

TRANSPORT

Straddling one of Europe's busiest cross-roads, Amsterdam has excellent air links, a fine motorway and train lines fanning out to the rest of Europe. Once in town, you'll find that Amsterdam is very much a walking city; you can traverse the old centre in 30 minutes and reach the outskirts in an hour. The tram system is reliable, though not necessarily faster than a bike, the locals' preferred way of getting around.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

AIR Airport

A mere 18km from central Amsterdam, Schiphol airport is the Netherlands' main international airport and the fourth-busiest passenger terminal in Europe. It's the hub of Dutch passenger carrier KLM, and over 100 airlines have direct flights and connections to all continents. Its shopping arcades, both in public areas and the See Buy Fly duty-free areas, are renowned.

Things Change...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Meet arrivals in the large lobby known as Schiphol Plaza. For airport and flight information call ☎ 0900 01 41 (per minute €0.40) or see www.schiphol.nl.

The airport is in the same telephone area code as Amsterdam proper (☎ 020).

Luggage may be deposited at the [left luggage office](#) (☎ 601 2443) in the basement between arrival areas One and Two. Cost is €5 per item per day. Lockers are available from €5 to €9 per day (depending on size) and luggage can be stored for up to a week.

GETTING INTO TOWN

The Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS; national railway) runs trains to Centraal Station (one way/return €3.60/5.50, 15 to 20 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes) from right beneath Schiphol Plaza. Train-ticket counters and vending machines are in Schiphol Plaza's central court; buy your ticket before taking the escalator down to the platforms (see [p242](#) for instructions for domestic tickets). If you need a *strippenkaart* (a ticket for local transport within Amsterdam), purchase it at the Ako newsstand near the ticket windows.

Taxi services between Amsterdam and Schiphol airport take 20 to 45 minutes (may be longer in rush hour) and cost about €30 to €40. Aficionados swear by [Amsterdam Airport Business Taxi](#) (☎ 06 5376 9753; www.aabt.info), who have Mercedes cars and professional drivers and cost €34 to €42 depending on your destination or origin in town.

Some of the international hotel chains have free shuttle services for their guests. Public services such as Connexion bus Interliner 370 also run regular services to and from central Amsterdam. Connexion runs a paid hotel shuttle (one way/return around €12.50/19.50). When making your hotel reservation, ask whether the shuttle stops on the route.

Another way to get to or from the airport is by the minivan service [Schiphol Travel Taxi](#) (☎ 0900 88 76, per min €0.10, from outside the Netherlands 31 38 339 47 68; www.schiphol.nl). Figure on about €21 per person.

By car, take the A4 freeway to/from the A10 ring road around Amsterdam. A short stretch of A9 connects to the A4 close to Schiphol.

Car-rental offices at the airport are in the right-hand corner near the central exits of Schiphol Plaza.

The airport's P1 and P2 short-term (undercover) parking garages charge €1.90 per half-hour for the first three hours, then €3 per hour. Daily charges are €26 a day for the first three days, €17.50 a day thereafter. The long-term (open-air) parking area is a fair distance from the terminal but is linked by a 24-hour shuttle bus. The charge is €50 for up to three days and €6.50 for each day thereafter.

BICYCLE & SCOOTER

The vast majority of Amsterdammers get around town on their estimated 600,000 *fiet-sen* (bikes). Motor scooters and mopeds are popular too, but few places hire them out (see right). Helmets are not required.

Many visitors rent a bike towards the end of their stay and wish they had done so sooner. See the boxed text, below, before setting out.

Bicycle Hire

All the companies listed here require ID plus a credit card imprint or a cash deposit with a passport. Many rental agencies require that you bring your passport as proof of ID. Prices are for basic 'coaster-brake' bikes; gears and handbrakes, and especially insurance, usually cost more.

Bike City (Map p86; ☎ 626 37 21; www.bikecity.nl; Bloemgracht 68-70; per day/week €8.50/41, plus credit card imprint deposit) There's no advertising on the bikes, so you can pretend you're a local.

Damstraat Rent-a-Bike (Map pp62-5; ☎ 625 50 29; www.bikes.nl; Damstraat 20-2; per day/week €7/31, plus credit card imprint deposit)

Holland Rent-a-Bike (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 32 07; Damrak 247; per day/week €6.40/34.50, plus deposit €150 or credit card imprint)

MacBike (☎ 620 09 85; www.macbike.nl; per day/week €8.50/29.75, plus ID & €50 deposit or credit card imprint) Centraal Station (Map pp62-5); Visserplein (Map pp62-5); Mr Visserplein 2; Weteringschans (Map pp100-1; Weteringschans 2) The most expensive (and the bikes are equipped with big signs that say 'LOOK OUT!' to locals), but it has the most locations.

Mike's Bike Tours (Map pp100-1; ☎ 622 79 70; www.mikesbiketours.com; Kerkstraat 134; half-day/full day/additional day €5/7/5, plus €200 deposit or passport or other ID)

BICYCLE RULES

The heavy traffic can be intimidating, but observe a few basics and soon you'll be freewheeling like a native:

- Cyclists have the right of way, except when vehicles are entering from the right. However, that doesn't mean motorists are as careful as they should be.
- Watch for pedestrians too. Tourists (the poor things) tend to wander in and out of bike paths with no idea of the danger they're putting themselves in.
- By law, after dusk you need to use the lights on your bike (front and rear) and have reflectors on both wheels. If your bike does not have lights, you need to use clip-on lights, both front and rear.
- It's polite to give a quick ring of your bell as a warning. If someone's about to hit you, a good sharp yell is highly effective.
- Chain your bike securely. Most bikes come with two locks, one for the front wheel (attach it to the frame) and the other for the back. One lock should also be attached to something stationary.

To carry a bike aboard a train, you'll need to purchase a bike day pass (€6), valid throughout the country, and carriage is subject to availability of space. Many train stations also have bike rental facilities on the spot. Collapsible bikes can be carried for free. An alternative to renting a bike is to buy one. Figure on about €80 for a used bike and maybe €40 for two good locks.

Scooter Hire

The best bet for scooter hire is to try **Moped Rental Service Gillex** (Map p86; ☎ 623 45 50; www.gillex.nl; Marnixstraat 208; weekday/weekend day €37.50/42.50, weekend/week €80/210, plus deposit €450). Scooters come in all colours, as long as it's yellow.

BOAT

Canal Boat, Bus & Bike

Canal Bus (Map pp62-5; ☎ 623 98 86; www.canal.nl; day pass per adult/child €18/12) does several circuits between Centraal Station and the Rijksmuseum between 9.50am and 8pm. The day pass is valid until noon the next day. The same company rents canal bikes (pedal boats) for €8 per person per hour (€7 if more than two people per canal bike). Docks are by Leidseplein (Map pp100-1) and near the Anne Frank Huis (Map p92).

See p249 for details of canal boat tours.

Ferries

There are free ferries from behind Centraal Station to destinations along the IJ, notably Amsterdam Noord.

The ferry that goes to the Eastern Docklands costs €1.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

We absolutely don't recommend having a car in Amsterdam, but if you must, read on.

Driving

Visitors are entitled to drive in the Netherlands on their foreign licences for a period of up to 185 days per calendar year. If you stay longer, you must get a Dutch licence (with some exceptions). For all queries, ring the **National Transport Authority** (☎ 0900 07 39, per min €0.10).

Traffic in Amsterdam travels on the right and is generally quite busy. The minimum driving age is 18 years for cars and 16 years for motorcycles. Seat belts are required for everyone in a vehicle. Children under 12 must ride in the back if there's room.

Be alert for bicycles, and if you are trying to turn right, be aware that bikes have priority. Trams always have the right of way. In traffic circles (roundabouts), approaching vehicles technically have right of way, but in practice they yield to vehicles already on the circle.

The blood-alcohol limit when driving is 0.05%, and the speed limits are 50km/h in built-up areas, 80km/h in the country, 100km/h on major rural through-roads and 120km/h on freeways (sometimes this is reduced to 100km/h, but this is generally clearly indicated).

Hire

Local companies are usually cheaper than the big multinationals, but don't offer as much backup or flexibility. Rates start at around €34/40 per day for a two-/four-person car, but they do change frequently, so call around. Rentals at Schiphol airport incur a €40 surcharge.

Look for local car-rental firms in telephone directories under the heading *Autoverhuur*. Following is a list of some of the better-known car-rental companies:

Avis Autoverhuur (Map p116; ☎ 683 60 61; www.avis.nl; Nassaukade 380)

easyCar (www.easycar.nl)

Europcar (Map p116; ☎ 683 21 23; www.europcar.nl; Overtoom 197)

Hertz (Map p116; ☎ 612 24 41; www.hertz.nl; Overtoom 333)

National Car Rental (Map p116; ☎ 616 24 66; www.nationalcar-rental.com; Overtoom 184)

Sixt (☎ 023-405 90 90; www.e-sixt.nl; Schiphol Plaza)

Parking

Parking in the city hits you where it hurts. Pay-and-display applies in the central zone from 9am to midnight from Monday to Saturday, and noon to midnight on Sunday. At the time of writing, the cost was €4.60/27.60/18.40 per hour/day/evening in most of the City Centre, and €3.60/21.60/14.40 elsewhere within

the Canal Belt. Prices ease as you move away from the centre. Day passes are available.

Nonpayers in the City Centre will find a bright yellow *wielklem* (wheel clamp) attached to their car and have to pay €103.60 to get it removed; visit the closest [Stadtoezicht office](#) (City Surveillance; ☎ 553 03 00) to pay the fine. Otherwise, within 24 hours the vehicle will be towed and the fine skyrockets to €300.

Parking garages in the City Centre include locations at Damrak, near Leidseplein and under Museumplein and the Stopera, but they're often full and cost more than a parking permit. Here are some other options for parking:

Amsterdam-Noord Park for free and take the ferry across.

