

Adventures Ashore Port Guide

AMSTERDAM

About Your Port Guide >>

This is your guide to Amsterdam, specially prepared by Princess Cruises. This guide is intended to assist you if you are on a shore excursion, touring independently or doing both.

Please note that the information provided is general in nature and is subject to change.



Netherlands At A Glance >>

SIZE 15,770 square miles, about the size of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined

POPULATION 15,022,000, about half that of California

LANGUAGE Dutch

CAPITAL Amsterdam

TYPE OF GOVERNMENT Parliamentary Democracy under a constitutional monarch

CURRENCY Euro, formerly Dutch Guilders

TIME ZONE GMT + 2 hours

An Overview of Amsterdam

There is a cute saying in the Netherlands, "God created the world, but the Dutch made Holland." It's literally true: about half of the present land area of the Netherlands lies below sea level, and must be protected from tidal flooding and salt water. The earliest people to live in the so-called Low Countries quickly learned how to manage the sea with dikes, dams and levees. Once the sea is permanently excluded from an area, the salt can be gradually washed from the soil, and productive land called "polder" can be reclaimed for agriculture. The Dutch have doubled the size of their small country by this process, which continues to this day.

The Netherlands and Belgium are among the most densely populated areas in the world: every square foot matters. And like most people living in crowded places, the Dutch have developed the appropriate virtues: frugality, efficiency, punctuality, and politeness. They have generated a country and a civilization that are genuinely "fine tuned." Canals provide cheap, clean transportation, and windmills use the sea breeze to pump water and grind grain. Canal houses tend to be tall, rather than broad. Farmers cram every corner with first-rate flowers or vegetables, using the most modern techniques.

The origin of Amsterdam, as the name suggests, was the construction of a protective dam on the Amstel River. We know that there was a small castle built here in 1204, but the town is not mentioned until 1275. The location dictated right from the start that Amsterdam would be a commercial hub.

In fact the whole Netherlands region was Europe's trade and manufacturing powerhouse during the Middle Ages. One significant building in any market was the Waag, or Weighing House. The civic officials guaranteed the accuracy of weights and measures in order to give honest weight and settle disputes.

In the 14th-century, Amsterdam was built around the original Dam Square, close to where the Royal Palace and the Nieuwe Kerk or New Church stand today. The church was once called St. Catherine's, and dates from 1408. It is a fine Gothic building, with beautiful stained glass, carvings and monuments, including one to Admiral de Ruyter. The Royal Palace was originally built as the Town Hall by the architect van Campen and only became Royal in 1768. The great hall inside is a classical marvel in white Italian marble; the large ceiling is unsupported by pillars. Also within sight of the harbor is the graceful Weeper's Tower, so called because of the many tearful farewells over the centuries.

Surrounding the central area are the four principal canals or grachten, representing later developments. Since they are nestled together like concentric crescents, the Grachts give Amsterdam an attractive fan-like pattern.

There was a large foreign settlement on the east side, between the Dam and the Herengracht, including merchants and artisans from nearly everywhere. A large Jewish colony also grew up in that district, specializing in diamond cutting and other skills. Spinoza was born there in 1632. Rembrandt lived in this neighborhood for 16 years. Further west,

Anne Frank's House still stands as a memorial to the sufferings of Dutch Jews during World War II.

The Dutch, led by William of Orange, fought for more than a century to establish their independence from Spain. They took full advantage of their skills as seaman, as well as their willingness to open dikes and flood areas to stop Spanish armies. The war against Spain gave Dutch ship captains access to some very profitable concessions, including trade with Java and the East Indies. Given the market for eastern goods in Europe, and the Dutch adeptness at finding better ways of doing almost everything, the potential earnings of the Indies trade were enormous.

Dutch shipwrights developed the "flute," a small but sturdy cargo ship that required only a handful of crewmen to sail it. They built thousands of these flutes which, together with the much larger East Indiamen, gave the Dutch merchant fleet a huge share of the shipping trade for the entire world.

The 17th-century was truly a Golden Age for the Netherlands, when Amsterdam was the financial heart of Europe. The combined merchant fleets of Britain and France did not equal half of what the Dutch could put to sea. It is no accident that

many of the paintings you will see in the Rijksmuseum depict markets, ships, militiamen, dockyard scenes, or exotic locales. Holland grew prosperous and splendid during its time of glory, and the city of Amsterdam happily reflects that age. As you tour, watch for the signs of that glory in the brick and mortar of the buildings.

Some neighborhoods are built entirely on tall wooden piles, driven into the firm clay; the Royal Palace has 13,659 of them. Most canal houses are tall and thin, allowing only the narrowest winding stairways inside. Because it is out of the question to move furniture up these stairs, nearly every house has a sturdy iron hook at the peak of its roof, so that beds and tables can be hoisted to the proper floor, then pulled through the windows. Keep an eye out for them—some are quite elaborate.

