

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

The country's wealth of home stays, hotels and hostels provide any traveller – whether they be backpacker or five-star aficionado – with plenty of choice. Hotels and B&Bs are the mainstay of accommodation in the country,

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

and, while most are fairly standard and highly functional, a few gems fly the boutique flag or are simply bizarre (p237).

Note that a good part of the country suffers from the 'Amsterdam effect': because transport is so efficient and the city is so popular, many visitors stay in the capital even if they're travelling further afield.

B&Bs

Bed-and-breakfasts are an excellent way to meet the friendly locals face to face, and to see the weird, the wacky and the wonderful interior designs of the Dutch first-hand. Unfortunately, they're not abundant in cities, but the countryside is awash with them. Local tourist offices keep a list of B&Bs on file, where costs usually range from €18 to €25 per person.

Camping

The Dutch are avid campers, even within their own country. Campgrounds tend to be self-contained communities complete with shops, cafés, playgrounds and swimming pools. Lists of sites with ratings (one to five stars) are available from the ANWB (the Dutch automobile organisation) and tourist offices. If you plan to do a lot of camping, pick up a copy of ANWB's yearly *Camping-gids* (€9.50); it's in Dutch, but the listings are easy to follow.

A camp site, which costs anything between €10 and €20, covers two people and a small tent; a car is an extra €1.50 to €6. Caravans are popular – every one in 15 residents owns one – so there are oodles of hook-ups.

Simple bungalows or *trekkershutten* (hiker huts; from €32) are another option. A typical hiker hut has four bunks, cooking facilities and electricity, but you'll need to bring your own sleeping bags, dishes and utensils. Consult www.trekkershutten.nl.

Rough camping is illegal. To get away from it all, seek out *natuurkampeerterreinen* (nature campgrounds) attached to farms. You'll enjoy a simpler and less crowded existence than at the major campgrounds. Reserve through tourist offices or check information online at www.natuurkampeerterreinen.nl.

PRACTICALITIES

- The metric system is used for weights and measures.
- Buy or watch videos on the PAL system.
- Keep abreast of things back home in the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Guardian*, or the *Times*, or weeklies the *Economist*, *Newsweek* or *Time* on newsstands.
- If you know a little Dutch, read up on the Netherlands' perspective on the news in *De Telegraaf*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *Het Parool* and *Het Financieele Dagblad*.
- Read the latest gossip and a smattering of news, in Dutch, for free in *Spits* and *Metro*, two daily rags available from train stations.
- Find out what the Dutch are listening to on Noordzee FM (100.7FM), Radio 538 (102FM) and Sky Radio (101.2FM).
- Watch or listen to the BBC, CNN and a welter of Euro-stations.
- Plug your hairdryer into a Continental two-pin adapter before you tap the electricity network (220V to 240V AC, 50Hz).

Hostels

The Dutch youth-hostel association **Stayokay** (☎ 020-551 31 55; www.stayokay.com; Postbus 9191, 1006 AD Amsterdam) still uses the Hostelling International (HI) logo, but the hostels themselves go under the name Stayokay. Most offer a good variety of rooms. As facilities have improved over the years to cater to groups and families, so prices have increased.

A youth-hostel card costs €15 at the hostels, or nonmembers can pay an extra €2.50 per night and thus become a member after six nights. HI members get discounts on international travel and pay less commission on money exchange at GWK offices. Members and nonmembers have the same privileges, and there are no age limits.

Apart from the usual dormitories there are rooms for one to eight people, depending on the hostel. Nightly rates normally range from €20 to €25 per person for dorm beds. Be sure to book ahead, especially in high season.

Hotels

The Dutch rating system goes up to five stars; accommodation with less than one star can call itself a pension or guesthouse but not a hotel. The stars aren't very helpful because they measure the amenities and the number of rooms but not the quality of the rooms themselves. Hotels tend to be small, with less than 20 rooms.

Many establishments have steep stairs but no lifts, which can pose problems for the mobility-impaired. Having said that, most top-end and a few midrange hotels do have lifts.

Many tourist offices can book hotel rooms virtually anywhere in the country for a small fee (usually a few euros). GWK currency-exchange offices take hotel reservations, charging a small fee and 10% of the room charge in advance. The **Netherlands Reservation Centre** (☎ 0299-68 91 44; www.hotelres.nl; Plantsoengracht 2, 1441 DE Pummerend) accepts bookings from abroad. You can generally save money by booking directly with the hotel, but many won't take credit cards and may insist on a down payment.

Prices vary, but in cities you should expect to pay under €50 for a double room in a budget hotel, up to €125 in a midrange hotel and from €125 for the top end. Prices in Amsterdam tend to be higher: under €70 for a budget double, €70 to €150 for a midrange double and upwards from €150 for a top-end double.

Last but not least, when booking for two people, make clear whether you want two single (twin) beds or a double bed.

Rental Accommodation

Special rules apply to rental accommodation to combat a perpetual housing shortage. Rents under €564 per month require a housing permit, but you aren't likely to get one swiftly, so expect to pay substantially more – say, €900 for a smallish two-bedroom flat in a not-grotty area of Amsterdam. Rents vary quite a bit in the big cities, with Amsterdam and Den Haag at the top and Rotterdam somewhere near the bottom of the scale. Most Dutch residents usually find a place through the so-called housing corporations after waiting a couple of years.

Some lucky folks find places in the classifieds of the daily *Telegraaf* (Wednesday), *Volkskrant* or *Parool* (Saturday), or through the twice-weekly *ViaVia*. All the papers have websites with rental ads in Dutch; scan under 'Te huur' or 'Huurwoningen'. The **Expatica** (www.expatica.com/holland) website has ads and a handy 'Where to live in (city)' section, and **Craigslist** (www.craigslist.com), a worldwide classified ads website, has a small but effective Amsterdam presence. If a flat sounds good, pick up the phone right then and there because it may be gone in a matter of hours. Be aware that some people try to let out their rent-subsidised flats to foreigners at inflated prices, which is illegal.

If time is of the essence, try the following agents:

Amsterdam Apartment (☎ 020-668 26 54; www.amsterdamapartment.nl; Oude Nieuwstraat 1, Amsterdam)
Apartment Services (☎ 020-672 18 40; www.apartmentsservices.nl; Waalstraat 58, Amsterdam)
IDA Housing (☎ 020-624 83 01; www.idahousing.com; Den Texstraat 30, Amsterdam)

ACTIVITIES

The most popular outdoor activities are linked to the defining characteristics of the Dutch landscape: flat land and water. There is no shortage of sports clubs and special-interest groups for your favourite pastime, as the Dutch have a penchant for organisation.

Boating

It seems as though everyone in the Netherlands is the proud owner of a boat; stroll by the canals and lakes and you'll see all manner of water craft, some impossibly wacky, often decades old, lovingly maintained and enjoyed in weather fair or fearful. Small canoes and sailboats can be hired on lakes throughout the country – the likes of Loosdrechtse Plassen in Utrecht province (p185) or Sneek (p235) in Friesland make particularly good bases for such an activity.

Sailing on a traditional boat is an unforgettable experience. Named for its ruddy sails, the 'brown fleet' of restored flat-bottomed vessels is a familiar sight on the vast IJsselmeer at weekends. The cheapest rental option are *botters*, old fishing boats with long, narrow leeboards and sleeping berths for up to eight passengers. Larger groups can go for converted freight barges known as *tjalks* (smacks), ancient pilot boats or massive clippers. You'll

also find motorboats for gliding through the country canals.

The **Netherlands Board of Tourism** (www.holland.com) will match you up with boat-rental firms depending on your location and budget and the type of boat you want. On the website, follow the 'boat rental' link under 'Search'. Local tourist offices will also have a list of boat rentals. The **Royal Dutch Watersports Association** (☎ 030-656 65 50; www.watersportverbond.nl; Daltonlaan 400, 3584 BK Utrecht) provides advice on boating rules and hundreds of links to relevant websites. ANWB stocks maps of the Netherlands' most popular waterways.

The following companies have typical rates, bearing in mind that everything is negotiable (after all, bargaining is a Dutch tradition): **Flevo Sailing** (☎ 0320-26 03 24; www.flevosailing.nl; Oostvaardersdijk 59c, Lelystad) Has a fleet of four- to eight-passenger sailing yachts for rent.

Holiday Boatin Yachtcharter (☎ 0515-41 37 81; Eeltjebaasweg 3, Sneek) Rents motorboats for puttering about on Friesland's myriad lakes and canals.

Holland Zeilcharter (see p155).

Hollands Glorie (☎ 0294-27 15 61; www.hollandsglorie.nl; Ossensmarkt 6, Muiden) Has *tjalks* for rent from a day to a week. Boats depart from harbours around the country, including Amsterdam, Edam, Hoorn, Medemblik and Muiden.

Top of Holland Yacht Charter (www.topofholland.com) Represents companies in Friesland, the IJsselmeer region and Zuid Holland, renting out everything from small sailboats to large cabin cruisers.

Cycling

Cycling is a way of life in the Netherlands. The country offers easy cycling terrain with many designated paths, including loads of off-road routes through pastures and woodland. The infrastructure gives priority to bikes over other forms of transportation, and car drivers often yield to cyclists even when the latter are pushing their luck. For more on traffic rules and specific bike routes, see p69.

Skating

The Netherlands is practically tailor-made for in-line skating. City parks are breeding grounds for the latest flashy manoeuvres on half-pipes, but the popularity of skating is such that day trips have been mapped throughout the country. The Achterhoek region (the eastern part of Gelderland) combines quiet conditions with a nice variety of landscapes; the Graafschap area in the northwest has seven

signposted skating routes with a total length of 200km. The list of places to skate is endless – any dyke top can be perfect for a spin. See the **iskate** (www.iskate.nl) website for details of events, hot skating spots and night skates, though the **Skatebond Nederland** (Dutch Skating Club; www.skatebond.nl) is more authoritative.

Ice skating was part of the Dutch psyche long before scarfed figures appeared in Golden Age winterscapes. The first skates were made from cow shanks and ribs, had hand-drilled holes and were tied to the feet. When canals and ponds freeze over, everyone takes to the ice, and you can join them with a pair of hockey skates (the best thing for beginners) bought either secondhand or from a department store. The famous Elfstedentocht (Eleven Cities Race, p238) takes place in Friesland every seven years on average, and even Crown Prince Willem-Alexander took part in 1986, to be greeted by Queen Beatrix at the finish line. Not surprisingly, the Dutch have had plenty of ice-skating champions.

Walking

The Dutch are avid walkers and hikers – in almost any weather and surroundings. The International Nijmegen Four Days' March (Internationale Wandelvierdaagse; p265) is the world's largest walking event and attracts more than 40,000 enthusiasts every July.

For salt breezes you might head for the coasts of Friesland, Zeeland or the coastal towns along the IJsselmeer. National parks such as Hoge Veluwe, Weerribben and Biesbosch offer a varied backdrop ranging from bogs to dunes to forest. The pretty, undulating knolls of Limburg can be a welcome change after the flatlands in the rest of the country. Thinly populated provinces such as Drenthe are ideal for untroubled treks through quiet farmland.

Nederlandse Wandelsportbond (Netherlands Hiking Club; ☎ 030-231 94 58; www.nwb-wandelen.nl; Pieterskerkhof 22, Utrecht) is a goldmine of information about the nicest paths and events. Branches of the ANWB motoring club, tourist offices and bookshops have more brochures than you can shake a walking stick at.

Windsurfing & Kite-Surfing

Abundant water and near-constant breezes make a perfect combination for windsurfing. Most developed beaches along the coast of the North Sea, the IJsselmeer and the Wadden

Islands have places that rent windsurfing boards (look for *surfplanken*). In winter the frozen lakes become racecourses for ice-surfing, with breakneck speeds of 100km per hour or more. Websites such as **Windlords** (www.windlords.com/nl) list the most popular locations to windsurf around the country. You can also inquire at any tourist office.

Wherever there's windsurfing, kite-surfing won't be far away. Harder to master but arguably more exhilarating, this relatively new pastime is catching on quickly with lovers of wind and water. If you're interested in giving it a try or want to hone your skills while on holiday, check out www.kitesurf.pagina.nl; it's in Dutch, but the lists of Dutch kite-surfing websites are easy to navigate.

BUSINESS HOURS

As a general rule, opening hours occur as follows:

Banks Open 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

Bars Open 11am to 1am, although some stay open longer at weekends and others won't open for service till the late afternoon.

Businesses Hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Nightclubs Hours vary across the country, but in general clubs open 10pm to 4am Friday and Saturday; some also open on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday.

Post offices Open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

Restaurants Open 10am or 11am to 11pm, with a break in the afternoon from 3pm to 6pm.

Shops Open noon to 6pm Monday, and 8.30am or 9am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday. Most towns have *koopavond* (evening shopping), when stores open till 9pm on Thursday or Friday. Bigger supermarkets in cities stay open until 8pm.

Most museums are closed on Monday. Government offices, private institutions and monuments keep limited opening hours; these hours are mentioned in this book where possible.

In the city centres an increasing number of shops are open from noon to 5pm on Sunday, especially on the first weekend of the month. Shops in Rotterdam and Den Haag are open every Sunday afternoon.

CHILDREN

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan is worth reading if you're unsure about travelling with kids. Much of her advice is valid in the Netherlands, where there is a lot to keep them occupied. Attitudes to children

are very positive, and Dutch children tend to be spontaneous and confident, thanks to a relaxed approach to parenting.

Practicalities

Some hotels have 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.

Children aged under four travel free on trains if they don't take up a seat. There's a Railrunner fare (€2) for kids aged four to 11.

