

Destination

Holland 2013/14

www.holland.com

www.itwalliance.com

The Netherlands – more often called Holland – is located in North-western Europe and borders the North Sea to the north and west, Belgium to the south and Germany to the east.

Holland is known for its love of the bicycle and as Europe's finest biking destination.

Destination Holland has been produced by the International Travel Writers Alliance with the support of the Netherlands Board of Tourism.

It provides a media resource for professionals looking to visit Holland to write, broadcast or create images that will highlight the country.

The Netherlands Board of Tourism will be delighted to talk to Alliance members about sourcing other story and feature ideas and potential press trip opportunities.

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Destination Holland

Holland : an overview

The constitution

Holland is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government.

For historical reasons, the government and parliament are in The Hague, although Amsterdam is the capital city. King Willem Alexander is the head of state and has a coalition government.



The language

While Dutch is the national language of Holland, English is widely spoken.

The people in the northern province of Friesland speak a language known as Fries, in addition to Dutch.

More than 90 percent of the residents of Friesland understand the Friesian language, nearly three-quarters speak it, 65 percent read it and some 70 percent can write it.

Facts and figures

Holland has a surface area of 41,528 square kilometres with the greatest distance from north to south 300 kilometres, and from west to east 200 kilometres.

Holland is one of the most densely populated countries in the world.

It has a population of 16,500,000 and an average of over 400 inhabitants per square kilometre.

The lowest point in Holland is 6.76 metres below sea-level.

Reasons to write about Holland : the cities

The cities of Holland provide the focal point of most visitor experiences with easy access to the surrounding countryside.

The key Dutch cities are:

- Amsterdam
- The Hague
- Rotterdam, and
- Utrecht

Amsterdam

Amsterdam is the capital and largest city in Holland.



It is one of the world's most alluring cities, with hundreds of 17th century houses, canals and museums where works of art by such masters as Van Gogh and Rembrandt are on permanent display.

The city is also known for its relaxed atmosphere, Amsterdam can be enjoyed any time of the year although it truly comes alive in summer with festivals, parades and concerts on floating stages on the canals.

In 2013, Amsterdam celebrates 400 years of its Canal Ring and the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum both re-opened after extensive renovations.

In 2014 the Stedelijk Museum will stage an exhibition on the work of Marcel Wanders; the Vondelpark will celebrate its 150th anniversary and the Rijksmuseum will reopen the Philips wing.

The tiny towns and villages just outside Amsterdam offer a rich tradition and typical Dutch landscapes with windmills, dikes and in late spring millions of blooming tulips.

www.iamsterdam.com

The Hague

The Hague is the seat of the Dutch government and the residence of the royal family.



The third largest city in Holland and capital of the Zuid-Holland province is near the North Sea.

With its wide streets, spacious squares and promenades and fine residential suburbs *The Hague* is a very elegant and attractive city.

It hosts many events during the spring and summer. Visitors also come to this area to enjoy the beaches and seaside resorts of Scheveningen and Kijkduin.

The beach and the dunes have plenty to offer sport enthusiasts from sailing, (kite) surfing, fishing and diving and many other water sports activities.

www.denhaag.nl/en.htm

Rotterdam

Rotterdam, Holland's second largest city, lies on both banks of the Nieuwe Maas, the southern arm of the Rhine



On the opening of the Europoort, in 1966, Rotterdam became the world's largest port for goods handled.

Central Rotterdam, which was almost completely destroyed by German air attacks in 1940, has emerged as one of Europe's modern cosmopolitan cities.

Rotterdam also enjoys a truly vibrant nightlife and a distinct skyline.

www.rotterdam.info



Utrecht

Utrecht is one of the oldest cities in Holland with a vibrant historic city centre surrounded by 13th-century canal wharves.



The old medieval centre of Utrecht kindles a passion for the past! Stroll along the century-old canals, and past the stately houses and wharves.

Here you can sample the pleasant, intimate atmosphere for which Utrecht is famous.

All year around Utrecht hosts various cultural events full of music, dance, literature, theatre and art.

The city's student community, the largest in the country, gives the city a youthful vibrancy.

