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# STROLLING AROUND AMSTERDAM

Lift your gaze and let the city of Amsterdam inspire your  
with 100+ surprising facts!

Spectrum

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## Foreword

Amsterdam is a city that radiates happiness and creativity – a place brimming with endless opportunity. While it, of course, has its less desirable areas, the city never stands still. The diverse blend of people, architecture and streets ensures there is always a new discovery to be made. Every corner offers a fresh perspective, whether through a conversation with a stranger, taking an unfamiliar route or a random detail on a building that has been there for a century. Amsterdam is a tapestry of countless experiences happening simultaneously, all waiting to be explored and documented. Join us on this journey of discovery!

My name is Tom and I was born in 1961 on the Binnenkant, a street right in the heart of the city centre. Growing up in the Rivierenbuurt in the South, I was part of a bustling family with nine children – seven sisters and a brother. With such a full house I often found myself outside exploring the world on my bike. I loved roaming the city, always on the lookout for something novel and interesting. Whenever I stumbled upon a peculiar street name or a striking building I would

jot it down and eagerly ask my father about it when I got home. He had an incredible passion for the city and had even been a city guide at 'Mee In Mokum'. His best advice to me was: 'Always look upwards, that's where you will see the most!' He not only shared fascinating facts about the city with me but also instilled in me a deep love for it.

My name is Josephine. I was born in 1994 and am Tom's youngest daughter. When I think back to my childhood, I remember being in the car and trying to guess which street we were driving through. By familiarising myself with a few prominent landmarks such as the imposing grey building of the David Lloyd gym, formerly Autopon, I soon memorised the main streets. Once I was able to explore the city on my bike, my friends would say, 'Just follow Joos, she always knows the way.' Now that I am older, I often browse Funda, the Netherlands leading property site, dreaming of places where I might one day live. I am fascinated by Amsterdam's diverse neighbourhoods, each with their own unique character. I love seeking out the intangible aspects of the city, such as its atmosphere, unwritten rules and old tales.

Isn't it a fascinating thought that the house you live in or the place where you buy your coffee has witnessed thousands of people before you and will continue to do so long after you are gone? You are part of something much larger than you can even conceive of, every single day.

In late 2020 we set up the Instagram account @ommetjemettom where we continue to document our discoveries. After more than 200 posts and over 40 strolls we realised it was time to start taking

our passion more seriously. In this book we will give you a bird's-eye view of the origins of Amsterdam, discuss the stories of eight unique places, explore their neighbourhoods and show you how you, too, can discover these stories so that next time you cycle across that one bridge (where you may have cycled for years) you will stop and take a closer look. When you do, you will suddenly notice much more than you have ever done before. That is when the city truly comes alive. You will never look back again.

Scan the QR code so you  
always have the maps to hand!







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# Entrepotdok

### Goods in no man's land

The Entrepotdok as we know it today is a stunning residential complex consisting of warehouses that run parallel to Hoogte and Laagte Kadijk. This impressive succession of buildings stretches over 500 metres and consists of no fewer than 84 warehouses, each named after Dutch and Belgian cities. Residents of these apartments can enjoy a spectacular view of Artis Zoo.

This complex was constructed after the French occupation with the oldest warehouses dating back to 1708. At the time, it was an enclosed area where traders had to bring their goods into the city to pay taxes. It was gated and guarded. If they did not wish to pay their taxes, they could leave their goods in the Entrepotdok where they would be under the supervision of customs. Typical goods stored here included wine, spices, grain and sugar. The Entrepotdok served as a ware-

house until 1895, but today is one of the largest inhabited warehouse locations in Amsterdam.

The French word 'entrepôt' (warehouse) refers to a sealed storage facility such as a shed, warehouse or even a cold store. The cargo is the word 'entre', French for 'between', meaning it is stored between its place of origin and its destination. The entrance gate to the Entrepotdok in Amsterdam is located on Kadijksplein and features tall dark blue doors with the words 'ENTREPOT DOK' written in large golden letters above. MDCCCXXX (1830), the year of construction, is inscribed in Roman numerals and on either side of the inscription is the staff of Mercury, the god of trade. Armed guards known as 'Redcaps' or 'Halberdiers' due to their distinctive uniform of a dark blue coat with gold buttons and a red collar who stood sentry every day in front of the gate, checked to see if the excise duties owed were paid.

To our great delight, we are discovering that old is blending with the new ever more in the city. Next to the Entrepotdok you will see the former Nautical College (1785-2000). This institution was not just a school but also a boarding facility where students lived and ate. In the courtyard garden stood a real ship named Kaatje which served as the latest model for full-scale training, where students practised hoisting the sails. When the Nautical College merged with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and the building was subsequently closed, Kaatje was relocated to Enkhuizen where it continues to be used for training purposes. The Maritime Academy has now

become part of the Prins Hendrik Campus, comprising various homes and studios. Where the campus entrance once stood is now a new building aptly named Kaatje. The façade features three glass cabinets containing objects discovered during construction including an ancient jar.

