

# ROTTERDAM

1. Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum
2. Blaak
3. Church of St. Lawrence
4. Lijnbaan
5. Europoort
6. Euromast
7. Schielandshuis Museum
8. Delfshaven





# ROTTERDAM

## THE NETHERLANDS

**Geographical position:** 51° 56' N / 4° 29' E

**Av. alt.:** -6 feet (-2 m)

**Area of the city:** 117.3 square-miles (304 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Population:** 585,000

**Region:** South Holland

**River:** Rhine delta, Maas (Meuse)

**Economy:** Port and harbor, oil refineries, high tech, media, light and heavy industry, administration, higher education, service industries, tourism



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## ROTTERDAM - DUTCH COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL POWER-HOUSE

Little more than a pile of rubble at the end of the Second World War, Rotterdam is now the world's third-largest port, whose commercial clout is matched by an upbeat atmosphere and broad range of cultural opportunities. The second-largest city in The Netherlands is well worth a detour for a number of reasons. While some reconstructed historic buildings are of interest, 'Manhattan on the Maas' has become something of an encyclopedia of post-war architecture, as becomes clear during a boat tour of its vast complex of docks and refineries overlooked by futuristic skyscrapers. Dedicated shoppers are bound to have a field day in Rotterdam, where one can find anything from bric-à-brac to haute couture, while countless eateries, pubs and cafés present a dazzling spectrum of local and international cuisine. Add some great museums, and you have a metropolis that can cater to every taste.

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN A NUTSHELL

Some time around the turn of the **13<sup>th</sup> century**, a small settlement began to develop at the confluence of the River Rotte in the Nieuwe Maas. The site proved to be congenial for trade and commerce, and Rotterdam acquired civic rights in **1299**. A crucial factor in the city's subsequent growth was a canal linking it with Delft. Born here in **1469**, Erasmus of Rotterdam (his actual name was Geert Geertsz) was to become one of Europe's most distinguished scholars and authors. Erasmus' scathing criticism of the Catholic church helped to inspire the Reformation. This, in turn, led to the Spanish occupation of the Low Countries, as a result of which Erasmus' home city was partly burnt to the ground in **1563**. Rotterdam's fortunes took a steeply upward turn after **1872**, when the completion of the Nieuwe Waterweg provided the city with a direct link to the North Sea. It soon became one of the world's most important ports, a fact symbolized by the construction of the Witte Huis, the tallest office building in Europe (145 feet; 45 m) in **1900**. Rotterdam's commercial importance proved to be fateful in the Second World War, when it was effectively razed to the ground by retreating German forces in **1944**. Recovery was swift, though, and **1968** saw the opening of the Europoort, which was designed to service the world's largest ships and tankers. The city's two most distinctive bridges, the Willems Bridge with its distinctive red pylons and the slender Erasmus Bridge, were opened in **1981** and **1996**, respectively.

## MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1. Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum:** This is a museum of genuinely international caliber, with notable works by Bosch, Brueghel, Memling and Rembrandt, as well as illuminating collections relating to modern art movements.
- 2. Blaak:** Having seen Zadkine's powerful memorial sculpture by the Maritime Museum, walk east for some interesting modern architecture like the Blaak rail- and subway station, the nearby Het Potlood ('Pencil') and the famous Cube Houses from 1974-84.
- 3. Church of St. Lawrence:** The reconstructed Grote Kerk is one of the few remnants of Rotterdam's historic heritage, and its spacious interior offers a welcome break from hectic city life.
- 4. Lijnbaan:** This street has the distinction that it was Europe's first-ever pedestrian zone when it was laid out in 1953.
- 5. Europoort:** A boat trip through Rotterdam's seemingly endless maze of docks and wharfs promises an enthralling encounter with modern industrial architecture.
- 6. Euromast:** The tower built in 1960 was about 360 feet (111 m) high, but the addition of the Space Tower 10 years later upped the ante to just over 600 feet (186 m), so that the views are truly memorable.
- 7. Schielandshuis Museum:** This is the best place to learn the ins and outs about Rotterdam's interesting history, as well as to view some fascinating old drawings and prints.
- 8. Delfshaven:** This attractive suburb on the south-west fringe of the city is about the only part of Rotterdam that escaped bombing. A monument in the Old Church recalls that the Pilgrim Fathers worshipped here in 1620.

### ENJOYING THE LOCAL CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

While Lijnbaan is Rotterdam's best-known shopping street, Beurstraverse is the place to go if you're looking for exclusive and expensive wares. Opposite the very futuristic Main Railway Station, the Plaza has a wide range of stores, as does the mile-long Zuiderboulevard. On Kop van Zuid, Vrij Entrepot is a large shopping mall, as is De Vijf Werelddelen in a large converted warehouse. If you're something of a foodie, you will definitely want to visit De Markthal, a striking, horseshoe-shaped building embracing over a hundred food stalls. For art galleries and antiques, take a stroll around Witte de Withstraat. Alternatively, you can find lots of specialty shops in the pretty suburb of Delfshaven. Rather pricier gifts can be found in the Rotterdam Diamond Center (Kipstraat).