Sights & Activities

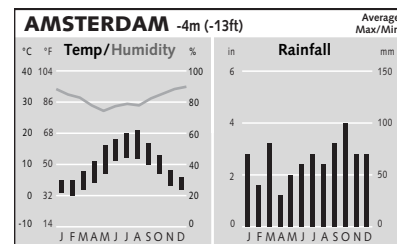
Zaanse Schans (p154) near Amsterdam is a great afternoon out, with its re-created windmill village, traditional Dutch houses, cheese farm and craft centre. Further north, the island of Texel has the Ecomare (p167), with oodles of birds and seals and strokeable fish.

A child's fantasies can run wild at De Efteling amusement park (p275), especially in the maze or Fairy Tale Forest. Animal parks abound and the good-natured frolics at the Dolfinarium will keep smiles on little faces all day long (see the boxed text, p263). The Apenheul will show the little ones what it means to really monkey about (see the boxed text, p263).

For more ideas, see p21.

CLIMATE

In general the Netherlands has a maritime climate of cool winters and mild summers. Wind and rain are year-round factors; March is the driest month, July and August the wettest (and hottest), and wind invariably comes from the southwest, although it always seems to be head-on when you're cycling.



For more detailed climate information, see p12.

COURSES

Language

Dutch is a close relative of English, but that doesn't make it easy to learn. Standard courses take months, and intensive courses last several weeks. Make inquiries well in advance.

Well-reputed schools include:

Amsterdam Summer University (☎ 020-620 02 25; www.amsu.edu; Keizersgracht 324, 1016 EZ Amsterdam) Conducts all of its courses and workshops in English (apart from its Dutch language training).

British Language Training Centre (☎ 020-622 36 34; www.bltc.nl; Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 328E, 1012 RW Amsterdam) Offers both Dutch and English courses.

Tropeninstituut (Royal Institute for the Tropics; ☎ 020-568 87 11; www.kit.nl; Mauritskade 63, 1092 AD Amsterdam) Intensive language courses aimed specifically at foreigners moving to the Netherlands.

Volkuniversiteit Amsterdam (☎ 020-626 16 26; www.volkuniversiteitamsterdam.nl; Rapenburgerstraat 73, 1011 VK Amsterdam) A range of well-regarded day and evening courses.

CUSTOMS

EU nationals can bring virtually anything they like, provided it's for personal use and they paid local tax in an EU country. Visitors from non-EU countries can import the following goods tax-free:

Alcohol Up to 1L of spirits or 2L of sparkling wine or fortified wine, such as sherry or port; 2L of non-sparkling wine.

Coffee Up to 500g of coffee or 200g of coffee extracts or coffee essences.

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

Tea Up to 100g of tea or 40g of tea extracts or tea essences.

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

Bringing meat or meat products, flowers, fruit, plants and protected species to the Netherlands is illegal. Tobacco and alcohol may only be imported by people aged 17 and over.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Much of the Netherlands is utterly safe, but caution is advised in the larger cities. Amsterdam and Rotterdam require a modicum of big-city street sense but nothing you wouldn't normally do at home.

Cars with foreign registration are popular targets for smash-and-grab theft. Don't leave things 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 to apprehend the thief – put the matter down to experience.

Mosquitoes can be a pain in summer. They breed in stagnant parts of the canals and in water under houses. In parts of the country near lakes or canals people sleep under netting.

Bicycles can be quite a challenge to pedestrians. Remember when crossing the street to look for speeding bikes as well as cars; straying into a bike lane without looking both ways is a no-no.

Intensive urban development means there's often little grass for dog dirt, and you may spend more time watching the pavement than the sights.

Scams

Big cities breed scams. Take special care in the train stations: someone might help you put your bags into a luggage locker, lock the door and hand you the key. When you return you find the key fits a different locker and your stuff is gone. If something feels wrong about a stranger who approaches you, chances are your instincts are right. Thieves sometimes pose as police (see p82).

DISCOUNT CARDS

Teachers, professional artists, museum conservators and certain categories of students may get discounts at a few museums or even be admitted free – it can depend on the person behind the counter. Bring proof of affiliation such as the International Teacher Identity Card (ITIC). People over 65 (60 for the partner) receive discounts on public transport, museum entry fees, concerts and more. You could try flashing your home-country senior card, but you might have to show your passport too. Other discount cards:

Cultureel Jongeren Paspoort (Cultural Youth Passport, CJP; www.cjp.nl; €12.50) Purchase from tourist offices. Provides people aged under 27 with big discounts to museums and cultural events around the country.

Hostelling International Card Useful at the official youth hostels (called Stayokay in the Netherlands); provides a €2.50 per night discount.

I Amsterdam Card (www.iamsterdamcard.com; 24/48/72hr €33/43/53) Available at tourist offices and some large hotels in Amsterdam. Gives free public transport, free entry to most museums, and discounts on some attractions and restaurants.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC; www.isic.org) Will get some admission discounts and might pay for itself through discounted air and ferry tickets. The same applies to hostel cards.

Museumkaart (www.museumkaart.nl; over/under 26yr €29.95/17.45) Gives free access to over 400 museums across the country.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES Dutch Embassies & Consulates

Diplomatic representation abroad:

Australia (☎ 02-6220 9400; www.netherlands.org.au; 120 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Belgium (☎ 02-679 17 11; www.nederlandse.ambassade.be; Herrmann-Debroux 48, 1160 Brussels)

Canada (☎ 613-237-5030; www.netherlandsembassy.ca; 350 Albert St, Ste 2020, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 1A4)

France (☎ 01 40 62 33 00; www.amb-pays-bas.fr; 7-9 Rue Eblé, 75007 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-20 95 60; www.niederlandeweb.de; Klosterstrasse 50, 10179 Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-269 3444; www.mfa.nl/dub-en; 160 Merrion Rd, Dublin 4)

Italy (☎ 06-367671; www.mfa.nl/rom-nl; Via della Camilluccia, 701-703, 00135 Rome)

Japan (☎ 03-5401 0411; www.oranda.or.jp; Shibakoen, 3-6-3 Minato-ku, 105-0011 Tokyo)

New Zealand (☎ 04-471 6390; www.netherlands.embassy.co.nz; Investment House, cnr Ballance & Featherston Sts, Wellington)

UK (☎ 020-7590 3200; www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk; 38 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DP)

USA (☎ 202-244-5300; www.netherlands-embassy.org; 4200 Linnean Ave NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in the Netherlands

Amsterdam is the country's capital but, confusingly, Den Haag (The Hague) is the seat of government – so that's where all the embassies are. Several countries also maintain consulates in Amsterdam.

Australia (☎ 070-310 82 00; www.australian-embassy.nl; Carnegielaan 4, Den Haag)

Belgium (Map p198; ☎ 070-312 34 56; www.diplomatie.be/thehague; Alexanderveld 97, Den Haag)

Canada (Map p198; ☎ 070-311 16 00; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/netherlands; Sophialaan 7, Den Haag)

France embassy (Map p198; ☎ 070-312 58 00; www.ambafrance.nl; Smidsplein 1, Den Haag); consulate

(Map pp92-3; ☎ 020-530 69 69; www.consulfrance-amsterdam.org; Vijzelgracht 2, Amsterdam)

Germany embassy (☎ 070-342 06 00; www.duitse-ambassade.nl; Groot Hertoginnelaan 18-20, Den Haag); consulate (Map pp92-3; ☎ 020-574 77 00; Honhorststraat 36-38, Amsterdam)

Ireland (Map p198; ☎ 070-363 09 93; Dr Kuijperstraat 9, Den Haag)

Italy embassy (Map p198; ☎ 070-302 10 30; www.italy.nl; Alexanderstraat 12, Den Haag); consulate (Map pp92-3; ☎ 020-550 20 50; Vijzelstraat 79, Amsterdam)

Japan (☎ 070-346 95 44; www.nl.emb-japan.go.jp; Tobias Asserlaan 2, Den Haag)

New Zealand (☎ 070-346 93 24; www.nzembassy.com; Carnegielaan10-IV, Den Haag)

UK embassy (Map p198; ☎ 070-427 04 27; www.britain.nl; Lange Voorhout 10, Den Haag); consulate (Map pp86-7; ☎ 020-676 43 43; Koningslaan 44, Amsterdam)

USA embassy (Map p198; ☎ 070-310 22 09; www.usembassy.nl; Lange Voorhout 102, Den Haag); consulate (Map pp92-3; ☎ 020-575 53 09; Museumplein 19, Amsterdam)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Following are the cream of the largest and most important events in the country – they may well be reason for a special trip. More goings-on are listed in destination chapters.

February/March

Carnaval Weekend before Shrove Tuesday. Celebrations with gusto that would do Rio or New Orleans proud, mostly in the Catholic provinces of Noord Brabant, Gelderland and Limburg. Maastricht's party means days of uninhibited drinking, dancing and street music.

March

Tefaf Maastricht Art & Antique Show (☎ 041-164 50 90; www.tefaf.com) For 10 days in the first half of March. Europe's largest art show is your chance to pick up a Monet, or at least do some serious browsing.

April

Koninginnedag (Queen's Day) On 30 April. Marked throughout the country with wearing of orange, drinking, and flea-market activity. Processions, dances and live music.

Amsterdam Fantastic Film Festival (www.afff.nl) European and international fantasy, horror and science-fiction movies.

May

Herdenkingsdag & Bevrijdingsdag (Remembrance Day & Liberation Day) On 4 and 5 May. The fallen from WWII are honoured in an Amsterdam ceremony, followed by live music, debate and a market the next day.

Nationale Molendag (National Mill Day) Second Saturday. Nearly every working windmill in the country (there are more than 600 in total) throws open its doors to visitors. Look for the sweet blue pennants.

June

Holland Festival (www.hollandfestival.nl) Virtually all month. The country's biggest extravaganza for theatre, dance, film and pop music, with a justified claim to cutting-edge innovation.

De Parade (www.deparade.nl) Mid-June to August. Nationwide inverse-circus tour, where the audience is in the ring while all manner of music, theatre, film and variety performances go on around them.

July

North Sea Jazz Festival (www.northseajazz.nl) Mid-July, in Rotterdam. World's largest jazz festival; attracts big names from around the planet, and even bigger crowds.

Dance Valley (www.dancevalley.nl) Mid-July. This outdoor dance technothon draws over 100 DJs and bands performing to fields of 40,000 or more.

August

Gay Pride Canal Parade First Saturday. The only waterborne gay parade in the world, with lots of pride showing on the outlandish floats.

FFWD Dance Parade (www.ffwdheinekendanceparade.nl) Downtown Rotterdam lets down its hair in a big way and turns into one big open-air techno club in early August.

Uitmarkt (www.uitmarkt.nl) Three days in late August. The reopening of Amsterdam's cultural season with free concerts and information booths around the big museums and Leidseplein.

Lowlands (www.lowlands.nl) Mid-August, in Biddinghuizen (Flevoland). Alternative music and cultural megabash, with campgrounds for the masses.

November

Sinterklaas Intocht Mid-November. Every year the Dutch Santa Claus arrives 'from Spain' with his staff and Black Pete helpers at a different port.

December

Sinterklaas On 5 December. Families exchange small gifts ahead of religious celebrations for Christmas.

FOOD

Prices tend to be high by European standards. As a general rule, snacks and light takeaway items cost about €3 to €8, while a three-course sit-down meal at a midpriced restaurant will run from €18 to €30 including a beer or a glass of wine; the bill rises to €40 to €60 at

the swish top-end places with Michelin stars. Tourist centres such as Amsterdam tend to be expensive and you may get much better value for money out in the provinces. Ethnic eateries, particularly with Surinamese and Chinese-Indonesian menus, are a reliable stand-by for cheap and tasty food.

See p59 for more details.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

The best national source of information is **COC** (☎ 020-623 45 96; www.coc.nl; Rozenstraat 8, 1016 NX Amsterdam). It has branches throughout the country that are happy to offer advice to newcomers.

Partisan estimates put the proportion of gay and lesbian people in Amsterdam at 20% to 30%. This is probably an exaggeration, but Amsterdam is certainly one of the gay capitals of Europe. Mainstream attitudes have always been reasonably tolerant, but it wasn't until the early 1970s that the age of consent for gay sex was lowered to 16. The last decade has seen considerable progress: it's now illegal to discriminate against job-seekers on the basis of sexual orientation. A landmark move came in 2001, when the Netherlands became the first country to legalise same-sex marriage.

The government has long subsidised COC, one of the world's largest (and the world's first) organisations for gay and lesbian rights. Now trade unions research the lot of homosexual employees, the police advertise in the gay media for applicants, and homosexuals are admitted to the armed forces on an equal footing.

Amsterdam's well-developed scene isn't typical of the country as a whole. The further one gets from the capital, the more often gay and lesbian bars and clubs operate behind dark windows. Rotterdam is an exception, as are the university towns with large, albeit transient, gay and lesbian populations.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

People take public holidays seriously. Most museums adopt Sunday hours on the days below (except Christmas and New Year) even if they fall on a day when the place would otherwise be closed. Many people treat Remembrance Day (4 May) as a day off.

Carnaval is celebrated with vigour in the Catholic south. Huge lager-fed parties are thrown in the run-up to Shrove Tuesday and little work gets done.

The holidays:

Nieuwjaarsdag New Year's Day; parties and fireworks galore

Goede Vrijdag Good Friday

Eerste Paasdag Easter Sunday

Tweede Paasdag Easter Monday

Koninginnedag 30 April. Queen's Day

Bevrijdingsdag 5 May; Liberation Day – this isn't a universal holiday: government workers have the day off, but almost everyone else has to work

Hemelvaartsdag Ascension Day; 40th day after Easter Sunday

Eerste Pinksterdag Whit Sunday (Pentecost); 50th day after Easter Sunday

Tweede Pinksterdag Whit Monday; 50th day after Easter Sunday

Eerste Kerstdag 25 December; Christmas Day

Tweede Kerstdag 26 December; Boxing Day

School Holidays

School holidays are staggered across three regions (north, central and south) to relieve congestion on the roads. Generally the holidays are scheduled as follows:

Spring holiday Two weeks in mid-February, also known as 'crocus' holiday

May holiday First week of the month

Summer holiday July, August and sometimes the first few days of September

Autumn holiday Second half of October

Christmas holiday Two weeks through the first full week of January

INSURANCE

Seriously consider taking out travel insurance. Medical or dental costs might already be covered through reciprocal health-care arrangements, but you'll still need cover for theft or loss, and for unexpected changes to travel arrangements (ticket cancellation etc). Check what's already covered by your local insurance policies or credit-card issue.

