

amsterdam marketing

PRESS FEATURE: OLD HOLLAND

Traditionally Dutch

Most visitors think of windmills and dykes when thinking of Holland. You don't need to go far from Amsterdam to discover traditional Holland: picturesque villages and water-rich landscapes as well as industrial-heritage sites are just around the corner.

Just north of Amsterdam lies an idyllic, largely man-made landscape. This is where Holland is quintessentially Holland, with ruler-straight canals, winding ditches, drawbridges, ancient wooden houses, traditional windmills and classic Dutch farmsteads. Thickly green pastures with grazing cows, sheep and horses stretch in all directions, with always at least one church tower visible on the horizon. This is the land of Hans Brinker, the hero of the 19th-century children's novel who saved the nation from disaster by plugging a hole in the dyke with his finger, preventing a catastrophic flood. (A story which is much better known abroad than in the Netherlands itself.)

The mills of the Zaanstreek

'Industrial heritage' might sound like we're talking about smoky factories, but nothing is less true. The lush Zaanstreek is the oldest industrial area in the world. As early as the 16th and 17th centuries, Zaandam gained importance with the invention of the sawmill. A lot of wood was needed for shipbuilding, and with the sawmill it went much faster and cheaper than by hand. The sawyer guild in Amsterdam saw this development as a threat and banned wood sawmills in Amsterdam. The clever peasants of the Zaanstreek benefited by producing ships for the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The ships, which were built in Zaandam (up to 100 per year!), needed to be built quickly. Shipbuilding became world famous in this area. Soon flour, peel and oil mills also arose, followed by paper, paint and other mills – more than 1,000, all together.

Russian Czar Peter the Great even came over to study the innovative shipbuilding for three days in 1697. He stayed in the cramped box bed of his friend Gerrit Kist, whose house from 1632 still exists. This 'Czar Peter House' is an example of early timber building in Zaandam and became a place of pilgrimage for fans of the czars. It is one of the earliest museums in the Netherlands.

In the 19th century, windmills were gradually replaced by factories, warehouses and mills. Thus was born one of the most important

industrial areas of the Netherlands: the Zaanwand of Wormer, a row of old factories and warehouses.

Zaanse Schans and the Zaan Museum

An absolute must-see is the [Zaanse Schans](#), a neighbourhood of Zaandam that boasts a collection of well-preserved original Zaandam houses and an impressive panorama of windmills. Discover here how the people of the Zaan region lived and laboured during the 17th and 18th centuries. Unique is that the 'village' is inhabited with still-working mills, including a sawmill and paint-making windmill. The nearby Zaan Museum paints a picture of the industrial development of the region, with a special section devoted to what is perhaps the ultimate symbol of Dutch industry: the Verkade biscuit and chocolate factory. In this factory, original machines can still be seen at work in a living re-enactment of history. During the region's industrial heyday, the river Zaan was a major transport artery. Now you can still easily explore the highlights of the area by boat.

Along the banks of the Zaan you have characteristic green wooden houses, mills, industrial monuments and modern architecture. You will sail along the Wormerwand (Wormer Wall) and the Zaanse Schans to the former chocolate factory in Zaandam, Verkade, and Hembrugterrein, which formerly served as a munitions factory. You can also reverse the route. Visitors can use the Zaan Hopper, a boat service from mid-May to mid-September on Friday, Saturday and Sunday between Zaandam and Wormerveer. Or you can rent an electric boat and navigate through the area yourself. You'll find spots to moor at various places along the route. Don't forget to admire the spectacular Zaandam [Inntel Hotel](#) with its front of 'stacked' green houses, as well as the exciting new Zaanstad Town Hall.

The Zaan and its banks are regularly the scene of events and festivals. Annual highlights include the sloop, the Zaan Regatta and the popular Singing on the Zaan festival, which in early July attracts many visitors with its large fleet of brightly coloured boats full of choirs and party people. In early June you can go to MidzomerZaan, a music festival at different industrial locations. Visit <http://www.zaanstreek.nl/visitors/> for more information.

The website of [European Route of Industrial Heritage](#) (ERIH) offers beautiful trails covering the industrial history of Zaandam. But Zaandam has more to offer. Nature lovers can walk, bike or explore the

surrounding green peat area by boat. More information on tourism opportunities can be found at www.zaanstreek.nl.

Authentic Dutch towns

North of Amsterdam, on the shores of the Markermeer lake, are four historic harbour towns and villages: Volendam, Edam, Monnickendam and Marken. Each one is well worth a visit, especially for the quintessentially Dutch houses, the traditional clothing still worn by some residents and the convivial atmosphere.

Arriving by boat, the wooden fishermen's houses along the dyke can be seen from far away. In these little villages and towns, time seems to have stood still. The canals, the harbours, the cheese markets, the houses and their stepped gables – everything is just as it was a hundred years ago. Some residents even continue to wear clogs and traditional dress. But the pleasant cafés and restaurants with their outdoor terraces have kept up with the times, and are happy to serve customers with a proper cup of coffee – or a sample of fresh herring. After all, the traditional speciality of these settlements is fish. The local population has always lived off fishing, though tourism has now become another major source of income.

