

AMSTERDAM

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WEB PLEASE SCAN QR-CODE



AMSTERDAM

THE NETHERLANDS

Geographical position: 52° 22' N / 04° 53' E

Av. alt.: 0 feet (0 m)

Area of the city: 84.6 square-miles (219.1 km²)

Population: 743,000

Region: North Holland

River: Amstel (IJsselmeer)

Economy: Computer companies, international banks, electronics, high tech, research, brewing, harbor, transport, culture, administration, higher education, congresses, tourism



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AMSTERDAM – FASCINATING CULTURAL MELTING POT

The capital of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is one of Europe's most exciting and multi-faceted destinations. Contrasts abound in a city that can boast such a rich historical and cultural heritage, while embracing the most weird and wonderful aspects of contemporary lifestyle. The main problem facing any visitor in Amsterdam is to know where to begin... and when to stop. After all, the 'Venice of the North' has no less than 7000 classified buildings on its 90 islands linked by 1200 bridges spanning the lovely canals converging on the River Amstel. Not to mention its dozens of excellent museums. But that's only half the story, because the key to making the most of Amsterdam is reserving time to savor its vibrant yet laidback atmosphere. You'll definitely want to explore at leisure the city's countless interesting eateries, cafés and bars, its amazing spectrum of fashion and specialty stores, and the sheer prettiness of its lanes flanked by canals and mansions. Last but by no means least, Amsterdam's night life remains an inexhaustible source of astonishment for even the most broad-minded visitor.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN A NUTSHELL

The origins of a first settlement on Amsterdam's marshy site at the point where the River Amstel joins the Zuiderzee can be traced back to about **1170/80**. The community of fishermen, farmers and cloth-makers soon flourished, being granted tax privileges in **1275** and civic rights in **1300**. Amsterdam's breakthrough as a center of trade came after it joined the Hanseatic League in **1369**. After terrible fires destroyed sections of the city in **1421** and **1452**, the erection of wooden houses was strictly forbidden. To stabilize the foundations of stone buildings, massive wooden piles had to be driven into the earth. While Amsterdam initially welcomed the rise of Habsburg power in the Low Countries, **1578** saw the Protestant population driving the soldiers of Philip II of Spain out of the city. The **17th century** was Amsterdam's 'golden age,' when it became one of Europe's main commercial centers. Amsterdam's prosperity was secured in **1876** with the opening of the North Sea Canal linking the metropolis with the coast to the west.

MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST

1. Rijksmuseum: This vast collection of art along with departments devoted to porcelain, silverware, glass, furniture and tapestries needs to be approached selectively. It's best to focus on a few highlights like landscapes of the Dutch 'Golden Age' and masterpieces by Jan Vermeer and Rembrandt (including the latter's 'Night Watch').

2. Van Gogh Museum: The city's most-visited museum has about 700 works covering the short and explosively creative career of this great exponent of Expressionism.

3. Stedelijk Museum: This recently renovated establishment picks up the story of art from the mid-19th century and has stunning works by artists like Mondrian, Cézanne, Chagall, Braque and Kandinsky. It is also strong on modern movements.

4. Singel Flower Market: The market lining this canal is a great place to stock up on 'tulips of Amsterdam' as well as other bulbs. Lovely mansions flank the canal, and the nearby Begijnhof and the Amsterdam Museum are worth seeking out.

5. Inner Canal Ring: Enjoy strolling at leisure along the concentric ring of canals between the Rijksmuseum and Singel. Perhaps sit down for a drink in one of the tempting cafés along Brouwersgracht.

6. Dam Square: Facing the impressive War Memorial, the Royal Palace (1648) has several monumental interiors. The nearby Nieuwe Kerk (c. 1400) is used for the coronations of Dutch kings and queens. De Bijenkorf is a classic-style department store, while Madame Tussauds is a popular address.

7. Anne Frank House: The Frank family moved into the concealed rear section of Prinsengracht 263 on July 6, 1942. Anne Frank wrote most of her classic diary here before the family was arrested on August 4, 1944. The nearby Westerkerk contains Rembrandt's tomb.

8. Red Light District: This area east of the Oude Kerk comes to life around twilight, but a daytime walk by the 'New Market' with the historic Scales Building (Waag) is also recommended.

ENJOYING THE LOCAL CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

If you can't find it in Amsterdam, it probably doesn't exist! This is certainly true of antiques, with the quarter around Nieuwe Spiegelstraat offering about 70 such shops. Jewelry is tops here, too. More of the same can be found in the Jordaan area, where many bookshops have lovely old prints and maps, and a number of second-hand shops offer curios at fair prices. In the so-called Museumkwartier and in Beethovenstraat, you can expect to find haute couture in exclusive boutiques, but more cutting-edge fashion is tucked away in Herenstraat and Prinsenstraat. For window-shopping, the small streets linking Prinzen-, Keizers- and Herengracht have lots of specialty shops. The Albert Cuip Market is a tourist magnet. If you fancy a break from the bustle, the former Jewish Quarter is located by the peaceful Botanical Garden.