See also the Insurance sections of the Health chapter (p311) and the Transport chapter (p306).

INTERNET ACCESS

If you pack a laptop, note that Dutch phones have a cord with a four-prong plug. Adapters are available at the airport and retail outlets. Most phones also have a modular RJ-11 plug on the other end, so you can always plug right into your modem. Major internet service providers such as AOL, AT&T and Earthlink have access numbers in the Netherlands.

You'll need to keep three pieces of information handy: your incoming (POP or IMAP) mail server name, your account name and your password. Wi-fi is another option, but you'll generally need to be signed up with a Dutch provider, which isn't cheap.

Otherwise internet cafés are the easiest way to check mail while travelling; they're everywhere and often have long opening hours. Some libraries, tourist offices and hotels also provide internet terminals. Expect to pay anything from €1.50 to €6 per hour.

LEGAL MATTERS

The Dutch police (*politie*) are a pretty relaxed lot and helpful to travellers. You're unlikely to incite their ire unless you do something instinctively wrong – like chucking litter or smoking a joint under their noses.

Officers can hold you up to six hours for questioning and another six if they can't establish your identity. If the matter's serious, you can be detained for 24 hours. You won't have the right to a phone call, but they'll notify your embassy or consulate. Relax – you're presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Anyone over 14 years of age is required by law to carry ID. Foreigners should carry their passport or a photocopy of the relevant data pages; a driving licence isn't sufficient.

Drugs

Contrary to what you may have heard, marijuana is illegal. The confusion arises because the authorities distinguish between 'soft' drugs (eg cannabis) and addictive 'hard' drugs such as heroin, crack or cocaine. Possession of soft drugs up to 5g is tolerated, but larger amounts make you a 'dealer' and subject to prosecution. However, if you're caught with, say, 10g, you'll probably only receive a fine.

The key term is *gedogen*. This wonderful word means that officials condemn the action but look the other way if common sense dictates. Hard drugs are treated as a serious

LEGAL AGE

Voting and driving: 18

Consent: 12 (but 16 if the parents object)

Homosexual marriage: 18

Drinking: 16

crime, but under the unique Dutch drug policy the authorities tend to treat genuine, registered addicts as medical cases rather than hardened criminals.

These tolerant policies attract many drug tourists; drugs are cheaper, more readily available and generally of better quality in the Netherlands than elsewhere. The country has become a major exporter of high-grade marijuana (grown locally) and is the European centre for the production of ecstasy. Much of Europe's cocaine passes through Rotterdam harbour.

For more about soft drugs, see the boxed text, p44.

Prostitution

Prostitution is legal in the Netherlands – based on the view that its practitioners are victims rather than criminals. The industry is protected by law, and prostitutes pay tax and even have their own lobby. Health checks are performed regularly to screen for disease, and some prostitutes qualify for pensions and insurance. Much of this open policy stems from a desire to undermine the role of pimps and the underworld in the sex industry. That hasn't always helped the plight of prostitutes, many of them immigrants from the Third World and Eastern Europe.

In Amsterdam's Red Light District you have little to fear as the streets are well-policed, but the back alleys are more dubious. This also goes for other Dutch cities such as Rotterdam and Den Haag. Even towns such as Leiden and Groningen have red-light areas plopped down amid otherwise quiet streets.

MAPS

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

Otherwise the best road maps of the Netherlands are those produced by Michelin and the Dutch automobile association ANWB.

WARNING

Never, ever buy drugs on the street: you'll get ripped off or mugged.

Don't light up in view of the police, or in an establishment without checking that it's OK to do so. The Dutch detest tourists who think they can just smoke dope anywhere.

The ANWB also puts out provincial maps detailing cycling paths and picturesque road routes. You'll find a wide variety of maps for sale at any tourist office, as well as at bookstores and newsstands.

MONEY

Like other members of the EU, the Netherlands currency is the euro, which is divided into 100 cents. There are coins for one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, and €1 and €2. Notes come in denominations of €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500. The one- and two-cent coins are still in circulation but are unofficially being phased out; most, if not all, shops now round up or down to the nearest five cents.

The Quick Reference page just inside the front cover lists exchange rates, while the Getting Started chapter (p12) has a rundown of costs.

ATMs

Automated teller machines can be found outside most banks and at airports and most train stations. Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard/Eurocard are widely accepted, as well as cash cards that access the Cirrus network. Be aware that, if you're limited to a maximum withdrawal per day, the 'day' will coincide with that in your home country. Also note that using an ATM can be the cheapest way to exchange your money from home – but check with your home bank for service charges before you leave.

Cash

Cash is still common and nothing beats it for convenience – or risk of theft or loss. Plan to pay cash for most daily expenses. However, staff at upmarket hotels might cast a furtive glance if you pay a huge bill with small-denomination notes rather than a credit card, and car-rental agencies will probably refuse to do business if you only have cash. Keep the equivalent of about US\$100 separate from the rest of your money as an emergency stash.

Credit Cards

All major international cards are recognised, and you will find that most hotels, restaurants and major stores accept them. But always check first to avoid, as they say, disappointment. Shops often 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 from an ATM, go to a GWK branch (see Moneychangers, below). You'll need to show your passport.

Report lost or stolen cards to the following 24-hour numbers:

American Express (☎ 020-504 80 00, 020-504 86 66)

Diners Club (☎ 08000334)

Eurocard and MasterCard (☎ 030-283 55 55)

Visa (☎ 08000223110)

International Transfers

Transferring money from your home bank will be easier if you've authorised somebody back home to access your account. In the Netherlands, find a large bank and ask for the international division. A commission is charged on telegraphic transfers, which can take up to a week but usually less if you're well prepared; by mail, allow two weeks.

The GWK (see Moneychangers, below) is an agent for Western Union and money is transferred within 15 minutes of lodgement at the other end. The person lodging the transfer pays a commission that varies from country to country. Money can also be transferred via American Express and Thomas Cook at their Amsterdam offices.

Moneychangers

Generally your best bet for exchanging money is to use **GWK** (☎ 09000566; www.gwk.nl) – note that calls to this number cost €0.25 per minute. Offices are in almost every medium-sized and larger train station as well as at the borders on major highways. Many locations, such as those at Amsterdam's Centraal Station and at Schiphol Airport, are open 24 hours. Banks and the Postbank (at post offices) are also good options; they stick to official exchange rates and charge a sensible commission.

Avoid the private exchange booths dotted around tourist areas. They're convenient and open late hours, but rates or commissions are lousy, though competition is fierce and you may do OK if you hunt around.

Tipping

Tipping is not essential as restaurants, hotels, bars etc include a service charge on their bills. A little extra is always welcomed though, and it's an excellent way to compliment the service (if you feel it needs complimenting). The tip can be anything from rounding up to the nearest euro, to 10% of the bill.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques (including eurocheques) are on the way out in the Netherlands – you'll be very hard pressed to find a bank who will change them for you. If you insist on carrying cheques, take American Express or Thomas Cook: their offices don't charge commission. GWK offices (see Moneychangers, opposite) still exchange cheques.

Shops, restaurants and hotels always prefer cash; a few might accept travellers cheques, but their rates will be anybody's guess.

POST

Poste restante is best handled in Amsterdam. Unless you're sending mail within the post office's local region, the slot to use in the rectangular red letter boxes is Overige Postcodes (Other Postal Codes).

For queries about postal services, ring ☎ 058-233 33 33 or consult www.tpgpost.nl.

Postal Rates

Within the country, letters up to 20g and postcards cost €0.39. Letters up to 20g and postcards within Europe cost €0.69 (air mail, known as 'priority') or €0.65 (standard); beyond Europe they are €0.85 or €0.80.

Standard mail (also available within Europe for parcels and printed matter) is not much cheaper than priority and takes about twice as long to reach the destination.

SHOPPING

The Netherlands isn't a shopper's haven; there's not a lot in the country that you won't find back home, aside from dope, pornography, round after round of cheese, rare flower bulbs and even rarer types of *jenever* (Dutch gin). Even the majority of the ubiquitous Delftware – blue-and-white porcelain stocked in every single souvenir shop – is made in China. Clogs, on the other hand, are one item you normally won't find outside the Netherlands, but they're available in almost every town across the country.

However, Amsterdam is a diamond in the rough, so to speak. For centuries it has been a centre for a girl's best friend, and while prices aren't necessarily cheaper here than elsewhere, diamond quality is high and prices are at least competitive.

The capital is also filled with speciality shops. You might be able to find banana-flavoured condoms and Mexican shrines

back home, but not an entire shop devoted to them.

Dutch bicycles may also catch the eye of shoppers. Prices are generally comparable to those in other European countries, but the variety – from lazy cruisers and kiddie carriers to stream-lined, space-age speedsters – is quite astounding and very tempting, considering how easy it is to transport your new transport on trains and planes.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

The Dutch are uninhibited when it comes to striking up conversations with complete strangers, whether at the next table in a restaurant or in a supermarket queue, and before you know it you'll find yourself in a conversation.

Booking into a group activity such as a walking tour or boat trip is a good recipe for making contacts. Young travellers also hook up with like-minded people at youth hostels or budget hotels. Nightclubs in cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam draw a large, fun-loving contingent of foreigners, and many also make their way to beach parties in places like Bloemendaal or Scheveningen. Single women should try to join forces before hitting the clubs – that's what the Dutch do.

TELEPHONE

The Dutch phone network is efficient and prices are reasonable by European standards. Most public phones accept credit cards as well as various phonecards. Phone booths are scattered around towns and you can always call from a post office.

For national directory inquiries, call ☎ 118 (€1.09 per call) or ☎ 09008008 for a human operator (€1.30 per call). International directory inquiries can be reached on ☎ 09008418 (€0.90 per minute). To place a *collect gesprek* (collect call) ring ☎ 08000101 (€0.25 per minute).

Mobile Phones

The Netherlands uses GSM 900/1800, which is compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 (though some North Americans have dual- or triple-band phones that do work here). Check with your service provider about using your phone in the Netherlands, and beware of calls being routed internationally, which becomes *very* expensive.

Prepaid mobile phones are available at mobile shops from €40. Packages with prepaid SIM cards are an excellent option – KPN, Telfort, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodaphone offer cards from €10 with €5 worth of calls. Make sure your phone is unlocked before purchasing such a card.

Phone Codes

The international access code is 0. Area codes for the Dutch cities covered in this book are given at the start of each city's section. The country code for the Netherlands is ☎ 31.

Many information services use phone numbers beginning with ☎ 0800 (free) or ☎ 0900 (which cost between €0.10 and €0.70 per minute depending on the number).

Numbers beginning with ☎ 06 are mobile or pager numbers.

Phonecards

Most public telephones are cardphones and there's no shortage of prepaid cards to fill them. Various cards are available at post offices, train station counters, tourist and GWK offices, supermarkets, and tobacco shops for €5, €10 and €20. Other cards are available at call centres, internet shops and street vendors, but be sure of their authenticity before handing over cash – readers have reported dodgy cards that eat your money in a matter of minutes.

KPN's cards are the most common, but railway stations only have Telfort phone booths that require a Telfort card (available at GWK offices or ticket counters), although there should be KPN booths close by.

The official, KPN-Telecom public phone boxes charge €0.10 per 20 seconds for national calls. Phones in cafés, supermarkets and hotel lobbies often charge more. Ringing a mobile number costs €0.55 per minute from a public phone.

TIME

The Netherlands is on Central European time, GMT/UTC plus one hour. Noon in Amsterdam is 11am in London, 6am in New York, 3am in San Francisco, 6am in Toronto, 9pm in Sydney and 11pm in Auckland, and then there's daylight-saving 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, beware that Dutch uses half to indicate 'half before' the hour. If

you say 'half eight' (8.30 in many forms of English), a Dutch person will take this to mean 7.30. Dutch also uses constructions such as *tien voor half acht* (ten to half eight – 7.20) and *kwart over acht* (quarter past eight – 8.15).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Within the Netherlands, tourist information is supplied by the **VVV** (Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer, Netherlands Tourism Board; www.vvv.nl), which has offices throughout the country. Although each tourist office is locally run, they all have a huge amount of information that covers not just their area but the rest of the country as well. However, most VVV publications cost money and there are commissions for services (eg €3 to €15 to find a room, €2 to €3 on theatre tickets). The **VVV information line** (☎ 09004004040; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) costs €0.55 per minute. People ringing from abroad should try ☎ 020-551 25 25 (no extra charge). See the individual city listings for details of local services as well as opening hours.

The Dutch automobile association **ANWB** (☎ 08000503; www.anwb.nl; 🕒 10am–6pm Mon–Sat) has free or discounted maps and brochures. It provides a wide range of useful information and assistance if you're travelling with any type of vehicle (car, bicycle, motorcycle, yacht etc). In many cities the VVV and ANWB share offices. You'll probably have to show proof of membership of your home automobile club. Its offices are open until 9pm during *koopavond* (evening shopping), which is on Thursday or Friday night, depending on the city.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Travellers with mobility problems will find the Netherlands fairly well equipped despite the limitations of some older buildings. A large number of government offices and museums have lifts or ramps; many hotels, however, are in old buildings where steep, narrow stairs are the only option. Restaurants tend to be on the ground floor, though they sometimes include a few steps up or down.