Car Hotel (☎ 493 12 78; www.carhotel.nl; per 24hr €20) Collects and delivers your car from and to your hotel.

Stadionplein Park and ride in from the southwestern outskirts.

Transferium parking garage (☎ 400 17 21; Bijlmer; per day incl 2 return tickets for public transport to Centraal Station €5.50) Under the Amsterdam Arena.

TAXI

Amsterdam taxis are among Europe's most expensive. Worse, drivers tend not to know the streets; you often have to tell them how to get there. This is complicated because, as a group, taxi drivers are among the few people you meet in town who may not speak English well. A notable exception is [Taxicentrale Amsterdam](#) (TCA; ☎ 777 7777).

You're not supposed to hail taxis in the many no-stop zones of the city, but many cabs will halt if you do. You can also usually find them at taxi stands at hotels and, especially at night, on Leidseplein.

Flag fall is around €3.40 and the rate is €1.94 per kilometre, plus a 5% to 10% tip. Some independent cabs charge lower fares but many will charge more. There's also the informal strategy of setting a price with the driver before you get in – figure about two thirds of the metered price. Some haggling is usually involved. If a driver's been waiting long enough, he may agree.

A cute alternative to regular taxis, the open three-wheeled scooters of [TukTuk](#) (☎ 0900 993 33 99, per min €0.55) have a Fellini quality about them. Costs are zone-based: €3.50/5/6.50 for one/two/three passengers in the City Centre, plus a flat €3.50 per zone thereafter.

TRAIN

Trains are frequent and serve domestic destinations at regular intervals, sometimes five or six times an hour. However, the network has been plagued by poor punctuality in recent years, particularly at rush hour.

Amsterdam's main train station is Centraal Station (CS). There's a left-luggage desk downstairs from Track 2, near the southeastern corner of the station.

Domestic Tickets

Tickets can be bought at the window or ticketing machines. Buying a ticket on board means you'll pay almost double the normal fare.

To use the ticketing machines, find your destination on the alphabetical list of place names, enter the code into the machine, then choose 1st or 2nd class (there's little difference in comfort, but if the train is crowded there are usually more seats in 1st class). Then choose with/without discount, the former *only* if you have a Railrunner or Voordeel-Urenkaart (see below) and the period of validity, ie 'today' or 'without date' for a future trip. For tickets without date, be sure to validate the ticket in a yellow punch gadget near the platform before you board. The machines take coins and PIN cards, but not credit cards.

With a valid ticket you can break your journey along the direct route. Day return tickets are 10% to 15% cheaper than two one-ways.

Children under four travel free if they don't take up a seat. Ages four to 11 pay a 'Railrunner' fare of €2 as long as an adult comes along.

If you plan to do a lot of travelling, a one-day travel card costs €40.30. For longer stays, the €55 Voordeel-Urenkaart is valid for one year and gives a 40% discount on train travel weekdays after 9am, as well as weekends, public holidays and the whole months of July and August. The discount also applies to up to three people travelling with you on the same trip. Seniors (60-plus) can pay an extra €14 for seven days of fare-free travel a year.

International Tickets

For details of international trains and reservations, visit the [NS international office](#) (www.ns.nl; Centraal Station; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) facing Track 2 and see Dutch inefficiency at its worst. At peak times (eg summer) the queues can be up to two hours.

Upon entering, pick up a numbered ticket based on the kind of train ticket you need: advance, pick-up of a reservation, or departing within an hour. Pick-ups and immediate departures get higher priority. Don't even think of taking a number for other than what you're planning to buy – you'll be sent to the back of the queue.

You may also purchase tickets by phone (☎ 0900 92 96, per minute €0.35, 8am to midnight), or by credit card online, but you must pick them up here. Be sure to reserve international seats in advance during peak periods.

Schedules

In stations, schedules are posted by route, though trip duration and arrival time information aren't. Outside of the station, contact the [NS](#) (☎ 0900 92 92, per min €0.70; www.ns.nl; ☎ 7am-midnight).

TRAM, BUS & METRO

Most public transport within the city is by tram; buses and Amsterdam's metro (subway) serve some outer reaches. Services are run by the local transit authority, the GVB; national railway (NS) tickets are not valid on local transport.

The GVB has an [information office](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 0900 80 11, per min €0.10; www.gvb.nl; Stationsplein 10; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat & Sun) across the tram tracks from the Centraal Station main entrance. Here you can get tickets, maps and the like. The website has lots of useful information including details of how to reach key sights.

You must either purchase a ticket on board or validate it when you board. If you get caught without a ticket or properly stamped strip, playing the ignorant foreigner will guarantee that you get fined €37.50. Some trams have conductors responsible for ticketing (usually towards the rear of the tram), while others do not. Drivers can also handle tickets but prefer not to as it slows things down. If you are transferring from another line, show your ticket to the conductor or driver as you board. Buses are more conventional, with drivers stamping the tickets as you board.

Chances are you won't use the metro unless you go to the international bus station at Amstelstation, south to the RAI Convention Centre, or to the World Trade Centre (all [Map pp58-9](#)).

GVB Fares

Tickets on trams and buses are calculated by zone and are valid for one hour from the time they're stamped. Within the city centre you are in Zone 1. When in doubt, consult the maps at bus and tram stops, or ask the driver or conductor. Single-trip fares for one/two zones are €1.60/2.40.

GVB passes are valid in all zones, and fares for one/two/three days are €6.50/10.50/13.50. Children (aged four to 11) and seniors can obtain a day pass for €4.50 per day, but multiple day passes are not available.

Strippenkaart

Depending on how much you plan to travel, consider a *strippenkaart* ('strip card'; 15-/45-strip cards €6.80/20.10), available at train and bus stations, post offices, many VVV (tourist information) offices, supermarkets and tobacconists.

Each strip is numbered, but there's a trick: you need to stamp for the number of zones you're travelling *plus one*, and you stamp one strip only. In other words, if you're travelling in Zone 1, stamp the second available strip but not the first (this would invalidate the second stamp). You should begin stamping from the lowest number available. You can also use a strip card if you're travelling with a companion, so if both of you are travelling within Zone 1, you stamp the second and the fourth strips (two strips plus two strips).

If you're boarding transport with a conductor, simply state where you're travelling and the conductor will stamp your card for you. If you need to validate it yourself, fold the card so that the strip you want to stamp is first on the top, and insert it into the machine.

A *strippenkaart* is valid on local public transport throughout the country; however, in early 2009 they will be replaced by a smart-card system, the *OV-chipkaart*. A disposable card costs €8 for four journeys – not a great deal. Or you can pay a one-off fee of €7.50 for a regular *OV-chipkaart* and load it at the GVB ticket vendors and machines (good for longer stays, as single journeys begin at €0.90). Don't forget to swipe it at the card readers in trams and buses, both upon entering and exiting, or you'll be liable for a fine.

BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours are similar to those of other European countries, with a few exceptions. Most banks and businesses close on public holidays, but many shops open on Good Friday, Christmas and Boxing Day. On other religious days, such as Whit Monday, it may seem hardly like a holiday at all. Venues normally closed on Sunday are likely to be shut on public holidays.

Banks Open from 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday – some till 9pm Thursday, and Saturday mornings.

Cafés Open 10am to 1am Sunday to Thursday, till 3am Friday and Saturday.

General office hours From 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Museums Often closed on Monday.

Pubs and clubs Opening hours vary. Closing hours 1am Sunday to Thursday, 3am Friday and Saturday.

Restaurants Lunch 11am to 2.30pm, dinner 6pm to 10pm.

Shops Open from noon to 6pm Monday, 9am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday. *Koopavond* (evening shopping) is on Thursday nights, with shops staying open until 9pm. Within the Canal Belt, shops are allowed to open from 1pm until 5pm on Sunday, although not all choose to do so.

Supermarkets Open until 8pm.

CHILDREN

There is much to keep kids occupied in Amsterdam – a zoo, playgrounds and parks, canal boat trips, a marionette theatre and kid-friendly museums, just for starters (see the boxed text, p105). Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* is a goldmine for planning ahead.

In general, attitudes towards children in the Netherlands are very positive, apart from some hotels with a no-children policy – check when you book. Most restaurants have high chairs and children's menus. Facilities for changing nappies, however, are limited to the big department stores, major museums and train stations and you'll pay to use them. Breast-feeding is generally OK in public if done discreetly. Kids are allowed in pubs but aren't supposed to drink until they're 16. While they're still tots, be careful of all the open water (Dutch kids all learn to swim at school).

See also listings in the Neighbourhoods chapter (p56), or check local listings for special events (under *jeugd* for 'youth').

Babysitting

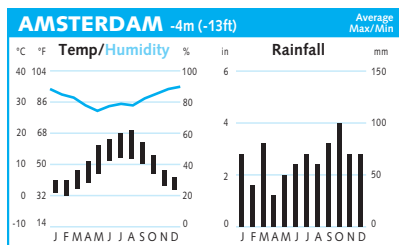
Babysitters charge between €5 and €6 an hour depending on the time of day, sometimes with weekend and/or hotel supplements and a service fee for the agency, and you might have to pay for their taxi home if it gets late. Agencies use male and female students, but you may not always be able to specify which gender. Weekends frequently get booked out, so plan ahead. Ask at hotels about babysitting services, or try **Oppascentrale Kriterion** (Map p122; ☎ 624 58 48; www.kriterionoppas.org; Valckenierstraat 45hs; ☎ 4.30-8pm daily, 9-11am Mon).

CLIMATE

Unlike the climate suggested by 17th-century landscapes depicting half-frozen skaters, Amsterdam has a temperate maritime climate with cool winters and mild summers. The best time to go is May (when the tulips are out) to August, when the weather is most reliable, but an Indian summer during September and early October can be delightful.

