

# Zuid Holland & Zeeland



These two provinces are home to some of the strongest imagery – and biggest clichés – associated with the Netherlands. You want dykes? Uh-huh. Windmills? Yeah. Tulips? OK. Well, alright fellas, let's gooooo...

The Keukenhof gardens are a place of pilgrimage for lovers of the lancelike leaves and bell-shaped, varicoloured flower of the tulip, and the Zuid (South) Holland area is great for biking and hiking, with trails and paths everywhere. Meanwhile, the built-up beaches of Noordwijk aan Zee and south to Scheveningen are popular with locals.

Further south, Zeeland (Sea Land) is the dyke-protected province that people often associate with the Netherlands when they're not thinking of tulips, cheese and windmills. Middelburg is the centre, with a serenity belying its proximity to the tragedies that spawned the Delta Project.

Zuid Holland's major cities are the biggest attractions: there's Leiden, with its university culture and old town (and proximity to the bulb fields); Den Haag, with its museums, stately air and kitsch beach; charming, beautiful Delft, the home of Jan Vermeer; and mighty Rotterdam, blessed with an edgy urban vibe, gritty cultural scene, and innovative architecture.

Several smaller places are also worth your time: Gouda is a perfect old canal town, while Dordrecht has its own surprises – for humans and sheep alike. Just east and south of Dordrecht is Biesbosch National Park, a sprawling natural area along the border with Noord-Brabant.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Answer the question 'Can you dance to architecture?' in **Rotterdam** (p211)
- Make like Tiny Tim at the **Keukenhof Gardens** (p195)
- Find out if waterfalls flow backwards at Den Haag's **Escher in het Paleis Museum** (p198)
- Look for girls wearing pearl earrings in old-world **Delft** (p204)
- Walk on water at Zeeland's **Delta Project** (p228)





## ZUID HOLLAND

Along with Noord (North) Holland and Utrecht, Zuid Holland is part of the Randstad, the economic and population centre of the Netherlands. Two of the nation's most important cities are here: Den Haag, the seat of the royal family and the government; and Rotterdam, Europe's busiest port.

### LEIDEN

☎ 071 / pop 118,500

Lovely Leiden is a refreshing, vibrant town, patterned with canals and attractive old buildings. It also has a few claims to fame: it's Rembrandt's birthplace, and it's home to the

Netherlands' oldest university (and 20,000 students), the alma mater of René Descartes.

The university was a gift from Willem the Silent for withstanding two Spanish sieges in 1574. It was a terrible time, ending when the Sea Beggars arrived and repelled the invaders. According to lore, the retreating Spanish legged it so quickly, they abandoned a kettle of *huts*pot (hotchpotch) – today it's still a staple of Dutch menus in restaurants, and in homes.

Decades later, Protestants fleeing persecution elsewhere in the Low Countries, France and England arrived in Leiden to a somewhat warmer welcome. Most notable was the group led by John Robinson, who would sail to America and into history as the pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower*.

Wealth from the linen industry buttressed Leiden's growing prosperity, and during the 17th century the town produced several brilliant artists, most famously Rembrandt van Rijn – better known by his first name alone. Rembrandt was born in Leiden in 1606, and remained here for 26 years before achieving fame in Amsterdam.

### Orientation

Old Leiden is a compact town. From Centraal Station a five-minute walk brings you to Beestenmarkt. Haarlemmerstraat and Breestraat are the town's pedestrian arteries, and most sights are within five minutes of either. The town is bisected by many waterways, the most notable being the Oude Rijn and also the Nieuwe Rijn, which meet at Hoogstraat to form a canal simply called the Rijn.

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

**Joho Company** (☎ 516 12 77; www.joho.nl; Stille Rijn 8-9) Travel books, maps, travel gear and supplies, and Internet access.