Train and other public transport stations have lifts, and most train stations and public buildings have toilets for the disabled. The trains themselves have wheelchair access in most instances, and people with a disability get discounts on public transport. For those with impaired vision, train timetables are published in Braille and banknotes have raised

shapes on the corners for identification. **Netherlands Railways** (☎ 030-235 78 22) has an information line with details of all its services for travellers with disabilities. The Dutch national organisation for the disabled is **ANGO** (Algemene Nederlandse Gehandicapten Organisatie, Dutch Society for the Disabled; ☎ 033-465 43 43; www.ango.nl; Koningin Wilhelminalaan 17, 3818 HM Amersfoort); the blind and deaf can contact **LED** (Landelijk Expertisecentrum Doofblindheid, Association for the Deaf & Blind; ☎ 030-267 92 88; www.doofblind.nl; Vrieslantlaan 3A, 3526 AA Utrecht).

VISAS

Tourists from nearly 60 countries – including Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, 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.

Nationals of most other countries need a so-called Schengen visa, named after the Schengen Agreement that abolished passport controls between the EU member states (except the UK and Ireland) plus Norway and Iceland. A visa for any of these countries is valid for 90 days within a period of six months. Some countries may impose restrictions on some nationalities.

Schengen visas are issued by Dutch embassies or consulates and can be valid for anything from a few days to two months. You'll need a passport valid until at least three months after your visit, and you must be able to prove that you have sufficient funds for your stay. Fees vary depending on your nationality, but expect to pay around €35. Tourist visas can be extended for another three months maximum, but you'll need a good reason and the extension will only be valid for the Netherlands, not the Schengen area.

Visa extensions are handled by the **Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst** (Immigration & Naturalisation Service; ☎ 020-889 3045, 09001234561; www.ind.nl); call it about visa extensions for anywhere in the country (the 0900 number costs €0.10 per minute). Study visas must be applied for via your college or university in the Netherlands. For information about working visas, see right.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

There's little street harassment in Dutch cities, where most women will feel safe. Amsterdam is probably as secure as it gets in the major cities of Europe. Just take care in the Red Light District, where it's best to walk with a friend to minimise unwelcome attention.

The feminist movement is less politicised than elsewhere and certainly more laid-back. Efforts focus on practical solutions such as cultural centres, bicycle repair shops run by and for women, or support systems to help women set up businesses.

Most women's organisations are based in Amsterdam, among them **Rutgershuis Amsterdam** (☎ 020-624 54 26; Sarphatistraat 618), a clinic offering information and help with sexual problems and birth control, including the morning-after pill. Elsewhere, look under *Vrouwenhuis* (Women's House) in the phone directory.

WORK

All-important 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 (*Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf*, or *MVV*). Citizens of EU countries as well as 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 residence permits are issued by the **Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst** (Immigration & Naturalisation Service; ☎ 020-889 30 45; www.ind.nl; Postbus 30125, 2500 GC Den Haag). For details of work permits, contact the **CWI** (Centrum voor Werk en Inkomens, Employment Services Authority; ☎ 079-371 29 03; www.cwinet.nl; Postbus 883, 2700 AW Zoetermeer). The CWI also runs www.werk.nl, which features up-to-date job offers.

Transport

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The Netherlands is an extraordinarily simple place to reach. Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport has copious air links worldwide, including many on low-cost European airlines, and the links on high-speed trains are especially good from France, Belgium and Germany. Other land options are user-friendly and the border crossings are nearly invisible thanks to the EU. There are also several ferry links with the UK and Scandinavia.

What's more, once you get to the Netherlands the transport stays hassle-free. Most journeys by rail, car or bus are so short that you can reach most regional destinations before your next meal. And with a country as flat as this, getting around by bicycle is a dream.

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.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY Passport

In principle all passengers with passports are allowed entry to the Netherlands, although those coming from 'suspected terrorist centres' may be detained for questioning.

AIR Airports & Airlines

Conveniently near Amsterdam, **Schiphol Airport** (code AMS; ☎ 020-794 08 00; www.schiphol.nl) is the Netherlands' main international airport and the third busiest in Europe. It is the seat of Dutch passenger carrier KLM, and dozens of other airlines have direct flights and connections to all continents. **Rotterdam Airport** (code RTM; ☎ 010-446 34 44; www.rotterdam-airport.nl) is much smaller but has handy links to the UK, Germany and Mediterranean destinations.

Eindhoven, Groningen and Maastricht act as feeder airports to Amsterdam, catering to business travellers and holiday charters to sunny climes. From **Eindhoven** (code EIN; ☎ 040-291 98 18; www.eindhovenairport.com), Ryanair serves London, Dublin, Milan and a handful of Mediterranean cities, while KLM flies to/from London and Paris.

AIRLINES FLYING TO & FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Unless otherwise stated, dial ☎ 020 before calling the numbers below.

Aer Lingus (code EI; ☎ 517 47 47; www.aerlingus.com; Folkstoneweg 28, Schiphol)

Air Canada (code AC; ☎ 346 95 39; www.aircanada.ca; Evert van de Beekstraat 5, Schiphol)

Air France (code AF; ☎ 654 57 20; www.airfrance.nl; Evert van der Beekstraat 7, Schiphol)

Alitalia (code AZ; ☎ 676 44 79; www.alitalia.com; Evert van de Beekstraat 9, Schiphol)

Austrian (code OS; ☎ 09002658920; www.aua.com; Evert van de Beekstraat 37, Schiphol)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 346 95 59; www.britishairways.com)

British Midland (code BD; ☎ 346 92 11; www.flybmi.com; Vertrekpassage 1, Schiphol)

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 motorized travel 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 level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – 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.

Cathay Pacific (code CX; ☎ 653 20 10; www.cathaypacific.nl; Evert van der Beekstraat 18, Schiphol)

China Airlines (code CI; ☎ 646 10 01; www.china-airlines.com; De Boelelaan 7, Amsterdam)

Continental Airlines (code CO; ☎ 346 93 81; www.continental.com; Schiphol Blvd 275, Schiphol)

Delta Air Lines (code DL; ☎ 201 35 36; www.delta.com; Evert van der Beekstraat 7, Schiphol)

El Al (code LY; ☎ 644 01 01; www.elal.com; Prof Bavincklaan 5, Amstelveen)

EasyJet (code U2; ☎ 023-568 48 80; www.easyjet.com; Antareslaan 35, Hoofddorp)

Japan Airlines (code JL; ☎ 305 00 75; www.jal-europe.com; Jozef Israelskade 48E, Amsterdam)

Jet2.com (code LS; ☎ 09002021067; www.jet2.com)

KLM (code KL; ☎ 474 77 47; www.klm.nl; Amsterdamseweg 55, Amstelveen)

Lufthansa (code LH; ☎ 09001234777; www.lufthansa.nl; Vertrekpassage 1, Schiphol)

Malaysia Airlines (code MH; ☎ 521 62 62; www.malaysiaairlines.com; Weteringschans 24/A, Amsterdam)

Northwest Airlines (code NW; ☎ 474 77 47; www.nwa.com; Amsterdamseweg 55, Amstelveen)

Ryanair (code FR; ☎ 09002022184; www.ryanair.com; Vertrekpassage 1, Schiphol)

Singapore Airlines (code SQ; ☎ 548 88 88; www.singaporeair.com; Evert van de Beekstraat 26, Schiphol)

Transavia (code HV; ☎ 09000737; www.transavia.com)

United Airlines (code UA; ☎ 201 37 08; www.unitedairlines.nl; Vertrekpassage 246, Schiphol)

Tickets

Within Europe there are plenty of no-frills airlines connecting Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport to other cities, and more often than not their bargain flights can be found online rather than through a travel agent. For long-haul flights the opposite is true – agents are a valuable source for tracking down cheaper flights between continents. Stable travel agents, such as **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com) and **Traifinders** (www.traifinders.com), offer good prices to many destinations.

Below is a short list of sites that sell air tickets to/from Schiphol Airport:

Ebookers (www.ebookers.com) Offers separate web gateways for many European countries and bargains on flights and hotels.

Expedia (www.expedia.com, www.expedia.co.uk) Lists major airline flights from the US and UK; the earlier you book the better.

Flight Centre (www.flightcentre.com) Respected operator handling direct flights, with sites for Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the US and Canada.

Last Minute (www.lastminute.com) One of the better sites for last-minute deals, including hotels.

Opodo (www.opodo.co.uk) UK-based company with excellent deals for European destinations.

Orbitz (www.orbitz.com) Cheap deals when flying from the US.

Price Line (www.priceline.com) Name-your-own-price US site.

Skyscanner (www.skyscanner.net) Collates cheap no-frills airline fares for many destinations around the world.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) US site that allows you to search fares (in US dollars) to/from practically anywhere.

Vliegtarieven (www.vliegtarieven.nl) Dutch site with hotel and car-rental deals alongside flights.

WaarheenWaarvoor (www.waarheenwaarvoor.nl) Dutch site offering flight-price comparisons and last-minute deals.

Africa

KLM has numerous services to Africa, including daily flights to Johannesburg, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Kenya Airways also offers daily links to the country's capital. From Johannesburg, low-season return fares to Amsterdam can start at around R5480 (€645) but can be considerably higher if not booked well in advance.

Rennies Travel (www.renniestravel.com) and **STA Travel** (www.statravel.co.za) have offices throughout Southern Africa. Check their websites for branch locations.

Asia

The major Asian airlines, such as Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines and Malaysia Airlines, have flights into Amsterdam. KLM links Jakarta with the capital. Although most flights are via another European capital, there are some direct links to Amsterdam. It's a good idea to shop around as there are often some good deals on offer. From Bangkok, return fares to Amsterdam are around US\$1500. Return fares from Singapore start at US\$850; expect to pay from US\$1250 from Hong Kong and US\$1100 from Tokyo for a return fare.

STA Travel (Bangkok ☎ 0662-236 0262; www.statravel.co.th; Hong Kong ☎ 852-2736 1618; www.statravel.com.hk; Singapore ☎ 65-6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg; Tokyo ☎ 03-5391 2922; www.statravel.co.jp) is always a good bet in Asia.

Australia

Flights from Australia to Amsterdam generally go via a Southeast Asian capital such as Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Singapore, and occasionally another European city. Expect to pay around A\$2000 return in low season,

but shop around as there are often good deals on offer.

Quite a few travel offices specialise in discount air tickets. Some travel agents, particularly smaller ones, advertise cheap air fares in the travel sections of weekend newspapers, such as the *Age* in Melbourne and the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Sydney.

Contact **STA Travel** (☎ 03-9207 5900; www.statravel.com.au) for the location of branches. **Flight Centre** (☎ 133 133; www.flightcentre.com.au) has offices throughout Australia. For online bookings, try www.travel.com.au.

Canada

Air Canada, among others, serves Amsterdam from Toronto. Fares vary from C\$400 in winter to C\$700 in summer.

Canadian discount air ticket sellers are also known as consolidators. The *Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette* and *Vancouver Sun* carry travel agents' ads and are good places to look for cheap fares.

Travel CUTS (☎ 1866-246-9762; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency and has offices in all major cities.

Continental Europe

Amsterdam is well connected to almost all other European cities. KLM and the major airlines of each country all serve each other. You should be able to find return fares from the major hub airports such as Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Paris and Madrid for €100 to €200.

Generally, there is not much variation in airfare prices for departures from the main European cities. All the major airlines are usually offering some sort of deal, and travel agents generally have a number of promotions on offer, so shop around.

Across Europe dozens of travel agencies have ties with **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com), where cheap tickets can be purchased and STA-issued tickets can be altered (usually for a US\$25 fee).

Recommended are the following travel agents:

Airstop (☎ 070 233 188; www.airstop.be) Belgium.

CTS Viaggi (☎ 06 462 04 31; www.cts.it) Italy.

Just Travel (☎ 089-747 3330; www.justtravel.de) Germany.

Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 0825 000 747; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr) France.

OTU Voyages (☎ 0820 817 817; www.otu.fr) France.

STA Travel (☎ 01803100040; www.statravel.de) Germany.

Viaggi Wasteels (☎ 06 446 66 79) Italy.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 01 42 86 16 00; www.vdm.com) France.

New Zealand

Reaching Amsterdam from Auckland means you have a choice of transiting through Los Angeles or via a Southeast Asian city, and usually one other European city. Low season return fares start from around US\$2000.

Both **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800243544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0508782872; www.statravel.co.nz) have branches throughout the country. For on-line bookings try www.travel.co.nz.

UK & Ireland

KLM, British Airways and British Midland fly to the Netherlands from the UK. Budget airlines EasyJet, Ryanair and Jet2.com do too, and have made big inroads into the business of the mainstream carriers. Watch for special fares that can be as low as UK£1 for a single (plus tax), although €40 to €60 is more likely in peak periods.

Ticket discounters, or bucket shops as they're known in the UK, can sometimes offer big savings. Discount air travel is big business in London, and advertisements for many travel agents appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheets, such as the *Independent* on Saturday and the *Sunday Times*. Also look out for free magazines such as TNT.

Popular travel agencies include **STA Travel** (☎ 08701630026; www.statravel.co.uk), with offices throughout the UK. It sells tickets to all travellers but caters especially to young people and students. Other recommended agencies include **Traifinders** (☎ 0845-050 5940; www.trailfinders.com) and **Travelbag** (☎ 08706070620; www.travelbag.co.uk).

From Ireland, fares run from about €150 in low season for return flights from Dublin to Amsterdam, but can cost twice that (and sometimes more) in high season. Travelling via London may save money. **USIT** (☎ 01-602 1904; www.usitnow.ie) has branches in Ireland and Northern Ireland specialising in student and independent travel.

USA

Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Northwest Airlines and United Airlines all have nonstop services to Amsterdam from cities in the US. Fares vary by season, from a

low of US\$300/500 from the east coast/west coast in winter to a high of US\$700/900 in summer.

Discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators (although you probably won't see a sign on the door saying 'Consolidator'). The *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* all produce Sunday travel sections in which you will find consolidators' ads.