Rain is spread evenly over the year, often in the form of endless drizzle, though the statisticians tell us that most of it falls at night (yeah, right). It's best to bring a foul-weather jacket in case of the occasional cold snap or rainstorm. Very few hotels have air conditioning, although higher temperatures due to global warming is slowly forcing a change. December to February is the coldest period, with occasional slushy snow and temperatures around freezing. It rarely freezes hard enough to allow skating on the canals, but when it does, the city comes alive with skaters. And you couldn't wish for better photo material than Amsterdam after a dusting of snow.

See also p16 to help you decide on the best time to go.



COURSES

Here are some options if you're interested in studying the Dutch language in all its guttural glory:

Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University (Map p92; ☎ 620 02 25; www.amsu.edu; Keizersgracht 324) Based in the Felix Meritis Building.

British Language Training Centre (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 36 34; www.bltc.nl; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 328e) Offers Dutch and English courses and has a good reputation.

Tropeninstituut (Map p129; ☎ 568 83 19; www.kit.nl; Royal Institute for the Tropics, Language Training Department, Lineaasstraat 2) Intensive language courses with a large component of cultural training, aimed specifically at foreigners moving to the Netherlands.

Volksuniversiteit Amsterdam (☎ 626 16 26; www.volksuniversiteitamsterdam.nl; Rapenburgerstraat 73) Well-regarded day and evening courses that don't cost a fortune.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

For visitors from EU countries, limits only still apply for perfumes and other luxury products. Special limits apply to visitors from the new EU member states who joined after 2003; see www.douane.nl for details.

Residents of non-EU countries are limited to the following:

Coffee 500g of coffee, or 200g of coffee extracts or coffee essences.

Perfume 50g of perfume and 0.25L of eau de toilette.

Tea 100g of tea, or 40g of tea extracts or tea essences.

Tobacco 200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco (shag or pipe tobacco) or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars.

Wine 1L of strong alcoholic drink or 2L of sparkling wine or fortified wine such as sherry or port; 2L of nonsparkling wine.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Visitors of various professions – artists, journalists, museum conservators, students and teachers – may get discounts at some venues if they show accreditation. Seniors over 65, and with partners of 60 or older, benefit from reductions on public transport, museum admissions, concerts and more. You may look younger, so bring your passport.

Other discount options:

Cultureel Jongeren Paspoort (Cultural Youth Passport; www.cjpn.nl; €15) Big discounts to museums and cultural events nationwide for people under 27 years.

I Amsterdam Card (per 24/36/72hr €33/43/53) Available at VVV offices and some hotels. Provides admission to most museums, canal boat trips, and discounts and freebies at shops, attractions and restaurants. Also includes a GVB transit pass.

Museumkaart (Museum Card; over/under 26yr €30/15, plus €4.95 for first-time registrants) Free entry to some 400 museums all over the country for one year. Buy one at the ticket counter before you hit an exhibition.

ELECTRICITY

The standard voltage throughout the Netherlands is 220V, 50Hz. Plugs are of the Continental two-round-pin variety. If you need an adapter, get it before you leave home because most of the ones available in the Netherlands are for locals going abroad. See www.kropla.com for issues related to electrical systems, such as cycle frequencies and how to avoid frying your hairdryer.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Amsterdam is the country's capital but confusingly, Den Haag is the seat of government, the result of an old deal among Holland's ruling elite. So the embassies are in Den Haag, but Amsterdam has a raft of consulates:

France (Map pp100-1; ☎ 530 69 69; Vijzelgracht 2)

Germany (Map p110; ☎ 574 77 00; Honthorststraat 36-8)

Italy (Map p110; ☎ 550 20 50; Vijzelstraat 79)

Spain (Map pp100-1; ☎ 620 38 11; Frederiksplein 34)

UK (Map p116; ☎ 676 43 43; Koningslaan 44)

USA (Map p110; ☎ 575 53 09; Museumplein 19)

These countries have embassies in Den Haag:

Australia (☎ 070-310 82 00; Carnegiealaan 4)

Canada (☎ 070-311 16 00; Sophialaan 7)

Denmark (☎ 070-302 59 59; Koninginnegracht 30)

India (☎ 070-346 97 71; Buitenrustweg 2)

Ireland (☎ 070-363 09 93; Dr Kuyperstraat 9)

Israel (☎ 070-376 05 00; Buitenhof 47)

Japan (☎ 070-346 95 44; Tobias Asserlaan 2)

New Zealand (☎ 070-346 93 24; Eisenhowerlaan 77n)

Norway (☎ 070-311 76 11; Lange Vijverberg 11)

EMERGENCY

In a life-threatening emergency, the national telephone number for an ambulance, police and fire brigade is ☎ 112. It's an all-in service that feeds you into the right emergency service, with no waiting.

HEALTH

For information on medical services in Amsterdam, see [opposite](#); some information for women is on [p256](#).

STDs & HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is still a problem in the Netherlands, but has been contained by practical education campaigns and free needle-exchange programs. The Dutch health ministry and organisations such as the COC, HIV Vereniging and Schorer Foundation (listed following) do their bit to prevent the spread of STDs and HIV. Virtually all bars, bookshops and saunas that cater for gays provide safe-sex leaflets; many also sell condoms.

Free testing for sexually transmitted diseases is available at the [GG&GD STD Clinic](#) (Municipal Medical & Health Service; [Map p122](#); ☎ 555 58 22; www.ggd.amsterdam.nl; Weesperplein 1; ☎ 8.30-10.30am & 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Fri). You must arrive early in the morning for same-day testing. If a problem is diagnosed staff will provide free treatment immediately, but blood-test results take a week (they'll give you the results over the phone if need be). The HIV Vereniging offers HIV testing on Friday nights (€20; ring for an appointment), with results in 15 minutes.

There are bilingual telephone help lines for those seeking information or a friendly ear:

[HIV Vereniging](#) ([Map p116](#); ☎ 616 01 60, help line 689 25 77; www.hivnet.org; 1e Helmersstraat 17b-3; ☎ 2-10pm Mon-Fri) National organisation for the HIV positive; provides personal assistance.

[Schorer Foundation](#) ([Map pp100-1](#); ☎ 573 94 44; www.schorer.nl; Sarphatistraat 35; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) NGO offering lesbian and gay health-care services; HIV prevention, buddy care.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

People take public holidays seriously, and if your Dutch visit collides with one, your plans may face a hiccup. Most museums adopt Sunday hours on the days listed here (except Christmas and New Year, when they are closed) even if they fall on a day when the place would otherwise be closed.

[Nieuwjaarsdag](#) New Year's Day, 1 January. Parties and fireworks galore.

[Pasen](#) (Easter) Goede Vrijdag (Good Friday); [Eerste and Tweede Paasdag](#) (Easter Sunday and Easter Monday).

[Koninginnedag](#) Queen's Day, 30 April.

[Bevrijdingsdag](#) Liberation Day, 5 May. This isn't a universal holiday; government workers have the day off but almost everyone else has to work.

[Hemelvaartsdag](#) Ascension Day. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

[Eerste and Tweede Pinksterdag](#) Whit Sunday (Pentecost) and Whit Monday. Usually between mid-May and mid-June.

[Eerste and Tweede Kerstdag](#) Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Many people also treat [Remembrance Day](#) (4 May) as a day off.

INTERNET ACCESS

Amsterdam led the digital revolution in Europe, so the city is just as wired as many of its visitors.

Most hotels offer some kind of internet access, from business centres and turbo-charged wi-fi to the receptionist's dusty PC. Oftentimes you can borrow a guest laptop. In-room connections may be ISDN or modular, if there's no wi-fi; if this is important, check ahead with the hotel.

There are a few internet cafés around town, but they're a dying breed with more and more visitors logging in via hotel terminals or mobile devices. Costs are roughly €1.50 to €2 per hour, with snappy high-speed lines.

[easyInternetcafé](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); www.easyeverything.co.uk; Damrak 33; ☎ 9am-10pm) Rows of aging self-service screens from the makers of easyJet.

[goPengo](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); www.gopengo.org; ☎ 771 97 58; Staalstraat 28; ☎ 9am-midnight) Linux-loving nonprofit outfit and defender of open-source software.

[Internet City](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 620 12 92; Nieuwendijk 76; ☎ 9am-midnight) Over 100 terminals not far from the main coffeeshop drag. Draws backpackers and bleary-eyed party animals.

Many coffeeshops double as internet cafés. You can also surf the web for free at outlets of the public library (Openbare Bibliotheek); try the following:

[Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 523 09 00; Oosterdokskade 143; ☎ 10am-10pm) Free wi-fi and use of library terminals, in a stunning new edifice overlooking the city and harbour (see [p71](#)).

[Openbare Bibliotheek Roelof Hartplein](#) ([Map p110](#); ☎ 662 00 94; Roelof Hartplein 430; ☎ 2-8pm Mon & Wed, 10am-5pm Tue & Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Housed in a fine Amsterdam School building.

LEGAL MATTERS

The Amsterdam *politie* (police) are pretty relaxed and helpful unless you do something instinctively wrong such as chucking litter or smoking a joint right under their noses. They can hold offenders for up to six hours for questioning (plus another six hours if they can't establish your identity, or 24 hours if they consider the matter serious) and do not have to grant a phone call, though they'll ring your consulate. You're presumed innocent until proven guilty.

In principle there's a 'limited' requirement for anyone over 12 years of age to carry ID. For the visitor this basically means on public transport, at soccer games or, increasingly, in designated 'security-sensitive' areas such as Rembrandtplein or the Red Light District, where the police can conduct random checks for illegal weapons and drugs. (It's all part of a national law-and-order, anti-terrorism campaign, but most visitors won't even notice it.) Foreigners should carry a passport or a photocopy of the relevant data pages; a driver's licence isn't sufficient.

You can drink beer and wine from age 16, and spirits from age 18, although bars and cafés are pretty lenient when it comes to proof of age. Coffeeshops require visitors be 18 or even 21 to enter and consume soft drugs. The legal driving age is 18.

MAPS

The maps in this book will probably suffice for casual touring. Lonely Planet's handy *Amsterdam City Map* is plastic-coated against the elements, and has a street index that covers the most popular parts of the city.

