

# amsterdam marketing

## PRESS FEATURE

### Russia in Amsterdam

**Amsterdam has age-old ties with Russia, both in the fields of trade, shipping, science, technology and culture. An important impulse was given by Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725), who resided in Amsterdam for some years. He was very interested in western technology and did not only come to Western Europe to establish diplomatic contacts, but also to study the latest technologies. Many locations around Amsterdam are testament to these ties between Russia and the Dutch capital.**

### **Tsar Peter the Great as Amsterdam shipbuilder**

Peter the Great stayed in Amsterdam in the years 1697-98 and 1716-17, and particularly wanted to learn shipbuilding. He was incognito, but the city council organized various festivities in his honour. In 1697, they for instance offered him a festive dinner at the Hortus Botanicus and a spectacular Spiegelgevecht (or show battle) on IJmeer. Using the pseudonym 'Pieter Migaylof', the tsar worked as a ship's carpenter for half a year, on the wharf of the Dutch East India Company at the Wittenburgergracht, from August 1697, where at the time the frigate *Pieter en Paul* was being built. He mastered the Dutch language and regularly acted as an interpreter between Russians and the Dutch. In 1698 the tsar took 640 Dutch engineers, craftsmen and artists to Russia to build a new Russian fleet.

Peter the Great admired the way in which Amsterdam had developed into one of the richest cities in Europe within a short period of time and the city served as inspiration in his construction of Saint Petersburg. In 1722 Russia concluded peace with Sweden. History has it that Peter the Great dressed in the uniform of a Dutch sea captain at a party in Moskou with his wife the tsarina beside him in a Dutch traditional costume. When Peter the Great died in 1725, the Dutch influence on Russia disappeared. In honour of the tsar's stay as a ship's carpenter in Amsterdam, a bronze commemorative plaque has been put up in the side wall of the former Admiralty Ropery, next to a Dutch East India Company warehouse on the Oostelijke Eilanden (Oostenburgergracht 77).

### **Hermitage Amsterdam**

In 2009, Hermitage Amsterdam opened its doors, a branch of the famous Hermitage in Saint Petersburg. Each year the Hermitage Amsterdam offers two special exhibitions from the enormous collection of the Saint

Petersburg Hermitage. From the entrance of the Amstel River, visitors cross the courtyard to the east wing where the actual entrance is. This is also where the foyer, auditorium, the shop and café-restaurant Neva, named after the river the original Hermitage is on, are located. The building was established in 1681-1683 and is the largest 17<sup>th</sup>-century building in Amsterdam. It used to be called the Amstelhof and was probably the very first home for the elderly in the world. Today, it is a contemporary exhibition complex with a separate Hermitage for children. [hermitage.nl](http://hermitage.nl)

### **Canal-side home for tsar Peter the Great**

In 1717, Peter the Great stayed in the house at Herengracht 527 for a while. It was the residence of the Russian envoy and merchant Dimitri Soloviev, who – on the tsar's orders – had to leave his house in great haste to make way for the tsar and his retinue.

The sandstone façade of the house, with pilasters and an eagle at the tympanum, is a beautiful example of the Amsterdam architecture at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The façade has a plaque.

### **Amsterdam 'keel' for Peter the Great's Russian fleet**

As requested by Peter de Grote, Amsterdam 'schout bij nacht' Cornelis Cruys (Stavanger 1657 – Saint Petersburg 1727) the founder of the Russian navy in 1723. As the first commander of the Russian fleet he foiled the attacks of the Swedes on Saint Petersburg. When he died, his body was transported back to Amsterdam by ship. His grave can be found in the Oude Kerk.

### **The hero of the Black Sea**

Under Catharina II, Amsterdam Admiral Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen (1735-1819) supported the Russian fleet in the Battle for the Black Sea, earning him the name 'Hero of the Black Sea'. It prompted the Russian navy in naming a battle ship *Kapitan Kinsbergen*. Admiraal van Kinsbergen was given a memorial stone in the Nieuwe Kerk.

### **A Russian 'cathedral' at the Roemer Visscherstraat**

At the Amsterdam Roemer Visscherstraat, near the Vondelpark, it is possible to tour seven European countries in less than a minute. Since 1894, it has a row of houses in the styles of seven countries. 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. Number 28 is the 'Russia' House. It resembles a Russian cathedral from the days of Ivan the

Terrible. The façade is crowned with an onion-shaped dome with a cross.