STA Travel (☎ 1-800-781-4040; www.statravel.com) is one of the biggest travel agents in the US, with offices in most states.

LAND Bicycle

In a land where the humble bicycle is king, bringing your own bike into the Netherlands will cause no problems.

By air, it's possible to first take your bicycle apart and protect it with a bike bag or box before handing it over to the baggage handlers, but it's much easier simply to wheel your bike to the check-in desk, where it should be treated as a piece of baggage. You may have to remove the pedals and turn the handlebars sideways so that it takes up less space in the aircraft's hold; check all this with the airline well in advance, preferably before you pay for your ticket.

Your bike can also travel with you on the Eurostar and Thalys high-speed trains from Belgium, France and the UK, provided you can disassemble the bike and fit it into a stowage bag that will fit into the normal luggage-storage racks on board.

If you want to bring your own bike, consider the risk of theft in Amsterdam – rental might be the wiser option in the capital.

Bus

Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and a few of Holland's smaller cities such as Den Haag and Utrecht, are well connected to the rest of Europe and North Africa by long-distance bus. See p302 for information on buses to and from Germany and p303 for details on buses to and from the UK.

The most extensive European bus network is maintained by **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com), a consortium of coach operators. It offers a variety of passes with prices that vary by time of year, but if you book well ahead bargains can be had.

Car & Motorcycle

For details about car ferries from England, see opposite.

Drivers of cars and riders of motorbikes will need the vehicle's registration papers, third-party insurance and an international driving permit in addition to their domestic licence. It's a good idea to also have complete insurance coverage – be sure to ask for a Green Card from your insurer.

The ANWB (p296) provides a wide range of information, maps, advice and services if you can show a letter of introduction or membership card from your own automobile association.

Traffic flows freely among EU countries, so border posts are largely a thing of the past. Customs officials still make spot checks, however, if a particular vehicle draws their attention.

Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe anywhere in the world and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

Many Dutch students have a government-issued pass allowing free public transport. Consequently, the number of hitchhikers has dropped dramatically and car drivers are no longer used to the phenomenon. Hitchers have reported long waits.

On Channel crossings from the UK, the car fares on the Harwich–Hoek van Holland ferry as well as the shuttle through the Channel Tunnel include passengers, so you can hitch to the continent at no cost to the driver (though the driver will still be responsible if you do something illegal).

Looking for a ride out of the country? Try the notice boards at universities, public libraries and youth hostels. **Bugride** (<http://europe.bugride.com>) is a good meeting place for European drivers and potential passengers.

Belgium & Germany

BICYCLE

Long-distance cyclists can choose from a variety of safe, easy, specially designated routes to get to the Netherlands from Belgium and Germany. The bicycle paths are called *landelijke fietsroutes* (LF) and retain that label in northern Belgium. The LF2 route runs 340km from Brussels via Ghent to Amsterdam; the

LF4 stretches 300km from Enschede near the German border to Den Haag.

Beware that mopeds also use bike paths and might be travelling well above their 40km/h speed limit (30km/h in built-up areas). Only competition cyclists and poseurs tend to wear bicycle helmets, but that shouldn't stop you from protecting your own cranium.

Repair shops are as common as *frites* vendors in the Netherlands – most train stations even have a bicycle shop with a resident mechanic.

For select cycling routes, see p69.

BUS

Aside from Eurolines (see p301), **Gullivers Reisen** (☎ 030-3110 2110; www.gullivers.de) links Berlin (one way/return from €29/58, nine hours, once daily), Hamburg (from €19/38, eight hours, once daily) and Hanover (from €19/38, 5½ hours, once daily) with Amsterdam. Sleeper coach beds are available for another €10 – a wise investment.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The main entry points from Belgium are the E22 (Antwerp–Breda) and the E25 (Liege–Maastricht). From Germany there are loads of border crossings, but the chief arteries are the E40 (Cologne–Maastricht), the E35 (Düsseldorf–Arnhem) and the A1 (Hanover–Amsterdam).

TRAIN

The Netherlands has good train links to Germany and Belgium and on to France. All Eurail, Inter-Rail, Europass and Flexipass tickets are valid on the Dutch national train service, **Nederlandse Spoorwegen** (NS; www.ns.nl). See p308 for more about trains within the country.

Major Dutch train stations have international ticket offices, and in peak periods it's wise to reserve seats in advance. You can also buy tickets for local trains to Belgium and Germany at the normal ticket counters.

For international train information, ring the Teleservice NS Internationaal on ☎ 09009296 (calls cost €0.35 per minute) or consult the website, www.nsinternational.nl. If you book ahead, NS charges a €3.50 reservation fee per ticket.

From Amsterdam, two main trains travel south. The first, an Intercity (IC), passes through Den Haag and Rotterdam and on

to Antwerp (€28, 2¼ hours, hourly), Bruges (€39.40, 3½ hours, hourly), Brussels (€33.40, three hours, hourly) and Luxembourg City (€63.60, 6¼ hours, every one to two hours).

The second train, the high-speed Thalys, runs six times a day between Amsterdam and Antwerp (€28, 2¼ hours), Brussels (€33.40, 2½ hours) and Paris (€97.50, 4¼ hours). Those under 26 receive a 50% discount, and seniors with a Rail Europe Senior (RES) card are entitled to 25% off travel. Only a handful of tickets are set aside for such discounts, so it is essential to book ahead.

The German ICE high-speed service runs six times a day between Amsterdam and Cologne (€49.20, 2½ hours) and on to Frankfurt (€107, four hours); there's a surcharge of €2 and €19 respectively. 'Super Day Returns' are available to Cologne for €58.50. There's also a night train between Amsterdam and Munich (from €79) – expect fat surcharges for the sleeper berths. The IC to Berlin (€92.20, six hours, three daily) passes through Hanover.

Weekend return tickets are much cheaper than during the week. A weekend return Amsterdam–Brussels (departure Friday to Sunday, return by Monday) is 40% cheaper than a regular ticket.

UK

BICYCLE

Most cross-Channel ferries don't charge foot passengers extra to take a bicycle. You can also bring your two-wheeler on the Eurostar (right).

BUS

Eurolines (see p301) runs a regular coach service to Amsterdam via Rotterdam and Den Haag or Utrecht from London's Victoria coach station (from UK£30 for adults, 12 hours). Coaches have onboard toilets, reclining seats and air-con.

Busabout (☎ 020-7950 1661; www.busabout.com) is a UK-based budget alternative to Eurolines. It runs coaches on circuits in Continental Europe; its Northern Loop circuit (UKE275) passes through Amsterdam and eventually links up with its western and southern routes in Paris and Munich respectively. Tickets are valid from May to October.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Ferries take cars and motorcycles to the Netherlands from several ports in the UK (for

details, see below). Le Shuttle express trains will take vehicles from the UK to France, from where you can drive to the Netherlands (see below).

TRAIN

Rail Europe (☎ 08708371371; www.raileurope.co.uk) will get you from London to Amsterdam on the highly civilised Eurostar service from Waterloo Station through the Channel Tunnel to Brussels, with an onward Thalys connection from there. The quickest connection will take around 6½ hours and starts from UK£90 return in 2nd class with special deals. A bicycle costs UK£20 one way unless it is in a bike bag, in which case it is classed as hand luggage.

Eurotunnel (☎ 08705353535; www.eurotunnel.com) runs a 'drive-on, drive off' shuttle linking Folkstone, UK, to Calais, France, on a 35-minute journey via the Channel Tunnel. One-way journeys for cars/motorcycles cost from UK£49/24 with advance reservations.

The **Dutch Flyer** (☎ 08705455455; www.dutchflyer.co.uk) is one of the cheapest ways to reach the Netherlands from the UK. Trains from London (Liverpool Street Station), Cambridge and Norwich connect with ferries sailing from Harwich to Hoek van Holland, where a further train travels on to Amsterdam. The journey takes around 9½ hours and costs as little as UK£25 one way.

SEA

UK

FERRY

Several companies operate car/passenger ferries between the Netherlands and the UK. Most travel agents have details of the following services but might not always know the finer points. For information on train-ferry-train services, see above. Reservations are essential for motorists in high season, although motorcycles can often be squeezed in.

Stenaline (☎ 08705707070; www.stenaline.co.uk) sails between Harwich and Hoek van Holland. The fast HSS ferries take only three hours 40 minutes and depart in each direction twice a day. Overnight ferries take 6¼ hours (one daily), as do normal day ferries (one daily). Foot passengers pay upwards of UK£40 return. Fares for a car with up to five people range from UK£300 to UK£350 return depending on the season and the day of the week. A motorcycle and driver cost UK£110/UK£200 in low/high season. Options such as

reclining chairs and cabins cost extra and are compulsory on night crossings.

P&O North Sea Ferries (☎ 08705202020; www.poferries.com) operates an overnight ferry every evening (11 hours) between Hull and Europort (near Rotterdam). Return fares start at UK£112 for a foot passenger (for two persons travelling together it's only UK£133), UK£238 for a car with up to four people, and UK£198 for a motorcycle and rider. Prices here include berths in an inside cabin, and luxury cabins are available.

DFDS Scandinavian Seaways (☎ 08702520524; www.dfds.co.uk) sails between Newcastle and IJmuiden (p152), which is close to Amsterdam; the 15-hour sailings depart every day. The earlier you book, the lower your fare: single fares start at UK£19 for a foot passenger in an economy berth with private facilities, plus UK£41 for a car. The fare for a motorcycle and rider is UK£49 one way. Bear in mind that prices go up in high season.

Most ferries don't charge for a bike and have no shortage of storage space.

GETTING AROUND

The Netherlands is more than easy to get around. If you are sticking to the major cities and sights, you won't need a car as the train and bus system blankets the country. Or you can do as the Dutch do and provide your power on a bike.

An excellent online information source, covering everything from bus and train connections to city metro lines, is www.9292ov.nl. It's in Dutch but quite easy to follow.

AIR

With a country as small as the Netherlands (the longest train journey, between Groningen and Maastricht, takes 4¼ hours), there is no need to fly anywhere. There is however the occasional flight from Amsterdam Schiphol to Eindhoven, and a number of daily flights between Amsterdam and Maastricht. They're chiefly used by business passengers transferring to international flights at Schiphol, and flights are quite expensive.

BICYCLE

The Netherlands is extremely bike-friendly and a *fiets* (bicycle) is the way to go; once you're in the country you can pedal almost

everywhere on 20,000km of dedicated bicycle paths. Everything is wonderfully flat, but that also means powerful wind.

The ANWB (see p296) publishes cycling maps for each province, and tourist offices always have numerous routes and suggestions. Major roads have separate bike lanes, and, except for motorways, there's virtually nowhere bicycles can't go. That said, in places such as the Delta region and along the coast you'll often need muscles to combat the North Sea headwinds.

Over 100 stations throughout the country have bicycle facilities for hire, protected parking, repair and sales. Details are noted throughout this book.

Bicycles are prohibited on trains during the weekday rush hours (6.30am to 9am and 4.30pm to 6pm), except for the Hoek van Holland boat train. There are no restrictions on holidays, at weekends or during July and August.

You may bring your bicycle onto any train as long as there is room; a day pass for bikes (€6) is valid in the entire country regardless of the distance involved. There are no fees for collapsible bikes so long as they can be considered hand luggage. Some trains such as the single-level Intercity carriages have very limited space. However, on popular stretches there's often a special bicycle carriage that increases capacity. If your planned train has no room for your bike, you'll have to wait for the next train.

For more information about cycling, see p69.

Hire

Although about 85% of the population owns bikes, and there are more bikes than people, bikes are also abundantly available for hire. In most cases you'll need to show your passport and leave an imprint of your credit card or a deposit (around €25 to €100). Private operators and train station hire shops (called *Rijwiel*) charge €4 to €7 per day, and €25 to €35 per week; rental in Amsterdam is around 30% higher.

Purchase

Your basic used bicycle (no gears, with coaster brakes, maybe a bit rickety) can be bought for around €50 to €75 from bicycle shops or the classified ads. Count on paying €100 or more for a reliable two-wheeler with

gears. Stolen bikes are available on the street for as little as €15, but it's highly illegal and the cash usually goes straight into a junkie's arm. Good new models start at around €200 on sale, but top-of-the-line brands can cost €1000 or more.

BOAT Ferry

Ferries connect the mainland with the five Frisian Islands. See the Friesland (p230) and Noord Holland (p145) chapters for details. Other ferries span the Westerschelde in the south of Zeeland, providing a link between the southwestern expanse of the country and Belgium. These are popular with people using the Zeebrugge ferry terminal and run frequently year-round. There is also a frequent ferry service on the IJsselmeer linking Enkhuizen with Stavoren and Urk. You'll also find a few small river ferries providing crossings on remote stretches of the IJssel and other rivers.

Hire

Renting a boat is a popular way to tour the many rivers, lakes and inland seas. Boats come in all shapes and sizes from canoes to motor boats to small sailing boats to large and historic former cargo sloops. Prices run the gamut and there are hundreds of rental firms throughout the country. See p287 for more details.

BUS

Buses are used for regional transport rather than for long distances, which are better travelled by train. They provide a vital service, especially in parts of the north and east, where trains are less frequent or nonexistent. The national *strippenkaart* (p307) is used on most regional buses. The fares are zone-based, but figure on roughly one strip for every five minutes of riding.

There is only one class of travel and passes exist for regions within provinces; drivers are well informed on such deals and can sell them on the spot. Reservations aren't possible – and definitely not necessary – on either regional or municipal lines, most of which run quite frequently. For details about regional buses around the country, consult www.9292ov.nl or call the transport information service on ☎ 09009292 (calls cost €0.70 per minute).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Dutch freeways are extensive but prone to congestion. Those around Amsterdam, the A4 south to Belgium and the A2 southeast to Maastricht are especially likely to be jammed at rush hours and during busy travel periods; a total length of 350km or more isn't unheard of during the holiday season.