Utrecht is home to the Centraal Museum, Dick Bruna House (creator of the internationally known rabbit Miffy) and the Rietveld Schroder house, a stunning example of the architectural style of the *de Stijl* movement and a UNESCO world heritage site.

www.visit-utrecht.com/en

Holland : Europe's cycling country

Holland is renowned for its passion for cycling and its love of the bicycle.



In 2014 there will be a focus on cycling in Dutch cities and the surrounding countryside as well as highlighting Holland as being the cycling country of Europe.

Holland is the one of world's premier cycling countries, boasting a road network that caters specifically for the needs of cyclists. The country's flatness helps assure a relaxed cycling tour.

Within relatively short distances, there are lots of things to see and experience, such as cultural heritage, landscapes and seascapes, dunes and dikes.

Holland's cycling facts and figures



- 84% of Dutch people own at least one cycle.
- In total there are 18 million cycles in Holland, more than the number of inhabitants, unique in the world!
- 40% of all cycles are purchased for recreational purposes.
- Holland has 29,000 km of cycle paths.
- 4,700 km of roads have special cycling lanes.
- Almost 1.5 million cycles were exported last year, with an export value of approximately €574 million.

In 2011 Germany purchased around 438,550 from Holland, with the France buying 200,000 and Belgium 192,910 cycles.

Holland's cycling past

Before World War II the majority of journeys in Holland were made by bike, but in the 1950's and 60's as car ownership soared, this began to change.

Cyclists found themselves being squeezed off of the road.

The increase in car users had a huge impact on the number of deaths on the roads.

In 1971 more than 3,000 people were killed by motor vehicles, 450 of them children.

As a result a social movement grew which campaigned for safer cycling conditions for children, it was called *Stop de Kindermoord* (Stop the Child Murder) after an article written with the same name by a journalist whose child had died in a road accident.

The Dutch government responded by building a vast network of cycling paths and by passing laws to secure the safety of cyclists on the road.

Cycling promotes sustainability

Sustainability is given a helping hand every time you get on your bike.

The Dutch government encourages the working population to use the bike by offering free or leased cycles, and by building more cycle parks where cyclists can park their bikes safely.

Road safety and rules

Holland ranks among the world's top 5 countries in terms of road safety.

In part, this is thanks to traffic rules that apply to all road users, including cyclists. For example, cyclists have the right of way in the following situations:



- cyclists coming from the right have right of way at a junction of equivalent roads
- in built-up areas cyclists have the right of way on roundabouts over vehicles leaving the roundabout
- cyclists are allowed to park on pavements and curbs, unless a sign prohibits it
- where there is no compulsory cycle or moped path, cyclists must use the road

Other rules in place:

- cycling proficiency lessons are a compulsory part of Dutch schooling. All schools have bike parks and at some schools 90% of the children cycle to school
- because of the road rules and protections in place by law most cyclists go helmet free
- In turn, cyclists are expected to obey the rules of the road. Cyclists may be fined for reckless cycling, being in the wrong place and for jumping red lights
- If you ride without lights at night, police can issue a 60€ fine. In addition bike reflectors are mandatory and if any of these are missing cyclists can face a hefty fine
- Parking your bicycle in the wrong place can also incur a 25€ fine

Bikes come in all shapes and sizes



You'll find bikes of all shapes and sizes in Holland. You can find one suitable to fit every situation. Here are some frequently occurring types:

City bikes

Built mainly to ride in a straight line in excellent comfort. You'll encounter a lot of these.

Hybrid bikes

Highly suitable for recreational use over short and long distances.

They are recognisable by a straight front fork with springs and are built with comfort in mind.

They easily handle bumpy roads.

Crossover bikes

These blend the features of a racing bike and a mountain bike.

They typically have large wheels and at least 27gears.

Holiday/trekking bikes

A combination of different types of bikes and intended for long distances.

They are ideally suited to cycling holidays, because they can carry a lot of baggage.

The price is fairly high because of the more expensive parts.

Mountain bikes

Also called MTB or ATB (All Terrain Bicycle), these bikes are designed for off-road tracks and mountain paths, but also perform excellently on 'normal' roads.

Recumbent bikes

A real eye-catcher because they are less common.

Their low height makes them more difficult to spot and gives the rider less overview of the traffic.