Otherwise you'll find a wide variety of maps for sale at any VVV office, as well as at bookstores and newsstands.

MEDICAL SERVICES

The Netherlands has reciprocal health arrangements with other EU countries and Australia. If you're an EU citizen, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), available from health centres or, in the UK, post offices, covers you for most medical care. You still might have to pay on the spot but you'll be able to claim it back again at home. Citizens of other countries are advised to take out travel insurance; medical or dental treatment is less expensive than in North America but still costs enough.

There are no compulsory vaccinations, but if you've just travelled through a yellow-fever area you could be asked for proof that you're covered. Up-to-date tetanus, polio and diphtheria immunisations are always recommended whether you're travelling or not.

For minor health concerns, see a local *drogist* (chemist) or *apotheek* (pharmacy, to fill prescriptions). For more serious problems, go to the casualty ward of a *ziekenhuis* (hospital) or try the [Centrale Doktersdienst](#) (☎ 0900 592 34 34), the 24-hour central medical service that will refer you to an appropriate doctor, dentist or pharmacy. For matters dealing with STDs and HIV/AIDS, see [opposite](#).

Forget about buying flu tablets and antacids at supermarkets; for anything stronger than toothpaste you'll have to go to a pharmacy. A convenient one is [Dam Apotheek](#) ([Map pp62-5](#); ☎ 624 43 31; Damstraat 2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat), just off the Dam.

A number of hospitals have 24-hour emergency facilities:

[Boven-IJ Ziekenhuis](#) (☎ 634 63 46; Statenjachtstraat 1, Amsterdam Noord) Take bus 34 north from Centraal Station.

[Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis](#) ([Map p129](#); ☎ 599 91 11; 1e Oosterparkstraat 1) At Oosterpark near the Tropenmuseum. The closest public hospital to the centre of town.

[St Lucas Andreas Ziekenhuis](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 510 89 11; Jan Tooropstraat 164) In the western suburbs.

[Slotervaart Ziekenhuis](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 512 93 33; Louwesweg 6) In the southwestern suburbs.

[VU Medisch Centrum](#) ([Map pp58-9](#); ☎ 444 44 44; De Boelelaan 1117, Amsterdam Buitenveldert) Hospital of the VU (Vrije Universiteit; Free University).

MONEY

The Netherlands uses the euro (€). If you're coming with US dollars you'll be aware that the euro has appreciated sharply against the dollar in the past couple of years. As for the denominations of the currency, there are €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500 notes, and €0.01, €0.02, €0.05, €0.10, €0.20, €0.50, €1 and €2 coins (amounts under €1 are called cents). Euro notes are the same in all participating countries: coins have a 'European' side and a 'national' side (in the Netherlands, with an image of Queen Beatrix). All are legal tender throughout the euro zone area, although many businesses will not accept notes larger than €50 because of the funny money in circulation.

To check the latest exchange rates, visit www.oanda.com. See also [Costs & Money](#) (p20).

ATMs

Automatic teller machines can be found outside most banks, at the airport and at Centraal Station. Most accept credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard/Eurocard, as well as cash cards that access the Cirrus and Plus networks. Check with your home bank for service charges before leaving. ATMs (cash-points) are so widespread in Amsterdam that we haven't mapped them, except for one location in the popular Jordaan district where ATMs are thin on the ground.

Changing Money

Avoid the private exchange booths dotted around tourist areas. They're convenient and open late, but rates and commissions tend to be lousy. Banks and the Postbank (at post offices) stick to official exchange rates and charge a sensible commission, as does [GWK Traveler](#) (☎ 0900 05 66), accessible at a number of branches: [Centraal Station](#) (🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun); [Damrak](#) (Map pp62-5; Damrak 1-5; 🕒 9am-8.45pm); [Leidseplein](#) (Map pp100-1; Leidseplein 31a; 🕒 9.15am-5.45pm) and [Schiphol airport](#) (🕒 7am-10pm).

Credit Cards

All the major international cards are recognised, and most hotels, restaurants and major stores accept them – but always check first to avoid disappointment. Some establishments levy a 5% surcharge (or more) on credit cards to offset the commissions charged by card providers.

To withdraw money at a bank counter instead of through an ATM, go to a GWK Traveler branch such as at Centraal Station or Schiphol airport. You'll need to show your passport.

Report lost or stolen cards to the appropriate 24-hour number. For American Express and Visa, phoning the emergency contact number for your home country will speed things up.

[American Express](#) (☎ 504 86 66)

[Diners Club](#) (☎ 654 55 11)

[Eurocard](#) and [MasterCard](#) (☎ Utrecht 030-283 55 55)

[Visa](#) (☎ 660 06 11, 0800 022 31 10)

PIN Cards

While in Amsterdam you'll notice people gleefully using 'PIN' cards everywhere, from shops to public telephones and cigarette vending machines. These direct-debit cards look like credit or bank cards with little gold-printed circuit chips on them, but they won't be of much use to visitors without a Dutch bank account. The Maestro direct-debit cards popular in Europe work just fine at ATMs.

Travellers Cheques

Banks charge a commission of 2% to 3% to cash travellers cheques, and require passport ID. American Express and Thomas Cook are the leading providers. However, shops, restaurants and hotels always prefer cash; a few might accept travellers cheques but the rates will be anybody's guess. Direct ATM withdrawals via a credit card might make more sense for cost and convenience – check with your bank.

Eurocheques are on their way out, although you can still cash them at banks and GWKs with a guarantee card. Few shops accept them.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Based in Amsterdam, *De Telegraaf* is the Netherlands' biggest newspaper: an untidy, right-wing daily with sensationalist news, good finance coverage, the closest thing you'll find to a Dutch tabloid. Amsterdammers swear by *Het Parool* for its lowdown on the capital's culture and politics. The highly regarded *NRC Handelsblad*, a merger of two elitist papers from Rotterdam and Amsterdam, sets the country's journalistic standards, while the populist *Volkskrant* has leftist leanings. The *Financieële Dagblad* is the country's leading daily for financial and business news. You'll occasionally see the *Algemene Dagblad*, a middle-of-the-road paper that has lost ground to its competitors. Many commuters pick up copies of the free *Metro*, *Spits* or *Dag* from racks in the train stations; leaf through and leave them on a seat for the next guy.

The English-language *Amsterdam Weekly* (www.amsterdamweekly.nl) comes out each Thursday with useful cultural features and listings. English-speakers can easily find European editions of the *Economist*, *Newsweek* and *Time*, as well as most of the major international newspapers at book stores such as Atheneum (p137). The main British newspapers

are available (the same day), as is the *International Herald Tribune*.

English-language ezines with widespread following include *Expatica* (www.expatica.com), which is tailored to the European expat set, and *Dutch News* (www.dutchnews.nl), a summary of daily happenings with a great news archive.

ORGANISED TOURS

For those with limited time on their hands, a quick tour is not such a bad thing – it lets you see a whole lot of stuff in a short period so you can then decide where you'd like to spend more time. There's a tour to suit every taste in Amsterdam, ranging from bike rides to walking tours. Canal cruises are by far the most popular and are an absolute must. While some are themed (jazz, candlelight, pizza – you name it, they got it), some are simply practical, enabling you to link many sights in a short time in the nicest way possible.

Bike Tours

[Cycletours Holland](#) (Map pp58-9; ☎ 627 90 32; www.cycletours.com; Buiksloterweg 7a) This very experienced tour company offers a variety of longer tours (one week+) around the Netherlands by bicycle with accommodation in barge-boats for groups of 15 to 30 people. It caters mostly to people who book in advance from abroad, so contact them well in advance (at least several weeks). A one-week tour starts around €600 for cabin with shared facilities, plus a €60 supplement in high season.

[Mike's Bike Tours](#) (Map pp100-1; ☎ 622 79 70; www.mikesbikeamsterdam.com; Kerkstraat 134; adult/infant in bike seat/child 12yr & under/student bike tour incl bike rental €22/free/15/19, bike & boat tour €29/free/20/25; 🕒 bike tour 12.30pm Mar–mid-May & Sep–Nov, 11am & 4pm mid-May–Aug, bike & boat tour noon Tue–Sun Jun–Aug) These fantastic four-hour tours take you both around the centre of town and into the countryside, with stops at windmills and cheese farms. Guides have insider knowledge of the city, and tours often end with a pub visit. The 'bike and boat' tour (about five hours) includes drinks on board and a visit to the Vondelpark. The meeting place for all tours is the reflecting pool on Museumplein, right behind the Rijksmuseum.

[Yellow Bike Tours](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 620 69 40; www.yellowbike.nl; Nieuwezijds Kolk 29; city/countryside tour per person €19.50/27.50; 🕒 city tour 9.30am & 1pm Sun–Fri, 9.30am & 2pm Sat, countryside tour 11am, all tours Apr–1 Nov) Yellow Bike offered the original Amsterdam bike tour, so it's got it down pat. Choose from a three-hour city tour or a six-hour countryside tour through the pretty

Waterland district north of central Amsterdam. These tours are less youth-oriented than Mike's and are limited to 12 to 15 tour participants per guide. Tours depart from its office. Reservations recommended.

Boat Tours

The companies mentioned here offer a variety of boat tours (singular *rondvaart*, plural *rondvaarten*), from hour-long excursions on the inner canals (figure on around €9 per person) to more elaborate tours of architecture on the Eastern Docklands, jazz cruises, dinner cruises and candlelight cruises. Sure they're touristy but on a clear night with the city lights a-twinkling, who's to argue it's not delightful? Details are constantly being revised, so check websites or phone for details. Some cruises are included in the I Amsterdam Card (p245).

To hire a paddle-powered Canal Bike, see p252. For details of boat transport around town, see p240.