Smaller roads are usually well maintained, but the campaign to discourage car use throws up obstacles – you may find the road narrows to a single lane in sections, or an assortment of speed-bumps and other 'traffic-calming schemes'.

Automobile Associations

For motoring information, contact the ANWB (☎ 070-314 71 47; Wassenaarseweg 220, Den Haag); its headquarters are in Den, but most big towns and cities have an office.

Driving Licence

You'll need to show a valid driving licence when hiring a car in the Netherlands. Visitors from outside the EU should also consider an international driving permit (IDP). Car-rental firms will rarely ask for one, but the police might do so if they pull you up. An IDP can be obtained for a small fee from your local automobile association – bring along a valid licence and a passport photo – and is valid for one year together with your original licence.

Fuel

Like much of Western Europe, petrol is very expensive and fluctuates on a regular basis. At the time of research it was about €1.40 per litre (about US\$6.50 per gallon). Gasoline (petrol) is *benzine* in Dutch, while unleaded fuel is *loodvrij*. Leaded fuel is no longer sold in the Netherlands. Liquid petroleum gas can be purchased at petrol stations displaying LPG signs.

Petrol isn't noticeably more or less expensive outside of towns. Cheaper fuel is generally available from cut-rate chains such as Tango or TinQ – just ask the locals.

Hire

The Netherlands is well covered for car hire. However, outside Amsterdam the car-hire companies can be in inconvenient locations if you're arriving by train. You can look for local car-rental firms in telephone directories under the heading *Autoverhuur*. You must be at least 23 years of age to hire a car in the Netherlands.

style with one of the biggest operators, with lazy trips along Dutch rivers into Belgium and Germany.

Lowlands Travel (☎ 06-2334 2046; www.lowlands-travel.nl; Korvelplein 176, 5025 JX Tilburg) Down-to-earth nature- and culture-oriented holidays, lasting from three days to a week for groups of two to eight people, mostly outdoorsy types aged 20 to 40.

TRAIN

Dutch trains are efficient, fast and comfortable – most of the time. Trains are frequent and serve domestic destinations at regular intervals, sometimes five or six times an hour. Short-term visitors may be fortunate, but overall the network has been plagued by poor punctuality in recent years. Rush-hour periods around the Randstad seem to notch up the most delays. The situation may be improving, if only because **NS** (☎ national inquiries 09009292, international inquiries 09009296; www.ns.nl) has little choice: its profitability is linked to its on-time rates. Some rural lines have been hived off to combination train-and-bus operators who coordinate schedules across the region.

Many stations across the country have electronic left-luggage lockers, which cost around €4 for 24 hours. The majority, inconveniently, are bank-card operated; Amsterdam's Centraal Station lockers are still coin operated, however.

Classes

The longest train journey in the Netherlands (Maastricht–Groningen) takes about 4½ hours, but the majority of trips are far shorter. Trains have 1st-class sections, but these are often little different from the 2nd-class areas and, given the short journeys, not worth the extra cost.

Trains can be an all-stops *stoptrein*, a faster *snel trein* (fast train, indicated with an S) or an even faster Intercity (IC). Intercity Express (ICE) trains travel between Amsterdam and Cologne and only stop in Utrecht and Arnhem; they're quite fast (a 10-minute saving to Arnhem), but you pay a €2 supplement at the counter or ticket machine, or €4 on board the train.

TRAVELLING DOGS

Dog owners can travel with Fido all day long on Dutch trains using a *dagkaart hond* (dog-gie day pass), which costs €3.

The high-speed Thalys only stops at Amsterdam, Schiphol, Den Haag and Rotterdam before going on to Antwerp, Brussels and Paris (or Luxembourg). It requires a special ticket, available at the international ticket counters.

Reservations

For national trains, simply turn up at the station: you'll rarely have to wait more than an hour for a train to anywhere. Services along the major routes stop around midnight (often much earlier on minor routes), but there are night trains once an hour in both directions along the Utrecht–Amsterdam–Schiphol–Leiden–Den Haag–Delft–Rotterdam route. *Intercityboekje* (€2) is a handy small booklet listing the schedules of all IC trains, with an excellent map of the entire system.

In stations, schedules are posted by route. Figure out where you're going and look up the schedule and track numbers. One annoyance: trip duration and arrival time information aren't included on the station schedules, so you'll have to ask staff.

For train and ticketing information hotlines and the NS website, see left.

Train Passes

There are several train passes for people living both inside and outside the Netherlands. These can all be purchased in Europe or in the Netherlands, with the exception of the Holland Rail Pass; generally, you'll need to show your passport. The websites www.international-rail.com, www.raileurope.co.uk and www.raileurope.com offer online purchases.

The Voordeurenabonnement (Off-Peak Discount Pass) is a great way to save money if you're going to be seeing the country by train. It costs €55, is valid for one year and provides a 40% discount on train travel on weekdays after 9am, as well as at weekends and on public holidays. The discount also applies to up to three people travelling with you on the same trip. The card is available at train-station counters.

The Eurodomino Pass allows three to eight days' unlimited travel during a one-month period in one of 25 European and North African countries. For the Netherlands, the three-day pass costs UK£43/32 adult/under 26 in 2nd class and about 50% more in 1st class. The five-day version runs UK£69/53 adult/under 26 and roughly two-thirds more for 1st class.

TRAIN COSTS

Train travel in the Netherlands is cheaper than in the UK but far more expensive than in Eastern Europe. Tickets cost the same during the day as in the evening and can be bought at windows or ticketing machines, although most tickets purchased at windows incur a €0.50 fee. Buying a ticket on board costs the normal fare price, plus €35 regardless of the destination.

Buying tickets from vending machines is fast and fairly straightforward when using the newer touch-screen variety – instructions are in a number of languages. The older machines, which use codes to choose destinations, require a bit more thinking, but you should find it easy after a couple of tries. First, check your destination on the alphabetical list of place names and enter the relevant code into the machine. Then you must choose 1st or 2nd class, *zonder/met korting* (without/with discount – this refers to a discount card such as the Voordeel-Urenkaart, discussed below) and *vandaag geldig/zonder datum* (valid today/without date). The machine will then indicate how much it wants to be fed – most are coin only, but more and more accept ATM and credit cards. However, it's best to carry plenty of loose change rather than rack up hefty bank fees back home from using the machines. If you choose a ticket without date you can travel on another day, but you'll have to stamp the ticket in one of the yellow punch gadgets near the platforms.

Tickets and discount cards:

- *Enkele reis* (one-way) – single one-way ticket; with a valid ticket you can break your journey along the direct route.
- *Dagretour* (day return) – normal day return; 10% to 15% cheaper than two one-ways
- *Weekendretour* (weekend return) – costs the same as a normal return and is valid from 7pm Friday to 4am Monday.
- *Dagkaart* (day pass) – costs €39.90/65 for 2nd/1st class and allows unlimited train travel throughout the country. Only good value if you're planning extensive train travel on any one day.
- *OV-dagkaart* (public transport day pass) – €5; bought in conjunction with the *dagkaart* (above), it allows use of trams, buses and metros for one day.
- *Railrunner* – €2; day pass for children aged four to 11.

Note that for delays in excess of half an hour – irrespective of the cause – you're entitled to a refund. Delays of 30 to 60 minutes warrant a 50% refund and delays of an hour or more a 100% refund.

Another option is the Holland Rail Pass, which allows you unlimited travel for any three (1st/2nd class UK£73/49) or five (1st/2nd class UK£118/79) days within one month. There are no reductions for youths or seniors.

If your trip will encompass all three Low Countries then the Benelux Pass is useful, as it covers Belgium and Luxembourg in addition to the Netherlands. The pass is good for any five days in one month and includes a substantial Eurostar discount if you are travelling from the UK. In 2nd class it costs UK£129/97 adult/under 26. A 1st-class version costs UK£193 (there's no age discount).

An Inter-Rail Pass is good for people who can show they have lived in Europe for at least six months. A 2nd-class pass covering

the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France costs UK£215/145 adult/under 26 for 16 days' unlimited travel.

Outside Europe the Eurailpass is heavily marketed. Good for 18 countries, it's more than overkill if you're just visiting the Netherlands or even the Benelux region. A 15-day pass costs US\$394 for those under 26 in 2nd class (the only class available); adults pay US\$605 in 1st class (again, the only option). You can buy these at travel agents or **Europe Rail** (www.europeairail.com), an international sales arm of the French railways.

Treintaxi

More than 100 train stations offer an excellent *treintaxi* (train taxi) service that takes you to/from the station within a limited area. The

cost per person per ride is €4.20 at a train-station counter or ticketing machine, or €5 direct from the driver. The service operates daily from 7am (from 8am Sunday and public holidays) till the last train. There's usually a special call box outside near the normal taxi rank.

These are special taxis and it's a shared service – the driver determines the route and the ride might take a bit longer than with a normal taxi, but the price is certainly right.

Ask the counter operator or taxi driver for a pamphlet listing all participating stations and the relevant phone numbers for bookings. There's also a central information number; call ☎ 09008734682 (calls cost €0.35 per minute).

The *treintaxi* service is handy for reaching places far from stations that don't have frequent bus services. Unfortunately, some major stations (Amsterdam CS, Den Haag CS or HS, Rotterdam CS) are excluded.

Health

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Travel health depends on your predeparture preparations, your daily health care while travelling and how you handle any medical problem that does develop. For the Netherlands, peace of mind is the first thing to pack, as health care and medical facilities are generally excellent.

BEFORE YOU GO

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later: see your dentist before a long trip; carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses; and take your optical prescription with you. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled, containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

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. It will not cover you for nonemergencies or emergency repatriation.

Citizens from other countries should find out if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and the Netherlands. If you do need health insurance, make sure you get a policy that covers you for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring an emergency flight home. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No jabs are required to travel to the Netherlands. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician at least six weeks before departure.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The WHO's publication *International Travel and Health* is revised annually and is available online at www.who.int/ith/. Other useful websites include www.mdtravelhealth.com (travel-health recommendations for every country, updated daily), www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk (general travel advice for the layman), www.ageconcern.org.uk (advice on travel for the elderly) and www.maristopes.org.uk (information on women's health and contraception).

NATIONAL HEALTH WEBSITES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

Australia (www.smartraveller.gov.au)

Canada (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index.html)

United Kingdom (www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceForTravellers/fs/en)

United States (www.cdc.gov/travel/)

FURTHER READING

Health Advice for Travellers (currently called the 'T6' leaflet) is an annually updated leaflet produced by the UK Department of Health and available free in post offices. It contains some general information, legally required and recommended vaccines for different countries, reciprocal health agreements and an E111 application form. Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* includes advice on travel health for younger children. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health* by Dr Richard Dawood (published by Oxford University Press) and *The Traveller's Good Health Guide* by Ted Lankester (published by Sheldon Press).

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. The chief symptom of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually – but not always – on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

To avoid jet lag (which is common when crossing more than five time zones), try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) to the time zone you're in as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. A herbal alternative is ginger.

IN THE NETHERLANDS

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good health care is readily available. For minor self-limiting illnesses an *apotheek* (pharmacy) can give valuable advice and sell

over-the-counter medication. It can also advise when more specialised help is required and point you in the right direction. The standard of dental care is usually good; however, it is sensible to have a dental checkup before a long trip.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Heat Exhaustion & Heat Stroke

Heat exhaustion (yes, it can happen, even in the Netherlands!) occurs following excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. To treat heat exhaustion, replace fluids with water and/or fruit juice, and cool the body with cold water and fans. Treat salt loss with salty fluids such as soup or bouillon, or add a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heat stroke is much more serious, resulting in irrational and hyperactive behaviour and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement by intravenous drip is recommended.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes are found in most parts of Europe and are well represented in the Netherlands. They may not carry malaria but can cause irritation and infected bites. Use a DEET-based insect repellent.

Bees and wasps only cause real problems for those with a severe allergy (anaphylaxis.) If you have a severe allergy to bee or wasp stings, carry an EpiPen or similar adrenaline injection.

Bed bugs lead to very itchy lumpy bites. Spraying the mattress with crawling insect killer after changing bedding will get rid of them.

Scabies are tiny mites that live in the skin, particularly between the fingers. They cause an intensely itchy rash. Scabies is easily treated with lotion from a pharmacy; other members of the household also need treating to avoid spreading scabies between asymptomatic carriers.

LYME DISEASE

Ticks can carry a serious bacterial infection called Lyme disease. A bite from an infected

tick may produce a red welt and a 'bull's eye' around the spot within a day or two. Mild flu-like symptoms (headache, nausea etc) may follow or may not, but antibiotics are needed to avoid the next stage of the illness – pain in the joints, fatigue and fever. If left untreated, Lyme disease can cause mental and muscular deterioration.

The most risky places in the Netherlands are the wooded areas of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe, Hoge Veluwe National Park, parts of Zeeland and on the Wadden Islands. The best prevention is to wear clothing that covers your arms and legs when walking in grassy or wooded areas, apply insect repellent containing DEET and check your body for ticks after outdoor activities.

If a tick has attached itself to you, use tweezers to pull it straight out – do not twist it. Do not touch the tick with a hot object such as a cigarette because this can cause the tick to regurgitate noxious saliva into the wound. Do not rub oil or petroleum jelly on it.

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical treatment. Make sure the children are up to date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure, as some vaccines are not suitable for children under a year old.

Remember to avoid contaminated food and water. If your child is vomiting or has diarrhoea, lost fluid and salts must be replaced. It may be helpful to take along rehydration powders for reconstituting with boiled water.