Recumbent bikes are slightly more expensive than ordinary bikes, usually because they are handcrafted.

Racing bikes

These are used for sport. The absence of lights makes them unsuitable for use in the dark.

Folding bikes

These are a good idea for small distances, and particularly handy for train commuters who want to ride from the station to their work (or home).

Tandems

Intended primarily for cycle enthusiasts, and there always need to be two of you.

The length of a tandem reduces its manoeuvrability.

Good interaction between the riders is essential, and this turns every journey into a special experience.

The Granny Bike or Omafiets

This bike provides a smooth ride, pretty lines and a comfortable upright riding position.

This bike is popular amongst Dutch women (and men!) of all ages.

Designed around a century ago it had women's long skirts in mind, so that they could easily step onto the bike.

Beware Omafiets often come without breaks and gears!

Cargo bikes or Bakfiets

Contrary to what the name suggests, these are typically used by mothers to transport their young children.

The bikes have 2 or 3 wheels and a large cargo box at the front. These are often customised with decorations, canopies etc.

Companies often use them too now to transport goods across cities.

The bar bike in Amsterdam

This is a mobile bar that you must power.

The beer bike is used principally for parties like company outings and stag parties.

It is particularly popular among locals and people on a day out.

Amsterdam

Real Amsterdammers cycle!

Cycling is the easiest way to get around and see the city. Amsterdam is home to approximately 881,000 bikes, which is close to the population of the city itself.



There are 140 bicycle shops and 29 bicycle hire businesses in the city.

There is room for 10,000 bicycles to park around Amsterdam Central Station.

In 2006, the longest bicycle bridge in the world was built across the Amsterdam-Rhine canal.

The Nescio Bridge is 780 metres long and is only accessible to cyclists and pedestrians.

Tourists can join in the cycling fun

There are special tourist routes and bike tours led by guides. Water bikes or pedaloos can be rented to use along the canals too.

Bicycles can be taken free of charge on public ferries across the River IJ.

A special ticket is required to take them on the train but it is not possible to take them on the tram. It is possible to rent bicycles across the city.

Typically, rental is possible for a minimum of three hours per day and on average the daily rental rate is 8€.

Most rental outlets can supply standard twowheel bikes, tandems, children's bicycles, racing bikes and bakfiets.

The main rental companies in Amsterdam are Yellow Bike, Rent-A-Bike and MacBike.

Some bike rental companies provide a 25% discount on presentation of an *Amsterdam City Card*.

The city is better adapted to transport on two wheels. This is because the 17th century city centre was made with pedestrians and horses in mind.

Overall, Amsterdam has 513km of dedicated, comfortable cycle paths including special bike-only bridges.

On average Amsterdammers collectively cycle over 2 million kms per day. 58% of Amsterdammers cycle daily (aged over 12).

There are many bicycle tours available through Amsterdam and into the surrounding countryside.

A bicycle tour through Amsterdam Zuid introduces you to this less visited part of the city.

On this self-guided route, you will pass museums, the stately Apollolaan and Vondelpark.

The tour takes around 2.5 hours and the illustrated guide can be picked up in public libraries and at the Amsterdam Tourist Office for 1€.

The Oostelijk Havengebied area can easily be reached by bicycle. Cycling and walking routes for this area can be picked up from the Amsterdam Tourist Office.

The area is a very modern neighbourhood full of contemporary architecture and design.

The area was constructed during the 1990's during an economic boom in Amsterdam, which is reflected in the high quality of materials used in the buildings and their ambitious designs.

The Oostelijk Havengebied was once an isolated area, now the regeneration has brought the four peninsulas – Java, KNSM, Borneo-Island and Sprenburg to life.

Cycling around here you will discover historic warehouses, concert halls, restaurants and a modern canal system to rival the historic 17th century canal ring.

Cycling in Amsterdam (cont)

Amsterdamse Bos is the name for the large park just outside Amsterdam.



A great place to cycle in and relax; ideal for picnics and walks with its natural landscape, sporting facilities for the more active and rowing lakes for water lovers.

It is situated 4km outside of Amsterdam and there are convenient cycle lanes to take you there.

Discover Waterland; an area of typical Dutch landscape with dykes and canals.

Waterland is the area north from Amsterdam surrounded by the cities Purmerend, Edam and Volendam.