[Blue Boat Company](#) (☎ 679 13 70; www.blueboat.nl; Stadhouderskade 30; 75min canal cruises adult/child under 4yr/child 5-12yr €10/free/6; 🕒 every 30min 10am-6pm Apr–Sep, every hr 10am-5pm Oct–Mar) Blue Boat's main tour clocks in at 75 minutes. Evening cruises (€14.50/free/10) are offered three times a night from April to September, and at 8pm only Thursday to Sunday the rest of the year. Tour boats depart from the Blue Boat dock near the Rijksmuseum.

[Canal Bus](#) (Map pp62-5; ☎ 623 98 86; www.canal.nl; Weteringschans 26; day pass adult/child 5-12yr €18/12) Offers a unique hop-on, hop-off canal boat service visiting most of the big destinations. Routes vary depending on where you want to visit. At night, there is a delightful 1½-hour jazz cruise (€45, runs 8pm and 10pm Saturdays from April to November). Sip drinks, enjoy light nibbles and watch the city lights go by.

[Classic Boat Dinners](#) (Map pp92; ☎ 330 19 10; www.classicboatdinner.nl; Prinsengracht 391; €214 1st hr, then €195 per hr) Nothing is more romantic than dining on this beautifully restored river launch, *Klejn Amsterdam* (1905), as you cruise the quieter canals, personal waiter on hand, feasting on a gastronomic silver-service six-course meal and marvellous wines. Propose during dessert and a yes is guaranteed. Also good for showing the boss around town.

[Classic Canal Charters](#) (Map p122; ☎ 421 08 25; www.classiccanalcharters.com; Czaar Peterstraat 147hs; €132-316 per hr, minimum 1.5-2hr) Hires out authentic old boats (converted cargo barges, sloops and salon boats) for six to 60 passengers for cruises (dinner, entertainment, outings etc) in Amsterdam and beyond. Rental includes skipper.

Holland International (☎ 622 77 88; www.hir.nl; Prins Hendrikkade 33a; 1hr cruise adult/child €11/6) Its one-hour canal cruise (every 15 minutes 9am to 6pm and every 30 minutes 6pm to 10pm) is to Amsterdam what the Eiffel Tower is for Paris – experience it before you die. It also has a roster of candlelight lunch and dinner cruises (adults €27.50 to €69, children €17.50 to €45).

Rederij Lovers (Map pp62-5; ☎ 530 10 90; www.loverson.nl; Prins Hendrikkade 25-27; 1hr tour per person €9, Museumboat day pass per adult/child €17/13) Apart from a one-hour canal tour (leaves every 30 or 45 minutes from the Lovers terminal in front of Centraal Station), there's a variety of night-time cruises, including the candlelight cruise (€27.50, running 8.30pm from April to October, and on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from November to March), with wine and Dutch cheese.

Don't forget that the public ferries across the IJ river take in some worthy architecture in Amsterdam-Noord and the Eastern Docklands during crossings (see p240).

City Tours

Keytours (Map pp62-5; ☎ 06 23 51 51; www.keytours.nl; Damrak 19; €15-55) Keytours is your one-stop shop for city tours – on foot, bike, bus and boat – to all major sights in and around Amsterdam. While its bus tours get you to sights you wouldn't normally see, buses are not the best option in town. The tranquil two-hour candlelit cruise (€25) shows you the city at its loveliest.

Lindbergh Tours (Map pp62-5; ☎ 622 27 66; www.lindbergh.nl; Damrak 26; €7.50-69) While this outfit offers similar tours to Keytours, it also runs a city sightseeing bus tour with commentary, along with Rembrandt Tours, Red Light Tours and day trips out of Amsterdam such as the Cheese Market and Windmill tour (€30).

New Amsterdam Tours (☎ in Berlin 49 30 6908 8035; www.newamsterdamtours.com; tours free, donations encouraged; ☎ 11am & 3pm) An entertaining three-hour jaunt to the sights of the Medieval Centre and Red Light District by slick young guides. Meet at the Tourist Information Office (the white building) opposite Centraal Station, rain or shine.

Randy Roy's Redlight Tours (☎ 06 4185 3288; www.randyroysredlighttours.com; per person incl drink €12.50; ☎ 8pm Sun-Thu, 8pm & 10pm Fri & Sat) The darkest secrets of Mike Tyson, Quentin Tarantino and other celebs feature in this lively 1½-hour tour of the Red Light District, conducted by long-time Amsterdam resident Kimberley. Meet in front of the Victoria Hotel (Damarak 1-5) opposite Centraal Station.

Red Light District Tour (☎ 420 73 28; www.pic-amsterdam.com; Engestraat 3; €12.50; ☎ 11am Tue, Wed & Fri, 6pm Fri & Sat) The Prostitutes Information

Centre offers fascinating one-hour tours of the Red Light District where it explains the nitty-gritty of how the business works. You get to talk to a former prostitute about her work and the neighbourhood. Profits go to the centre; reservations are necessary.

Red Light District Tour (☎ 623 63 02; www.zoom-amsterdam.com; per person €15; ☎ 5pm) Zoom Amsterdam offers this 2½-hour tour covering both the history and culture (if you will) of the Red Light District. All questions are answered. Meet at the café inside the Schreierstoren (Prins Hendrikkade 94-95), across from Centraal Station.

Urban Home and Garden Tours (☎ 688 12 43, for last-minute bookings 06 2168 1918; www.uhgt.nl; per person incl drink €25; ☎ 10.15am Fri, 11.15am Sat, 12.15pm Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct) These well-regarded tours look at Amsterdam dwellings from the perspective of home, garden and even gable. Visits include 18th-century, 19th-century and contemporary homes. Tours take 2½ to three hours. You'll need to reserve ahead, and the meeting point for tours (near Rembrandtplein) will be revealed after you do.

POST

The postal service is fairly reliable and swift with deliveries. Post offices are generally open 9am to 5pm weekdays. The **main post office** (Map p92; Singel 250; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is large and well equipped, and there's also a branch in the **Stopera complex** (Map pp62-5; Waterlooplein 10; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat). For queries about postal services ring ☎ 058-233 33 33 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday, or 9am to 4pm Saturday.

The standard rate ('priority') for letters under 20g is €0.44 within the Netherlands, €0.72 within Europe, and €0.89 outside Europe. Unless you're sending mail within the Amsterdam region, use the slot marked *Overige Postcodes* (Other Postal Codes) on the red letterboxes. When you buy stamps, you'll have to buy a booklet of at least five, so stock up on postcards.

RADIO

Radio stations include Q-music (100.7 FM, www.qmusic.nl), Radio 538 (102.1 FM, www.radio538.nl) and Sky Radio (101.2 FM, www.skyradio.nl), plus offerings from RTL (www.rtl.nl) and NOS (Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, www.nos.nl). All have streaming and broadcast half-hourly news reports (in Dutch), with Europop and chat sandwiched in between.

BBC Radio 4 (198kHz FM) and BBC Radio 5 (693kHz FM, sports) lead the English-language content.

SAFETY

Theft is rare in normal hotel rooms, although it's always wise to deposit valuables for safekeeping at the reception desk or, where available, in your in-room safe. Theft is more common at hostels; bring your own lock for your locker.

Watch out for pickpockets in crowded markets and trams. Violent crime is rare, especially involving foreigners, although there have been a small number of gay-bashing incidents recently.

Cars with foreign registration are popular targets for smash-and-grab theft. Don't leave valuable items in the car; remove registration and ID papers and the radio/stereo if possible.

If something is stolen, get a police report for insurance purposes, but don't expect the police to retrieve your property or apprehend the thief. C'est la vie.

There are occasionally some junkie types around the Zeedijk and Gelderskade, and also on the Nieuwendijk near Centraal Station. Generally they won't bother you if you don't bother them.

Bicycles are numerous and can be dangerous for pedestrians. When crossing the street or a bicycle lane look for speeding bikes – the 'silent killers', as we like to call them. Cyclists, meanwhile, should take care to watch out for unwitting foreign tourists in their paths. And always, *always*, lock up your bike with a decent lock.

Finally, two words: dog poo. The city is trying though.

SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Health & Fitness

When the weather's agreeable, it's popular to hit the Vondelpark with your obligatory iPod for a run. At other times locals hit the indoor fitness facilities to burn off that beer.

GYMS

Apart from the places listed below, several hotels also have fitness centres for day use, including the **Splash Fitnessclub** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 621 22 23; www.splashrenaissance.nl; Kattengat 1) at the Renaissance Hotel and Amsterdam Fitness & Health Club (Map p116) at the NH Amsterdam Centre. Squash City (p254) also has full facilities.

Barry's Health Centre (Map pp100-1; ☎ 626 10 36; www.barryshealthcentre.nl; Lijnbaansgracht 350; day/

week pass €15/€27.50; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Large, well-equipped facility that has been renovated with a full complement of the latest machines; it offers classes, plus sauna, steam, tanning beds and a 'cardio theatre'.

Fitness First (Map pp62-5; ☎ 530 03 40; www2.fitnessfirst.nl; Nieuwezijsdijk Kolk 15; day €16, month pass from €29; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) A central location is not the only thing this modern gym has going for it. There's a full range of cardio and weightlifting equipment, group classes, sauna, steam and aroma rooms, sun beds, beauty treatments and free video loans for members.

Garden Gym (Map pp62-5; ☎ 626 87 72; www.thegarden.nl; Jodenbreestraat 158; day pass €9-12.50, month pass €40-61; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon, Wed & Fri, noon-11pm Tue, noon-10pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun) Has been rated as Amsterdam's best gym for women. The Garden Gym offers aerobics and feel-good activities, including sauna, massage, physiotherapy and dietary advice.

SAUNAS & BATHS

Saunas are mixed and there's no prudish swimsuit nonsense, so check your modesty at reception (or pick up an extra towel). Note that gay saunas have another purpose entirely.

