

**WHY SHOULD I GO TO AMSTERDAM**



# WHY SHOULD I GO TO ↴ AMSTERDAM

THE CITY YOU DEFINITELY  
NEED TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU TURN 30





## THIS IS WHY!

Amsterdam is a friendly city that stands for freedom, creativity, and cultural enrichment. It's a city with a soul, always surprising and renewing itself without losing its timeless character. Its compact size makes it perfect for strolling or cycling, exploring the neighbourhoods, enjoying the many museums, and experiencing the visible and palpable history. Amsterdam's international character and the many cultures living side-by-side are reflected in the numerous eating options. Looking for something to do after dinner? The city's vibrant nightlife offers endless possibilities for fun and entertainment.

Exploring this dynamic city doesn't have to break the bank. Cycle, walk, and use public transport (don't forget to jump on the free ferry!) if you don't want to miss out on the Amsterdam lifestyle. Book a nice hostel, join free tours, and visit the most beautiful sights; there is a lot to see. You don't even have to buy a ticket for the Rijksmuseum to enjoy it: the exterior, garden, and Passage alone are worth the visit. Get yourself a croquette from the famous FEBO wall or a *broodje kaas* (cheese roll), have a picnic in one of the many parks, and immerse yourself in the local culture. In short, there is always something to suit every taste and budget.

No matter the season, Amsterdam will be the cosiest village you'll ever visit. From the historic Centrum with its charming canals to the urban and industrial Noord: wherever you wander, Amsterdam is more than likely to leave a lasting impression – and a great one at that.

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# DISTRICTS

Amsterdam may not be as large as other capitals, however, its various districts and neighbourhoods each have their own identity and features. The districts are further divided into neighbourhoods, and their names can always be found at the bottom of the street signs.

## Centrum (Centre)

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You'll never be bored in Amsterdam. Especially in the city centre. Its iconic canals lined with monumental buildings, the market at Waterlooplein, the canal cruises, the controversial Red-Light District; you're probably familiar with all of these even if you've never been to Amsterdam. But Centrum also boasts many other cool and slightly lesser-known spots like Noordermarkt in the Jordaan, and quieter areas like the



Oostelijke Eilanden (Eastern Islands), Haarlemmerbuurt, and hidden courtyards such as Begijnhof and Van Brienenhofje.

#### Noord (North)

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The largest district of the city, Noord, is located across the river IJ. It has seen quite a transformation in the past few years. Previously slightly isolated, it has now been fully embraced by the rest of the city. This is partly due to the Noord/Zuidlijn, the metro line connecting the north and south since 2018, linking Noord with the rest of the city. You'll still find working-class neighbourhoods, but trendy new apartment buildings are becoming increasingly prominent. The vibe in Noord is an intriguing mixture of working-class, creative, and industrial.

#### Oost (East)

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Amsterdam-Oost, delightfully diverse, is characterised by a mixture of students and families of different backgrounds. In Oosterparkbuurt, stately houses surround the park, while in peaceful Watergraafsmeer young families and their cargo bikes fill the streets. In Indische Buurt, over a hundred languages are spoken. On the outskirts of Oost, you'll find Bijlmer. This neighbourhood, built in the 1960s, is filled with high-rise buildings. Many Antilleans, Surinamese, and Ghanaians settled here at the time. Major attractions in the area are the Johan Cruyff Arena – Ajax's stadium – and concert halls, where music legends from around the world perform.

#### West

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West is expansive and diverse, offering plenty to experience for a day or two. It's a very green district, with various parks such as Westerpark, the charming Erasmuspark, and Rembrandtpark. It is brimming with cool shops and restaurants, and it's a bit more laid-back than the city centre. In this district, you'll encounter plenty of impressive architecture, including the expressive *Amsterdamse School* architectural style, which was popular in the Netherlands between 1910 and 1930. At the remarkable Museum Het Schip, you can learn all about *Amsterdamse School*, art, and architecture. The residents in West are a melting pot of students, young families, and seniors, along with a mixture of many backgrounds, reflecting Dutch society as a whole.

#### Zuid (South)

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This district is known for its tidiness and affluence. Many famous Dutch people chose to move here. It's a vibrant district with major museums located in the Museumkwartier and a high-end shopping area in P.C. Hooftstraat and Cornelis Schuytstraat. You'll need to win the lottery before you can do more than window shopping in either. In this district, you'll also find popular neighbourhood De Pijp. Once a working-class area, this is now a trendy neighbourhood that has undergone significant changes and is becoming increasingly popular. You'll find many cosy terraces, cafes, and concept stores in De Pijp. The largest park in Amsterdam can also be found in this district: the elongated Vondelpark. This park is popular with both tourists and locals. It's delightful to relax on the grass, or simply take a stroll.

