spare, thanks to the discovery of the gems in South Africa. About a third of Jewish families worked in the diamond industry, and many of them could finally afford to leave the Jewish quarter for this new district beyond the Plantage (the delectable parklands where only the wealthiest could afford to live). Signs of the lower-middle-class heritage have long since disappeared and now it’s similar to the other 19th-century slums that arose around the Canal Belt. Much of the real estate in this area is owned by the University of Amsterdam.

On the northern fringe you’ll find the acclaimed Tropenmuseum (below), which gives insights into Dutch colonial activities in the East Indies. The park has a large pond and several monuments, including a memorial to murdered filmmaker Theo van Gogh (see p44). This 4.5m-high work of curved steel is named the Scream. The park also host numerous events such as main stages for the annual Holland Festival and the Roots Festival.

To the south lies the Amstelstation, a key metro and railway station of use to some 50,000 travellers daily. The reason to visit is the several intriguing wall murals by artist Peter Alma (1886–1969), including an idealised depiction of trains converging on an amptywheel in an unlikely landscape of mountains and cities.

TROPENMUSEUM Map p129
€ 568 82 15; www.kit.nl; Linnaeusstraat 2;
Adult/child under 6yr/child 6-17yr/senior or student €7.50/free/3.75/5; 10am-5pm
Completed in 1926 to house the Royal Institute of the Tropics, and still a leading research institute for tropical hygiene and agriculture, this fascinating museum houses a large collection of colonial artefacts, presented with insight, imagination and a fair amount of multimedia.

A huge central hall, with galleries over three floors, seeks to re-create daily life in several tropical countries. You can visit an African market, a Mexican-style cantina and a life-sized yurta (traditional felt hut) and hear push-button recordings of native musical instruments. An absorbing part of the exhibit is the Cabinet of Curiosities, the fascinating display of exotica (found in every good colonialist’s home) containing ritual masks, long dug-out canoes and dead butterflies.

There’s a great giftshop, and the pleasant Soeterijn Café and the Ekeko Restaurant (€ 568 86 44) serve food that relates to current exhibits and performances.

The Tropeninstituut Theater (€ 568 82 15; box office noon-4pm Mon-Sat) has a separate entrance and screens films as well as hosting music, dance, plays and other performances by visiting artists.

OOSTERPARK Map p129
568 82 15; p129
Adult/child under 6yr/child 6-17yr/senior or student €7.50/free/3.75/5; 10am-5pm
The sprawling park was laid out in the 1880s to accommodate the nouveaux riches of the city’s diamond traders who benefited from the South African diamond boom. The park makes a fine diversion if you’re heading to the nearby Tropenmuseum (left). Between the museum and the large pond stands the Spreuksteen, a little Hyde Park Corner where orators of every ilk can have their say; see www.spreuksteen.nl for the erratic schedule.

FRANKENDAEL Map p129
€ 774 43 99; Middenweg 72; free admission; Gardens dawn till dusk
As early as the 18th century, wealthy Amsterdamers would spend their summers in plush country retreats south of Plantage on a tract of drained land called Watergraafsmear. The last survivor of this era is Frankendael, an elegant Louis XIV-style mansion; at the time of writing it was due to reopen in mid-2008 after a sweeping restoration. The house backs onto a formal garden that’s open to the public, but be sure to view the forecourt with gushing fountain and statues of Bacchus and Ceres. The property is swathed in a larger landscape garden with walking paths, decorative bridges and the remains of follies.
OUTER DISTRICTS

North of the Jordaan, the wharves and warehouses of the Western Islands (Westelijke Eilanden) were abuzz with activity in the early 17th century. The Golden Age was taking off, the Dutch still dominated the sea trade, and money flowed into this old harbour like beer from the barrel. The wealthy Bicker Brothers, both mayors of Amsterdam, even built their own Bickerseiland here to cater for their ships.

Few tourists make it out here, partly because the district is shielded from view by a railway line, but it’s a wonderful area to explore, with cute drawbridges and handsome old warehouses nestled in quiet lanes. Many addresses have been converted to charming homes and artists studios. The Prinseniland and Realenield (named after the 17th-century merchant Reynier Reael) are the prettiest of the isles. The narrow bridge linking the two, the Drieharingenbrug (‘Three Herrings Bridge’; Map pp58–9), is a quaint replacement for the pontoon that used to be pulled aside to let ships through.

By all means visit the Zandhoek (Map pp58–9), a photogenic stretch of waterfront. Now a modern yacht harbour, back in the 17th century it was a ‘sand market’, where ships would purchase bags of the stuff for ballast. Many a VOC skipper lived hereabouts, carousing in local bars and enjoying the view over the IJ between voyages. The street south of Zandhoek is the Galgenstraat (Gallows St), which on a clear day afforded a look at the executions in Amsterdam-Noord.

In those days it was called entertainment.

The sights become more scattered as you move away from Amsterdam’s lovely old centre, but the nuggets you’ll find out here are definitely worth the trip: top-rated art museums, stylish architecture and lush greenery in recreation areas, just for starters.

WESTERGASFABRIEK Map pp58–9

586 07 10; www.westergasfabriek.nl; Haarlemmerweg 8-10

A stone’s throw northwest of the Jordaan, this late-19th-century Dutch Renaissance complex was the city gasworks until it was all but abandoned in the 1960s, its soil contaminated. The fabriek has re-emerged, thankfully, as a new cultural and recreational park, with lush lawns and a long pool suitable for wading, sports facilities and even child care. The aesthetic of surrounding Westerpark goes from urban plan to reedy wilderness, with marshes and shallow waterfalls.

Inside the main buildings you’ll find cinemas, cafés, restaurants, nightspots and creative office spaces. Watch for events in the Westergasterras (p191), a slick, postindustrial party venue.

HET SCHIP HOUSING ESTATE Map pp58–9

418 28 85; www.hetschip.nl; Spaarnammerplantsoen 140; adult/student/senior €5/2.75; 1-5pm Thu-Sun

This remarkable housing estate (1920) is a flagship of the Amsterdam School of architecture (p53), and is located west of Amsterdam harbour. The triangular block, loosely resembling a ship, was designed by Michel de Klerk for railway employees. The rocket-like tower has no purpose apart from linking the wings of the complex. The museum shows workers apartments and the ex-post office at the ‘bow’ of the ‘ship’ with the original interior. It is now home to the Documentation Centre for Social Housing, with a permanent display of architecture called Postie Restante. Look out for the yellow telefooncel where workers would dial the telephone numbers for customers.

AMSTELPARK Map pp58–9

Europaboulevard; 8am-dusk

South of the ringway, in the suburb of Buitenveldert, lies the vast Amstelpark, grounds of an international flower show in 1972. The park is a paradise for kids, with a petting zoo, minigolf, pony rides and a playground. In summer a miniature train chugs its way around the park. Other attractions include rose and rhododendron gardens, and art exhibitions are held in the Glazen Huis (Glass House), the Orangerie and the Papillon Gallery.

Just outside the south edge of the park you’ll see the Riekermolen. In a field south-west of the mill you’ll find a statue of a sitting Rembrandt, who made sketches here along the riverbank.

To get there, take the metro to Amsterdam RAI or tram 4.

OLYMPIC STADIUM Map pp58–9

305 44 00; Olympisch Stadion 21

The grand Olympic Stadium was designed by Jan Wils, a protégé of famous architect HP Berlage, and is functionalist in style. The arena was built for the 1928 summer Olympic Games, and has a soaring tower from which the Olympic Flame burned for the first time during competition. The stadium is classified as a national monument; today it hosts sporting events and concerts.

Much of the housing in southwest Amsterdam originates from the time of the 1928 Games. Many of the streets and squares in the area bear Greek names like Olympiaplein and Herculesstraat. Trams 16 and 24 go from Centraal Station direct to the stadium.

LIVING TOMORROW PAVILION

203 04 00; www.livtom.com; De Entrée 300, Amsterdam-Zuidoost; adult/student under 10yr/student 10-12yr €11.50/free/9; by reservation

A bathroom mirror that displays the latest news? Or a smart washing machine that keeps your red socks out of a white load? These are just a couple of the innovations on display at the Living Tomorrow Pavilion, a shoe-shaped home and office of the future. A spate of companies (among others, Philips, 3M and HP) show off their applications in a living and working environment. The curiously beautiful shape of the building itself comes from the idea of an object turned inside-out. Visits are by reservation only, and 1½ hour tours in both English and Dutch take place on Saturday.

AMSTERDAMSE BOS Map pp58–9

Amsterdam Woods; 545 61 00; www.amsterdamsebos.nl; Bosbaanweg 5; admission free; 8am-5pm

The product of a 1930s make-work programme, this woody recreation area a few kilometres southwest of Amsterdam is a boon for urban nature-lovers. You’ll find a petting zoo, a sports park, a rowing course with hire craft, and a pancake house, not to mention the open-air Amsterdamse Bos Theatre (p202) that stages plays in summer.

The forestry museum (Map pp58-9) is a 19th-century building that has been restored and adapted as a visitors centre. (The name is derived from their capital cities.) Members included Asger Jorn, Corneille, Constant and the great Karel Appel, but the group lasted for just three years (1948–51). Changing exhibits are on show as well; expect to see bold colours and busy designs. The art is less of a unified whole than a philosophy, inspired by Marxism, of using materials at hand to create painting, sculpture, even poetry.

Take bus 170 or 172 from Centraal Station or tram 5 to the end of the line in Amstelveen.

COBRA MUSEUM

547 50 50; www.cobra-museum.nl; Sandbergplein 1, Amstelveen; adult/child under 6yr/child 6-16yr/senior & student €7/free/2.50/4; 11am-5pm Tue-Sun

Artists from Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands formed the CoBrA movement after WWII. (The name is derived from their capital cities.) Members included Asger Jorn, Corneille, Constant and the great Karel Appel, but the group lasted for just three years (1948–51). Changing exhibits are on show as well; expect to see bold colours and busy designs. The art is less of a unified whole than a philosophy, inspired by Marxism, of using materials at hand to create painting, sculpture, even poetry.

Take bus 170 or 172 from Centraal Station or tram 5 to the end of the line in Amstelveen.

AMSTERDAM RAI Map pp58–9

549 12 12; www.rai.nl; Europaplein 22

This exhibition and conference centre (featured, by the way, in Jacques Tati’s 1971 film Trafic) is the largest such complex in the country. The building opened in 1961 and just keeps expanding, for the car, fashion, horse-jumping and 50-odd other shows held here every year. RAI stands for Rijwiel en Automobiel Industrie, the bicycle and auto association. To get there, take the metro to the Amsterdam RAI stop or tram 4.

ELECTRISCHE MUSEUMTRAMLIJN

AMSTERDAM Map pp58–9

Tram Museum Amsterdam; 673 75 38; www.museumtram.nl; Amstelveensweg 264; return ticket adult/senior & child €4/2; 11am-6pm Sun mid-Apr–Oct, plus 1pm & 3pm Wed Jul & Aug

Beyond the south-western extremities of the park, just north of the Olympic Stadium, is the former Haarlemmermeer Station, which houses the tram museum. Historic trams sourced from all over Europe run between here and Amstelveen, making a great outing for kids and adults alike. A return trip takes about 1 ¼ hours (see website for schedule) and skirts the large Amsterdamse Bos recreational area.

WESTERGASFABRIEK Map pp58–9

586 07 10; www.westergasfabriek.nl; Haarlemmerweg 8-10

A stone’s throw northeast of the Jordaan, this late-19th-century Dutch Renaissance complex was the city gasworks until it was all but abandoned in the 1960s, its soil contaminated. The fabriek has re-emerged, thankfully, as a new cultural and recreational park, with lush lawns and a long pool suitable for wading, sports facilities and even child care. The aesthetic of surrounding Westerpark goes from urban plan to reedy wilderness, with marshes and shallow waterfalls.

Inside the main buildings you’ll find cinemas, cafés, restaurants, nightspots and creative office spaces. Watch for events in the Westergasterras (p191), a slick, postindustrial party venue.
FURTHER AFIELD

KRÖLLER-MÜLLER MUSEUM
☎ 0318-591 627; www.hogeveluwe.nl; De Hoge Veluwe National Park; park only adult/child €73.50, park & museum adult/child €14/7, car surcharge €6; ☑ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun

Nestled within the Netherlands’ largest park, this delightful museum was once owned by Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller, a wealthy German-Dutch couple. He wanted hunting grounds, she wanted a museum site – they got both.

The museum has works by Picasso, Gris, Renoir, Sisley and Manet, but it’s the Van Gogh collection that makes it world-class. There’s also an evocative sculpture garden behind the museum. Ticket booths at each of the three entrances (Hoenderloo, Otterlo and Rijzenburg) provide basic information and useful maps. By car, take the A10 ring road to the A1 towards Amersfoort and Apeldoorn. Exit at Exit 19 (N304) and follow the signs. Trains to Apeldoorn (single/return €13/23.10) take just over one hour, plus a 20-minute bus ride from the train station into the park.

VILLAGES OF THE AMSTEL

Cycling Tour

1 Amstelpark Leave from the Amstelpark (p130), a pretty municipal park about 300m south of the A10 motorway, which has a rose garden, an open-air theatre and several cafés. Note that cycling isn’t allowed in the park.

2 Ouderkerk aan de Amstel A couple of kilometres south, along the quiet east bank of the Amstel, is Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, a pretty, affluent village (actually a few centuries older than Amsterdam) with plenty of riverside cafés and handsome houses.

3 Bullewijk River At Ouderkerk, cross the bridge over the Bullewijk River and turn left (east) opposite the ancient Jewish cemetery, following the right bank of the Bullewijk. You pass under the A9 motorway, and 1km further on, at a spot with a pleasant restaurant, the Waver River comes in from the right (south) – follow that.

4 De Ronde Hoep You’ll have great views of De Ronde Hoep, a wild, sparsely populated peat area drained by settlers about 1000 years ago. It attracts many birds, oblivious to Amsterdam’s skyscrapers looming in the distance. The Waver narrows and becomes the Oude Waver, and when you come to the two hand-operated bridges, you’ll clearly see that the land is below water level.

5 Bunker At the southern end of the route lies a squat riverside bunker, one of 38 defensive forts built around Amsterdam at the turn of the 20th century (and outmoded by the 1920s). Here you rejoin the Amstel and turn right (north), following the bank back toward Amstelveen.

6 Nes aan de Amstel Just north of here, the village of Nes aan de Amstel, across the river, has some delightful café-filled wooden terraces – admire them from a distance, as there’s no bridge close by.

7 Amstelpark Crossing north under the A9, the final leg of the journey provides a view of the modern skyline of Amsterdam-Zuidoost. An interesting diversion takes you across the bridge at Ouderkerk to the west bank and around the fringes of the green Amstel area, with oodles of all-too-cute garden allotments. The Amstelpark lies just to the north.

A DAM GOOD BIKE RIDE

Cycling Tour
1 Noordhollands Kanaal Take the free Buiksloterweg ferry from behind Centraal Station across the IJ, then continue 1km along the west bank of the Noordhollands Kanaal. Do a loop onto and over the second bridge, continue along the east bank for a few hundred metres and turn right under the freeway and along Nieuwendammerdijk past the Vliegenbos camping ground. Follow Schellingwouderdijk under the two major road bridges, when it becomes Durgerdамmerdijk, and you’re on your way.

2 Durgerdam The pretty town of Durgerdam, spread along the dyke, looks out across the water to IJburg, a major land-reclamation project with thousands of new homes. Further north, the dyke road passes several lakes and former sea inlets – low-lying, drained peat lands that are now key breeding sites for birds, among them plovers, spoonbills and herons. Climb the dyke at one of the vantage points for sweeping views to both sides.

CYCLE FACTS

Start Noordhollands Kanaal
End Noordhollands Kanaal
Distance 55km
Duration Seven to 10 hours
3 Uitdam The road – now called Uitdammerdijk – passes the town of Uitdam, whose 160 inhabitants can usually be found near the yacht harbour, the campground or the swimming pool, as there’s not much else goin’ down.

4 Marken Take the road leading right (east) and proceed along the causeway to the former island of Marken, a one-time fishing community in a startlingly isolate setting, with houses on piles.

5 Volendam From Marken, take the summer ferry (one-way adult/child €4.25/3.25, 30 minutes, 11am to 6pm, every 30 to 45 minutes mid-March through October) to Volendam. This picturesque fishing port has reinvented itself as a tourist town, but the back streets behind the harbour hold the most charm.

6 Monnickendam Head south along the sea dyke towards Monnickendam, with its many old fishing homes and 15th-century church. About 1.5km south of Monnickendam, turn right (southwest) towards Zuiderwode.

7 Broek in Waterland Continue to Broek in Waterland, a pretty hamlet with homes painted a particular shade of grey, ‘Broeker grijs’, after the landscapes painted here by Claude Monet and others. Then cycle along the south bank of the Broekervaart canal towards Het Schouw on the Noordhollands Kanaal.

8 Watergang Bird-watchers may want to head up the east bank towards Watergang and its bird sanctuary. Otherwise, cross the Noordhollands Kanaal (the bridge is slightly to the north) and follow the west bank back down to Amsterdam Noord; it’s straight pedal-all the way to the ferry that takes you back to Centraal Station.
top picks

- **Concerto** (p150)
  The place for settling many a musical score.
- **Noordermarkt** (p153)
  For art, antiques and assorted whatnots.
- **American Book Center** (p137)
  From art to Zen, all titles in English.
- **Droog Design** (p142)
  In Dutch, that means sizzling interiors.
- **Bloemenmarkt** (p150)
  Bag your beautiful bloomin’ bulbs here.
- **Puccini Bomboni** (p142)
  Sweet-smelling instruments of death by chocolate.
- **Santa Jet** (p148)
  How ’bout a grinning skull for someone you love?
- **Eva Damave** (p143)
  Tempting togs by a funky and unique stylist.
- **Miauw** (p146)
  Stock up on threads for all your nine lives.
- **Concrete** (p139)
  Where photos meet fashion under one roof.
Amsterdam was once the warehouse of the world, stuffed with riches from the far corners of the earth. The Dutch empire has gone the way of the dodo, but vendors here still have a knack of bringing you rare, exotic or just plain wacky goods. Sure, you may be able to find glowing Mexican shrines or banana-flavoured condoms back home, but Amsterdam has entire shops devoted to such items.

Some popular gifts include tulip bulbs, rounds of Gouda cheese and bottles of jenever (Dutch gin). Fantastic bargains are rare, but it’s worth chasing photographic art, recorded music, vintage and Dutch designer clothing, diamonds and antiquarian books. For a souvenir of quality, try a Delft blue vase – or a custom-made bong. There’s definitely something for everyone.

The Dutch have mastered the art of casual fashion, and it streams right out of the no-nonsense side of the national character. The result is simple, affordable and practical designs that don’t get caught in the spokes.

The best shops are in charming canal houses on cobbledstone streets, in a village-like ambience. The Negen Straatjes area has the best boutiques. But Amsterdam also has wonderful outdoor markets, from Waterlooplein’s vast fleamarket to more intimate, low-key venues where organic produce, spices and flowers are sold from carts on tree-lined squares.

SHOPPING STREETS
You won’t find any huge shopping malls in town, but you can scratch the chain-store itch on Nieuwendijk and in the Magna Plaza shopping gallery; the department and clothing stores of busy Kalverstraat and Leidsestraat are a little more upscale. Fancy PC Hooftstraat is for major fashion brands like Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.

The most satisfying browsing is among the pint-sized boutiques of the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys), within the Western Canal Belt. The Jordaan bristles with quirky shops and galleries, while antique and art buffs head for the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat in the Southern Belt.

OPENING HOURS
Generally, shops are open between 9am and 6pm Tuesday to Saturday, with the exception of Thursday, with late-night shopping until 9pm. Monday tends to have shorter hours, from noon till 6pm, while shops in the Canal Belt areas are generally open 1pm to 6pm Sunday.

Art galleries keep limited hours and are often only open afternoons from Wednesday to Sunday. Shops selling smart drugs tend to stay open into the evenings. Where hours vary significantly from these opening times, we’ve noted it in individual listings. Note, however, that many shops operate on limited schedules during summer holidays.

CONSUMER TAXES
The Dutch abbreviation for value-added tax is BTW, and it’s calculated into the purchase price. The standard rate of BTW is 19% (20% from 2009), while a reduced rate of 6% applies on certain items such as groceries and books.

Provided you are not a citizen of the European Union, and you are buying expensive items that you will export from the EU within three months, you may be entitled to a refund of the tax, minus a service fee.

The store must subscribe to the Global Refund system (look for the sticker in the window), your purchase there must total at least €50 in a single day, and you must request a Global Refund cheque at the time.

If you are departing the EU from Schiphol airport, present your goods along with your receipt, passport, air ticket and your Global Refund cheque at the Global Refund office in Terminal 3. You can receive cash, a credit to your credit card or a bank cheque.

If you leave the EU from another airport, inquire locally, but generally you must take your goods and documents to customs for authorisation.

BARGAINING
For a nation of born traders the Dutch don’t haggle much, if only because most retailers aren’t set up for it. Flea-markets, art galleries and antique shops are among the few places where you’ll be tempted to try.

CITY CENTRE
The old core contains Amsterdam’s greatest stock of emporia, from multilevel department stores to vendors of your favourite boudoir duds. In Nieuwmarkt, much of the action takes place at the Waterlooplein flea market, but veer away and you’ll discover home-grown shops that are much sweeter and more low-key.

MEIDEL CENTRE
HERMAN BROOD GALERIE
Map pp62-5  
Art & Antiques
☎ 623 37 66; Spuistraat 320
This gallery is dedicated to Herman Brood, Amsterdam’s legendary rocker and club promoter (1946–2001) who shone brightly before crashing big-time on drugs and alcohol. His oil paintings are upstairs from the busy Café Dante.

AMERICAN BOOK CENTER
Map pp62-5  
Books
☎ 625 55 37; www.abc.nl; Spui 12
Recently relocated here, this excellent five-storey store is the biggest source of English-language books in Amsterdam. Its greatest strengths are in the artsy ground-floor department, but upstairs there’s fiction and oodles of special-interest titles, plus a good travel-guidebook section. It also stocks foreign periodicals (eg the New York Times).

ATHENAEUM BOOKSHOP & NEWSAGENCY
Map pp62-5  
Books
☎ 622 62 48; Spui 14-16
This multilevel store on the square has a vast array of both usual and unusual books and cheerful, helpful staff. The separate newsagency on the corner is your best choice for international newspapers and magazines.

A SHOPPER’S GLOSSARY
Virtually any sales clerk you meet in Amsterdam will speak English, but to make things quick, here’s a short list of words you’re likely to encounter on signage:

kassa – cashier
kassakorting – discount taken at register
korting – discount, as in ‘25% korting’
lauatge dagen – final days
opruiming, uitverkoop – clearance sale
saldes or sale – sale
tot or t/m – up to, as in ‘tot 50% korting’
vanaf or va – literally ‘and up’, as in ‘€20 va’ (€20 and up). Note that this can be a clever ploy in which, for example, a clothing rack marked ‘€10 va’ includes just a few items at that price – the rest can be much higher.

AU BOUT DU MONDE
Map pp62-5  
Books
☎ 625 13 97; Singel 313; Mon-Sat
From angels to Zen, this tranquil two-storey shop stocks books on Eastern and Western philosophy, Tibetan Buddhism, Freud, alternative medicine and pretty much anything else for your religious, psychological or spiritual needs.

WATERSTONE’S
Map pp62-5  
Books
☎ 638 38 21; Kalverstraat 152
Four stores and a central location near the Spui make Waterstone’s a great resource for English-language books (often discounted). There’s an emphasis on travel guides, magazines, newspapers and novels.

PINOKKIO
Books
Map pp62-5  
Children’s
☎ 622 89 14; www.pinokkio.net; Magna Plaza, Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 182
This pleasant shop stocks wooden and educational toys, rocking horses, wooden vehicles, replica canal houses, mobiles and, of course, lots of Pinocchio dolls. Since this is Holland, there’s also a Miffy section.

C&A
Map pp62-5  
Clothing
☎ 530 71 50; Beurspassage 2
There’s little that’s fancy about this Euro-chain (what’s a designer brand?), but it’s a fine choice if you need inexpensive knockabout clothes. Choose carefully and you may even find some wares with style.
**H&M** Map pp62-5  Clothing  
- **624 06 24; Kalverstraat 125**  
This fashion chain store has up-to-the-minute clothes for all ages at several locations. You may find higher quality elsewhere, but prices are remarkably low.

**UNIVERSITY SHOP** Map pp62-5  Clothing  
- **525 36 55; Spui 23**  
The University of Amsterdam has a lovely logo, and you can wear it on your lovely person with T-shirts or sweatshirts, or carry it around on book bags or bottle openers.

**DE BIJENKORF** Map pp62-5  Department Store  
- **621 80 80; Dam 1**  
The city’s most fashionable department store in the highest-profile location, facing the Royal Palace, it has a small restaurant store in the highest-profile location, facing the Royal Palace, it has a small restaurant and also a clothing department. Exclusive and classic clothes for the whole family are featured here. Men are particularly well catered for with labels like Ralph Lauren and Armani, best purchased during the brilliant 50%-off sales, but there is still plenty for the ladies. Note the amazing chandeliers and beautiful glass cupola.

**MAISON DE BONNETIERE** Map pp62-5  Department Store  
- **531 34 00; Rokin 140**  
Exquisite and classic clothes for the whole family are featured here. Men are particularly well catered for with labels like Ralph Lauren and Armani, best purchased during the brilliant 50%-off sales, but there is still plenty for the ladies. Note the amazing chandeliers and beautiful glass cupola.

**VROOM & DREESMANN** Map pp62-5  Department Store  
- **622 01 71; Kalverstraat 201**  
Slightly more upmarket than Hema, this national chain is popular for its clothing and cosmetics. Its fabulous cafeteria, La Place, serves well-priced, freshly prepared salads, hot dishes and pastries.

**FEMALE & PARTNERS** Map pp62-5  Erotica/Clothing  
- **620 9152; www.femaleandpartners.nl; Spui 100**  
Everything you need for your inner dominatrix…or the one who’s waiting for you at home. Female & Partners is filled with clothing, undies, leather and toys for women and those who love them. Thank goodness men aren’t the only ones who get to have fun!

**LAUNDRY INDUSTRY** Map pp62-5  Fashion  
- **420 25 54; www.laundryindustry.com; Spui 1**  
Hippie types head here for well-cut, well-designed clothes by this Dutch design house. Watch glamorous couples coveting soft leather coats and perfectly fitted suits. There’s another branch at Magna Plaza, but the Spui location is the main store.

**CRACKED KETTLE** Map pp62-5  Food & Drink  
- **624 07 45; www.crackedkettle.nl; Raamstreeg 3**  
Cheers! Run by a couple of home brewers, this delightful shop stocks about 80 Dutch beers as well as German Rauchbier (smoked beer), Belgian Kriek and Great Divide Yeti Imperial Stout, to name a few. It also carries beer glasses, and ships worldwide.

**DE BIERKONING** Map pp62-5  Food & Drink  
- **625 23 36; Paleisstraat 125**  
Beer. Just beer. Some 950 varieties including hundreds from Belgium, Germany, Britain, and, of course, Holland – plus glasses, mugs and books on home brewing. It’s centrally located right near the Royal Palace, so you have no excuse not to go.

**LE CELLIER** Map pp62-3  Food & Drink  
- **638 65 73; Spuistraat 116**  
You’ll find a splendid selection of Dutch jenever, absinthe, spirits and liqueurs, a super range of Old and New World wines and around a hundred beers.

**BEAUFORT** Map pp62-5  Jewellery  
- **625 91 31; www.beaufortieradenl.nl; Grimburgwal 11; Tue-Sat**  
Exquisite handcrafted contemporary jewellery is created on site: many of the pieces combine silver and gold. The necklaces and rings are particularly beautiful.

**BLUE NOTE** Map pp62-5  Music  
- **428 10 29; Gravenstraat 12**  
This is the place for jazz in Amsterdam. You’ll find a wide range of artists – Dutch, European and American – as well as Japanese pressings, lounge music, and a few listening decks.

**FAME MUSIC** Map pp62-5  Music  
- **638 25 25; Kalverstraat 2-4**  
This megastore has an enormous number of titles with broad (and mainstream) collections of pop, jazz and classical CDs, DVDs and videos. It also sells tickets to big concerts. Sale prices can be quite reasonable.

**RITUALS** Map pp62-5  Perfume & Cosmetics  
- **344 92 22; Kalverstraat 73**  
The flagship store of this heavenly brand (now a successful global franchise) turns out sublime products focused on enlivening everyday cleaning, refreshing, relaxing and energising rituals – from bathing to washing the dishes. We especially love its Rice Scrub, Hammam Body Mud and Lotus Massage Oil.

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**Clothing sizes**

**Women’s clothing**

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**Women’s shoes**

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**AMSTERDAM PHOTOGRAPHY** Map pp62-5  Photography  
- **621 12 56; www.scotteggert.com; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 114; noon-8pm**  
Classic and experimental shots of Amsterdam at its most photogenic, especially at night. Photos can be printed up to A2 size, matted and framed. Its congenial owner, Scott from New York, is happy to mail your choice home.

**CONCRETE** Map pp62-5  Photography/Fashion  
- **0900 262 73 83; www.concrete.nl; Spuistraat 250**  
Part exhibition space showing rotating exhibitions of adventurous photography, graphics and illustration, and part cool clothes store. Features floating racks of zany Walter van Beirendonck T-shirts and jeans, Dutch labels Raak and D-Cent, plus interesting gear from Maharishi, Obey, Buddhist Punk, Michiko Koshino, Homecore and Minus Ung.

**KALVERTOREN SHOPPING CENTRE** Map pp62-5  Shopping Centre  
- **www.kalvertoren.nl; Singel 457**  
This popular, modern shopping centre contains Vroom & Dreesmann, a small Hema, and big-brand fashion stores like Replay, Quiksilver, Levi’s, Timberland and DKNY.

**MAGNA PLAZA** Map pp62-5  Shopping Centre  
- **626 91 99; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 182**  
This grand 19th-century landmark building, once the main post office, is now home to a marvellous upmarket shopping mall with over 40 stores stocking fashion, gifts and jewellery – everything from Mango and Sissy Boy to Pinokkio.

**CHILLS & THRILLS** Map pp62-5  Smart Drugs  
- **638 00 15; Nieuwzijds 17**  
Always packed with tourists straining to hear each other over thumping techno music, this busy shop sells herbal trips, E-testing kits, psychoactive cacti, amino-acid and vitamin drinks, novelty bongs and life-size alien sculptures. Check out the minivaporiser, a smoke-free way to consume grass.

**INNERSPACE** Map pp62-5  Smart Drugs  
- **624 33 38; www.innerspace.nl; Spuistraat 108**  
Known for good service and information, this large shop started as a supplier to large parties, and now the shop sells herbal ecstasy, psychoactive plants and cacti. True
to its origins, it’s also a good place for party info and tickets.

**MAGIC MUSHROOM GALLERY**  
Map pp62-5  
Smart Drugs  
☎ 427 57 65; www.magicmushroom.com;  
Spuistraat 249

The nifty bubble-glass displays will put the zap on your head even before you buy anything. The cool, open-plan ‘gallery’ has the best choice of ‘shroom products and souvenirs in town. Feel free to wobble the garden swing while you nurse a smart drink, or wait for the herbal XTC to kick in.

**BAZAR**  
Map pp62-5  
Souvenirs  
☎ 638 44 04; Nieuwendijk 128

If you collect kitsch souvenirs or want to buy the boys on the bucks’ night some gifts (so they don’t go blabbing back home), then this is the place to head for the widest range of ridiculous tourist trinkets – everything from rude-shape egg fryers to fluffy clog slippers.

**3-D HOLOGRAMMEN**  
Map pp62-5  
Speciality Shop  
☎ 624 72 25; Grimburgwal 2;  
noon-6pm Tue- 
Fri, noon-5.30pm Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun & Mon

This fascinating (and trippy) collection of holographic pictures, jewellery and stickers will delight even the most jaded peepers.

**BLOND**  
Map pp62-5  
Speciality Shop  
☎ 06 2468 4086; www.blond-amsterdam.nl;  
Singel 369;  
Tue-Sat

Actual blondes Femque and Janneke glaze plates and dishes in designs that are hilarious, adorable and very colourful: ladies lunching, beach scenes, chocolates, and cheeses. You can custom order as well.

**FAIR TRADE SHOP**  
Map pp62-5  
Speciality Shop  
☎ 625 22 45; Heiligeweg 45

This charity shop features quality, stylish products including clothes, toys, CDs and ceramics from developing countries. The company works directly with producers and provides ongoing business training.

**RED LIGHT DISTRICT**

**ANTIQUAARIAAT KOK**  
Map pp62-5  
Books  
☎ 623 11 91; www.nvva.nl; Oude Hoogstraat 14-18

A wide and engaging range of used and antiquarian stock (literature, coffee-table books, old prints etc) is sold here, including biology, art and architecture titles.

**WONDERWOOD**  
Map pp62-5  
Design & Homewares  
☎ 625 37 38; www.wonderwood.nl; Rusland 3;  
noon-6pm Wed-Sat & by appt

Head here for originals or reproductions of ‘40s and ‘50s Dutch furniture design. Classics include the T46 coffee table by Hein Stolle, works by Gijs Bakker and Han Pieck, and the box chair, which folds up into its own box – you can actually ship it with your luggage!

**GEELS & CO**  
Map pp62-5  
Food & Drink  
☎ 624 06 83; Warmoesstraat 67;  
Mon-Sat

Operating from this atmospheric store for over 140 years, this distinguished tea-and-coffee merchant also sells chocolate, teapots and coffee plungers. Be sure to visit the interesting little museum (☎ 2-3.30pm Tue & Sat) upstairs.

**HANS APPENZELLER**  
Map pp62-5  
Jewellery  
☎ 626 82 18; www.appenzeller.nl; Grimburgwal 1;  
Tue-Sat

Appenzeller is one of Amsterdam’s leading designers in gold and stone, known for the simplicity and strength of his designs. If his spare work is not to your taste, all along the same street is a row of jewellery shops of all kinds.

**ABSOULTE DANNY**  
Map pp62-5  
Sex Shop  
☎ 421 09 15; www.absolutedanny.com; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 78

Named by Dutch Playboy as Amsterdam’s classiest sex shop, Absolute Danny specialises in fetish clothing, lingerie and leather, plus hard-core videos and dildos just for fun.

**KOKOPELLI**  
Map pp62-5  
Smart Drugs  
☎ 421 70 00; www.consciousdreams.nl;  
Warmoesstraat 12

Were it not for its main trade, you might swear this large, beautiful space was a fashionable clothing or homesware store. In addition to mushrooms and smart drugs, there’s an art gallery, internet facilities, books and a chill-out lounge area overlooking Damrak.

**CONDOMERIE HET GULDEN VLIES**  
Map pp62-5  
Speciality Shop  
☎ 627 41 74; www.condomerie.nl; Warmoesstraat 141;  
Mon-Sat

Where the well-dressed Johnson shops. Perfectly positioned for the Red Light District, this boutique stocks hundreds of types of condoms, lubricants and saucy gifts. Some of the condoms are decorated like minitropical scenes, or may remind you of your favourite cartoon character.

**HIMALAYA**  
Map pp62-5  
Speciality Shop  
☎ 626 08 99; www.himalaya.nl; Warmoesstraat 56;  
Mon-Sat

What a surprise: a peaceful, New Age oasis in the Red Light District. Stock up on crystals, incense and oils, ambient CDs and books on the healing arts, then visit the lovely tearoom.

**NIEUWMARKT**

**JACOB HOOY & CO**  
Map pp62-5  
Alternative Medicine  
☎ 624 30 41; Kloveniersburgwal 12;  
Mon-Sat

This charming chemist’s shop – with its walls of massive, wooden drawers – has been selling medicinal herbs, homeopathic remedies and natural care since 1743. You can also get teas and seasonings for chicken or fish.

**PO CHAI TONG**  
Map pp62-5  
Alternative Medicine  
☎ 428 49 56; Waterlooplein 13;  
Mon-Sat

If nothing seems to take away your stress, fatigue or jet lag, pay a visit to Dr Kai Zhang’s kindly Chinese herbal-medicine and acupuncture shop. It’s far from fancy, but clients have included opera singers and conductors from the nearby Stopera.

**TYPO GALLERY**  
Map pp62-5  
Art  
☎ 623 85 52; www.ewaldspieker.nl; Groenburgwal 63;  
ring for opening hours

A peek inside the artistic mind of Ewald Spieker, who creates graphic art out of typography. He’s been exhibited all over and published books of his work. Just a few of his works are for sale; the red ‘YES’ made of stacks of cardboard had our name written all over it.

**BOOK EXCHANGE**  
Map pp62-5  
Books  
☎ 626 62 66; Kloveniersburgwal 58

Near the university, this rabbit warren features four rooms of secondhand books, with temptingly priced occult, sci-fi and detective novels, many of them in English.

**NIJHOF & LEE**  
Map pp62-5  
Books  
☎ 620 39 80; www.nijhoflee.nl; Staalstraat 13a;  
Mon-Sat

Design fans will want to head here for a swell selection of international architecture, art and typography books and posters in an intimate but contemporary setting. One wall boasts a substantial selection of well-priced remainders.

**DE BEESTENWINKEL**  
Map pp62-5  
Children’s  
☎ 623 18 05; Staalstraat 11;  
Tue-Sun

From teeny tiny teddy bears to pink plastic pig snouts, this pleasantly crowded shop sells de best (best) of de beesten (animals). Other bests: plush toys from great toy-makers, lamps in animal shapes, and lots of plastic reptiles.

**KNUFFELS**  
Map pp62-5  
Children’s  
☎ 623 06 32; St Antoniesbreestraat 39-51

Avert the kids’ eyes or they will be drawn to its origins, it’s also a good place for party info and tickets.
from the ceiling of this busy corner shop. Adults, too, may be drawn in by the soft toys, puppets, beautiful mobiles, teddies and jigsaw puzzles.

RIELE Map pp62-5  Clothing & Accessories  623 34 08; St Antoniebreestraat 128;  daily  Fancy and edgy at the same time, this minimalist space lets the clothes do the talking. Designers include Ines Raspoort (Dutch), E Play (Italian), Tone Barker (Danish) and Ghost (British). Accent them with accessories from the Dutch designers Chick on a Mission.

DROOG DESIGN Map pp62-5  Design & Homewares  623 50 59; www.droogdesign.nl; Staalstraat 7b;  noon-6pm Tue-Sun  A relative newcomer on the international design scene, this slick Amsterdam-based firm is already a market leader with inventions like the 85-lamp chandelier, the cow chair, and curtains with dress patterns. There are over 180 products by 100-plus designers.

HENXS Map pp62-5  Fashion  638 94 78; http://shop.henxs.com; St Antoniesbreestraat 136  The two tiny floors of this indie clothes store are crammed with fave labels of skaters and graffiti artists such as Hardcore, Bombers Best, Evisu and G-Star, along with graffiti supplies and edgy accessories.

Puccini Bomboni Map pp62-5  Food  626 54 74; www.puccinibomboni.com; Staalstraat 17  We’re not the only ones who go gaga over Puccini’s large, handmade chocolate bonbons with rich fillings. Unforgettable chocolates include plum, marzipan or the calvados cup. There is another branch at Singel 184 (627 83 41). Note: shops have been known to close in warm weather – for the sake of the chocolates, of course.

T Klompenhuisje Map pp62-5  Souvenirs  622 81 00; Nieuwe Hoogstraat 9a;  Mon-Sat  Reasonably priced and finely crafted, traditional Dutch clogs are just the thing to potter around the garden in, away from prying eyes. Good ones are surprisingly comfortable. There’s also handmade leather goods and baby’s woollen slippers.

Joe’s Vliegerwinkel Map pp62-5  Specialty Shop  625 01 39; Nieuwe Hoogstraat 19;  Mon-Sat  Whether you’re after a kite for the kids that flies in nice patterns, or you’re looking for something more exotic, head to this specialised kite shop where you can also buy build-it-yourself kits.

Jordaan  Shops here have an artsy, eclectic, home-made feel. The area around Elandsgracht is the place for art, particularly photography, and specialty shops from hats to cats. On Haarlemmerdijk, the extension of Haarlemmerstraat, lots of new shops have opened to pick up the overflow of shoppers.

Claire V Map p86  Accessories  421 90 00; www.clairev.nl; Prinsengracht 234f;  Mon-Sat  The silk handbags, wraps and accessories embroidered with patterns and floral designs are gorgeous, but that’s not the only reason they’re worthy. Claire’s wares are made at a training centre for Cambodian landmine victims, so by shopping here you’ll look good and do good.

Rock archive Map p86  Art  423 04 89; www.rockarchive.com; Prinsengracht 110;  Wed-Sat  The whites are white and the blacks are black at this professional shop of limited-edition rock’n’roll prints. Robert Plant, Debbie Harry, Sting and tons of others are all there to be had for small change, in a format of your impeccable choice.

Josine Bokhoven Map p86  Art & Antiques  623 65 98; www.galeriejosinebokhoven.nl; Prinsengracht 154  Across the canal from the Anne Frank Huis, this friendly gallery features contemporary art and the work of emerging young artists, including German artist Ralph Fleck.

Hug Gallery for International Photography Map p86  Art Gallery  489 42 40; www.hughug.info; 1e Tuinderwarsstraat 16  Small but important gallery that attracts some of the top names, especially from Britain. It’s one of the few galleries that partners with photography museums like Huis Marseille (p95) and FOAM (p99).

Kleurgamma Map p86  Art Gallery  423 05 03; Hazenstraat 51-55;  Mon-Sat  In this minimalist space you may find the work of some nearby photographers on the walls, or have your own prints processed. You’ll feel better knowing that the Rijks and Van Gogh Museums get theirs done here too.

Torch Gallery Map p86  Art Gallery  626 02 84; Lauriergracht 94;  Thu-Sat  Torch, one of Amsterdam’s most cutting-edge galleries, is proud of its diverse selection. Around a dozen shows per year include photography and new media from many countries, and occasional painting and sculpture, from artists like Anton Corbijn (whose coverage of U2 was famous) and Annie Sprinkle.

English Bookshop Map p86  Books  626 42 30; http://shopenglishbookshop.nl; Lauriergracht 71;  Tue-Sun  This attractive, canal-side shop has a well-chosen selection of English-language biographies, novels and translations of the works of Dutch writers.

Fotografia Map p86  Books  639 39 39; 2e Laurierdwarstraat 60-64;  Tue-Sat  This classy shop is as simple as a photo lab and stocked full of publications featuring the likes of Alfred Stieglitz, Charlotte Dumas, Rineke Dijkstra and Magritte.

Broer & Zus Map p86  Children’s  422 90 02; www.broerenzus.nl; Rosengracht 94;  Mon-Sat  Cosy little ‘Bro & Sis’ specialises in Dutch designers and fabrics for kids from birth to six years. You can get brands like Kidscase, tiny tops emblazoned with slogans like ‘Mr Charming’ and ‘ladykiller’, and wild prints (think Hawaiian shirts).

Mechanisch Speelgoed Map p86  Children’s  638 16 80; Westerstraat 67;  Mon, Tue, Thu-Sat  This fun shop is crammed full of nostalgic toys including snow-domes, glow-lamps, masks, finger puppets and wind-up toys. And who doesn’t need a good rubber chicken every once in a while?

Eva Damave Map p86  Fashion  627 73 25; www.evadamave.nl; Laurierdwarstraat 51c;  Wed-Sat  Eva Damave creates funky woollen sweaters and zip jackets with her signature front patchwork panels made up of graphic cotton, silk and wool squares. She only produces one-offs or in small series, so you’re unlikely to see anyone else wearing your woollly knit.

De Belly Map p86  Food  330 94 83; Nieuwe Leliestraat 174  This organic supermarket, in the Jordaan for over three decades, has a great bakery and a small but smart selection of prepared foods, even organic tarts and chocolates.

’T Zonnetje Map p86  Food  623 00 58; Haarlemmerdijk 45;  Tue-Sat  In a space that’s been a teashop since 1642, you can find teas from all over the world, coffees and implements, and be waited on by a commendably cheerful owner. High tea is served upstairs (reserve for large groups).

Het Oud-Hollandsche Snoepwinkelje Map p86  Food & Candy  420 73 90; Egelantiersdwarstraat 2  This corner shop is lined with jars after apothecary jar of Dutch penny candies with flavours from chocolate to coffee, all manner of fruit and the inscrutable, salty Dutch liqueur known as drop.

Arnold Cornelis Map p86  Food & Drink  625 85 85; Elandsgracht 78;  Mon-Sat  Your dinner hosts will think you’re in the know if you present them with something from this long-standing shop. Just a sample: marzipan fruits, chocolate bonbons with wasabi (it creeps up on you) and blue spheres made with Malaga wine. At lunch,
grab a flaky pastry filled with cheese, meat or vegetables. There is another branch at Van Baelenstraat 93 (Map p110; 662 12 28).

JG BEUNE Map p86 Food & Drink
624 83 56; Haarlemmerdijk 156-158
This elegant sweet shop with original antique fittings has specialised in pastry and chocolate-making since 1882. Buy a box of delicious rich milk chocolates in the shape of Amsterdammerjtes, the cast iron bollards around the city that protect you from traffic.

GOLDSTRASSE Map p86 Jewellery
420 20 95; Elandsgracht 89; Wed-Sat
Some 14 designers from the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Austria and more exhibit here. One example is Amsterdam-based Marina Alexandre, a jewellery designer and teacher. You’ll see rings in gold, silver and silicone. Fittingly, since many of the artists graduated from the Rietveld Academy, works here are more like wearable art.

DISCOSTARS Map p86 Music
626 11 77; Haarlemmerdijk 86
Both the disco generation and the ‘disco sucks’ generation will enjoy this repository of the music of yesteryear. If any of the names Olivia Newton-John, Engelbert Humperdinck, Paul Young, Celia Cruz, Candy Dulfer, Buddy Holly, Yves Montand, Doris Day or Roy Rogers mean anything to you, you’ll find lots more to like.

LA SAVONNERIE Map p86 Perfumes & Cosmetics
428 11 39; www.savonnerie.nl; Prinsengracht 294; Tue-Sun
Aromatic Savonnerie makes more than 80 natural soaps on the premises, as well as stocking wonderful varieties from around the world – from rustic Aleppo olive-oil soap to gentle Belgian donkey-milk soap. There’s an enormous range of loofahs, sponges, back-scrubbers and gift-packs.

