

Netherlands Traveler

Where: Amsterdam, Netherlands

When: Mid-May 2019 (arrive in the morning; depart in the evening); This time of year has the least amount of rain, only a day or two fewer than the wet months. It will still rain while you're here, so pack accordingly. In the Spring, you'll have smaller crowds and the city is thawing and some greenery will start to bloom.

How Long: 10 days, sleeping over 9 nights

Good to Know: Remember that a coffeeshop isn't selling coffee, these are cannabis cafes and they don't allow cigarette smoke inside. Dutch weed is quite strong, so go easy if you smoke it – and if you do, also try a space cake but wait an hour for affects before you eat another. Local currency is the Euro. The language is Dutch, but they are excellent at English. Obviously, you'll have a lot of Dutch food, but equally matched by Indonesian food. Local beverage of choice is Heineken, but gin is also very popular. Biking, walking and sometimes boating are the best ways to get around. Don't bike under the influence, you will be fined. Last tip - watch out for canals, people fall in all the time.

Packing Tips: (1) Raincoat, the weather is fairly wet here – so consider a travel umbrella as well; (2) Power adapter; (3) Water bottle, cheaper than having to buy water every day and the water is safe to drink; (4) Portable charger as you'll be out most of the day, don't let your phone drain out; (5) Comfortable walking shoes that are also bike friendly, sandals or open-toed shoes are not ideal.

Day 1

Welcome to Amsterdam!

Get to your hotel and unpack. Stroll around your neighborhood to get familiar with your surroundings. Get a little dressed up and have a traditional Dutch dinner at Haesje Claes (Dutch, \$\$) to officially welcome you to the Netherlands.

Day 2

Breakfast – TEDS (Brunch, \$\$) and then enjoy a stroll to your next stop.

10 AM – Do something touristy and get a picture in front of the 'I Amsterdam' sign located at the back of the Rijksmuseum on Museumplein, and then visit the [Rijksmuseum](#) (€19 = \$22; whole museum is 4-5 hours, average time spent is 2-3 hours). Book in advance and receive a discount online.

Get your picture with the sign at the start of the day to avoid heavy crowds and watch for pick-pocketers.

12:30 PM – Stroll through Vondelpark (Amsterdam's biggest urban park): sights to see include an open-air theatre, bike rides more. Enjoy lunch at the [Seafood Bar](#) (Seafood, \$\$).

3 PM – Visit the [Van Gogh Museum](#) across the way (€19 = \$22; time spent is 2 hours). Book in advance.

Don't miss the iconic 'Sunflowers' and 'The Potato Eaters'. Peek into the third floor to see works by Pissarro and Monet.

6 PM – Stroll around Leidseplein (Leiden Square) for people watching, souvenirs, etc. but you'll be right back.

7 PM – Cross the canal to Kartika (Indonesian, \$\$) for dinner. Try spicy rijsttafel or 'rice table'.

Return to Leidseplein. The square gets active with raves, dancing, drinks and more. Stay as long as you want or catch up on your jet-lag.

Want to dance? After 11 PM head to Escape, one of Amsterdam's most well-known clubs that was established in 1987. It's a swanky and pricey venue that consists of three parts – club, bar and café.

Day 3

Sleep in.

11 AM - 3 PM – Let's Eat, take a walking [Food Tasting Tour of Jordaan](#) (\$90 per person; time spent is 4 hours).

Book in advance. Sample 12 different food tastings at 7 unique ventures, meet the familiar keeping Dutch food traditions alive, venture through fancy neighborhoods and picturesque canals while learning the cultural history of Amsterdam with a canal ride.

Revisit some of the areas you saw, go shopping, or head back to the hotel to freshen up for tonight.

6:30 PM Dinner at De Belhamel (French, \$\$\$) is an elegant, European/French menu with a fabulous canal view and terrace. Enjoy and lavish dinner, dessert and drinks before starting your evening – no high-heels, you're walking later.

8 PM – Tour the [Sexmuseum de Venustempel](#) known as the SexMuseum or Venus Temple in front of the Central Station. It will walk you through the history of naturalism and development of sexuality, and you'll get a laugh out of the quirky mannequins and photos. (Time spent is 45 minutes). This is the start of the Red Light District.

9 PM – Explore the Red Light District (time spent is 2 hours), stop wherever for a drink or to people watch. Enjoy your night! Please keep in mind it is forbidden to take pictures of women behind red lit windows, people are patrolling to ensure this rule is enforced and they don't ask for your camera/phone nicely.

Fun Facts: The red lights indicate a woman, while the blue lights indicate transgender; there will be children here with their families, it's safe and open to all.

Sights to See: Cannabis College where you can get free advice on the recreational and medicinal use of cannabis or venture down a few doors to learn 'in-depth' at the Hash, Marihuana & Hemp Museum; pay a visit to the Condomerie, a Condom shop; and stop in TonTon Club Centrum for some arcade games.