### **Russian Orthodox Church H. Nicolaas van Myra**

Among the Christian communities in Amsterdam, the Russian orthodox faith holds a special position. As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was a Greek-Russian orthodox church at the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, the Katharinakapel. It was mainly visited by Russian and Greek seamen and merchants, but in 1697 also by Peter the Great and his retinue. The current Amsterdam parish of the Heilige Nicolaas van Myra was founded in 1974 by a small group of orthodox worshippers. They chose the holy Nicholaas as their patron saint; not just patron saint of the city of Amsterdam, but also a much beloved saint in Russia. Because the previous church had become too small, the parish moved in 2006 to the Lijnbaansgracht/Tichelstraat in the Jordaan neighbourhood. The previous Roman Catholic monasterium dating from 1912 was transformed into a characteristic Russian orthodox church. The panels have been sculpted with early Christian motifs from Slavonic, Georgian, Byzantium and Roman traditions. The church contains various icons gifted by the churchgoers. Services are held on Saturdays at 6.30pm and Sundays at 10am. More information: [orthodox.nl](http://orthodox.nl)

### **Coats of arms of Saint Petersburg 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 enamelled tiles of about 1 x 1 metres wide. Between Frankfurt and Vienna you will find Saint Petersburg. 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.

### **Malevich: famous Russian in Stedelijk Museum**

The collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam comprises dozens of paintings and gouaches by Kasimir Malevich (1888-1935). It is the largest Malevich collection outside Russia. Together with Dutch painter Mondriaan this Russian artist is considered to be the founder of abstract art.

### **'Rusland' but no Russia**

Since the 15th century there has been a street between Kloveniersburgwal and Oudezijds Achterburgwal with the name 'Rusland'. However, this name does not refer to the country in Eastern Europe. It refers to the 'ruisland' that used to be here, an Old-Dutch word for reed. Apart from various historic gables, a large five-star hotel can be found

here: the Radisson SAS.

### **Tsar Peter as a goldmine for artists**

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Peter the Great was so popular in the Netherlands that many artists took him as the subject of their paintings. Because these were in great demand, artists sometimes painted several almost identical copies. The Dutch Scheepvaartmuseum (National Maritime Museum) has a few paintings in its collection that refer to Peter the Great, such as *Het fregat Pieter en Paul op het IJ (Frigate Pieter and Paul on the IJ)* painted by Abraham Storck (1635-1710). The Rijksmuseum Amsterdam has an almost identical copy, at first glance only varying in size. Apparently Peter the Great was so popular that the painter was requested to produce more paintings on this subject in a short period of time.

### **Tsar Peter and the Amsterdam Museum**

On 27 Augustus 1697, Tsar Peter the Great and his Grand Embassy visited the Amsterdam Burgerweeshuis at Kalverstraat, where the Amsterdam Museum is now located. Various museum artefacts remind of the Russian tsar living in Amsterdam. Part of the museum's permanent collection is a model of Jan van der Heijden's (1637-1712) fire hose. Peter the Great visited the workshop of this painter and inventor on several occasions. With this fire hose a powerful uninterrupted stream of water could be achieved through use of the latest discoveries regarding air pressure. Tsar Peter was impressed by the ingenuity of this wonder of physics. Peter the Great bought ten of those 'brandspuiten'; apparently the Dutch invention made a lasting impression, because the Russian word for a fire hose is still 'brandspoit'.

[amsterdammuseum.nl](http://amsterdammuseum.nl)

### **Stanislavski in Stadsschouwburg**

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) was a famous Russian theatre maker. It is, therefore, not surprising that the café-restaurant in the Stadsschouwburg was named after him. Seven days a week – from 8am to midnight – guests are welcome. Stanislavski is conveniently located next to the Theatre & Film Bookshop. It is a place where culture, hospitality and catering meet.

[stanislavski.nl](http://stanislavski.nl)

[ssba.nl](http://ssba.nl)

### **Czaar Peterhuisje in Zaandam**

In the vicinity of Amsterdam, in Zaandam, you can still find the Czaar Peterhuisje. When he lived in the Netherlands in 1697, Peter the Great stayed in this house for a week. The tsar came especially to the Zaanstreek area to study shipbuilding. The wooden house was built in 1632 and is the oldest wooden house that was preserved. Although the tsar only stayed here for a week – from 18 until 25 August 1697 – people were so honoured with him staying here that this is the reason why the house is still here today. The stone cover was commissioned by Tsar Nicolaas II, the last tsar of Russia. The building style is late 19<sup>th</sup> century; a Russian Orthodox church served as an example. Over the years, the museum has been visited by a great number of Russians.

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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.