

amsterdam marketing

PRESS FEATURE

Italy in Amsterdam

There are age-old ties between Amsterdam and Italy. As early as 1477 a group of people from Lombardy came to Amsterdam. Not only has Amsterdam been called the Venice of the North since the 17th century, there were also intensive business contacts between the two cities. In the 17th century Amsterdam developed into the most important trade centre of Europe. The unparalleled wealth allowed people to build homes on the banks of the famous canals that resembled small palaces. The interiors of these canal-side houses were embellished with Italian marble.

Favourite tourist destination

Since 1600, Amsterdam has been a favourite destination for visitors from Italy, which becomes apparent from countless travel journals. This appeal still continues today and Amsterdam attracts many Italian tourists. Italian visitors are ranked sixth on the Tourist Barometer.

'De Lommerd': money lenders from Lombardy

In 1477 a group of Italian money lenders came to Amsterdam. They were called 'Lombarden' after their country of origin: Lombardy. That is why a lending bank is still popularly known as a 'lommerd' in Dutch. The current Stadsbank van Lening at de Nes, established in 1614, is a typical example of the architecture from that day and borders on the Lombardsteeg.

Courante uyt Italien, 1618

Since the 17th century Amsterdam has been famous for its tolerance towards dissenters and many foreign papers and books were printed in Amsterdam. The oldest Dutch newspaper is the Courante uyt Italien ende Duitschlandt (the Newspaper from Italy and Germany), printed in Amsterdam in 1618. The only remaining copy of this newspaper is in the Royal Library of Stockholm. A replica can be viewed at the Persmuseum (Press Museum) in Amsterdam East: persmuseum.nl

Amsterdam, Venice of the North

Trade between Amsterdam and Venice has been thriving for centuries. These cities have much in common: canals, a harbour, entrepreneurial spirit and a well-preserved historic inner city. As early as the 17th century Amsterdam was dubbed 'Venice of the North' by travellers.

Italian marble in the Dam Palace

Around 1650 Amsterdam was among the richest cities in the world. To emphasise this fact, large quantities of marble from Carrera were used during the build of the new city hall, currently the Paleis op de Dam (Royal Palace). Transporting these heavy blocks of marble was quite an endeavour: from the mountains they were transported to Carrera by oxen carts and then by ship to Amsterdam by way of Livorno or Genoa. When the building work was completed, it was quite impressive and it was referred to as the 'eighth wonder of the world'. The most impressive use of marble can be found in the interior: all halls and galleries have beautiful marble sculptures, for instance in the Vierschaar where the death penalties used to be pronounced.

't Wapen van Venetië

At Stromarkt 11 a simple house is located with a lavishly decorated lower façade cornice. The name of this house dates back to the Gouden Eeuw (Golden Age) when the trading relationships between Amsterdam and Venice were close. On the façade is a stone with the text 't Wape van Venetien', the Sint Marcus lion from the Venetian coat of arms and the initials HB, referring to the former owner of the house Hendrik Beerenburg. The family coat of arms – a bear in a castle – is on top of the gable.

Italian architecture

Italian architecture greatly influenced the Amsterdam cityscape. Beautiful classicist examples from the 17th century are the Paleis op de Dam by architect Jacob van Campen and the façades of the canal-side houses by for instance Philips Vingboons.

At the end of the 19th century architect H.P. Berlage was inspired by the Palazzo Pubblico in Sienna when he designed the famous Koopmansbeurs.

Home of musician Locatelli

Italian violinist and composer Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764), came to Amsterdam in 1720, where he composed and taught music, but also conducted concerts. He lived at Prinsengracht 506. In honour of him the city of Bergamo gifted a commemorative plaque for the façade of the house in 1964.

Italian chimney sweeps in Amsterdam

Between Spuistraat and Singel, directly opposite the Romeinsarmsteeg, lies a narrow alleyway where no one lives anymore nowadays. Since the 17th century this alley has been called the Schoorsteenvegerssteeg

(Chimney Sweep Alley). There used to be eight houses here and Italian chimney sweeps and a Dutch house keeper lived in the majority of them. At the moment there is not much left of the Italian chimney sweeping history. With the arrival of central heating the number of chimney sweeps reduced considerably.

't Hofje van Venetië

At Elandstraat 104-142 you can find a courtyard with alms houses around it called the Venetiëhofje, or the Maarloops Hofje – with reference to the regent at that time, who built the east wing. The 'hofje' was founded in 1650 by Jacob Stoffels, a merchant who acquired his fortune from trading with Venice. To show his gratitude, he built the thirteen houses for 'widows in need' and named it Venetië.

Theater Frascati

Circa 1810 an Italian opened a coffee house at de Nes by the name of Frascati. Over time party rooms were added, so Frascati developed into a beloved Amsterdam amusement centre. From 1840, it was home to regular concerts; the main hall could seat some 1500 visitors. The complex is still being used as a theatre. Frascati is located at Nes 63.

An Italian palazzo at the Roemer Visscherstraat

In the Amsterdam Roemer Visscherstraat, near Vondelpark, the 'Italy' House is located at number 26; a house in palazzo style. In 1894 a row of houses was built in the styles of seven countries: Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Russia, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. This 'United Europe', also known as the 'Zevenlandenhuizen' (Seven Country Houses) was designed by architect Tjeerd Kuipers (1858-1942) with the intention to depict the history of European architecture.

Ice-cream sellers in Amsterdam

Italian Michele Tofani came to Amsterdam in 1928. He intended to sell ice-cream to the people attending the Olympic Games that were held in Amsterdam that year. He decided to stay and sold ice-cream from his cart at Amstelveld or Waterlooplein. The Tofani family still own ice-cream parlours with delicious ice-cream at Kloveniersburgwal and in the De Pijp neighbourhood.

- Tofani, Kloveniersburgwal 16
- Peppino, Eerste Sweelinckstraat 16

Italian concept store

It stands to reason that Amsterdam also boasts many restaurants and delicatessen with delicious Italian food. A must-visit is Il Sogno in the

Nieuwmarktbuurt area: a shop with various Italian products. Not only do they sell delicious and fresh Italian food, but also Italian fashion, books, gifts and Italian courses. Il Sogno is located at Koningsstraat 19.
ilsogno.eu

Coat of arms of Rome on the façade of the Centraal Station

The façade of Amsterdam's Centraal Station is adorned with the coats of arms of fifteen European cities, each depicted on colourful enameled tiles of about 1 x 1 metres wide. Between Madrid and Marseille you will find Rome. The coats of arms are all part of the lavish decorations of the station that opened in 1889 and was considered to be a 'triumphal arch of transport' at the time.

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About Amsterdam Marketing

Amsterdam Marketing is the city marketing organisation of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, active in the fields of promotion, information, research and services. Our ambition is to put this region on the map as one of the five most attractive metropolitan areas in Europe for its residents, visitors, businesses and influential groups. Under the motto "I amsterdam", we present the region as a dynamic place to live and work, an attractive travel destination and a test market for innovation.