Hammam (Map pp58-9; ☎ 681 48 18; www.hammam-amsterdam.nl; Zaanstraat 88; adult/child 2-5yr/child 6-12yr €15/4/11; ☎ noon-10pm Tue-Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun, last entry 2½hr before closing) In the northwest beyond the Haarlemmerpoort, Hammam is an attractive Turkish-style place for women only, offering a range of spa treatments and victuals such as baklava.

Koan Float (Map p92; ☎ 555 00 33; www.koanfloat.nl; Herengracht 321; floating 45/60min €30/38; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) It's not a sauna, but come here for salt-water floatation tanks – and have music piped in if you like. Management swears that 45 minutes of soaking is the equivalent of four hours' sleep, and great for jet lag. The massages are heavenly, performed by qualified masseurs. Inquire about special deals.

Sauna Deco (Map p92; ☎ 623 82 15; www.saunadeco.nl; Herengracht 115; admission noon-3pm Mon-Fri €14, all other times €15; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) Sauna Deco is a stunning Scandinavian-style sauna with good auxiliary facilities, a snack bar and lots of well-toned customers. The building itself is a gem, an early creation of architect HP Berlage; its Art Deco furnishings used to grace a Parisian department store. Massages and facials are also available; inquire for rates. Credit cards and PIN cards are not accepted.

SWIMMING

Amsterdam has a number of indoor pools and summer outdoor pools, some of them historic and very cool. However, we strongly recommend that you phone before you set out. In recent years, some indoor pools shut down in summer to save money, and hours can vary from day to day or season to season. Few are open past 7pm. Also, note that sessions are often restricted for children, nudes, seniors, sports clubs, women, you name it.

Bijlmersportcentrum (☎ 697 25 01; Bijlmerpark 76, Bijlmer; adult/child €2.90/2.60; 🕒 Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, ring for times) Near Bijlmer metro station, this sports centre has indoor and outdoor pools with a mixture of lane swimming and family free swims.

de Mirandabad (Map pp58-9; ☎ 536 44 44; De Mirandalaan 9; adult/concession €3.30/2.60; 🕒 ring for times) A tropical 'aquatic centre', complete with beach and wave machine, indoor and outdoor pools, tanning booths and waterslide, the Mirandabad is south of the city centre. This is probably the city's best facility for those with little ones. There are also squash courts.

Flevoparkbad (Map pp58-9; ☎ 692 50 30; Insulindeweg 1002; adult/senior/child 3-15yr €2.50/1.90/2.40; 🕒 10am-5.30pm May-early Sep, to 7pm in hot weather) Located east of the city centre, there's only an outdoor pool here, but it's packed when the mercury rises. Take tram 7 or 14 to the end.

Floraparkbad (Map pp58-9; ☎ 632 90 30; Sneeuwbalweg 5, Amsterdam Noord; adult/child €3.50/3) Florapark has indoor and outdoor pools, an enormous 65m slide, kids' play area and a good sunbathing section, not to mention a sauna and lots of different courses.

Marnixbad (Map p86; ☎ 625 48 43; Marnixplein 5-9; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Sat) This fancy new complex is the only place in central Amsterdam where lap swimming is possible, in a 25m pool. While swimming turn your head to the waters of the Singelgracht at eye level right outside the window. The in-house sauna isn't bad either.

Sloterparkbad (Map pp58-9; ☎ 506 35 06; Sloterveerlaan 2-4; adult or child €3.75, child under 2yr free; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Set in an attractive recreational area with a yacht harbour in the western suburbs, next to the terminus of tram 14, this place has indoor and outdoor pools. The latter can get overcrowded, but this bath is known for a less frequented nudist island, past the pools and across a causeway. In summer, on cold, rainy days the indoor pool opens.

Zuiderbad (Map p110; ☎ 678 13 90; Hobbemastraat 26; adult/child €3/2.70) This 1912 edifice behind the Rijksmuseum has been restored to its original glory, full of tiles, character and appreciative paddlers.

Outdoor Activities

Soccer, ice-skating, cycling, tennis, swimming and sailing are just a few activities that keep the locals fit – and of course jogging, which is popular in the Vondelpark and other parks. The Amsterdamse Bos has several walking and jogging trails for serious exercise. Bikes are available for rent in many corners of town (see p240) and bike tours are available (p249).

The whole coast of Holland is one long beach, backed by extensive dunes that are ideal for walks. The closest seaside resort is Zandvoort, but quieter resorts can be found further north, such as Castricum north of IJmuiden, or Egmond and Bergen a bit further north near Alkmaar.

For information about sport and leisure activities and venues, visit the **City Hall Information Centre** (Map pp62-5; ☎ 624 11 11; Amstel 1) in the arcade between the Stopera and the city hall. Local community centres (in the phone-book under Buurtcentrum) organise fitness courses.

CANAL BIKES

Explore the city from a different perspective with a pedal around the canals. Don't worry, it isn't as much work as it sounds. As long as you don't mind getting a little bit wet, it is lots of fun.

Canal Bike (per hr per person €8, more than 2 people per boat €7, plus €50 deposit; 🕒 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, later on warm nights in summer), affiliated with Canal Bus (p249), allows you to explore the canals yourself at water level. Landing stages are by the Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Anne Frank Huis and the corner of Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat. The Rijksmuseum location (Map pp100-1) is open year-round, and there are limited hours at other locations.

GOLF

Golf was long derided as something for the elite but has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, don't go expecting lush rolling links such as at St Andrew's. The Netherlands space crunch means that land is usually more profitably put to other uses. Look under *Golfbanen* in the pink pages of the phone book for several other options.

Borchland Sportcentrum (☎ 563 33 33; www.borchland.nl; Borchlandweg 6-12; 9 holes daylight €15, evenings €20; 🕒 8am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) has a nine-hole all par-three course. Call for hours of tutored courses or to set up a private lesson. Take the metro to Strandvliet.

Openbare Golfbaan Sloten (☎ 614 24 02; Sloteweg 1045; 9 holes €13-18; 🕒 8.30am-dusk May-Aug, to 8pm Mon-Fri Sep-Apr), located on the southwest side of town, also consists of nine holes. Take bus 145.

HOCKEY

Dutch (field) hockey teams compete at world-championship level. In contrast to football (soccer), which is played mainly by boys in school yards, streets and parks, hockey is still a somewhat elitist sport played by either sex on expensive club fields. For this reason, visitors will have a hard time playing unless they can become affiliated with a team. The season is similar to that for soccer. For information and matches, contact **Hockey Club Hurley** (☎ 645 44 68; Amsterdamse Bos, Nieuwe Kalfjeslaan 21; 🕒 4pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat, 8.30am-8pm Sun).

ICE-SKATING

When the canals freeze over in winter (which, to skaters, doesn't happen enough) everyone goes for a skate. Lakes and waterways fill up with skaters, their colourful scarves trailing in the wind. Be aware, however, that people break through the ice and drown every year, so be wary unless you see large groups of people. The edges and areas under bridges are hazardous because they often don't freeze properly.

You can only rent skates at a skating rink. A pair of simple hockey skates costs upwards of €50 at department stores and sports shops. Hockey skates are a cinch for learners, but figure skates are difficult to master. Speed skates put a lot of strain on the ankles, but are definitely the preferred option for serious, high-speed outings. Wood-framed skates that you tie under your shoes can be picked up cheaply at antique and bric-a-brac shops. They make you look quaint but make no mistake, you'll move like the wind if they're sharpened. Besides, they make great souvenirs.

The **Ijscomplex Jaap Eden** (Map pp58-9; ☎ 694 96 52; Radioweg 64; adult/child under 15yr & senior €5.10/3.20; 🕒 Oct-mid-Mar, ring for hours), in the eastern suburb of Watergraafsmeer, has an indoor and outdoor rink. Get there on tram 9 to Kruislaan/Middenweg.

In winter you can also skate on the frozen pond on Museumplein, looking like the top of a wind-up jewellery box.

INLINE SKATING & SKATEBOARDING

Amsterdam's extensive bike paths and flat, open expanses make the city a dream

destination for Rollerbladers and skateboarders alike. Good places to practice your moves include the asphalt trails in the lovely Vondelpark (p115), the half-pipe on Museumplein (p111) and the long, straight waterside roads of Java Eiland in the Eastern Docklands (Map p122). If the weather's dry, also check out the Friday Night Skate, a popular rolling tour through Amsterdam (see the boxed text, p117).

You can rent in-line skates at **De Vondeltuin** (Map p116; ☎ 664 50 91; www.vondeltuin.nl; Vondelpark 7) for one/two/three hours for €5/7.50/10 from March to October. This kiosk is located near the Amstelveenseweg entrance at the southwestern end of the park. Prices include protective helmet and knee and elbow pads. Skateboarders are advised to bring their own gear to Amsterdam as rentals are thin on the ground.

KORFBALL

This sport elicits giggles from foreigners who don't quite grasp its charms. Korfbal (literally 'basketball') is a lively hybrid of netball, volleyball and basketball, a passing game where male and female players ultimately target a hoop standing 3.5m high, far taller than in American basketball. It's billed as the world's only unisex sport, with dozens of active clubs in the Benelux and even a global championship. For information on venues in Amsterdam, contact the **Amsterdam Sport Council** (☎ 552 24 90).

SAILING

It should come as no surprise that the Dutch are avid sailors. Yachting is a national sport – the word 'yacht', after all, comes from the Dutch *jachtschip*, or 'chase ship'. This includes modern open boats and yachts, but also a more traditional kind revered here like nowhere else. On weekends a fleet of restored flat-bottomed boats, called the 'brown fleet' because of their reddish-brown sails, criss-cross the IJsselmeer north of Amsterdam. Some are privately owned but many are rented, and sailing on one is an unforgettable experience.

Vessels on offer range from ancient pilot boats to enormous four-masted clippers. Among the more affordable options are *boten*, one-time fishing boats with a sleeping berth for around eight people, from about €400 per day including skipper. Larger groups could rent a converted freight barge known as a *tjalk*, a Frisian design with jib and spritsail

rig, from about €600 per day. The best web portals include www.zeilkippers.nl, where you can tailor your needs to the port of departure (eg Amsterdam), type of boat, number of passengers and more. Costs are quite reasonable if you can muster a group of fellow enthusiasts, and remember – prices are always negotiable.