## A stroll through the Kadijken neighbourhood

The Entrepotdok is located the Kadijken, an elongated strip of land measuring 900 metres long and 170 metres wide. A 'kadijk' literally means the boundary between reclaimed and non-reclaimed land – a dike with an adjacent quay. In 1663 during the 'Fourth Expansion' of Amsterdam, the fourth major urban expansion, land outside the dykes on the east side of Amsterdam was incorporated into the city. This area had a summer dyke (kadijk), the Nieuwe Zeedijk which was constructed outside and to the north of the Sint Antoniesdijk. The dyke was raised and named Hoogte Kadijk (High Kadijk), while the lower land behind it was named Laagte Kadijk (Low Kadijk). It became a shipyard area and warehouses were built there in the 18th century. In the 20th century more housing was constructed in this area.

The Kadijken has undergone significant changes and renovations over time. Despite these transformations, the old atmosphere and the hustle and bustle of the past is still palpable when walking through the area. In the 1970s, like many other parts of the city, this neighbourhood contained neglected, boarded-up houses and warehouses. The Entrepotdok and its warehouses had also stood empty for years. Residents fled the city in search of space and greenery. Despite the impoverishment of this neighbourhood there were still shops to be found in the area: a butcher, a baker and even a milkman who delivered from door to door. One of the long-standing business-

es on Hoogte Kadijk was a spice factory where spices from overseas were taken from large barrels and put into smaller packages. The aroma of cinnamon, gingerbread and pepper permeated the entire neighbourhood. Today the area has truly become residential once again. A local resident shared with us that many social housing units have been sold by the housing association in recent years culminating in a different demographic moving into the neighbourhood – a more affluent demographic.

📍 Tom, has vivid memories of the scents in the city. Each neighbourhood had its own distinct aroma thanks to the various factories producing different goods. Near the Heineken Brewery you could always tell when they were brewing, just as the scent of cocoa wafted through the air near the Omval. Slightly further along, the delightful fragrance of the soap factory would fill your senses.

In front of the Entrepotdok entrance on Kadijksplein you will see the picturesque Scharrebiërsuis bridge. Scharrebië (a type of beer) played a significant role in Amsterdam's history. Until the late 19th century, the city's drinking water was of poor quality with the canals serving as sewers. As an alternative to clean drinking water, people turned to low-alcohol beer known as 'scharrebië'. The term 'scharre' is derived from 'scherf', a medieval coin of low value, much like the beer itself. This beer was sold at the Scharre beer sluice to skippers waiting to continue their journey. The brewing process which involved boiling water and adding alcohol made it a safer option than drinking the polluted canal water. The Municipality of Amsterdam

described the situation succinctly: 'Amsterdam was known as a beautiful woman, but one with bad breath.'

To the left of the Scharrebiërsuis you will discover the liqueur distillery 'De Druif'. It is a miracle that this café still exists today. This block was designated for demolition to make way for the IJ tunnel, but fate had other plans in store. The IJ tunnel was relocated, saving one of Amsterdam's oldest cafés. The origins of De Druif liqueur distillery are humble. Around 1600, Dutch merchants brought back herbs, spices and sugar, sparking a wave of experimentation among the locals. These concoctions quickly gained in popularity. By 1816, Amsterdam boasted ten liqueur distilleries. Café De Druif, like many others in the area, served as a meeting point sailors reported to before boarding their ships. Before setting sail, they would indulge in a liqueur.

On the corner of Laagte Kadijk you will find the 'Koffiehuis van den Volksbond' (People's Union Coffee House). Established in 1895 on Kadijksplein at the request of the workers themselves, this coffee house aimed to curb alcohol abuse. Until this time, workers had to wait outside one of the many cafés in the area for work and their wages were paid out there, often leading to undesirable consequences. The coffee house was soon managed by the 'Volksbond, Association Against Alcohol Abuse'.

Although the Druif is not located on the Kadijken, it can be found on Rapenburg, one of the three islands created during Amsterdam's Second Expansion. Andries van Wezel, an 'ordinary' boy from a Jew-



ish family grew up here. He began his career as a diamond cutter and eventually worked his way up to become the director of a diamond factory which had branches in several countries. With his accumulated wealth he purchased numerous works of art. Upon his death in 1921 he donated his extraordinary collection, including pieces by Israëls and Breitner, to the Rijksmuseum. Author Rein van der Wiel wrote a book about his life: *Van Rapenburgerstraat naar Amerika. De levensstijd van diamantbewerker en kunstverzamelaar Andries van Wezel (1856-1921)* (From Rapenburgerstraat to America – The life of diamond cutter and art collector Andries van Wezel 1856-1921).

Let us return to the Kadijken. Opposite the Entrepotdok stands a bridge once known as the Oorgatbrug. This bridge had a unique construction and was designed by Amsterdam's city carpenter Hendrick Jacobsz Staets, who was granted a patent for it in 1596. The bridge featured a slit right through the deck covered by a wooden hatch allowing boats to sail under the bridge with their masts upright (if the hatch was opened). This meant that boats could pass under the bridge without lowering their masts, hence the name Oorgat, meaning 'hole in the bridge'. Eventually, a new bridge was constructed on this spot, and the name was changed to Kortjewantsbrug. The bridge keeper would call out from afar 'Kort je want!' (which means 'cut your rope!'). The hole was so small that skippers had to take care that their masts and ropes didn't get tangled in the bridge.

📍 In this neighbourhood you will notice that many bridges are named after animals, which is quite apt given the proximity to Artis Zoo. It all began with a local resident, Mr Van