A stylized illustration of a city skyline. The buildings are represented by solid black silhouettes of various architectural styles, including a tall spire on the left, a central tower with a cross, and several domes and smaller spires on the right. Two vibrant rainbows are depicted, one above the other, arching across the sky. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white, stylized clouds. The overall style is graphic and modern.

## **PRACTICAL INFO**

# TRAVEL

When in Amsterdam, you'll certainly be walking. A lot. Make sure to wear comfortable shoes! Amsterdam isn't really that big, and many iconic landmarks are within walking distance of each other. But you'll cover a lot of ground anyway. Walking will always be the best way to explore a city, but there are other ways to get around.

GVB is Amsterdam's local transport provider ([gvb.nl](http://gvb.nl)). Navigating the city is a breeze thanks to its extensive public transport system. In front of Central Station, you'll find both tram stops and an entrance to the metro. Buses depart from the back of the station; take the escalator upstairs to get there. The metro is very efficient, but taking a tram or bus allows you to take in some of the sights along the way.

Contactless payment can be used on all forms of public transport. Fares vary depending on the type of transport and the distance travelled. Make sure you use the same card for touching in and out throughout the day. Alternatively, you can purchase tickets at larger stations; look for the blue GVB ticket machines. On the tram and bus, only single journeys and day tickets (24 hours) are available. Multi-day tickets can be purchased at the ticket machines and service points, or the GVB phone app. Note that you cannot buy tickets on the metro; you must do so at the station before boarding.

Noord (North) and the rest of Amsterdam are divided by the IJ river. To cross it, you can use the ferry. This is both practical and fun. And it is free of charge. You can board on foot or take





a bicycle. Ferries depart from the rear of Central Station; a screen shows the time left until departure. The most frequently operating ferry goes to Buiksloterweg (every 5 minutes). It also operates at night, albeit on a reduced timetable. There are also ferries with destination IJplein and NDSM. The NDSM ferry departs from Pontsteiger (West) too. From Azartplein (Oost), a ferry sails to Zamenhofstraat (Noord).

Download the GVB app for public transport in the city and you'll always be up to date with arrival and departure times. Download the Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) app for train times if you're travelling to the airport or a location outside of Amsterdam. You can look up information on all Dutch transport providers (buses, trains, metros) on the app *9292 Travel Planner OV*. And of course, you can also use Google Maps. One of the most convenient

and enjoyable ways to explore the city is by bike. Often, ho(s)tels rent out bicycles. If not, bike rental shops are abundant in the city, primarily around Central Station. Some examples are Starbikes Rental, MacBike, Black Bike, and Amsterdam Bikes. Although we advise against it, you can drive to and through Amsterdam by car. Driving is increasingly discouraged, and parking is notoriously expensive. There are several car-free zones, and the local government plans to expand these further. If you do travel by car, we recommend parking at one of the P+R (Park and Ride) facilities, parking lots on the outskirts of the city that charge a reduced rate per 24 hours ([amsterdam.nl/en/parking/park-ride](https://amsterdam.nl/en/parking/park-ride)).

From Schiphol Airport, a train departs to Amsterdam Central Station every ten minutes, and once an hour starting from 1am. You can find the

train platforms in the main hall of the airport (Schiphol Plaza). Purchase a train ticket from one of the yellow ticket machines in the hall or in the NS phone-app, or you can touch in and out with your contactless debit or credit card. Every ten minutes, bus 397 departs from bus stop B17 to the city centre of Amsterdam. This bus stops at Museumplein, Leidseplein, and Rijksmuseum, but not at Amsterdam Central Station. At night, Niteliner N97 operates

to and from these stops. Download the Amsterdam Airport Express app for current schedules, and for purchasing a ticket in advance. Taxi prices are advertised on screens at baggage claim. However, in reality, fares are much higher. We advise against taking taxis, as trains and buses are both faster and cheaper. You can book a shared taxi to the airport, but this is not possible in the opposite direction.

## WHERE TO STAY

### Hans Brinker Hostel

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Kerkstraat 136-138,  
1017 GR (Centrum),  
hansbrinker.com

Accommodation in Amsterdam is notoriously expensive. Youth hostels (around € 40-75 per night) are obviously cheaper than hotels (at least € 100). They often have kitchen facilities and communal areas, making them a great place to meet new people.

Named after the imaginary boy who saved the country by plugging a hole in the seawall with his finger, this hostel is right in the city centre. Close to Leidseplein and other nightlife areas, staying here will guarantee an adventure. When the party in the city ends, the fun continues at Hans Brinker's own bar.