Some places only rent boats for day trips, but it's much more fun to go for a full week-end. A popular arrangement: you arrive at the boat Friday at 8pm, sleep on board, sail out early the next morning, and visit several destinations around the IJsselmeer before returning late Sunday afternoon. Note that cancellation insurance is rarely available, and that trips will be called off in heavy weather.

TENNIS & SQUASH

More courts are listed under *Tennisbanen* and *Squashbanen* in the pink pages of the phone book.

Borchland Sportcentrum (☎ 563 33 33; Borchlandweg 6-12; per hr tennis 8am-4pm Mon-Fri €15.50, 4-10pm Mon-Fri or all day Sat & Sun €23, squash until 4pm Mon-Thu €8, after 4pm Mon-Thu €15, after 4pm Fri or all day Sat & Sun €10; 🕒 8am-11pm) A huge complex next to the Amsterdam ArenA in the Bijlmer, it has tennis, squash and badminton courts, bowling alleys, golf and other facilities including a restaurant. Take the metro to Strandvliet.

Squash City (Map p86; ☎ 626 78 83; www.squashcity.com; Ketelmakerstraat 6; day pass €7-14, month pass €32-75; 🕒 8.45am-midnight Mon, 7am-midnight Tue-Thu, 7am-11.30pm Fri, 8.45am-7.30pm Sat & Sun) Located across the railway line Haarlemmerplein, at Bickersseiland, west of Centraal Station. Sauna is included with squash-court hire, as is use of a well-equipped fitness centre. Admission price depends on the services you want to use.

Tenniscentrum Amstelpark (Map pp58-9; ☎ 301 07 00; www.tenniscentrum.nl; Koenenkade 8; court hire per hr summer €20, per hr winter outdoor/indoor €20/25) Amstelpark has 42 open and covered courts and runs the country's biggest tennis school. It's conveniently close to the World Trade Center and RAI exhibition buildings, and there are fitness facilities as well.

Watching Sport FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

Local club Ajax features prominently in the local competition and usually qualifies for the UEFA Champions League, Europe's top competition. Other Dutch leaders are PSV (the Philips Sport Association) from Eindhoven and Feyenoord from Rotterdam, and if any of these clubs play against one another, it's a

big event. Dutch football is 'cool' and 'technical', characterised by keep-the-ball play and surgical strikes. This, after all, is the cradle of 'Total Football'.

Amsterdam Arena (☎ 311 13 33; www.amsterdamarena.nl; Arena Blvd 1, Bijlmermeer) is where Ajax plays. This amazing hi-tech complex with a retractable roof seats 52,000 spectators and has hosted many a major league championship. It also has an Ajax museum with cups and other paraphernalia. Soccer games usually take place Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon during the playing season (early September to early June, with a winter break from just before Christmas to the end of January). Take the metro to Bijlmer or Strandvliet/ArenA station.

Readers have recommended the one-hour guided **stadium tour** (☎ 311 13 36; adult/child €10/8.50; 🕒 11am-4.30pm Apr-Sep, noon-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar, except on game days or major events). The tour includes a walk on the hallowed turf and entry to the museum.

TELEPHONE

The Dutch phone network, KPN, is efficient, and prices are reasonable by European standards. Phone booths are scattered around town.

Collect call (*collect gesprek*; domestic ☎ 0800 01 01, free call; international ☎ 0800 04 10, free call).

International directory inquiries (☎ 0900 84 18, per number €1.15).

National directory inquiries (☎ 1888, per number €1.30).

Operator assistance (☎ 0800 04 10, free call).

Costs

Calls are time-based, anytime and anywhere. KPN Telecom public phone boxes charge €0.10 per 15 seconds for all national calls (minimum charge €0.20), and €0.10 per nine seconds for calling a mobile phone. Phones in cafés, supermarkets and hotel lobbies often charge more. Calling from private phones is considerably cheaper.

The cost of international calls varies with the destination, and changes frequently due to competition. At the time of writing, calls to Britain and the USA cost €0.056 to €0.071 per minute respectively, and Australia €0.19. The connection charge is about €0.10. To all three countries, rates jump to €0.10 every 13 seconds when ringing from a KPN phone box.

Incoming calls to mobile phones are generally free to the recipient (assuming it's a Dutch mobile phone used in the Netherlands).

Coin phones have made a comeback, but card phones still predominate. You can easily pick up a phone card (see [below](#)). Many public phones accept credit cards, although starting fees are stiff and cards issued outside of the Netherlands may require extra steps during dialling.

Mobile Phones

The Netherlands uses GSM 900/1800, compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 (some convertible phones work in both places).

Prepaid mobile phones, which run on chips that store call credits, are available at mobile-phone shops starting from around €35 when on special. You can also buy SIM cards for your own mobile phone. Look for KPN, Telfort, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone shops in major shopping areas including along Rokin, Kalverstraat and Leidsestraat. Some stores, such as T for Telecom and Bel Company, handle many brands.

New prepaid phones generally come with a small amount of call time already stored. To top it up, purchase more minutes at one of the branded stores, news dealers or supermarkets, and follow the instructions.

Phone Codes

To ring abroad, dial ☎ 00 followed by the country code for your target country, the area code (you usually drop the leading 0 if there is one) and the subscriber number. The country code for calling the Netherlands is ☎ 31 and the area code for Amsterdam is ☎ 020; again, drop the leading 0 if you're calling from outside the Netherlands. Do not dial the city code if you are in the area covered by it.

Free information calls (☎ 0800)

Mobile or pager numbers (☎ 06)

Paid information calls (☎ 0900) Cost varies between €0.10 and €1.30 per minute.

Phonecards

For public telephones, cards are available at post offices, train station counters, VVV and GWK offices and tobacco shops for €5, €10 and €20. KPN's card is the most common but there are tonnes of competitors – T-Mobile,

Orange and Vodafone, among them – who usually have better rates. Train stations have Telfort phone booths that require a Telfort card (available at GWK offices or ticket counters), although there should be KPN booths nearby.

TIME

The Central European time zone (same as Berlin and Paris) is one hour ahead of the UK, six hours ahead of New York, nine hours ahead of Los Angeles and eight hours behind Sydney. For Daylight Savings Time, clocks are put forward one hour at 2am on the last Sunday in March and back again at 3am on the last Sunday in October.

When telling the time, be aware that the Dutch use 'half' to indicate 'half before' the hour. If you say 'half eight' (8.30 in some dialects of English), a Dutch person will take this to mean 7.30.

TOILETS

These are not a widespread facility on Dutch streets, apart from the redolent, free-standing public urinals for men in places such as the Red Light District. Many people duck into a café or department store. The standard fee for toilet attendants is €0.50.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Maps, theatre tickets, hotel bookings and answers to your queries can be obtained at the VVV's **Amsterdam Tourist Office** (Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer, Netherlands Tourism Board; www.holland.com). Its staff are always helpful, even if the offices can be quite busy. Note that most VVV publications cost money and there are commissions for services such as hotel bookings.

The **VVV information number** (☎ 0900 400 40 40; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) costs €0.40 a minute; from abroad call ☎ 020-551 25 25 (no extra charge). Offices include inside **Centraal Station** (Map pp62-5; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8am-9pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sun) by platform 2; in front of **Centraal Station** (Map pp62-5; Stationsplein 10; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri); just off **Leidseplein** (Map p116; Stadhouderskade 1; 🕒 10am-6pm); as well as at the **Holland Tourist Information** (🕒 7am-10pm) at Schiphol airport.

For anything related to entertainment, head to Amsterdam's **Uitburo** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 0900 01 91, per minute €0.40; www.aub.nl in Dutch; cnr Leidseplein &

Marnixstraat), which has loads of free brochures and sells tickets (with a €1.50 mark-up). For bookings from abroad, try the [National Reservations Centre](#) (☎ 31 70 320 25 00).

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travellers with reduced mobility will find Amsterdam only moderately well equipped to meet their needs. Most offices and museums have lifts and/or ramps and toilets for the disabled. But many budget and midrange hotels are in old buildings with steep stairs and no lifts, and hoteliers' hands are often tied as registered monuments cannot be altered structurally. In addition, the cobbled streets can present problems for wheelchairs. Restaurants tend to be on ground floors, though 'ground' sometimes includes a few steps. The metro stations have lifts, many trains have wheelchair access, and most train stations and public buildings have toilets for the disabled.

People with a disability get discounts on public transport and can park free in designated spots, provided they have a windscreen marker. There are train timetables published in Braille.

The Amsterdam Uitburo and the VVV (see p255) can provide details regarding access to entertainment venues and museums. More questions? Contact the [Stichting Gehandicapten Overleg Amsterdam](#) (Map p122; SGOA, Amsterdam Forum for the Disabled; ☎ 577 79 55; www.sgoa.nl; Plantage Middenlaan 141).

VISAS

Tourists from nearly 60 countries – including Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, the USA and most of Europe – need only a valid passport to visit the Netherlands for up to three months. EU nationals can enter for three months with just their national identity card or a passport that expired less than five years ago.

Nationals of most other countries need a so-called Schengen visa, valid within the EU member states (except the UK and Ireland), plus Norway and Iceland, for 90 days within a six-month period.

Schengen visas are issued by Dutch embassies or consulates overseas and can take a while to process (like two months). You'll need a passport valid until at least three months after your visit, and prove you have sufficient funds for your stay and return journey.

Fees vary between €35 and €60, depending on your nationality.

Visa extensions are handled by the [Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst](#) (Immigration & Naturalisation Service; ☎ 0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). Study visas must be applied for via your college or university in the Netherlands. For working visas, see [below](#). Also visit [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/netherlands](#) for up-to-date visa information, or check with the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Equality has long been taken for granted, although far fewer women than men are employed full-time, and fewer still hold positions in senior management.

