THE IMPORTANCE OF WINDMILLS FOR THE NETHERLANDS

INTRODUCTION
A gentle creak and a soft ‘whoosh’ as the sails zip past is all you hear when standing close to a windmill. It’s worth bearing in mind that a century or so ago nigh on ten thousand windmills were fully operational day in day out in the Netherlands! They were used to reclaim polders, mill grain, to press oil from seeds or to saw wood. This wood, for example, ensured a flourishing shipbuilding industry in the Zaanstreek region, which is where the world’s first bona fide industrial zone emerged in the seventeenth century. When the windmills found themselves in competition with steam and later diesel and electricity, they gradually disappeared from the Dutch landscape, leaving the 1200 windmills that remain today and are being lovingly maintained and protected. This car route passes the oldest, most beautiful and most unique mills that abound in the Netherlands. You will pass through old Dutch fishing villages and drive through typical Dutch polder landscape and the UNESCO world heritage region De Beemster. The route starts in Haarlem, one of the most beautiful cities in the Netherlands and a wonderful place to begin with a coffee.

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Touristic routes Amsterdam Metropolitan Area
Windmill route
STARTING POINT OF THE ROUTE:

Molen de Adriaan
Papentorenvest 1A, Haarlem
GPS: 52.38404, 4.64190

Molen de Adriaan
Haarlem is the birthplace of many famous Dutch painters who repeatedly immortalized this tower mill in oils. Which is logical, as the mill occupies a magnificent spot on the River Spaarne. Inside there are expositions on Haarlem and windmill technology. At the top, twelve metres above the river, you have a great view of the city.

Go to the following address: Schansend 7, Zaandam.
GPS: 52.47335, 4.82182

Zaanse Schans
In total, in excess of one thousand windmills populated the Zaanstreek region, from the traditional flour mills to mills that were used for sawing wood for shipbuilding. Around 1650 some 75 ships were built here each year. Even Tsar Peter the Great came over from Russia to learn how to build a ship in Zaandam. One must see is Verfmolen De Kat (paint mill), where dyes and chalk are still ground to produce pigments for traditional paint.

Go to the following address: De Borcht 10, Amsterdam.
GPS 52.32408, 4.89378

De Riekermolen
This polder mill was built in 1636 but was moved to the present site on the River Amstel due to Amsterdam’s urban expansion in 1956. Seeing an old windmill like this with Amsterdam’s high-rise buildings in the background is a unique experience.

Go to the following address: Akersluis 10, Amsterdam.
GPS: 52.34153, 4.79223

1 Molen de Adriaan

If the foundation managing it has its way, the sails will be turning at full strength again in 2011 on the occasion of the four hundredth birthday of De Beemster region. Check the website for the latest news: www.nachtegaalbeemster.nl.

Go to the following address: Achterdichting 1A, Katwoude.
GPS: 52.49048, 5.05778

4 De Kathammer
The landscape doesn’t get more typically Dutch than this. At the edge of a winding stream, set against the backdrop of the wooden fishermen’s houses of Volendam, stands the octagonal polder mill De Kathammer. This mill moves the water in the neighbouring polder and prevents houses and roads from subsiding and enables farmers to work their land properly.

Go to the following address: Hobredenweg 4, Middenbeemster.
GPS: 52.56450, 4.91928

Korenmolen De Nachtegaal
We do not know how old De Nachtegaal is exactly. It is possible that the windmill was already second-hand when it was moved to this spot in 1669. The windmill is in dire need of restoration.

Go to the following address: De Borcht 10, Amsterdam.
GPS 52.32408, 4.89378

Touristic routes Amsterdam Metropolitan Area
Windmill route
6 Molen van Sloten
Molen van Sloten is one of the few windmills that is open to the public pretty much daily. With a bit of luck the miller will show you how he turns the windmill’s cap to face the wind. In the accompanying Kuiperijmuseum (coopery museum) an imitation workshop has been created in which wooden casks and barrels are made. This is also a popular location for weddings.

Go to the following address: Zijdstraat 28, Aalsmeer. GPS: 52.26885, 4.74650

7 Molen de Leeuw
Above the shops and restaurants in the centre of Aalsmeer, Molen De Leeuw towers proudly. After a thorough restoration in 1996 the grain mill was put back into use. The wheat that is milled here can be bought in the windmill. A lovely souvenir to take home with you.

Go to the following address: Hommeldijk 20, Haarlem. GPS: 52.26885, 4.74650

8 Molen de Hommel
Over the centuries, a large number of windmills have been struck by lightning or the subject of considerable fire-damage. So too was this polder mill, which was razed to the ground by fire due to a lightning strike in 1967 and was restored in subsequent years. This typical Dutch mill is situated in a lovely spot on a recreational pond near to the historic Cruquius windmill. When the sails are turning, the doors are open.

TIP! On national windmill day, a lot of windmills open their doors and turn their sails. Check the website www.nationalemoldag.nl for dates and participating windmills (website is only available in English).

Did you know that nearly all windmills are looked after and maintained by volunteer millers?

FACT!

This route is part of the project ‘Visit Amsterdam, See Holland’ and is financed by: City Region of Amsterdam, Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Noord-Holland, Flevoland, Aalsmeer, Almere, Amstelveen, Amsterdam, Haarlem, Haarlemmermeer, Lelystad, Ouder-Amstel, Velsen, Zaanstad, Zandvoort, Councils of the ISW (Intermunicipal Cooperative Body).