### Heart of Amsterdam

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Oudezijds Achterburgwal  
120, 1012 DT (Centrum),  
hearhostel.nl

A hostel inspired by the world of film, with rooms themed by film classics such as *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty*. The perfect hostel if you want to be close to the city centre; it is located in the heart of the Red-Light District.

### Durty Nelly's Inn

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Warmoesstraat 115, 1012 JA  
(Centrum), durtynellyns.nl

Highly rated hostel in the city with very comfortable bunk beds shaped like capsules, providing some privacy in the dormitory. It's clean and centrally located, the walk from Central Station is under ten minutes. Not unimportant: the showers are great!

### Budget Hotel

#### Tourist Inn

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Spuistraat 52,  
1012 TV (Centrum),  
tourist-inn.com

Plenty of comfort without breaking the bank, that's what characterises this hotel. Due to its location right in the city centre, it's a nice place where backpackers, students, and groups gather. Within a few minutes' walk, you can see most of the sights. Also convenient: breakfast is included in the room rates.

### The Flying Pig

#### (uptown or downtown)

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Downtown: Nieuwendijk  
100, 1012 MR (Centrum),  
Uptown: Vossiusstraat 46,  
1071 AJ (Zuid), flyingpig.nl

Never a dull moment at The Flying Pig. Stay downtown if you're up for a wild party in their bar: it's the place to be. Stay uptown if you like to meet other travellers but also value a good night's sleep. Uptown overlooks Vondelpark, and all major museums are just around the corner.

### Camping Vliegenbos

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Meeuwenlaan 138, 1022  
AM (Noord),  
amsterdam.nl/vliegenbos

A small and peaceful campsite in a forest, still close to the free ferry and metro for easy access to the city. You can bring your own tent or rent a 'city cabin'. Fresh bread can be ordered for breakfast, and there is a small restaurant on site.

### ClinkNOORD

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Badhuiskade 3, 1031 KV  
(Noord), clinkhostels.com

This hostel can be found in a beautiful Art Deco building dating from 1920, which alone makes staying at ClinkNOORD worthwhile. Meet fellow travellers in this cosy and clean hostel. Female-only rooms are available. Just a few minutes from the city centre, it's an enjoyable trip as you can take the free ferry to cross the IJ river.

### **Volkshotel**

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*Wibautstraat 150, 1091 GR  
(Oost), volkshotel.nl*

A creative hub spanning five floors with hotel rooms, a nightclub, exhibition space, restaurant, bar, and rooftop terrace (complete with sauna and hot tubs). Enjoy fantastic views over the city from here. It's also a meeting place for locals. Book through their own website for the best pricing. The metro stops right outside Volkshotel.

### **Camping Zeeburg**

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*Zuider IJdijk 20, 1095 KN  
(Oost), campingzeeburg.nl*

At the outskirts of the city, you'll find this sustainable and cosy campsite. You can rent accommodation or bring your own tent. There are communal picnic areas and various water sports activities to enjoy.



### **Stayokay Hostel**

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*Zandpad 5, 1054 GA  
(West), Timorplein 21,  
1094 CC (Oost),  
stayokay.com*

There are two Stayokays in the city: one near Vondelpark (close to the museum area), and the other location is in Oost, with a lovely cinema around the corner. Clean, pleasant atmosphere, and a bar to boot. Public transport links are nearby, but bike rental is available too.

### **Train Lodge**

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*Changiweg 121, 1043 DZ  
(West), trainlodge.com*

Looking for a place to sleep that's both unique and comfortable? Book your bed in one of the train compartments located next to Sloterdijk station. Very friendly staff and a pleasant atmosphere. This might be our favourite place to stay in Amsterdam.

### **Dutchies Hostel**

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*Sara Burgerhartstraat  
21a, 1055 KV (West),  
dutchieshostel.com*

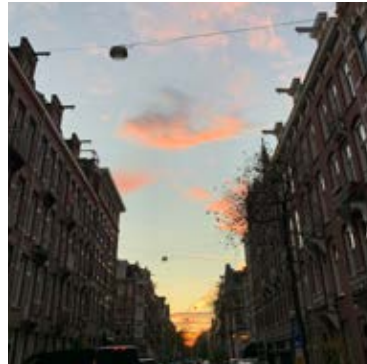
A modern and clean hostel just outside the city centre. It offers a nice communal kitchen for those who like to do their own cooking, and there's a supermarket just around the corner. The city centre is easily accessible by public transport.