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Centrale Bibliotheek** (Central Library; ☎ 514 99 43; Nieuwstraat; internet per hr €3; ☎ 10am-6pm)

**Ortes Telecom** (Steenstraat; internet per hr €3)

#### POST

**Post office** (☎ 514 17 88; Breestraat 46; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat)

#### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 09002222333; www.leidenpromotie.nl; Stationsweg 2D; ☎ 11am-5.30pm Mon, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat)

### Sights

Most of the sights are concentrated within Leiden's pretty canal belt and are best experienced on foot.

The **Rijksmuseum van Oudheden** (National Museum of Antiquities; ☎ 516 31 63; www.rmo.nl; Rapenburg 28; adult/under 18yr €7.50/5.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) has a hieroglyph collection, and 94 human and animal mummies. The entrance hall contains the Temple of Taffeh, a gift from Egypt in 1969 for Dutch help in saving ancient monuments when the Aswan High Dam was built.

The 17th-century **Lakenhal** (Cloth Hall; ☎ 516 53 60; www.lakenhal.nl; Oude Singel 28-32; adult/under 18yr €4/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) houses the Mu-

nicipal Museum, with an assortment of works by old masters, as well as period rooms and temporary exhibits. The 1st floor has been restored to the way it would have looked when Leiden was at the peak of its cloth trade prosperity.

Leiden's carefully restored windmill, **De Valk** (Falcon; ☎ 516 53 53; http://home.wanadoo.nl/molenmuseum; 2E Binnenvestgracht 1; adult/under 15yr €3/1.70; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), has been carefully restored; its construction and operation highlight the wonders of preindustrial engineering. There are many presentations, including one that laments that local boy Rembrandt, as a miller's son, didn't paint many windmills. The upper levels afford an inspired view of the old town.

Leiden University was an early centre for Dutch medical research, and the **Museum Boerhaave** (National Museum of the History of Science & Medicine; ☎ 521 42 24; www.museumboerhaave.nl; Lange St Agnietenstraat 10; adult/under 19yr €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) gathers together five centuries of pickled organs, surgical tools and skeletons in its Anatomy Theatre (it's morbid, but just try to look away). The museum is housed in the hospital where the chronically ill Herman Boerhaave taught medicine from his sick-bed until his death in 1738.

A stuffed elephant greets you at **Naturalis – Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum** (National Museum of Natural History; ☎ 568 76 00; www.naturalis.nl; Darwinweg 2; adult/child €9/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). This is a large and well-funded collection of all the usual dead critters, as well as the 1,000,000-year-old Java Man, discovered by Dutch anthropologist Eugène Dubois in 1891. This striking building is 300m west of the train station.