If you are lucky, you may spy the House of Mister Tripp's Coachman. The story goes that a wealthy merchant named Tripp had a grumbling coachman who once said, "I'd be happy if I had a house as wide as your front door." So that's what he got. A large door goes from side to side in a tiny house, and there is nothing more except the roof! It just goes to show you're taken at your word in this precise country.

Places of Interest in Amsterdam

Anne Frank House - Anne Frankhuis

The small canal house where the Frank family and their friends hid from the Nazis for two years

Central Train Station

Main transportation hub

Dam Square

The city's main square is where Amsterdam began in the 12th-century; also good for shopping

Flower Market

Open-air flower stalls

Jewish Historical Museum - Joods Historisch Museum

Collection of documents, paintings, and objects related to the history of the Jewish people in Amsterdam and the Netherlands

Rembrandt's House

Rembrandt's home that he later lost in bankruptcy; today it is a museum with a collection of his prints and etchings and one of his presses

Rijksmuseum - State Museum

World-famous museum noted for its splendid collection of Dutch Masters, including Rembrandt's renowned "Night Watch"

Royal Palace at Amsterdam - Het Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam

Built in the 17th-century as the city's town hall, this imposing Dutch classical building stands on 13,659 pilings sunk deep into what was a marshy riverbed; it has been the official residence of the House of Orange since 1808 and is used only for the highest of state occasions

Vincent Van Gogh Museum

Dedicated to the tormented career of the legendary Dutch impressionist artist, this collection includes nearly all of his paintings, drawings, and letters; the light-filled museum was designed by another great Dutch artist, Gerrit Rietveld

Weeper's Tower - Schreinstoren

Tradition has it that this lookout tower got its name from the sailors' wives who bid their husbands farewell from the tower ramparts



More About Amsterdam

DOCKING

Your Princess ship docks in Amsterdam approximately a mile from the city center. Please refer to the City Map for the specific location.

SHORE EXCURSION DEPARTURES

Passengers will meet at a specific location for each shore excursion departure. Please refer to your tour ticket and the Princess Patter for the correct place and time. Your Shore Excursion staff will be at that location to assist you.

TAXIS

Taxis are available pierside and throughout the city. Please inquire at the Tour Office for more information.

SHOPPING

Shopping in Amsterdam is truly a treat. It is a world center for diamond cutting and the silver trade. You'll find good buys in:

Delftware: Authentic blue-and-white earthenware

Pewter: Unique pots, plates and figurines

Leerdam Crystal: Famous for its fine design and lovely blue-white color

Cigars: A box of the famous Dutch cigars makes a good gift

Cheeses and other edibles: Dutch chocolates and candies, pickled herring or smoked eel

The best places to shop are in Dam Square and along Leidsestraat and Kalverstraat. Please refer to the Amsterdam City Map for specific locations.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Post Office The nearest post office is located at Prins Hendrikkade. Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Banks Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 or 5:00 p.m.

Museums Generally open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., although these vary accordingly and often change without notice.

Shops Generally open weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There is usually late-night shopping on Thursday, and many stores are closed Monday morning. Souvenir shops usually have longer hours. Some shops are open Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m.

PROPER ATTIRE

Please wear proper attire ashore when planning to visit churches, cathedrals and other sacred places. Shorts for both men and women are considered improper. Women should also cover their bare shoulders.

LOCAL CUISINE

Food Specialties

Tradition plays a big part in Dutch cuisine. Recommended foods include:

Groentensoep A clear consomme soup, loaded with vegetables, vermicelli and tiny meatballs

Hutspot A national favorite of potatoes, carrots and onions

Herring Available from street pushcarts; locals hold it tail first and swallow it whole

Spekpannekoek Oversized pancake stuffed with bits of bacon and served with fruit syrup or molasses

Of course, there are also Holland cheeses. Edam and Gouda are eaten both *jonge* (fresh) or *oude* (mature); Leiden is often eaten with an apertif; and Frisian is flavored with cloves.

Drink Specialties

The national drink is jenever or gin, usually served in shot glasses and drunk neat. It comes in a variety of flavors and brands, including Bols, Bokma, De Kuyper and Claeryn.

Dutch beers are quite good, and the

liqueurs are excellent. They include:

Curacao Named for the island in the Dutch West Indies, it gets its delicious taste from the peel of an orange specially grown there

Parfait d' Amour A highly perfumed, amethyst-colored liqueur

Bruidstranen Translated as "bride tears," this clear, sweetish liqueur is literally adorned with flecks of floating gold

Also try *advocaat*, a heavier and creamier variety of eggnog.

It is always recommended that you drink bottled water while in port.

TIPPING

Suggested tipping is 10 percent for good service.

SOME USEFUL WORDS

Yes	Ja
No	Neen
Please	Alstublieft
Thank you	Dank U
Good morning	Dag

PRINCESS CRUISES AGENTS

In case of emergency while you are ashore, please contact:

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Note: The information in this port guide is subject to change without notice. We apologize for any inconvenience, but Princess Cruises cannot accept responsibility for any such alterations. Thank you.



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