Volendam

Volendam may well be the best known of the fishing villages on the Markermeer. The village owes its international fame not just to its pleasant restaurants, terraces and curio shops, but also to the authentic houses lining its streets, which make visitors feel as if they have stepped a hundred years back in time. The harbour is home to countless eateries specialising in – of course – fresh fish. The other export product is music: (mainly) Dutch artists from this village are immensely popular in the Netherlands.

Edam

Edam, aka 'Little Amsterdam', is world famous for its cheese. Until 1922, farmers used to come here by ship, unloading their wares at a dedicated quay, from which the cheeses were transported to the market by Edam's cheese carriers. Once the cheese had been approved, the price per kilo was determined through a process called *handjeklap*, which involved the prospective buyer and seller slapping each other's hands with each bid until a handshake sealed the price. Since 1989, a cheese market is organised for visitors every Wednesday from 10:30 to 12:30 in July and August. Edam also boasts a host of historic buildings. The town acquired city rights as early as 1357, and from that time on flourished especially in

the areas of shipbuilding and trade. A number of unique buildings remain from this period, including the former Town Hall (Raadhuis), the Edam Museum and the Fort at Edam (Fort bij Edam), which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Monnickendam

Monnickendam is a historical town with a rich history that gained city rights as early as 1355. Its Saint Nicholas Church – also known as The Great Church – dates back to 1400 and is a landmark visible from far and wide. Monnickendam is also home to the Speeltoren, with the country's second-oldest carillon, an orphanage built in 1638, a music-box museum, 'de Oude Visafslag' pottery centre and a number of eel smokehouses.

Marken

Marken lies across from Monnickendam, on what used to be an island inhabited by Frisian monks. These monks initially lived off agriculture, but were forced to become fishermen due to floods. In 1957 the island was connected to the mainland by a road (the N518), and it is now a popular tourist destination. This is due in large part to the breathtaking vistas of the Markermeer lake, the unique traditional dress and genuine Dutch houses. This outstanding village can also be accessed by boat from Volendam.

Beemster, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Quiet and nature just a stone's throw from lively Amsterdam is what the Beemster region has to offer. The 17th-century Beemster polder is a prime example of how the Netherlands has 'made' large parts of the country. Since 1999, the Beemster polder is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Explore the area by foot and by bicycle, and of course from the water. You can rent rowboats, canoes and electric whisper boats at several places. A suitable starting point for a cycling or boat trip is the picturesque village of Broek in Waterland. The name says it all: there are more waterways than roads. Nearby are other beautiful villages. The area is 100% countryside, and yet only half an hour by bike from the centre of Amsterdam. You can relax in Fort Resort Beemster, also recognised by UNESCO. Here is a sustainable wellness centre located with all facilities behind the metre-thick walls of the fort.

In the Beemster Infocenter visitors can obtain maps and directions. There are also bikes and boats for rent, for a journey of discovery through the flat polder landscape of old farms and fields, across the winding dikes, with beautiful views and traditional farmhouses everywhere you look.

How to get there?

Although you can travel just fine by car, you can also use public transport. The Zaanstreek is easily accessible either by train or by bus. The train trip between Amsterdam Central Station and Zaandam is just about 15 minutes. For the Zaanse Schans, take the train from Amsterdam towards Alkmaar, getting off at station Koog-Zaandijk. Then it's a 10 minute walk. There are several buses from Amsterdam to Zaandam. Connexxion's bus line 391 has Zaanse Schans as an end stop. There are also specifically organised bus trips from Amsterdam.

The Markermeer area can be reached from Amsterdam Central Station via (EBS) bus lines 306 (direction Middenbeemster), 312 and 314 (towards Edam), 315 (Marche) and 316 (Volendam-Edam). Bus lines 312, 315 and 316 also goes to Monnickendam. For Broek in Waterland you can also take bus lines 312, 314, 315 and 316.

You can find a [map](#) with tips and useful information on public transport by [9292](#).

Facts & figures

Markermeer is:	One of the largest freshwater lakes in Europe
Lake surface area:	700 km ² (triangular shaped)
Depth:	2 to 4 metres
Number of 18 th -century mills (Zaanse Schans):	More than 600
Number of mills from the year 2016 (Zaanse Schans):	6
Zaanstad area:	83.24 km ²
Water surface:	11.24%
Land area:	88.76%
Zaanstad population:	152,678 (1 April 2016)
Distance between Amsterdam and Zaanstad:	10 km (as the crow flies) and 19 km (car)
Beemster area:	72 km ²
Dyke length:	Approximately 38 km
Water surface area:	About 5%
Altitude:	3.5 m below sea level

Source: Society for the Preservation of Nature and Visitor Centre Netherlands Beemster

Amsterdam, July 2016

Note to the editor: The information may be freely referenced or copied if the source is credited: www.iamsterdam.com. The above information is subject to change and Amsterdam Marketing accepts no responsibility for inaccuracies in published information.

Public information:

www.iamsterdam.com

Amsterdam Marketing Press Office

E-mail: pressoffice@iamsterdam.com

Images: <http://mediabank.iamsterdam.com/>

Telephone: +31 (0)20 702 6265

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 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.