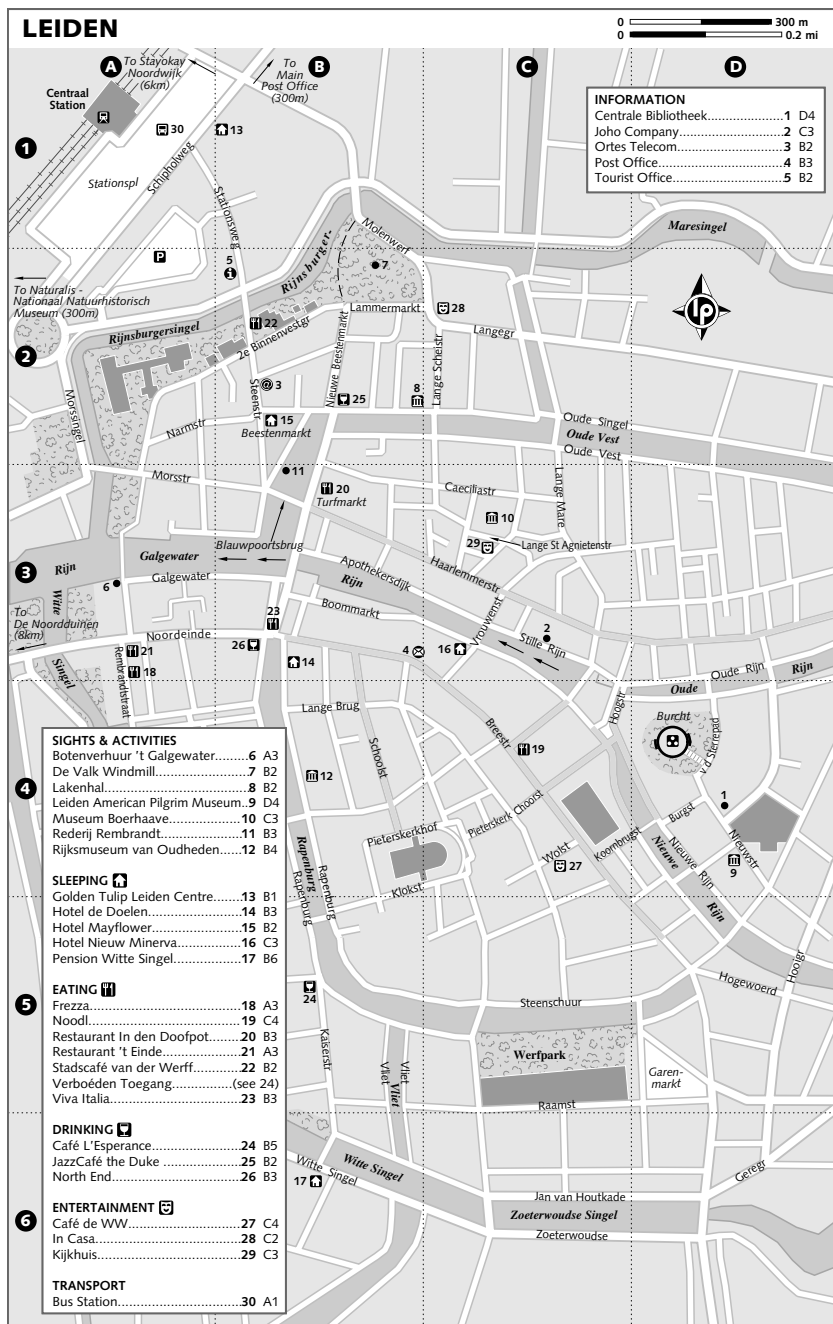
### Activities

Rent a canoe or kayak from **Botenverhuur 't Galgewater** (☎ 514 97 90; www.galgewater.nl; Galgewater 44a; per hr €5; ☎ 11am-6pm Oct-May, 11am-10pm Jun-Sep) and explore the canals.

### Tours

**Rederij Rembrandt** (☎ 513 49 38; www.rederij-rembrandt.nl; Beestenmarkt; adult/child €5/3) gives one-hour boat tours of Leiden at various times throughout the year. Check the schedules at the dock or on the website.

There are longer, three-hour cruises of the waterways and lakes around Leiden. Ask the tourist office for details.



## PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

In 1608 a group of Calvinist Protestants split from the Anglican Church and left persecution in Nottinghamshire, England, for a journey that would span decades and thousands of miles. Travelling first to Amsterdam under the leadership of John Robinson, they encountered theological clashes with local Dutch Protestants.

In Leiden they found a more liberal atmosphere, thanks to the university and some like-minded Calvinists who already lived there. They also found company with refugees who had escaped from persecution elsewhere. However, the group's past was to catch up with them. In 1618 James I of England announced he would assume control over the Calvinists living in Leiden. In addition, the local Dutch were becoming less tolerant of religious splinter groups.

The first group of English left Leiden in 1620 for Delfshaven in what is today Rotterdam, where they bought the *Speedwell* with the intention of sailing to the New World. Unfortunately, the leaky *Speedwell* didn't live up to its name; after several attempts to cross the Atlantic, the group gave up and, against their better judgment, sailed into Southampton in England. After repairs to their ship and a thwarted attempt to restart their journey, the group joined the much more seaworthy *Mayflower* in Dartmouth and sailed, as it were, into history as the Pilgrims.