### **Hostel Annemarie**

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*Jan Willem Brouwersstraat  
14, 1071 LJ (West), amster-  
damhostelannemarie.com*

One of the cheapest places to stay in the city, so don't expect too much. But the location is perfect.



## GOOD TO KNOW

### Opening hours

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Most supermarkets, cafes, shops, and museums are open every day, especially in the city centre. Some are closed on Sundays and Mondays, so check the website to avoid disappointment.

### Alcohol & drugs

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The Amsterdam nightlife, with its vibrant squares and busy streets, is always buzzing. There's a lot you can do in the liberal city of Amsterdam, but there are limits. The minimum age for buying alcohol or visiting a coffee shop is 18, make sure to always bring photo ID. Don't smoke marijuana in public; it is illegal and considered poor etiquette by Amsterdam natives. The same goes for drinking in

public, for which you could get a 100 euro fine – better finish your drink before hopping to the next bar. Drugs may be offered to you on the street or in parks, but you should never engage. The quality varies hugely, and you might be putting yourself in danger.

### Cycling rules

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Cycling is one of the most enjoyable ways to explore the city. Cyclists rule the roads. If you're not used to this, it can be overwhelming at times. It may seem like there are no rules, and it can feel downright dangerous, but cyclists usually know exactly what they're doing. Amsterdammers cycle fast, constantly ringing their bells if they want to pass someone. You don't have to keep up with their pace but

do try to maintain a reasonable speed if you cycle. Every street has a bike lane as well as a pavement: don't confuse the two. Use hand signals to indicate the direction you're going and avoid sudden stops. Use two locks for your (rental) bike. One for the front wheel attached to the frame and a secure point, and the other lock for the back.

### Reservations

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Just like any other big city, Amsterdam can get very crowded. As much as you might want to keep the beautiful spots to yourself, you often can't avoid other people visiting the same attractions. If you want to secure a spot in a restaurant, entry to a party, access to your favourite exhibition, or a cinema ticket, book in advance. Especially during holidays and weekends.

### Card Only

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Although there are plenty of cashpoints in the city, using your

card for payments is often the norm. From shops to restaurants and bars, many places have an 'Alleen Pinnen' (Card-only) policy.

### Tipping

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There are no fixed rules for tipping in Amsterdam and the Netherlands. You simply tip if you were happy with the service or the food, with 5 to 10 percent of the bill as a norm. However, it is never mandatory.

### Be respectful and careful

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Amsterdam can sometimes feel like a carnival where anything goes. Don't forget that real people actually live here; they have families to keep safe and work to attend the next day. Be respectful in everything you do. Additionally, as beautiful and romantic the canals are, they can also be a death trap. Don't urinate in the canals; it's not only unpleasant but you could fall in too. There are plenty of



public urinals (*plaskrullen*) on the pavements where you can relieve yourself. These are designed for men, and we hope that more inclusive public toilets will be available soon. Getting caught for public urination will cost you at least 150 euros; enforcers are not lenient.

### Red-Light District

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Opinions are divided about the popular Red-Light District in the city centre. While it's one of the busiest tourist spots in Amsterdam, sex workers are simply people practising their profession. Do not take photos or videos

of them; it is disrespectful and a violation of privacy. This is monitored, so don't even try to do it discreetly either.

### Going places

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While you may get the impression that everything is happening in the centre of town, other parts of Amsterdam are also worth your time. Turn left when everyone else goes right; it may surprise you where this could lead you. Try to get out of town too. Public transport is well organised, and distances are short: you can easily spend an afternoon visiting a nearby village or town (see page 182).



# WHEN TO TRAVEL





## AMSTERDAM IN SPRING

Amsterdam is simply stunning in spring. After the dark winter months, the first rays of sunshine and the rise in temperature have a huge effect on the Dutch. Everyone ventures outside, some even donning shorts when it might be a tad early, and the many terraces are bustling once again.

One of the highlights of the season is admiring the Japanese cherry blossoms in Bloesempark, located in Amsterdamse Bos. This colourful spectacle usually lasts just three weeks. Hop on a bicycle and go early to beat the crowds; it is a magical place to see the sun rise.

Spring is the perfect time to make the most of the many

terraces. You'll also see lots of locals cruising along the canals; you could rent a boat and explore the city from the water. And of course, nothing beats a good picnic. Bring a blanket, grab some delicacies, and off you go. Our favourite spots are Oosterpark, Vondelpark, and Erasmuspark.

King's Day is a Dutch national holiday celebrated each year on 27th April. The party starts the night before, with crowds gathering in the streets to drink and dance the night away. On the 27th, the city transforms into one large orange-coloured flea market. Food and drinks are for sale on every street corner, and there will be live music whichever way you turn.