The name Waterland dates from medieval times. The countryside (Waterland) is very suitable for cycling as it has an extensive network of cycling paths.

To make your visit, start by taking the ferry across the IJ behind Central Station.

You'll first have to cycle through urban areas before reaching the countryside around the Waterland area.

Along the way you will find a combination of the famous Dutch "polder" landscape and pretty villages, like :

- Broek in Waterland
- Zunderdorp
- Schellingwoude
- Durgerdam
- Ransdorp
- Holysloot
- Uitdam, and
- Zuiderwoude.

Amstel River Countryside (1/2 day trip)



Amsterdam certainly isn't the first place you think of when you hear the words 'rustling reeds', 'farms' and 'polder landscape'.

Nevertheless, Amsterdam's hinterland is quiet, green and unspoilt.

Simply follow the River Amstel, which starts in the city centre at the Muntplein.

In no time at all you'll be cycling past grazing cows, country houses and historic villages.

Picture the 17th and 18th centuries with one giant country house after another along the river bank.

These country houses were once owned by rich merchants during the Golden Age who were coming here to enjoy the peace and quiet with their family.

A few magnificent rural sites have been preserved, including Oosterveer and Wester Amstel.

Just outside of Ouderkerk is the largest, undeveloped area in the Randstad region of Holland, the polder called De Ronde Hoep (the Round Hoop).

The strange thing about it is that only the edge has been built upon, the polder itself being reserved for agriculture and meadow birds.

Cycling in Amsterdam (cont)



A tour of Ronde Hoep

The 17-kilometre trip over the dyke is very popular with walkers, joggers and cyclists.

Even the famous painter Rembrandt was a fan of this rural area; *Ouderkerk aan de Amstel* and surrounding area make frequent appearances in his paintings.

Between Zandvoort and IJmuiden lies Zuid-Kennemerland National Park, a glorious expanse of dunes of some 38 hectares which draws in two million visitors each year.

Living here are over one hundred different species of bird, red deer, rabbits, roe deer as well as large grazers such as Highland cattle.

There is also a small number of wisent – a (dangerous) European bison that, with a bit of luck, may be seen from a distance.

The undulating landscape is in stark contrast to the normally flat Dutch polder landscape. There are various marked paths :

Short routes of 1.5 kilometres, the majority around four to ten kilometres and for the fanatics, routes of more than one hundred kilometres.

The dune areas are often extremely expansive and conceal all kinds of surprises such as military bunkers and magnificent viewpoints.

Start at the visitor centre in Overveen for hiking maps, cycling routes and information on the landscape, history and management.

www.iamsterdam.com



Defence Line of Amsterdam (1/2, 1 day or 2 days)



The Defence Line of Amsterdam (Stelling van Amsterdam) is a 135 km long ring of fortifications around Amsterdam made up of forts located 10 to 15 kilometres from the city centre.

It was built between 1883 and 1920, and consisted of flooded areas (inundations) and 46 forts.

All of this was dedicated to protecting the national stronghold, as an absolute final line of defence for Holland.

Even during the final stages of its construction, the invention of the aeroplane and long-range artillery rendered the defence line obsolete.

Nevertheless, the forts and the infrastructure were left in place, largely in their original state.

The Defence Line of Amsterdam was placed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 1996.

The Hague

The Hague offers city cycle tours in partnership with one of their partners such as City Cycle Tours and Totzo!

The Hague is one of the best cities to cycle in with over 250 kilometres of dedicated cycle paths. It is also a relatively small city and residents can reach most of their destinations in 20 minutes (e.g. from the city center to the beach) with cycling from one end of the city to the other taking around 45 minutes.



City Cycle Tours

With an experienced guide, you will explore the most lovely and well-known spots of *The Hague* or alternatively you can go for a ride in the dunes.

The company offers two different group tours:

Orange Tour

The tour lasts 2.5 to 3 hours. It starts at Scheveningen and goes to the Peace Palace and from there to the Plein in the city centre.

Then the group will cycle in the direction of the royal residence of Huis ten Bosch and through the Haagsche Bos along the dunes back to Scheveningen.