Avoid: Watch for pickpockets. A common misconception, but you are not allowed to smoke weed on the streets; Bananenbar is over-priced and watered down; the Erotic Museum is more of a store that you must pay to shop in; and again, don't take pictures of the women.

Day 4

Grab a coffee and stroopwafel or Oliebollen from Metropolitan on Warmoesstraat (Patisserie, \$\$).

9:30 AM – Visit a 13th-century church, [De Oude Kerk](#) (€12 = \$14; time spent is 30-45 minutes)

This church was built on a cemetery; therefore, the entire floor consists of gravestones.

Look to the back of the church and you may see the top of Beurs van Berlage, the former stock exchange building. And venture around the church to see the [Belle](#) sculpture, honoring sex workers around the world.

10 AM – Walk over to tour the [Koninklijk Paleis](#), the Royal Palace where the king and family still live (limited openings but for your trip this is available the 18th and 19th; €10 = \$12, time spent is 1 hour).

11:30 AM – Make your way south to Leidseplein (Leiden Square) and to the bridge. You'll stroll through canals and walk-ways taking in the city. Stop at any of the hundreds of bars and restaurants for lunch.

This square is a great place to revisit at night, it's packed with dance clubs, bars and more.

1:30 PM – Shop through stands selling clothing, food, flowers at more at the iconic street market located here since 1905, [Albert Cuyp Market](#) (time spent is 1 hour). If you're adventurous, seek out and try authentic Dutch food like the famous herring. Need a break? Go just behind the market to relax in Sarphatipark.

3 PM – Have the [Heineken Experience](#) at the brewery turned museum, which includes a tour of the processing and a tasting (€18 = \$21; time spent 2-3 hours). Book in advance to avoid the line and receive a discount online.

6 PM Dinner – Cross the canal to La Storia della Vita (Italian, \$\$) for a lovely, Italian dinner.

Find a bar on the canal and have a relaxing evening or see if anyone is performing at the Paradiso concert hall.

Day 5

Grab a coffee but save room for brunch.

9:30 AM – Learn about Amsterdam's history in the city's [Begijnhof](#) located in the city center (time spent is 30-45 minutes). This former women's religious community that dates to the 15th century and has 2 wooden houses still standing. Learn more → [here](#). Contact the Begijnhof through the website to arrange a tour prior to your visit.

This is private property and serves as a place of silence, and visitors are expected to respect this custom.

11 AM – Late breakfast at [The Pancake Bakery](#) and try some massive sweet and savory Dutch pancakes.

1 PM – Walk down the canal to visit the [Anne Frank House](#) (€10 = \$12; average time spent is 1.5 hours). Get tickets ahead of time to avoid the very long lines.

3 PM – Walk through the Bloemenmarkt, Floating Flower Market, located on the Singel Canal (time spent is 45 minutes) and find a good souvenir and try some cheese.

This is the only floating flower market in the world, and tulips are the most popular flower here.

7 PM – Fancy dinner at Brasserie Ambassade (Fine Dining, \$\$\$), reservations required. Great ambiance and fantastic wine selection.

Day 6

Day Trip to [Rotterdam](#), the rebuilt city after being bombed flat during WWII. It is now reconstructed and is a distinguished and quirky architecture scene that holds the largest number of skyscrapers in the Netherlands. Other Day Trip Options: Giethoorn, Maastricht, Utrecht, Windmills of Kinderdijk (UNESCO World Heritage site), Tulip Fields of Lisse or Haarlem.

9 AM – Get there by train ride: time spent is 1.5 hours or by the fast train, time spent is 45 minutes. After exiting Rotterdam Central Station, turn around and check out the fully modern and unique architecture.

11 AM – Grab lunch at the futuristic and colorful [Markthal](#), the Market Hall, consisting of an indoor food market in a modern complex; “World of Drinks” shop is a cool one to see.

12:30 PM – Walk north to [Grote of Saint Laurenskerk](#), the Church of Saint Laurence which is the only remaining piece of medieval architecture that survives in Rotterdam. Peek your head inside, but no need to tour.

Then head to see the peculiar houses of Rotterdam, known as the [Cube Houses](#) which is also a museum (€3 = \$4; time spent is 1 hour). Walk through town – marvel at Witte Huis (only of the only buildings to survive the Blitzkrieg in WWII) and the Euport till you reach the bridge Ersamusburg and take photos. You can even visit the [Maritime Museum](#), a huge collection of cartography, maritime memorabilia and art if you’d like (€14 = \$16; time spent is 1 hour). And if you’re a big fan of boats, make time to visit the SS Rotterdam, a large ocean liner that now serves as a hotel and museum.

4 PM – Explore the art at [Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen](#) (€17,50 = \$20; time spent is 2 hours).

Don’t miss: “Tower of Babel” by Pieter Bruegel and “Couple with their heads full of Clouds” by Dali.

Stroll toward Het Park and through to other side to reach the [Euromast Tower](#) to have a perfect 360-view of Rotterdam; get tickets in advance.

7 PM Dinner Options: [Jamie's Italian Rotterdam](#) (Italian, \$\$), [Zeezout](#) (Seafood, \$\$\$), or [Gastrobar Hartig](#) (Small plates, \$\$\$) and then take the late train back to Amsterdam.