In terms of safety, Amsterdam is probably as secure as it gets in the major cities of Europe. There's little street harassment, even in the Red Light District, although it's best to walk with a friend to minimise unwelcome attention.

[Centrum voor Seksuele Gezondheid](#) (Map p122; ☎ 624 54 26; Sarphatistraat 618; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, Tue also 6-9pm, by appointment) is a clinic offering information and help with sexual problems and birth control, including morning-after pills.

WORK

Work permits must be applied for by your employer in the Netherlands; in general, the employer must prove that the position cannot be filled by someone from within the EU before offering it to a non-EU citizen. Nationals from many countries must apply for a Temporary Entry Permit (MVV or Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf). Citizens of EU countries, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA are exempt.

You'll need to apply for temporary residence before an employer can ask for your work permit. The process should take five weeks; contact the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country.

In the Netherlands, residency permits are issued by the [Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst](#) (☎ 0900 123 45 61, per minute €0.10; www.ind.nl; Postbus 3211, 2280 GE Rijswijk). For details of work permits, contact the [CWI](#) (Employment Services Authority; ☎ 0800 80 01; Westwaarts 11, 2701 AD Zoetermeer). The CWI also runs a bilingual website ([www.werk.nl](#)) with up-to-date job offers.

Doing Business

Amsterdam makes much of its gateway function to Europe, with its busy airport, easy-going tax laws and educated, multilingual workforce. Many large international companies have their European headquarters and distribution in Amsterdam.

If you're looking to rent office space and other facilities, try [Euro Business Center](#) (Map p92; ☎ 520 75 00; www.eurobc.nl; Keizersgracht 62-64) or [Regus Business Centre](#) (Map pp58-9; ☎ 800 020 20 00; www.regus.com; Strawinskylaan 3051). For services such as copying, videoconferencing and a courier, seek out [FedEx/Kinko's](#) (Map p116; ☎ 0589 09 10; www.kinkos.nl; Overtoom 62).

LANGUAGE

It's true – anyone can speak another language. Don't worry if you haven't studied languages before or that you studied a language at school for years and can't remember any of it. It doesn't even matter if you failed English grammar. After all, that's never affected your ability to speak English! And this is the key to picking up a language in another country. You just need to start speaking.



Learn a few key phrases before you go. Write them on pieces of paper and stick them on the fridge, by the bed or even on the computer – anywhere that you'll see them often.

You'll find that locals appreciate travellers trying their language, no matter how muddled you may think you sound. So don't just stand there, say something! If you want to learn more Dutch than we've included here, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's user-friendly *Dutch Phrasebook*.

SOCIAL

Meeting People

Hello.
Dag/Hallo.
Goodbye.
Dag.
Please.
Alstublieft/Alsjeblieft. (pol/inf)
Thank you.
Dank u/je (wel). (pol/inf)
Thank you very much.
Hartelijk bedankt.
Yes/No.
Ja/Nee.
Do you speak English?
Spreek u/Spreek je Engels? (pol/inf)
Do you understand (me)?
Begrijpt u/Begrijp je (me)? (pol/inf)
Yes, I understand.
Ja, ik begrijp het.
No, I don't understand.
Nee, ik begrijp het niet.

Could you please ...?
Kunt u ... alstublieft?
repeat that dat herhalen
speak more trager spreken
slowly
write it down dat opschrijven

Going Out

What's on ...?
Wat is er ... te doen?
locally hier
this weekend dit weekend

today vandaag
tonight vanavond
Where are the ...?
Waar zijn de ...
clubs (nacht)clubs
gay venues gay clubs en cafés
places to eat eetgelegenheden/
restaurants
cafés/kroegen
pubs
Is there a local entertainment guide?
Heeft u een plaatselijke uitgaansgids?

PRACTICAL

Question Words

Who? Wie?
What? Wat?
When? Wanneer?
Where? Waar?
How? Hoe?

Numbers & Amounts

1 één
2 twee
3 drie
4 vier
5 vijf
6 zes
7 zeven
8 acht
9 negen
10 tien
11 elf

12 twaalf
13 dertien
14 veertien
15 vijftien
16 zestien
17 zeventien
18 achttien
19 negentien
20 twintig
21 eenentwintig
22 tweeëntwintig
30 dertig
40 veertig
50 vijftig
60 zestig
70 zeventig
80 tachtig
90 negentig
100 honderd
1000 duizend
2000 tweeduizend

Days

Monday maandag
Tuesday dinsdag
Wednesday woensdag
Thursday donderdag
Friday vrijdag
Saturday zaterdag
Sunday zondag

Banking

I'd like to ...
Ik wil graag ...
cash a cheque een cheque wisselen
change money geld/cash wisselen
change some (een paar) reischekques
travellers cheques wisselen

Where's the nearest ...?
Waar is ...?
automatic teller de dichtsbijzijnde
machine geldautomaat
foreign exchange het dichtsbijzijnde
office wisselkantoor

Post

Where is the post office?
Waar is het postkantoor?

I want to send a ...
Ik wil een ... versturen.
fax fax
parcel pakket
postcard briefkaart

I want to buy ...
Ik wil een ... kopen.
an aerogram luchtpostblad/
aerogram
an envelope envelop
a stamp postzegel

Phone & Mobile Phones

I want to buy a phone card.
Ik wil een telefoonkaart kopen.

I want to make ...
Ik wil ...
a call (to ...) telefoneren (naar ...)
reverse-charge/ voor rekening van de
collect call opgeroepene
telefoneren

Where can I find a/an ...?

Waar vind ik een ...?

I'd like a/an ...

Ik wil graag een ...
adaptor plug adaptor plug
charger for my lader voor mijn
phone telefoon
(rechargeable) (herlaadbare) batterij
battery for my voor mijn telefoon
phone GSM (telefoon) huren
mobile/cell
phone for hire
prepaid mobile/ voorafbetaalde GSM
cell phone (telefoon)
SIM card for SIM-kaart voor uw
your network netwerk

Internet

Where's the local internet café?
Waar is het plaatselijke internetcafé?

I'd like to ...

Ik wil graag ...
check my email mijn email checken
get online op het net gaan

Transport

What time does the ... leave?
Hoe laat vertrekt ...?
bus de bus
ferry de veerboot/ferry
train de trein

What time's the ... bus?

Hoe laat is de ... bus?
first eerste
last laatste
next volgende

Are you free? (taxi)
 Bent u vrij?
 Please put the meter on.
 Gebruik de meter alstublieft.
 How much is it to ...?
 Hoeveel kost het naar ...?
 Please take me to (this address).
 Breng mij alstublieft naar (dit address).

FOOD

For more detailed information on food and dining out, see p156.

breakfast	ontbijt
lunch	lunch/middageten
dinner	diner/avondeten
snack	snack
eat	eten
drink	drinken

Can you recommend a ...

Kunt u een ... aanbevelen? (pol)

Kan je een ... aanbevelen? (inf)

bar/pub	bar/café
café	café/koffiehuis
coffeeshop	koffieshop (note: a café where legal soft drugs are sold)
restaurant	restaurant

EMERGENCIES

It's an emergency!
 Dit is een noodgeval!
 Could you please help me/us?
 Kunt u me/ons alstublieft helpen?
 Call the police/a doctor/an ambulance!
 Haal de politie/een dokter/een ziekenwagen!
 Where's the police station?
 Waar is het politiebureau?

HEALTH

Where's the nearest ...?
 Waar is de dichtstbijzijnde ...?
 chemist (night) apothek (met nachtdienst)
 diner/avondeten
 doctor dokter
 hospital ziekenhuis

I need a doctor (who speaks English).
 Ik heb een dokter nodig (die Engels spreekt).

Symptoms

I have (a) ...
 Ik heb ...
 fever koorts
 headache hoofdpijn
 pain pijn

plage – beach	straat – street
plein – square	strand – beach
polder – area of drained land	strippenkaart – stampable multi-use ticket used on public transport
postbus – post office box	toren – tower
Randstad – literally 'rim-city'; the urban agglomeration including Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Den Haag	VVV – tourist office
rondvaart – boat tour	waag – old weigh house
spionnetje – outside mirror allowing a house occupant to see who's at the door downstairs	wallen – Red Light District
stadhuis – town hall	wielklem – wheel clamp attached to illegally parked vehicles
stedelijk – civic, municipal	zaal – hall
stichting – foundation, institute	ziekenhuis – hospital

GLOSSARY

apothek – chemist/pharmacy
 bibliotheek – library
 bier – beer
 bos – woods, forest
 broodje – breadroll (with filling)
 bruin café – brown café; traditional Dutch pub
 burgwal – fortified embankment
 café – pub, bar; also known as kroeg
 coffeeshop (also spelt koffieshop in Dutch) – café authorised to sell cannabis
 CS – Centraal Station
 dagschotel – daily special in restaurants
 drop – salted or sweet liquorice
 dwarsstraat – street connecting two (former) canals
 eetcafé – cafés serving meals
 fiets – bicycle
 gasthuis – hospice, hospital (old)
 gezellig – convivial, cosy
 GG&GD – Municipal Medical & Health Service
 gracht – canal
 grachtengordel – canal belt
 GVB – Gemeentevervoerbedrijf; Amsterdam municipal transport authority
 GWK – Grenswisselkantoor; official currency exchanges
 hof – courtyard
 hofje – almshouse or series of buildings around a small courtyard, such as the Begijnhof
 jenever – Dutch gin; also spelled genever
 kaas – cheese
 kade – quay
 kassa – cashier, check-out
 kerk – church
 koffiehuis – espresso bar (as distinct from a coffeeshop)
 koninklijk – royal
 korfbal – a cross between netball, volleyball and basketball
 markt – town square
 merguez – type of spicy sausage
 NS – Nederlandse Spoorwegen; national railway company
 openbare – public
 paleis – palace

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