Scheveningen Tour

Discover Scheveningen in a fun and active way starting by the former fishing village and the Scheveningen harbour and proceeding to the Pier and the Kurhaus.

City Cycle Tours are located at: Keizerstraat 27, 2584 BA The Hague.

www.citycycletours.nl

As well as Totzo! there are various places to hire bikes in The Hague:

Du Nord Scheveningen : www.fietsverhuurzuidholland.nl, and Verhuur Scheveningen : www.verhuurscheveningen.nl

Totzo!

Totzo! organises fixed and tailor-made bicycle tours and excursions in and around *The Hague*.

Totzo! allows you to experience what the citizens of The Hague love so much about their city and what they are really proud of.

The Hague Tour

This tour is all about *The Hague's* grand history and its role in Holland today.

It will lead you through neighbourhoods and past sites full of moving stories, funny anecdotes, popular myths and hard facts.

The Hague - Beat City number 1

In 1962 The Hague was home to over 2,000 bands, which produced a number of worldwide hits.

This tour tells the tale of the music and the scene during the city's roaring 1960s.

The title *The Hague - Beat City number 1* dates from that era and is still valid today.

Art and Architecture Tour

See *The Hague's* important works of art and architectural highlights. Discover which artists blossomed in *The Hague* in past times and which upcoming new artists are setting the scene today.

Sea, Dunes and Woodlands Tour

This tour is about the relationship between the city and the natural environment it is set in. Learn about the city's 'green rules' drawn up by King Willem II.

Hear the real fishermen's stories of Scheveningen. And what does 'Zuiderpark' have to do with the rest of the world?

Totzo! bike tours and excursions are located at: Noordeinde 59, 2514 GC The Hague.

www.totzo.org

Rotterdam

Rotterdam is a great city to discover by bicycle.

The extensive network of cycle paths are well maintained and the city is part of a network of major bicycle routes in the greater Rotterdam area.

You can rent a bicycle at Rotterdam Central Station via Fietspoint, starting from about € 6.50 per day. When you're in the city centre, you can take advantage of the free bicycle shelters on the Binnenrotte and the Meent.

Exploring the city with a guided tour is also possible, with Rotterdam ByCycle offering various bike tours for groups.

www.rotterdambycycle.nl/en



Big City Tour

On this three hour tour you will discover the diversity of Rotterdam.

A city full of modern architecture and an impressive skyline, city-parks and harbour-views.

Taking in Delfshaven, Erasmusbridge, the Southbank and Willemsbridge along the way. The tour is led by an enthusiastic guide and can be booked for 6 people or more.

It costs 23.50€ per person and includes the bike rental and guide service.

Inner City Tour

This tour is ideal for those who want to learn as much as possible about Rotterdam in a limited amount of time.

The tour takes 2 hours and during this your guide will show you the river Maas, the Old Harbour, Museum Park and the Old Harbour.

This tour can be booked for 6 people or more and costs 19.50€ per person and includes the bike rental and guide service.

Past and Present Architecture Tour



The tour takes 2 and a half hours and shows you over a hundred years of architecture.

After the Second World War many new buildings were built in the inner-city, many were high-rise.

Famous architects such as Quist, Koolhaas and Coenen put their mark on the city. But Rotterdam has a longer architectural history.

Brinkman & Van dr Vlugt and J.J.P. Oud already introduced many remarkable designs to the people of Rotterdam in the 1930s.

This tour can be booked for 6 people or more and costs 21.50€ per person and includes the bike rental and guide service.

It is also possible to hire bikes from Rotterdam ByCycle too for groups of 10 or more people and cost 7€ per day and 6€ per further day. Individual bike rental or smaller group rental can be made from:

Use-it, Vijverhofstraat 47 010 2409 158 Rent a cool green Kronan bike at Use-It for € 6.- for the day (€ 50.- refundable deposit required).

www.use-it.nl/node/80

Rotterdam (cont)

The World Port Classic

Since 2011 Rotterdam has hosted the World Port Classic which is a cycling event from Rotterdam to Antwerp (Belgium). The dates for the 2014 event have yet to be finalized but it is likely to take place in May.

www.wpctoertocht.nl

A good day trip to take by bike from Rotterdam is to visit Gouda.

Gouda lies 20km north east and is a quiet country town with canals, old historic buildings and narrow paths and alleys.