Children should be encouraged to avoid and mistrust any dogs or other mammals because of the risk of rabies and other diseases. Any bite, scratch or lick from a warm-blooded, furry animal should immediately be thoroughly cleaned. If there is any possibility that the animal is infected with rabies, immediate medical assistance should be sought.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling through different time zones can all contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern. If

using oral contraceptives, remember that some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working and lead to the risk of pregnancy – remember to take condoms with you just in case. Time zones, gastrointestinal upsets and antibiotics do not affect injectable contraception.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible, but there are important things to consider. Always seek a medical checkup before planning your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks. Illness during pregnancy can be more severe, so take special care to avoid contaminated food and water and insect and animal bites. A general rule is to only use vaccines, like other medications, if the risk of infection is substantial. Remember that the baby could be in serious danger if you were to contract infections such as typhoid or hepatitis. Some vaccines are best avoided; for example, those that contain live organisms. However, there is very little evidence that damage has been caused to an unborn child when vaccines have been given to a woman very early in pregnancy before the pregnancy was suspected. Take written records of the pregnancy with you. Ensure your insurance policy covers pregnancy delivery and postnatal care. Always consult your doctor before you travel.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Emergency contraception is most effective if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex.

When buying condoms, look for a European CE mark, which means they have been rigorously tested, and then keep them in a cool, dry place or they may crack and perish. Condoms are widely available from pharmacies and vending machines in many restaurants and nightclubs.

The **Rutgers Foundation** (www.rutgersnissogroep.nl) manages seven regional centres in the Netherlands that provide a range of sexual and reproductive health-care services. Emergency contraception can be obtained at short notice. Contact the telephone helpline at ☎ 030-231 34 31. The Amsterdam centre, the **Rutgershuis** (☎ 020-624 54 26; www.acsg.nl; Sarphatistraat 618), is open for walk-in visitors.

Language

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Almost every Dutch person from age five onwards seems to speak English, often very well and better than you'll ever learn Dutch, so why bother? That's a good question because you'll rarely get the opportunity to practise: your Dutch acquaintances will launch into English, probably because they relish the opportunity to practise their language skills. Nevertheless, a few words in Dutch show goodwill, which is always appreciated, and you might even get to understand a bit more of what's going on around you. The phrase *Spreekt u Engels?* (Do you speak English?) before launching into English is best used with older people. The young, thanks to years of English in school, as well as exposure to vast amounts of English-language media (movies are usually subtitled rather than dubbed), will likely look at you like you've gone around the bend if you ask about their English skills.

The people of the northern Friesland province speak their own language. Although Frisian is actually the nearest relative to English, you won't be able to make much sense of it, and you'll have to go to a small-town shop or a farm to really hear it anyway. It's not the dominant language in the province, but most of the locals know some as a sign of cultural pride.

Most English speakers use the term 'Dutch' to describe the language spoken in

the Netherlands and 'Flemish' for that spoken in the northern half of Belgium. Both are in fact the same language, called Netherlandic (*Nederlands*) or simply Dutch. The differences between Dutch and Flemish (*Vlaams*) are similar in degree to those between British and North American English.

Dutch nouns come in one of three genders: masculine, feminine (both with *de* for 'the') and neuter (with *het* for 'the'). Where English uses 'a' or 'an', Dutch uses *een*, regardless of gender.

There's also a polite and an informal version of the English 'you'. The polite form is *u* (pronounced with the lips pursed and rounded), the informal is *je*. As a general rule, people who are older than you should be addressed as *u*.

For useful information that will help when ordering food and dining out, including Dutch words and phrases, see p64. For more extensive coverage of Dutch than we have space for here, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Western Europe Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Note that the following lists describe the pronunciation of the letters used in our guides to pronunciation, not written Dutch.

Vowels

a	as the 'u' in 'run'
e	as in 'bet'
i	as in 'hit'
o	as in 'pot'
u	pronounced with pursed, rounded lips, as in the French <i>tu</i>
ə	a neutral vowel, as the 'a' in 'ago'
aa	as the 'a' in 'father'
ee	as in 'eel'
oa	as in 'boat'
oo	as in 'zoo'
ow	as in 'cow'
ay	as in 'say'
əy	similar to the sound of 'er-y' in 'her year' (with no 'r' sound) or, if you're familiar with it, as the 'eui' in the French <i>fauteuil</i>
eu	similar the 'er' in 'her', but with no 'r' sound

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Dutch, like German, strings words together, which can baffle a foreigner trying to decipher (let alone remember) street names. *Eerste Goudsbloemdwarstraat* (First Marigold Cross Street) is a good example! Chopping a seemingly endless name into its separate components might help a bit. The following terms appear frequently in street names and on signs:

<i>baan</i>	– path, way	<i>molen</i>	– (wind)mill
<i>binnen</i>	– inside, inner	<i>nieuw</i>	– new
<i>bloem</i>	– flower	<i>noord</i>	– north
<i>brug</i>	– bridge	<i>oost</i>	– east
<i>buiten</i>	– outside, outer	<i>oud</i>	– old
<i>dijk</i>	– dyke	<i>plein</i>	– square
<i>dwar</i>	– transverse	<i>poort</i>	– city gate, gate
<i>eiland</i>	– island	<i>sloot</i>	– ditch
<i>gracht</i>	– canal	<i>sluis</i>	– sluice, lock
<i>groot</i>	– great, large, big	<i>steeg</i>	– alley
<i>haven</i>	– harbour	<i>straat</i>	– street
<i>hoek</i>	– corner	<i>toren</i>	– tower
<i>huis</i>	– house	<i>veld</i>	– field
<i>kade</i>	– quay	<i>(burg)wal</i>	– (fortified) embankment
<i>kapel</i>	– chapel	<i>weg</i>	– road
<i>kerk</i>	– church	<i>west</i>	– west
<i>klein</i>	– minor, small	<i>wijk</i>	– district
<i>laan</i>	– avenue	<i>zuid</i>	– south
<i>markt</i>	– market		

Consonants

Most consonants in the pronunciation guides are similar to their English counterparts (**b, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, w, z**). A few trickier sounds are listed below:

ch	as in 'chip'
g	as in 'go'
kh	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> ; it's like a hiss produced by tightening the tongue against top of the throat
ng	as in 'ring'
r	trilled, either with the tongue forward or held back restricting the flow of air in the throat
y	as in 'yes'
zh	as the 's' in 'pleasure'

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for	<i>Ik ben op zoek</i>	ik ben op zoek
a ...	<i>naar een ...</i>	naar ən ...
camping ground	<i>camping</i>	kem-ping
guesthouse	<i>pension</i>	pen-syon
hotel	<i>hotel</i>	ho-tel
youth hostel	<i>jeugdherberg</i>	yeukht-her-berkh

Where is a cheap hotel?

Waar is een goedkoop hotel?
waar is ən kooht-koop ho-tel

What is the address?

Wat is het adres?
wat is hət ə-dres

Could you write the address, please?

Kunt u het adres opschrijven alstublieft?
kunt u hət ə-dres op-skhray-vən əls-tu-bleeft

Do you have any rooms available?

Heeft u een kamer vrij?
hayft u ən kaa-mər vray

I'd like (a) ...	<i>Ik wil graag een ...</i>	ik wil khraakh ən ...
bed	<i>bed</i>	bet
single room	<i>eenpersoons-kamer</i>	əyn-pər-soans-kaa-mər
double room	<i>tweepersoons-kamer</i>	tway-pər-soans-kaa-mər
room with two beds	<i>kamer met twee bedden</i>	kaa-mər met tway be-dən
room with a bathroom	<i>kamer met badkamer</i>	kaa-mər met bat-kaa-mər
to share a dorm	<i>bed op een slaapzaal</i>	bet op ən slaap-zaal

How much is it ...? Hoeveel is het ...?

per night	<i>per nacht</i>	pər nakht
per person	<i>per persoon</i>	pər per-soan

Is breakfast included?

Is ontbijt inbegrepen? is ont-bayt in-bə-khray-pən

MAKING A RESERVATION

(for phone or written requests)

To ...	<i>Tot ...</i>
From ...	<i>Van ...</i>
Date	<i>Datum</i>
I'd like to book ...	<i>Ik wil ... reserveren.</i> (see the list under 'Accommodation' for bed and room options)
in the name of ...	<i>op naam van ...</i>
for the night/s of ...	<i>voor de nacht(en) van ...</i>
credit card number	<i>kredietkaart nummer</i>
expiry date	<i>vervaldag</i>
Please confirm availability and price.	<i>Gelieve de prijs en beschikbaarheid te bevestigen.</i>

May I see the room?*Mag ik de kamer zien?* makh ik dā kaa-mār zeen**Where is the bathroom?***Waar is de badkamer?* waar is dā bat-kaa-mār**I'm leaving today.***Ik vertrek vandaag.* ik vār-trek van-daakh**We're leaving today.***Wij vertrekken vandaag.* way vār-tre-kān van-daakh**CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS****Hello.***Dag/Hallo.* dakh/ha-loa**Goodbye.***Dag.* dakh**Yes.***Ja.* yaa**No.***Nee.* nay**Please.***Alstublieft.* (pol) als-tu-bleeft*Alsjebliëft.* (inf) a-shā-bleeft**Thank you (very much).***Dank u (wel).* (pol) dangk u (wel)*Dank je (wel).* (inf) dangk ya (wel)**Thanks.***Bedankt.* (pol or inf) bā-dangt**That's fine/You're welcome.***Graag gedaan.* khraakh khā-daan**Excuse me.***Pardon.* par-dan*or Excuseer mij.* eks-ku-zayr may**I'm sorry.***Sorry/Excuses.* so-ree/eks-ku-zās**How are you?***Hoe gaat het met u/jou?* (pol/inf) hoo khaat hēt met u/yow**I'm fine, thanks.***Goed, bedankt.* khoot, bā-dangt**See you soon.***Tot ziens.* tot zeens**What's your name?***Hoe heet u?* (pol) hoo hayt u*Hoe heet je?* (inf) hoo hayt yā**My name is ...***Ik heet ...* ik hayt ...**Where are you from?***Waar komt u* waar komt u*vandaan?* (pol) van-daān*Waar kom je* waar kom yā*vandaan?* (inf) van-daān**I'm from ...***Ik kom uit ...* ik kom ayt ...**I (don't) like.***Ik hou (niet) van ...* ik how (neet) van ...**Just a minute.***Een moment.* ən mo-ment**DIRECTIONS****Where is ...?***Waar is ...?* waar is ...**How do I get to ...?***Hoe kom ik bij ...?* hoo kom ik bay ...**(Go) straight ahead.***(Ga) rechtdoor.* (khaa) rekht-daar**(Turn) left.***(Ga) naar links.* (khaa) naar lings**(Turn) right.***(Ga) naar rechts.* (khaa) naar rekhs**at the corner***op de hoek* op dā hook**at the traffic lights***bij de verkeerslichten* bay dā vār-kayrs-likh-tān**SIGNS**

Ingang	Entrance
Uitgang	Exit
Informatie/Inlichtingen	Information
Open	Open
Gesloten	Closed
Verboden/Niet Toegelaten	Prohibited
Kamers Vrij	Rooms Available
Vol	Full/No Vacancies
Politiebureau	Police Station
WCs/Toiletten	Toilets
Heren	Men
Dames	Women

What street/road is this?*Welke straat/weg is dit?* wēl-kā straat/wekh is dit?**behind***achter* akh-tār**in front of***voor* vor**far (from)***ver (van)* ver (van)**near (to)***dichtbij* dikht-bay**opposite***tegenover* tay-khān-ōa-vār**beach***strand* strant**bridge***brug* brukh**castle***kasteel* kas-tayl**cathedral***kathedraal* ka-tay-draal**island***eiland* ay-lant**main square***stadplein* stats-playn**market***markt* markt**old city***oude stad* ow-dā stat**palace***paleis* pā-lays**ruins***ruines* rwee-nās**sea***zee* zay**square***plein* playn**tower***toren* toa-rān**EMERGENCIES****Help!***Help!* help**There's been an accident.***Er is een ongeluk* ēr is ən on-khā-luk*gebeurd.* khā-beurt**I'm lost.***Ik ben de weg kwijt.* ik ben dā wekh kwayt**Go away!***Ga weg!* kha wekh**Call ...!***Haal ...* haal ...**a doctor***een dokter* ən dok-tār**the police***de politie* dā po-leet-see**HEALTH****I need a doctor.** *Ik heb een dokter nodig.* ik hep ən dok-tār no-dig. noa-dikh**Where is the hospital?** *Waar is het ziekenhuis?* waar is hēt zee-kān-hāys**I'm ill.** *Ik ben ziek.* ik ben zeeek**It hurts here.** *Het doet hier pijn.* hēt doot heer payn**I'm ...***Ik ben ...* ik ben ...**asthmatic** *asthmatisch* ast-maa-tis**diabetic** *suikerziek* say-kār-zeeek**I have epilepsy.***Ik heb epilepsie.* ik hep ay-pee-lep-see**I'm allergic to ... antibiotics***Ik ben allergisch voor...* ik ben a-ler-khis voar ...*antibiotica* an-tee-bee-ō-tee-ka**aspirin***aspirine* as-pee-ree-nā**penicillin***penicilline* pay-nee-see-lee-nā**bees***bijen* bay-ən**nuts***noten* noa-tān**antiseptic***ontsmettings-* onts-met-tings-*middel* mi-dāl**aspirin***aspirine* as-pee-ree-nā**condoms***condooms* kon-doams**constipation***verstopping* vār-sto-ping**contraceptive***anticonceptie-* an-tee-kon-sep-see-*middel* mi-dāl**diarrhoea***diarree* dee-a-ray**medicine***geneesmiddel/* kha-nays-mi-dāl/*medicijn* may-dee-sayn**sunscreen***zonnebrandolie* zo-nā-brant-ōa-lee**tampons***tampons* tam-pons**nausea***misselijkheid* mi-sā-lək-hayt**LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES****Do you speak English?***Spreekt u Engels?* spraykt u eng-əls**Does anyone here speak English?***Spreekt er hier iemand Engels?* spraykt er heer ee-mant eng-əls**How do you say ... in Dutch?***Hoe zeg je ...* hoo zekh yā ...*in het Nederlands?* in hāt nay-dār-lants**What does ... mean?***Wat betekent ...?* wat bā-tay-kānt ...**I (don't) understand.***Ik begrijp het (niet).* ik bā-khrayp hāt (neet)**Please write it down.***Schrijf het alstublieft op.* skhryf hāt als-tu-bleeft op**Can you show me (on the map)?***Kunt u het mij tonen* kunt u hāt may toa-nān*(op de kaart)?* (op dā kaart)**NUMBERS****0** nul nul**1** één ayn**2** twee tway**3** drie dree**4** vier veer**5** vijf vayf**6** zes zes**7** zeven zay-vān**8** acht akht**9** negen nay-khān**10** tien teen**11** elf elf

