

EUROPE · CITY BREAKS · CULTURE · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · NIGHTLIFE

Netherlands

The Netherlands crams Golden Age canal cities, world-class art and a landscape engineered from the sea into a compact, flat country laced with railways and cycle paths. Amsterdam's canal ring and Keukenhof's spring tulips are the headline acts, but Rotterdam's architecture, Delft's blue-and-white streets and the Wadden islands reward anyone who travels a little further.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Netherlands and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Amsterdam	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR)	 LANGUAGE Dutch, English West Frisian	 BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £75–£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 1h 10m direct ~£60–£220 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Around a quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level, held back by dykes, pumping stations and the windmills that became national symbols. The 17th-century Golden Age left a dense web of gabled canal cities and the art of Rembrandt and Vermeer, while Van Gogh's work fills museums in Amsterdam and the Hoge Veluwe. A first trip usually centres on Amsterdam, with day trips by train to Haarlem, Utrecht and Delft and a night in Rotterdam or The Hague. Spring visitors add Keukenhof and the bulb fields; walkers and cyclists head for the dunes, the Veluwe forests or the Wadden islands.

Distances are short, trains frequent and cycling is the national way of life, so it is easy to change base every couple of nights. It is not cheap: Amsterdam's hotel prices are among Europe's highest, and tourist taxes add to the bill. Amsterdam is crowded from spring to early autumn, while Rotterdam, Groningen and Maastricht feel far more local. English is spoken almost universally. First-timers are often surprised by Dutch directness, by the sheer volume of bikes at rush hour, and by how quickly the countryside turns quiet just beyond the cities.

Top 5 highlights

- 

ARCHITECTURE

Amsterdam's canal ring

The UNESCO-listed 17th-century ring of Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Prinsengracht is best explored on foot or by small boat, past merchants' houses, hidden almshouse courtyards and the Jordaan's brown cafés.
- 

NATURE

Keukenhof

Around seven million bulbs flower across this garden near Lisse, open for roughly eight weeks from late March to mid-May. Hire a bike to ride past the striped bulb fields that surround it.

3

HISTORY

Kinderdijk

Nineteen 18th-century windmills line the polder canals near Rotterdam, a UNESCO site showing how the Dutch drained their land. Arrive by waterbus from Rotterdam and step inside a working mill.

4

CULTURE

Hoge Veluwe and the Kröller-Müller Museum

Heath, forest and drifting sand dunes, explored on free white bicycles, surround the Kröller-Müller Museum, which holds the world's second-largest Van Gogh collection and a superb sculpture garden.

5

NATURE

Texel and the Wadden Sea

A 20-minute ferry from Den Helder reaches the largest Wadden island, with wide beaches, dunes, seals and bird-rich mudflats. Elsewhere along the UNESCO-listed Wadden Sea, guided mudflat walking is a summer speciality.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Amsterdam

≈ 1.1 million people

Canal houses, the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Anne Frank House justify the hype. Stay beyond the centre, in De Pijp or Oost, for better value and calmer evenings.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Rotterdam

≈ 870,000 people

Rebuilt boldly after the 1940 bombing, it is a showcase of modern architecture: the Cube Houses, Markthal and Erasmus Bridge. Great food halls and a real working port.

3RD LARGEST CITY

The Hague

≈ 850,000 people

Seat of government and the international courts, with the Mauritshuis's Vermeers, including Girl with a Pearl Earring, and the beach at Scheveningen a short tram ride away.

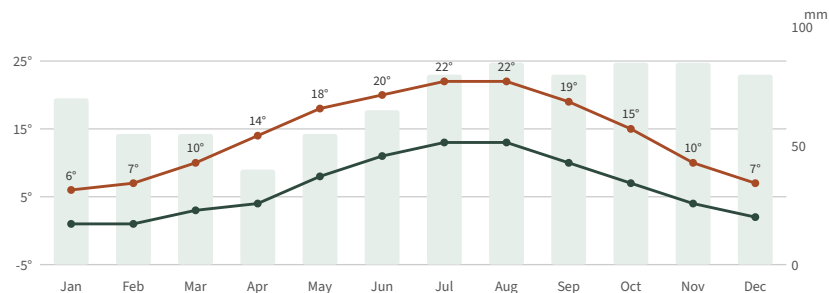
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Netherlands

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep.**

**Average climate in Amsterdam**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Nov– Dec	Amsterdam Light Festival From late November to January, light artworks line Amsterdam's canals; see them on foot or from an evening canal boat.
Apr	King's Day On 27 April (26 April if that falls on a Sunday) the country turns orange for street parties, packed boats on Amsterdam's canals and a nationwide free-for-all flea market.
Oct	Amsterdam Dance Event Five days in mid-October when hundreds of clubs and venues host DJs and daytime industry talks, making it one of the world's biggest electronic music gatherings.

How much does Netherlands cost?

SHOESTRING £75 per person / day hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £160 per person / day 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
---	--	--

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Stamppot

Mashed potato stamped together with kale, endive or sauerkraut and served with smoked rookworst sausage and gravy; classic winter comfort food.

Hollandse Nieuwe herring

Raw, lightly cured new-season herring, best from June, eaten with chopped onion and pickles or held by the tail at a street stall.

Bitterballen

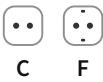
Crisp deep-fried balls of thick beef ragout, served with mustard as the standard bar snack alongside a beer.

Getting around

Trains are fast and frequent, and you can tap in and out with a contactless bank card or phone on trains, trams, buses and metros nationwide. Cycling is the local way to get about, with rental bikes in every city. Eurostar runs direct from London to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Driving is easy but city parking is expensive, so use park-and-ride sites. Uber and Bolt operate in larger cities.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+31

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Service is included, so tipping is optional. Rounding up or leaving 5–10% for good restaurant service is normal; nothing is expected at bars.

ETIQUETTE

Dutch directness is not rudeness. Never walk in red-surfaced bike lanes, arrive on time, and don't photograph sex workers in Amsterdam's red-light district, where smoking cannabis in the street is also banned.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS), Amsterdam; Eindhoven Airport (EIN), Eindhoven; Rotterdam The Hague Airport (RTM), Rotterdam

Visas & entry for Netherlands

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes the Netherlands, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; or for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in the Netherlands are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

 See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Netherlands

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Second Day of Christmas

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Tue 27 Apr 2027	King's Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Pentecost
Mon 17 May 2027	Pentecost Monday

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Dutch

ENGLISH	DUTCH	SAY IT
Hello	Hallo	<i>HAH-loh</i>
Thank you	Dank u wel	<i>DAHnk uu vel</i>
Please	Alstublieft	<i>AHL-stuu-bleeft</i>
Excuse me	Pardon	<i>par-DON</i>
How much is this?	Hoeveel kost dit?	<i>HOO-vayl kost dit</i>

Know before you go

Book Anne Frank House tickets as soon as your dates are fixed; they are sold only online through the museum's website and popular slots go weeks ahead.

Some shops, cafés and supermarkets still refuse foreign credit cards, while others are card-only, so carry a debit card or phone wallet as well as a little cash.

Lock your bike to something fixed, ideally with two locks, as theft is common. Keep right, signal turns by hand and use lights after dark.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.