The market square is the largest in Holland and acts as a reminder of the town's medieval trading past. Today the market square hosts a cheese market every Thursday morning from June to August where you can buy Gouda cheese.

To the Southeast of Rotterdam, again around 20km away lies Dordrecht.

Barely touched by World War II the town has kept its 18th and 19th century architecture and there is plenty to explore amongst its terraces and harbours.

Green Rotterdam

Cycle route along parks, canals and nature in Rotterdam

Rotterdam is greener than you think!

In and around the city you can find many parks, forests, canals, hidden **neighbourhood** gardens and verdant dikes.

The varied nature of Rotterdam is best discovered by bike.

Green Rotterdam leads you along the most beautiful spots, including the Kralingse Bos (forest) and the Isle of Brienoord.

For this route the starting point is Rotterdam Central Station, at cycle junction 75 on the Weena.

The route follows the Westersingel, one of sixteen stately canals that have been built since 1850, to the Museumpark.

This park used to be part of the estate of the family Van Hoboken.

The modern park is surrounded by five museums:

- Kunsthal Rotterdam
- Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen
- Rotterdam Natural History Museum
- Chabot Museum, and
- The New Institute.

Next stop is the Park and the Euromast; its "crow's nest" gives you a panoramic view of the city and harbour for many miles around.

From the impressive entrance building of the Maastunnel, there are escalators where you can go down with your bike and cycle beneath the river.

On the south bank you pass the picturesque Charlois, one of the many old village centres within the city.

The Zuiderpark (South Park) is a large park that was recently completely renovated. The route continues towards the Van Brienoordbrug.

To the left of the bridge you can see the Island Brienoord, a beautiful rugged landscape.

Back on the north bank you bike along the Nesserdijk, an old part of Rotterdam from 1270.

Via the Kralingse Plas the cafe De Tuinen has a lovely terrace on the water and the Kralingse Bos (forest) you reach the Hillegersberg district with its many lakes.

Along the river Rotte, where Rotterdam got its name from, you again reach the city centre and Rotterdam Central Station, the end point of this route.

This route uses the junctions system. Street signs point you to the next numbered junction, where you will find a map with an overview of all junctions, routes and numbers in the area.

Total length: 31.8 km

Utrecht

The best place to start a bicycle tour is the medieval city centre with the magnificent Dom tower, the picturesque canals and wharves. From there, Utrecht and its beautiful surroundings can easily be explored by bike.



Cycling tour along the Vecht (35 km) - the rich heritage of the Golden Age.

The River Vecht meanders along reed covered banks behind them the imposing manors with a rich past.

As you cycle along look out for fortresses and majestic castles.

In the days of the Romans, the Vecht was a branch of the Rhine, which in those days flowed from fort Vechten around Utrecht to the Zuiderzee.

For a long time the Vecht was the most important shipping route between Amsterdam and Utrecht.

Later the connection between the Vecht and the Rhine was greatly improved by digging the Oudegracht.

Slot Zuylen Castle



Slot Zuylen Castle is situated on the river Vecht in the tiny village of Oud-Zuilen near Utrecht.

Whilst retaining its medieval castle-like features it was converted into an 18th century country mansion.

Slot Zuylen opened its doors to visitors 60 years ago and has meanwhile acquired museum status.

The past is brought to life through guided tours, garden walks, concerts and special events.

Different bicycle routes will guide you through the countryside surrounding Utrecht to fantastic places such as castles, the Dutch Water Defence Line and typically Dutch wind mills.

A beautiful route to take is the: 'Cycle to the Golden Age' route along the river the Vecht.

As a sumptuous boulevard, the Vecht river meanders between Amsterdam and Utrecht, framed by hydrangeas, high trees and magnificent country estates.

The old river course around the city became land and disappeared.

In the 13th century castles were built on the higher embankments along the river. Small settlements developed around these castles.

In the 17th century, during the Golden Age, the wealthy merchants and regents from Amsterdam built their country estates along the river Vecht.

The houses were surrounded by gardens and landscaped woods.

The most beautiful part of the Vecht is between Maarsse and Loenen aan de Vecht.

Here the river meanders past castles, country estates, gardens, summer houses and woods.