CATS & THINGS Map p86 Speciality Shop
428 30 28; Hazenstraat 26
Head here when the cat (or cat-lover) back home deserves a souvenir. There’s the expected assortment of kitty toys, sculptures, grooming needs, beds and climbers, but this shop proves that feline-themed merchandise need not be kitschy and can even be cool.

CHRISTODOULOU & LAMÉ Map p86 Speciality Shop
320 22 69; Rozengracht 42
Handwoven Tibetan silk pillows, velvet throws and hand-beaded saris from this treasure-trove of sumptuous soft furnishings will transform your home into a plush sanctuary. It’s a real festival of colours.

DE LACH Map p86 Speciality Shop
626 66 25; www.moviepostersdelach.com; 1e Bloemdwarsstraat 14; Tue, Thu-Sat
This eccentric corner shop sells vintage movie postcards from all over the world (eg the Italian version of Some Like it Hot) from €12 to €1000. There’s a mini Walk of Fame, signed by Dutch stars, on the path outside.

INTERNATIONAAL DESIGN CENTRUM Map p86 Speciality Shop
521 87 10; Rozengracht 215-217; Tue-Sat
Begun over a century ago, this shop has repped the forefront of Dutch design ever since – Gispen, Edra and Artiform – and some foreign designers as well. Its affiliate, De Kasstoor (across the street), applies the same design concept to kitchens and lighting (towel hooks are simultaneously slick and cute).

KITSCH KITCHEN Map p86 Speciality Shop
622 82 61; www.kitschkitchen.nl; Rozengracht 8-12
You want it flowered, frilly, colourful, over the top or just made from plastic? Chances are you’ll find it here – everything from handbags to homewares to kiddie toys and doll gowns. Plus lamps, Mexican tablecloths, pink plastic chandeliers from India and, of course, bouquets of plastic flowers.

LA DIABLITA Map p86 Speciality Shop
06 1085 7333; Binnen Oranjehofstraat 11; Mon & Wed-Sat
You’ve got a night on the town and need sparkly, spangly jewellery, gold sandals, yellow shoes or pink high-tops? This tiny storefront off the Haarlemmerdijk can help you. You say you need the same for your young daughter? They have a small selection for her too.

WESTERN CANAL BELT
You could easily spend all of your shopping time in Amsterdam – indeed all your time in Amsterdam, period – in the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys) in the Canal Belt just east of the Jordaan. The selection is arty, worthwhile and constantly changing, and lots of cafés mean plenty of break time.

KLEIN ANTIK Map p92 Antiques
622 82 61; Gasthuismolensteeg 11; Tue-Sat
Tiles, making trip to toe, including Delft blue, as well as Dutch pottery, some going back to medieval times. Don’t expect great bargains (broken pieces sell from €25), but it’s a lovely place to shop.

NIC NIC Map p92 Antiques & Kitsch
622 85 23; www.nicnicdesign.com; Gasthuismolensteeg 5
A trip here is like a visit to a gallery of 20th-century design. Cramped shelves take you from Art Deco to Bauhaus, googie, the ’70s, The Simpsons and heaven knows what else.

MENDO Map p92 Art & Antiques
612 12 15; Berenstraat 11; Wed-Sun
The Mendo ad agency has opened this smart, black-walled gallery specialising in young Dutch painters. Works range from bright to disturbing-but-alluring. It also sells an intriguing selection of art, design, architecture and photography books.

ARCHITECTURA & NATURA Map p92 Books
623 61 86; www.architectura.nl; Leliegracht 22; Mon-Sat
This charming antique shop has art, architecture, design, landscape and coffee-table books. Upstairs, Architecturaantiquariat Opbouw (Architecture Antique Shop; 638 70 18) has a selection of its namesake.

BOEKIE WOEKIE Map p92 Books
639 05 07; Berenstraat 16; noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat
While other shops handle art books, here they sell books as art, created by artists specifically for this medium. Some tell stories (elegantly illustrated, naturally), others are riffs on graphic motifs; you may want to browse for a long time.
WESTERN CANAL BELT

Dirk Bikkembergs, Martin Margiela and Viktor & Rolf.

**VOLSKBOND SHOP** Map p92  Clothing  
Tel 428 30 72; Haarlemmerstraat 146-148

A relic from the days when Haarlemmerstraat was not so chic. Proceeds from sales of used clothing (most items €0.50 to €10) help finance facilities for the homeless: halfway houses, counselling services and the like.

**SKINS COSMETICS** Map p92  Cosmetics  
Tel 528 69 22; www.skins.nl; Runstraat 9

The Netherlands’ exclusive importer of special brands of fragrances, cosmetics and skin-care and beauty products: think Aesop, Dyptique, Etro, Laura Mercier and the Art of Shaving. They also do makeup sessions and facials.

**FROZEN FOUNTAIN** Map p92  Design & Homewares  
Tel 622 93 75; www.frozenfountain.nl; Prinsengracht 629; @ Mon-Sat

The city’s best-known showcase of furniture and interior design. Prices are not cheap, but wares are offbeat and very memorable (designer pen-knives, kitchen gadgets).

**BE INNOCENT** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 320 59 87; Oude Spiegelstraat 9

Style-savvy fashionistas will be familiar with these Victorian Gothic–inspired frilly baby-doll dresses from the elegant Gothic Lolita look of the Japanese Harajuku subculture. Although it took off in Japan in the ’90s, its recent appropriation by Gwen Stefani is now popularising it in the West.

**EXOTA** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 620 91 02; www.exota.com; Hartenstraat 10

Head here for hip gear from indie labels such as King Louie and Aem Kei to global brands. Also has kitsch accessories such as King Louie and Aem Kei to global

**LAURA DOLS** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 624 90 66; www.lauradols.nl; Wolvenstraat 7

Compulsive style-watchers head to this vintage-clothing store for fur coats, 1920s beaded dresses, lace blouses and ’40s movie-star accessories like hand-stitched leather gloves.

**LOCAL SERVICE** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 628 86 38; Keizersgracht 400-402

Media types (male at 400; female at 402) hunt here for the latest Paul Smith (Amsterdam’s exclusive dealer for his main line), and the Ghost, Stone Island and DreiKorn collections.

**MIAUW** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 422 05 61; www.miauw.com; Hartenstraat 36

Analik is one of Amsterdam’s edgiest young designers. Her latest enterprise, Miauw, is a showcase for her idiosyncratic collections, and likeminded labels such as Preen, Karen Walker, Kokon to Zai, and Henrick Vibskof. It also has changing exhibitions of graphic, media, graffiti and conceptual art.

**URU DURI** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 422 94 57; Huidenstraat 30

South Korean An-Su Kim’s tiny boutique stocks funky little dresses (little being the key word) in retro fabrics that she designs and her mother and sister sew up in Seoul. These sassy numbers you won’t find elsewhere are teenagers – but they’re worth dieting for.

**ZIPPER** Map p92  Fashion  
Tel 623 73 02; Huidenstraat 7

Amsterdam hipsters head here for seriously nostalgic, retro secondhand gear – wacky printed shirts, stoepjeep jeans, ’40s zoot suits, porkpie hats and the like.

**MEEUWIG & ZN** Map p92  Food  
Tel 626 52 86; Haarlemmerstraat 70; @ Mon-Sat

Fill your own bottle from metal crocks containing over 50 types of olive oil from around the world. You’ll also find bottles of gourmet vinegar, mustard, chutney and fresh olives.

**UNLIMITED DELICIOUS** Map p92  Food  
Tel 622 48 29; Haarlemmerstraat 122

Is it ever! It’s tempting to dive into the gorgeous, sculptural cakes and tarts, but – if you can – walk past them to the dozens of varieties of chocolates made in-house. Some of the more outlandish combinations (that somehow work) are rosemary sea salt, caramel cayenne and Laphroaig whisky. More standard choices include coffee, nougat and our favourite: Ceylon cinnamon.

**DE KAASKAMER** Map p92  Food & Drink  
Tel 623 34 83; Runstraat 7

A small shop with 440 cheeses from around Europe and Holland, and deli items like pâté, cured meats and baguettes. At lunch time it does a roaring sandwich trade.

**URBAN PICNIC** Map p92  Food & Drink  
Tel 320 88 66; www.urbanpicnic.net; Oude Spiegelstraat 4

Everything you need for a picnic in the park or a snack for the train: baskets, plasticware, paper goods, nifty biodegradable wooden utensils and, oh yes, the food, like sandwiches of smoked Irish salmon with horseradish cream, or lamb sausage with mustard mayo.

**NIEUWS** Map p92  Gag Gifts  
Tel 627 95 40; Prinsengracht 89

A mind-boggling array of kooky trinkets cram this entertaining store – from quirky action figures (we love the Crazy Cat Lady, the Obsessive Compulsive, Rosie the Riveter and Albine Bowler!) to mini patron saints, foreplay dice and voodoo dolls. Travellers love the Wash Away Your Sins soap.

**GAMEKEEPER** Map p92  Games  
Tel 638 15 79; Hartenstraat 14

The selection of board games is dizzying, as is the imagination that went into making them. Start with checkers, chess and mah jong, and move on to Cathedral (build a city in the style of the Great Wall of China or the souk in Marrakech) or Rush Hour (help a car get out of traffic). ‘Cooperative’ games encourage players to play with, not against, each other.

**BEADDIES** Map p92  Jewellery  
Tel 428 51 61; Huidenstraat 6

Once the funky jewellery in the window draws you in, you’ll find yourself here for hours selecting gorgeous beads, gems, charms and trinkets to design your own necklaces and bracelets. Our advice: don’t start from scratch, opt for a variation on Beadies’ fab designs.

**ZINNE & MINNE** Map p92  Sex Shop  
Tel 338 24 33; www.zinne&minne.com; Gasthuismolensteeg 12

If Sex and the City was shot in Amsterdam, we bet that the girls would spend half their time in this shop. Shoes, boots, sandals and espadrilles run from supremely classy to just plain fun. There’s also a small section for guys.

**ANTONIA BY YVETTE** Map p92  Shoes  
Tel 627 24 33; www.antoniabyvette.nl; Gasthuismolensteeg 12

A husband and wife team of watchmakers and are the exclusive Amsterdam dealers of such brands as Germany’s D Dornblüth and the Dutch Christiaan van der Klaauw, who

**AMSTERDAM WATCH COMPANY** Map p92  Specialty Shop  
Tel 389 27 89; www.amsterdamwatchcompany.nl; Hartenstraat 4; @ Tue-Sat

Design in Amsterdam and handcrafted in Italy from fine leather, internationally renowned Hester van Eeghen’s unique shoes are for those who dare to dress their feet dramatically in bright colours, fur suede, and geometric patterns and prints. Her handbags are just as attention-grabbing.

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SOUTHERN CANAL BELT

DE WITTE TANDEN WINKEL
Map p92  Speciality Shop
Tel 623 34 43; Runstraat 5
We love shops that are obsessed, and ‘The White-Teeth Shop’ certainly is – with dental hygiene. There’s a huge selection of toothbrushes, toothpastes from around the world, brushing accessories you never knew you needed and friendly advice.

SANTA JET
Map p92  Speciality Shop
Tel 427 20 70; Prinsenstraat 7
Forgot to pack your love potion? Or fresh out of prayer candles? The interior’s vivid colours alone are worth a visit to this quirky shop, as are the Mexican shrines, religious icons and Day of the Dead paraphernalia.

EPISODE
Map p92  Vintage Clothing
Tel 626 46 19; www.episode.eu; Berenstraat 1
Visiting rock stars head to Episode to travel through two floors of fabulous vintage and secondhand gear. Most impressive when we last dropped in were the seemingly endless racks of 1970s suede coats, folkly peasant blouses, colourful ponchos and big, bright plastic sunshades.

CITYBOEK
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 627 03 49; www.cityboek.nl; Kerkstraat 211; by appt
We normally don’t write up shops selling souvenir posters, but this small publishing house is an exception, with precisely drawn, multicoloured, architecturally faithful prints, books and postcards of Amsterdam’s canalscapes (eg images of the entire Herengracht or Singel).

DECORATIVA
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 320 10 93; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 9a
An amazing jungle of European antiques, collectables and weird vintage gifts fills this large space. Look up and you’ll even see paintings on the ceilings.

EDUARD KRAMER
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 623 08 32; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 64
Specialising in antique Dutch wall and floor tiles, glass and silver, Eduard Kramer is bursting with vintage homewares.

EH ARIENS KAPPERS
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 623 53 56; www.masterprints.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 32
This pretty gallery stocks original prints, etchings, engravings, lithographs, maps from the 15th to 20th centuries, and Japenese woodblock prints.

JASKI
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 620 39 39; www.jaski.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 27-29
This large, commercial gallery sells paintings, prints, ceramics and sculptures by some of the most famous members of the CoBrA movement (see p36).

LIEVE HEMEL
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 623 00 60; www.lievehemel.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 3
You’ll find magnificent contemporary Dutch realist painting and sculpture at this smart gallery. It shows works by Dutch painters Ben Snijders and Theo Voorzaat, and astounding, lifelike representations of clothing – hewn from wood – by Italian Livio de Marchi.

REFLEX MODERN ART GALLERY
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 627 28 32; www.reflex-art.nl; Weteringschans 79a; Tue-Sat
This prominent gallery, opposite the Rijksmuseum, is filled with contemporary art and photography, including works by members of the CoBrA and the Nouveau Réaliste movements.

REFLEX NEW ART GALLERY
Map pp100-1  Art & Antiques
Tel 423 54 23; www.reflex-art.nl; Weteringschans 83; Tue-Sat
This new branch specialising in new art is across the street from the original Reflex. There’s an emphasis on photography, and artists include young up-and-comers like David La Chapelle, Robin Lowe, Roger Bollen, Larry Sultan and Nobuyoshi Araki.

GALERIE LAMBIEK
Map pp100-1  Books
Tel 626 75 43; www.lambiek.nl; Kerkstraat 78; daily
Serious collectors of comics will lose themselves amid tens of thousands of titles of Dutch and worldwide comic-book art. Crumb, Avril and Herriman are just the tip of the 4000-plus author iceberg.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE & FILM BOOKS
Map pp100-1  Books
Tel 622 64 89; Leidseplein 26; Mon-Sat
In the Stadschouwburg building, this excellent shop is crammed with books on its namesake subjects, as well as speciality sections on, for example, musicals and famous directors. The majority of titles are in English.

SELEYZ SCHETEMEA
Map pp100-1  Books
Tel 523 14 11; Koningsplein 20
The largest bookshop in town is a true department store, with many foreign titles and New Age and multimedia sections. It can be dizzying. Readings and book launches take place next to the upstairs café.

CARL DENIG
Map pp100-1  Camping, Outdoor & Sport
Tel 626 24 36; Weteringschans 113-115; Tue-Sat
Opened in 1912, this is Amsterdam’s oldest and best outdoor retailer, though you pay for the quality. There are five floors of packs, tents, hiking and camping accessories, snowboards and skis.

TINKERBELL
Map pp100-1  Children’s
Tel 625 88 30; Spiegelgracht 10; Mon-Sat
The mechanical bear blowing bubbles outside this shop fascinates kids, as do the intriguing technical and scientific toys inside. You’ll also find historical costumes, plush toys and an entire section for babies.

SPOILED
Map pp100-1  Clothing
Tel 626 38 18; Leidsestraat 27
At this one-stop urban-lifestyle store you’ll find labels like Mads Norgaard, Rare, Junk De Luxe, Skunk Funk, True Religion, Stella Nova, My Ass, Fred Perry, Tommy Hilfiger and River of Sweden, along with stylish shoes and accessories, cool magazines and art. You can also throw back an espresso and get your hair cut.

YOUNG DESIGNERS UNITED
Map pp100-1  Clothing
Tel 626 9191; www.ydu.nl; Keizersgracht 447
Angela Groenendijk Wasylewski’s boutique is a showcase for young Dutch designers. Check out Suzanne de Jager and Natasja Leenders’ bold and playful Guten Appetit label, Heidi Long’s striking collection, Marjoleine Innemee’s Asian-inspired Minneme, Ester Peters’ fun Kinky Dream Wear, sexy Amber Rose, and Sarid Khomnay’s extravagant Amm Couture.

BEBOB DESIGN
Map pp100-1  Design & Homewares
Tel 624 57 63; www.bebob.nl; Prinsengracht 764
Lovers of international 20th-century design classics – from Arne Jacobsen Swan chairs to Isamu Noguchi lamps – should make this their first stop in Amsterdam. While the store arranges shipping, a George Nelson ball clock should fit nicely in the carry-on.

CORA KEMPERMAN
Map pp100-1  Fashion
Tel 625 12 84; Leidsestraat 72
Kemperman was once a designer with large Dutch fashion houses, but since 1995 she’s been working on her own empire – now encompassing nine stores, including three in Belgium. Her creations feature floaty, layered separates and dresses in linen, cotton and wool.

HANA ZUKI
Map pp100-1  Fashion
Tel 422 95 63; Vleiselstraat 87
Local designers started this funky boutique-come-studio as a showcase for their creations and those of their friends. Check out Hana Zuki’s own graphic fashion, hip Alko label, and edgy Phatoak by Dutch Natasja van den Elzen, along with illustrations, magazines, Lomos, and Maomall’s handmade toys.
WHERE TO GET YOUR GROOVE ON
If club music is your thing, you can swing, sway and snap notes with knowledgeable locals at these shops. The chill cat next to you at the listening booth may be spinning for you that night. Here are just a few of the joints we tested (also supreme for the latest club and dance-fest info):

**Back Beat Records** (Map p86;  627 16 57; Egelantierstraat 19)
**Boudoirque** (Map pp62-5;  623 26 93; Haringpakkersestraat 10-18)
**Killa Cutz** (Map pp62-5;  428 40 40; Nieuwe Nieuwstraat 19d)
**Rush Hour Records** (Map pp62-5;  427 45 05; Spuistraat 98)
**Wax Well Records** (Map p92;  528 68 80; Gasthuismolensteeg 6a)

**LOOK OUT** Map pp100-1  Fashion  625 50 32; www.lookoutmode.com; Utrechtsestraat 91 & 93
Looking through the racks at these wonderful neighbouring men’s and women’s stores is a real delight. Look out for super stylish labels such as Paul Smith, Philosophy, Etro, Kenzo, Brunos Bazaar and Anne-mie Verbeke.

**DESHIMA** Map pp100-1  Food & Drink  625 75 13; Weteringschans 65;  Mon-Sat Downstairs, Deshima is a health-food store with all sorts of macrobiotic products, but upstairs there’s a lovely selection of prepared foods (plates from €8.50 to €10.50) and a few seats for eating in. Try the salads and cooked veggies, cakes and tarts.

**EICHHOLTZ** Map pp100-1  Food & Drink  622 03 05; Leidsestraat 48
This small deli is bursting with everything homesick Brits and Americans yearn for, such as Oreo cookies, Betty Crocker cake mix, Heinz baked beans, peanut butter (Skippy, Jif or Peter Pan!), HP sauce and Bird’s custard.

**HART’S WIJNHANDEL** Map pp100-1  Food & Drink  623 83 50; Vizelgracht 27;  Tue-Sat Listen to classical music as you peruse the shoe shelves and eggs for you to sit on.

**CONSCIOUS DREAMS** Map pp100-1  Smart Drugs  626 69 07; www.consciousdreams.nl; Kerkstraat 119
You can enhance whatever needs enhancing at Amsterdam’s original smart shop, founded in 1993. The enthusiastic staff can explain everything about trippy herbs, extracts and cacti. There’s a small but excellent book section, club-night flyers and internet facilities.

**BLOEMENMARKT** Map pp100-1  Sensible; closed sun winter
It’s hard to resist the quivering tulips at Amsterdam’s signature flower market, near Muntplein. Once you’ve chosen your 10lb bag of Burning Heart or Queen of Night bulbs, ask the traders if you can take it back home. Ireland and the UK allow an unlimited number of bulbs to be brought back in, as Canada and the USA (accompanied by a certificate, which will be provided). Japan permits up to 100 certified bulbs, while Australia and New Zealand have banned the importation of bulbs altogether.

**AURORA KONTAKT** Map pp100-1  Speciality Shop  623 40 62; Vizelstraat 27-35
If your favourite electronic or computer gadget has stopped working, this no-nonsense store can sell you a replacement at competitive prices.

**MARÁÑON HANGMATTEN** Map pp100-1  Speciality Shop  622 59 38; www.maranon.com; Singel 488
Anyone who loves hanging around should come here and explore Europe’s largest selection of hammocks. The colourful creations, made of everything from cotton to pineapple fibres, are for everyone from adults to babies, and are made by many producers from indigenous weavers to large manufacturers.

**MARKET WATCH**
No visit to Amsterdam is complete if you haven’t experienced one or more of its lively markets. The following are merely a selection. Watch out for pickpockets.

- [Albert Cuypmarkt](map p118) Exotic goods as well as cheap basics from nations around the globe.
- [Antiques markets](Map pp62-5;  9am-5pm Sun May-Sep; Amstelveld (Map pp100-1;  9am-6pm last Fri of the month in warmer months) There are many genuine articles here and lots of books and bric-a-brac.
- [Art markets](Map pp62-5;  10.30am-6pm Sun Mar-Oct) Thorbeckeplein (Map pp100-1; Spui (Map pp62-5) These quiet markets, dealing in mostly modern pictorial art, are a bit too modest in scope to yield real finds.
- [Bloemenmarkt](opposite) Amsterdam’s signature flower market.
- [Boerenmarkt](Farmers’ Market;  10am-3pm Sat) Noordermarkt (Map p86; Nieuwmarkt (Map pp62-5) Pick up home-grown produce, organic foods and picnic provisions.
- [Book market](Map pp62-5; Oudemanhuysstraat;  11am-4pm Mon-Fri) In the old arcade between Oudezijds Achterburgwal and Klovieniersburgwal (blink and you’ll miss either entrance), this is the place to find that 19th-century copy of Das Kapital or a semantic analysis of Icelandic sagas, and some newer books and art prints. Another book market takes place on the Spui (Map pp62-5;  8am-6pm Fri). 
- [De Louwer antiques market](Map p86; Lingengracht;  11am-4pm Sat) General market, very much a local affair.
- [Noordermarkt](Map pp62-5; Noorderstraat;  9am 1pm Tue, 9am-6pm Sat) This Jordaan market has a split personality. Tuesdays are for antiques, fabrics and secondhand bric-a-brac, while Saturdays see a delightful farmers market with organic produce.
- [Plant market](Map pp100-1; Amstelveld;  3-6pm Mon Easter Christmas) All sorts of living green things, pots and vases are sold here.
- [Stamp & coin market](Map pp62-5; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 280;  10am-4pm Wed Sat) This little street-side market, just south of Wijdesteeg, sells stamps, coins and medals.
- [Waterlooplein flea market](Map pp62-5; Waterlooplein;  9am-5pm Mon Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm Sat) Amsterdam’s most famous flea market is full of curios, secondhand clothing, music, electronic stuff slightly on the blink, hardware and cheap New Age gifts.
- [Westerman market](Map p86; Westerstraat;  9am-1pm Mon) Cheaps clothes and textiles, some real bargains.

**WHERE TO GET YOUR GROOVE ON**
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- **Wax Well Records** (Map p92;  528 68 80; Gasthuismolensteeg 6a)
OLD SOUTH
The real concentration of shops is around the PC Hoofstraat, which teems with brands that need no introduction: Hugo Boss, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, JA Hencelks, Louis Vuitton, Mont Blanc, Zegna and more. Across the Vondelpark, Overtoom has furniture and home-design stores as well as secondhand shops.

DE WINKEL VAN NIJNTJE
Map p10 Children’s
671 97 07; Beethovenstraat 71; Mon-Sat
Dutch illustrator Dick Bruna’s most famous character, Miffy (‘Nijntje’ in Dutch), is celebrated in toys and kids’ merchandise. Items range from pencils and soap bubbles to note pads, mouse pads, books, plush toys, clothing and playhouses, to Royal Delftware plates.

XSMALL
Map p110 Children’s
470 26 00; www.xsmall.nl; Van Baerlestraat 108; Mon-Sat
Outfitting the moppets of the Old South with toys and extra-cute clothes for kids aged 0 to 10. They can also create digital portraits in Andy Warhol style, from your own digital photo of your little darling (from €45).

DE WATERWINKEL
Map p110 Food & Drink
675 59 32; Roelof Hartstraat 10
Thirsty? With over 100 types of bottled water (mineral, sparkling, still and flavoured), this calm and pretty store will keep your juices flowing.

CHAINS WILL KEEP US TOGETHER
Some shops have several locations around town. For chocolates and ice cream, look out for Australian Homemade Leidestraat 101 (Map pp100-1); Singel 437 (Map pp62-5); Albert Heijn is a ubiquitous chain of general supermarkets, while Blocker sells simple homewares. Personal-care products can be found at any Etos store Nieuwendijk 69 (Map pp62-5); Nieuwendijk 182 (Map pp62-5); Leidestraat 82 (Map pp100-1); Overtoom 77 (Map p110), Gall & Gall (Map pp62-5; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 226a) should fill all your wine and liquor needs; outlets are also found within most branches of Albert Heijn supermarkets.

BROOKMANS & VAN POPPEL
Map p110 Music
679 65 75; www.brookmans.com; Van Baerlestraat 92-94; Mon-Sat
Near the Concertgebouw (surprise!), it’s the city’s top choice for classical and popular sheet music, as well as music books. Head to the 1st floor for a comprehensive selection from the Middle Ages through to classical and contemporary.

LAIRESSE APOTHEEK
Map p110 Pharmacy
662 10 22; De Lairessestraat 40h; Mon-Sat
Both a pharmacy and installation art, with graphics of the periodic table filling the entrance and a rotunda of green backlit cases inside.

VONDELPARK & AROUND
The winding paths of the Vondelpark must inspire a certain wanderlust because the nearby streets are full of outdoor and travel gear shops. You’re in capable hands: Holland has produced more than its fair share of world adventurers. Stroll down Overtoom and return equipped to tackle something more strenuous than a canal-boat tour.

PIED À TERRE
Map p116 Books
627 44 55; Overtoom 135
The galleyed, skylit interior of this classy travel-book shop feels like a Renaissance centre of learning. It specialises in pretty much any book you’ll need for outdoor pursuits: hiking and cycling tomes, topographical maps and travel guides.

BEVER ZWERFSPORT
Map p116 Camping, Outdoor & Sport
689 46 39; Stadhouderskade 4; Mon-Sat
Everything you need for a local hike or a Himalayan expedition: camping equipment, mountaineering gear, clothes and shoes.

MEVIUS & ITALIAANDER
Map p16 Speciality Shop
618 02 56; Overtoom 21-25
This shop doesn’t have a lot of street presence, but it’s cavernous where it counts (in the back) and loaded with the unexpected: old posters and dishes from faraway lands, new espresso pots and used LPs, furniture and lamps. Prices start at €50.

FRANK’S SMOKEHOUSE
Map p122 Food & Drink
670 07 74; www.smokehouse.nl; Wittenburger Gracht 303
Frank is a prime supplier to Amsterdam’s restaurants. He learned how to smoke fish from the Swedes, and his excellent Alaska salmon, halibut and yellowfin tuna can be vacuum packed for easy passage through airport customs (which works, unlike with meat).

DE EMAILLEKEIZER
Map p119 Home Wares
664 18 47; 1e Sweelinckstraat 15; Mon-Sat
Email sounds like something you want to send, but in Dutch it means ‘enameled’, so it’s something you’ll want to keep. This colourful store brims with: metal tableware and more coated in interesting designs from China, Ghana, Poland etc.

STENELUX
Map p119 Speciality Shop
662 14 90; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 2; Thu-Sat
Buy an old fossil for that old fossil you left back home. Stenelux has a smart collection from this world and beyond (including meteorites).

FIETSFABRIEK
Map p119 Bicycles
572 18 34; www.fietsfabriek.nl; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 12; Tue-Sun
Wessel van den Bosch trained as an architect, and now he makes custom bicycles from this wild ‘n’ crazy workshop, one of several in Amsterdam. Come in and pick up a bakfiets (cargo bike), a familiefiets (with covered ‘pram’) or even a standard Omafiets (one-city gear bike). Just browsing is a joy.

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STADSBOEKWINZEL
Map p119 Books
251 15 10; Vijzelstraat 32; Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm
Wed-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun
Run by the city printer, this is the best source for books about Amsterdam’s history, urban development, ecology and politics. Most titles are in Dutch (but you can always look at the pictures) – you’ll also find some in English. It’s in the City Archives building.

STENELUX
Map p119 Speciality Shop
662 14 90; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 2; Thu-Sat
Buy an old fossil for that old fossil you left back home. Stenelux has a smart collection from this world and beyond (including meteorites).

PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS
If you’ve come to Amsterdam to have a new interior put in your multimillion-dollar yacht, the dockyards out here will hit the spot. Other shoppers come for the renowned deli or maker of custom-made boxes. The pierside cafés make a great place to unravel your booty.

YOI
Map p119 Fashion
670 55 40; 1e Jacob van Campenstraat 27; Tue-Sun
This ‘hip honest guerrilla store’ sells Dutch fashion produced with respect for humans, animals and the environment, made from organic cotton, hemp, secondhand clothes, recycled parachute and prison blankets. Labels include fair-trade threads by Fuck the Fashion, Lazy One, and This is a Story by Meike Beckers.
OUTER DISTRICTS

SO DUTCH FASHION

Map pp58-9

Clothing

617 09 57; www.dutchfashionfoundation.com; 2
World Fashion Centre, Wilhelminaplein 13, Tower 1, 
fl 13; Mon-Fri

The Dutch Fashion Foundation promotes the best of Dutch fashion and helps designers develop their labels into commercial brands. Its showroom at the World Fashion Centre provides haute couture ateliers and carries collections by the hottest Dutch designers, such as Mada van Gaans, Jan Taminiau, Bas Kosters and Percy Irausquin.

DIAMONDS

Amsterdam has been a diamond centre since Sephardic Jews introduced the cutting industry in the 1580s. The Cullinan, the largest diamond ever found (3106 carats), was split into more than 100 stones here in 1908, after which the master cutter spent three months recovering from stress. A large oval diamond cut here, known as the Koh-i-Noor (Mountain of Light), was acquired by Queen Victoria and now forms part of the British crown jewels.

The four diamond factories listed below offer guided tours, but the Gassan tour is probably the most enlightening. Tours are free and usually run 9am to 5pm daily.

Diamonds aren’t necessarily cheaper in Amsterdam than elsewhere, but between the tours and extensive descriptions and factory offers, you’ll know what you’re buying.

Amstel Diamonds (Map pp100-1; 623 14 79; Amstel 206-208)

Amsterdam Diamond Center (Map pp62-5; 624 57 87; Rokin 1)

Coster Diamonds (Map p110; 305 55 55; Paulus Potterstraat 2-6)

Gassan Diamonds (p79; 622 53 33; Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173-175)
top picks

- De Burgermeester (p173)
  The best burgers for discriminating burghers.
- Blauw aan de Wal (p160)
  A rose among thorns in the Red Light District.
- Bordewijk (p161)
  French & Italian lessons for picky palates.
- Hemelse Modder (p161)
  Dutch culinary haven with heavenly mousse.
- Le Petit Latin (p159)
  Formidable fish with Jacques’ lovely southern accents.
- Piet de Leeuw (p168)
  Tender steak and tab frites since 1900.
- Ristorante d’Antica (p166)
  Watch pasta spin in a wheel of cheese.
- Supper Club (p158)
  Mattress dining with a flair for the dramatic.
- Tujuh Maret (p167)
  The many side dishes of life: Indonesian rice table.
- Van Vlaanderen (p166)
  French eatery reaching for the Michelin stars.
Dutch cuisine used to be little more than a contradiction in terms. This harks back to the days when Holland’s hard-working merchants saw spices, coffee and cheese more as tradable commodities than something to be enjoyed. The leading Dutch restaurant critic, Johannes van Dam, recently went so far as to say the Dutch would eat anything if it were well presented (‘if it had a bow on it’).

Seriously, and take it from someone who lived here for years, it’s not as bad as all that. A memorable meal awaits if you know where to look. And a major delight is the huge choice of cuisine, including delicacies from the former colonies. (When in Amsterdam, you have to eat an Indonesian rice table – it’s the law.)

Another great joy is the visual flair of Amsterdam’s restaurants. From the sumptuous interiors of supper clubs to pint-sized designer cafés, you can feast your eyes as well as your stomach.

Restaurants who care will change their menus seasonally, if not daily. Where we have listed individual dishes, they’re either always on the menu or a reference to give you a line on the chef’s creativity. Most places will have a few vegetarian choices.

Last but not least, don’t forget about traditional Dutch cooking. While not exactly refined, with good honest dishes like *hutspot* (hotchpotch) it can be delicious.

### SPECIALITIES

You’ll find all colours in the rainbow, but Italian, French, Thai and Chinese are so widespread they’re practically seen as national cuisines. Spanish-style tapas are all the rage, as is sushi, Pacific-Rim fusion and wok/noodle shops. Dutch chefs fly the flag highest at nouvelle cuisine and fish restaurants, but there are also grease vendors like Febo (see boxed text, p169).

In the De Pijp district, Indian and Turkish eateries are as common as one-speed bicycles, plus there are cuisines you may never have heard of, like Surinamese, a pleasant surprise. Chinese is always a good bet, particularly in the little Chinatown near the Zeejadij.

### Dutch

Traditional Dutch cuisine revolves around meat, potato and vegetables. That said, contemporary chefs have made some great strides, and what’s now called ‘Dutch’ often has echoes of far-off, mystical lands.

Some typical dishes include *stamppot* (mashed pot) – potatoes mashed with vegetables (usually kale or endive) and served with smoked sausage or strips of pork. *Hutspot*, similar to *stamppot* but with carrots, onions and braised meat, is a popular winter dish. *Erdtensoep* is a thick pea soup (a spoon stuck upright in the pot should fall over slowly) with smoked sausage and bacon.

Year-round favourites include *broodjes* (filled sandwiches). Quality *broodjeswinkels* (sandwich shops) are like elaborate delis. Pile hot or cold ingredients onto a choice of breads and rolls, from roast beef or fish salads to cheeses and *assortert* (raw beef sausage, a Dutch delicacy).

*Kroketten* (croquettes) are a Dutch classic: a ragout with meat, sometimes even fish or shrimp, that’s crumbed and deep-fried. (Van Dam, the culinary mavens, just published an encyclopaedic history of this creation.) They are also served as small balls called *bitterballen*, with mustard.

*Pannenkoeken* translates as ‘pancakes’, although North Americans will be in for a surprise – the Dutch variety is huge and a little stretchy, served flat, one to a plate and topped with wide combination of ingredients, both sweet and savoury.

There’s plenty of seafood at stalls around the city. *Harings* (herring) is a national institution, prepared with salt or pickled but never cooked; your standard model is beheaded, split and filleted, served with diced onion and sometimes sweet-pickle chips as a garnish. *Paling* (eel) is usually smoked. *Mosselein* (mussels) are best eaten from September to April; the classic preparation is to cook with white wine, chopped leeks and onions, and serve with a side of *frites* or *potaat* (French fries).

Some typical Dutch desserts are fruit pie (apple, cherry, banana cream or other fruit), *vla* (custard) and pancakes. Many snack bars and pubs serve *appeltaart* (apple pie) and coffee throughout the day – there’s a reason Dutch apple pie is so admired.

### Indonesian

Whatever you do, you must sample this tasty legacy of Dutch colonial history. Some dishes are concoctions rather than traditional Indonesian, but that doesn’t make them less appealing. An Indonesian *rijsttafel* – a dozen or more tiny dishes, some startling spicy, with rice – should be a highlight of your visit.

Smaller *nasi rames* (boiled rice) is similar in concept and served on one plate. *Bami rames* is the same dish with thick noodles. *Gado-gado* is lightly steamed vegetables with peanut sauce and hard-boiled egg. A delicious staple is *satè* or *satéh* (satay), marinated barbecued beef, chicken or pork on small skewers.

Other stand-bys are *nasi goreng* – fried rice with onions, pork, shrimp and spices, often topped with a fried egg or shredded omelette – and *bami goreng*, the same thing but with noodles.

Indonesian food is usually served mild for Westerners. If you want it hot (pedis, pronounced p-dis), say so but be prepared for the ride of a lifetime. You can play it safe by asking for *sambal* (chilli paste), although it may already be on the table. *Sambal oelek* is red and hot; the dark-brown *sambal badjak* is based on onions and is mild and sweet. If you overdo it, a spoonful of plain rice will douse the flames.

### Surinamese

This former South American colony has dishes familiar to those who know the Caribbean, with African, Indian and Indonesian influences. Chicken features strongly, along with curries (chicken, lamb or beef), potatoes and rice, and a hard-boiled egg is usually in there somewhere. *Roti* are unleavened pancakes. It’s a pleasant fire on the tastebuds, and great value.

### PRACTICALITIES

#### Opening Hours

Dinner is the main meal, usually served from 6pm to 10pm. Many restaurants only do dinner, and will fill up by 7pm. Try arriving for the ‘second sitting’, when films and concerts start, between 8.30pm and 9.30pm. Kitchens tend to close by 10pm and leave late-night grazing to the street vendors.

For lunch your best bets are cafés (see also the Drinking & Smoking chapter, p178). Their meals tend to be reliable, but not life-changing. Many cafés open as early as 10am, and lunch can be ordered from 11am to 2.30pm. They’re great places to hang out, even after the kitchen shuts down. Many lunch cafés may allow you to linger until later afternoon.

Breakfast before 10am can be a problem. Unless your hotel serves breakfast, you may need to wait until the cafés open, or locate a bakery.

Restaurants tend to be open for business daily, but a few take Sunday and Monday off. Some go ahead and take several weeks off in July and August, so phone ahead or risk seeing ‘On Holiday’ at the front door.

#### How Much?

Eating out may seem reasonable compared to some other European cities (hello, London and Paris), but know that prices are up sharply since the euro was introduced in 2002.

Lunch will set you back anything from €2.50 for a basic sandwich to €10 for a complicated salad. Main courses will cost €8 to €18, lunch or dinner, at middle-of-the-road restaurants. To cut your bill, look for the *dagschotel* (dish of the day), and heartier appetites might go for a *dagnenu*, a set menu of three or more courses. Except at top-end restaurants, main courses should cost under €25, and three-course dinners are readily available for €25 to €35.

Breakfast tends to be overpriced: at a café, you can expect €5 for coffee, something baked and maybe some orange juice. Consider hitting a bakery the next morning.

A beer will generally set you back around €2, and nonalcoholic drinks are only slightly cheaper. House wines are generally €3 to €5 per glass, although the sky’s the limit on full bottles.

Last but not least, many restaurants do not accept credit cards; check in advance.

#### Booking Tables

Virtually everyone speaks English well. Apart from the busiest upper-crust restaurants, booking a table is rarely a problem. A phone call is usually all that is required.

### PRICE GUIDE

This guide is based on the average price of a main course, including tax. See individual listings for prices of set meals where available.

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as well as the little Asia- and Chinatown at the south end of Zeedijk. The bottom of the street called Nes in the Medieval Centre offers several nice cafés and restaurants outside the slipstream. Nieuwmarkt is one of Amsterdam’s liveliest squares, and certainly its loveliest; the surrounds brim with tempting eateries.

**MEDIEVAL CENTRE**

**SUPPER CLUB**  
Map pp62-5  
Contemporary Dutch €€  
638 05 13; www.supperclub.nl; Jonge Roelenteg 21; 5-course menu €65;  dinner

If you’re looking for a scene, you’ve found one. Enter the theatrical, all-white room, snuggle on the enormous mattresses and snack on victuals as DJs spin house music. Shows are provocative and entertaining – if it’s lamb night, live sheep may be led through to the kitchen. If it’s hospital night, look out.

**SEA PALACE**  
Map pp62-5  
Chinese €€  
626 47 77; www.seapalace.nl; Oosterdokskade 8; mains €9.60-36, yum cha courses €13.50-15;  lunch & dinner

Funny thing about floating Chinese restaurants: they look like tourist traps and may well be, but from Hong Kong to Holland they are all admired for good food. The Sea Palace’s three floors are busy with people, both Chinese and non, who come not just for the great views of the city from across the IJ. Even if you order dim sum from a menu instead of by the cart, the shrimp in the ha kow dumplings go pop in your mouth just the same.

**LUCIUS**  
Map pp62-5  
Seafood €€  
624 18 31; www.lucius.nl; Spuistraat 247; mains €17.50-28, set menus €35;  dinner

Simple, delicious and consistently full, Lucius is known for both fresh ingredients and not mucking them up with lots of sauce and spice. The interior, all fish tanks and tiles, is workmanlike and professional, just like the service.

**D’VIJFF VLIEGHEN**  
Map pp62-5  
Contemporary Dutch €€  
530 40 60; www.thefivflies.com; Spuistraat 294-302; mains €20-28, set menus from €39;  dinner

So what if every tourist and business visitor eats here? Sometimes the herd gets it right.

The ‘Five Flies’ is a classic, spread out over five 17-century canal houses. Old-wood dining rooms teem with character, featuring Delft tiles and works by Rembrandt and Breitner. Some chairs have brass plates for the celebrities who’ve sat in them.

**ORIENTAL CITY**  
Map pp62-5  
Chinese €€  
626 83 52; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 177-179; mains €8.50-24, dim sum €2.50-4.50;  lunch & dinner

This huge Hong Kong–style restaurant with the requisite red lanterns is always lively. Join gaggles of local Chinese for daily dim sum (11.30am to 4.30pm; we like the meaty, flavoursome cha sui u bao pork buns) and a 24-page menu (!) of classic Cantonese cuisine.

**VILLA ZEEZICHT**  
Map pp62-5  
Café €€  
626 74 33; Torensteeg 7; mains €3-21;  breakfast, lunch & dinner

Although you could try sandwiches and pastas here, half the patrons seem to be eating the famous apple pie. For €4.50 you get a mountain of apples dusted in cinnamon, surrounded by warm pastry and fresh cream. In warm weather, outdoor tables are set up on the bridge over the Singel.

**HAESJE CLAES**  
Map pp62-5  
Traditional Dutch €€€  
624 99 98; www.haesjclaes.nl; Spuistraat 273-275; mains €13.30-20, set menus from €28.50;  lunch & dinner

Haesje Claes’ warm surrounds, a tad touristy but with lots of dark wood and antique knick-knacks, is just the place to comfort your peeling soup and endive stamppot. The fish starter has a great sampling of Dutch fishes.

**LE PETIT LATIN**  
Map pp62-5  
Mediterranean €€  
624 94 25; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 306; mains €11-19.50, set menus €32;  7-11pm

Easy to overlook, with its step-down entrance, the ‘Little Latin’ drips with culinary authority, and it’s not just the curried travel posters from the Côté d’Azur. If you can’t read the blackboard scrawl, chef Jacques from Marseille will crouch to give you the day’s specials – Aquitaine lamb? Fresh mulet flown in from the Riviera? Who can say non. The wine list is brief but formidable. Reserve or weep.

**SELF-CATERING**

Amsterdam has some great takeaway shops, known in some quarters as traiteurs (caterers). You’ll find slick delis, bistro or street windows selling Spanish tapas, Italian tagliatelli, Indonesian skewers and ol’ stand-bys like pizza or falafel. Department stores like De Bijenkorf (p138) and Vroom & Dreesman (p138) have good cafeterias.

The chains Volendamer Vishandel (fish, sandwiches and snacks) and Bakkerij Bart (bakers) can be found in shopping areas. AH To Go has branches in heavy-traffic zones (bakeries) can be found in shopping areas. And fish stands sell-...
**DOLORES** Map pp62-5  Organic €

56; Zoutsteeg 4; sandwiches €1.60-4.45; lunch & dinner

It won't win any design awards, but year in, year out, Nam Kee's the most popular Chinese spot in town. And why not; there's good roast anything, and service is snappy. A new, fancier location has opened at Geldersekade 117 (Map pp62-5).

**NEW KING** Map pp62-5  Chinese €

If you want Chinese on the Zeedijk but don't want to feel like you're slumming it, New King is about the fanciest on the block. The roast meats may have you asking 'how much is that duckie in the window?' (€24 with the full service of different courses.)

**EAT MODE** Map pp62-5  Asian €

This smart little fusion diner covers the Pacific Rim in style. Order, take your number and plop down at a New Age marbled-wood table while they whip up your sea-weed salad, California spring rolls or Thai tom yam goong soup. Does a booming takeaway trade too.

Also recommended:

**KAMP YIN** Map pp62-5  Chinese €

265 100; www.kampyin.com; Zeedijk 115; mains €4-16; lunch & dinner

A little hard to locate, but worth it. Extraordinary care goes into dishes – you might find pot-au-feu with chicken or polenta soufflé – and you may even find a sprig of mint in your cup of water. Desserts are wonderful, including the namesake hemelse madder (heavenly mud) chocolate mousse. The dining room is spare yet comfy, or snag a table out back on a warm night.

**HEMLESE MODDER** Map pp62-5  Contemporary Dutch €€

264 12 03; www.hemelsemodder.nl; Oude Waal 9; mains €16, 3-/4-/5-course menus €24/28.50/32; dinner

A little hard to locate, but worth it. Extraordinary care goes into dishes – you might find pot-au-feu with chicken or polenta soufflé – and you may even find a sprig of mint in your cup of water. Desserts are wonderful, including the namesake hemelse madder (heavenly mud) chocolate mousse. The dining room is spare yet comfy, or snag a table out back on a warm night.

**CAFÉ BERN** Map pp62-5  Swiss €

262 00 34; Nieuwmarkt 9; mains €9-14; dinner

Indulge in a fondue frenzy at this delightfully well-worn brown café. People have been flocking here for more than 30 years for the gruyère fondue as well as the extraordinaire. Note: it’s generally closed for a large part of the summer, but do you really want fondue in hot weather anyway? Reservations advised.

**STERK STAALTJE** Map pp62-5  Takeaway €

264 9065; http://sterkstaaltje.com; Staalstraat 12; prices vary; lunch

Top-shelf soups, duck or shrimp curries, and noodle dishes are the order of the day at this sophisticated restaurant with bright art. Note: some locals refer to it by its old name, Tom Yam. A pretheatre menu is available.

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**BALTHAZAR’S KEUKEN** Map p86  French-Mediterranean €€

420 21 14; www.balthazarsskeuken.nl; Elandsgracht 108; 3-course set menu €26; dinner Wed-Fri

Consistently one of Amsterdam’s top-rated restaurants. Don’t expect a wide-ranging menu – the byword is basically ‘what ever we have on hand’ – but it’s usually absolutely delectable. Plus, there’s a modern-rustic look and attentive service (!). Reservations recommended.