This legendary voyage was actually just one of many involving the Leiden group. It wasn't until 1630 that most had made their way to the American colonies founded in what is today New England. Some 1000 people made the voyages, including a number of Dutch who were considered oddballs for their unusual beliefs.

In Leiden today, traces of the Pilgrims are elusive. The best place to start is the **Leiden American Pilgrim Museum** (☎ 512 24 13; www.pilgrimhall.org/leidenmuseum.htm; Beschuitsteeg 9; admission €2; ☹ 1-5pm Wed-Sat), a fascinating restoration of a house occupied around 1610 by the soon-to-be Pilgrims. The house itself dates from 1375, but the furnishings are from the Pilgrims' period. Note the tiles on the floor, originals from the 14th century. Pick up a walking-tour brochure, which helps you explore the surviving parts of 17th-century Leiden.

## Festivals & Events

Leiden grinds to a halt in early October for **Leidens Ontzet**, commemorating the day the Spanish-caused starvation ended in 1574. The revelry is undiminished even four centuries later, and there is much eating of the ceremonial *hutspot*, herring and white bread. But more than anything, consumption focuses on beer sandwiches (hold the bread) and a drunken time is had by all – especially the night before.

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Stayokay Noordwijk** (☎ 0252-37 29 20; www.stayokay.com/noordwijk; Langeveldlerlaan 45; dm from €20) The hostel is next to a popular beach. Take buses 57 or 90 (last bus at 11pm) to Sancta Maria hospital and walk for 10 minutes.

**De Noorduinen** (☎ 402 52 95; www.tours.nl/noorduinen; Campingweg 1; per camp site from €16.50; ☹ Apr-Oct) The closest camping ground, 8km to the west. Take buses 31 or 41.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel de Doelen** (☎ 512 05 27; www.dedoelen.com; Rapenburg 2; s/d with bathroom from €75/95) Some of the

Doelen's canalside rooms border on palatial opulence, with all the trimmings, and even the more basic options have bathroom, phone and TV. Rooms come in three flavours: basic, standard and suite.

**Hotel Mayflower** (☎ 514 26 41; Beestenmarkt 2; www.hotelmayflower.nl; s/d €65/80) These spacious rooms are bright and inviting, with comfy furnishings and lots of trimmings. Apartments are also available.

**Hotel Nieuw Minerva** (☎ 512 63 58; www.nieuwminerva.nl; Boommarkt 23; s/d €75/100) The Minerva has a traditional look and a quiet canalside location, and its rooms are comfortable and well equipped. If you want a bit more bang for your buck, try the luxury suites, such as the evocatively named 'Room of Roses' and 'Room of Angels'. The décor in these is full-on mock baroque, and it makes a suitable backdrop for canoeing (and anything else).

**Pension Witte Singel** (☎ 512 45 92; www.pensionws.demon.nl; Witte Singel 80; s/d with shared bathroom €41/62, d with bathroom €76) Fresh, spacious rooms with large windows overlooking most agreeable scenery: the perfectly peaceful Singel canal

in the front and a typically Dutch garden out the back.

### TOP END

**Golden Tulip Leiden Centre** (☎ 408 35 00; Schipholweg 3; s/d €150/170; ☺ ☑ ☒ ☓) These large and modern rooms are aimed at business travellers who are happy to trade architectural charm for amenities. You'll get all the charm you can handle out on the town's pretty canalside streets.

### Eating

**Frezza** (Rembrandtstraat 2; tapas from €4; ☺ dinner Wed-Sun) Frezza is a bit of a Leiden hot spot, finding an audience with its delectable selection of Mediterranean delights, including tapas.

**Viva Italia** (☎ 514 88 18; Kort Rapenburg 17; mains €16-20; ☺ lunch & dinner) This classy and fine Italian joint, with its luxurious décor (including white-leather couches, no less) and fine service, dishes up upmarket vittles like veal with rolled-in Parma ham and basil pesto.