Kasteel De Haar



Another major castle to look out for along the way is Kasteel De Haar.

There are only a few castles in Europe that have the same ideal image of a medieval fortress with towers and ramparts, with canals, gates and drawbridges as De Haar.

The castle was entirely restored and partially rebuilt in the late 19th century and it rises like a real fairy-tale castle from a park with large trees, surrounded by old gardens and ponds.

Utrecht (cont)

The Westbroek Lake tour

Another day trip suggestion from Utrecht is the lake area tour which is around 36km.

Go to the tourist office at Loosdrecht to start your journey and ride over the Oud Loosdrechtesedijk dyke.

To your left is the wonderful country estate designed by the famous garden architect Zocher.

Continuing on through Nieuw Loosdrecht towards the Rading, you will pass through beautiful towns like Hollandse Rading, St Maartensdijk, Achthhoven and Westbroek.

Just past Westbroek you will see the water of the Maarseveenseplassen to your left.

A little further on is the Bert Bospad road that leads through a beautiful region towards the Tienhovense Plassen lake area.

You will cross through this amazing nature reserve towards Breukeleveen.

To your left is the Stille Plas lake (or Breukeleveensplas). Passing through Muydeveld and Boomhoek, towns in the Wijdemeren, you will return to your starting point in Nieuw Loosdrecht.

In all, this bicycle tour takes about 2 to 2.5 hours.

Bike rental, information and maps

The Tourist Information Office in Utrecht is next to the Dom tower and sells bicycle routes and maps.

Visitors can also hire a bicycle from the Tourist Information office for € 10 per day (a cash deposit of € 100 is required).

www.visit-utrecht.com/en

Cycling Routes

LF routes

LF routes (Landelijke Fietsroutes) are national cycle routes perfect for multi-day cycle trips.

They are linear cycle routes which are intended for cycling from a to b. LF Routes are generally long-distance, cross-border routes and constitute a national network of approximately 4,500 kilometres.

They are signposted in two directions with rectangular white signs with green lettering. The signs show the route number, the route name and a directional arrow.

The Big Polder tour



For another suggestion there is the Big Polder tour which is 39km. The tour starts in Amersfoort.

From here you will ride to Soest with its beautiful Soestdijk Palace, which is where the former Dutch Queen Juliana lived.

After Soest you will head towards Baarn, entering the peaceful polder region.

The Eempolder is an area of extensive fields ruled by nature. Cycle along the Eemdijk dyke, and enjoy the views that stretch all the way to Flevoland.

When you turn off at the end of the Eemdijk, you have almost reached the end of the tour.

The last few kilometres lead you through green meadows back to Amersfoort.

Cycling routes (cont)

Junction routes

The junction route network covers most of Holland.

Every junction has a number and an information board which contains an overview map.

It also indicates the distance to the next junction.

At every junction, you have a choice of several junction numbers to continue your trip.

Themed routes

Themed routes are made up of several LF routes. These routes are usually between 30 to 50 kilometres long and are signposted using hexagonal signs.

The theme of these routes can often be deduced from their name e.g. the Molenroute (Mill route).

Although there are still a number of these routes in Holland the emergence of junction routes has resulted in a steady decline of the number of themed routes with hexagonal signs.

The Zuiderzeeroute (Zuider Zee Route)

www.nederlandfietsland.nl/en/long-distance-cycle-routes/zuiderzeeroute

The Nederlandse Kustroute (Dutch Coastal route)

This follows the North Sea and Waddenzee coast.

www.nederlandfietsland.nl/en/long-distance-cycle-routes/nederlandse-kustroute

The Tulip Bulb Route



The advantage of this system is that everyone determines for themselves how short or long they want their route to be.

Moreover, the system is flexible: at every junction, you can decide to shorten or change the route.

To cycle from one junction to another, just keep following the route signs with the number of the next junction.

The Ronde van Nederland (Tour of the Netherlands)



This is the ultimate route for any holiday cyclist.

This tour strings together several sections of LF routes into a tour of over 1,300 kilometres.

www.nederlandfietsland.nl/en/long-distance-cycle-routes/ronde-van-nederland

Those that complete the tour receive a certificate and are listed in the hall of fame at nederlandfietsland.nl (only in Dutch).

www.nederlandfietsland.nl/landelijke-fietsroutes/wij-fietsen-de-ronde-van-nederland

The Tulip Bulb route in Flevoland is named by National Geographic Traveller as one of the finest routes in the world.