**RAKANG THAI** Map p86  Thai €€

627 50 12; Elandsgracht 29; mains €17-21, 4-course menu €27-32; dinner

Chairs wrapped in strapjackets, bright art on the walls, neckties in the tables (it makes sense when you see it), a mai pen rai (no problem) atmosphere and delicious cooking (go for the almost buttern tom kha gai soup or crunchy, spicy duck salad) keep it busy here night after night.

**JEAN JEAN** Map p86  French €

627 71 53; www.jean-jean.nl; 1e Anjeliersdwarsstraat 14; mains €17-22, 4-course menu €35; dinner Tue-Sun

One of the hottest places in town, this cosy neighbourhood bistro offers honest and affordable Gallic comfort food: soups, meat and fish dishes etc. The setting is understated yet sophisticated, and service is professional.

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**SITTING CITIES**

**JORDAAN**

The restaurants in this part of town exude the conviviality that has long been a hallmark of the Jordaan. The Haarlemmerstraat and surrounds are trendy, but many people still gravitate to the eateries along Westerstraat. You may want to lose your way in the narrow backstreets, where the next hot spot may be opening up.

**MAE KEE** Map pp62-5  Chinese €

264 11 66; www.maekke.com; Zeedijk 19; mains €6-16.50; lunch & dinner

Still features old steel weights and measuring tools, plus friendly, knowledgeable service.

**RITUALS** Map pp62-5  Vegan €€

527 04 00; Schilderswetering 10; mains €11-23, 3-course menu €23-30; dinner

Biologically (organic) is the name of the game at this tiny shop, which resembles a kiddle train station in the traffic island. Try organic burgers, tostis (grilled sandwiches), chicken and frites. Service has been known to take its time, but it is fun to watch the world go by at the picnic-table seating outdoors. It is on Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal, opposite No 289.

**VLAAMS FRITESHUIS** Map pp62-5  Takeaway €

624 60 75; Voetboogstraat 33; small/large €1.70/2.20, sauces €0.50-0.60; 11am-6pm

This hole-in-the-wall takeaway has drawn the hordes for its monumental frites since 1887. The standard is smothered in mayonnaise, though you can ask for ketchup, peanut sauce or a variety of spicy mayos. If the queue’s too long, consider Wil Graanstra Friteshuis (p166) on Westerkerk square.

Also recommended:

**KANTJI TO GO** Map pp62-5  www.kantji.nl; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 342; dishes €3.75-6.25; lunch & dinner

Cobble your own Indonesian combo from rice, noodles, meat and veggies.

**VAN DEN BERGE’S BROODJESBAR** Map pp62-5 622 83 56; Zoutsteeg 4; sandwiches €1.60-4.50; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; Try gehakt, thin meatball slices served warm with killer-hot mustard.

**VOLANDEREN VISHANDEL** Map pp62-5 626 33 88; Zoutsteeg 6; sandwiches €2.20-4.50; breakfast & lunch

This three-table shop has immaculate fresh fish and a great location.

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**BLAUW AAN DE WAL** Map pp62-5  International €€€

330 22 57; Oudezijds Achterburgwal 99; mains €24-27, 3-course menu €42-30; dinner

Definitely a rose among thorns: a long, often graffiti-covered hallway in the middle of the Red Light District leading to a Michelin-listed garden of Eden. Originally a 17-century herb warehouse, the white-washed, exposed-brick, multilevel space still features old steel weights and measures, plus friendly, knowledgeable service and refined French- and Italian-inspired cooking. In summer, grab a table in the romantic garden.

**KRUASA THAI** Map pp62-5  Thai €€

622 95 33; Warmoesstraat 6-8; lunch & dinner

One of the hottest places in town, this three-table shop has immaculate fresh fish and a great location.
JORDAAN

EATING

10pm

In a town where ‘Turkish’ usually means Divan specialising in Japanese. At the continent’s only shop for meat, seafood and veggies, so are the If the Dutch are famous for pancakes of okonomiyaki (literally, ‘cook Saucer’, but if you’re prepared to take your while listening to music with a beat. Also recommended: Bloemgracht (Map p86; 620 20 88; www.restaurant bloemgracht.nl); Bloemgracht 47; mains €21.50; set menus €35; breakfast Wed-Sun) Quality cuisine in a lovely canal house. Try the grilled tuna with smoked potatoes. Broodje Mokum (Map p86; 623 19 66; Rogezgraft 26; sandwiches from €2) Great sandwiches – point and they’ll tell you the price. Noodle & Go (Map p86; 773 09 13; Brouwersgracht 125; dishes €4-7; lunch & dinner) Noodles or fried rice, plus meat and a veg, and you’re on your way.

WESTERN CANAL BELT

It may not have the ethnic dining diversity of other parts of town, but the Western Canal Belt makes up for it with some interesting and surprisingly fashionable options. Notably, the Negen Straatjes (Nine Alleys) are filled with cafes and small restaurants to match their lovely boutiques.

CHRISTOPHE Map p92

French €€

Café €

625 08 07; www.christophe.nl; Leliegracht 46; mains €31-53, 4-course set menus €45-65; breakfast & dinner Tue-Sat

Lobster dishes, duck-liver terrine and an unusual elegance keep Jean-Christophe Rovers’ Michelin-starred restaurant busy every night. However, the excellent, caring

JAPANESE PANCAKE WORLD

Map p86

Japanese €€

623 02 23; Noordermarkt 43; mains €2.50-6; breakfast, lunch & dinner

This sprawling, indoor-outdoor space is great for people-watching, popular for coffees and small meals, and out-of-the-park for its tall, cakey apple pie (€2.50). On market days (Mondays and Saturdays) there’s almost always a queue out the door.

DUENDE

Map p86

Spanish €€

620 66 92; www.cafeduende.nl; Lindengracht 62; tapas €3.50-9.50; dinner Flamenco music (Saturday night), big shared tables and reasonably priced tapas guarantee Duende’s popularity. It’s great for a party with a big group of friends – or strangers. The front room is the more lively (and attractive) of the two. Note: order at the bar.

DE BLAFFENDE VIS

Map p86

Contemporary Dutch €€

625 17 21; Westerstraat 118; mains under €8.50; breakfast, lunch & dinner

Meals at the rowdy, corner ‘Barking Fish’ are better than they need to be for the price (contemporary Dutch – steak, fish, chicken – changing daily). Students and 30-somethings happily bop and swish beer while listening to music with a beat.

SMALL WORLD CATERING

Map p86

Takeaway €

420 27 74; www.smallworldcatering.nl; Binnen Oranjestraat 14; sandwiches €5.45-7.50, other mains €4-6; 10.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun

This Australian-run company is known for quality. Small cases house gorgeous prepared vegetables and meat dishes, and you can get a variety of quiches and sand-wiches including fresh tuna, tapenade and artichoke hearts.

WINKEL

Map p86

Café €

623 02 23; Noordermarkt 43; mains €2.50-6; breakfast, lunch & dinner

This eel’s nest of contempo-cool, with a girlfriend, and it’s an instant party. In keeping with the ‘long and thin’ theme, dishes.

MOEDERS

Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

623 76 43; Vinkenstraat 119; mains €3.80-11.50, 6-course set menus €13-15.50; dinner Mon-Sat

Moeder (mother) is in his 60s (yes, his...he’s big and gruff and probably a sweetheart inside), and he’s been serving up solid, inexpensive meals for decades. The tiny kitchen-laden home is coconuts, beefsteaks, schnitzels and chicken with potatoes and vegetables (some canned) like your own moeder always wanted you to eat. The set menus are a steal.

DE BOLHOED

Map p86

Vegetarian €€

626 18 03; Prinsengracht 60-62; lunch mains €3.50-11.75, dinner mains €9.50-14.50, 3-course menu €22; lunch & dinner

The ‘Charlie Brown’s pumpkin patch goes to India’ interior is a nice setting to tuck into enormous, organic Mexican-, Asian- and Italian-inspired dishes; in warm weather, there’s a verdant little canalside terrace. Leave room for the banana-cream pie. Veggies sway by it – reserve.

CINEMA PARADISO

Map p86

Italian €€

623 73 44; www.cinemaparadiso.info; Westerstraat 184-186; mains €9.50-15; dinner Tue-Sun

Action! Cinema Paradiso opened in 2002 in a former movie theatre, and glitterati have been appearing in the dining room ever since. Direct yourself to a booth or table near the open kitchen, and enjoy pastas, pizzas, lots of antipasti and stargazing. Go for cocktails and drink in the atmosphere.

BURGER’S PATIO

Map p86

International €€

623 68 54; 2e Tuindwarsstraat 12; mains €13-19, 3-course menu €25; dinner

Despite its name, this is no hamburger joint. Rather, an air of easy-going cool permeates the modern interior, and the namesake patio is a fun hideout. Meats are free-range, pastas are popular, and touches like crudités, aioli and tapenade make the prices seem more reasonable than they already are.

NOMADS

Map p86

Middle Eastern €€

344 64 01; www.restaurantnomads.nl; Rozengracht 133; meze plates €3-8.25, couscous €15-21.50, 3-course set menu €45; dinner Tue-Sun

It’s the Supper Club concept on the road to Morocco. Wine, dine and recline on mattresses amid decadent decorations, and graze on platters of mod Middle Eastern snacks while being entertained by belly dancers and DJs. Superbly sexy, and best experienced with a lively group.

LOCAL

Map p86

International €€

423 40 39; www.local-amsterdam.nl; Westerstraat 136; mains €7-19.50; dinner

This eel’s nest of contempo-cool, with long, tall tables stretching its entire length, ensures that you will never eat alone. Go with friends, and it’s an instant party. In keeping with the ‘long and thin’ theme, main dishes are grilled on skewers: there’s an international selection from yakitori to beef stroganoff, all served with potatoes, salad and appropriate sauces.

DE VLEIGENDE SCHOTEL

Map p86

Vegetarian €€

625 20 41; Nieuwe Leliestraat 162-168; mains €9.13-7.5; dinner

Service can be spotty at the ‘Flying Saucer’, but if you’re prepared to take your time in the summer camp-chic dining room, you’ll enjoy some of the city’s favourite veggie gratins, lasagnes and Indian-inflected meals. There’s a decent wine list.

DIVAN

Map p86

Turkish €€

626 82 39; Elandsgracht 14; mains €13-17; lunch Fri & Sat, dinner nightly

In a town where ‘Turkish’ usually means ‘takeaway’ (or ‘pizza’), Divan offers a calming alternative. For €23.50 you get the mezze combo starter of 10 assorted dips, skewers and salads, and we loved ali nazik (minced lamb with aubergines in yoghurt garlic sauce), but it was the gracious, sweet service that will take us back.

Café VLINDER

Map p86

Café €

626 77 08; Brouwersgracht 139; mains €3.50-13; breakfast & lunch

This window-lined corner place in the Jordaan serves a magnificent, fresh-made breakfast (€12.50), laden with Dutch cheese, hâché, smoked salmon, eggs, coffee and fresh juice. It’s also pleasant for afternoon cake and coffee (try the cheesecake or nut tart). We love the sassy service that describes itself as ‘straight-friendly’.

Also recommended:

BROODJE MOKUM

Map p86; 623 19 66; Rogezgraft 26; sandwiches from €2)

MOEDERS’ POT EETHUISJE

Map p86

Traditional Dutch €€

626 79 57; www.moeders.com; Rozengracht 251; mains €13-17, 3-course menu €24-28; dinner

Mum’s the word at ‘Mothers’. When this friendly place opened, staff asked customers to bring their own plates, flatware and photos of their own mums as donations, and the result is still a delightful hodge-podge. So is the food, including stamppot, seafood, Moroccan dishes, a vegetarian frittata and a rijsttafel of traditional Dutch dishes.

DE WINKEL

Map p86

Vegetarian €€

626 77 08; Brouwersgracht 139; mains €3.50-13; 4-course set menus €45-65; dinner Mon-Sat

This Australian-run company is known for its unusual elegance keep Jean-Christophe Royer’s Michelin-starred restaurant busy every night. However, the excellent, caring

WE DARE YOU

Amsterdamse loves raw fish. Herring season is announced with all the fanfare of the new Beaujolais elsewhere: look for ‘Hollands Nieuw’ signs at the fish kiosks around town. The proper way to eat a herring is to dangle it above the mouth and bite bit by bit (don’t worry, it’s already been filleted for you).
service puts it over the top in our book, making this an extraordinary restaurant by world, not just Amsterdam, standards.

**DE BELHAMEL** Map p92  French €€
622 10 95; www.debelhamel.nl; Brouwersgracht 60; mains €18-21, set menu €32; diner
In warm weather the canalside tables at the head of the Herengracht are an aphrodisiac, and the sumptuous Art Nouveau interior provides the perfect backdrop for excellent, French- and Italian-inspired dishes like silky roast beef.

**LOF** Map p92  Fusion €€
620 29 97; Haarlemmerstraat 62; mains €18-21, 3-course menu €35; diner
Sit on an outdoor cushion and watch the passing world. The surplus décor manages to feel cool.

**STOUT** Map p92  Fusion Café €€
616 36 64; Haarlemmerstraat 73; lunch mains €4.75-13, dinner mains €15-20; lunch & dinner
Slick, hip couples congregate at this airy, artful café to air-kiss, read design magazines, gossip and share imaginative fusion dishes (carrot and coriander soup with fennel and miso sauce). Schoolhouse-quality furniture and Brazilian dance beats animate a fair bet you’ll spot a local media type here most weekends.

**W ERC K** Map p92  Contemporary Dutch €€
627 40 79; www.werc.nl; Prinsengracht 277; mains €14-18; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat
Finally, a café that is worthy of the high-profile location between the Anne Frank Huis and Westerkerk. You can choose from sandwiches and snacks (€3 to €8) or steaks and more involved mains; think chicken with smoked bacon or black tagliatelle with morel sauce. Most people come to see and be seen on the crushed white-stone terrace.

**CILU B ANG** Map p92  Indonesian €€
626 97 53; www.cilubang.com; Runstraat 10; mains €7.25-18; rijsttafel €21-37; diner
In the Negen Straatjes, cute, cozy and slightly romantic, celadon-hued Cilubang soothes the stomach and soul with rijsttafel and attentive, personal service. It’s been at it for 2½ decades. The food is West-Javanese style, and with any luck you’ll hear gamelan music too.

**DE 2 GRIEKEN** Map p92  Greek €€
625 53 17; Prinsenstraat 20; mains €13-17; diner
Craving stewed mountain goat or some juicy lamb chops? This relaxed, family-run bistro caters to your carnivorous desires with great grills and gets ‘opad’s from locals. In nice weather, grab a seat on the flower-lined terrace out back. If you’re a fan of Greek wines, this is the place to go.

**EN V Y** Map p92  Mediterranean €€
344 64 07; www.envy.nl; Prinsengracht 381; Tapas €4.50-17; set menus €50; lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Mon-Tue
This hip, sleek restaurant encourages diners to take five-a-course menu of seemingly endless, top-notch tasting. The designer globes are there to light up the media stars here most weekends.

**BUFFET V A N O D DE TTE** Map p92  Café €
423 60 34; www.buffet-amsterdam.nl; Herengracht 309; mains €3-12; lunch 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5:30pm Sat, noon-5:30pm Sun
Not a buffet but a sit-down café, Odette and Yvette show how good simple cooking can taste when you start with great ingredients and a dash of creativity. Soups, sandwiches, pastas and quiches are mostly organic, and you might find small like pine nuts in your quiche. Sit by the window for one of the city’s prettiest canal views.

**FO O DISM** Map p92  Café €
427 51 03; www.foodism.nl; Oude Leliestraat 8; mains €4.50-12; €11.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 6pm Sat & Sun
A hip, colourful little joint run by a relaxed crew. All-day breakfasts (€9), sandwiches like grilled chicken and salads make up the day menu; night-time sees patrons tucking into plates of pasta – try the ‘Kung Funghi’ (with three kinds of mushrooms, parsley, walnuts and cream).

**H E I N** Map p92  Café €
623 10 48; Berenstraat 20; mains €4-11; breakfast & lunch
Hein simply loves to cook, and it shows in her simple, stylish, sky-lit café – you have to walk through the kitchen to reach the dining room. Media types, doing business over brunch, comment that she has a great touch with simple dishes: croque monsieur or madame, smoked salmon and fresh fruit salads.

**GOOD I ES** Map p92  Café €
625 61 22; Huidenstraat 9; dishes €3.50-10; lunch & dinner
This once-country place in the Negen Straatjes with rustic picnic tables has gone glam with a slick makeover, a bar and even occasional DJ nights. They’ve joined the tapas wave, but it’s still popular for creative sandwiches like grilled chicken with salad and pine nuts.

**L U ST** Map p92  Café €
626 57 91; Runstraat 13; mains €3.50-8.50; breakfast & lunch
Parquet floors and walls, supermod ceiling lamps and Brazilian dance beats animate this glam café. It’s a fair bet you’ll spot models nibbling focaccia sandwiches, tostis, generous salads or the popular grilled chicken club with avocado.

**NI E LS E N** Map p92  Café €
330 60 06; Berenstraat 19; dishes €4-10; breakfast & lunch
This sunny café, with its bright interior filled with fresh flowers, has a tasty set breakfast – eggs, toast, fruit, juice and coffee (€7.50). During lunch a large variety of salads and sandwiches are served: try the BLT or gigantic chicken club sandwich.

**P AN CA CE BAK E R Y** Map p92  Contemporary Dutch €€
625 13 33; www.pancake.nl; Prinsengracht 191; mains €4.95-11.50; lunch & dinner
This basement restaurant in a restored warehouse features a dizzying 79 varieties...
of this Dutch speciality from sweet (choc-o-)late to savoury (the ‘Egyptian’, topped with lamb, sweet peppers and garlic sauce). There are also omelettes, soups, desserts and lots of tourists given its proximity to the Anne Frank Huis.

WIL GERAANSTRA FRITSHUIS
Map p92  Fries €
6 52 40 71; Westermarkt 11; frites €1.70-2.40; © 11am-6pm
This little stall near the Anne Frank Huis has been serving up crispy frites with delectable mayo since 1956. Legions of Amsterdammers swear by them. While you’re there, ask Wil to do his impression of ‘Terminator’ Schwarzenegger – it’s priceless.

Also recommended:
Koh-I-Noor (Map p92) 6 22 31 33; Westermarkt 29; mains €12.50-19.50; © dinner Venerable Indian with curries and tadka close to Anne Frank Huis.
Letting (Map p92) 6 22 93 93; www.letting.nl; Prijsenstraat 3; sandwiches €4.50-7; © 8am-5.30pm
Bright, charming snack ‘n’ sandwich bar, for pit-stopping between purchases.
‘t Kuyfije (Map p92) 6 22 10 45; Gasthuismolensteeg 9; sandwiches €2.50; © breakfast & lunch) Tile-lined sandwich shop. Try the pastamires and raw meats.

SOUTHERN CANAL BELT
All roads in Amsterdam seem to lead to Leidseplein, but we don’t really recommend eating there. While cheap and cheerful, establishments there tend not to be particularly distinctive. A short walk away, however, you’ll find some attractive options.

Much the same could also be said for Rembrandtplein. Instead of eating there, walk a few steps to Utrechtsestraat, the finest restaurant row in town.

VAN VLAANDEREN Map p100-1  French €€
6 62 82 92; Weteringschans 175; set menus €39.50-55.00; © 6.30pm-10.30pm, closed Sun & Mon
One of our favourite French restaurants in town, with lovely canal views from the raised deck. Owner Bas Verstift will come out to chat and advise on your wine, and the fine nuances of dishes are always surprising – such as tuna carpaccio with avocado, chicken with bacon mousse or langoustines done three ways.

top picks

• De Bethsembl (p164) In summer, try for an outdoor table overlooking the canal; you’ll have the beautiful Brouwersgracht alongside you and the handsome Herengracht at your feet.

• La Rive (below) As if two Michelin stars weren’t enough, this restaurant at the Intercontinental Hotel sits right on the Amstel for riverfront views.

• M Café (p169) Drink in the views from the top floor of the Metz & Co department store on the Keizersgracht.

• Sea Palace (p158) This floating Chinese restaurant is pleasing on the eye, and pleasing on the IJ.

LA RIVE  Map p100-1  French €€
6 62 60 60; www.restaurantlavire.com; Amstel Intercontinental Hotel, Professor Tulipleyn 1; mains €34-55; © breakfast daily, lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat
Two Michelin stars and a formal dining room with graciously spaced tables and views over the Amstel make La Rive the perfect venue for an out-to-impress lunch or dinner. The menu changes frequently, but standbys include turbot and truffle in potato pasta, or, as you’d expect, a starter of caviar.

RISTORANTE D’ANTICA  Map p100-1  Italian €€
6 62 38 62; www.dantica.nl; Reguliersdwarsstraat 80-82; mains €13-39, set menus from €35; © dinner Tue-Sun
Although D’Antica’s three dining rooms get their share of celebrities, you’d be hard pressed to find a more welcoming restaurant in town. There’s a familiar selection of pastas and meats, but cognoscenti order spaghetti al parmigiano (not on the menu) – and everyone may watch as waiters turn steaming pasta inside a wheel of cheese.

SEGUGIO  Map p100-1  Italian €€
330 15 03; www.segugio.nl; Utrechtsestraat 96; pastas €15-17, mains €26-36; © dinner Mon-Sat
This fashionably minimalist storefront with two levels of seating is the sort of place other chefs go for a good dinner. It’s known for risotto and high-quality ingredients combined with a sure hand. Book ahead – it’s almost always busy.

SLUIZER  Map p100-1  International €€
6 62 63 76; www.sluzier.nl; Utrechtsestraat 43-45; mains €14.50-24.50, 3-course menu €19.50; © dinner
This old-line institution – with its romantic, enclosed garden terrace – historically comprises two restaurants: a Parisian-style ‘meat’ restaurant (No 43) and a fish restaurant (No 45), though both menus are available in both restaurants. Spare ribs are the speciality of the former and bouillabaisse the speciality of the latter.

REASTAURAN RED  Map p100-1  Seafood/French €€
320 18 24; www.restaurantred.nl; Keizersgracht 594; mains €14.50-24.50, set menus €25; © 6.00pm-midnight
For those paralysed by choice, the very sexy Red is for you. It’s all about steak or lobster here, and whatever way you’re wired, the stylish waitresses will match the right wine. No prizes for guessing the main colour scheme.

TUJUH MARET  Map p100-1  Indonesian €€
6 427 98 65; www.tujuh-maret.nl; Utrechtsestraat 73; mains €13.50-23.50, rijsttafel €35.50; © lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly
Dare we say it? Tujuh Maret, next door to Tempo Doeloe, is just as good but attitude-free and cheaper. Grab a wicker chair and tuck into spicy Sulawesi-style dishes like dried, fried beef or chicken in red-pepper sauce. Rijsttafel is laid out according to spice intensity; makanan kecil is a mini-rijsttafel for €15.

HERRIE  Map p100-1  International €€
6 62 08 38; Utrechtsestraat 30a; dishes €18-23; set menus €39-50; © 6-10pm Mon-Sat
The menu translates as ‘uproar’ – after all, the chef appeared on a Dutch cooking programme ‘Uproar in the Kitchen’ – but make no mistake, this skilled team runs like clockwork. Refined creations such as marinated lobster with parmesan cream emerge from the open kitchen with choreographed timing, served in the chic grey-and-black interior. The only drawback is the limited wine list. Downside: it’s a bit supercilious – you have to ring a doorbell to enter.

TAKE THAI  Map p100-1  Thai €€
6 62 05 77; Utrechtsestraat 87; mains €14-19.75, set menus €25-36; © dinner
This modern restaurant plates up some of the best Thai food in the city. Choose from a variety of curries spiced according to your palate. The Penang beef curry is a winner, as is the fish fried in lemongrass and Thai basil.

PASTA E BASTA Map p100-1  Italian €€
6 422 22 26; www.pastaebasta.nl; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 8; 3-course menu €34; © dinner
There may be better Italian food in town, but Pasta e Basta is popular with large groups year in, year out thanks to its singing waitstaff, who perform opera, standards and more. Regulars swear by the antipasto buffet and grilled meats. Reserve well in advance.

THAI CORNER  Map p100-1  Thai €€
320 66 84, Kerkstraat 66; mains €9.50-19.50, set menus €23-28; © dinner
Don’t dismiss this cute little place: it does seriously authentic Thai. Locals and restaurant critics swoon over squid with garlic pepper and tofu with Thai basil, and stare agog at the over-the-top, carved wooden bar at the back. Other restaurants could afford to take lessons from the self-effacing service.

ROSE’S CANTINA  Map p100-1  Mexican €€
6 625 97 77; www.rosescantina.com; Reguliersdwarsstraat 38-40; dishes €5.50-19.50; © dinner
Even if the Californians and Texans (not to mention Mexicans) among us wouldn’t

S stingy gay couples pack the different levels of this Art Nouveau–tiled and styled space for pizzas, pasta and playful flirting, and it’s perfect for a low-key lunch with your fashion-industry friends.

TEMPO DOELOE  Map p100-1  Indonesian €€
6 625 67 18; Utrechtsestraat 75; mains €19.50-21.50, rijsttafel & set menus €25-35; © dinner Mon-Sat
One of the best Indonesian restaurants in the city (it charges accordingly), Tempo Doeloe’s setting and service are pleasant and decorous without being overdone. Dishes bring out subtle flavours amid the spice, and staff are happy to accommodate vegetarians. Plus, there’s an extraordinary wine list. Downsides: it’s a bit supercilious – you have to ring a doorbell to enter.

Sinful paste makes a mean lasagne at Tempo Doeloe.
stamp this place as authentic, it’s hard not to love the gorgeous courtyard and fiesta interior. Fajitas, quesadillas and enchiladas are super sized, and margaritas taste good on any continent.

SZMULEWICZ Map pp100-1  International €
620 28 22; www.szmulewicz.nl; Bakkerstraat 12; mains €10-19; // dinner
Szmulewicz’s décor is at once slick and breezy (trompe l’oeil marble walls, sculpted lighting), a diversity reflected in its menu of reliable, ever-changing international cooking: pastas, tapas, Greek dishes, beef fillets and vegetarian specialties. In summer, buskers play outside on this quiet block off Rembrandtplein.

PASTINI Map pp100-1  Italian €€
622 17 01; www.pastini.nl; Leidsegracht 29; mains €9.50-19; // dinner
With a gezellig, rustic-renaissance interior and a can’t-beat-it location facing two canals, Pastini wins praise for its looks, pastas and prices. Another speciality is the antipasto starter (€10.25 for five choices), but save room for dessert.

PIET DE LEEUW Map pp100-1  Steakhouse €€
623 71 81; www.piethelieuw.nl; Noorderstraat 11; mains €11.50-18; // dinner
This building dates from 1900, it’s been a common table, over well-priced steaks all over (including, admittedly, tourists) at your own table, you may meet folks from far and wide. Arrive before 6.30pm or reserve.

CAFÉ WALEM Map pp100-1  Café €€
625 35 44; Keizersgracht 449; lunch mains €4.50-9.50, dinner mains €9.50-17.50; // breakfast, lunch & dinner
The industrial-mod building by Gerrit Rietveld, two terraces, friendly service and a changing menu keep this place busy. There’s a popular carpaccio sandwich, mains including fish and duck, a neat line of soups and salads, and coffee from Illy.

LOS PILONES Map pp100-1  Mexican €€
320 46 51; www.lospilones.nl; Kerkstraat 63; starters €3.50-7.75, mains €12.50-13.75; // 4-11.30pm Tue-Sun
Owners Hector and Pedro consistently set the standard among Amsterdam’s handful of Mexican restaurants. If you’re looking for wonderfully grilled bistek, crispy chicken rolls and fruity margaritas, you’re definitely in the right place. No tacos (‘we don’t do Tex-Mex’) but who cares? One of their 60 tequilas will help you get over it.

PATA NEGRA Map pp100-1  Spanish €€
422 62 50; Utrechtsestraat 142; tapas €3.50-15, most under €8.50; // lunch & dinner
Tapas and only tapas. The alluringly tiled exterior is matched by a vibrant crowd inside, especially on weekends, downing sangria by the jug and all those small plates (the garlic-fried shrimps and grilled sardines are standouts). Margaritas are made with freshly squeezed lime juice, as they should be. Arrive before 6.30pm or reserve.

PYGMA-LION Map pp100-1  African €€
420 70 22; Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 5a; mains lunch €5.50-13, dinner 14-25; // dinner Tue-Sun
This modern South African bistro plates up animals you normally have to go to a zoo to see, like ostrich, springbok and zebra. Squeamish stomachs will still find more domesticated options: vegetarian dishes, ‘tippy’ tart and blackcurrant scones.

GOLDEN TEMPLE Map pp100-1  Vegetarian €€
626 85 60; www.restaurantgoldentemple.nl; Utrechtsestraat 126; mains €6.85-14.25; // dinner
Golden Temple’s quietly upscale setting means that you don’t have to feel like you’re back in school just because you’re eating vegetarian food. Its international menu of Indian thali, Middle Eastern and Mexican platters is good and inexpensive. Leave room for the totally wicked banana-cream pie.

FEBO A-GO-GO
The cheesy fast-food chain Febo (fay-bo) deserves the Amsterdam sex-and-drugs treatment: before first contact, however delightful, you might as well educate yourself.

With deep-fryers like sewage tanks and a steady clientele of bottom-feeders, Febo is secretly loved for its cheap, filling, heart-clogging treats (mostly €1 to €2). Then there’s the presentation – rows upon rows of tiny glass doors like a miniature Red Light District, lined with gorgeous bits that practically wink at you: kroketten of veal or beef, kipburger (chicken burger), Feboburger (thought to be real beef with BBQ sauce and lettuce) and enough variations to send Ronald McDonald screaming for cover. Insert a coin or two into a slot and open sesame, you’ve got the greatest date of your life.

OK, it’s down and dirty, but as long as you’re in and out quickly, who’s gonna know?

WAGAMAMA Map pp100-1  Japanese €€
528 77 78; Max Euweplein 10; mains €8-13; // lunch & dinner
The long rows of rectangular tables, laid out cafeteria-style, are often filled with hipsters fortifying themselves for bike trips or nights on the town. Staples include chicken ramen, Japanese curries and fried noodles or rice.

M CAFÉ Map pp100-1  Café €
520 78 48; Keizersgracht 455; mains €4-12; // 10am-5pm
Drink in that amazing panoramic view! The location, high above the Keizersgracht in the top-floor gallery of the ritzy Metz Department Store, gives new meaning to ‘high tea’ (€12), although other dishes are nothing you can’t find elsewhere (soup, salads or sandwiches).

BOJO Map pp100-1  Indonesian €€
622 74 34; www.bojo.nl; Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 51; mains €7.25-11.50; // lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily (open until 2am)
After a night on the town, there’s nothing like a little Indonesian. Bojo is a late-night institution. Clubbers come for sizzling satays, filled fried rice and steaming bowls of noodle soup. The quality may be uneven, but the food is certainly well priced.

ULIVETO Map pp100-1  Takeaway €
423 00 99; Weteringschans 118; dishes €4.50-10.50; // 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat
In a capacious, spare atmosphere of understated luxury, this shop is lined with huge corks of olive oil and splendid displays of Italian specialties. If you prefer to dine in, try the long white marble table when cooking demonstrations or classes do not being held there.

ZUSHI Map pp100-1  Japanese €€
330 68 82; Amstel 20; dishes €3.80-7.50; // breakfast, lunch & dinner
This conveyor-belt sushi shop features post-industrial chic décor (stainless steel, brick and blondwood), club tunes, lighting service, and new grilled dishes. Add up the colours of your plates to figure out the bill.

VAN DOBBEN Map pp100-1  Sandwich Shop €€
624 42 00; Korte Reguliersdwarsstraat 5; dishes €2-7.50; // breakfast, lunch & dinner
This diner with the hospital-tile décor has been supplying Amsterdam’s best kroketten (€2) since 1945. Also much beloved for sandwiches, soups and omelettes, and a compulsory stop on a Rembrandtplein pub crawl.

BAGELS & BEANS Map pp100-1  Sandwich Shop €€
427 22 13; www.villagebagels.nl; Vijzelstraat 139; bagel sandwiches €2.80-5.50; // breakfast & lunch
The people who gave Amsterdam bagel-chic are going like gangbusters. You may feel like a New Yorker as you dive into a bagel with salmon, chive cream cheese and capers, especially if you grab the newspaper. But you’ll remember where you are at the Stromarkt branch (Map pp62-5; // 528 91 52, Stromarkt 2), which has a canal-side terrace.

BAGELS & BEANS
This conveyor-belt sushi shop features post-industrial chic décor (stainless steel, brick and blondwood), club tunes, lighting service, and new grilled dishes. Add up the colours of your plates to figure out the bill.

SUMMER CANAL BELT
The building dates from 1900, it’s been a steakhouse and hangout since the 1940s, and the dark and cozy atmosphere has barely changed since. If you don’t get your own table, you may meet folks from all over (including, admittedly, tourists) at a common table, over well-priced steaks with toppings like onions, mushrooms or bacon, served with salad and piping-hot frites.

CAFÉ MORLANG Map pp100-1  Café €€
625 26 81; www.morlang.nl; Keizersgracht 451; lunch mains €3.50-18, dinner mains €10-18; // lunch & dinner
Grab a fashion magazine, order tomato soup or tarte tatin, or choose from a rotating menu with influences from Italy to Thailand. The canalside terrace is fab in warm weather; indoors enjoy the high ceilings and gigantic portraits of staff members painted on the back wall. Friday nights it’s a low-key gay hangout – so low-key that you may not realise it.
ones (smoked chicken with avocado and pesto). Top it all off with a slice of dense fig cake; it goes exceedingly well with coffee. There’s another branch in De Pijp (Map p119; 672 16 10, Ferdinand Bolstraat 70).

**BROODJE VAN KOOTJE**

*Sandwiches €*

623 20 36; Leidseplein 20; broodjes from €2; lunch & dinner

This is Amsterdam’s longest-running sandwich bar, although you’d never know it by its appearance (Micky D’s has more charm). Still, it opens open for late-night munchies, the quality is solid and you can’t beat the two locations (second branch at Spui 28, Map p262–3), right in the heart of the pub ‘n’ club zone.

Also recommended:

Gala (Map pp100–1; 623 63 03; Reguliersdwarsstraat 38; tapas €6–12; dinner) Tootsome tapas, each more like a main meal, within Rose’s Cantina (p167).

Loekie (Map pp100–1; 624 42 30; Prinsengracht 705; broodjes €2.25–5.50; lunch & dinner) Butcher shop with 150 types of fillings to stuff into a broodje for you.

Mazo Falafel (Map pp100–1; 420 74 35; Muntplein 1; sandwiches €2.80–4.30; lunch & dinner) Its flagship creation is crispy, hot and authentic, with endless salad and toppings.

Wok to Walk (Map pp100–1; 624 29 41; Leidsestraat 96; dishes €4–9.50; 9am–midnight) For noodly refuel, shockingly healthy in this part of town.

**OLD SOUTH**

The refined neighbourhood that hosts the Concertgebouw, major museums and swanky shops is home to some very chi-chi restaurants. Don’t be surprised if you bump into tenor Placidio Domingo or violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter as you wait for seating. The hi-tech toilets are almost worth the €0.50 admission.

**COBRA CAFÉ-RESTAURANT**

Map p110  International €

470 01 11; Hobbemastraat 18; mains €5–12; lunch & dinner

This arty glass cube of a restaurant, full of original works by Corinelle and Appel, sure is touristy. But when you’re all museumed out and need a salad, a massive club sandwich or a slice of ‘Karel Appel taart’, you’ll hardly notice. The hi-tech toilets are almost worth the €0.50 admission.

**SABOR DE MARIA**

Map p110  Mediterranean Tapas €

662 72 76; www.sabordemaria.nl; Roefol Haststraat 60; mains €6.50–8; lunch & dinner

Mon-Sat

This catering shop sells tapas from €1.25 per 100g, such as meatballs, stuffed grape leaves and garlic chicken wings, and main dishes like rib eye with pepper sauce, vegetable lasagne and Spanish chicken. Take it away, or settle at one of the few tables.

**SAMA SEBO**

Map p110  Indonesian €

662 81 46; www.samasesebo.com; PC Hooftstraat 27; rijsttafel per person €27.50, lunch specials €15, dishes €2–6.50; lunch & dinner

Mon-Sat

Sama Sebo looks more like a brown cafe than a trip to the South Seas, and that’s OK. The rijsttafel is 17 dishes (four to seven at lunch time), and you can get individual plates if that’s too much. It’s had the same formula since 1970, so who are we to question?

Also recommended:

La Falote Map p110; 624 54 54; Roefol Haststraat 26; mains €5–10.50; dinner Mon-Sat Home-style Dutch cooking. Wait till the owner brings out the accordion.

Renz’s (Map p110; 673 16 73; www.renzos.nl; Van Baerlestraat 67; dishes €1.95–2.95; 11am–9pm) Italian takeaway deli with a popular miniterrace.

**VONDELPARK & AROUND**

For lazy grazing, the Vondelpark has several cafés whose terraces buzz on a warm summer’s day. The streets just north of the park, meanwhile, are a real find for lovers of world food. Look out for exotic dishes from Asia and Africa served in surrounds that are earthy, authentic and refreshingly low-key.

**‘T BLAUWE THEEHUIS**

Map p116  Cafe €€

Round Blue Teahouse; 662 02 54; www.blauwetheehuis.nl; Vondelpark 5; lunch €3.50–5; dinner mains €14–19; 9am–10pm

This functionalist teahouse from 1936 is a wonderful multi-level building that serves coffee, cake and alcohol; its terrace and balcony are great for a beer on a sunny day, even in winter when the heaters are on.

**PALOMA BLANCA**

Map p116  Moroccan €

612 64 85; www.palomablanca.nl; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 145; mains €13–16.50; dinner

Mon–Sun

This name is Spanish, but the lanterns, dishware and mosaic-top tables are straight out of a Marrakech souk. Try the starter of olives and bri (spicy tuna spread), mains of couscous and tajine (Moroccan strew) or mixed grills of spicy sausage, lamb cutlets and chicken. It’s the only place in town to cook with smet, a specially aged butter.

**LALIBELA**

Map p116  Ethiopian €

683 83 32; 1e Hooftstraat 249; mains €7.50–13; dinner

Mon–Sat

This shop just north of the Overtoom was the Netherlands’ first Ethiopian restaurant, and it’s still our favourite. Aksumite-hide paintings with Christian motifs hang on the walls. You can drink Ethiopian beer from a half-gourd, and taste your stews, egg and vegetable dishes using endjera, a spongy pancake, instead of utensils. Trippy African music rounds out the experience.

**WAROENG ASJE**

Map p116  Javanese/Surinamese €

616 65 89; Jan Pieter Heijestraat 180; mains €5–12; rijsttafel €28; lunch Mon–Fri, dinner daily

This counter-service shop serves rijsttafel, but you can get some of the same food in human-sized portions with the nasi rames special (€9) – a heaped plate of roasted meats, on skewers or in spicy stews, with ster-fried or pickled vegetables, and a deep-fried hard-boiled egg.

**HAP HMM**

Map p116  Traditional Dutch €

618 18 84; 1e Hooftstraat 33; mains €5–7; 4.30–8pm Mon-Fri

Elsewhere €6 might buy you a bowl of soup, but at this wood-panelled neighbourhood place €6 might buy an entire dinner: simple Dutch cooking (meat + veggies + potatoes), served on stainless-steel dishes. Beer is cheap too.

**DE PIJP**

Anything can happen on De Pijp’s cuisine scene – it’s funky, frilly and fashionable, often all at once. West of the Albert Cuypmarkt, the Albert Cuypuwark is the trendy belt with unique ethnic spots, while to the north, the streets around Marie Heinekenplein heave with a spirited crowd of local 20- to 40-somethings.

**PUYCK**

Map p119  International €€

676 70 79; www.puyck.nl; Ceintuurbaan 147; set menus from €36; dinner Mon–Sat

This place near Sarphatipark offers neither games nor pretension, just imaginative, sophisticated cooking appropriate for a nice night out. Think baby lobster with lettuce, duck breast in Chinese five-spice, or a white wine–poached pear, all served with flair. If it has the Thai curry sorbet, consider yourself lucky.

**MAMOUCH**

Map p119  Moroccan €€

673 63 61; www.restaurantmamouche.nl; Quellijnstraat 104; mains €14.50–22; dinner

Mon–Sun

Mamouche gets serious acclaim for modern Moroccan amid minimalism. Exposed flooring, mottled walls and slat-beam ceilings complement the changing selection of couscous, lamb and fish dishes. Check out
the brass fixtures in the loo – if you can find it. Reservations are a must.

**KLOPSPIJS** Map p119  French International €€<br>264 25 60; Hemonystraat 38; mains €19.50; set menus €28.50;  dinner Wed-Sun

Located in an old bell-maker’s workshop, this charming, intimate restaurant with a handful of tables makes for a fine end to a day of poking around De Pijp. The three-course menu of, say, smoked duck breast salad, grilled sea bass and strawberry-rhubarb cake is a class act, and the wine selection is small but superb.

**BALTIP HOUSE** Map p119  Indian €€<br>470 89 17; Albert Cuypstraat 41; mains €10.50-18;  dinner

One of the best-kept secrets in De Pijp is this exceedingly friendly, quick-serving, always-tasty spot. The butter chicken masala (€12.50) is consistently smooth and tender but the fiery tandooris and biryanis won’t disappoint either. Start with a rich mango lassi and a chapatti amuse-bouche on the shady terrace.

**ZEN** Map p119  Japanese €<br>627 06 07; Frans Halстраat 38; mains €6.50-17.75;  lunch & dinner Tue-Sat

Let’s be frank: many Japanese restaurants are lovely, elegant poseurs. Zen, however, offers cooking like okasan (mum) used to make: domburi (bowls of rice with various ingredients on top), sushi and tonkatsu (deep-fried pork cutlet) are just the start. Décor: minimalist Dutch-meets-Japanese. It’s also popular for takeaway.

**ZAGROS** Map p119  Kurdish €€<br>670 04 61; www.zagrosrestaurant.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 50; mains €10-15.75;  dinner

Never tried Kurdish food? Neither had we, but we’re glad we did. Just as Kurdistan straddles Greece and Persia, so does the cuisine, with grills and stews (mostly lamb and chicken), salads of cucumber, tomato or onion, and starters like hummus and dumast (thick, dry yogurt).

**CAFÉ DE PIJP** Map p119  Café €<br>618 16 69; Ferdinand Bolstraat 17-19; mains €13.50-15;  lunch & dinner

De Pijp, the restaurant, is a fitting emblem of De Pijp, the neighbourhood: bright, young, cheerful, colourful, reasonably priced and good-looking both outside and in. You might see skinny young things digging into enormous plates of fish paella or tempura-style shrimp.

**TURKIYE** Map p119  Turkish €<br>Ferdinand Bolstraat 48; mains €6.75-15.50;  breakfast, lunch & dinner

English may not work at this simple shop, but it doesn’t matter: the dishes inside the glass case are plenty eloquent. Locals value Turkiye for its grilled mains and small plates like stuffed tomatoes and Turkish pizza (€1 to €3.50). Eat-in or takeaway.

**BAZAR AMSTERDAM** Middle Eastern/Fusion €€<br>675 05 44; www.bazaramsterdam.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 182; mains €8-14.50; 3-course menu €15;  breakfast, lunch & dinner

Beneath a golden angel in the middle of the Albert Cuypmarkt, this one-time Dutch Reformed church has fab-u-lous tile murals and 10,001 Arabian lights to complement the cuisine: from Morocco through Turkey, Lebanon and Persia. Even the plates are gorgeous. Breakfast and lunch are served all day, or just come for a beer and baklava or coffee and apple pie.

**CAMBODJA CITY** Map p119  Cambodian €€<br>671 49 30; Albert Cuypstraat 58-60; mains €3.50-13.50, set dinner for 2 from €24;  dinner Tue-Sun

The owner’s welcome is warm and friendly, and the flavours are from across Southeast Asia – lempeas (spring rolls), Vietnamese noodle soups, Thai curries etc. Set menus also reflect the different traditions, and there are fab displays of takeaway foods in case you don’t feel like eating in.

**ALBERT CUYP 67** Surinamese €€<br>671 13 96; Albert Cuypstraat 67; mains €3.20-8.40;  lunch & dinner

If you’re looking for stylish surroundings, turn away now. If, however, you’re after quality examples of Surinamese food, take a seat. A colossal portion of roti kip (chicken curry, flaky roti bread, potatoes, cabbage and egg) is a fine replenishment after a couple of hours at Albert Cuypmarkt.

**DE BURGERMEESTER** Map p119  Burgers €<br>670 93 39; www.burgermeester.eu; Albert Cuypstraat 48; burgers €4.75-10;  noon-11pm

This sleek little bistro makes the finest burgers in town, bar none. It uses only organic beef (or lamb, falafel or tilapia), in mouth-stretching portions that would pass as a main dish without a bun. Then come the toppings: spicy fusion veggies, bean sprouts, piri-piri mayo and more. The name is a play on ‘mayor’ (burgemeester).

**BAKKEN MET PASSIE** Map p119  Bakery €€<br>670 13 76; http://debakkerswinkel.nl; Albert Cuypstraat 51-53; 8am-6pm Tue-Sat

Say your sweetie hates ethnic food but you desperately want something exotic on the Albert Cuyp. This quietly fancy shop bakes the appropriate bribes like yummy Valrhona chocolate tart (€3.85 per slice) or lemon cake (€6.50 per small loaf).

**TAART VAN M’N TANTE** Sweets €<br>776 46 00; www.detaart.com; Ferdinand Bolstraat 48; mains €6.75-15.50;  lunch & dinner

This sleek little bistro makes the finest pastries in the city, with 45 choices – the gorgonzola pizza puts the toppings: spicy fusion veggies, bean sprouts, piri-piri mayo and more. The name is a play on ‘mayor’ (burgemeester).

**MÁS TAPAS** Sweets €<br>664 00 66; Saenredamstraat 37; tapas per plate from €3;  dinner

While ‘tapas’ has become Amsterdamese as bold.

**MÁS TAPAS** Sweets €<br>664 00 66; Saenredamstraat 37; tapas per plate from €3;  dinner

While ‘tapas’ has become Amsterdamse as bold.

**PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS**

The Plantage may be just steps from Nieuwmarkt, but what a difference those few steps make, taking you to an area that’s quiet yet close to some important sights. In the Eastern Islands, a lot of our favourite places are by (or in some cases, literally on) the water. Choose from the historic and homely to world-class slick. The Eastern Docklands is the end of the line, but many agree that the trek is worth it for its beautiful eateries and innovative cuisine.

**PLANTAGE** Planicus Map p122  International €€<br>330 94 69; www.restaurantplanicus.nl; Plantage Kerklaan 61a; mains €16-19;  lunch & dinner

Next to the Resistance Museum and oppo-site the Artis Zoo, this dramatically stylish space (bright red bar at the back) is where TV execs head to cut deals over big serves of upmarket comfort food. Lunch is typically sandwiches, salads and pastas. The menu changes quarterly, and there are friendly, good-looking waiters.

**ABE VENETO** Map p122  Italian €<br>639 23 64; Plantage Kerklaan 2; mains €4.50-12.50;  lunch & dinner

Sometimes you just want a corner place with decent food at honest prices. The pizza menu tops out at €9.50 and has 45 choices – the gorgonzola pizza puts the kitchen to excellent use. Other options include pastas, salads and meat dishes. In summer, a terrace is set up by the canal.

**EASTERN ISLANDS**

**A TAVOLA** Map p122  Italian €<br>625 49 94; Kadijksplein 9; mains €11.50-20;  dinner

Overlooked by most tourists, this authentic Italian restaurant near the Shipping Museum serves a small but well-chosen menu of meats and pastas that cry out for a selection from its excellent wine list. Even if the service can be a little iffy, the quality of the cooking is consistent and strong. Reservations are a must.
**EASTERN DOCKLANDS**

**VOORBIJ HET EINDE**  
Map p122  
French €€  
419 11 33; Sumatrakade 613; mains €24, set menus €33-66; dinner Wed-Sat  
It means ‘beyond the end’, and on your trek out here to Java Eiland you may begin to question your judgement. Don’t. This place, with its supremely architectural interior (frosted glass walls, lots of right angles), wins high praise for high French in high style – the menu changes every month or so.

**FIFTEEN**  
Map p122  
International €€€  
0900 343 83 36; www.fifteen.nl; Jollemahof 9; mains €18-22, 4-course set menu with wine €42; dinner ‘Naked chef’ Jamie Oliver has brought to Amsterdam a concept he began in London: take 15 young people from underprivileged backgrounds and train them for a year in the restaurant biz. Results: noble intention, sometimes spotty execution. The setting, however, is beyond question: Fifteen faces the IJ, and the busy, open-kitchen space is city-cool, with graffitied walls and exposed wood beams.

**ODessa**  
Map p122  
International €€€  
419 30 10; www.de-odessa.nl; Veemkade 259; lunch mains €3.40-8, dinner mains €17-22; lunch & dinner  
Odessa rocks. Literally. This groovy boat, with indoor and outdoor eating decks and a 1970s-themed ‘plush-porno’ décor, is just the sort of place where Hugh Hefner would hold a debauched pyjama party – as if to emphasise that fact, DJs take over late at night. The menu changes frequently, and although opinions on food and service run the gamut from ‘love it’ to ‘hate it’, there’s no denying it’s a scene.

**GARE DE L’EST**  
Map p122  
International €€€  
463 06 20; www.garedeleste.nl; Cruquiusweg 9; 4-course set menu €72; dinner  
Gare de l’Est has both the smallest menu in Amsterdam and also the largest. They say that because four chefs (from traditions including North African, Mediterranean and Asian) take turns nightly in the kitchen, and what their course menus lack in length they make up for in variety over the course of a year. Portuguese tiles and glowing Middle Eastern lamps adorn the interior, and courtyard seating exudes good vibes.

**PANAMA**  
Map p122  
International €€€  
311 86 89; www.panama.nl; Oostelijke Handelskade 4; mains €11-18; lunch & dinner  
The Eastern Harbour’s first grown-up restaurant has an enormous, sleek dining room, Mondrian colour scheme and steel light fixtures; it’s a good place to fortify yourself before hitting the nightclub on the same premises. Gucci-barbed couples splurge on oysters (in season) and a weekly changing menu of pastas and grills. Wash it down with the – wait for it – Panamartini (vodka, crema cioccolata, espresso).

**OOSTERPARK & AROUND**

For a whiff of the former Dutch colonies, try the Ekeko restaurant in the Tropenmuseum (p128) or the simple Indonesian and Surinamese takeaways on nearby Linnaeusstraat and De Van Swindenstraat. Further south, the park that embraces the sumptuous Franken- dael (p128) is home to one of the Amsterdam’s finest restaurants.

**DE KAS**  
Map p129  
International €€€  
462 45 62; www.restaurantdekas.nl; Kameringh Oomeslaan 3, Frankendael Park; 5-course menu €42; dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat  
Admired by gourmets city-wide, De Kas has an organic attitude to match its chic glass greenhouse setting – try to go during a thunderstorm! It grows most of its own herbs and produce right there (if it’s not busy you might be offered a tour), and the result is incredibly pure flavours with innovative combinations. Romantic and tony.

**OUTER DISTRICTS**

**BLENDER**  
Map p558-9  
French-Mediterranean €€€  
486 98 60; Van der Palmkade 16; mains €18-22; dinner daily, lunch Sat & Sun  
Way out west of the Jordaan, Blender’s is cheeky, curvy. 1970’s airport-lounge interior (think lots of orange swirl chairs) is just the place to sip cocktails, sample inventive French-Med food and socialise as DJs spin deep house and soul. People love it and hate it for the same reason (self-conscious hipness), but there’s no doubt it’s a scene.

**BETTY’S**  
Map p558-9  
Vegetarian €€€  
644 58 96; Rijnstraat 75; mains €17-22; lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Wed-Sun  
Some consider it the top vegetarian restaurant in the country. The menu’s small on any given day, but there’s always something new. It’s rounded out by tiny tables and a decent wine selection, and everyone says to save room for dessert.

**CAFÉ-RESTAURANT AMSTERDAM**  
Map p558-9  
French International €€€  
682 26 66; wwws.cradam.nl; Watertorenplein 6; mains €10-21; lunch & dinner  
One of the city’s hippest eateries is housed in a former water-processing plant near the Westerpark. Expect classic French brasserie cooking (steak beanmaise, mussels, roasted garlic chicken). Note the 30m-high wooden ceilings (with hanging metal hooks and chains) and the huge floodlights rescued from the former Ajax and Olympic stadiums.

**RESTAURANT PS**  
Map p558-9  
International €€€  
421 52 18; www.restaurant-ps.nl; Planciusstraat 49; dinner mains €14-19, 3-course menu €30; dinner Tue-Sat  
Run by an unlikely yet vastly experienced pair – an English chef and a Columbian maitre d’ – this new restaurant in the Western Islands, north of the Jordaan, already has an army of devoted fans. Expect reasonable prices, an excellent wine menu and attentive service, plus an artsy interior with mosaics of Venetian glass. The set meals change weekly and feature seasonal ingredients.

**PACIFIC PARC**  
Map p558-9  
International €€€  
488 77 78; www.pacificparc.nl; Poloneuzakade 23; lunch mains €3.50-10, dinner mains €13.50-17, 3-course menu €25; lunch & dinner  
Among the many venues in the newly refurbished Westergasfabriek, Pacific Parc is the most established and, arguably, the most interesting. Lunch time is typically sandwichies, pastas and salads, although dinner can get pretty adventurous with selections like ceviche and stuffed lamb shanks. Late at night expect to see DJs and guest performers.

**GARY’S MUFFINS**  
Map p558-9  
Bakery €  
412 30 20; Kinkerstraat 140; dishes €1.50-4.50; 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun  
This long-standing bakery serves fresh bagels, chocolate brownies from Gary’s grandma’s recipe, and sweet and savoury muffins for anyone craving a healthy(ish) minumunch.

**SAL MEIJER**  
Map p558-9  
Kosher Deli  
673 13 13; Schilderstraat 45; dishes €2.5; 10am-7.30pm Sun-Thur, 10am-3pm Fri  
This kosher delicatessen has little to no atmosphere, but how can you argue with a refrigerator case lined with pretty scoops of salmon, potato and egg salads? Order the heaping corned-beef sandwich – get it warm, you’ll thank us. We love the kicky ginger cake for dessert.
BLUelist (blu, list) v.
to recommend a travel experience.
What’s your recommendation? www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist

drinking & smoking

top picks

- Café ’t Smalle (p186)
  So gezellig: moor the boat right at your table.
- Hoppe (p181)
  An icon of drinking history with a bottomless vat.
- Café de Jaren (p185)
  Grandest, most talkative terrace on the Amstel.
- Brouwerij ’t IJ (p192)
  Columbus, a sweet ostrich and a windmill.
- Het Papeneiland (p186)
  Cosy tiled café with a secret tunnel story.
- Kandinsky (p181)
  Cool-vibe coffeeshop free of Rastas and aliens.
- Proeflokaal Wijnand Fockink (p184)
  Glorious jenever for the dedicated tippler.
- Café Cuba (p185)
  A brown café beamed to the Caribbean.
- Bar Bep (p181)
  An Eastern European cabaret lounge ca 1950.
- Dampkring (p181)
  A hobbit’s cave emitting rings of funny smoke.
**DRINKING & SMOKING**

Given this city’s rep as a wild-running commune of rabid party animals, the first-time visitor may be surprised that Amsterdam is still very much a café society.

A serious and civilised institution, the café of any sophisticated metropolis should bring to mind intellectual types hunched over worn tables in blue-smoky rooms, dissecting the eternal themes and poring over newspapers as if they were actually working. While you can still find such folk in the canal city, and certainly plenty of smoke, they’re both part of the broader Amsterdam culture – and darn good reasons for in-depth research. Someone’s gotta do it, after all!

**SPECIALITIES**

**Drinks**

Lager beer is the staple, served cool and topped by a two-finger-thick head of froth – supposedly to trap the flavour. Requests of ‘no head please’ will meet with a steely response. *Een bier, een pils of een vaas* will get you a normal glass; *een kleinje pils* is a small glass and *een fluitje* is a small, thin, Cologne-style glass. Many places also serve half-litre mugs (*een grote pils*) to please tourists, but somehow draught lager doesn’t taste the same in a mug and goes flat if you don’t drink quickly.

Popular brands include Heineken, Amstel, Grolsch, Oranjeboom, Dommelars, Bavaria and the cheap Brouwersbier put out by the Albert Heijn supermarket chain. They contain about 5% alcohol by volume, so a few of those seemingly small glasses can pack quite a wallop. Tasty and stronger Belgian beers, such as Duvel and Westmalle Triple, are also very popular and reasonably priced. Withier (*white beer*, eg the DutchWieckse Witte, the Belgian Hoeagaarden) is a somewhat murky, crisp and citrus-y blonde beer that’s drunk in the summer with a slice of lemon. The dark, sweet *bokbier* comes out in the autumn. Don’t be surprised if the brews sold in supermarkets are not much cheaper than in pubs.

* Dutch gin (*jenever*, pronounced ‘ya- *nay-ver*, also *genever*) is made from juniper berries and is drunk chilled from a tiny glass filled to the brim. Most people prefer jonge (young) *jenever*, which is smooth and relatively easy to drink; *oude* (old) *jenever* has a strong juniper flavour and can be an acquired taste. A common combination, known as a *kopsoot* (head butt), is a glass of *jenever* with a beer chaser – few people can handle more than two or three of those. Brandy is known as *vieux* or *brandewijn*. There are plenty of indigenous liqueurs, including *advocaat* (a kind of eggnog) and the herb-based *Beerenburg*, a Frisian schnapps.

So long overshadowed by other tipples, wine is drunk more by Dutch than ever before. The average supermarket will stock wines from every corner of Europe (with excellent value from Spain and Bulgaria) and many countries further afield, such as Chile, South Africa and Australia. The most expensive bottle in a supermarket rarely costs more than €8 and will be quite drinkable.

The hot drink of choice is coffee – after all, it was Amsterdam’s merchants who introduced coffee to Europe. It should be strong and can be excellent if it’s freshly made. If you simply order *koffie* you’ll get a sizeable cup of java with a small, airline-style container of *koffiemelk*, similar to unsweetened condensed milk. *Koffie verkeerd* (coffee ‘wrong’) comes in a bigger cup or mug with plenty of real milk. *Espresso* and *cappuccino* are also available, and most anywhere can accommodate you with decaf. A pleasant Dutch café chain, *Coffee Company*, has locations throughout town.

*Tea* is usually served as a cup of hot water with a tea bag. Many places offer a choice of bags. If you want milk, ask ‘*met melk, graag*’ (with milk, please), but many locals add a slice of lemon instead.

Amsterdam tap water is fine but it does have a slight chemical taste – as any waiter will suggest – so mineral and soda waters are popular. Dairy drinks include chocolate milk, *Fristi* (a yoghurt drink), *karnemelk* (buttermilk) and of course milk itself. A wide selection of fruit juices and soft drinks is available too.

**Smoking & Soft Drugs**

Most cannabis products used to be imported, but today the country has top-notch home produce, so-called *nederwiet* (nay-der-weet) developed by horticulturists and grown in greenhouses with up to five harvests a year. Even the police admit it’s a superior product, especially the potent ‘super skunk’ with up to 13% of THC, the active substance (Nigerian grass has 5% and Colombian 7%). According to a recent government-sponsored poll of coffeeshop owners, *nederwiet* has captured over half the market, and hash is in decline even among tourists.

‘Space’ cakes and cookies are sold in a rather low-key fashion, mainly because tourists often have problems with them. If you’re unused to their effects, or the time they can take to kick in and run their course, you could be in for a rather involved experience.

Some coffeeshops might sell magic mushroom rooms, that is, if the psychedelic fungi aren’t banned by the time you read this. These far-out vendors are the place to go for serious mind-altering products such as cacti, herbal extracts and specialist smokables like dried sage or wild lettuce (see the boxed text, p140). Whatever you decide to purchase, ask the staff how much you should take and heed their advice, even if nothing happens after an hour.

**WHERE TO CONSUME**

When the Dutch say ‘café’, they mean a pub, and there are over 1000 of them in the city. More than just drinking houses, cafés are places to go and hang out for hours if you like. Amsterdam has a stunning variety, and some have regular customers or a certain type of clientele that’s been coming there for years, if not generations.

Many cafés have outside seating on a *terras* (terrace), glorious in summer, and sometimes covered and heated in winter. These are great places to relax and watch people pass by, soak up the sun, read a paper or write postcards. Most of these cafés serve food as well. Less adventurous chefs get by on soups, sandwiches, salads, *tostis* (ingredients such as cheese and tomato or pesto grilled between two slices of bread) and the like. Cafés that take their food seriously call themselves *eetcafés*, and their food can be very good indeed.

There are a number of cafés that don’t fit into the descriptions of brown cafés, grand cafés etc that we discuss in the following section. Lighting up in the former will get you a tongue-lashing at best.

Note that relatively few locals frequent the coffeeshops – this is generally something they try as teenagers, and then leave to the tourists (read an insider’s view, p193). That said, the atmosphere in coffeeshops can vary sharply, and some have abandoned the space ‘tune-out, turn-off’ pose (eg aliens, Jamaican locks and cartoon fantasies) in lieu of a more mel low New Age vibe, especially outside of the Red Light District.

**Beer Cafés**

Beer cafés specialise in the brew, with many seasonal and potent brands on tap and in the bottle. At any one time, some establishments will be stocked with 300 or more varieties, and can offer excellent advice for imbibing.

**Brown Cafés**

The most historic and famous type of café is the brown cafe (*bruin café*). The name comes from the smoke stans from centuries of use (although recent aspirants slap on brown paint to catch up). You may find sand on the wooden floor or Persian rugs on the tables to soak up spilled beer. Some sell snacks or full meals as well. Most importantly: they provide an atmosphere conducive to deep, meaningful conversation – and inducing the nirvana of gezelligheid (see p182).

**Coffeeshops**

In the Netherlands a coffeeshop is a place that sells cannabis. You’ll have no trouble finding one of the 200-odd coffeeshops in Amsterdam, and any place showing palm leaves and Rastafarian colours (red, gold and green) will have something to do with marijuana. Others closely resemble normal cafés.

**Designer Bars**

The city’s array of watering holes wouldn’t be complete without these ‘loungey’ designer bars. Some are ultramodern, some retro, others shabby-chic with furniture that looks borrowed from somebody’s attic.

**Grand Cafés**

Grand cafés are spacious, have comfortable furniture and are, well, just grand. A good tradition in many is their indoor reading
table stacked with the day’s papers and news magazines, usually with one or two in English. Another difference: they all have food menus, some quite elaborate. They’re perfect for a lazy brunch with relaxing chamber music tinkling away in the background.

Irish Pubs
Amsterdam has its fair share of rollicking pubs from the Emerald Isle, often with live rock or traditional folk music. Most Irish pubs are located around Leidseplein (it teems with them) and Rembrandtplein.

Tasting Houses
There are also a few tasting houses (proefkokers), on the whole intimate affairs where you can try dozens of jenevers and liqueurs. Some are attached to distilleries – a holdover from the 17th century when many small distilleries operated around town – while others are simply affiliated.

CITY CENTRE
When it comes to imbibing and toking, Amsterdam’s old centre is the mother lode. The sheer variety of establishments is astounding, and staff expertise is prized so highly that a beer café may poach a barkeeper from a competitor down the street.

MEDIAVIA CENTRE
Café Het Schuim Map pp62-5  Bar
638 93 57; Spuistraat 189
Schuim means ‘foam’ (on beer) and this grungy, arty bar is extraordinarily popular with beer-swilling locals – and it gets packed any time of day or night. While the people-watching can be distracting, it’s wise to keep one eye on your belongings.

IN DE WILDEMAN Map pp62-5  Beer Café
638 23 48; Koloksteeg 3
This former distillery tasting house has been transformed into an atmospheric yet quiet beer café with over 200 bottled beers, 18 varieties on tap and a smoke-free area. Locals rave about the choice of Trappist ales, the huge selection from Belgium and the Netherlands, and the potent French ‘Belzebuth’ (13% alcohol!).

CAFÉ VAN ZUYLEN Map pp62-5  Brown Café
639 10 55; Torensteeg 4
Although the sun terrace is one of the prettiest spots for a drink on the Singel, the interior – with its cosy rooms featuring lots of wood and old leather banquets – is just as appealing in the cooler months.

DE SCHUTTER Map pp62-5  Brown Café
622 46 08; Voetboogstraat 13-15
This large student eatcafé has a brown-café look, a relaxed vibe and inexpensive, tasty dagschotels (dishes of the day). It’s open for lunch and dinner, and is a good place to fortify yourself on the cheap before a night on the town.

DE ZWARTE Map pp62-5  Brown Café
624 65 11; Spuistraat 334
‘Not everyone has knowledge of beer, but those who have it drink it here’, is the translation of the slogan on a panel above this atmospheric bar with the original tile floor from 1921. Just across the alley from Hoppe, De Zwart gets a different (though amicable) crowd of left-wing journalists and writers, as well as local-government people.

HOPPE Map pp62-5  Brown Café
420 44 20; Spui 18-20
Go on. Do your bit to ensure Hoppe maintains one of the highest beer turnovers in the city. Since 1670 drinkers have been enticed behind that velvet curtain into the dark interior to down a few glasses – the entrance is to the right of the pub-with-terrace of the same name. In summer, Hoppe’s crowd of boisterous business boys spills over onto the pavement of the Spui.

OPORTO Map pp62-5  Brown Café
638 07 02; Zoutsteeg 1
This tiny brown café is worth visiting just for the inlaid woodwork behind the bar (check out the Zodiac signs). Its wrought-iron-and-parchment lighting fixtures are said to have been the same for 60 years.

PILESNER CLUB Map pp62-5  Brown Café
623 17 77; Begijnesteenweg 4
Also known as Engelse Riet (ask the bartender for a translation), this small, narrow and ramshackle place doesn’t allow you to do anything but drink and talk, which is what a ‘real’ brown café is all about. It opened in 1893 and has hardly changed since. Beer comes straight from the kegs in the back, via the ‘shortest pipes in Amsterdam’ (most places have vats in a cellar or side room with long hoses to the bar); connoisseurs say they can taste the difference.

ABRAXAS Map pp62-5  Coffeehouse
625 57 63; Jonge Roelensteeg 12
Harries is down the most beautiful coffeeshop in town. Choose from southwest USA, Middle Eastern and other styles of décor, spread over three floors. There are live DJs, extrafriendly staff and free internet usage with a drink purchase.

DAMPKRING Map pp62-5  Coffeehouse
638 07 05; Handboogstraat 29
You saw it in Ocean’s Twelve, now see it up close. Consistently a winner of the Cannabis Cup, Damkrimp is darkish, youngster and decorated rather hobbitish. Its name means the ring of the Earth’s atmosphere where smaller items combust.

EL GUAPO Map pp62-5  Coffeehouse
420 05 42; Nieuwe Nieuwstraat 32
Sorta Latin, sorta cavern, this shop is populated by friendly people and is known for some of the best hash in town. You can bring your own music and ask them to play it – just remember to get it back when you leave.

HOMEGROWN FANTASY Map pp62-5
627 56 83; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 87a
Quality Dutch-grown product, pleasant staff, good tunes and famous space cakes make this popular with backpackers from nearby hostels. Patrons make use of the 3m-long glass bongs to smoke hydronic weed.

KANDINSKY Map pp62-5  Coffeehouse
624 70 23; Rosmarinsteeg 9
Those not into the grungy, hippy feel of most Amsterdam coffeeshops love Kandinsky for its clean, contemporary style, funky music, friendly service and infamous space cakes. Alcohol is no longer available (it’s the new coffeshop law, folks) but is readily sold at its café opposite.

BAR BEP Map pp62-5  Designer Bar
626 56 49; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 280
With its olive-green vinyl couches and ruby-red walls, Bep resembles a kitsch,
CITY CENTRE

DRINKING & SMOKING

Folksiness with Amsterdam chic. In its maze of rooms (the one-time home of German expressionist Max Beckmann) you’ll find warm fireplaces, a cool bar, gorgeous wall carvings and seats salvaged from an old Irish church. Catch frequent musical happenings and sports on the telly. Meals include Irish stew, and beef and Guinness pie (mains €10.50 to €13.50).

B VAN B CAFÉ Map pp62-5 Other Café
☎ 638 39 14; Beursplein 1; 9am-5pm Mon-Wed, 10am-6pm Thu-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun
The café in the Beurs van Berlage (p69), one of the city’s most spectacular buildings, boasts original brick and tilework, and murals by Jan Toorop (1903) representing past, present and future. Food includes lasagne, croquettes, steaks and the usual assortment of sandwiches and salads. Unless the main building happens to be open to the public (eg concerts), this is your only sure way to get inside.

VRANKRIJK Map pp62-5 Squat Bar
www.vrankrijk.org; Spuistraat 216; 9pm ‘Boom!’ says the colourful cartoon poster of a façade, till the early ‘80s a familiar sound in this squatters pad, once the scene of scuffles with police in riot gear. It’s mellowed a bit but is still active, more with social-support groups than protests. Monday is Queer Night, and on Thursdays there’s ‘consultation’ for squatters. The interior is still suitably grubby, mainly out of solidarity.

DE BLAUWE PARADE Map pp62-5 Tasting House
☎ 624 48 60; Nieuwzijds Voorburgwal 176-180
The building, now the Hotel Die Poort van Cleve, was the site of the original Heineken brewery, so it seems an appropriate place for tastings (of jenever though, not beers). While there, feast your eyes on the Delft-blue tile mural (1870s) of a parade of children bearing gifts to an emperor.

DE DRIE FLESCHJES Map pp62-5 Tasting House
☎ 624 84 43; Gravenstraat 18
Behind the Nieuwe Kerk, the distiller Bootz’s tasting room dates from 1650. It is dominated by 52 vats that are rented out to businesses that entertain clients here. It specialises in liqueurs (although you can also get jenever) – the macaroni liqueur is quite nice. Take a peek at the collection of kalkoentjes, small bottles with hand-painted portraits of former mayors.

RED LIGHT DISTRICT

DE BUURVROUW Map pp62-5 Bar
☎ 625 96 54; St Pieterspoortsteeg 29
This groovy late-night bar is where you inevitably end up when there’s nowhere else to go. Take it easy because someone’s watching: above the entrance is a bust of de Buurvrouw (the woman next door). And yes, everyone is probably as drunk as you. Febo (p169), anyone?

CAFÉ ZILT Map pp62-5 Bar
☎ 421 54 16; Zeedijk 49; 9.30pm-3am Mon-Thu, 11.30pm-4am Fri & Sat
This classy little dive is where the corpus delicti shudders to a halt after a night of glorious excess. There’s a great selection of seasonal beers (why go easy at this stage?) and bar snacks such as gehaktbal (spicy hamburger balls) to buoy the blood sugar.

CAFÉ LEF Map pp62-5 Bar
☎ 421 54 16; Zeedijk 23; 5pm-1am, Wed-Thu, 2pm-1am Thu-Thu
This alternative to a blackout at Café Zilt (above) has a robust wooden bar for slumped conversation and a bottomless pit of Belgian and Dutch brews. Nicholas, the congenial bartender, knows a great cure for the hiccups, and it’s completely legal.

IN ’T AAPJEN Map pp62-5 Brown Café
☎ 626 84 01; Zeedijk 1
This funny little bar, one of the oldest in Amsterdam, got its name ‘In the Monkey’ from the lice-carrying beasts kept by the original owner; sailors lodging here left with an itch they could scratch. The story goes that a customer couldn’t pay his bill and settled the debt with a monkey. The place is stuffed with old toys and advertising signs.

GREENHOUSE Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop
☎ 627 17 39; www.greenhouse.org; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 191
One of the most popular coffeeshops in town. Smokers love the funky music, multicoloured mosaics, psychedelic stained-glass windows and the high-quality weed and hash. The central location near the Dam is a plus.

BUBBLES & WINES CHAMPAGNE BAR Map pp62-5 Designer Bar
☎ 422 33 18; Nes 37; 3.30pm-1am Mon-Sat
Ignore the silly name, this stylish wine bar is a first for Amsterdam: 54 quality wines by the glass, tasting flights (several different wines to try) and the city’s most scrumptious bar food: caviar blinis, cheese plates and our favourite, ‘bee stings’ – parmesan drizzled with white truffle-infused honey.

LIME Map pp62-5 Designer Bar
☎ 639 30 20; Zeedijk 104
Small but perfectly formed Lime, with its ever-changing, kitsch-cool interior and upbeat grooves, is the perfect preclub pit stop. The DJs and cocktails might just keep you there till morn.

DURTY NELLY’S Map pp62-5 Irish Pub
☎ 638 01 25; Warmoesstraat 117
Huge, dark and always busy, this pub attracts foreign visitors from the cheap hotels in the area with fun, drinks, darts and pool. It serves a first-rate Irish breakfast and has internet access too.

THE ART OF BEING GEZELLIG

This particularly Dutch quality is one of the best reasons to visit Amsterdam. It’s variously translated as snug, friendly, cosy, informal, companionable and convivial, but gezelligheid – the state of being gezellig – is something more easily experienced than defined. There’s a sense of time stopping, an intimacy of the here and now that leaves all your troubles behind, at least until tomorrow. You can get that warm and fuzzy feeling in many places and situations:

- While nursing a brew with friends.
- Over coffee and cake with neighbours (the stoop will do).
- Lingering after a meal (the Dutch call this ‘natuurfelen’).
- Sitting round a beach campfire (or an open hearth).
- A chatty supermarket queue (beats reading De Telegraaf).
- Anyplace with candles, sparklers or flashlights.

1950s Eastern European cabaret lounge. It gets groovy with filmmakers, photographers and artists. The heat is off since its heyday, and we prefer it that way.
MOLLY MALONE’S  Map pp62-5 Irish Pub  
624 11 50; Oudezijds Kolk 9
Regularly packed with Irish folk, this dark,
woody pub holds spontaneous folk-music
sessions. Bring your own guitar and let
loose with the other Eireophiles.

CAFÉ-RESTAURANT ZEPPO’S  Map pp62-5 Other Café  
624 20 57; Gebed Zonder End 5
This site, off Grimgenburgwal, has assumed
many guises over the centuries: a cloister
during the 15th, a horse-carriage storehouse
in the 17th and a cigar factory in the 19th.
These days it’s festive, attractive and almost
romantic, with a beautiful garden and Bel-
gian beers. There’s live music Sunday from
4pm (cover groups and big bands).

PROEFLOKAAL DE OOEIevaAR  Map pp62-5 Tasting House  
620 80 04; St Olafspoort 1;  
Mon-Sat 11am-2.30pm
Not much bigger than a vat of jenever,
this magnificent little tasting house has been
going since 1782. On offer are spirits of the
De Ooeiervaar distillery, still located in
the Jordaan. The house was built leaning
over and has not subsided, as many people
wrongly assume even before a shot of Old
Dutch.

PROEFLOKAAL WIJNAND FOCKINCK  Map pp62-5 Tasting House  
639 26 95; Pijlsteeg 31;  
Mon-Sat 11am-2.30pm
This small tasting house (dating from 1679)
haves scores of jenever and liqueurs – some
quite expensive and potent. It’s in an
arcade behind Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky,
and although there are no seats or stools,
it is an intimate place to knock back a taste
or two with a friend. We particularly enjoy
the boswandering (‘walk in the woods’), a
vivacious combination of young jenever,
herb bitters and orange liqueur – the effect
is like cloves.

BLINCKER  Map pp62-5 Theatre Café  
627 19 38; www.nesttheaters.nl; St Barberen-
straat 7-9
The high ceiling, cozy mezzanine and mel-
low atmosphere make Blincker a popular
theatre café. At the rear of the Frascati
Theatre, it gets crammed with a young
student crowd having a pre-theatre meal or
post-theatre drinks.

DE BRAKKKE GROND  Map pp62-5 Theatre Café  
626 00 44; Nes 43
Part of the Flemish Cultural Centre, this café
overlooking a quiet square does an honest
trade in Flemish beer (try a magnum bot-
tle from a Belgian abbey) and homestyle
food (think steak au poivre or salmon with
Ardennes ham).

NIEUWMARKT
DE BEKEERDE SUSTER  Map pp62-5 Beer Café  
423 01 12; Kloveniersburgwal 6-8
It’s got the brew tanks, it’s got the beauti-
ful hardwood interior, it’s even got the
history: a 16th-century brewery-cloister
run by nuns. Stop in for a meal of pub
munchies.

CAFÉ DE DOELEN  Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
624 90 23; Kloveniersburgwal 125
On a busy canalside crossroads between the
Amstel and the Red Light District, this café
dates back to 1895 and looks it: carved
wooden goat’s head, loaded stained-glass
lamps, sand on the floor. Still, it’s far from
stuffy, there’s a fun, youthful atmosphere
here, and during fine weather the tables
spill across the street for picture-perfect
canal views.

DE SLUYSWACHT  Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
625 76 11; Jodenbreestraat 1
Listing like a ship in a high wind, this tiny
black building was once a lock-keeper’s
house on the Oude Schans. Today, the
canal-side terrace is one of the nicest spots
we know in town to relax and down a beer
(Dommelsch is the house specialty), and it
has gorgeous views of the Montelbaanstorren
(p82).

I GET AROUND...
It was only a matter of time before someone combined two legendary Amsterdam pastimes: cycling and beer. Het
Fietscafé (Bike Café; 06 5386 4090; www.fietscafe.nl; per hr/day €75/250, plus delivery fee €75-190, 30/50L keg
€60/90) is a pedal-powered party, shaped like an open-sided trolley car with a bar down the middle and barstools on
either side. Here, though, the barstools sit atop pedals, which you do and up to 16 of your mates can use to go anywhere
cars can (except highways). Designate a bartender and a driver (who’s not allowed to drink), pop your favourite CD in
the player, and you’re on your way.

LOKAAL ‘T LOOJSJE  Map pp62-5 Brown Café  
627 26 35; Nieuwmarkt 32-34
With its beautiful etched-glass windows and tile tableaux on the walls, this is one of the oldest and prettiest cafés in the
Nieuwmarkt area. It attracts a vibrant mix of students, locals and tourists.

HILL STREET BLUES  Map pp62-5 Coffeeshop  
www.hill-street-blues.nl; Nieuwmarkt 14
Feels more like a lounge bar than a coffee-
shop, with jazz lounge music, an in-the-
groove vibe and an international swathe
of visitors. Firm beanbag stools and comfy
benches make great stations for watch-
ing the life forms on busy Nieuwmarkt.
Once you’ve settled in on the terrace,
try a blended smoothie with yogurt or
fresh fruit, or one of its phenomenal
chocolate shakes, a perfect antidote to the
dam of yore. Of course, the locals may bag a
remote table away from curious foreigners,
but in this jolly part of town it’s just as likely
they’ll toast your good health and break out
in song.

WAAG CAFE  Map pp62-5 Other Café  
422 77 72; Nieuwmarkt 4
This former 15th-century weigh house (and
later, gallows! – see p78) is now an impres-
sive café-restaurant combining old-world
accents (massive, circular wrought-iron
candelabras) with new-world drinks and
food, though it is rather expensive. It
serves pretty good sandwiches (we sug-
gest you try the Club) and salads as well,
and there’s so-not-medieval wireless inter-
net access.

JORDAAN
Visitors who seek a typical café experience
‘with the locals’ will love the Jordaan, a
chummy district still touted as the Amsterdam
of yore. Of course, the locals may bag a
remote table away from curious foreigners,
but in this jolly part of town it’s just as likely
they’ll toast your good health and break out
in song.

HOT CONVERSATION TOPICS
You’re enjoying a beer with friends at a café overlooking
a canal. What are you likely to hear?
- ‘It took me forever to park my bike!’
- ‘What are you getting Jakob and Pieter as a
wedding gift?’
- ‘I wish I could afford to live in the Canal Belt, but
I bought a great flat in Bos en Lommer.’
- ‘Let’s go for a ride on my boat on Saturday.’
- ‘Where’s the after-party?’
- ‘Sorry, I can’t hear you for all the construction
noise!’
- ‘I wonder if the smoking ban will really be
enforced…’
- ‘I hope my bike is still there.’
CAFÉ ‘T MONUMENTJE
Map p86  Brown Café
624 35 41; Westerstraat 120
Diagonally opposite Café Nol, this slightly scruffy café is always full of barflies, backgammon players and locals. It’s a good spot for a beer and a snack after shopping at the Westermarkt.

CAFÉ ‘T SMALLLE
Map p86  Brown Café
623 96 17; Egelantiersgracht 12
Take your boat and dock right on ‘t Smallle’s pretty terrace – there’s hardly a more convivial setting in the daytime or a more romantic one at night. It’s equally charming inside – dating back to 1786 as a jenever distillery and tasting house, and restored during the 1970s with antique porcelain beer pumps and lead-framed windows. It’s so gorgeous, so authentic, and so Dutch gezellig, that there’s a reproduction of it in Japan.

Café Nol
Map p86
624 53 80; Westerstraat 109; 9pm-1am (till 3am Fri & Sat)
The epitome of the old-style Jordaan café, this is sort of place where the original Jordaanese (ie before students, artists and professionals moved in) would sing oom-pah ballads with drunken abandon. They still do, but nowadays everyone from athletic types to drag queens joins in.

De Pieper
Map p86  Brown Café
626 47 75; Prinsengracht 424
Considered by some customers to be the king of the brown cafés, De Pieper is small, unassuming and unmistakably old (1665). The interior features stained-glass windows, fresh sand on the floors, antique Delft beer mugs hanging from the bar and a working Belgian beer pump (1875). It’s a friendly, sweet place for a late-night Wieckse Witte.

De Prins
Map p86  Brown Café
624 93 82; Prinsengracht 124
Close to the Anne Frank Huis (p93), this pleasant and popular brown café prepares good lunch-time sandwiches, a terrific blue-cheese fondue at night, and international dishes like vegetarian wraps.

De Reiger
Map p86  Brown Café
624 74 26; Nieuwe Leliestraat 34
Assiduously local but highly atmospheric, this café has a quiet front bar and a noisy, more spacious dining section at the back serving a short menu (eg steaks or duck with peppercorns).

De Tuin
Map p86  Brown Café
624 45 59; 2e Tuinwarsstraat 13
Always a good place to start the evening. Join the youngish clientele enjoying the wide selection of Belgian beers, good food and funky soul music.

De Twee Zwaantjes
Map p86  Brown Café
625 27 29; Prinsengracht 114; ring for opening hours
The small, authentic ‘Two Swans’ is at its hilarious best on weekend nights, when you can join some 100 people belting out torch songs and pop standards. Hours are erratic, so ring ahead first.

Het Papeneiland
Map p86  Brown Café
624 19 89; Prinsengracht 2
You won’t be the only tourist visiting this café, but that doesn’t make it any less worthwhile. It’s a 1642 gem with Delft-blue tiles and a central stove. The name, ‘Papists’ Island’, goes back to the Reformation when there was a clandestine Catholic church on the north side of the canal. By some accounts you got there via a secret tunnel on the north side of the canal. By some accounts you got there via a secret tunnel.

La Tertulia
Map p86  Coffeeshop
Prinsengracht 312; 11am-7pm Tue-Sat
A backpackers’ favourite, this mother-and-daughter-run coffeeshop has a greenhouse feel. You can either sit outside by the Van Gogh–inspired murals, play some board games, or take in those Jurassic-sized crystals by the counter.

Rokkerij
Map p86
626 30 60; www.rokerij.net; Elandsgracht 53
The newest member of the Rokkerij chain thinks it knows how an Indian living room really looks, with bright tiles, orange walls and religious icons. Its clientele is much less touristy than at its outlet near Leidseplein (p190).

Finch
Map p86  Designer Bar
626 24 61; Noordermarkt 5
This funkaculous bar with its retro décor (deliberately mismatched yet somehow harmonious) is just the spot to hang out and knock back a few beers after a visit to the market. It’s known for an arty-designy clientele, and lipstick lesbians.

G-Spot
Map p86  Designer Bar
320 37 33; Prinsengracht 422; 11am-1am
Next door to De Pieper (opposite), this contemporary minimalist bar-restaurant with its bright light-filled interior couldn’t be more different to its brown-café neighbour, but it’s equally as appealing. While the interior is stylish, the canal-side terrace with pretty views will keep you outside. Good wines available by the glass.

Proust
Map p86  Designer Bar
623 91 45; Noordermarkt 4
Next door to Finch, this bar is sleek and hip with mod colours, and the crowd changes as the hour does – families in the daytime, students (or older) at night. It’s also known for its hot chocolate.

Café Thijsse
Map p86  Other Café
623 89 94; Brouwersgracht 107
The glowing umber, Art Deco–inspired interior with stained-glass windows and big tables is a crowd-puller. It’s busy on weekends with groups of neo-Jordanese yuppies meeting up for a late brunch and staying on until dinner.

Western Canal Belt
The cafés of this refined district tend to have a touch more polish than elsewhere – the interiors are slicker, the brass fittings shinier, the menus more elaborate. The rest of the places just keep themselves in half-lit atmosphere and hope no-one notices.

‘t Arendsnest
Map p92  Beer Café
421 20 57; Herengracht 90
This gorgeous, restless brown café, with its glowing, copper jenever boilers behind the bar, specialises in Dutch beer served by helpful staff. Be sure to try the herby, powerful Jopen Koyt, brewed from a 1407 recipe.

Café de Pels
Map p92  Brown Café
622 90 37; Huidenstraat 25; 10am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat
The action at this appealingly shabby traditional brown café – attracting a mix of students, academics and creative types – is focused on drinking. It’s also a Sunday morning breakfast fave.

Café Het Molenpad
Map p92  Brown Café
625 96 80; Prinsengracht 653
This place attracts a nice mix of artists – some of whose work adorns the walls of this gallery-café – students and tourists. Lunch is the standard sandwich-and-salad affair, but dinner dishes are more interesting, with a mix of Dutch and Mediterranean flavours.

De Doffer
Map p92  Brown Café
622 66 86; Runstraat 12-14
Writers, students and artists congregate at this popular café (with adjoining bar) for affordable food and good conversation. The dining room, with its old Heiniken posters, large wooden tables and, occasionally, fresh flowers, is particularly ambient at night.

De II Prinsen
Map p92  Brown Café
624 97 22; Prinsenstraat 27
With its large windows, chandelier, mosaic floor and big terrace, this café looks...
refills (it’s organic). It keeps shorter hours than most coffee shops.

**SIBERIÉ** Map p92  Coffee shop  623 59 09; www.siberie.nl; Brouwersgracht 11

It’s a comfortable, living-room-like setting and the owners are known for supplementing their wares with cultural events like poetry slams, acoustic concerts, DJ nights and even horoscope readings.

**BRIX** Map p92  Design Bar  639 03 51; Wolvenstraat 16

The mod-lounge setting at this new spot makes it a great place to chill over a beer or enjoy small plates like herring and salmon carpaccio, and chicken lemongrass sticks with banana chutney. There’s live jazz Sunday and Monday nights from about 9pm.

**DYLAN** Map p92  Design Bar  530 20 10; Keizersgracht 384

Like the hotel surrounding it, the Dylan’s lobby bar is superposh – sleek black and white with Indonesian influences, and a great place to pose…if you can get in. Restaurant patrons get seating priority. You might swear that all the beautiful people surrounding you stepped off the pages of the fashion magazines on the coffee tables.

**WOLVENSTRAAT 23** Map p92  Design Bar  320 08 43; Wolvenstraat 23; 9am-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat

This funky bar with no name – we dare you to find a sign anywhere – is especially popular with locals, who come for the good wines by the glass, great music and tasty Asian snacks. If this is your kind of place, check out their other bar, Finch (p187).

**CAFÉ DE VERGULDE GAPER** Map p92  Grand Café  624 89 75; Prinsenstraat 30

Decorated with old chemists bottles and vintage posters, this former pharmacy – popular with locals, and translated as the ‘Golden Gaper’, for the open-mouthed bust of a Moor traditionally posted at Dutch apothecaries – has amiable staff and a terrace with afternoon sun. It gets busy with 20- and 30-something media types meeting for after-work drinks.

**DULAC** Map p92  Grand Café  624 42 65; Haarlemmerstraat 118

This former bank building is outrageously decked out in a kooky, but kind of spooky, mixture of styles (think Turkush, Art Nouveau and Amsterdam School, with a few Gothic acccents). There are DJs Thursday through to Saturday nights, a pool table and an amiable mix of students, older folks and Americans.

**POMPADOURE** Map p92  Other Café  623 95 54; Huidenstraat 12

Join society ladies sipping top-notch tea and nibbling away at homemade Belgian-style chocolates and pastries at this chicchi little tearoom in the Negen Straatjes. If you just want the chocolates, they’re €4.30 per 100g. Note: it’s not open on Sundays, but a second branch is, at Kerkstraat 148 (Map pp100-1; 330 09 81).

**DE ADMIRAAL** Map p92  Tasting House  625 43 34; Herengracht 319; 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat

The grandest and largest of Amsterdam’s tasting houses, De Admiraal is also a restaurant and party venue. Although some grumble that they pour only their own house brands (16 jenevers and 60 liqueurs made by Van Wees, an Amsterdam distiller), it’s hard to quibble over the lovely setting and pleasant staff.

**FELIX MERITIS CAFÉ** Map p92  Theatre Café  626 23 21; Felix Meritis Bldg, Keizersgracht 324

Join performing artists from around Europe and the city’s cultural cognoscenti imbibing in this high-ceilinged, quietly refined room (think theatrical lighting). Huge windows overlooking the canal make it a sunny place for breakfast (from 9am).

**SOUTHERN CANAL BELT**

Much of the action gravitates towards two of Amsterdam’s busy pleasure centres, the shrill squares called Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein. Many locales here feel surprisingly authentic given the tacky surrounds. A more discriminating crowd hits Utreichtsestraat, where you’ll find some of the city’s most enticing cafes and bars.

**AMSTEL BAR & BRASSERIE** Map pp100-1  Bar  622 60 60; Amstel Intercontinental Hotel, Professor Tulippein 1

So you need to entertain a client. She’s very high powered and you can’t leave things to chance. The bar at the Amstel Intercontinental Hotel is dignified and appropriately clubby, and its river-view location is the power spot in town. We expect you’ll get that contract you wanted and you may even rub elbows with famous financiers for your next deal.

**EYLDERS** Map pp100-1  Brown Café  624 27 04; Korte Leidsewarsstraat 47

During WWII, Eylders was a meeting place for artists who refused to toe the cultural line imposed by the Nazis, and the spirit lingers on. It’s still an artists café with exhibits, and makes a quiet retreat from the Leidseplein.

**OOSTERLING** Map pp100-1  Brown Café  623 41 40; Utrechtsestraat 140

Opened in the 1700s as a tea and coffee outlet for the United East India Company, Oosterling is as authentic as it gets – run by the same family since 1877. These days it’s packed with the after-work-drinks crowd from the bank across the square and is one of the very few cafes that has a bottle-shop (liquor-store) permit.

**BULLDOG** Map pp100-1  Coffee shop  625 62 78; www.bulldog.nl; Leidseplein 13-17

Amsterdam’s most famous coffeeshop chain has evolved into its own empire, with multiple locations (some double as cafés), a hotel, bike rental, even its own brand of energy drink. This flagship location on the Leidseplein is in a former police station. How times have changed.
**GLOBAL CHILLINE** Map pp100-1  Coffeeshop
> 777 97 77; www.globalchilllage.com;
> Kerkstraat 51
This relaxed shop with friendly staff looks like a little workshop with tripsy murals and chilled-out music (African and jazzy beats), populated by happy smokers relaxing on comfortable couches.

**ROKERIJ** Map pp100-1  Coffeeshop
> 622 94 42; www.rokerij.net; Lange Leidsewarsstraat 41
Behind this black hole of an entrance you’ll find Eastern decor and candlelight for those tired of the Rastafarian vibe. Staff at this flagship branch have a reputation for friendliness, explaining why outlets have shot up like weed(s). Others include the Jordaan (p187).

**DE HUYSCHKAEMER** Map pp100-1  Designer Bar
> 627 05 75; Utrechtsestraat 137
A one-time restaurant, De Huyschkaemeren has made the transition to a full-time designer bar, with a mixed crowd – gay and straight, expat and local, old and young. The setting is minimalist, with spare walls and booths.

