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. The cycle route starts at the railway stations in Zaandam, where you can hire a bicycle, and passes through the Zaanstreek region, the historical windmill mecca, and the wetland recreation area Het Twiske. Wind in your hair and get pedalling!

THE IMPORTANCE OF WINDMILLS FOR THE NETHERLANDS

BIKE RENTAL
NS Fietspoint Pieters
At trainstation Zaandam
Provincialeweg 21, Zaandam
T +31 (0)75 615 65 93
www.vvvzaanstreek.nl

TOURIST INFORMATION
VVV Agency Zaandam Inntel Hotels
Provincialeweg 102, Zaandam
T +31 (0)20 201 88 00
www.vvvzaanstreek.nl

VVV i-Point het Twiske
Noorderlaaik 1, Oostzaan
T +31 (0)20 201 88 00
www.vvvzaanstreek.nl

VVV i-Point Zaanse Schans
Schansend 1, Zaandam
T +31 (0)20 201 88 00
www.vvvzaanstreek.nl
The mill has served as an oil mill, a processor of cocoa waste and (in the Second World War) as a printing business for such things as food rationing coupons. Nowadays it is used to produce and sell linseed oil.

At Molen Het Pink, turn right into Pinkstraat and follow this. The street turns into ‘Museuimlaan’. At the start of the curve you will see on your right-hand side a green house typical of the Zaan region: the Molenmuseum (windmill museum).

Molenmuseum
This museum, which has been here since 1928, provides a clear picture of the heyday and demise of industrial windmills, the prosperity it brought for Amsterdam’s harbour, and the tough living conditions for the miller and his labourers. If the wind was up, they would toil day and night amidst a deafening din and a terrible stench. If the wind abated, then they were occupied with maintenance work.

Turn right into Museuimlaan. Take the first right, Zwarte Bonsemstraat. At the end of the street turn right into Stationsstraat. At the end of this street turn left into Hoogstraat. At the bridge over the River Zaan turn left into Guisweg. At the end of Guisweg turn left. After the viaduct, take an immediate right onto the cycle path. The cycle path becomes Guispad. After the bridge you will see Molen De Schoolmeester on your left-hand side.

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. Park up your bike for a moment, because this is a magnificent spot for walking too.

Cross the River Zaan using the Julianabrug (bridge) and then turn into Hoogstraat on the left. This street leads naturally into ‘Lagedijk’. Turn right into Boschjesstraat. At the end of the street turn left into Pinkstraat.

Molen Het Pink
This windmill was built in 1620, making it the oldest extant mill in the Zaan region. And it’s a resilient one, because it has withstood the most terrible hardships: being hit by lightning, the upper axle breaking twice, fire and subsidence.

STARTING POINT OF THE ROUTE:

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4 Molen de Schoolmeester
This is the last remaining functioning wind-powered paper mill in the world. The invention of the Hollander beater made it possible to produce paper from bits of material, old paper and rope. In part thanks to an extensive renovation at the start of this century, De Schoolmeester is still producing ‘Zaansch Bord’ paper the traditional way, paper suitable for use as packaging material.

5 Twiskemolen
The magnificent Twiskemolen was rebuilt in the Twiskepolder in 1974 and drains the Twiskepolder. The original mill from c. 1578 was initially sited on another spot where it was dismantled in 1939. The shell was left behind without its sails and was used as a residence until the 1960s.

Follow the cycle junction signs:
18 → 70 in direction of 69.
On the Provincialeweg turn right. You are now at the finishing point.

FACT!
In contrast to polder mills, grain mills are not inhabited due to the dust. There are still polder mills that are inhabited.

1 BAR & RESTAURANT PUUR SAEN
Aan de Vaart 1
1506 TW Zaandam
T +31 (0)75 631 17 11
I www.inntelhotelsamsterdamzaandam.nl

2 CAFÉ-RESTAURANT FABRIEK
Jan Sijbrandssteeg 12
1502 BA Zaandam
T +31 (0)75 614 76 16
I www.de-fabriek.nl

3 DE HOOP OP D’SWARTE WALVIS
Kalverringdijk 15 (Zaanse Schans)
1509 BT Zaandam
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I www.dewalvis.nl

4 PAVILJOEN TWISKE
Noorderlaaik 8
1511 BX Oostzaan
T +31 (0)75 684 48 31
I www.paviljoentwiske.nl

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