12	<i>twaaif</i>	<i>twaaif</i>
13	<i>dertien</i>	<i>der-teen</i>
14	<i>veertien</i>	<i>vayr-teen</i>
15	<i>vijftien</i>	<i>vayf-teen</i>
16	<i>zes-tien</i>	<i>zes-teen</i>
17	<i>zeventien</i>	<i>zay-vən-teen</i>
18	<i>acht-tien</i>	<i>akh-teen</i>
19	<i>negentien</i>	<i>nay-khən-teen</i>
20	<i>twintig</i>	<i>twin-takh</i>
21	<i>eenentwintig</i>	<i>ayn-en-twin-takh</i>
22	<i>tweeëntwintig</i>	<i>tway-en-twin-takh</i>
30	<i>dertig</i>	<i>der-takh</i>
40	<i>veertig</i>	<i>vayr-takh</i>
50	<i>vijftig</i>	<i>vayf-takh</i>
60	<i>zestig</i>	<i>zes-takh</i>
70	<i>zeventig</i>	<i>zay-vən-takh</i>
80	<i>tachtig</i>	<i>takh-takh</i>
90	<i>negentig</i>	<i>nay-khən-takh</i>
100	<i>honderd</i>	<i>hon-dart</i>
1000	<i>duizend</i>	<i>dāy-zant</i>
2000	<i>tweeduizend</i>	<i>twēe-dāy-zant</i>

PAPERWORK

name	<i>naam</i>	<i>naam</i>
nationality	<i>nationaliteit</i>	<i>na-syo-na-lee-tayt</i>
date of birth	<i>geboortedatum</i>	<i>kha-boar-ta-daa-təm</i>
place of birth	<i>geboorteplaats</i>	<i>kha-boar-ta-plaats</i>
sex (gender)	<i>geslacht</i>	<i>kha-slakht</i>
passport	<i>paspoort</i>	<i>pas-poart</i>
visa	<i>visum</i>	<i>vee-zum</i>

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...
Ik wil graag ... kopen. ik wil khraakh ... *koa-pən*

How much is it?
Hoeveel is het? hoo-vayl is hat?

I don't like it.
Ik vind het niet leuk. ik vint hat neet leuk

May I look at it?
Mag ik het zien? makh ik hat zēn

Can I try it (on)?
Kan ik het eens proberen? kan ik hat ayns pro-bay-rən

I'm just looking.
Ik kijk alleen maar. ik *kayk* a-layn maar

It's cheap.
Het is goedkoop. hat is khoot-koop

It's too expensive (for me).
Het is (mij) te duur. hat is (may) tə dur

I'll take it.
Ik neem het. ik *naym* hat

Do you accept ...? *Accepteert u ...* ak-sep-tayrt u ...
credit cards *kredietkaarten* kray-deet-kaar-tən
travellers *reischeques* rays-sheks
cheques

more *meer* mayr
less *minder* min-dər
smaller *kleiner* klay-nər
bigger *groter* khroa-tər

I'm looking for ... *Ik ben op zoek naar ...* ik ben op zoek naar ...
the bank *de bank* də bank
a bookshop *een boekenwinkel* ən boo-kan-win-kəl
the chemist/ pharmacy *de drogist/ apotheek* də dro-khist a-po-tayk
the city centre *het stadscentrum* hət stat-sen-trum
a clothing store *een kledingzaak* ən klay-ding-zaak
the church *de kerk* də kerk
the ... embassy *de ... ambassade* də ... am-ba-saa-də
the exchange office *het wisselkantoor* hət wi-səl-kan-toar
a laundry *een wasserette* ən wa-sə-re-tə
the market *de markt* də markt
the museum *het museum* hət mu-say-əm
the newsagency *de kranten-winkel* də kran-tən-wing-kəl

the post office *het postkantoor* hət post-kan-toar
a public toilet *een openbaar toilet* ən oa-pən-baar toalet

the stationers *de kantoorboek-handel* də kan-toar-book-han-dəl

a supermarket *een supermarkt* ən su-pər-mart
the tourist office *de VVV* də vay-vay-vay

What time does it open/close?
Hoe laat opent/ sluit het? hoo laat oa-pənt/ slayt hət

I want to change ... *Ik wil ... wisselen.* ik wil ... wi-sə-lən

money *geld* khelt
travellers *reischeques* rays-sheks
cheques

TIME & DATES

What time is it? *Hoe laat is het?* hoo laat is hət

It's (8 o'clock). *Het is (acht uur).* hət is (akht ur)

in the morning *'s morgens* smor-ghəns
in the afternoon *'s middags* smi-dakhs
in the evening *'s avonds* saa-vonts
When? *Wanneer?* wa-nayr
today *vandaag* van-daakh
tomorrow *morgen* mor-khən
yesterday *gisteren* khis-tə-rən

Monday *maandag* maan-dakh
Tuesday *dinsdag* dins-dakh
Wednesday *woensdag* woons-dakh
Thursday *donderdag* don-dər-dakh
Friday *vrijdag* vray-dakh
Saturday *zaterdag* zaa-tar-dakh
Sunday *zondag* zon-dakh

January *januari* ya-nu-aa-ree
February *februari* fay-bru-aa-ree
March *maart* maart
April *april* a-pril
May *mei* may
June *juni* yu-nee
July *juli* yu-lee
August *augustus* ow-gus-tus
September *september* sep-tem-bər
October *oktober* ok-tə-bər
November *november* no-vem-bər
December *december* day-sem-bər

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

What time does the ... leave?
Hoe laat vertrekt ...? hoo laat vər-trekt ...

What time does the ... arrive?
Hoe laat komt ... aan? hoo laat komt ... aan

boat *de boot* də boat
bus *de bus* də bus
plane *het vliegtuig* hət vlieg-tuyk
train *de trein* də trayn
tram *de tram* də trem

Where is ...? *Waar is ...?* waar is ...
the airport *de luchthaven* də lukht-haa-vən
the bus stop *de bushalte* də bus-hal-tə
the metro station *het metro-station* hət may-tro-sta-syon
the train station *het (trein)-station* hət (trayn)-sta-syon
the tram stop *de tramhalte* də trem-hal-tə

I'd like ... ticket. *Ik wil graag ...* ik wil khraakh ...
a one-way *een enkele reis* ən eng-kə-lə rays
a return *een retourticket* ən rə-toor-ti-ket
a 1st-class *eerste klas* ayr-stə klas
a 2nd-class *tweede klas* tway-də klas

I want to go to ... *Ik wil naar ... gaan.* ik wil naar ... khaan

The train has been cancelled/delayed.
De trein is afgelast/ vertraagd. də trayn is af-khə-last/ vər-traakht

the first *de eerste* də ayr-stə
the last *de laatste* də laat-stə

platform *spoor/perron* spoar/pə-rən
number *nummer* nu-mər
ticket office *loket* loa-ket
timetable *dienstregeling* deenst-ray-khə-ling

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an ... *Ik wil graag een ... huren.* ik wil khraakh ən ... hu-rən
bicycle *fiets* feets
car *auto* ow-to
motorbike *motorfiets* mo-tər-feets

ROAD SIGNS

Afrit/Uitrit	Exit (from freeway)
Eenrichtingsverkeer	One Way
Gevaar	Danger
Ingang	Entrance
Omleiding	Detour
Oprit	Entrance (to freeway)
Tol	Toll
Uitgang	Exit
Verboden Toegang	No Entry
Verboden in te Halen/ Inhaalverbod	No Overtaking
Verboden te Parkeren/ Parkeerverbod	No Parking
Vertragen	Slow Down
Voorrang Verlenen	Give Way
Vrij Houden	Keep Clear

Is this the road to ...?
Is dit de weg naar ...? is dit də wekh naar ...

Where's a service station?
Waar is er een benzinstation? waar is er ən ben-zee-nə-sta-syon

Please fill it up.
Vol alstublieft. vol als-tu-bleeft

I'd like (30) litres. *Ik wil graag (dertig) liter.* ik wil khraakh (der-tikh) lee-tər
diesel *diesel* dee-zəl

leaded petrol *gelode benzine* khə-lo-də ben-zee-nə

unleaded petrol *loodvrije benzine* loat-vray-ə ben-zee-nə

(How long) Can I park here?
(Hoe lang) Kan ik hier parkeren? (hoo lang) kan ik heer par-kay-rən

Where do I pay?
Waar kan ik betalen? waar kan ik be-taa-lən

I need a mechanic. *Ik heb een mecanicien nodig.* ik hep een may-ka-nee-sye noa-dikh

The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).

Ik heb auto/motorfiets ik heb ow-to/moa-tər-feets
pech (in ...) pekh (in ...)

The car/motorbike won't start.

De auto/motorfiets da ow-to/moa-tər-feets
wil niet starten. wil neet star-tən

I have a flat tyre.

Ik heb een lekke band. ik heb ən le-kə bant

I've run out of petrol.

Ik zit zonder benzine. ik zit zan-dər ben-zee-nə

I've had an accident.

Ik heb een ongeluk gehad. ik hep ən on-khə-luk khə-hat

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

I need (a/an) ... *Ik heb ... nodig.* ik hep ... noa-dikh

Do you have *Heeft u ...?* hayft u ...

(a/an) ...?

car baby seat *een autozitje* ən ow-to-zi-chə
voor de baby voar da bay-bee

child-minding service *een oppasdienst* ən op-pas-deenst

children's menu *een kindermenu* ən kin-dər-mə-nu

(disposable) *(wegwerp-)* (wekh-werp-)

nappies/diapers *luiers* løy-ərs

formula (milk) *melkpoeder (voor zuigflessen)* melk-poo-dər (voar zøykh-fle-sən)

(English-speaking) *een babysit (die Engels spreekt)* ən bay-bee-sit (dee eng-əls spraykt)

babysitter

highchair *een kinderstoel* ən kin-dər-stool

potty *een potje* ən po-chə

stroller *een wandel-wagen* ən wan-dəl-waa-khən

Is there a baby change room?

Kan ik hier ergens kan ik heer er-khəns

de baby verschonen? da bay-bee vər-skhoa-nən

Do you mind if I breastfeed here?

Stoort het u als ik stoart hət u als ik

hier de borst geef? heer da borst gayf

Are children allowed?

Zijn kinderen toegelaten? zayn kin-də-rən too-khə-la-tən



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Europe Phrasebook

Glossary

See the boxed text, p315, for a list of terms commonly encountered in street names and sights.

abdij – abbey
apotheek – chemist/pharmacy

bad – bath, pool
benzine – petrol/gasoline
bevrijding – liberation
bibliotheek – library
bos – woods or forest
botter – type of 19th-century fishing boat
broodje – bread roll (with filling)
bruin café – brown café; traditional drinking establishment
buurt – neighbourhood

café – pub, bar; also known as *kroeg*
coffeeshop – cafe authorised to sell cannabis

dagschotel – daily special in Dutch restaurants
drop – salted or sweet liquorice

eetcafé – cafés serving meals

fierljeppen – pole-jumping over canals (Frisian; see also *polstokspringen*)
fiets – bicycle
fietsenstalling – secure bicycle storage
fietspad – bicycle path

gasthuis – hospital, hospice
gemeente – municipal, municipality
gezellig – convivial, cosy
GVB – Gemeentevervoerbedrijf (Amsterdam municipal transport authority)
GWK – Grenswisselkantoren; official currency-exchange offices

hal – hall, entrance hall
haven – port
herberg – hostel
hervormd – reformed (as in church)
hof – courtyard
hofje – almshouse or series of buildings around a small courtyard, also known as Begijnhof
hoofd – main

jacht – yacht
jenever – Dutch gin; also *genever*

kaas – cheese
kantoor – office
koffiehuis – espresso bar (as distinct from a *coffeeshop*)
klompen – clogs
klooster – cloister, religious house
koningin – queen
koninklijk – royal
korfbal – a cross between netball, volleyball and basketball
kunst – art
kwartier – quarter

loodvrij – unleaded petrol/gasoline

markt – town square
meer – lake
molen – windmill

NS – Nederlandse Spoorwegen; national railway company

paleis – palace
polder – area of drained land
polstokspringen – pole-jumping over canals (Frisian: *fierljeppen*)
postbus – post office box

raam – window
Randstad – literally ‘rim-city’; the urban agglomeration including Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Den Haag
Rijk(s) – the State

scheepvaart – shipping
schilder – artist, painter
schouwburg – theatre
sluis – lock (for boats/ships)
spoor – platform (in train station)
stadhouder – chief magistrate
stadhuis – city hall
stedelijk – civic, municipal
stichting – foundation, institute
strand – beach
strippenkaart – punchable multiticket used on all public transport

terp – mound of packed mud in Friesland that served as a refuge during floods (plural *terpen*)

treintaxi – taxi for train passengers

tuin – garden

tulp – tulip

turf – peat

verzet – resistance

Vlaams – Flemish

VVV – tourist information office

waag – old weigh-house

wadlopen – mud-walking

weeshuis – orphanage

werf – wharf, shipyard

winkel – shop

zaal – hall

zee – sea

ziekenhuis – hospital