**KAMER 401** Map pp100-1  Designer Bar
> 422 44 53; Marnixstraat 401; 4pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat
This glamorous bar glows at night, as do the gorgeous-looking cocktail-drinking young locals who pack the place till late. With DJs providing a funky soundtrack, it’s perfect for preclubbing drinks.

**LUX** Map pp100-1  Designer Bar
> 422 14 12; Marnixstraat 403; 8pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat
One of several happening bars along this street, attracting beautiful young Amsterdammers and expats-in-the-know – good DJs keep the crowds happy and the bar staff very, very busy.

**SUZY WONG** Map pp100-1  Designer Bar
> 626 67 69; Korte Leidsewarsstraat 45
This sure-to-impress bar bustles with Dutch trends and actors. The look: Victorian-drawing-room-on-speed, with red velvet-teen wallpaper and a bamboo garden; a photo of Andy Warhol observes. A worthy place to fortify yourself before heading across to Jimmy Woo’s (p197).

**WEBER** Map pp100-1  Designer Bar
> 627 05 74; Marnixstraat 397; 8pm-3am Mon-Thu, to 4am Fri-Sun
We love this buzzy bar for its loud indie music, retro décor and unpretentious local vibe. Cheap drinks and friendly service and an added incentive to head here on a Saturday night – if you can squeeze in!

**CAFÉ AMERICAIN** Map pp100-1  Grand Café
> 556 32 32; Amsterdam American Hotel, Leidsekaat 97
This Art Deco monument, opened in 1902, was a grand café before the concept even existed, with huge stained-glass windows overlooking Leidseplein, a lovely, library-like reading table and a great terrace.

**DE KROON** Map pp100-1  Grand Café
> 625 20 11; Rembrandtplein 17-1
A popular venue for media events and movie-premiere parties, with high ceilings, velvet chairs, and the chance to wave at the Little People below on the Rembrandtplein. There is a lift to get up the two storeys, but climb the two flights instead and you’ll be rewarded with an Art Deco tiled staircase.

**MULLIGANS** Map pp100-1  Irish Pub
> 622 13 30; Amstel 100
This is probably the most ‘authentic’ Irish pub, at least music-wise. There’s a congenial atmosphere, Guinness on tap and live Irish music most nights from 9pm (no cover charge). Sunday sesions let you participate. BYOI (instrument) and T (talent).

**HERBERG HOOGHOUTD** Map pp100-1  Other Café
> 420 40 41; Reguliersgracht 11; Mon-Sat 4pm-midnight
Situated on lovely Reguliersgracht, this venerable café still bears the hallmarks of the Hooghoudt Distillery founded in Groningen in the late 19th century. You can try a gambit of jenever, liqueurs and vodkas, or warm up with a korenwijn right out of a barrel on the bar. Note the earthenware pots still used to give the firewater its special flavour.

**CAFÉ SCHILLER** Map pp100-1  Theatre Café
> 624 98 46; Rembrandtplein 26
Most cafés would pay a fortune to have Schiller’s fabulous Deco interior, but this is original. Walls are lined with portraits of Dutch actors and cabaret artists from the 1920s and ’30s. Bar stools and booths are often occupied by tippling journalists and artists, and folks tucking into pre- and post-theatre menus.

**PLACES TO PLAY**
You’ll have ample opportunity for mind games at Amsterdam’s bars and clubs, but for something more traditional, try one of the following. Some are pretty down-and-dirty. Hours vary, but these places generally open from early afternoon through the evening.

- **Snookerclub Final Touch** (Map pp100–1)
  > 620 92 52; Prinsengracht 735
This two-storey spot with six snooker tables and five pool tables feels studenly but gets a mixed crowd. Other games include backgammon, darts and chess.

- **Snookerclub De Keizers** (Map p92)
  > 623 15 86; Keizersgracht 256
De Keizers’ five storeys feel like something out of The Shining: it’s one-­­grand 18th-century canal house whose huge rooms now contain just one or two tables each. You can get drinks and bar snacks, and it’s always pretty quiet. It’s bittersweet to see such faded glory; on the other hand, it’s sooo cool that it exists.

- **Café de Laurierboom** (Map p86)
  > 623 30 15; Laurierstraat 76
The hub of the Jordaan chess circuit is one of its oldest cafes, still bearing a stone tablet labelled tapperij en slippet. From 3pm the local masters test their wits over a drinkie or three.

- **Max Euweplein** (Map pp100–1)
Enthusiastic chess players can play and schmooze around the oversized outdoor chessboard.

**JANVIER** Map pp100-1  Other Café
> 626 1199; Amstelveld 12
There’s no lovelier place to sit on a sunny afternoon than under the shady plane trees at this stylish bar-­restaurant. Stick to a drink and snacks (the food can be hit and miss) and watch the kids kick a football around in this pleasant down-to-earth neighbourhood.

**TWINS BACKSTAGE** Map pp100-1  Other Café
> 622 36 38; Utrechtsestraat 67
The twins Greg and Gary Christmas once had a song-and-dance act, and in the 1970s they opened this café as a sideline. Greg passed away several years ago, and Gary keeps things going with substantial help from the neighbours. Don’t expect crisp service or top-notch food, but do expect encompassing kitsch, from mannequins in crocheted shawls to flower-power decals. No matter your sexual orientation, you’ll find a titillating photo on the washroom wall.

**DE BALIE** Map pp100-1  Theatre Café
> 623 36 73; Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 10
In the Balie performance space, lovely Deco-meets-industrial design attracts a diverse crowd of artists, politicians, journalists, actors, filmmakers and anyone else looking for a decent lunch.

**DE SMOEISHAAN** Map pp100-1  Theatre Café
> 625 03 68; Leidsekaat 90
Theater Bellevue’s café gets pretty lively, both before and after the shows, with theatre visitors and performers. During the day it’s a nice place to relax by the Singelgracht. The pub food is better than it needs to be (try the gehakt at lunch time) and there’s a good full-on restaurant upstairs too (restaurant closed July to mid-August).

**OLD SOUTH**
‘Old anything’ in a label tends to impress. The cafés in the Old South marry a 1920s social conscience with Dutch understatement that still says ‘I’ve arrived’. The result is classic period cafés with a wonderful ambiance of leisure that’s taken for granted, like what cultivated folk should expect anyway.

**WILDSCHUT** Map p110  Brown Café
> 676 82 20; Roelof Hartplein 1
A real gathering place for the Old South. When the weather’s warm, pretty much everyone heads to the terrace, with views of the Amsterdam School buildings. And
when the weather’s not great, soak up the atmosphere in the Art Deco interior.

VONDELPARK & AROUND

The scene here revolves around the handful of old-style cafés in the city’s most popular park – wonderful places to cool your heels after a stroll round the pond-filled grounds. The spacey-looking ’t Blauwe Theehuis (p171) is as famous for coffee and cake as its generous lunch and dinner mains.

HET GROOT MELKHUIS

Map p116 Other Café

612 96 74; Vondelpark 2

Kind of a Goldilocks apparition, this huge thatched house at the forest’s edge invites you in. The huge dining forecourt, play-ground and amazing selection of chewing gum machines cater to families and all kidlike guests.

CAFÉ VERTIGO

Map p116 Theatre Café

612 30 21; Vondelpark 3

Bonus: this is both a theatre café (at the main hall of the Filmmuseum, p115) and, in nice weather, a great place to linger outdoors watching the cyclists and families go by in the Vondelpark. Try the uitjesmijter Vertigo (egg sandwich with bacon, mushroom, teriyaki sauce, tomato and melted cheese, €7.50).

DE PIJP

The neighbourhood that houses the old Heineken Brewery (p118) is chock-full with watering holes that few tourists discover, being well off the beaten track. For a good solid pub crawl, start with the enthusiastic after-work crowd on Gerard Douplein and drink your way south towards Sarphatipark.

PILSVOGEL

Map p119 Brown Café

664 64 83; Gerard Douplein 14

The kitchen dispenses small plates (€2.50 to €4.50) and dagschotels (€11.50) to a 20-something crowd, but that’s really secondary when you’re sitting on De Pijp’s loveliest, busiest corner. Watch the world go by, or at least its ambassadors.

SARPHAAT

Map p119 Brown Café

675 15 65; Ceintuurbaan 157

Grab an outdoor table by the Sarphatipark, tuck into a slice of Boston cheesecake and a coffee, and see if you don’t feel like a local.

18 TWINTIG

Map p119 Designer Bar

470 06 51; Ferdinand Bolstraat 18-20

This bar facing Marie Heinekenplein is all pastels, mints and tiny Buddhas to make anyone look glamorous, not that the good-looking 20- and 30-somethings need enhancement. There’s a contemporary, diverse food menu (mains €16.50 to €21.50).

BAR ÇA

Map p119 Designer Bar

470 41 44; Marie Heinekenplein 30-31

One of the hottest cafés in town, this club themed like a ‘Barcelona in Amsterdam’ has brought real life to Marie Heinekenplein. Hang in the posh plush-red and darkwood interior, or spread out onto the terrace.

PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS

In keeping with all the daring architecture out here, the Plantage, Eastern Islands and Eastern Docklands area has seen an invasion of back-lit designer bars and media-savvy cafés, and we’ve listed those that meld mod style with good ol’ Dutch gezelligheid. Among the more traditional places, the venerable Brouwerij ’t IJ has tasty brews that are a definite highlight.

BROUWERIJ ’T IJ

Map p122 Beer Café

622 83 25; Funenkade 7; 3-8pm Wed-Sun

The tasting room of Amsterdam’s leading microbrewery has a cozy, down-and-dirty beer-hall feel (walls lined with dried hops and bottles from around the world) and the house brew is on tap. In nice weather you can enjoy your beer on the terrace at the foot of the De Gooyer Windmill (p124). Where better to sample a Columbus (9%), a zatte (‘drunk’) or a sweet, orange-coloured struis (ostrich)?

SMOKY TOWN LIVING

Peter Vloot, 45, is an artist and skipper born in Osdorp, a western suburb of Amsterdam. He now lives in the Western Islands north of the Jordaan. We asked Peter to give us the skinny on dope-smoking tourists, police searches and the arts scene, as well as his past life as a squatter.

Do you have much contact with the tourists in the city?

Well, I used to drive a water taxi in town and now I’m a skipper, taking passengers and tourists around town.

Do you find it a pain that a lot of tourists come to Amsterdam just to party, drink and smoke dope?

I’m always surprised when my friends come up from Switzerland and smoke much more in Amsterdam than they do at home. But there it’s illegal. When you’re born here it seems normal, so I’m used to it and it doesn’t really bother me. But if it bothers you, you might as well stay away from the city centre. Most residents don’t ride their bicycles along the Rokin and the Damrak anyway!

What’s special about Amsterdam for artists?

There’s so much going on. The moment that you say, you want to make art your living, you’ve got the greatest chance of success in Amsterdam. There’s an art to the way the city is constantly changing. As older neighbourhoods were being cleaned up, the buildings became a kind of breeding ground, and you could use their rooms as an artist or squatter. But these places are disappearing.

What was it like being a squatter?

Easy. Someone moved out and I moved in. When I was squatting in 1983, I lived in what was known as the most dangerous street in Amsterdam. There were clashes among the dealers and junkies, fires were set and so on. When I told my landlord I was going to pay rent, and it was a tiny amount in the ’80s, he said, ‘Oh, that’s great!’ Because I was a squatter but not aggressive, he was happy to hear it. And then I lived there for 20 years. Now it’s a school, and part of a renovation project.

CAFÉ KOOSJE

Map p122 Brown Café

320 08 17; Plantage Middenlaan 37

If the three catch-words for real estate are location, location and location, then Koosje’s got a lock on the market, between the Artis Zoo (p121) and the Hollandsche Schouwburg (p123). There are lots of windows to watch the action outside, a great corner vibe, and small plates and sandwiches, most under €6.

KHL

Map p122 Other Café

779 15 75; Oostelijke Handelskade 44

Proof of how far this district has come, KHL is a one-time squatter café gone legit. Next to the Lloyd Hotel, it’s a historic brick building with great tilework, and the garden is worth a glass or two. There’s often music on weekends – everything from Latin to pop to Klezmer.

BLOEM

Map p122 Other Café

330 09 29; Entrepotdok 36

You’ve always wanted to see those lovely buildings of the Entrepotdok from the inside? Now you can, at this dark and cozy café-restaurant. Amid the brick and beams, enjoy a beer or a coffee, and meals are better than they need to be (lunch around €7, three-course menus around €20).

STAR FERRY

Map p122 Theatre Café

788 20 90; Piet Heinkade 1

It’s practically a commandment nowadays that any newly built performing space worth the name has to have a flash café, and the café at the new Muziekgebouw aan ’t IJ is hard to beat for location and views. Several stores of glass give you an IJ’s-eye perspective.
OOSTERPARK & AROUND

As the capital of a seafaring nation, Amsterdam has no shortage of riverside cafés that remind you of the age-old Dutch bond with H2O. On gorgeous summer evenings many patrons arrive by boat, settle at a terrace table and watch the freight barges, tugs and rowing teams ply the waters of the Amstel or the IJ.

AMSTEL HAVEN Map p129
 otros Café
☎ 665 26 72; Mauritskade 1

Bike or boat up to where the Amstel meets the Singelgracht, snag a canalside table under an umbrella, and have yourself a swell view of the water and skyscrapers. Daytimes, munch on uitsmijters, sandwiches and mains, and on weekend nights, the dining room becomes a dance floor with DJs or live music.

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NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

top picks

- **Bitterzoet** (p196)
  Fresh, exciting dance club that changes its spots nightly.
- **Concertgebouw** (p199)
  World-renowned concert hall with superb acoustics.
- **Escape** (p196)
  Fabulously flashy 'n trashy nightclub on Rembrandtplein.
- **Melkweg** (p199)
  The stars come out at this restless Leidseplein nightspot.
- **Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ** (p200)
  Stunning high-tech temple of the performing arts.
- **Muziektheater** (p200)
  Crossroads of global opera and choreography.
- **Panama** (p197)
  Cool jazz, hot Latin and scores of beautiful, jiggy patrons.
- **Paradiso** (p199)
  One-time church that preaches a gospel of rock.
- **Sugar Factory** (p197)
  Creative theme nights that hit all the sweet spots.
- **Tuschinski theater** (p200)
  Dazzling Art Deco jewel with a silver screen.
NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

Amsterdam’s entertainment scene is wonderfully easy-going and remarkably diverse for a city of its size. It may not be as sophisticated as some European cities – minimalist interiors are still a fairly new concept – but the soft entry to most venues, apart from a few nightclubs, is refreshing. Dress is for the most part casual, and people won’t blink if you wear jeans to the opera. This place always feels familiar, like a cosmopolitan village where everyone knows one another.

There are loads of big concert halls, theatres, cinemas and other performance venues. Generous subsidies help support a flourishing arts scene with world-renowned orchestras, as well as ballet and opera. The city really comes alive when there’s open-air entertainment in the parks and streets, and along the canals.

CLUBBING

Much of the action takes place in the city centre and Southern Canal Belt, but locals may prefer the large, glitzy venues outside town. Most nightclubs close at 4am on Thursday and Sunday and 5am on Friday and Saturday. Looking for the after-party? Keep an eye out for flyers at record shops and clubwear stores.

If there’s a bouncer, you may have to pass muster; entry rules are supposed to be posted after a member of the Dutch parliament was recently denied admission. Entry fees can be as much as €20. Others are free, in which case you should tip the doorman a couple of euros as you leave.

BITTERZOET Map pp62-5

521 30 01; www.bittezoet.com; Spuistraat 2
Always full, always changing. This is the freshest, friendliest and best-regarded of all Amsterdam’s nightclubs.

ESCAPE Map pp100-1

622 11 11; www.escape.nl; Rembrandtplein 11
A mixture of Amsterdam nightlife for two decades, the lights and video screens are even slicker since a 2007 revamp. First Friday of the month is Salvation, one of Amsterdam’s leading gay dance nights.

ODEON Map pp100-1

521 85 55; www.odeonamsterdam.nl; Singel 460
This historic venue from the 1660s was given a top-to-toe glam renovation in 2005, complete with murals of glam models. Club nights and concerts are held in the grand hall upstairs.

PANAMA Map p122

311 86 86; www.panaama.nl; Oostelijke Handelskade 4
A vibrant venue aimed at 25- to 35-year-olds, Panama has a salsa-tango dance salon and glamorous nightclub that spins Latin, Ibiza vibes, Cuban big bands and more.

SUGAR FACTORY Map pp100-1

626 50 06; www.sugarfactory.nl;
Lijnbaansgracht 238
A cool spot, an excellent location and a varied line-up are the hallmarks here. Most nights start with music, cinema or spoken word performances, followed by late-night DJs and dancing.

TO NIGHT Map p129

694 74 44; www.hotelarena.nl; Hotel Arena,
’s-Gravestraat 51
In keeping with the club’s name, each night is different – everything from dance classics to salsa. The interior is magnificent, the chapel of a one-time orphanage.

VAKZUID Map pp58-9

570 84 00; www.vakzuid.nl; Olympic Stadium 35
A glamorous club-restaurant at the 1928 Olympic Stadium, Vakzuid has a large dance floor and loads of comfortable lounges to pose on. There’s a lot of house, with some ‘80s and disco thrown in for good measure.

WESTERGASTERRAS Map pp58-9

475 14 12; www.westergasterras.nl;
Klonneplein
This cool, postindustrial, indoor-outdoor space is screamingly popular on Fridays for theme nights such as Tropical, and the pace hardly slows the rest of the week. Make an evening of it: dinner or a movie at the Westergasfabriek, and then hit the club.

WINSTON KINGDOM Map pp62-5

623 13 80; www.winston.nl; Hotel Winston,
Warmoesstraat 127
Changing theme nights (think the ‘sexy, trashy and suave’ Club Vegas on Sundays) and a fine line-up of local DJs make Winston very hip, very cool and very Amsterdam.

Also recommended:
De Nieuwe Anita (Map pp58-9; 311 95 06; www.dennieuweanita.nl); Frederik Hendrikstraat 111 Living-room venue expanded for noisecollectors, with a great café.
Jimmy Woo (Map pp100-1; 626 31 50; www.jimmywoo.com; Korte Leidsedwarstraat 18) Platform for the young and beautiful, with fab light-and-sound shows.
Powerzone (Map pp58-9; 0900 769 37 96; www.powerzone.nl); Danieel Goedkoopstraat 1-3 Multilevel dance factory with a DJ in every corner. Take the metro to Spaklerweg.

ROCK, JAZZ & BLUES

At most venues you can just turn up at the door, but you might want to book ahead for famous acts (see above).

Jazz is popular and there’s a lot of it happening in cafés; blues thrives less. The world’s largest jazz festival is the North Sea Jazz Festival, held in Rotterdam every July (p18).

BIMHUIS Map p122

788 21 50; www.bimhuis.nl; Piet Heinkade 3
The Bimhuis is the beating jazz heart of the Netherlands, and its stylish new digs at the Muziekgebouw aan ‘t IJ (p200) draws international jazz greats like Branford Marsalis.
THE WORLD’S ULTIMATE PICKUP LINE

Apart from his duties as international beer magnate, Freddy Heineken (1924–2002) had a reputation for being a ladies’ man. As the story goes, an attractive young female approached the bar and uttered the familiar phrase: ‘I’d like a Heineken, please.’ Freddy (stationed nearby) replied: ‘I’m right here.’

ALTERNATIVE-MUSIC VENUE

alternative-music venue attracts a young clientele for lashings of punk, metal and goth.

CASABLANCA Map pp62-5  
625 56 85; www.casablanca-amsterdam.nl; Zeedijk 26
Even if its glory days are over, this venerable jazz café hosts big bands four nights a week and other jazz the rest of the time. The club, like the dancing, is hot and steamy.

CASABLANCA

LISBOA Map p122  
622 12 72; Veenkade 251
At weekends, this restaurant-club boat moored behind the C1000 supermarket hosts jazz artists such as trumpeter Saskia Laroo and Brazilian samba bands.

MALOE MELO Map p86  
420 45 92; www.maloemelo.com; Lijnbaansgracht 163
This is the altar of Amsterdam’s tiny blues scene, just a few blocks from Leidseplein. There’s everything from Cajun zydeco and swing to Texas blues and rockabilly.

BETHANIEKLOOSTER Map pp62-5  
625 00 78; www.bethanieklooster.nl; Barndesteeg 6b
This former monastery near Nieuwmarkt has a glorious ballroom, the perfect place to take in some Stravinsky or Indian sitar.

BEUS VAN BERLAGE Map pp62-5  
627 04 66; www.beusvanberlage.nl; Damrak 243
The renowned „old commodities exchange“ (p95) has two small concert halls with comfortable seats and so-so acoustics. The Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and the Netherlands Philharmonic are the resident companies.

CONCERTGEBOUW Map p110  
671 83 45; www.concertgeblouw.be; Concertgebouwplein 2-6;  telephone sales 10am-5pm, box office till 7pm
One of the world’s great concert halls, the Concertgebouw has near-perfect acoustics that flatter the already wonderful Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Bernard Haitink, the celebrated conductor, once remarked that the hall was the best instrument the orchestra ever had.

TROPENINSTITUUT THEATER Map p129  
568 85 00; www.kit.nl; Tropenmuseum, Linnaeusstraat 2
The live agenda is like no place else in Amsterdam, mainly South American, Indian and African music, films and offerings like Japanese geisha.

GLOBAL MUSIC

Amsterdam’s classical music scene, with fine international orchestras, conductors and soloists crowding the agenda, is the envy of many European cities. It also has a tradition of free lunchtime concerts, from 12.30pm at the Concertgebouw, except in summer.

CONSERVATORIUM VAN AMSTERDAM Map p110  
527 75 50; www.cva.ahk.nl; Van Baerlestraat 27
Students at the Netherlands’ largest conservatory of music offer regular classical recitals. Note that at the time of writing the venue was expected to move to the Oosterdokseiland (near Centraal Station) by late 2008.

Mega Venues

You never know what to expect at the following venues. One night it might be an international pop star, then next it might be dance or a classical concert, or even a club night.

- Amsterdam Arena (Map pp100-1; 311 13 33; www.amsterdamarena.nl; Arena Blvd 1, Bijlmermeer) This ultimate stadium venue produces mega-shows like the Rolling Stones, Eminem and dance events.
- Koninklijk Theater Carré (Map pp100-1; 0900 252 52 55; www.theatercarre.nl; Amstel 115-125) The largest theatre in town puts on cabaret circuses, and big-budget musicals.
- Melkweg (Map pp100-1; 531 81 81; www.melkweg.nl; Lijnbaansgracht 234a) The newly expanded ‘Milky Way’ draws the masses with its eclectic live music – everything from Afro-Celtic to thrash – plus dance halls, cinema, lounges and art galleries.
- Paradiso (Map pp100-1; 626 45 21; www.paradiso.nl; Wateringschans 6) This former church remains the city’s premier rock venue. Big-name acts like Bright Eyes, Jurassic 5 and Moby come often, and the Paradiso and Paradiso dance nights are legendary.
- Stadsschouwburg (Map pp100-1; 624 23 11; www.stadsschouwburgamsterdam.nl; Leidseplein 26) This stunning theatre from 1894 features large-scale productions, operettas, and drama by Teneelgroep Amsterdam.

JAZZ CAFÉ ALTO

DE BADCUYP Map p119  
675 96 69; www.badcuyrp.nl; 1e Sweelinckstraat 10
A low-down and very cool venue off the Albert Cuypmarkt, De Badcuyr has regular World Jam and Open Kaip (open mic) nights, African dance cafés and musical offerings including South Indian, jazz and Latin.

WORLD MUSIC

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam is a natural breeding ground for world music. Apart from the venues listed here, look into Melkweg (opposite), Paradiso (opposite) and the Latin bars that give toned bodies another place to sweat gracefully.

AKHNATON Map pp62-5  
624 33 96; www.akhnaton.nl; Nieuwezijds Kolk 25
A young, multicultural crowd jams this club to catch live hip-hop, Latin and Afro-centric acts. It’s been going strong for 50 years.
NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

DE UITKIJK Map pp100-1
623 74 60; www.uitkiijk.nl; Prinsengracht 452
This fun art-house stalwart, located in an old canal house, is the city’s oldest surviving cinema (dating to 1913). For film buffs who know their Fuller from their Fellini.

FILMMUSEUM Map p116
589 14 00; www.filmmuseum.nl; Vondelpark 3
The esteemed Filmmuseum has two tiny cinemas screening cult horror, cutting-edge foreign films and specials devoted to screen legends and genres such as Bollywood. At the time of writing it was expected to move into a sleek new complex in Amsterdam-Noord in 2009.

HET KETELHUIS Map p58-9
684 00 90; www.ketelhuis.nl; Westergasfabriek, Haarlemmerweg 8-10
In the old gas works, the three screening rooms have a chic post-industrial vibe and comfy seats; it’s a great platform for art-house films. It also has a cosy café.

KRATION Map p122
623 17 08; www.kration.nl; Roeterstraat 170
This UvA-student-run theatre-caffe has a great array of premieres, themes parties, classics, kids’ ﬂicks and more. This former diamond factory became a movie theatre after WWII to help resistance fighters earn an income.

MOVIES Map p86
638 60 16; www.themovies.nl; Haarlemmerdijk 161
Indie features alongside mainstream at this beautiful Art Deco cinema. Treat yourself to a meal in the restaurant (the three-course ‘dinner and a movie’ costs a reasonable €29).

RIALTO CINEMA Map p119
676 87 00; www.rialtoﬁlm.nl; Ceintuurbaan 338
This great old cinema near Sarphatipark focuses on premieres and gets eclectic art-house fare from around the world.

TUSCHINSKITHEATER Map pp100-1
623 15 10, 0900 14 58, per min £0.35; www.path.nl/tuschinski; Reguliersbreestraat 26-34
Extensively refurbished, Amsterdam’s most famous cinema is worth visiting for its sumptuous Art Deco/Amsterdam School interior. The main theatre shows blockbusters, the smaller one art-house and indie ﬁlms.

MUZIEKTHEATER Map pp62-5
625 54 55; www.hetmuziektheater.nl; Waterlooplein 22
This swanky Stopera theatre is home to the Netherlands Opera, the National Ballet and the Netherlands Ballet Orchestra. International dance troupes such as those run by Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham also perform here.

MUZIEKGEBOUW AAN ‘T IJ Map p122
Tickets 788 20 00, ofice 788 20 10; www.muziekgebouw.nl; Piet Heinkade 1; performance prices vary; ticket ofice noon-7pm Mon-Sat
This dazzling new performing-arts venue brings together several agendas under one roof. Behind the hi-tech exterior you’ll ﬁnd a dramatically lit main hall with ﬂexible stage layout and great acoustics. Its jazz stage, Bimhuis (p197), is more intimate.

Free lunchtime concerts are normally held in the main hall once a month on different weekdays from September to May – check the website or printed programme for details.

CINEMA

Amsterdam’s hungry cinephiles have some 45 cinemas to choose from. The ‘ﬁlm ladder’ listing of what’s on is posted at pubs and cinemas, at www.amsterdam.cinema.nl and in the Thursday newspapers. Af means alle leeftijden (all ages). Screenings are usually in the original language with Dutch subtitles.

Big multiplexes include the Pathé cinemas at De Munt (Map pp100-1; Vijzelstraat 15). The following cinemas are more interesting.

CINECENTER Map pp100-1
623 66 15; Lijnbaansgracht 236
Euro and American art-house are the standard fare. The last Monday of the month is for queer ﬁlms, except in summer. Don’t miss the hip bar with white padded walls.

COMEDY

Given the Dutch are ﬁne linguists and have a keen sense of humour, it’s natural that English-language comedy would thrive in Amsterdam. The two premier comedy clubs in the Leidseplein area are the best places to see fast-thinking, fast-talking comics in action. No-one is safe from lampooning, even the audience.

BOOM CHICAGO Map pp101
423 01 01; www.boomchicago.nl; Leidseplein Theater, Leidseplein 12
Amsterdam’s leading show for English-language improv comedy, best enjoyed over dinner and a few drinks. The inhouse Boom Bar has DJs spinning a few nights a week and a quiz night on Mondays.

COMEDY CAFÉ AMSTERDAM Map pp101-1
638 39 71; www.comedycafe.nl; Max Euweplein 43-45
The Comedy Café books Dutch and international stand-up comics. Sundays are normally reserved for English-speaking acts.

AMSTERDAMS MARIONETTEN THEATER Map pp62-5
620 80 27; www.marionettentheater.nl; Nieuwe Jonkerstraat 8; adult/child under 7yr/child 7-14yr €15/free/€7; performance times vary
In a former blacksmith’s shop near Nieuwmarkt, the marionette theatre has a limited repertoire (mainly Mozart operas such as The Magic Flute), but kids and adults alike are enthralled with the fairy-tale stage sets, period costumes and beautiful singing.

AMSTERDAM’S BIGGEST THEATRE

The following is a shortlist of Amsterdam’s lively theatre scene. Performances are mostly in Dutch but sometimes in English, especially in summer. See also Koninklijk Theater Carré and Stadsschouwburg (p199).

THEATRE, DANCE & SPOKEN WORD

SO YOU THINK THAT’S FUNNY?
In the early 1990s Andrew Moskos moved to Amsterdam and founded the Boom Chicago comedy club (above) with two other Americans. We asked him how he and Amsterdam got where they are today.

How did you make the leap to Amsterdam?
My best friend and I were tourists here. We were in a coffeeshop and fell in love with Amsterdam, and got obsessed with the idea of quitting our jobs and coming here. There was a hole in the market for comedy. So we wrote to the city and laid out our idea.

Has Boom’s audience changed?
Our audience has got more sophisticated. We started off with topics like the Red Light District, soft drugs being legal, things we thought the tourists would go for. Now we’ve shifted into commenting on politics, American and Dutch. We had one show called Bite the Bullet, following the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, when big changes were underway in Holland.

How has the club scene changed?
It’s become less important, maybe 50% of what it was a few years ago. Amsterdam and its nightlife engine has changed too, not just here but in other cities too. The drinking, the cocaine, ecstasy, the dance culture, all this has moved into the background. If you go to a hip nightlife place now, you probably won’t be dancing, whereas five years ago, you would. It’s more head-bobbing now.

Do you like how Amsterdam has cleaned up its act?
Like moving dirty postcards inside the shops, less graffiti etc? A lot of people were thinking, ‘aw, how bland do we have to get?’ But soon we realized, ‘Wait a minute, that’s actually better.’ They made the garbage cans bigger too, which helped.

MORE CINEMA

CINEMA

DE KLEINE KOMEDIE Map pp101-1
624 05 34; www.dekleinekomedie.nl; Amstel 56-58
This renowned little theatre founded in 1786 puts on concerts, dance, comedy and cabaret, sometimes in English.

More information can be found online at www.amsterdam.com.
voices that bring the diminutive cast to life. From June to August the theatre only performs for groups; at other times, check the website for a schedule.

**AMSTERDAMSE BOS THEATRE**
☎ 643 32 86; www.bostheater.nl; Amsterdamse Bos
This large open-air amphitheatre stages plays in Dutch (Shakespeare, Brecht, Chekhov) in summer. We love it when the actors pause as planes pass overhead.

**CASABLANCA VARIÉTÉ** Map pp62-5
☎ 625 56 85; www.casablanca-amsterdam.nl; Zeedijk 24; dinner & show €34.50, show only €5
The other half of Casablanca contains the Netherlands’ only theatre devoted to the art of circus performance – sleight of hand, magic, variety shows and singers.

**COSMIC THEATER** Map pp62-5
☎ 626 68 66; www.cosmictheater.nl; Nes 75-87
Originally from Curaçao, this drama troupe stages plays representing a variety of cultures, with an emphasis on Surinamese, African, Turkish and Moroccan.

**DE BALIE** Map pp100-1
☎ 553 51 51; www.debalie.nl; Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 10
The focus here is multicultural and political, in big international productions.

De Balie also holds short-film festivals and debates, has new-media facilities and a stylish bar.

**DE BRAKKE GROND** Map pp62-5
☎ 626 68 66; www.nestheaters.nl; Flemish Cultural Centre, Nes 45
A fantastic array of music, experimental video, modern dance and exciting, young theatre is performed in Brakke Grond’s striking 150-seat theatre.

**FELIX MERITIS** Map p92
☎ 623 13 11; www.felix.meritis.nl; Keizersgracht 324
Amsterdam’s former cultural centre puts on innovative, modern theatre, music and dance, with lots of co-productions by Eastern and Western European artists.

**FRASCATI** Map pp62-5
☎ 626 68 66; www.nestheaters.nl; Nes 63
This experimental theatre is a draw for young Dutch directors, choreographers and producers. Expect multicultural dance and music performances, as well as hip-hop, rap and breakdancing. In May it hosts a cool urban-dance festival that’s worth checking out.

**OPENLUCHTTHEATER** Map p116
Vondelpark Open-Air Theatre; ☎ 673 14 99; www.openluchttheater.nl; Vondelpark
From June to August the Vondelpark hosts free concerts in its intimate open-air theatre, and it’s a fantastic experience to share with others. Expect world music, dance, children’s theatre and more.

**THEATER BELLEVUE** Map pp100-1
☎ 530 53 01; www.theaterbellevue.nl; Leidsekade 90
Come here for experimental theatre, international cabaret and modern dance, mainly in Dutch.
**top picks**

- **Arc** (p206)
  Designer meet-market for being seen, air-kissed and ignored.
- **Black Tulip Hotel** (p207)
  Get tied up for a weekend in this spanking fine hotel.
- **De Engel van Amsterdam** (p205)
  Cruisey terrace bar for chin-chin wagging.
- **Getto** (p205)
  Island of taste in the Zeedijk’s sea of testosterone.
- **Mr B** (p204)
  For all your jaw-dropping leather, fetish and dungeonwear.
- **Montmartre** (p206)
  Campy Bohemian bar where the ’80s never die.
- **Queen’s Head** (p205)
  Queer contrasts of frocks, jocks and Ken dolls.
- **Saarein** (p206)
  The original sisters’ café, democratised for one and all.
GAY & LESBIAN AMSTERDAM

The Netherlands was the first country to legalise same-sex marriage (in 2001), and homosexuality was criminalised here as early as 1811. So it should come as no surprise that Amsterdam’s gay scene is among the world’s largest. Locals are always fretting about whether they’ve lost their cherry as ‘European gay capital’, but as debate takes place in the many gay and lesbian establishments (about 300 in total if you count the cool ‘friendly’ places) you may wonder what they’re on about. The lesbian scene is much less active, but that’s about par for the course.

For orientation, know that there are four hubs that party hardest. In the Red Light District, Warmoesstraat is home to the infamous leather and fetish bars, dungeonlike darkrooms, porn vendors and coffeeshops; Rembrandtplein (p194) is for traditional pubs, brown cafés and nightclubs, some with a sing-songy, campy bent; and the venerable scene around Leidseplein (p99) has a smattering of venues and hotels. The classiest act is located one street down from the flower market, in Reguliersdwarsstraat, and draws the beautiful twinkies who schmooze and cruise their way along the street. In summer it might seem like a giant block party.

Wherever you are, crowds tend to vary with the time of happy hour – it shifts from bar to bar, and so will you in all likelihood. Note that there have been a number of gay-bashing incidents in recent years, so use your street smarts outside of the pleasure zones. The vast majority of Amsterdam’s eateries are gay-friendly, so see the Eating chapter (p156) when the munchies hit.

SHOPPING

Amsterdam is many things to many people, but one thing it’s not is lacking in inhibition. This means that any shopping needs related to sexuality are catered to with gusto, and that you always leave a shop with more ideas, if less cash, than you entered with.

INTERMALE
Map pp62-5
Books
625 00 09; www.intermale.nl; Spuistraat 251
One of Amsterdam’s leading gay bookstores, Intermael has 11% of floors of photo books, sexy mags, videos and pornographic cards.

VROLIJK
Map pp62-5
Books
623 51 42; www.vrolijk.nl; Paleisstraat 135;
11am-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri,
10am-7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun,
closed Sun Oct-Dec
The Netherlands’ largest G&L bookstore carries the major mags as well as novels, guidebooks and postcards. Upstairs you’ll find art, poetry and DVDs.

SHIRT SHOP
Map pp100-1
Clothing
423 20 88; www.shirtshopamsterdam.nl;
Reguliersdwarsstraat 64
On gay Amsterdam’s main street, this funky, two-storey shop sells tight-fitting men’s shirts to make you look fabulous. Look for sale items around €25.

MR B
Map pp62-5
Erotica/Gay
422 00 03; www.misterb.com; Warmoesstraat 89;
10am-6:30pm Mon- Wed & Fri, 10am-9pm
Thu, 11am-6pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun
Kind of the tamer wares at this renowned Red Light District shop include leather and rubber suits, hoods and bondage equipment, all made to measure if you want.

ROB
Map pp62-5
Erotica/Gay
625 46 86; www.rob.nl; Warmoesstraat 71
Rob sells anything and everything for one’s bondage and rough-sex fantasy: army gear, leather and rubber are just the start. Oh my!

VROLIJK
Map pp62-5
Books
623 51 42; www.vrolijk.nl; Paleisstraat 135;
11am-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri,
10am-7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun,
closed Sun Oct-Dec

DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

More glasses are emptied and partners swung in the old City Centre and the Southern Canal Belt than anywhere else, although Jordaan’s low-key scene has a few lesbian cafés. Warmoesstraat in the Red Light District is definitely for those who love it hard – leather and rubber, piercings and slings, darkrooms and acres of porn. A brighter crowd frequents the upper end of the Zeedijk, which has seen a revival of sorts.

CITY CENTRE

CAFÉ BARDEWIJN
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
420 51 32; Zeedijk 14
This very friendly beer bar draws a mixture of local gay regulars and tourists, and has killer views of the canal out back and Zeedijk in front, making it a must on Queen’s Day.

CUCKOO’S NEST
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
627 17 52; Nieuweweg 16
A small, busy bar said to have the largest ‘playroom’ in Europe. You could spend a whole night exploring the labyrinth of cubicles and glory holes.

DE ENGEL VAN AMSTERDAM
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
427 63 81; www.engelamsterdam.nl; Zeedijk 21;
17:30 from 3pm Tue-Sun
The new ‘Angel’ draws a cruisey terrace crowd who toast the evening’s promise with a flute of blended juice or champagne. DJ Mayday spins her favourites on Wednesday, and the TGIF drink night is starting to gel.

GETTO
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
421 51 51; www.getto.nl; Warmoesstraat 51;
Tue-Sun
This groovy, very long restaurant-bar is loved for its entertainment (tarot readers, DJs, bingo competitions). Great people-watching from the front, and a rear lounge where you can chill. Draws a cross-section of the gay community.

PRIK
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
320 00 02; www.prikamsterdam.nl; Spuistraat 109;
4pm-1am Sun & Tue-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat
‘Sexy snacks and liquids’ is the motto of this ‘playroom’ in Europe. You could spend a few hours here for a few euros and a good laugh.

QUEEN’S HEAD
Map pp62-5
Gay Bar
420 24 75; www.queenshead.nl; Zeedijk 20;
4pm-1am Mon-Thur, to 3am Fri & Sat
A beautifully decorated, canal-view, old-world-style café once run by legendary drag queen Dusty. The place has toned down a bit – there are still drag shows on Tuesday, but the crowd is more mixed, and even straight men are welcome.

COCKRING
Map pp62-5
Gay Club
623 96 04; www.clubcockring.com; Warmoesstraat 96;
11pm-4am Sun-Thur, to 5am Fri & Sat
This popular club has a disco downstairs playing techno and trance, while upstairs is a hot cruising area; leather boys are particularly welcome. Look for live strip shows and ‘shoes only’ parties.

ARGOS
Map pp62-5
Leather Bar
622 65 95; www.argosbar.com; Warmoesstraat 95;
10pm-3am Sun-Thur, to 4am Fri & Sat
Amsterdam’s oldest leather bar hosts leather boys of all ages in its famous darkrooms. The regular ‘Sex on Sunday’ party is always wild (though safe). Dress code: nude or seminude.

WEB
Map pp62-5
Leather Bar
623 67 58; St Jacobstraat 6; 2pm-1am Sun-
Thur, to 3am Fri & Sat
Cruisey, well-established leather and clone bar with darkrooms and ‘bear nights’. No, the pit below the grate in the floor is not a real loo.

JORDAAN

THERMOS DAY SAUNA
Map p86
Gay Sauna
623 91 58; www.thermos.nl; Raamstraat 33;
admission €18; noon-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm
Sat, 11am-10pm Sun
Thermos is a sprawling, popular place for sexual contacts, with porn movies, private (or not so private) darkrooms, roof deck, hair salon and restaurant.

CAFÉ SUGAR
Map p86
Lesbian Café
623 12 34; Hazenstraat 19; 6pm-1am
Thu-Mon
Not just for lesbians, the Sugar throws great parties and has a conscience for the goings on of the buurt (neighbourhood). Come on in, blow up a balloon and hit the dance floor.

DE TRUT
Map pp58-9
Lesbian Club
612 35 24; Biederdijkdijk 165; 11pm-4am
Sun-Thur
Just west of the Jordaan, this Sunday-night club is a lesbian institution held in the basement of a former squat. Its name means ‘the tart’ and it comes with an attitude; arrive well before 11pm, and know that heteros are definitely not welcome.
GAILY MARRIED IN AMSTERDAM

Richard Keldoulis is co-founder of Pink Point, the gay and lesbian information kiosk (see p208). We asked the native Australian, married to his Dutch partner since 2004, about the paper chase of tying the knot.

How much bureaucracy was involved?
It was actually quite easy, because I got Dutch citizenship after living with my Dutch partner for five years. But now, to bring a partner in, gay or straight, it’s a nightmare. You have to go back to your country of origin to apply, and your partner has to earn 120% of the minimum income. And it’s virtually impossible now to bring in a partner from, say, Morocco or Turkey.

What are the pros and cons of registration on one hand, and marriage on the other?
Registration is for pets, as one friend put it. Marriage entails the broad spectrum — everything is settled legally, your pensions, benefits and so on. But it also puts your relationship on an equal level. Registration keeps you on a different level, a second-class thing.

Can anyone just come and get married here?
I get a lot of emails from people who want to come to Holland and tie the knot. But it’s not that easy. One partner already has to be a resident, or have Dutch citizenship. Gay marriage is so normal here that it seems weird that you don’t have it everywhere else.

SLEEPING

Assuming your head actually hits a pillow while in Amsterdam, know that this scene’s hotels have few equals worldwide. You can expect the ‘p’s’ — professional, proud and infuriatingly pretty — but also minimal fuss about the basic comforts, like extra towels or having an organic blend sent up.

BLACK TULIP HOTEL
Map pp62-5  Boutique Hotel
£ 427 09 33; www.blacktulip.nl; Geldersekade 16; incl buffet breakfast s £115, d £125-195;
This small gay hotel (males only) has more bondage gear than you can shake a whip at. Everything is fashionable and (pardon the expression) spanking clean. Rates include ensuite bathroom, fridge and minibar.

AMISTAD HOTEL
Map pp100-1  Boutique Hotel
£ 624 80 74; www.amistad.nl; Kerkstraat 42; s £100-115, d £130-150, s/d without bathroom £75/94
Rooms at this bijou hotel are dotted with Philippe Starck chairs, CD players and chic, soft furnishings, in addition to TV, phone, safe and fridge. The breakfast room (with ruby-red walls and make-a-friend communal tables) becomes a gay internet café later.

Exit (Map pp100-1; £ 625 87 88; Reguliersdwarsstraat 42) Cavernous nightclub with a busy darkroom and ‘Drag Planet’ nights.

Sappho (Map pp100-1; £ 66 2868 4906; Wijzelstraat 103)
Arty mixed-to-Lebanese bar; women-only on Friday.

FOURTH RESOURCES

There are boatloads of G&L resources in this town, so this is more about focussing on what you need.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Betty’s (Map pp100-1) Club recovery zone; cosy despite the blood-red wallpaper.

The coolest minimalist interior is sooo right for the space to flirt and drink. The revolving bar can make you giddy after too many cocktails.

YIPPEE AYE 0-73!
The hottest game in town is Gay Super Bingo ( £ 776 46 00; 8pm 1st Wed of month) at Strand West Beach (Map pp58–9). Theme: all-American rodeo. No guns allowed.

AMSTERDAM Gay & Lesbian Traveller

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FACEBOOK PAGE

GAY & LESBIAN AMSTERDAM DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

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INFORMATION
Amsterdam Police Gay Network (559 53 85; homonetwork@amsterdam.politie.nl) The place to report any trouble or harassment.

COC Amsterdam (Map p86; 626 30 87; www.cocamsterdam.nl; Rozenstraat 14) The national gay and lesbian organisation, the oldest of its kind in the world.

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard (623 65 65; www.switchboard.nl; 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 4-10pm Sat & Sun) Great source. Provides advice on an anonymous basis.

Pink Point (Map p22; 412 44 63; www.pinkpoint.org; Westerkerk Sq; 10am-6pm) Staffed by volunteers, this kiosk next to the Homomonument (p95) is a goldmine for details on Amsterdam’s gay and lesbian scene, as well as souvenirs and gifts.

Schorer Foundation (Map pp100-1; 573 94 44; www.schorer.nl; Sarphatistraat 35; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) NGO offering healthcare services, HIV prevention and buddy care.

WEBSITES
www.cocamsterdam.nl Organises club nights and other events.
www.gayamsterdam.nl Published by the Gay News, and comprehensive.
www.gay.nl Directory to pretty much anything in town, in Dutch only but decipherable.
www.pinkpoint.org Links and information.

GUIDES & MAPS
Bent Guide (Pink Point) Published in English, full of insider info on all facets of gay life.
Gaymap Amsterdam, Gay News Amsterdam, Gay&Night Listings mags available for free around town.

RADIO & TV
The local gay radio station MVS (www.mvs.nl) broadcasts 7pm to 8pm nightly on 106.8 FM (cable 103.3 FM), with an English programme on Sunday. TV shows are broadcast 8pm to 9pm on Saturday via local station Salto A1.
top picks

- **Fusion Suites** (p220)
  A royal domain blessed with art and nature.
- **Between Art & Kitsch B&B** (p222)
  Comic relief with a bed attached.
- **Hotel Luxer** (p214)
  A slick slumber amid the neon lights.
- **Hotel Résidence Le Coin** (p212)
  Designer pods in a killer location.
- **Hotel Zandbergen** (p221)
  Peaceful and professional, but personal.
- **Maes B&B** (p216)
  Hidden oasis in the not-so-wild West.
- **Windketel** (p224)
  Your top romantic hideaway – and octagonal.
- **Hotel Brouwer** (p213)
  Few frills but great canal views.
In its typically charming way, Amsterdam has loads of hotels in wild and wonderful spaces: inspired architects breathed new life into old buildings, from converted schools and industrial lofts to entire rows of canal houses joined at the hip. Some of these lodgings overlook gorgeous canals or courtyards, some are filled with art that’s historic or modern, and still others are triumphs of clever design.