**Verboden Toegang** (☎ 514 33 88; www.verbodentoeegang.nl; Kaiserstraat 7; mains €13-20; ☺ dinner) This casual, elegant, wood-panelled restaurant doesn't take itself too seriously (the name means 'access forbidden'). The grub's top-notch, with an emphasis on seafood – try the butterfish in white wine.

**Restaurant In Den Doofpot** (☎ 512 24 34; www.indendoofpot.nl; Turfmarkt 9; mains €12-45; ☺ dinner) There's little chance you're going to walk away hungry from this elegant place. It serves twists on Dutch home-style cooking with elaborate French touches and other less bulky options.

**Restaurant 't Einde** (☎ 512 21 15; Rembrandtstraat 2; mains from €16; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun) Small and sophisticated, with an excellent menu: exquisite meat, fish, poultry and seafood variations. Not too traditional, not too nouvelle cuisine, the food is mildly progressive and always delicious.

Other options:

**Noodl** (☎ 513 92 73; www.noodl.nl; Breestraat 88A; dishes €11-16; ☺ dinner) Vietnamese and good dim sum.

**Stadscafé van der Werff** (☎ 512 61 20; Stationsweg 7-9; lunch dishes €9-13; ☺ lunch) Bright, with large windows and the usual café menu.

### Drinking

**Café L'Esperance** (☎ 512 16 00; www.lesperance.nl; Kaiserstraat 1) This is a small, skinny, typically Dutch pub – nostalgic, cheerful, wood-panelled, cosy, and pumping in the summer time.

It often has live music, with big and little men belting out big fat tunes to big crowds in a thin space.

**JazzCafé the Duke** (☎ 566 15 85; Oude Singel 2) No windows, but loads of yellowing, vintage jazz posters on the walls. Their motto is, 'If we don't have it, you don't need it'. It's true: you don't need windows to enjoy this atmospheric den, with its fine live jazz every night, and suitably appreciative crowds.

**North End** (☎ 512 1541; www.north-end.nl; Noordende 55) This superb English-style pub is full of warmth, cosy nooks and character. It comes complete with its very own 'bourbon alley' (not very English, granted, but a welcome selection of booze all the same) and patented beer *strip-penkaart* (strip card).

### Entertainment

#### LIVE MUSIC

**In Casa** (☎ 512 49 38; www.dansalonincasa.nl; Lammermarkt 100) This place is huge and, from the outside, looks as though it has no atmosphere – but appearances can be deceiving. It has live music, a dance floor, comedy and a variety of other events.

**Café de WW** (☎ 512 59 00; Wolsteeg 6) Live rock is played here to a young crowd in the over-loud, hormonally charged atmosphere on Fridays. On other nights there's a DJ.

#### CINEMAS

**Kijkhuis** (☎ 566 15 85; Vrouwenkerksteeg 10) Has an alternative film programme.

### Getting There & Away

Centraal Station is bright and modern. It has all the usual conveniences, and the lockers are near platform No 5. Sample fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	7.50	34	6
Den Haag	2.80	10	6
Schiphol Airport	4.50	18	4

Regional and local buses leave from the bus station directly in front of Centraal Station.

### Getting Around

Leiden is compact and you'll have a hard time walking for more than 20 minutes in any one direction. The bicycle shop in Centraal Station is around the back.

### AROUND LEIDEN Keukenhof Gardens

Near Lisse, between Haarlem and Leiden, a beautiful enigma unfurls for just two months each year: the blooming of millions of multi-coloured tulip, daffodil and hyacinth bulbs at the **Keukenhof gardens** (☎ 0252-46 55 55; www.keukenhof.nl; Stationsweg 166A, Lisse; adult/child 4-11yr €12.50/5.50; ☺ 8am-7.30pm late Mar-May, cashier to 6pm). The gardens stretch on and on, and there are greenhouses full of more delicate varieties of flowers besides the ephemeral tulips. You'll forgive the presence of thousands of other tourists – little can detract from the rainbow of natural beauty. Wandering about can easily take half a day. From the edges of the gardens, you can see the stark beauty of the commercial bulb fields stretching in all directions.