The Noordoostpolder is home to the largest bulb fields in Holland.

During the flowering period, a marked trail is available.

The trip can be made by car, bike or on foot.

Along the route millions of tulip bulbs can be seen. Besides the Tulip Bulb route there is an information centre and a tulip show garden.

Cycle- friendly accommodation in Holland

In Holland, places that carry the 'Fietsers Welkom!' (Cyclists Welcome!) quality label, go the extra mile to cater to cyclists' needs.

There is ample choice of holiday accommodation in Holland equipped for cycling holidaymakers. Some suggestions are shown below:

Hikers' cabins



These wooden cabins with simple facilities are mostly to be found at camping sites.

There are approximately 700 of the cabins at 220 places across the country.

www.trekkershutten.nl/en/

Bed & Breakfast Vrienden op de Fiets

These are not commercial B&B establishments, but private addresses where you can get overnight accommodation with breakfast.

Each address has its own particular look and feel.

In total there are 3,500 addresses, all affiliated to the foundation of the same name.

www.vriendenopdefiets.nl/en/###http://vriendenopdefiets.nl/index.php/en/

Natural Campsites



People looking for tranquillity in green surroundings can go to around 140 nature camping sites.

They are open to hikers and also take cyclists.

www.natuurkampeerterreinen.nl/en/

KGC (Karaktervolle Groene Campings)



These are 30 small campsites at various locations in Holland.

They are small and peaceful, making them ideal for people who are travelling from place to place and want a good night's sleep.

www.kgc.nl/en/

Cycling events in Holland

In a country where getting around by bike is the norm, you will naturally find a host of cycling events. Some are aimed purely at the fun of taking part in sports and outdoor recreation.

Others are organised to raise money for good causes. Two of the most important annual cycling events are :

Hof van Twente Herfstfiets4daagse

This annual 4-day event offers routes varying from 35 to 70 km through deciduous woodland in autumnal colours in the northeast of Holland.

Drentse fiets4daagse

Drenthe, in northeast of Holland, is the best province for cycling and enjoying nature. The routes in this 4-day event in July are 30, 40 and 100 km per day.

Classic Holland

Keukenhof

The world-famous Keukenhof gardens can be easily explored by bike. Cycle along and enjoy fields of flowers close up and in detail.

Bikes can be rented in the gardens.



In 2014 the park will be open from 20 March to 18 May and the 2014 theme will be Holland.

www.keukenhof.com

Press trips to Holland

In 2014, group and individual press trips (dates and trip capacity are being confirmed) will be organised to:

- Keukenhof
- Amsterdam
- Rotterdam
- The Hague
- Utrecht

Art focused group press trips will also be organised around the theme of *Mondrian*.

For more information contact : **Simone Sagi at ssagi@holland.com**

How to get to Holland from the UK

Short breaks

Short breaks to Holland can be sourced through Expedia

www.expedia.co.uk

By air

easyJet

easyJet flies to Amsterdam from the UK from London Gatwick; Luton; Stansted; Edinburgh; Newcastle Southend; Liverpool; Bristol and Belfast.

www.easyjet.com

Other airlines flying from the UK to Holland include :

- KLM
- British Airways
- jet2.com
- Cityjet
- Darwin Airline
- Flybe, and
- Ryanair

By sea

Stena Line

The Harwich to Hook of Holland ferry route is operated twice-daily by Stena Line.

The journey time is approximately six-and-a-half hours.

Foot passengers and car drivers can travel on board and Stena Line also operates the Dutchflyer rail and sail package.

Cycles are also welcome on board.

www.stenaline.co.uk

Other ferry companies

Other ferry companies that sail from the UK to Holland include P&O Ferries and DFDS Seaways.

By rail

Eurostar

Eurostar services run from London St.Pancras, Ebbsfleet and Ashford International Stations to Brussels.

Regular and reliable connections run from Brussels to cities and towns all over Holland.

www.eurostar.com

More information



For more information about Holland and press images contact :

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