But charm doesn’t come cheap. There are 37,750-plus hotel rooms in Amsterdam, and at peak times it can seem that all of them are full. If you’re looking to ‘do’ Amsterdam on the cheap, you might find yourself in a tiny, threadbare room and pay more for it than you thought possible. Leave the budget options to the college kids, take a deep breath, swipe that card and sally forth. 

Or look on the internet for substantial discounts, even at the top hotels.

If you’re driving, inquire about parking in advance. In almost all cases parking is a major problem and the most you’ll get is a (payable) parking permit out on the street – with all the attendant headaches and security risks – or a referral to the nearest parking garage (up to €40 a day), which may be a fair distance away. Top-end hotels have their own parking arrangements but prefer advance notice. See Parking (p241) for other important info.

Sleeping options specifically for gays and lesbians can be found on (p207).

ACCOMMODATION STYLES

Amsterdam’s lodgings run the gamut from baroque palaces and splendid boutique properties to little ‘mum and dad’ B&Bs, youth hostels and sprawling budget hotels. But the digs are modest-sized compared with those in other capitals – any hotel with more than 20 rooms is considered large, and many rooms are on the snug side. Quite a few hotels are polished gems strung alongside the old canals like Vermeer earrings. Some of the most tempting hotels link two or more such places; the Hotel Pulitzer (p215) is composed of 25 houses!

You’ll see a ‘star’ plaque on the front of every hotel, indicating its rating according to the Benelux Hotel Classification. The stars (from one to five) have to do with the existence of certain facilities, rather than with exterior signage and access is by reservation only, giving the property an experience that’s difficult to get in a larger lodging. Styles range from classic to kitsch to contemporary.

Bed & Breakfasts

By law, an inn with four rooms or fewer cannot be called a hotel, but a handful of interesting B&Bs has sprung up in recent years. Most don’t have exterior signage and access is by reservation only, giving the property an intimate feel. Many visitors enjoy the ability to feel more like a local in a home, an experience that’s difficult to get in a larger lodging. Styles range from classic to kitsch to contemporary.

Houseboats

We’re not talking a hardship cruise here. Amsterdam’s residents have perfected the art of comfy living above the fishes, and some of the 3000-odd houseboats are rented out at quite reasonable rates. Stick to vessels in the quieter Western Canal Belt and Jordaan, where you’re less likely to be disturbed by the wake of those monster tour boats.

Party & Stoner Hotels

This being Amsterdam, a number of hotels in the budget category cater to party guests (not that reception will ask if that’s you) as well as pot smokers. By and large they’re pretty basic affairs, but we’ve included a few for those who can’t resist the temptation.

FLAT CHAT

The following websites are a good place to start if you’re looking for an apartment in Amsterdam.

- Amsterdam Apartment (Map pp62-5;  668 26 54; www.amsterdampartment.nl; Oude Nieuwstraat 1)
- Apartment Services (Map pp58-9;  672 18 40; www.apartmentservices.nl; Waalstraat 50)
- Citymundo (Map pp58-9;  470 57 05; www.citymundo.com; Schinkelkade 47)
- Goudsmit Estate Agents (  644 19 71; www.goudsmit.nl; AJ Ernststraat 735)
- IDA Housing Services (  624 83 01; www.idahousing.com; Den Texstraat 30)

Some visitors (and this author) have achieved excellent results via local message boards. Among them: www.craigslist.com Worldwide resource for just about anything. Its Amsterdam presence is small but effective.

www.expatica.com An excellent resource for the expat community. Go directly to the classified ads.

www.wivia.nl For this one you’ll need to read Dutch (click ‘Woon & Bedrijfsruimte’ to start, then click ‘Tijdelijk’ (temporary) under ‘Woningen’ (housing).
especially for longer stays. Top-end hotels often rely on business travellers and tend to lower rates in the summer months and on weekends. Many hotels also offer discounts via their websites, especially for last-minute bookings.

Most of the quoted rates include a 5% city-tax at the more expensive hotels, however, this is added separately to the bill. Also, if you’re paying by credit card, some hotels add a surcharge of up to 5% (ouch).

**Deluxe**
Facilities like air-conditioning, fitness centres (some with pocket-sized swimming pools), conference and banquet rooms, and business services are par for the course. Breakfast is rarely included (and can cost €20 and up).

**Top End**
For a bit of luxury, loads of privacy and lashings of personal service, these hotels will put a smile on your dial. Expect lifts, in-room internet access, minibars and room service. Unless stated, rates include breakfast.

**Midrange**
Most hotels in this category are big on comfort, low on formality and small enough to manage on a budget. Most of the quoted rates include a 5% city-tax, rooms have toilet and shower (and/or bath) and come with TV, phone and breakfast. Not many hotels in this category over two storeys have lifts (elevators), and their quaint narrow stairwells can take some getting used to, especially with luggage.

**Budget**
 Lodgings in the lowest price bracket are thin on the ground in Amsterdam. Some are nothing short of run-down flop houses with mouldy smells, due to the damp climate and the Dutch aversion to decent ventilation. The better options tend to be spic ‘n’ span with furnish-ings that are, at best, cheap ‘n’ cheerful.

**PRICE GUIDE**
This guide is based on the average price for a double room, tax not included. Breakfast may or may not be included – see the individual listings.

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**CITY CENTRE**
The myriad contrasts of the old centre, only 1km long and 500m wide, are a powerful draw for guests who want to be in the thick of it 24 hours a day. Accommodation options cover all the bases, from the hostels and party hotels of the Red Light District to deluxe establishments with sweeping river views.

**MEDIEVAL CENTRE**

**HOTEL DE L’EUROPE**
Map pp62-5
Luxury Hotel €€€€
€ 531 17 77; www.leurope.nl; Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2-8; s/d €325/400; 
Oozing Victorian elegance, L’Europe welcomes you with a gleam chandelier, a marble lobby, 100 gloriously large rooms (some have terraces and all have hand-some marble bathrooms), and smart extras like a shoe shine service and boats for canal cruises. The attached Excelsior restaurant and chichi gym (said to be admired by no less than Governor Schwarzenegger) are equally impressive.

**HOTEL RÉSIDENCE LE COIN**
Map pp62-5
Boutique Hotel €€€
€ 254 68 00; www.lecoin.nl; Nieuwe Doelenstraat 5; s €110, d €133-147, q €220
This shiny inn, owned by the University of Amsterdam offers 42 small high-class apartments spread over seven historical buildings, all equipped with designer furniture, wood floors, wireless internet and kitchenettes – and all reachable by lift. It’s in the thick of things, opposite the State Opera. Note there are no phones or TVs in rooms.

**BELLEVUE HOTEL**
Map pp62-5
International Hotel €€
€ 530 95 30; www.bellevuehotel.nl; Martelaarsgracht 10; s/d/t/q from €80/110/150/180; 
Of the small hotels around Centraal Station, this is the only one we’d stay at. Opened spring 2005, rooms are small, white and tidy, and feature mod loos and towels as well as a safety deposit box, but no-one seems to mind, especially when there’s so much fun to be had in the throbbing lobby bar with a pool table, DJ’s some nights and a chilled-out, cushion-lined basement nicknamed the ‘happy room’.

**BELLEVUE HOTEL**
Map pp62-5
International Hotel €€
€ 530 95 30; www.bellevuehotel.nl; Martelaarsgracht 10; s/d/t/q from €80/110/150/180; 
Of the small hotels around Centraal Station, this is the only one we’d stay at. Opened spring 2005, rooms are small, white and tidy, and feature mod loos and towels as well as a safety deposit box, but no-one seems to mind, especially when there’s so much fun to be had in the throbbing lobby bar with a pool table, DJ’s some nights and a chilled-out, cushion-lined basement nicknamed the ‘happy room’.

**HOTEL HOKSBERGEN**
Map pp62-5
Boutique Hotel €€
€ 626 60 43; www.hotelhoksbergen.nl; Singel 301; s €64-98, d €90-125, apt €165-220
You sure can’t beat Hoksbergen’s fantastic canal-side location, and there’s a breakfast buffet, but be warned: even sardinies would have trouble squishing into the microscopically small rooms (with clean but plain furnishings). If you feel claustrophobic, a self-contained apartment (up to five people) may be a better option.

**HOTEL BROUWER**
Map pp62-5
Boutique Hotel €€
€ 624 63 58; www.hotelbrouwer.nl; Singel 83; s/d €55/90; 
Our favourite hotel in this price range, it has just eight rooms in a house dating back to 1652. Its rooms, named for Dutch painters, are furnished with simplicity, but all have canal views. There’s a mix of Delft-blue tiles and early-20th-century furniture, and – get this – a tiny elevator. Staff dispense friendly advice. Reserve well in advance. No credit cards accepted.

**AMSTEL BOTE**
Map pp62-5
Party Hotel €€
€ 626 42 47; www.amstelhotel.com; Oosterdokskade 2-4; s & d with land/water view from €78/83, tr with land/water view from €119/124;
Five minutes’ walk from Centraal Station, this floating hotel is usually populated by dazed, Europe-in-four-days bus groups and packs of Brit boys/girls celebrating bucks’/hens’ nights. Rooms are sterile (in both senses) and have TV, phone and itty-bitty bathrooms. Breakfast is €10 per person. Note there are occasional two- and three-night stay requirements (eg on weekends).

**FLYING PIG DOWNTOWN HOSTEL**
Map pp62-5
Stoner Hostel €
€ 420 68 22; www.flyingpig.nl; Nieuwendijk 100; dm €22-30; Hang out with hundreds of young, dope-smoking backpackers at this very relaxed, very central, 30-room hostel; rates vary by time of year and number of beds per room (the smallest has four). It’s pretty grungy, but no-one seems to mind, especially when there’s so much fun to be had in the throbbing lobby bar with a pool table, DJs some nights and a chilled-out, cushion-lined basement nicknamed the ‘happy room’.

**AIVENGO YOUTH HOSTEL**
Map pp62-5
Hostel €
€ 620 11 55, 421 36 70; www.aivengoyouth hostel.com; Spuistraat 6; dm weekday/weekend €18/20; Funky Aivengo’s, with two rooms (18 and 19 beds respectively), is a real winner. It’s got a quiet, respectful vibe and wonderful, cheery, modern–Middle Eastern interior. Rates here include clean bed linen and towels as well as a safety deposit box, but there’s no breakfast or common rooms. Note: there’s a 1pm to 5pm lockout and a 4am curfew.

**RED LIGHT DISTRICT**

**NH GRAND HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY**
Map pp62-5
International Hotel €€
€ 554 91 11; www.nh-hotels.com; Dam 9; d €270; Pride of place belongs to this gargantuan, 468-room edifice across from the Royal Palace, one of the city’s first grand hotels (1866). NG Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky has elegant if compact rooms and spectacular public spaces. The 19th-century ‘winter garden’ dining room, with its soaring steel-and-glass roof, is a national monument (the splendid breakfast buffet costs an extra €22), and there are no phones or TVs in rooms.
HOTEL LUXER
Map pp62-5
Boutique Hotel €€
€ 330 32 05; http://hoteluxer.tobook.com; Warmingstraat 11; s/d/tr from €85/110/150;

A pleasant surprise if ever there was one, this smart small number is probably the best option for your small money in the thick of the RLD, with vast numbers of pubs and more within staggering distance. Rooms are small but well equipped (air-conditioning!) and at night the breakfast area becomes a chic little bar. The only real drawback is the bathrooms, which are well thought out but miniscule.

HOTEL WINSTON
Map pp62-5
Party Hotel €€
€ 623 13 80; www.winston.nl; Warmingstraat 123; s 667-77, d 690-100

Party central for touring bands and up-for-anything tourists, with rock’n’roll rooms and a busy club downstairs. Most rooms are ‘art’ rooms: local artists were given free rein, with results from super-edgy (entirely stainless steel) and playful to questionably raunchy. Group rooms sleep up to eight. Look for midweek and off-season discounts. If you simply want to park your bones after a day on the canals, the Acacia is just the ticket, fully devoid of extras in a sleepy corner of the Jordaan. Rooms in the angular corner building are larger than the norm, if oddly shaped, and all have a bath and WC attached. And if you’ve seen steep stairs before, think climbing gear this time. Management is friendly and has a few houseboats to rent too.

HOTEL THE CROWN
Map pp62-5
Party Hotel €€
€ 626 96 64; www.hotelthecrown.com; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 21; s €40-70, d €680-120, tr €120-160;

Rooms at this Brit-run, Red Light District hotel are pretty monastic (shared toilet, no TV or phone), and don’t even bother asking for breakfast. Although it is priced in our midrange bracket, quality is firmly budget. So what’s the draw? Fun. The 1930s Art Deco bar has sports on TV, a pool table, a dartboard and hordes of celebrating stag-nights. Spill-smoking is permitted (some would say encouraged) in the bar, but no smoking in rooms.

OLD NICKEL
Map pp62-5
Party Hotel €€
€ 624 19 12; www.oldnickel-amsterdam.nl; Nieuw Brugsteeg 11; s/d/tr/q without bathroom €50/80/120/160

Location, location: the Nickel will appeal to everyone looking for a simple place to crash after a red-light romp. Go up (and up and up) the steep stairs from the historic, well-stocked pub, and you’ll find clean no-nonsense rooms, all bathrooms shared. Rates include a big cooked breakfast and drop sharply during the week.

CHRIStIAN YOUTH HOSTEL
‘THE SHELTER CITY’
Map pp6-5
Hostel €€
€ 625 30 32; www.shelter.nl; Barndesteeg 21; dm inc breakfast €16, Jul & Aug €19;

The price is right at this rambling hostel just outside the Red Light District, but only if you can handle Christian rock music piped through the PA system and enormous ‘Jesus loves you’ signs. The pros of staying here include large, airy, single-sex dorms (and bathrooms, which are frequently cleaned), filling breakfasts, a quiet garden courtyard, eternal salvation and a tough no-drugs or alcohol policy. The cons include a 2am curfew – and a tough no-drugs or alcohol policy. Its partner hostel in the Jordaan (opposite) has less missionary zeal.

JORDAAN

This colourful district has but a few sleeping options in its tangle of narrow lanes, due in part to the paucity of sights close by. But the cosy cafés, quirky shops and charming village character make the Jordaan a great place to get forty winks.

HOTEL AMSTERDAM WIECHMANN
Map p86
Inn €€
€ 626 33 21; www.hotelwiechmann.nl; Prinsengracht 328; s/d/tr from €85/140/195;

This family-run hotel occupies three houses. It has a marvellous canalside location, cosily but lovingly cared-for rooms furnished like an antique shop with country quilts and chintz, and lobby tchotchkes (knick-knacks) that have been there for some 50 years (including a suit of armour and a potbellied stove). It’s very Ghost & Mrs Muir and very friendly.

HOTEL ACACIA
Map p86
Inn €€
€ 622 1460; www.acacia.nl; Lindengracht 251; s/d/tr/q from €95/130/195;

If you simply want to park your bones after a day on the canals, the Acacia is just the ticket, fully devoid of extras in a sleepy corner of the Jordaan. Rooms in the angular corner building are larger than the norm, if oddly shaped, and all have a bath and WC attached. And if you’ve seen steep stairs before, think climbing gear this time. Management is friendly and has a few houseboats to rent too.

HOTEL VAN ONNA
Map p86
Inn €€
€ 626 58 01; www.hotellvanonna.nl; Bloemgracht 102-108; r per person €45;

Even if the 41 rooms here won't win any design awards, they’re reasonably priced and you’re in a gorgeous section of the Jordaan, within earshot of the bells of the Westerkerk (get a room in the back if you’re sensitive to noise). Rooms sleep up to four people. Try to book the attic room with its old wooden roof beams and panoramic views over the Jordaan. No phone, TV or credit cards.

INTERNATIONAL BUDGET HOSTEL
Map p86
Stoner Hostel €
€ 624 27 84; www.internationalbudgethostel. com; Leidsegracht 76; dm €28-30, tw €70;

Reasons to stay: canalside location in a former warehouse, really close to nightlife; four-person limit in rooms; cool mix of backpackers from around the world smoking in the lounge (though smoking is strictly prohibited in rooms, as are hard drugs); clean rooms with lockers; staff who’re more than pleased to try to help; lower off-season rates. Reasons not: your money will go further elsewhere as breakfast isn’t included.

WESTERN CANAL BELT

For sleeping in centuries-old, the wide, tree-lined canals and stylish mansions of the Western Canal Belt take some beating. Incredibly, as many structures are protected monuments, there may be little difference between the façade of a luxury hotel and that of a hostel. The café-filled Jordaan district is nearby, and shoppers will appreciate the Negen Straatjes boutiques on their doorstep.

DYLAN
Map p92
Deluxe Hotel €€€€
€ 530 20 10; www.dylanamsterdam.com; Keizersgracht 384; s/d from €295/445

London hotelier Anouska Hempel was behind the design of this hotel, known until recently as Blakes. Although Hempel has parted company and the name has changed, the Dylan remains a true temple of style. Slink through the 17th-century canal house’s courtyard entrance and past the gorgeous staff to ensconce yourself in the restaurant or the black-and-white lobby where world beats don’t so much play as fizz. Its 41 sophisticated, individually decorated rooms might have Japanese or Indonesian motifs; fluffy towels, silk pillows piled high and spacious bathrooms make them serene and sumptuous. Plus, there’s free health-club access, and a lounge par excellence.

HOTEL PULITZER
Map p92
Luxury Hotel €€€€
€ 523 52 35; www.luxurycollection.com/pulitzer; Prinsengracht 315-331; d from €255;

Spread over 25 lovely canal houses, the Pulitzer manages to combine big-hotel efficiency with boutique-hotel charm. Beautifully restored rooms vary from house to house, but all have mod cons galore, including sweet and cozy bathrooms. There are loads of extras too: choose from a cigar
bar, an art gallery, private 75-minute canal cruises, garden courtyards and a wonderful restaurant, all high on elegance and low on pomposity.

**CANAL HOUSE HOTEL**
Map p92  Boutique Hotel €€€
€ 622 51 82; www.canalhouse.nl; Keizersgracht 148; f €140-190
Where to spend your time in this splendid 26-room hotel dating from MDCCCLXX (as it says on the façade)? In the ornately furnished, high-ceilinged, 17th-century dining room resplendent with chandeliers, grand piano and garden views? The plush, burgundy-hued bar? Or the small but inviting, antique-filled guest rooms? Staff are agreeable, and rooms have phones and computer connections.

**HAMPSTEAD CLASSIC HOTEL TOREN**
Map p92  Boutique Hotel €€
€ 622 60 33; www.toren.nl; Keizersgracht 164; s/d from €125/155; 6
A title-holder for price, room size and personal service. The Toren’s communal areas are pure 17th century with gilded mirrors, fireplaces and magnificent chandeliers, while its guest rooms are elegantly furnished with modern facilities. Treat yourself and book the room with the two-person Jacuzzi and the garden patio (from €270). Breakfast costs €12.

**MIAUW SUITES**
Map p92  Boutique Hotel €€
€ 717 34 29; www.miauw.com; Hartenstraat 36; tste €145/245
Located above the designer fashion shop of the same name, Miauw’s spacious quarters are just what the doctor ordered for a weekend’s shopping blitz in the Negen Straatjes district. The snug rooms mix stylish and vintage interior décor, and have electronic goodies such as widescreen TVs and wi-fi. Minimum stay is two nights. The suites are more like one-bedroom flats with a full living room and an open kitchen.

**FREDERIC’S RENTABIKE & HOUSEBOATS**
Map p92  Houseboats €
€ 624 5509; www.frederic.nl; Brouwersgracht 78; d €105-135, tr/q €140/150
Some visitors harbour a Mark Twain fantasy of drifting on the waves all night (sans the nasty steering) and then find their rust-bucket is cold and clammy. Not so with Frederic, whose nicely outfitted houseboats on the Prinsengracht, Brouwersgracht and Bloemgracht are bona fide floating holiday homes with all the mod cons.

**MAES & B&B**
Map p92  B&B €
€ 427 51 65; www.bedandbreakfastamsterdam.com; Herenstraat 26th; s €70-90, d €95-130; 6
If you were designing a traditional home in the western canals, it would probably turn out a lot like this four-bedroom property: oriental carpets, wood floors and exposed brick. It’s actually fairly spacious for such an old building. The kitchen (open all day for guests to use) is definitely gezellig. Rooms have TVs but no phones.

**HOTEL NEW AMSTERDAM**
Map p92  Boutique Hotel €€€
€ 522 23 45; www.hotelnewamsterdam.nl; Herengracht 13-19; s €65, d €120-130, tr €140; 6
This building, which was once a brothel, is the basic Hotel New York, received a makeover in 2004 and has become a quick favourite among the cultural crowd, as well as establishing quite a considerable gay following. Perhaps it’s because of the fresh-painted murals in guest rooms and common rooms (some peppered with naughty bits), fresh-pressed OJ for breakfast, and fresh-faced, friendly staff. Phone calls and drinks won’t break the bank.

**HOTEL NADIA**
Map p92  Inn €
€ 620 15 50; www.nadia.nl; Raadhuisstraat 51; s/d/tr/q €90/120/170/220; 6
Originally built for an insurance firm, this handsome building has a precipitous set of stairs (go figure) but the nice folks at Nadia will tote your luggage up them and do just about everything else to make you feel at home. Rooms are immaculate, with linens that will bounce coins. Rooms to the front have great views of the Westerkerk, and apart from the trams (ear plugs) there is little to fault.

**BUDGET HOTEL CLEMENS AMSTERDAM**
Map p92  Inn €
€ 624 60 89; www.clemenshotel.nl; Raadhuisstraat 39; s without bathroom €60, d without bathroom €75-80, d/tr with bathroom €120/150; 6
Tidy, renovated, steep-stairred Clemens gears itself to all budgets. Take your pick of the chic themed rooms (one with a sexy red-gold interior, another with delicate French antiques) all with TV, phone, safe and fridge. Your gregarious hostess will lend PCs for in-house wireless internetting (€8 per night). Breakfast is €7 extra.

**HOTEL PAX**
Map p92  Inn €
€ 624 97 35; Raadhuisstraat 37; s without bathroom €25-40, d without bathroom €35-60, d with bathroom from €60
This budget choice in hotel-lined Raadhuisstraat – an eight-room hotel run by two friendly, funky brothers – has an artsy-student vibe. All eight rooms have a TV and each is individually decorated. The larger rooms face a street with noisy trams, but the view of the Westerkerk and Keizersgracht more than makes up for it. Breakfast is not included.

**SOUTHERN CANAL BELT**
This is a cradle of Golden Age riches, so no surprise that many of Amsterdam’s swankiest hotels are located here, not far from the dining hub of Utrechtsestraat and the antique shops of Nieuwe Spiegelstraat. Yet the elegant Southern Canal Belt has accommodation for all sizes of wallet.

**SEVEN ONE SEVEN**
Map pp100-1  Deluxe Hotel €€€
€ 427 07 17; www.717hotel.nl; Prinsengracht 717; r €415-670; 6
One of the most wonderful hotels in Amsterdam – designed, boutique and simply breathtaking. Its eight hyper-plush, deliciously appointed rooms come with that rare luxury: space. Step into the splashy Picasso suite – with its soaring ceiling, prodigiously long sofa, gorgeous contemporary and antique decorations, and bathroom as big as some European principalities – and you may never, ever want to leave. Rates include breakfast, afternoon tea, house wine and oodles of one-on-one service.

**AMSTERDAM AMERICAN HOTEL**
Map pp100-1  International Hotel €€€€
€ 620 00 55; www.banksmansion.nl; Herengracht 519-525; s €159-189, d €189-219; 6
One of our favourite new hotels in town. There’s no nickel-and-diming over incidentals like the lobby bar, breakfast, coffee, internet and snacks. Thoroughly renovated a few years ago, the rooms now feature contemporary décor, a plasma-screen TV, a DVD player, a wet bar (free gin, whisky etc), a terry-cloth robe and an enormous showerhead.

**AMSTEL INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL**
Map pp100-1  International Hotel €€€€
€ 622 60 60; www.amsterdam.intercontinental.com; Professor Tulippe 1; r from €410; 6
Everything about this five-star edifice is spectacular, from its imposing location overlooking the Amstel, to its magnificent colonnaded lobby and, of course, its wallet-walloping room prices. Lavishly decorated rooms, reverential service and luxe extras such as La Rive restaurant (two Michelin stars, p160), chauffeured limousines, heated indoor pool and fitness centre with all sorts of steam options delight even the fussiest trans-Atlantic celebrities and Euro-royalty.

**HOTEL AMSTELZICHT**
Map pp100-1  Inn €
€ 623 66 93; www.hotelamstelzicht.nl; Amstel 104; s/d €95-155, apt €195-245; 6
The view out front is straight from a 17th-century painting, so make sure you get one of the rooms facing the Amstel river and the gabled houses beyond. The ’70s décor...
here has a suitably bourgeois feel, and you’ll enjoy the room amenities (minibar, hairdryer, coffee and tea kettle etc). It’s bang in the action, just a minute’s walk from Rembrandtplein. The self-catering apartment has an open kitchen, a living area and a balcony.

**HOTEL AGORA**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
627 22 00; www.hotelagora.nl; Singel 462; s & d €108-126, tr from €165, q €193;  
Fifteen minutes by foot from everything, the well-run Agora offers smallish rooms with understated décor, up-to-date bathroom, and a cheerful garden off the breakfast room. All rooms have a phone, a TV and computer hookups. Rooms without private bathroom cost about one-third less.

**HOTEL ADOLESC**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
626 39 59; www.adolesc.nl; Nieuwe Keizersgracht 26; s/d/tr €65/110/120;  
In a lovely nook near Waterlooplein, this little economy hotel based in an old canal house will put a smile on your face. There are bright art prints in the clean, simple rooms. There’s no breakfast, but you can help yourself all day to coffee, tea and snacks, including fruit.

**HOTEL ORLANDO**  [Map pp100-1]  Boutique Hotel €€  
638 69 15; www.hotelorlando.nl; Prinsengracht 1099; s/d/tr from €68/110/115;  
Oh Orlando, how do we love thee? Let us count the ways. One: five biggish, high-ceiled, canalside rooms at smallish rates. Two: hospitable, gay-friendly hosts. Three: breakfast in bed. Four: impeccably chic, boutique style with custom-made cabinetry and satin curtains. We could go on, but we’ll leave you to discover more.

**HOTEL KAP**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
624 59 08; www.kaphotel.nl; Den Texestraat 5b; s/d/tr €60/98/132;  
Wilhelmina Kap ran a pension here before the war, and some of the features seem that historic: midcentury wood panelling, no phones or nonsmoking rooms. Still, some bright rooms have French windows, wicker furniture and up-to-date bathrooms. A buffet breakfast is served in an attractive dining room and the courtyard garden, and courteous, gay-friendly owners round out the experience. Most rooms have private showers but shared toilets.

**HOTEL FREELAND**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
622 75 11; www.hotelfreeland.com; Marnixstraat 386; s/d/tr 655/110/130;  
Freeland has the Leidseplein scene twinged, because what it supplies – basic but clean and tidy rooms at an excellent location, all with ensuite shower, some with balconies overlooking a canal, an ashfliek from the next coffeeshop and unusually quiet – pretty much kills the competition. The congenial owners, Rick and Pascale, will make sure you get a big tasty breakfast.

**HOTEL DE ADRIAAL**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
626 21 50; www.adriaalamsterdam.nl; Herengracht 563; s €65-85, d with/without bathroom €105/75  
Near bustling Rembrandtplein, the Adriaal is sweet, homey and blessed with an interesting history. Nine clean and bright canal-side rooms (all with safes and TV, no phone) are outfitted with seriously mismatched furniture. There’s also a large ‘family room’. The hotel attic was a hideout for Jews during WWII, while Nazi soldiers lodged and dined below. Breakfast is not available.

**HOTEL ADOLPHE**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
626 21 87; www.adolphehotel.com; Leidsekaade 89; s without bathroom €45, d with/without bathroom €89/72  
The Quentin, decorated with colourful murals, rock-star art and contemporary handmade furniture, offers a variety of rooms for the weary traveller from cramped to well sized, some with balconies, canal views, phone and TV. It’s popular with the gay community and international actors and musicians performing at nearby Theatre Bellevue, Melkweg and Paradiso. There’s an elevator, and breakfast costs €7.

**HOTEL PRINSENHOF**  [Map pp100-1]  Inn €€  
623 17 72; www.hotelprinsenhof.com; Prinsengracht 810; s/d/tr without bathroom €49/69, s/d with bathroom €84/89  
Honest value, this 18th-century house features ahh-lovely canal views, a breakfast room with some Delft-blue tiles, and ‘Captain Hook’, the electric luggage hoist in the central stairwell (gets around the no-lift issue). Staff are affable and the rooms spacious with antique and well, not-antique furnishings. The attic quarters with diagonal beams are most popular.

**HOTEL DE BELLEVUE**  [Map pp100-1]  Stoney Hotel €€  
625 44 25; www.hemp-hotel.com; Frederikplein 15; s without bathroom €60, d with/without bathroom €75/70;  
Proof positive that Amsterdam is the capital of the northern ‘hempisphere’, this chi-clout hotel serves hemp-flour rolls (tetrahydrocannabinol or THC-free) with your breakfast, the café sells hemp teas and beers, and all five colourful and individually decorated rooms (hemp soap and fabrics included) exude a ‘just back from Goa’ vibe. Dope-smokers reserve now (though you can’t buy pot here – you gotta draw the line somewhere).

**HOTEL TRE BELLEVUE**  [Map pp100-1]  Boutique Hotel €€  
638 23 23; www.city-hotel.nl; Utrechtsestraat 2; d with/without bathroom €90/80;  
Above the Old Bell pub, practically on Rembrandtplein, is this unexpectedly fabulous choice: it’s clean, neat, good value and well run by a proud, warm family. The rooms are decorated with crisp linens and each comes with a TV. Rooms sleep two to eight people (from €25 per person). The attic annex has a wonderful view of town.

**QUENTIN HOTEL**  [Map pp100-1]  Party Hotel €€  
626 21 87; www.quentinhotels.com; Leidsekaade 89; s without bathroom €45, d with/without bathroom €89/72  
The Quentin, decorated with colourful murals, rock-star art and contemporary handmade furniture, offers a variety of rooms for the weary traveller from cramped to well sized, some with balconies, canal views, phone and TV. It’s popular with the gay community and international actors and musicians performing at nearby Theatre Bellevue, Melkweg and Paradiso. There’s an elevator, and breakfast costs €7.

**HILTON AMSTERDAM**  [Map p110]  International Hotel €€€  
710 60 00; www.hilton.com; Apollolaan 138-140; r from €240;  
Although it’s an old-school hotel with lots of business guests, the Hilton grabs the spotlight every once in a while. It was ‘flower power’ central in 1969 when John Lennon and Yoko Ono staged their ‘bed-in’ for world peace (you can rent the room). Herman Brood, the famously wrecked artist-musician, used to frequent the hotel bar carrying a parrot on his head before he jumped off the hotel roof (parrot survived). This tower fronts a grassy park with a marina out back; rooms are international business standard; the health club features a sauna and a Turkish bath; and service is crisp and professional.

**COLLEGE HOTEL**  [Map p110]  Boutique Hotel €€  
571 15 11; www.thesiegroep.com/college; Roelf Hartstraat 1; r from €175;  
A breath of fresh air, this venerable property was originally a 19th-century school. It’s now a trendy hotel with stylish acccents: flat-screen TVs, silk-throw pillows, cordless phones, the occasional stained-glass window and exposed beams on the top floor. Here’s the difference, though: it’s staffed by hotel-school students. Continental breakfast costs a steep €17.50, but if the dining hall was this cool where we went to college, we’d have figured out a way not to graduate.

**HOTEL FITA**  [Map p110]  Boutique Hotel €€  
679 09 76; www.hotelfita.com; Jan Luikenaarstraat 37; s €100, d €130-160;  
This tiny, family-owned hotel on a quiet street off Museumplein and PC Hooftstraat
was renovated a few years ago and is now one of the best in the Old South. It's got 16 handsome rooms with nicely appointed bathrooms, an English-style breakfast buffet and an elevator. Plus, room rates include free telephone calls to Europe and the USA.

**XAVIERA HOLLANDER BED & BREAKFAST** Map p110 B&B €€

- 673 39 34; www.xavierahollander.com; Stadionweg 17; d from €120;

A living legend of flickering celluloid, and glad to provide all the details, the Happy Hooker star has settled down to run this fabulous B&B, that is, when she's not writing columns, producing theatre shows or poring over her next set of memoirs. The interior contains plenty of racy allusions to her past life, in leather, shag and stained_proof formica, but chambers are uniformly luxurious, particularly the princely garden hut. Xaviera's still something of a media star, and customers past and present are always dropping by. From the same culture who gave us Calvinism.

**MUSEUM SQUARE HOTEL** Map p110 Inn €€

- 618 95 96; www.museumsquarehotel.nl; De Lairessestraat 7; d from €109/119/149;

A great location close to the Concertgebouw, this small, family-run hotel has rooms larger than Amsterdam standard for the price, with big windows and comfy beds. The superb staff are extremely helpful with planning your day out. Trams stop right outside the front door (as well as the Schiphol Interliner bus 370 – nice), but it's not noisy at all for guests staying on the street side.

**COLLECTOR** Map p110 B&B €€

- 673 67 79; www.the-collector.nl; De Lairessestraat 46ths; r 680-115;

This B&B is a real find: just three rooms near the Concertgebouw. The 1914 building is spotless with contemporary renovations and furnished with museum-style displays of clocks, Amsterdam School furnishings, wooden shoes etc. Each room has a balcony and a TV, and the owner will buy food for you to prepare breakfast at your leisure; the kitchen is open all day.

**HOTEL AALDERS** Map p110 Inn €€

- 662 01 16; www.hotelalders.nl; Jan Luijkenstraat 13-15; s/tw/tr from €79/109/145;

There are fancier hotels in town, but the family-owned Aalders is homely and well situated on a quiet street near the Museumplein. Each room in its two row homes is different (the old-style room has wood panelling and leaded windows), but all have wireless internet access. The breakfast room has a Venetian-glass chandelier. Huge rooms are available for large groups.

**HOTEL ACRO** Map p110 Party Hotel €€

- 662 55 38; www.acrohotel.nl; Jan Luijkenstraat 44; s/d/tr/q from €89-105/155/180;

Once a bit austere, the Acro has given its 80s décor rooms a useful facelift and the result is pleasant indeed. Rates are reasonable for the quiet location (near Museumplein), the bar is welcoming (it's just had a makeover from its big-hair club to more of a brown café), and the staff are warm and helpful. Maybe that's why so many British guests return year after year.

**HOTEL BEMA** Map p110 Inn €€

- 679 13 96; www.bemahotel.com; Concertgebouwplein 19b; s from €45, d with/without bathroom €85/65;

Climb the stairs to this seven-room hotel in a higgledy-piggledy mansion house across from the Concertgebouw and filled with African art. Expect extra-big doubles and breakfast in bed but no phone in the room. Staff can also arrange private apartments for up to four people.

**HOTEL ROEMER** Map p110 Boutique Hotel €€

- 589 08 00; www.vondelhotels.com; Roemer Visscherstraat 8-10; d €135-255, ste €295-345;

This cosy, beautifully designed hotel is an oasis of calm, with an excellent location close to the Vondelpark and the Museum Quarter. All rooms overlook either a quiet, leafy street or the stately back garden, have high ceilings and an abundance of natural light. Room 28 is typical of the gadgetry you'll find – flat-screen TVs, an iPod dock and a DVD player. Business people will appreciate the ergonomic workspaces and the room service. Breakfast (£23) is a big price for what you get.

**HOTEL VONDELPARK & AROUND**

**VONDELPARK & AROUND**

An aura of wealth, history and privilege is inevitable in urban surrounds as beautiful as the Vondelpark. The difference here is that bankers who casually jog in the park will be inevitable in urban surrounds as beautiful as the Vondelpark. The difference here is that

**HOTEL ZANDBERGEN** Map p116 Inn €€

- 676 93 21; www.hotelanders.com; Willemsparkweg 205; s/d/tr/q from €109/140/175/205;

The Zandbergen stands out like sterling silver in a tray of plastic cutlery. The caring staff in this wonderful, nonsmoking hotel go overboard, the rooms are absolutely faultless and the generous breakfast brings raves from guests. Rooms at the rear have balconies overlooking a quiet courtyard. As in many Amsterdam hotels, the stairs are steep but there are nice rooms at group level. The beautiful Vondelpark is just over the road, where the tram will get you to the centre in a jiffy.

**HOTEL DE FILOSOOF** Map p116 Boutique Hotel €€

- 676 93 21; www.hotelanders.com; Willemsparkweg 205; s/d/tr/q from €109/140/175/205;

The variety of breakfast rooms may remind some guests love this place so much that they send in owl figurines from all over the world. Staff are warm and welcoming, and the dapper, bright and quiet rooms come with lots of facilities (hairdryers, laptop plugs). Best of all, buffet breakfast (included in the price) is served in a serene, light-filled room overlooking a gorgeous garden.

**FLYNT B&B** Map p116 B&B €€

- 618 46 44; www.flynt.nl; 1e Helmersstraat 34; r €70-120;

Flynt's building, on a quiet block off the Overtoom, is almost a century old, but the
look is contemporary, bright and spotless. Frank, the easy-going owner, will purchase breakfast food for you, and the kitchen is yours 24/7. The owners have cats and dogs, and your pets are welcome too. Rooms are nonsmoking, though hallways are not.

**BORGMAN VILLA HOTEL** Map p116  Inn €€€  673 52 52; www.hotel-borgmann.nl; Koningslaan 48; d/q €107/145; ☑ ☑.

One of the more refined options around the leafy rim of the Vondelpark, the Borgmann has comfortable, quiet, wi-fi-linked rooms that overlook an affluent residential street or, yes, the grand Von-delpark. The British Consulate is right down the street. The Golden Age, but who’s to quibble because the rooms at Aalborg are clean, tidy and newly installed. The front rooms enjoy a fine view overlooking the lush Sjahpati-park. It’s only a 10-minute bus ride from the centre and geared toward weekend breakers, so rates may plummet during the week.

**APPLE INN HOTEL** Map p116  Inn €€  662 78 94; www.apple-inn.nl; Koninginneweg 93; s/d from €59/79; ☑.

A solid good find, in a nice residential area near the Vondelpark. Note that all doubles are twins, and the rooms (with peppy quilts meeting European hardwood) vary a lot in size, from enormous with big bathrooms to rather small – clear this up ahead of time. Although the hallways could stand a touch-up, the Rembrandt shines where it matters: rooms are spotless and have TVs, phones and coffeemakers and some have hardwood floors and bathtubs. The wood-panelled breakfast room is a beauty, with chandeliers and 17th-century paintings on linen-covered walls. Rooms 2 (large with a balcony overlooking a small garden) and 21 (four-person, split-level, sunny and modern) offer plenty of bang for your buck.

**STAYOKAY VONDELPARK** Map p116  Hostel €€  589 89 96; www.stayokay.com; Zandpad 5; dm €24-30, tw €74; ☑.

A blink away from the Vondelpark, this 535-bed hostel attracts over 75,000 guests a year – no wonder the lobby feels like a mini-UN. All bedrooms are nonsmoking, have lockers, a shower, a toilet and well-spaced bunks. There are lifts, a café, two restaurants and bike-hire opportunities. There’s no curfew but the no-visitors-at-night, no-drugs policy is strictly enforced. From March to October and during public holidays the maximum stay is three nights. Discounts are offered in low season.

**ALONSO’S (p214)**

The website. The British Consulate is right down the street. The Golden Age, but who’s to quibble because the rooms at Aalborg are clean, tidy and newly installed. The front rooms enjoy a fine view overlooking the lush Sjahpati-park. It’s only a 10-minute bus ride from the centre and geared toward weekend breakers, so rates may plummet during the week.

**BEFORE & AFTER B&B** Map p119  Inn €  679 04 85; www.between-art-and-kitsch.com; Ruysdaelkade 75-2; s/d from €80/90, rt €20; ☑

Mondrian once lived here – that’s part of the art – and the kitsch is bits like a crystal chandelier in the baroque room and the smiling brass Buddha nearby. The Art Deco room, meanwhile, has seriously gorgeous linen-covered walls. Rooms 2 (large double room, meanwhile, has seriously gorgeous linen-covered walls. Rooms 2 (large double

**BICYCLE HOTEL AMSTERDAM** Map p119  Inn €€  679 34 52; www.bicyclehotel.com; Van Ostadestraat 123; d €115, s/d without bathroom €65/80; ☑

If you’re into the bed-and-bike thing, this is the place to go. Run by Marjolein, who loves pedal-power, this casual, friendly, green-minded hotel has rooms comfy and familiar, and serves a killer organic breakfast (included). You can hire popular carrier-bikes – great for city spins with children.

**PLANTAGE, EASTERN ISLANDS & EASTERN DOCKLANDS**

If you’re used to thinking outside the box, welcome. The hotels of these eastern suburbs offer charms of a sort that are rare in the old centre: abundant greenery, cutting-edge architecture, the rippling expanse of the IJ dotted with riverboats. The smart money comes here after the party downtown.

**PLANTAGE**

**EDEN LANCASTER HOTEL** Map p112  International Hotel €€€  535 68 88; www.edenhotelgroup.com; Plantage Middenlaan 48; s/d from €90/109; ☑

This 93-room place next to a park is bigger than it looks, and a top-to-toe renovation a few years back has made it one of the smartest lodgings in the Plantage. Rooms all have TV, phone, free wi-fi and motifs of blonde wood, red brick, cream, and the stylised St Andrew’s crosses of the city seal. Breakfast costs €14 and includes hot dishes.

**HOTEL PARKLANE** Map p112  Inn €€  622 48 04; www.hotel-parklane.nl; Plantage Parklaan 16; s €75-95, d €100-110; ☑

This 12-room one-time dressmaker’s shop is being renovated room by room by kindly owners who care about doing things right. The rooms (large by Dutch standards) are comfy and equipped with fridges; the baths are sparkling and modern with great water pressure; and the well-sorted buffet breakfast will keep you going into the afternoon.

**HOTEL REMBRANDT** Map p112  Inn €€€  627 27 14; www.hotelsrambrandt.nl; Plantage Middenlaan 17; s €73, d €95-115, tr/q €140/165; ☑

Although the hallways could stand a touch-up, the Rembrandt shines where it matters: rooms are spotless and have TVs, phones and coffeemakers and some have hardwood floors and bathtubs. The wood-panelled breakfast room is a beauty, with chandeliers and 17th-century paintings on linen-covered walls. Rooms 2 (large with a balcony overlooking a small garden) and 21 (four-person, split-level, sunny and modern) offer plenty of bang for your buck.

**LILIANE’S HOME** Map p112  Inn €€  627 40 06; 1 Meisen@zonne.nl; Sarphatistraat 119; d from €90

Once Amsterdam’s sole women-only inn, this seven-bedroom private home in a smart ’Herenhuys’ recently began to allow male visitors, and that’s a nice thing for you gents. It has loads of personality, rooms with huge windows (some with balconies), and amenities including a TV (no phone), a fridge and books to read. Reservations are required, since there is no bell desk.

**HOTEL HORTUS** Map p112  Stoner Hotel €€  625 99 96; www.hotelhortus.com; Plantage Parklaan 8; d €77, s/d €40/54; ☑

Facing the Botanical Garden, this old-shoe comfy, 20-room hotel has small doubles with or without showers (lack of the draw); all have a safe and a sink. It’s run by the same crew as Hotel Brian (p213), so it’s no surprise that the lounge is chock-full of young, happystoners transfixed by the large-screen TV. Large rooms sleep up to eight people. Rates include a cooked breakfast.

**EASTERN DOCKLANDS**

**MÖVENPICK HOTEL CITY CENTRE** Map p112  International Hotel €€€€  519 12 00; www.moevenpick-hotels.com; Piet Heinkade 11; d €145-250; ☑ ☑ ☑ ☐

Situated on the water’s edge next to the Passenger Terminal building, the fetching exterior of this 20-storey business hotel is layered with stripes of glass, green granite and white concrete. Views of the busy harbour, dotted with ferries, cruise ships and passing barges, are best from the picture windows on the upper floors. Rooms have relaxed contemporary décor, comfy beds, small but sleek bathrooms and lots of little extras. It’s a good 10-minute walk to Centraal Station but there’s an hourly shuttle during the day.

**LLOYD HOTEL** Map p112  Boutique Hotel €€€  561 36 36; www.lloydhotel.com; Oostelijke Handelskade 34; d €300-380; ☑

This ultrastylish building used to be a hotel for migrants back in 1921, and many of the original fixtures still exist (tiles, cabinetry etc), combined with triumphs of more contemporary Dutch design. The result is a combination hotel, cultural centre and local gathering place. Rooms span one star (bathroom down the hall) to five star (plush and racquetball-court sized). Yet many are also so quirky and individualistic (teeny tiny doubles, bathtub in the centre, giant bed for eight) that some guests may be turned off. Accept it on its terms and you’ll love it.
OOSTERPARK & AROUND

The Oosterpark may look like a Saharan outpost on the map, but in reality it’s just a short tram or bus ride away from the City Centre – and the accommodations here are spacious, quiet and comfy. While you’re here, don’t miss visiting the exotic Tropenmuseum (p128).

HOTEL ARENA Map p129  Party Hotel €€
☎ 850 24 00; www.hotelarena.nl; ’s Gravesandestraat 51; d €79-149, ste €154-204;
With more facelifts than a Hollywood star, this building, bordering lush Oosterpark, has morphed from chapel to orphanage to backpackers hostel to, now, a modern, 121-room hotel with a trendy restaurant, café and nightclub. Minimalist rooms – ‘designer industrial hospital’ chic – are more Ikea than Wallpaper* magazine, but the large, split-level double rooms are a sun-drenched delight. Rooms in sections A, B, E and F tend to be quieter. Breakfast costs €12.50.