There are several options for reaching the park – see the boxed text, below, for details.

### DEN HAAG (THE HAGUE)

☎ 070 / pop 472,100

Den Haag, officially known as 's-Gravenhage ('the Count's Hedge'), is the Dutch seat of government and home to the royal family. Prior to 1806, Den Haag was the Dutch capi-

tal. However, that year, Louis Bonaparte installed his government in Amsterdam. Eight years later, when the French had been ousted, the government returned to Den Haag, but the title of capital remained with Amsterdam.

Den Haag today is a stately, regal place filled with palatial embassies and mansions, green boulevards and parks, prestigious art galleries, a mouthwatering culinary scene, a clutch of tasty museums, and some throbbing nightlife. Plus it's attached to the seaside suburb of Scheveningen, worth a visit for its lively kitsch and long stretch of beach.

In the 20th century Den Haag became the home of several international legal entities including the UN's International Court of Justice and the Academy of International Law.

### Orientation

Den Haag is spread over a fairly large area. Centraal Station is near the heart of town; Hollands Spoor station (HS), on the main line from Amsterdam to Rotterdam and destinations further south, is 1km south of the centre. Most streets heading west reach Scheveningen, 4km away, but it's more pleasantly approached at the end of a 15- to 20-minute bike ride that

### TULIPS – THE BELOVED BULB

Tulips have captured the fancy of the Dutch for centuries. In fact, at times this love has become an absolute mania.

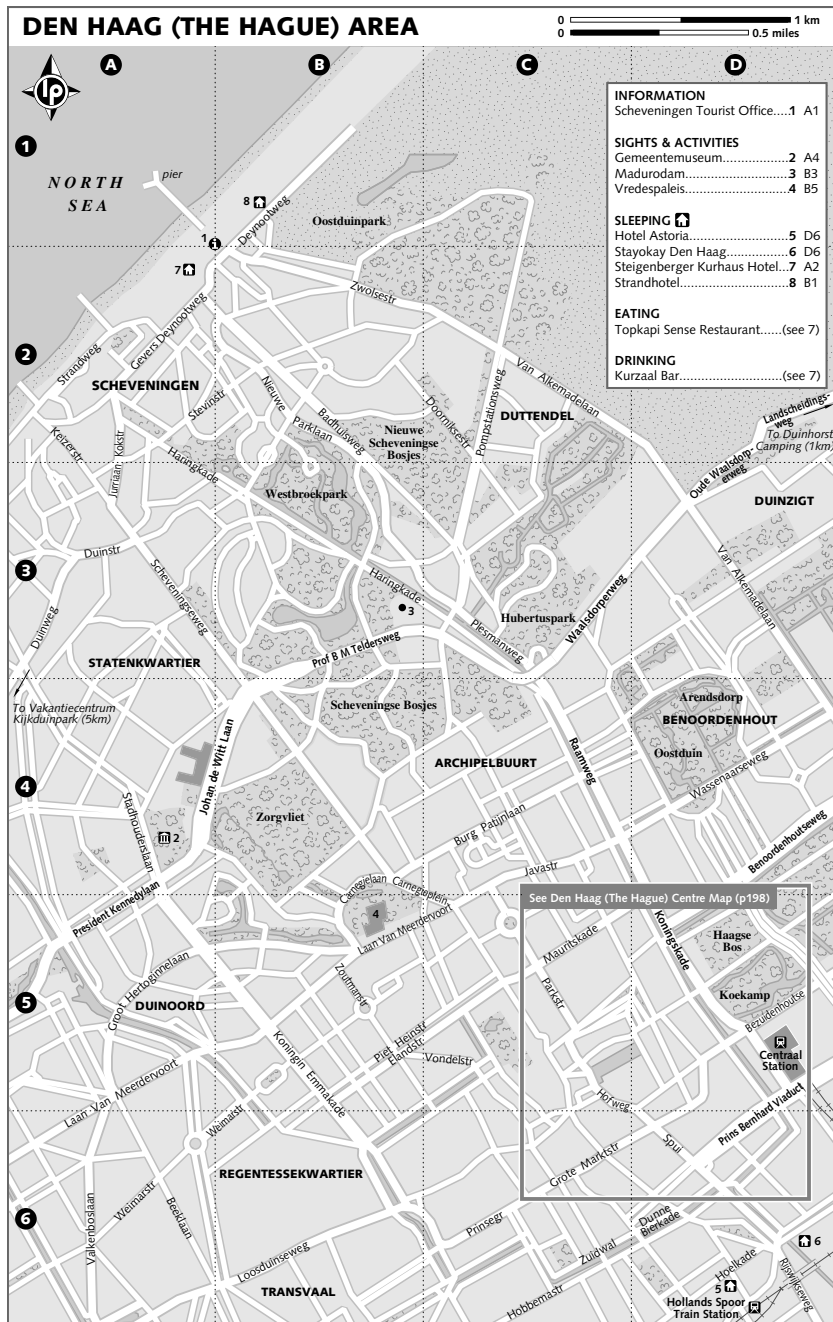
The first stop on any tulip tour is the Keukenhof, the world's largest flower garden, located between the towns of Hillegom and Lisse, south of Haarlem. The 32-hectare park attracts a staggering 800,000 people for a mere eight weeks every year. Nature's talents are combined with artificial precision to create a garden where millions of tulips and daffodils bloom, perfectly in place and exactly on time.