Day 7

Grab a coffee and stroopwafel or Oliebollen before starting your day.

10 AM – Find nemo at the [NEMO Science Museum](#), a modern architecture building that is the largest science center in the Netherlands (€17 = \$20; time spent is 2 hours but 3-4 hours with kids).

Other options: Zoo, Botanical Gardens, Holocaust Memorial or Dutch Theater/Jewish Cultural Quarter.

For lunch, grab a slice of pizza at NEMO and take a seat on the pier.

2 PM – Learn about the authentic cheese making process in a [Cheese Tasting Tour with Wine](#) at Henri Willig (€14,95 = \$18; time spent is 1 hour). Sample 5 different kinds of cheese served with mustard and cheese dips, and sip on wine or Dutch beer.

Stroll around the corner to continue tasting Dutch beer at [Proeflokaal Arendsnest](#) (Bar, \$\$), a cozy copper and wood-paneled walled bar that serves over 100 beers from Dutch breweries.

5 PM – Head back to the hotel to freshen up for dinner and a night on the town. Find a local spot for dinner.

Check out music venue and club Melkweg in advance and see who’s performing – then go! Or head to Jimmy Woo, a luxurious night club that won the ‘Dutch Design’ prize and ‘Best Club Sound in the Netherlands’.

Day 8

10 AM – Brunch at [Blue Amsterdam](#) (\$\$) and sit on the 2nd level for a 360-view of the city; make a reservation.

Noon – Take the free 15-minute ferry ride behind Central Station to [NDSM](#). This place is filled with quirky décor, hipster eateries, music and wonderous street art that started as a shipping yard. Go exploring.

- Find all the street art you can by wandering around the shipyard – look at shipping containers, walls, rocks, everything. Make sure to locate graffiti artist Kobra's painted "Let Me Be Myself" of Anne Frank on the NDSM-Werf building.
- The Sculptures and Installation Art – you can't miss the giant spider or binocular looking art that includes ear trumpets.
- Turn around to look at the Faralda Crane Hotel which used to be a crane and is now one of the most exclusive hotels. If you're extra jumpy, take a bungee jump leap from a 50-meter platform attached to the hotel.
- NDSM Welcome Centre or Warehouse City is full over studios, theatres and start-up businesses that you can peek into.

3 PM – Have a coffee or tea at Noorderlicht Café, a former greenhouse (Café, \$\$). Don't let the appearance fool you, it's warm and welcoming inside, it's just being hip. Or get a healthy bite at Pilek (\$\$), a restaurant inside a shipping container on the water's edge. Head back to town on the ferry.

7 PM Dinner – Prepare your appetite and make reservations, because the ribs at Cannibal Royal Handboogstraat (\$\$) are worth it, and so are the burgers, and bitterballen and everything. And it will be hard to do but save room for the cheesecake.

Rest up and change for an evening out.

11 PM – Head out for dancing at AIR Amsterdam or Club AIR, for cutting-edge electronic tunes and a multi-teared dance floor.

Day 9

10 AM Breakfast at Tinner on Rokin (Brunch, \$\$), commonly known as brunch heaven. Try the Bloody Mary soup or other exotic dishes.

11:30 AM – Learn a bit more about the city's history at the [Amsterdam Museum](#) (€14 = \$16; time spent is 2 hours). If you want more art, there's also the [Museum Het Rembrandthuis](#) for a large collection of Rembrandt. If you have time, visit the Magere Brug aka Skinny Bridge, a traditional draw-bridge but it's a tad out of the way.

1:30 PM – Shop, eat and marvel in Dam Square. Don't miss the National Monument that serves as a remembrance of WWII. Here's a tad bit of history → [here](#).

3 PM – Take a boat tour with [Those Dam Boat Guys](#) (€25 = \$29; time spent is 1.5-2 hours), book in advance.

5 PM – Drop into the [Amsterdam Cheese Museum](#), but don't take a tour – try samples and buy a wheel!

Look up what time the sunset happens, and then watch the sunset over the canal at the famous spot, "7 Bridges". Beer Garden Dinner at De Bieruin Prinsengracht (Beer Garden, \$\$) and try the spit-roasted half chicken with home-made sauces and the veggie burger with mango chutney is hands down amazing.

Last night so you need to go out – revisit the square, red light district or other hot spots that you heard about.

Day 10

Pack up before you head out.

11 AM – Go all out for this breakfast at Libertine Café (Breakfast, \$\$). Get the baked eggs, bruschetta with salmon, famous Dutch asparagus, cheesy cauliflower, pizza, pasta, one of everything and enjoy! Oh, must try the orange almond cake too.

Explore The Nine Streets neighborhood for unique art, fashion, and more. Find The Otherist store for a souvenir unlike any others. Venture back to Vondelpark and enjoy your last day here. People watch, feed the birds, watch a show at the open-air theater, but relax.

Head Home. Goodbye Amsterdam.