OUTER DISTRICTS

CAPTAIN’S PLACE Map pp58-9  Houseboat €€
☎ 419 81 19; www.meesvof.nl; Levantkade 184; d €95-155
This charming number is set on a rebuilt ship, the Pas Meprese, in the former ore harbour of the Eastern Docklands. There are all of two rooms, both large and comfortably fitted out, with their own heated bathrooms. As the owner is a bit star-struck the quarters are dubbed Orion and Cassiopeia. The best part is the on-board garden for grazing (nice breakfast) and plain lazing, even in the foul Dutch weather because it has a sliding glass roof.

HOTEL V Map pp58-9  International Hotel €€
☎ 662 32 33; www.hotellv.nl; Victorieplein 42; s €80-90, d €120-145, t €170; 
This small hotel is a modish number, with a fresh, minimalist style with brilliant flashes of colour and a groovy fireplace. With only 24 understated rooms it’s a personal and personable hotel with enough mod cons (including wi-fi) to keep hipsters happy while still being close to the bars of de Pijp.

WINDKETEL Map pp58-9  Apartment €€
☎ 682 26 66; www.windketel.nl; Watertorenplein 8c; d €125; 
Built into an octagonal, three-storey tower from 1897, and once part of the municipal water works, the cute-as-a-button ‘Wind Kettle’ tops our list of romantic getaways in Amsterdam. There’s just one apartment, but what a place – a kitchen and living room with state-of-the-art appliances, stereo, wi-fi and TV, a bathroom decked out in cosy tile and wood fittings, and a skylit bedroom directly under the sloping roof. It shares a courtyard with Café-Restaurant Amsterdam (p173) and the entertainment complex Westergasfabriek (p130).

QBIC HOTEL Map pp58-9  Boutique Hotel €€
☎ 321 11 11; www.qbic-hotels.com; Strawinskylaan 241; r €39-139; 
Located in the World Trade Center office complex, this spanking new hotel pushes the design envelope with its ‘Cubis’, queen-sized beds and shower-washrooms melded into single monolithic units (note: no WC door, so intimacy is assured). You pay up front, and prices swing with demand like seats on cheapie airlines. Businessfolk will like its proximity to the RAI conference centre, and it’s on the metro/tram networks.

YOTEL  Boutique Hotel €€
☎ 44 (0) 207 100 11 00; www.yotel.com; Schiphol Airport Plaza; d from €85; 
As we went to press, Yotel had announced plans to open a branch of its Japanese-style capsule hotels at Schiphol Airport in early 2008. Prices for the standard 7-sq-metre cabins are time-based, starting at four hours for short layovers. It’s a blessing for travelers who need to catch a red-eye flight.

STAYOKAY AMSTERDAM ZEEBURG Map pp58-9  Hostel €
☎ 551 31 90; www.stayokay.com; Timorplein 21; dm from €27, d/q from €60/120; 
Housed in a former school from the fin-de-siecle, the newest Stayokay (opened in summer 2007) is a bit removed from the hotspots but a worthy alternative to the centre’s crowded hostels. Like this chain’s other hostel-hotels (eg in Vondelpark, p222), all bedrooms have their own bathroom and subtle design touches. Take tram 14 from Centraal Station, a 15-minute journey.

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If you’re like many residents, you’ll have trouble tearing yourself away from Amsterdam. But you can’t say you’ve really seen the Netherlands until you venture beyond the city gates. There’s a wealth of beauty, history and tradition within easy reach, and the slower pace of life seems a world away from the Dutch capital.

Prepare yourself for a region awash in clichés – the pointy laced hats, wooden clogs, tulips, cheese and windmills that define the Dutch to the outside world. Still, these items are more than decoration. If you look more closely you’ll find a heritage still alive today, proving there’s more to it all than skilful marketing (though there’s plenty of that too).

The urban belt around the capital is called the Randstad, literally the ‘rim city’ that takes in a large portion of the Dutch population. These cities boast their own art, architecture and atmosphere that rival anything Amsterdam has to offer. Big industry looms in the south, and if you fly over at night you can’t miss the radiant glow of greenhouses that nurture tomatoes, cucumbers and flowering plants.

But large swathes of this area are also surprisingly rural, with wide expanses of meadow interspersed with patches of pine forest. Stocks of cattle roam freely on the polders, the flat, marshy lands laced with drainage canals. Between the cities, nature-lovers are in their element: the polders make an ideal habitat for wild birds such as swans, herons or warblers, many of which nest in the tall grasses along the canals.

The fast, efficient Dutch railway network makes it a snap to get around. Cycle paths are available for holders of rail tickets. All the following destinations lie within an hour’s journey from Amsterdam by train (and if need be, by connecting bus). Get an early start and you might ‘do’ two locations without feeling rushed.

CITIES & ART

Fine paintings can be found in collections across the Netherlands, and it’s worth noting that first-rate galleries even a stone’s throw from Amsterdam tend to be less crowded than in the capital. The cities following all have historic quarters and museum treasures that invite you to explore.

It’s hard to know where to start, but the 17th-century heart of lovely Haarlem (p228), less than 20 minutes away, is always a good wager. At one time the city was more important in the art world than Amsterdam, so it’s no surprise that Haarlem possesses one of the country’s finest assemblies of Dutch paintings, at the Frans Hals Museum. There are also examples of the CoBrA art movement in the capital. The cities following all have historic quarters and museum treasures that invite you to explore.

Rembrandt’s birthplace, Leiden (p231), is an easy-going university town with several first-class museums, the world’s oldest botanical garden, and a wealth of lively student pubs.

In the 17th century, the pilgrim fathers settled in Leiden before beginning their epic voyage to the New World. Some of its key artworks stem from the Renaissance era, such as the impressive triptych of The Last Judgment at the Lakenhal museum.

One look at the impressive canals of Utrecht (p233) and you’ll believe it was a trading hub long before Amsterdam. Its soaring Domtoren recalls the church’s formidable power in the Middle Ages. An outstanding collection of medieval art is housed in the Museum Het Catharijneconvent, while the Centraal Museum nearby has superb 16th-century portraits of the Civic Guard.

CHEESE & WINDMILLS

Forget the cutesy postcards: this unlikely pair of icons helped make Holland what it is today, namely rich and dry. The first big wheels of Gouda and rubbery balls of Edam were originally produced near Amsterdam, and travelled well on sea voyages. The curds are still supplied by Frisian cows – inspiration for many a black-and-white milk jug – and these
cows graze on land that was once drained by windmills. Many of these graceful structures are listed monuments, and open as museums or shops throughout the region.

So, feel like doing the rounds? Then the Saturday cheese market at Alkmaar (p236), one of the last bastions of the traditional cheese guilds, is just the ticket. If it’s windmills you crave, the place to feed the urging is at Zaanse Schans (p237), a kitschy but comely open-air museum village. Here you’ll find a half-dozen of them twirling their arms in the air and churning out mustard, oil and dye.

FLOWERS
The lovely tulip has been seducing Europeans since the 16th century, when an enterprising Dutch ambassador brought back (read: smuggled out) the first precious bulbs from the Near East. The Netherlands is now a major world supplier of all kinds of colourful and exotic blooms, and most thrive in the cool wet climate. They’re much more than a commodity; the ‘flower culture’ means you’ll see droves of people with a bunch tucked under one arm.

The sprawling bulb gardens of the Keukenhof (a former royal garden taken over by the bulb growers; see the boxed text, p233) erupt into a riot of colour between March and May, and you’ll find tulip fields scattered throughout North and South Holland. You can also visit the world’s biggest flower auction that is held not far south of the capital, in the town of Aalsmeer (p238).

HAARLEM
It’s hard not to be enthusiastic about Haarlem, which has retained more of its 17th-century heritage than even Amsterdam. The wealth of historic buildings, leafy hofjes (courtyards) and old-world antique shops give the centre a real sense of history and grandeur, and its pretty bridges and winding alleys are just as charming as any in the Dutch capital.

The name Haarlem derives from Haar- leheim, meaning a wooded place on high, sandy soil. You won’t get nosebleeds from the altitude, but it’s worth noting that the surrounding area used to be a huge lake, the Haarlemmermeer. The counts of Holland set up a toll post here and Haarlem quickly became the top inland port after Amsterdam. When the Spanish invaded in 1572, virtually the entire population was slaughtered after a seven-month siege, but, against the odds, the community recovered quickly. Haarlem then soared into the prosperity of the Golden Age, attracting painters and artists from around Europe.

If you arrive by train, your first sight will be Haarlem Centraal, a glorious Art Deco masterpiece and hands-down the country’s most beautiful train station. Walk to the old centre along Kruisstraat, and the town’s wealth and elegance becomes apparent by the exclusive stores, art galleries and antique shops.

Lined with lovely cafés and restaurants, the Grote Markt is the city’s beating heart. It’s fronted by the 14th-century Stadhuis (Town Hall), which features a balcony where judgements from the high court were pronounced. The Counts’ Hall contains some amazing 15th-century panel paintings, and if it’s open you can take a peek.

Across from the Stadhuis looms the Grote Kerk van St Bavo (adult/child €2/1.25; 10am-4pm Mon-Sat), the Gothic cathedral with a 50m-high steeple. It contains some fine Renaissance artworks, but the star attraction is its Müller organ – one of the most magnificent in the world and played by both Mozart and Handel. There are tours in English on request, and free organ recitals take place at 3pm on Thursday July to early September and at 8.15pm every Tuesday from mid-May to mid-October. The organ stands 30m high and has about 5000 pipes, and the acoustics are terrific.

The square focuses on De Hallen (023-511 57 75; Grote Markt 16; adult/child €5/free; 11am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), halls including the 17th-century Vleeshal, a former meat market, and the Verweyhal; today they are annexes of the Frans Hals Museum. The Verweyhal contains the museum’s collection of modern art, including Dutch impressionists and CoBrA artists. On the square north of the Grote Kerk is the Laurens Constant statue, whom Haarlemmers believe has a claim, along with Gutenberg, to be called the inventor of moveable type.

Off Grote Houtstraat to the south stands the Proveniershuis, the former headquarters of the Joris Doelen (Civic Guards of St George), which started life as an almshouse. Its wonderful old hofje is one of Haarlem’s prettiest, and like all hofjes it provides clues about the origins of the Dutch social state.

Others hofjes worth a look include the Brouwers Hofje (Tuchtuussstraat 8), which lodged the brewers’ guild; the Frans Looen Hofje (Witte

HAARLEM
SIGHTS & INFORMATION
Bakkerskoren...........................................1 C3
Brouwers Hofje. .................................... 2 A4
Frans Hals Museum. .............................. 3 B4
Frans Looen Hofje................................. 4 A3
Grote Kerk van St Bavo............................5 B3
Hofje van Langhoven.............................. 6 A4
Hofje van Staats................................. 7 C2
Laurens Constant statue......................... 8 B3
Nieuwe Kerk........................................ 9 A4
Proveniershuis...................................... 10 A4
Stadhuis........................................ 11 B3
Teylers Hofje....................................... 12 C3
Teyleers Museum............................... 13 C4
Tourist Office.................................. 14 C2
Verweyhal........................................ (see 15)
Vleeshal........................................ 16 C4
Whitehouse Cruises.......................... 17 C4
Witte Hofje........................................ 18 C4

TRANSPORT: HAARLEM
Direction 20km west
Travel time 15 to 20 minutes
Train Services to Haarlem are frequent (£3.60, up to six per hour); the Grote Markt is a 500m walk to the south.
Car From the ring road west of the city, take the N200 which becomes the A200

Haarlem has two excellent museums that can be visited in a day. A short stroll south of Grote Markt, the Frans Hals Museum (023-511 57 75; www.franshalsmuseum.nl; Groot Heiligland 62; adult/child £9.50/free; 11am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) is a must for anyone interested in the Dutch masters. Kept in a poorhouse where Hals spent his final years, the collection focuses on the 17th-century Haarlem School; its pride and joy are eight group portraits of the Civic Guard that reveal Hals’ exceptional attention to mood and psychological tone. Look out for works by other greats such as Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Jacob van Ruisdael.

Among the museum’s other treasures are the works of Hals’ teacher, Flemish artist Carel van Mander: stunning illustrations of the human anatomy, all ceiling-high with biblical and mythological references.
The **Teylers Museum** (<tel>023-516 09 60</tel>; Spaarne 16; adult/child €7/2; 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), the oldest museum in the country (1778), has an eclectic display of everything from drawings by Michelangelo and Raphael to intriguing 18th-century inventions. There’s an amazing old electrostatic machine that conjures up visions of mad scientists, with batteries the size of a milk wagon. Be sure to visit the magnificent, sky-lit Oval Zaal (Oval Room) containing many natural-history specimens in elegant glass display cases on two levels. The magnificent interiors alone are worth the entry price.

Northeast of the museum is the striking **Bakenesserkerk** (<map_approved>en Vrouwenstraat & Bakenessestraat; closed to the public</map_approved>), a 15th-century church with a curious steeple of wood and sandstone. These materials were chosen because the Grote Kerk proved too weak to support a heavy tower. In the evening the steeple orange from the lamplight within.

**Canal boat tours** are run by **Woltheus Cruises** (<tel>023-535 77 23; www.woltheuscruises.nl</tel>; adult/child €6.50/3.50; 1st tour noon). These tours (also provided in English) leave from opposite the Teylers Museum six times most days from March to October.

### SIGHTS & INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (<tel>0900 616 16 00</tel>, per min €0.50; www.vvv.denhiem.info; Stationsplein 1; 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat-Oct-Mar)

### SLEEPING

**Hotel Amadeus** (<tel>023-532 45 30; www.amadeus-hotel.com</tel>; Grote Markt 10; s/d incl breakfast €60/85) Great deal on the Grote Markt – a bit snug, but comfy and a primo location. Breakfast is included.

**Hotel Carillon** (<tel>023-531 05 91; www.hotelcarillon.com</tel>; Grote Markt 27; with/without bathroom s €60/40, d €80/65) Nestled in a row of old gabled houses on the main square.

**Hotel Mayflower** (<tel>023-532 20 08; www.joosthotel.com</tel>; Groenmarkt 20; r or studio from €69) This friendly hotel has 100-plus quarters spread over an entire block; items from this former antique shop provide the ambience.

### ENTERTAINMENT

**Café Stiels** (<tel>023-531 64 40</tel>; Spui 21) For jazz and rhythm & blues, the back stage here hosts bands almost every night from 10pm onwards.

**Philharmonie** (<tel>023-512 12 12; Lange Begijnestraat 11) This venerable concert hall emerged from a recent facelift with its classical face intact, and features music from across the spectrum. The orchestra, Philharmonie Haarlem, ranks among the best in the Netherlands.

### DRINKING

**Café 1900** (<tel>023-531 82 83</tel>; Bartelijoristraat 10) An authentic little gem of a brown café with a fin-de-siècle interior and long bar perfect for propping up after a day out and about.

**Café Het Melkmoord** (<tel>023-531 35 35; Zijlstraat 63) This crunchy brown café, named after a Dylan Thomas radio play, is a great place to sample a welter of Dutch and Belgian brews.

**Café Studio** (<tel>023-5130 33; Grote Markt 25) A genteel watering hole during the day, this grand café-bar with cathedral views becomes flirt central after dark.

**Proeflokaal in den Uiver** (<tel>023-532 51 99; Riviervismarkt 13) House in an old fishmonger’s quirky old place has shipping doodads and a schooner sailing right over the bar. There’s jazz on Thursday and Sunday evenings.

### TRANSPORT: LEIDEN

**Direction** 45km southwest  
**Travel time** 35 minutes  
**Train** NS runs services from Amsterdam six times per hour (€7.60)

Car From the southwest point of the A10 ring road, take the A4

**Sights & Information**

- **Boveninhuist Galgewater**
- **De Burcht**
- **Hortus Botanicus**
- **Lakenhal**
- **Museum Boerhaave**
- **Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde**
- **Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden**
- **Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde**
- **Windmills De Vak**
- **Woltheus Cruises**

**Eating**

- **Café Einstein**
- **De Kweebolhuis**
- **De Kwebbelen**
- **Eko Etikafé**
- **Eko Etikafé**
- **Kraakpoets**
- **La Keuze**
- **Leuk restaurant met een terras**
- **Oude Apotheek**
- **Pinsel**
- **Proeflokaal in den Uiver**
- **Wortel en Fritjes**

**Sleeping**

- **Hotel Amadeus**
- **Hotel Carillon**
- **Hotel de Doelen**
- **Hotel Mayflower**
- **Hotel Newoe Wilhelmin**

**Transport**

- **NS** small, 10 minutes from Amsterdam

**Tourist Office**

- **Hotel Amadeus**
- **Hotel Carillon**
- **Hotel de Doelen**
- **Hotel Mayflower**
- **Hotel Newoe Wilhelmin**

**Eating**

- **Café Amadeus**
- **Café Einstein**
- **De Kweebolhuis**
- **De Kwebbelen**
- **Eko Etikafé**
- **Eko Etikafé**
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- **La Keuze**
- **Leuk restaurant met een terras**
- **Oude Apotheek**
- **Pinsel**
- **Proeflokaal in den Uiver**
- **Wortel en Fritjes**

**Sleeping**

- **Hotel Amadeus**
- **Hotel Carillon**
- **Hotel de Doelen**
- **Hotel Mayflower**
- **Hotel Newoe Wilhelmin**

**Transport**

- **NS** small, 10 minutes from Amsterdam
Leiden is right up there with the great historic cities of the Netherlands. As you get further south from its supernmoderm Central Station, the city’s traditional character unfolds. A five-minute walk takes you into Leiden’s district of historic canals, rivers, the most notable being the Oude Rijn and the Nieuwe Rijn. They meet at Hoogstraat to form a canal, simply called the Rijn.

De Burcht (admission free; sunset-sunset), an 11th-century citadel on an artificial hill, lost its protective functions as the city grew around it. Now it’s a park with lovely places to view the steeples and rooftops, and a wonderful café at its base.

The Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities; 0900 660 06 00; per min €0.10; Rapenburg 20; adult/child 4-17yr €8.50/5.50; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) has a world-class collection of Greek, Roman and Egyptian artefacts, the pride of which is the extraordinary Temple of Taffeh, a gift from former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to the Netherlands for helping to save ancient Egyptian monuments from flood.

A sister collection, the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (National Ethnology Museum; 071-516 88 00; Steeistraat 1; adult/child 4-12yr €7.50/4; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun), focuses on the former Dutch colonies and the cultures of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, much like Amsterdam’s Tropenmuseum (p128).

The Ijssel Hortus Botanicus (071-527 72 49; Rapenburg 72; adult/child €2.50; 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar), Europe’s oldest botanical garden (1587), is home to the country’s oldest descendants of the Dutch tulips. It’s a wonderful place to relax, with explosions of tropical colour and a fascinating steamy greenhouse.

The 17th-century Lakenhal (Cloth Hall; 071-516 53 60; Oude Singel 28-32; adult/child under 18yr €4/ free; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) houses the Municipal Museum, with an assortment of works by Old Masters, as well as period rooms and temporary exhibits. The 1st floor has been restored to the way it would have looked when Leiden was at the peak of its prosperity.

Leiden’s landmark windmill museum, De Valk (The Falcon; 071-516 53 53; 2e Binnenvestgracht 1; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), has been carefully restored, and many consider it the best example of its kind. Its arms are free to turn ‘whenever possible’ and can still grind the ol’ grain.

A stuffed elephant greets you at Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum (National Museum of Natural History; 071-568 76 00; Darwinweg 2; adult/child 4-12yr €9.50; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun), a large, well-funded collection of all the usual dead critters and, notably, the million-year-old Java Man discovered by Dutch anthropologist Eugene Dubois in 1891. It’s 300m west of the town centre.

Leiden University was an early centre for Dutch medical research. You can see the often-grisly results (five centuries of pickled organs, surgical tools and skeletons) at the Museum Boerhaave (071-521 42 24; Lange St Agnietenstraat 10; adult/concession €6/3; 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun).

There are leisurely one-hour canal boat tours of the channel around the old town centre with Rederij Rembrandt (071-513 49 38; www.rederij-rembrandt.nl; Beestenmarkt; adult/child €6/4; 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun).

There’s little chance you’ll walk away hungry from this elegant eatery named after a clever Dutch pun. Expect twists on Dutch home-style cooking with French touches. Noord (071-513 92 73; Breestraat 88a; dishes €8-16; lunch & dinner) Trendy little dim-sum joint usually buzzing with students.

INFORMATION

Tourist Office (0900 222 23 33, per min €0.50; www.hollandrijnduinland.nl; Stationsweg 2d; 11am-5.30pm Mon, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat year-round; 10am-3pm Sun mid-Apr–Aug).

EATING

Café Einstein (071-512 53 70; Nieuwe Rijn 19; mains lunch €2.75-10, dinner €12.75-20; breakfast & lunch) It’s a relaxed café with a student vibe, river views and lovely waterside setting. There’s a French menu except for Sunday and Monday, when it goes Thai.

De Kweebelen (071-512 61 90; Noordeinde 19; mains €12-20, 3-course menu €19.50; dinner) The most fun restaurant in Leiden, with a kitschy menu (‘Jack the Ripper’ spare ribs) but always worth the ride.

Frezza (071-512 21 15; Rembrandtstraat 2; mains €8; dinner) A bit of a Leiden hot spot, Frezza has tasty dishes such as oven-baked quail in honey-thyme sauce for only €8; just imagine honey-thyme sauce for only €8; just imagine if we don’t have it, you don’t need it’, is its motto, and amid this cool-cat interior of yelowing, vintage jazz posters, the fine live jazz never makes you doubt it.

ENTERTAINMENT

Café de WW (071-512 59 00; Wolsteeg 6) On Friday and Saturday, live rock can expand to an impromptu stage in the alley with crowds trailing up to the main street. On other nights there’s a DJ.

Jazzcafé de Duke (071-566 15 85; Oude Singel 2) ‘If we don’t have it, you don’t need it’, is its motto, and amid this cool-cat interior of yelowing, vintage jazz posters, the fine live jazz never makes you doubt it.

DETOUR: KEUKENHOF FLOWER GARDENS

Covering some 32 hectares, the Keukenhof (025-246 55 55; www.keukenhof.nl; Stationsweg 166, Lisse; adult/child/senior €13/6/12; 8am-7.30pm late March-late May, last entry 6pm) is the world’s largest bulb-flower garden, attracting nearly 800,000 visitors during a mere eight weeks every year. The virtues of the online ticket facility should soon be obvious.

The gardens were opened in 1949 with the idea of having a showplace for European growers to show off their hybrids. This isn’t just any old trade show, however. Nature’s talents are combined with artificial precision to create a wonder of landscaping where millions of tulips, narcissi and daffodils blossom perfectly in place and exactly on time. You can easily spend half a day here filling your camera’s digital memory.

If the temps have been wilting, don’t worry – fresh blooms are planted by helping hands for the duration of the season. Special exhibits are held in the pavilions around the site, and there are cafes and refreshment stands throughout. Opening dates vary slightly from year to year, so check before setting out. During opening season, Connexxion runs special Keukenhof Express buses from Leiden Centraal Station (six strips” on the stripkaart, 20 minutes, three times hourly).

SLEEPING

Hotel de Dooden (071-512 05 27; www.dedoen.com; Rapenburg 2; s/d €75/95; ©) It has a slightly faded air of classical elegance; some canalside rooms are larger and better appointed.

Hotel Mayflower (071-514 26 41; www.hotelmayflower.nl; Beestenmarkt; s/d €65/80; ©) These spacious quarters are bright and inviting, with comfy furnishings and lots of trimmings along the pilgram theme.

Hotel Nieuwe Minerva (071-512 63 58; www.nieweminerva.nl; Boommarkt 23; s/d €80/110; ) Located in six 16th-century canalide houses, this central hotel has themed rooms, including a room with a bed in which King Lodewijk Bonaparte (aka Louis Bonaparte) slept.

UTRECHT

Breathe in the history in the Netherlands’ oldest city, picturesque Utrecht. A major political and religious centre during the Middle Ages, it had some 40 magnificent churches dotting the city. Today the French Gothic cathedral, the Dom, ten, with 50 melodious bells, towers above the town. It’s the tallest in the Netherlands, and the views from the panoramic tower (stretching as far as Amsterdam) are spectacular.

Find your way through the building dust (Utrecht’s centre is a major work site through to 2013) and you’ll emerge into a beautiful and vibrant old-world city, ringed by striking canal wharves going back to the 13th century. Well below street level, the wharves are unique in all of the Netherlands, and the streets alongside brim with shops, restaurants and cafés.

In summer, Utrecht is festival central, with offerings such as jazz (with musicians seemingly on every corner) and the Netherlands Film Festival in September. On top of that,
Some 300 years to complete, and definitely had staying power: in 1674 the North Sea winds reached hurricane force and the nave, which wasn’t quite as robust, blew down and opened up the gap on today’s square where the cathedral resides. You can see the old extents of the nave, and visit the Domkerk, the surviving chancel of the cathedral with a few tombs within.

Another key point of interest is the undeniably photogenic canal, Oudegracht, the scene of many a wedding photo. At night, the bend in this canal is illuminated by lamplight. Stretching down toward the southern tip of the old town, the canal is at its most evocative, and the streets are unexpectedly quiet. A section of the Singel called the Stadsbuitengracht has its own monastery, now a cavernous dance hall with medieval chandeliers, remains a fixture on the city’s student community of 40,000 is the largest in the country, making it one very in-depth place.

TRANSPORT: UTRECHT

Day trips Utrecht

Direction 40km southeast
Travel time 30 minutes
Train NS runs about five services per hour ($6.40)
Car From the Amsterdam ring road, take the A2

Boat trips with Lovers Utrecht (030-272011; cnr Lange Veste & Oudegracht, hr boat trip adult/concession €7.50) trace a circular route through the deep canals of the old town. The tours provide a unique perspective on the city, not least because the water lies a couple of metres below street level.

Of over a dozen museums, the Museum Het Catharijneconvent (030-231 72 96; Nieuwegracht 63; adult/child/senior €8.50/4.50/7.50; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) is the leader, with the finest collection of medieval religious art in the Netherlands. All but the most jaded art-lover will marvel at the beautiful illuminated manuscripts, carvings and robes.

Others include the Centraal Museum (030-236 23 62; Nicolaaskerkhof 10; adult/concession €8/6; 11am-5pm Tue-Sun), covering applied arts and Utrecht School paintings. There’s a bit of De Stijl to boot, including the world’s most extensive collection of Gerrit Rietveld’s works, a feast for minimalists. There’s even a 12th-century Viking longboat that was dug out of the local mud.

The Universiteitsmuseum (030-253 80 08; Lange Nieuwstraat 106; adult/child 4-17yr €7.50; 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a re-created 19th-century classroom, historic dentistry tools (is it safe?) and way too many models of medical maladies. You can find solace out back in De Oude Hortus, the old botanical garden, along with all the other visiting dentophobes. The venerable garden has trees and plants collected by the Dutch during their world exploits.

The National Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement (National Museum from Musical Clock to Street Organ; 030-231 27 89; Steenweg 6; adult/child/senior €7/4.60; 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a splendid assembly of musical machines from the 18th century onward. These are demonstrated with gusto during the hourly tours. Most impressive are the street and fairground organs from around Europe. Just east of town, the Rietveld-Schröderhuis (030-236 23 10; Prins Hendrikklaan 30; adult/child under 13yr/child 13-18yr €6/18; 11am-5pm, reservations strongly advised) is a Unesco-protected landmark, adhering to the ‘form follows function’ creed with amazing invention.

Kafé België (030-231 26 66; Oudegracht 196; snacks €3-8) An absolute mecca for beer-lovers, the Belgie stocks examples from very many of Benelux’s brewers. Order nuts under the in-flatable shark.

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Central Museum ............................................ 1 C3
De Oude Hortus ........................................ 2 C3
Domklooster ........................................... 3 C2
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EATING

Blauw ....................................................... 9 B2
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Deeg ......................................................... 11 C3
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Oudegracht .............................................. 12 B2
Polman’s .................................................... 13 C2

DRINKING

Café Leidig KFH ......................................... 14 C4
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ENTERTAINMENT

De Oude Hortus ........................................ 17 B3
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INFORMATION

Tourist Office (VVV Utrecht; 0900 128 87 32, per min €0.50; www.utrechtyourway.nl; Vinkenburg 19; noon-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Wed & Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, 9.30am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Sep)

EATING

Blauw (030-234 24 63; Springweg 64; set menu from €21; dinner) Blauw has worked hard to make Indonesian food trendy in Utrecht, or at least popular. Quality is the key, and the rice table, comprising 14 tasty little dishes, is a winner.

Deeg (030-233 11 04; Lange Nieuwstraat 71; 3-course menu €31; dinner) Acclaimed as much for its fresh, organic, creative cooking as the stylish décor, it’s in a quiet area south of the action.

Café le Journal (030-236 48 39; Neude 32; mains €10-22; lunch & dinner) This classy grand café is made for people-watching on the busy square, with its crispy fresh salads a running favourite.

Oudaen (030-231 18 64; Oudegracht 99; mains €10-23; lunch & dinner) The best choice along this popular stretch of canal, the Oudaen is set in a restored 14th-century banquette hall. It offers salads, steaks and succulent seafood, as well as its own in-house brew.

Polman’s (030-231 63 88; cnr Janjans & Keistraat; mains €19.50, 3-course menus from €32.50; dinner) Diners are welcomed in an elegant former ballroom with ceiling frescoes, a hangover from its days as an elite gentlemen’s club. The French and Italian meals are honed for the discriminating palate.

DRINKING

Kafé België (030-231 26 66; Oudegracht 196; snacks €3-8) An absolute mecca for beer-lovers, the Belgie stocks examples from very many of Benelux’s brewers. Order nuts under the inflatable shark.

Café Leidig KFH (030-231 75 77; Tolsteeberg 3) This classy pub overlooks a confluence of canals at the southern tip of town. Patrons gather on tables around the oversized chessboard on the terrace.

Winkel van Sinkel (030-230 30 30; Oudegracht 158) This 19th-century building houses a grand café, nightclub and restaurant with a divine interior. It was once the Netherlands’ first department store – check out the green statues of females that buckled the loading cranes.

ENTERTAINMENT

Tivoli (030-231 14 91; Oudegracht 245) This former monastery, now a cavernous dance hall with medieval chandeliers, remains a fixture on Utrecht’s student music scene.

Springhaver Theater (030-230 30 30; Springweg 52) This Art Deco complex houses intimate cinemas that screen art-house and independent films, and has a great in-house café.
SLEEPING
Grand Hotel Karel V (☎ 030-233 75 55; www.karelv.nl; Geeteblokker 1; s/d from €210/320) This place is a lavishly converted 14th-century building, with flawless service.
Strows Budget Hostel (☎ 030-238 02 80; www.strows.nl; Boothstraat 8; s & d €57.50, dm €14.50-17.50) A 17th-century building and former squat that’s been lovingly restored.

ALKMAAR
If ever there was a cheese town, Alkmaar is it. Most visitors come to this picturesque town for the traditional cheese market (Waagplein; 10am-12.30pm Fri Apr-early Sep), dating back to the 17th century.
But the city is more than just a purveyor of curdled milk. It holds a special place in Dutch hearts as the first town, in 1573, to declare for the Dutch against Spain, and as the site of the mutiny that set the country on the path to independence.

On Friday mornings, waxed rounds of kaas (cheese) are ceremoniously stacked on the main square. Soon, porters appear in colourful hats (denoting the cheese guild), and dealers in white smocks insert a hollow rod to extract a cheese sample, and sniff and crumble to check fat and moisture content. Once deals are struck, the porters whisk the cheeses on wooden sledges to the old cheese scale, accompanied by a zillion camera clicks. It’s primarily for show – nowadays the dairy co-ops have a lock on the cheese trade. Still, as living relics go it’s a colourful show.

Lording over this spectacle, the Waaggebouw (Weigh House, 1390) also houses the tourist office where you can pick up a walking tour of Alkmaar’s historic buildings (€2) covering historical sights. Inside you’ll also find the Hollands Kaasmuseum (Dutch Cheese Museum; ☏ 027-511 42 84; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; 10am-4pm Mon-Thu, 10am-1pm Fri) and the Cheese Market Museum (Kanalenmuseum; see 7) stacked everywhere you look.

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9am-4pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sat late Mar–early Nov, a reverential display of cheese-making utensils, photos and a curious stock of paintings by 16th-century female artists. The mechanical tower carillon (€6.30pm & 7.30pm Thu, noon & 1pm Sat, 11am & noon Fri mid-Apr–mid-Sep) with jousting knights still springs to life.

Across the square, the Nationaal Biermuseum (☎ 072-511 38 01; Houttul 1; adult/child €3/1.75; 1-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-4pm Sat & Sun) has a decent collection of beer-making equipment and wax dummies showing how the suds were made. The rare video of Dutch beer commercials since the 1950s is a real bowler. Choose from 30 beers (eight on draught) in the friendly bar after your tour.

The Stedelijk Museum (☎ 072-511 07 37; Canadaplein 1; adult/child €4.50/free; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) is overlooked by many visitors, which is a shame because its collection of oils by the Dutch masters is first-rate. There are life-sized portraits of Alkmaar nobles and historic scenes of the city in decline after the Golden Age. In the upstairs gallery, Charley Toorop’s paintings of the cheese bearers with grotesque features still stir controversy.

The Grote Kerk (Kerkplein; 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; admission Jun-Aug €4, Sep-May €2.50) reminds us that Noord Hollanders are organ-lovers. The most famous here is the little ‘Swallow Organ’ (1511) in the north ambulatory. The 17th-century organ built by Jaco van Campen dominates the nave. Organ recitals take place from noon to 12.30pm and 1pm to 1.30pm June to August, and Wednesday evenings in July and August.

The Stadhuis (Town Hall) dates from the Renaissance.

Transport: Alkmaar
Direction 35km northwest
Travel time 30 to 40 minutes
Train Services run at least twice per hour from Amsterdam (€6.40, 40 minutes); the canal-bound centre is 500m southeast of the train station
Car Take the A9 in the west of Amsterdam, which goes directly to Alkmaar

DRINKING
Café Vrije Vogelhuis (☎ 072-511 24 58; Houttul 20) The place for beer and billiards with rollicking Dutch folk music (e ‘Tandeleen’) and top-40 hits.
Café Lindebloom (☎ 072-512 17 43; Verdonkeraad 114) Over by the old fish market this is a cozy bar where talkative locals linger on the canal terrace.

ZAANSE SCHANS
This kitsch open-air museum on the Zaan River is a bit of a guilty pleasure. It’s undeniably touristy and tacky in parts, but picturesque because of its gardens and canal setting, so it’s still a lot of fun.

The six working windmills along the riverbanks are the highlight and apart from the villagers, who actually live and earn their keep here, are the most authentic thing about the place. It was once the world’s first light-industrial region, with more than 700 windmills powering flour and paint production.
One still sells fat jars of its freshly ground mustard, while the others turn out pigments,

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Yorkshire
Weald
Cotswolds
South Downs
East Anglia

INFORMATION
Tourist Office (☎ 072-511 42 84; www.vvvalkmaar.nl; Waagplein 2; 1-5pm Mon, 10am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat)

EATING
De Tromp Kaashuis (☎ 072-511 34 22; Magdalenestraat 11) If you’re looking to grab some cheese after seeing so much of it, check out this quality certified shop with Dutch and French cheeses stacked everywhere you look.
Het Hof van Alkmaar (☎ 072-512 12 22; Hof van Sonoy 1; lunch €3.50-13, dinner mains €16-20; Mon & dinner

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TRANSPORT: ZAANSE SCHANS
Direction 10km northwest
Travel time 20 to 30 minutes
Train In summer, take the Connexion bus 91 from Amsterdam Centraal (€2.50, 20 minutes, hourly). The rest of the year board the train towards Alkmaar and get off at Koog Zaandijk (€2.80, 20 minutes, four times hourly), and walk the 1km to Zaans Schans.
Car Travel to the northwestern side of the city on the A10 ring road, and take the A8 turn-off. Exit at Zaandijk.
oils, meal and sawed planks. Most are open for inspection, and it’s a treat to clamber about the creaking works while the mills shake in the North Sea breeze.

The other buildings have been brought here from all over the country to re-create a 17th-century community and, understandably, some of them look out of place. There is an early Albert Heijn market, a cheese maker and a popular dog factory that turns out wooden shoes as if grinding keys. The engaging pewter smith will explain the story behind dozens of tiny figures while the soft metal sets in the moulds. The spanking new Zaans Museum (075-616 28 62; adult/child €4.50/2.70; 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) shows how the harnessing of wind and water was done.

Admission to the re-created community site is free, but some buildings charge a small admission. The information centre sells area maps for €1. Once you’ve finished poking about the village, a tour boat (adult/child €5/2.50; Tue-Sun Apr-Sep) does a 45-minute spin on the Zaan River several times a day.

AALSMEER

This town is home to the world’s biggest flower auction (Bloemenveiling; 39 39 39; www.vba-aalsmeer.nl; Legmeerdijk 131; 7-11am Mon-Fri), the Bloemenveiling. Make sure you’re in the viewing gallery by 9am to catch the first flower-laden carts go to auction. Selling is conducted – surprise! – by Dutch auction, with a huge clock showing the starting price. From the starting bell, the hand keeps dropping until someone takes up the offer and a deal is struck. There’s a self-guided audio tour that will let you peek into the auction rooms and see arrangers prepping the blooms for display.

The auctions takes place in Europe’s largest commercial complex (one million sq metres), and one look at the parking lot and truck fleets will tell you why so much space is necessary. Some 90 million flowers and two million plants change hands here every single day, racking up nearly €7 million in business. More and more transactions are taking place online, so catch the action while it’s still here. Mondays are the busiest time, Thursdays the quietest.

TRANSPORT: AALSMEER

Direction 22km southwest
Travel time 50 minutes
Bus Connexxion bus 172 from Amsterdam Centraal Station to Aalsmeer VBA stop (four times hourly)
Car Take the A4 a short way to Haarlemmermeer then left (southeast) onto the N201
TRANSPORT

Straddling one of Europe’s busiest cross-roads, Amsterdam has excellent air links, a fine motorway and train lines fanning out to the rest of Europe. Once in town, you’ll find that Amsterdam is very much a walking city; you can traverse the old centre in 30 minutes and reach the outskirts in an hour. The tram system is reliable, though not necessarily faster than a bike, the locals’ preferred way of getting around.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

AIR

Airport

A mere 18km from central Amsterdam, Schiphol airport is the Netherlands’ main international airport and the fourth-busiest passenger terminal in Europe. It’s the hub of Dutch passenger carrier KLM, and over 100 airlines have direct flights and connections to all continents. Its shopping arcades, both in public areas and the See Buy Fly duty-free areas, are renowned.

Meet arrivals in the large lobby known as Schiphol Plaza. For airport and flight information call ☏0900 01 41 (per minute €0.40) or see www.schiphol.nl.

The airport is in the same telephone area code as Amsterdam proper (☏020).

Luggage may be deposited at the left luggage office (☏601 24 43) in the basement between arrival areas One and Two. Cost is €5 per item per day. Lockers are available from €5 to €9 per day (depending on size) and luggage can be stored for up to a week.

GETTING INTO TOWN

The Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS; national railway) runs trains to Centraal Station (one way/return €3.60/5.50, 15 to 20 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes) from right beneath Schiphol Plaza. Train-ticket counters and vending machines are in Schiphol Plaza’s central court; buy your ticket before taking the escalator down to the platforms (see p242 for instructions for domestic tickets). If you need a strippenkaart (a ticket for local transport within Amsterdam), purchase it at the Ako newsstand near the ticket windows.

Taxi services between Amsterdam and Schiphol airport take 20 to 45 minutes (may be longer in rush hour) and cost about €30 to €40. Aficionados swear by Amsterdam Airport Business Taxi (☏06 5376 9753; www.aabt.info), who have Mercedes cars and professional drivers and cost €34 to €42 depending on your destination or origin in town.

Some of the international hotel chains have free shuttle services for their guests. Public services such as Connexxion bus Interliner 370 also run regular services to and from central Amsterdam. Connexxion runs a paid hotel shuttle (one way/return around €12.50/19.50). When making your hotel reservation, ask whether the shuttle stops on the route.

Another way to get to or from the airport is by the minivan service Schiphol Travel Taxi (☏0900 88 76, per min €0.10, from outside the Netherlands 31 38 339 47 68; www.schiphol.nl). Figure on about €21 per person.

By car, take the A4 freeway to/from the A10 ring road around Amsterdam. A short stretch of A9 connects to the A4 close to Schiphol.

Car-rental offices at the airport are in the right-hand corner near the central exits of Schiphol Plaza.

The airport’s P1 and P2 short-term (undercover) parking garages charge €1.90 per half-hour for the first three hours, then €3 per hour. Daily charges are €26 a day for the first three days, €17.50 a day thereafter. The long-term (open-air) parking area is a fair distance from the terminal but is linked by a 24-hour shuttle bus. The charge is €50 for up to three days and €6.50 for each day thereafter.

Things Change...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.
BICYCLE & SCOOTER
The vast majority of Amsterdammers get around town on their estimated 600,000 fietsen (bikes). Motor scooters and mopeds are popular too, but few places hire them out (see right). Helmets are not required.

Many visitors rent a bike towards the end of their stay and wish they had done so sooner. See the boxed text, below, before setting out.

Bicycle Hire
All the companies listed here require ID plus a credit card imprint or a cash deposit with a passport. Many rental agencies require that you bring your passport as proof of ID. Prices are for basic ‘coaster-brake’ bikes; gears and handbrakes, and especially insurance, usually cost more.

Bike City (Map p86; 662 37 21; www.bikecity.nl; Bloemgracht 68-70; per day/week €9.50/41, plus passport deposit) There’s no advertising on the bikes, so you can pretend you’re a local.

Damstra Rent-a-Bike (Map pp62-5; 625 50 29; www.bikecity.nl; Damstraat 20-2; per day/week €7.31, plus passport deposit)

Holland Rent-a-Bike (Map pp62-5; 622 32 07; Damrak 247; per day/week €6.40/34.50, plus deposit €150 or credit card imprint)

Macbike ( 620 09 85; www.macbike.nl; per day/week €8.50/29.75, plus ID & €50 deposit or credit card imprint)

Centraal Station (Map pp62-5; Visserplein (Map pp62-5; Mr Visserplein 2); Weteringschans (Map pp100-1; Weteringschans 2) The most expensive (and the bikes are equipped with big signs that say ‘LOOK OUT!’ to locals), but it has the most locations.

Mike’s Bike Tours (Map pp100-1; 662 79 70; www.mikesbiketours.com; Kerkstraat 134; half-day/full day/ additional day €5.75/15, plus €200 deposit or passport or other ID)

Scooter Hire
The best bet for scooter hire is to try Moped Rental Service Gilex (Map p86; 623 45 50; www.gilex.nl; Marnixstraat 208; weekday/weekend day €37.50/42.50, weekend/week €80/210, plus deposit €450). Scooters come in all colours, as long as it’s yellow.

BOAT
Canal Boat, Bus & Bike
Canal Bus (Map pp62-5; 623 98 86; www.canal.nl; day pass per adult/child €18/12) does several circuits between Centraal Station and the Rijksmuseum between 9.50am and 8pm. The day pass is valid until noon the next day. The same company rents canal bikes (pedal boats) for €8 per person per hour (€7 if more than two people per canal bike). Boats are by Leidseplein (Map pp100-1) and near the Anne Frank Huis (Map p92).

See p249 for details of canal boat tours.

Ferries
There are free ferries from behind Centraal Station to destinations along the IJ, notably Amsterdam Noord.

The ferry that goes to the Eastern Docklands costs €1.

To carry a bike aboard a train, you’ll need to purchase a bike day pass (€6), valid throughout the country, and carriage is subject to availability of space. Many train stations also have bike rental facilities on the spot. Collapsible bikes can be carried for free. An alternative to renting a bike is to buy one. Figure on about €80 for a used bike and maybe €40 for two good locks.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL
Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change
Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household’s gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes
Climatecare.org and other websites use ‘carbon calculators’ that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE
We absolutely don’t recommend having a car in Amsterdam, but if you must, read on.

Driving
Visitors are entitled to drive in the Netherlands on their foreign licences for a period of up to 185 days per calendar year. If you stay longer, you must get a Dutch licence (with some exceptions). For all queries, ring the National Transport Authority (0900 07 39, per min €0.10).

Traffic in Amsterdam travels on the right and is generally quite busy. The minimum driving age is 18 years for cars and 16 years for motorcycles. Seat belts are required for everyone in a vehicle. Children under 12 must ride in the back if there’s room.

Be alert for bicycles, and if you are trying to turn right, be aware that bikes have priority. Trams always have the right of way. In traffic circles (roundabouts), approaching vehicles technically have right of way, but in practice they yield to vehicles already on the circle.

The blood-alcohol limit when driving is 0.05%, and the speed limits are 50km/h in built-up areas, 80km/h in the country, 100km/h on major rural through-roads and 120km/h on freeways (sometimes this is reduced to 100km/h, but this is generally clearly indicated).

Hire
Local companies are usually cheaper than the big multinationals, but don’t offer as much backup or flexibility. Rates start at around €34.40 per day for a two-/four-person car, but they do change frequently, so call around. Rentals at Schiphol airport incur a €40 surcharge.

Look for local car-rental firms in telephone directories under the heading Autoverhuur. Following is a list of some of the better-known car-rental companies:

Avis Autoverhuur (Map p116; 683 60 61; www.avis.nl; Nassaukade 380)

easyCar (www.easycar.nl)

Europcar (Map p116; 683 21 23; www.europcar.nl; Overtoom 197)

Hertz (Map p116; 612 24 41; www.hertz.nl; Overtoom 333)

National Car Rental (Map p116; 616 24 66; www.nationalcar-rental.com; Overtoom 184)

Sixt (623-405 90 90; www.e-sixt.nl; Schiphol Plaza)

Parking
Parking in the city hits you where it hurts. Pay-and-display applies in the central zone from 9am to midnight from Monday to Saturday, and noon to midnight on Sunday. At the time of writing, the cost was €4.60/27.60/18.40 per hour/day/evening in most of the City Centre, and €3.60/21.60/14.40 elsewhere within

BICYCLE RULES
The heavy traffic can be intimidating, but observe a few basics and soon you’ll be freewheeling like a native:

- Cyclists have the right of way, except when vehicles are entering from the right. However, that doesn’t mean motorists are as careful as they should be.
- Watch for pedestrians too. Tourists (the poor things) tend to wander in and out of bike paths with no idea of the danger they’re putting themselves in.
- By law, after dusk you need to use the lights on your bike (front and rear) and have reflectors on both wheels. If your bike does not have lights, you need to use clip-on lights, both front and rear.
- It’s polite to give a quick ring of your bell as a warning. If someone’s about to hit you, a good sharp yell is highly effective.
- Chop your bike securely. Most bikes come with two locks, one for the front wheel (attach it to the frame) and the other for the back. One lock should also be attached to something stationary.

Climatecare.org and other websites use ‘carbon calculators’ that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda. Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT
the Canal Belt. Prices ease as you move away from the centre. Day passes are available.
Nonpayers in the City Centre will find a bright yellow wielkien (wheel clamp) attached to their car and have to pay €103.60 to get it removed; visit the closest Stadspolitie office (City Surveillance; ☏ 553 03 00) to pay the fine. Otherwise, within 24 hours the vehicle will be towed and the fine skyrockets to €300.
Parking garages in the City Centre include locations at Damrak, near Leidseplein and under Museumplein and the Stopera, but they’re often full and cost more than a parking permit. Here are some other options for parking:
Amsterdam-Noord Park for free and take the ferry across.
Car Hotel (☏ 493 12 78; www.carhotel.nl; per 24hr €20) Collects and delivers your car from and to your hotel.
Stadionplein Park and ride in from the southwestern outskirts.
Transferium parking garage (☏ 400 17 21; Blijmer; per day incl. 2 return tickets for public transport to Centraal Station €5.50) Under the Amsterdam Arena.

TRAINS
Trains are frequent and serve domestic destinations at regular intervals, sometimes five or six times an hour. However, the network has been plagued by poor punctuality in recent years, particularly at rush hour.
Amsterdam’s main train station is Centraal Station (CS). There’s a left-luggage desk downstairs from Track 2, near the southeastern corner of the station.

Domestic Tickets
Tickets can be bought at the window or ticketing machines. Buying a ticket on board means you’ll pay almost double the normal fare. To use the ticketing machines, find your destination on the alphabetical list of place names, enter the code into the machine, then choose 1st or 2nd class (there’s little difference in comfort, but if the train is crowded there are usually more seats in 1st class). Then choose with/without discount, the former only if you have a Railrunner or Voordeel-Urenkaart (see below) and the period of validity, ie ‘today’ or ‘without date’ for a future trip. For tickets without date, be sure to validate the ticket in a yellow punch gadget near the platform before you board. The machines take coins and PIN cards, but not credit cards.
With a valid ticket you can break your journey along the direct route. Day return tickets are 10% to 15% cheaper than two one-ways.
Children under four travel free if they don’t take up a seat. Ages four to 11 pay a ‘Railrunner’ fare of €2 as long as an adult comes along.
If you plan to do a lot of travelling, a one-day travel card costs €40.30. For longer stays, the €55 Voordeel-Urenkaart is valid for one year and gives a 40% discount on train travel weekdays after 9am, as well as weekends, public holidays and the whole months of July and August. The discount also applies to up to three people travelling with you on the same trip. Seniors (60+) can pay an extra €14 for seven days of fare-free travel a year.

International Tickets
For details of international trains and reservations, visit the NS international office (www.ns.nl; Centraal Station; 8am-6.30am-9pm) facing Track 2 and see Dutch inefficiency at its worst. At peak times (eg summer) the queues can be up to two hours. Upon entering, pick up a numbered ticket based on the kind of train ticket you need: advance, pick-up of a reservation, or departing within an hour. Pick-ups and immediate departures get higher priority. Don’t even think of taking a number for other than what you’re planning to buy – you’ll be sent to the back of the queue. You may also purchase tickets by phone (☏ 0900 92 92, per mnt €0.35, 8am to midnight), or by credit card online, but you must pick them up here. Be sure to reserve international seats in advance during peak periods.

Schedules
In stations, schedules are posted by route, though trip duration and arrival time information aren’t. Outside of the station, contact the NS (☏ 0900 92 92, per min €0.70; www.ns.nl; 7am-midnight).

TRAM, BUS & METRO
Most public transport within the city is by tram; buses and Amsterdam’s metro (subway) serve some outer reaches. Services are run by the local transit authority, the GVB; national railway (NS) tickets are not valid on local transport.
The GVB has an information office (Map pp32-3; ☏ 0900 80 11, per min €0.10; www.gvb.nl; Stationsplein 10; 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat & Sun) across the tram tracks from the Centraal Station main entrance. Here you can get tickets, maps and the like. The website has lots of useful information including details of how to reach key sights. You must either purchase a ticket on board or validate it when you board. If you get caught without a ticket or properly stamped ticket, playing the ignorant foreigner will guarantee that you get fined €37.50. Some trams have conductors responsible for ticketing (usually towards the rear of the tram), while others do not. Drivers can also handle tickets but prefer not to as it slows things down. If you are transferring from another line, show your ticket to the conductor or driver as you board. Buses are more conventional, with drivers stamping the tickets as you board.
Changes are you won’t use the metro unless you go to the international bus station at Amstelstation, south to the RAI Convention Centre, or to the World Trade Centre (Map pp36-9).

GBV Fares
Tickets on trams and buses are calculated by zone and are valid for one hour from the time they’re stamped. Within the city centre you are in Zone 1. When in doubt, consult the maps at bus and tram stops, or ask the driver or conductor. Single-trip fares for one/two zones are €1.60/2.40.
GBV passes are valid in all zones, and fares for one/two/three days are €6.50/10.50/13.50. Children (aged four to 11) and seniors can obtain a day pass for €4.50 per day, but multiple day passes are not available.

Strippenkaart
Depending on how much you plan to travel, consider a strippenkaart (‘strip card’; 15-45 strip-cards €6.80/20.10), available at train and bus stations, post offices, many VVV (tourist information) offices, supermarkets and tobacconists.
Each strip is numbered, but there’s a trick: you need to stamp for the number of zones you’re travelling plus one, and you stamp one strip only. In other words, if you’re travelling in Zone 1, stamp the second available strip but not the first (this would invalidate the second stamp). You should begin stamping from the lowest number available. You can also use a strip card if you’re travelling with a companion, so if both of you are travelling within Zone 1, you stamp the second and the fourth strips (two strips plus two strips).
If you’re boarding transport with a conductor, simply state where you’re travelling and the conductor will stamp your card for you. If you need to validate it yourself, fold the card so that the strip you want to stamp is first on the top, and insert it into the machine.
A strippenkaart is valid on local public transport throughout the country; however, in early 2009 they will be replaced by a smart-card system, the OV-chipkaart. A disposable card costs €8 for four journeys – not a great deal. Or you can pay a one-off fee of €7.50 for a regular OV-chipkaart and load it at the GVB ticket vendors and machines (good for longer stays, as single journeys begin at €0.90). Don’t forget to swipe it at the card readers in trams and buses, both upon entering and exiting, or you’ll be liable for a fine.
BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours are similar to those of other European countries, with a few exceptions. Most banks and businesses close on public holidays, but many shops open on Good Friday, Christmas and Boxing Day. On other religious days, such as Whit Monday, it may seem hardly like a holiday at all. Venues normally closed on Sunday are likely to be shut on public holidays.

Banks: Open from 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday – some till 9pm Thursday, and Saturday mornings.

Cafés: Open 10am to 1am Sunday to Thursday, till 3am Friday and Saturday.

General office hours: From 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Museums: Often closed on Monday.

Pubs and clubs: Opening hours vary. Closing hours 1am Sunday to Thursday, 3am Friday and Saturday.

Restaurants: Lunch 11am to 2.30pm, dinner 6pm to 10pm.

Shops: Open from noon to 6pm Monday, 9am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday. Koopavond (evening shopping) is on Thursday nights, with shops staying open until 9pm. Within the Canal Belt, shops are allowed to open from 1pm until 5pm on Sunday, although not all choose to do so.

Supermarkets: Open until 8pm.

CHILDREN

There is much to keep kids occupied in Amsterdam – a zoo, playgrounds and parks, canal boat trips, a marionette theatre and kid-friendly museums, just for starters (see the boxed text, p105). Lonely Planet’s Travel with Children is a goldmine for planning ahead.

In general, attitudes towards children in the Netherlands are very positive, apart from some hotels with a no-children policy – check when you book. Most restaurants have high chairs and children’s menus. Facilities for changing nappies, however, are limited to the big department stores, major museums and train stations and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is generally OK in public if done discreetly. Kids are allowed in pubs but aren’t supposed to generally OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is usually OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is usually OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is usually OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is usually OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is usually OK in public if done discreetly. Kids and you’ll pay to use them. 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HEALTH

For information on medical services in Amsterdam, see opposite; some information for women is on p256.

STDs & HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is still a problem in the Netherlands, but has been contained by practical education campaigns and free needle-exchange programs. The Dutch health ministry and organisations such as the COC, HIV Vereniging and Schorer Foundation (listed following) do their bit to prevent the spread of STDs and HIV. Virtually all bars, bookshops and saunas that cater for gays provide safe-sex leaflets; many also sell condoms.

Free testing for sexually transmitted diseases is available at the GGD&STD Clinic (Municipal Medical & Health Service; Map p122; 555 58 22; www.ggd.amsterdam.nl; Weesperplein 1; 8:30-10:30am & 1:30-3:30pm Mon-Fri). You must arrive early in the morning for same-day testing. If a problem is diagnosed staff will provide free treatment immediately, but blood-test results take a week (they’ll give you the results over the phone immediately, but blood-test results take a week). There are bilingual telephone help lines for HIV/AIDS, see opposite.

There are two international help lines for those interested in sexual health or a friend's ear:

HIV Vereniging (Map p116; 616 01 60, help line 689 25 77; www.livinnet.nl; 1e Helmersstraat 17b-3; 2-10pm Mon-Fri; National organisation for the HIV positive; provides personal assistance.

Schorer Foundation (Map pp100-1; 573 94 44; www.schorer.ni; Sarphatistraat 35; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) NWO offering lesbian and gay health-care services; HIV prevention, buddy care.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

People take public holidays seriously, and if your Dutch visit collides with one, your plans may face a hiccup. Most museums adopt Sunday hours on the days listed here (except Christmas and New Year, when they adopt Sunday hours on the days listed here). Many programmes may face a hiccup. Most museums adopt Sunday hours on the days listed here. People take public holidays seriously, and many also sell condoms.

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Koninginnedag Queen’s Day, 30 April.

Bevrijdingsdag Liberation Day, 5 May. This isn’t a universal holiday; government workers have the day off but almost everyone else has to work.

Hemelvaartdag Ascension Day. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

Eerste en Tweede Pinksterdag Whit Sunday (Pentecost) and Whit Monday. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

Eerste en Tweede Kerstdag Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Many people also treat Remembrance Day (4 May) as a day off.

INTERNET ACCESS

Amsterdam led the digital revolution in Europe, so the city is just as wired as many of its visitors.

Most hotels offer some kind of internet access, from business centres and turbo-charged wi-fi to the receptionist’s dusty PC. Ottentimes you can borrow a guest laptop. Internet connections may be ISDN or modular, if there’s no wi-fi; if this is important, check ahead with the hotel.

There are a few internet cafés around town, but they’re a dying breed with more and more . The Netherlands has reciprocal health arrangements with other EU countries and Australia. If you’re an EU citizen, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), available from health centres or, in the UK, post offices, covers you for most medical care. You still have to pay on the spot but you’ll be able to claim it back again at home. Citizens of other countries are advised to take out travel insurance; medical or dental treatment is less expensive than in North America but still costs enough.

LEGAL MATTERS

The Amsterdam politie (police) are pretty relaxed and helpful unless you do something instinctively wrong such as chucking litter or smoking a joint right under their noses. They can hold offenders for up to six hours for questioning (plus another six hours if they can’t establish your identity, or 24 hours if they consider the matter serious) and do not have to give a phone call, though they’ll ring your consulate. You’re presumed innocent until proven guilty.

In principle there’s a ‘limited’ requirement for anyone over 12 years of age to carry ID. For the visitor this basically means on public transport, at soccer games or, increasingly, in designated ‘security-sensitive’ areas such as Rembrandtplein or the Red Light District, where the police can conduct random checks for illegal weapons and drugs. (It’s all part of a national law-and-order, anti-terrorism campaign, but most visitors won’t even notice it.) Foreigners should carry a passport or a photocopy of the relevant data pages; a driver’s licence isn’t sufficient.

You can drink beer and wine from age 16, and spirits from age 18, although bars and cafés are pretty lenient when it comes to proof of age. Coffeeshops require visitors be 18 or even 21 to enter and consume soft drugs. The legal driving age is 18.

MAPS

The maps in this book will probably suffice for casual touring. Lonely Planet’s handy Amsterdam City Map is plastic-coated against the elements, and has a street index that covers the most popular parts of the city.

Otherwise you’ll find a wide variety of maps for sale at any VVV office, as well as at bookstores and newsstands.

MEDICAL SERVICES

The Netherlands has reciprocal health arrangements with other EU countries and Australia. If you’re an EU citizen, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), available from health centres or, in the UK, post offices, covers you for most medical care. You still have to pay on the spot but you’ll be able to claim it back again at home. Citizens of other countries are advised to take out travel insurance; medical or dental treatment is less expensive than in North America but still costs enough.

There are no compulsory vaccinations, but if you’ve just travelled through a yellow-fever area you could be asked for proof that you’re covered. Up-to-date tetanus, polio and diphtheria immunisations are always recommended whether you’re travelling or not. For minor health concerns, see a local dridget (chemist) or apotheek (pharmacy, to fill prescriptions). For more serious problems, go to the casualty ward of a ziekenhuis (hospital) or try the Centrale Doktersdienst (0900 592 3434), the 24-hour central medical service that will refer you to an appropriate doctor, dentist or pharmacy. For matters dealing with STDs and HIV/AIDS, see opposite.

Forget about buying flu tablets and antacids at supermarkets; for anything stronger than toothpaste you’ll have to go to a pharmacy. A convenient one is Dam Apotheek (Map pp62-5; 624 43 31; Damstraat 2; 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat), just off the Dam.

A number of hospitals have 24-hour emergency facilities:

Boven-U Ziekenhuis (634 63 46; Statenjachtstraat 1, Amsterdam Noord) Take bus 34 north from Centraal Station.

Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis (Map p129; 599 91 11; 1e Oosterparkstraat 1) At Oosterpark near the Tropenmuseum. The closest public hospital to the centre of town.

St Lucas Andreas Ziekenhuis (Map pp58-9; 510 89 11; Jan Tooropstraat 164) In the western suburbs.

Slotervaart Ziekenhuis (Map pp58-9; 512 93 33; Louwersweg 6) In the southwestern suburbs.

VU Medisch Centrum (Map pp58-9; 444 44 44; De Boelelaan 1117, Amsterdam Buitenveldert) Hospital of the VU (Vrije Universiteit; Free University).

MONEY

The Netherlands uses the euro €). If you’re coming with US dollars you’ll be aware that the euro has appreciated sharply against the dollar in the past couple of years. As for the denominations of the currency, there are €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500 notes, and €0.01, €0.02, €0.05, €0.10, €0.20, €0.50, €1 and €2 coins (amounts under €1 are called cents). Euro notes are the same in all participating countries; coins have a ‘European’ side and a ‘national’ side (in the Netherlands, with an image of Queen Beatrix). All are legal tender throughout the euro zone area, although many businesses will not accept notes larger than €50 because of the funny money in circulation.
PIN Cards

While in Amsterdam you’ll notice people gleeefully using ‘PIN’ cards everywhere, from shops to public telephones and cigarette vending machines. These direct-debit cards look like credit or bank cards with little gold-printed circuit chips on them, but they won’t be of much use to visitors without a Dutch bank account. The Maestro direct-debit cards popular in Europe work just fine at ATMs.

Travellers Cheques

Banks charge a commission of 2% to 3% to cash travellers cheques, and require passport ID. American Express and Thomas Cook are the leading providers. However, shops, restaurants and hotels always prefer cash; a few might accept travellers cheques but the rates will be anybody’s guess. Direct ATMs withdraw via a credit card might make more sense for cost and convenience – check with your bank.

Eurocheques are on their way out, although you can still cash them at banks and GWKs with a guarantee card. Few shops accept them.

Credit Cards

All the major international cards are recognised, and most hotels, restaurants and major stores accept them – but always check first to avoid disappointment. Some establishments levy a 5% surcharge (or more) on credit cards to offset the commissions charged by card providers.

To withdraw money at a bank counter instead of through an ATM, go to a GWK Travex branch such as at Centraal Station or Schiphol airport. You’ll need to show your passport.

Report lost or stolen cards to the appropriate 24-hour number. For American Express and Visa, phoning the emergency contact number for your home country will speed the process. ATMs (cashpoints) are so widespread in Amsterdam that we haven’t mapped them, except for one location in the popular Jordaan district where ATMs are thin on the ground.

Changing Money

Avoid the private exchange booths dotted around tourist areas. They’re convenient and open late, but rates and commissions tend to be lousy. Banks and the Postbank (at post offices) stick to official exchange rates and charge a sensible commission, as does GWK Travex (0900 05 66), accessible at a number of branches: Centraal Station (% 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun); Damrak (Map pp62-5; Damrak 1-5; 9am-8.45pm); Leidseplein (Map pp100-1; Leidseplein 31a; % 9.15am-5.45pm) and Schiphol airport (% 7am-10pm).

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Based in Amsterdam, De Telegraaf is the Netherlands’ biggest newspaper: an untidy, right-wing daily with sensationalist news, good finance coverage, the closest thing you’ll find to a Dutch tabloid. Amsterdammers swear by Het Parool for its lowdown on the capital’s culture and politics. The highly regarded NRC Handelsblad, a merger of two elitist papers from Rotterdam and Amsterdam, sets the country’s journalistic standards, while the populist Volkskrant has leftish leanings. The Financieele Dagblad is the country’s leading daily for financial and business news. You’ll occasionally see the Algemene Dagblad, a middle-of-the-road paper that has lost ground to its competitors. Many commuters pick up copies of the free Metro, Spits or Dag from racks in the train stations; leaf through and leave them on a seat for the next guy.

The English-language Amsterdam Weekly (www.amsterdamweekly.nl) comes out each Thursday with useful cultural features and listings. English-speakers can easily find European editions of the Economist, Newsweek and Time, as well as most of the major international newspapers at bookstores such as Athenaeum (p197). The main British newspapers are available (the same day), as is the International Herald Tribune.

English-language ezines with widespread following include Expatica (www.expatica.com), which is tailored to the European expat set, and Dutch News (www.dutchnews.nl), a summary of daily happenings with a great news archive.

ORGANISED TOURS

For those with limited time on their hands, a quick tour is not such a bad thing – it lets you see a whole lot of stuff in a short period so you can then decide where you’d like to spend more time. There’s a tour to suit every taste in Amsterdam, ranging from bike rides to walking tours. Canal cruises are by far the most popular and are an absolute must. While some are themed (jazz, candlelight, pizza – you name it, they got it), some are simply practical, enabling you to link many sights in a short time in the nicest way possible.

Bike Tours

Cycle tours Holland (Map pp58-9; % 627 90 32; www.cycletours.com; Buiksloterweg 7a) This very experienced tour company offers a variety of longer tours (one week+) around the Netherlands by bicycle with accommodation in barge-boat of 15 to 30 people. It caters mostly to people who book in advance from abroad, so contact them well in advance (at least several weeks). A one-week tour starts around €600 for cabin with shared facilities, plus a €60 supplement in high season.

Mike’s Bike Tours (Map pp100-1; % 622 79 70; www.mikesbeemsteramsterdam.com; Kerkstraat 134; adult/infant in bike seat/child 12yr & under/student bike tour inc bld rental €22/free/15/19; bike & boat tour €29/€20/25; bike tour 12.30pm Mon-mid-May & Sep-Nov, 11am & 4pm mid-May–Aug; bike & boat tour noon Tue-Sun Jun-Aug). These fantastic four-hour tours take you both around the centre of town and into the countryside, with stops at windmills and cheese farms. Guides have insider knowledge of the city, and tours often end with a pub visit. The ‘bike and boat’ tour (about five hours) includes drinks on board and a visit to the Vondelpark. The meeting place for all tours is the reflection pool on Museumplein, right behind the Rijksmuseum.

Classic Canal Charters (Map p245; % 621 47 61; www.classicalcanachtours.com; Prinsengracht 291; €214 per hr, min 1-2 hrs per tour, maximum 12 people). These pleasant half-hour cruises cost €214 per hour, and offer a delightful journey on the Amsterdam canals. The tour is a perfect length for those with limited time on their hands but who wish to see the city from the water. The tour is suitable for all ages, and offers a wonderful view of the city.

Boat Tours

The companies mentioned here offer a variety of boat tours (sional rondvaarten, plural rondvaarten), from hour-long excursions on the inner canals (cycle around €9 per person) to more elaborate tours of architecture on the Eastern Docklands, jazz cruises, dinner cruises and candlelight cruises. Sure they’re touristy but on a clear night with the city lights a-twinkling, who’s to argue it’s not delightful? Details are constantly being revised, so check websites or phone for details. Some cruises are included in the 1 Amsterdam Card (p245).

To hire a paddle-powered Canal Bike, see p282. For details of boat transport around town, see p240.

Blue Boat Company (% 679 13 70; www.blueboat.nl; Stadhouderskade 30; 75min canal cruises adult/child under 4yr €10/€6; every 30min 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, every hr 10am-5pm Oct-Mar) Blue Boat’s main tour clocks in at 75 minutes. Evening cruises (£14.50/free/€10) are offered three times a night from April to September, and at 8pm only Thursday to Sunday the rest of the year. Tour boats depart from the Blue Boat dock near Centraal Station.

Canal Bus (Map pp66-7; % 623 98 86; www.canal.nl; Weteringschans 26; day pass adult/child 5-12yr €18/12) Offers a unique hop-on, hop-off canal boat service visiting most of the big destinations. Routes vary depending on where you want to visit. At night, there is a delightful 1½-hour jazz cruise (£45; runs 6pm and 10pm Saturdays from April to November). Skip decks, enjoy light nibbles and watch the city lights go by.

Classic Boat Dinners (Map p52; % 330 19 19; www.classicboatinners.nl; Prinsengracht 391; €214 1st hr, then £195 per hr) Nothing is more romantic than dining on this beautifully restored river launch, Mijn Amsterdam (1905), as you cruise the quieter canals, personal waiter on hand, feasting on a gastronomic silver-service six-course meal and marvellous wines. Propose dessert and a yes is guaranteed. Also good for showing the boss around town.

Classic Canal Charters (Map p122; % 421 08 25; www.classiccanachtours.com; Czaar Peterstraat 14/7b; €132-316 per hr, minimum 1.5-2hr) Hires out authentic old boats (converted cargo barges, sloops and salmon boats) for six to 60 passengers for cruises (dinner, entertainment, outings etc) in Amsterdam and beyond. Rental includes skipper.
City Tours

Keytours (Map pp62-5;  06 23 51 51; www.keytours.nl; Damrak 19; €15-55) Keytours is your one-stop shop for city tours – on foot, bike, bus and boat – to all major sights in and around Amsterdam. While its bus tours get you to sights you wouldn’t normally see, buses are not the best option in the town. The tranquil two-hour candlelight cruise (£25) shows you the city at its loveliest.

Lindbergh Tours (Map pp62-5;  020 27 27; www.lindbergh.nl; Damrak 26; €7.50-69) While this outfit offers similar tours to Keytours, it also runs a city sightseeing bus tour with commentary, along with Rembrandt Tours, Red Light Tours and day trips out of Amsterdam such as the Cheese Market and Windmill tour (£30).

New Amsterdam Tours (Map in Berlin 49 30 6908 8835; www.newamsterdamtours.com; tours free, donations encouraged;  11am & 3pm) An entertaining three-hour jaunt to the sights of the Medieval Centre and Red Light District by slick young guides. Meet at the Tourist Information Office (the white building) opposite Centraal Station.

Paal Tours (Map pp62-5;  622 27 66; www.paal.tours; Oudezijds Voorburgwal 27; 1½hr tour per person incl drink €21.50; 11am & 3pm) An entertaining three-hour jaunt to the sights of the Medieval Centre and Red Light District by slick young guides. Meet at the Tourist Information Office (the white building) opposite Centraal Station.

POST

The postal service is fairly reliable and swift with deliveries. Post offices are generally open 9am to 5pm weekdays. The main post office (Map p92; Singel 250;  9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is large and well equipped, and there’s also a branch in the Stopera complex (Map pp62-5; Waterlooplein 10;  9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1:30pm Sat). For queries about postal services ring  058-233 33 33 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday, or 9am to 4pm Saturday.
The standard rate (‘priority’) for letters under 20g is €0.44 within the Netherlands, €0.72 within Europe, and €0.89 outside Europe. Unless you’re sending mail within the Amsterdam region, use the slot marked Oversea Postcodes (Other Postal Codes) on the red letterboxes. When you buy stamps, you’ll have to buy a booklet of at least five, so stock up on postcards.

RADIO

Radio stations include Q-music (100.7 FM, www.qmusic.nl), Radio 538 (102.1 FM, www.radio538.nl) and Sky Radio (101.2 FM, www.skyradio.nl), plus offerings from RTL (www.rtl.nl) and NOS (Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, www.nos.nl). All have streaming and broadcast half-hourly news reports (in Dutch), with Europop and chat sandwiched in between.

BBC Radio 4 (198kHz FM) and BBC Radio 5 (693kHz FM, sports) lead the English-language content.

SAFETY

 Theft is rare in normal hotel rooms, although it’s always wise to deposit valuables for safekeeping at the reception desk or, where available, in your in-room safe. Theft is more common at hostels; bring your own lock for your locker.

Watch out for pickpockets in crowded markets and trams. Violent crime is rare, especially involving foreigners, although there have been a small number of gang-bashing incidents recently.

Cars with foreign registration are popular targets for smash-and-grab theft. Don’t leave valuable items in the car; remove registration and ID papers and the radio/stereo if possible.

If something is stolen, get a police report for insurance purposes, but don’t expect the police to retrieve your property or apprehend the thief. C’est la vie.

There are occasionally some junkie types around the Zeedijk and Gelderskade, and also on the Nieuwendijk near Centraal Station. Generally they won’t bother you if you don’t bother them.

Bicycles are numerous and can be dangerous for pedestrians. When crossing the street or a bicycle lane look for speeding bikes – the ‘silent killers’, as we like to call them. Cyclists, meanwhile, should take care to watch out for unwitting foreign tourists in their paths.

And always, always, lock up your bike with a decent lock.

Finally, two words: dog poo. The city is trying though.

SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Health & Fitness

When the weather’s agreeable, it’s popular to hit the Vondelpark with your obligatory iPod for a run. At other times locals hit the indoor fitness facilities to burn off that beer.

GYMS

Apart from the places listed below, several hotels also have fitness centres for day use, including the Splash Fitnessclub (Map pp62-5;  621 22 23; www.openspa.nl; Kattengat 1) at the Rijksbaan Amsterdam Hotel and Amsterdam Fitness & Health Club (Map p50) at the NH Amsterdam Centre. Squash City (p254) also has full facilities.

Barry’s Health Centre (Map pp100-1;  626 10 36; www.barryshealthcentre.nl; Lijnbaansgracht 350; day/week pass €15/€22.50;  7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Large, well-equipped facility that has been renovated with a full complement of the latest machines; it offers classes, plus sauna, steam, tanning beds and a ‘cardio theatre’.

Fitness First (Map pp62-5;  530 03 40; www2 .fitnessfirst.nl; Nieuwegracht Kolk 15; day €16, month pass from €39;  7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) A central location is not the only thing this modern gym has going for it. There’s a full range of cardio and weightlifting equipment, group classes, sauna, steam and aroma rooms, sun beds, beauty treatments and free video loans for members.

Garden Gym (Map pp62-5;  626 87 72; www .thegarden.nl; Jodenbreestraat 158; day pass €9.50, month pass €40-61;  9am-9pm Mon, Wed & Fri, noon-11pm Tue, noon-10pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun) Has been rated as Amsterdam’s best gym for women. The Garden Gym offers aerobics and feel-good activities, including sauna, massage, physiotherapy and dietary advice.

SAUNAS & BATHS

Saunas are mixed and there’s no prudish swimsuit nonsense, so check your modesty at reception (or pick up an extra towel). Note that gay saunas have another purpose entirely.

Hammam (Map pp58-9;  681 48 18; www.hammam amsterdam.nl; Zaamstraat 88; adult/child 2-5yr/child 6-12yr €15/4/11;  noon-10pm Tue-Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun, last entry 21hr before closing) In the northwest beyond the Haarlemmerpoort, Hammam is an attractive Turkish-style place for women only, offering a range of spa treatments and rituals such as baklava.

Koan Float (Map p92;  555 00 33; www.koanfloat.nl; Herengracht 321; floating 45/60min €30/38;  9.30am-11pm) It’s not a sauna, but come here for salt-water floatation tanks – and have music piped in if you like. Management swears that 45 minutes of soaking is the ‘cardio theatre’.

Hijama (Map p92;  626 80 60; www.hijama .nl; Prins Hendrikkade 89a; 1½hr treatment incl drink €25, in and around Amsterdam.

Pan Amsterdam (Map pp240-1;  626 80 60; www .amsterdam.com; Lijnbaansgracht 350; day/week pass €15/€22.50;  7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Large, well-equipped facility that has been renovated with a full complement of the latest machines; it offers classes, plus sauna, steam, tanning beds and a ‘cardio theatre’.

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Sauna Deco (Map p92;  623 82 15; www.saunadeco .nl; Herengracht 115; admission noon-3pm Mon-Fri €14, all other times €15;  9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 6-1pm Sun) Sauna Deco is a stunning Scandinavian-style sauna with good auxiliary facilities, a snack bar and lots of well-toned customers. The building itself is a gem, an early creation of architect HP Berlage; its Art Deco furnishings used to grace a Parisian department store. Massages and facials are also available; inquire for rates. Credit cards and PIN cards are not accepted.
Outdoor Activities
Soccer, ice-skating, cycling, tennis, swimming and sailing are just a few activities that keep the locals fit – and of course jogging, which is popular in the Vondelpark and other parks. The Amsterdamse Bos has several walking and jogging trails for serious exercise. Bikes are available for rent in many corners of town (see p240) and bike tours are available (p239).

The whole coast of Holland is one long beach, backed by extensive dunes that are ideal for walks. The closest seaside resort is Zandvoort, but quieter resorts can be found further north, such as Castricum north of IJmuiden, or Egmond and Bergen a bit further north near Alkmaar.

For information about sport and leisure activities and venues, visit the City Hall Information Centre (Map p625; 624 11 11; Amstel 1) in the arcade between the Stopera and the city hall. Local community centres (in the phonebook under Buurtcentrum) organise fitness courses.

CANAL BIKES
Explore the city from a different perspective with a pedal around the canals. Don’t worry, it isn’t as much work as it sounds. As long as you don’t mind getting a little bit wet, it is lots of fun.

Canal Bike (per hr per person €8, more than 2 people per boat €7, plus €50 deposit; 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, later on warm nights in summer), affiliated with Canal Bus (p249), allows you to explore the canals yourself at your own pace. Landing stages are by the Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Anne Frank Huis and the corner of Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat. The Rijksmuseum location (Map p100–1) is open year-round, and there are limited hours at other locations.

GOLF
Golf was long derided as something for the elite but has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, don’t go expecting lush rolling links such as at St Andrew’s. The Netherlands space crunch means that land is usually more profitably put to other uses. Among the more affordable options are lush rolling links such as at St Andrew’s. The Netherlands space crunch means that land

SAILING
It should come as no surprise that the Dutch are avid sailors. Yachting is a national sport – the word ‘yacht’, after all, comes from the Dutch jachtschip, or ‘chase ship’. This includes modern open boats and yachts, but also a more traditional kind revered here like nowhere else. On weekends a fleet of restored flat-bottomed boats, called the ‘brown fleet’ because of their reddish-brown sails, criss-cross the Ijsselmeer north of Amsterdam. Some are privately owned but many are rented, and sailing on one is an unforgettable experience.

Vessels on offer range from ancient pilot boats to enormous multi-masted clippers. Among the more affordable options are bot ters, one-time fishing boats with a sleeping berth for around eight people, from about €400 per day including skipper. Larger groups could rent a converted freight barge known as a jalk, a Frisian design with jib and spritsail
big event. Dutch football is ‘cool’ and ‘technical’, characterised by keep-the-ball play and surgical strikes. This, after all, is the cradle of ‘Total Football’.

**Amsterdam Arena** (☎️ 311 33 33; www.amsterdam arena.nl; Arenaplein 1, Bijlmermeer) is where Ajax plays. This amazing hi-tech complex with a retractable roof seats 52,000 spectators and has hosted many a major league championship. It also has an Ajax museum with cups and other paraphernalia. Soccer games usually take place Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon during the playing season (early September to early June, with a winter break from just before Christmas to the end of January). Take the metro to Bijlmer or Strandvliet/Arena A station.

Readers have recommended the one-hour guided **stadium tour** (☎️ 311 13 36; adult/child €8/5.50; ✉️ 11am-4.30pm Apr-Sep, noon-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar, except on game days or major events). The tour includes a walk on the hallowed turf and entry to the museum.

**TELEPHONE**

The Dutch phone network, KPN, is efficient, and prices are reasonable by European standards. Phone booths are scattered around town.

**Collect call** (collect gesproken; domestic ☎️ 0800 01 01, free call; international ☎️ 0800 04 10, free call).

**International directory inquiries** (☎️ 0900 04 18, per number €1.15).

**National directory inquiries** (☎️ 1888, per number €1.30).

**Operator assistance** (☎️ 0800 04 10, free call).

**Costs**

Calls are time-based, anytime and anywhere. KPN Telecom public phone boxes charge €0.10 per 15 seconds for all national calls (minimum charge €0.20), and €0.10 per nine seconds for calling a mobile phone. Phones in cafés, supermarkets and hotel lobbies often charge more. Calling from private phones is considerably cheaper.

The cost of international calls varies with the destination, and changes frequently due to competition. At the time of writing, calls to Britain and the USA cost €0.056 to €0.071 per minute respectively, and Australia €0.19. The connection charge is about €0.10. To all three countries, rates jump to €0.10 every 13 seconds when ringing from a KPN phone box.

Incoming calls to mobile phones are generally free to the recipient (assuming it’s a Dutch mobile phone used in the Netherlands).

Coin phones have made a comeback, but card phones still predominate. You can easily pick up a phone card (see below). Many public phones accept credit cards, although starting fees are stiff and cards issued outside of the Netherlands may require extra steps during dialling.

**Mobile Phones**

The Netherlands uses GSM 900/1800, compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 (some convertible phones work in both places).

Prepaid mobile phones, which run on chips that store call credits, are available at mobile-phone shops starting from around €35 when on special. You can also buy SIM cards for your own mobile phone. Look for KPN, Telfort, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone shops in major shopping areas including along Rokin, Kalverstraat and Leidsestraat. Some stores, such as T for Telecom and Bel Company, handle many brands.

New prepaid phones generally come with a small amount of call time already stored. To top it up, purchase more minutes at one of the branded stores, news dealers or supermarkets, and follow the instructions.

**Phone Codes**

To ring abroad, dial ☎️ 00 followed by the country code for your target country, the area code (you usually drop the leading 0 if there is one) and the subscriber number. The country code for calling the Netherlands is ☎️ 31 and the area code for Amsterdam is ☎️ 020; again, drop the leading 0 if you’re calling from outside the Netherlands. Do not dial the city code if you are in the area covered by it.

**Free information calls** (☎️ 0800)

**Mobile or pager numbers** (☎️ 06)

**Paid information calls** (☎️ 0900) Cost varies between €0.10 and €1.30 per minute.

**Phonecards**

For public telephones, cards are available at post offices, train station counters, VVV and GWK offices and tobacco shops for €5, €10 and €20. KPN’s card is the most common but there are tonnes of competitors – T-Mobile, Orange and Vodafone, among them – who usually have better rates. Train stations have Telfort phone booths that require a Telfort card (available at GWK offices or ticket counters), although there should be KPN booths nearby.

**TIME**

The Central European time zone (same as Berlin and Paris) is one hour ahead of the UK, six hours ahead of New York, nine hours ahead of Los Angeles and eight hours behind Sydney. For Daylight Savings Time, clocks are put forward one hour at 2am on the last Sunday in March and back again at 3am on the last Sunday in October.

When telling the time, be aware that the Dutch use ‘half’ to indicate ‘half before’ the hour. If you say ‘half eight’ (8.30 in some dialects of English), a Dutch person will take this to mean 7.30.

**TOILETS**

These are not a widespread facility on Dutch streets apart from the redolent, free-standing public urinals for men in places such as the Red Light District. Many people duck into a café or department store. The standard fee for toilet attendants is €0.50.

**TOURIST INFORMATION**

Maps, theatre tickets, hotel bookings and answers to your queries can be obtained at the VVV’s Amsterdam Tourist Office (Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer, Netherlands Tourism Board; www.holland.com). Its staff are always helpful, even if the offices can be quite busy. Note that most VVV publications cost money and there are commissions for services such as hotel bookings.

The **VVV information number** (☎️ 0900 040 40 40; ✉️ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) costs €0.40 a minute; from abroad call ☎️ 020-551 25 25 (no extra charge). Offices include inside **Centraal Station** (Map pp62-5; ☎️ 8am-9pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8.30am-9pm Fri) by platform 2; in front of **Centraal Station** (Map pp66-7; Stationsplein 10; ☎️ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; just off Leidseplein (Map p116), Stadhouderskade 1; ☎️ 10am-6pm); and as well as at the **Holland Tourist Information** (☎️ 7am-10pm) at Schiphol airport.

For anything related to entertainment, head to Amsterdam’s **Uitburo** (Map pp100-1; ☎️ 0900 01 91, per minute €0.40; www.aub.nl in Dutch; cnr Leidseplein &
TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travellers with reduced mobility will find Amsterdam only moderately well equipped to meet their needs. Most offices and museums have lifts and/or ramps and toilets for the disabled. But many budget and midrange hotels are in old buildings with steep stairs and no lifts, and hoteliers’ hands are often tied as registered monuments cannot be altered structurally. In addition, the cobbled streets can present problems for wheelchairs. Restaurants tend to be on ground floors, though ‘ground’ sometimes includes a few steps. The metro stations have lifts, many trains have wheelchair access, and most train stations and public buildings have toilets for the disabled.

People with a disability get discounts on public transport and can park free in designated spots, provided they have a windscreen marker. There are train timetables published in Braille.

The Amsterdam Uitburo and the VVV (see p255) can provide details regarding access to entertainment venues and museums. More questions? Contact the Stichting Gehandicapten Overleg Amsterdam (Map p122; SGOA, Amsterdam Forum for the Disabled; 31 77 79 55; www.sgoa.nl; Plantage Middenlaan 141).

VISAS

Tourists from nearly 60 countries – including Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, the USA and most of Europe – need only a valid passport to visit the Netherlands for up to three months. EU nationals can enter for three months with just their national identity card or a passport that expired less than five years ago.

Nationals of most other countries need a so-called Schengen visa, valid within the EU member states (except the UK and Ireland), plus Norway and Iceland, for 90 days within a six-month period.

Schengen visas are issued by Dutch embassies or consulates overseas and can take a while to process (like two months). You’ll need a passport valid until at least three months after your visit, and prove you have sufficient funds for your stay and return journey. Fees vary between €35 and €60, depending on your nationality.

Visa extensions are handled by the Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration & Naturalisation Service; 0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). Study visas must be applied for via your college or university in the Netherlands. For working visas, see below. Also visit www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/netherlands for up-to-date visa information, or check with the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Equality has long been taken for granted, although far fewer women than men are employed full-time, and fewer still hold positions in senior management.

In terms of safety, Amsterdam is probably as secure as it gets in the major cities of Europe. There’s little street harassment, even in the Red Light District, although it’s best to walk with a friend to minimise unwelcome attention.

Centrum voor Seksuele Gezondheid (Map p122; 624 54 26; Sarphatistraat 618; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, Tue also 6-9pm, by appointment) is a clinic offering information and help with sexual problems and birth control, including morning-after pills.

WORK

Work permits must be applied for by your employer in the Netherlands; in general, the employer must prove that the position cannot be filled by someone from within the EU before offering it to a non-EU citizen. Nationals from many countries must apply for a Temporary Entry Permit (MVV or Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf). Citizens of EU countries, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA are exempt.

You’ll need to apply for temporary residence before an employer can ask for your work permit. The process should take five weeks; contact the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

In the Netherlands, residency permits are issued by the Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst (0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). For details of work permits, contact the CWI (Employment Services Authority; 0800 80 01; Westwaarts 11, 2701 AD Zoetermeer). The CWI also runs a bilingual website (www.werk.nl) with up-to-date job offers.

Doing Business

Amsterdam makes much of its gateway function to Europe, with its busy airport, easy-going tax laws and educated, multilingual workforce. Many large international companies have their European headquarters and distribution in Amsterdam.

If you’re looking to rent office space and other facilities, try Euro Business Center (Map p92; 520 75 00; www.eurobc.nl; Keizersgracht 62-64) or Regus Business Centre (Map pp58-9; 800 020 20 00; www.regus.com; Strawinskylaan 3051). For services such as copying, videoconferencing and a courier, seek out FedEx/Kinko’s (Map p116; 0589 09 10; www.kinkos.nl; Overtoom 62).
It’s true – anyone can speak another language. Don’t worry if you haven’t studied languages before or that you studied a language at school for years and can’t remember any of it. It doesn’t even matter if you failed English grammar. After all, that’s never affected your ability to speak English! And this is the key to picking up a language in another country. You just need to start speaking.

Learn a few key phrases before you go. Write them on pieces of paper and stick them on the fridge, by the bed or even on the computer – anywhere that you’ll see them often.

You’ll find that locals appreciate travellers trying their language, no matter how muddled you may think you sound. So don’t just stand there, say something! If you want to learn more Dutch than we’ve included here, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet’s user-friendly Dutch Phrasebook.

### SOCIAL

#### Meeting People

Hello.
Dag/Hallo.
Goodbye.
Dag.
Please. 
Alstublieft/Alsjeblieft.
Thank you. 
Dank u /je (wel).
Yes/No.
Ja/Nee.
Do you speak English?
Spreekt u/Spreek je Engels?
Yes/Nee.
Do you understand (me)?
Heeft u een plaatselijke uitgaansgids?

### PRACTICAL

#### Numbers & Amounts

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#### Banking

I’d like to ...
Ik wil graag ...
- cash a cheque
- change money
- change some travellers cheques
- get online
- check my email
- reverse-charge/collect charge
- collect a call
- buy a phone card
- buy a prepaid mobile phone
- buy a sim card
- buy a prepaid sim card for your network

#### Phone & Mobile Phones

I want to buy a phone card.
Ik wil een telefoonkaart kopen.

I want to make ...
Ik wil ...
- an international call
- a call (to ...) for rekening van de opgeroepene telefoneren
- a collect charge
- a call (to ...) voor rekening van de opgeroepene telefoneren

Where can I find a/an ...?
Waar vind ik een ...

I’d like a/an ...
Ik wil graag een ...

#### Internet

Where’s the nearest internet cafe?
Waar is het dichtstbijzijnde internetcafé?

I’d like to ...
Ik wil ...
- check my email
- get online
- go online

#### Transport

What time does the ... leave?
Hoe laat vertrekt de...

- bus
- ferry
- train

What time’s the ... bus?
Hoe laat is de ...

- first
- last
- next
Are you free? (taxi)
Bent u vrij?
Please put the meter on.
Gebruik de meter alstublieft.
How much is it to ...?
Hoeveel kost het naar ...
Please take me to (this address).
Breng mij alstublieft naar (dit address).

FOOD
For more detailed information on food and dining out, see p156.

breakfast  ontbijt
lunch  lunch/middageten
dinner  diner/avondeten
snack  snack
eat  eten
drink  drinken

Can you recommend a ...?
Kunt u een ... aanbevelen? (pol)
Kan je een ... aanbevelen? (inf)
bar/pub  bar/café
café  café/koffiehuis
coffeeshop  koffieshop (note: a café where legal soft drugs are sold)
restaurant  restaurant

HEALTH
Where’s the nearest ...?
Waar is de dichtbije zijnde ...
chemist (night)  apotheker (met nachtdienst)
doctor  dokter
hospital  ziekenhuis

I need a doctor (who speaks English).
Ik heb een dokter nodig (die Engels spreekt).

Symptoms
I have (a) ...
Ik heb ...
fever  koorts
headache  hoofdpijn
pain  pijn

GLOSSARY
apotheker – chemist/pharmacy
bibliothek – library
bier – beer
bos – woods, forest
broodje – breadroll (with filling)
bruin café – brown café; traditional Dutch pub
burgwal – fortified embankment
café – pub, bar; also known as kroeg
coffeeshop (also spelt koffieshop in Dutch) – café authorised to sell cannabis
CS – Centraal Station
dagschotel – daily special in restaurants
drop – salted or sweet liquorice
dwarstraat – street connecting two (former) canals
eetcafé – cafés serving meals
fiets – bicycle
gasthuis – hospice, hospital (old)
gezellig – convivial, cozy
GG&GD – Municipal Medical & Health Service
gracht – canal
grachtengordel – canal belt
GVB – Gemeentevervoerbedrijf; Amsterdam municipal transport authority
GWK – Grenswisselkantoor; official currency exchanges
hof – courtyard
hofje – almshouse or series of buildings around a small courtyard, such as the Begijnhof
jenever – Dutch gin; also spelled genever
kaas – cheese
kade – quay
kassa – cashier, check-out
kerk – church
koffiehuis – espresso bar (as distinct from a coffeeshop)
koninklijk – royal
korfball – a cross between netball, volleyball and basketball
markt – town square
merguez – type of spicy sausage
NS – Nederlandse Spoorwegen; national railway company
openbare – public
paleis – palace
plage – beach
plein – square
polder – area of drained land
postbus – post office box
Randstad – literally ‘rim-city’, the urban agglomeration including Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Den Haag
rondvaart – boat tour
spionnetje – outside mirror allowing a house occupant to see who’s at the door downstairs
stadhuis – town hall
stedelijk – civic, municipal
stichting – foundation, institute
straat – street
strand – beach
stripkenkaart – stampable multi-use ticket used on public transport
toren – tower
VVV – tourist office
waag – old weigh house
wallen – Red Light District
wielklem – wheel clamp attached to illegally parked vehicles
zaal – hall
ziekenhuis – hospital

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