The broad stripes of colour are a spectacular feast for the eye. Postcards just don't do justice. The bulbs are left to bloom fully so that they will gain full strength during the growing season, after which over €500 million worth of bulbs are exported worldwide.

To appreciate the blooms you have several options. By train, opt for one of the frequent local (meaning slow) trains between Haarlem and Leiden. These pass through the heart of the fields. By car, cover the same area on the N206 and N208, branching off down tiny side roads as you wish (at the gardens, you'll have to pay a parking fee of around €4). But like so much of the Netherlands, perhaps the best way to see the bulb fields is by bicycle. You can set your course along the smallest roads and get lost in a sea of colour. If you just want to head straight to the gardens, Netherlands Railways sells a ticket (adult/under 11 years €17/9) that combines entrance to the gardens and travel by express bus from Leiden CS (20 minutes).

In Lisse, the **tourist office** (☎ 0252-41 42 62; Grachtweg 53A; ☺ noon-5pm Mon, 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) can give you many options for bulb-field touring. Also in Lisse, the small **Museum de Zwarte Tulp** (Museum of the Black Tulip; ☎ 0252-41 79 00; www.museumdezwartetulp.nl; Grachtweg 2A; admission €3; ☺ 1-5pm Tue-Sun) displays everything you might want to know about bulbs, including why there's no such thing as a black tulip.

See p171 for details on the Aalsmeer Flower Auction, the largest of its type in the world.



will take you past the lush homes of some of Den Haag's most well-heeled residents.

Den Haag has no true centre; rather, there are several areas of concentration, including the Binnenhof and the nearby Kerkplein.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Van Stock** (Map p198; ☎ 365 68 08; www.vanstock.um.nl; Venestraat 11) Selection of travel books and magazines.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Kado Internet** (Map p198; Spui 165; internet per hr €2.75)

**Koninklijke Bibliotheek** (Royal Library; Map p198; ☎ 314 09 11; Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 5; internet per hr €3; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 9am-8pm Tue, 9am-1pm Sat)

### POST

**Post office** (Map p198; ☎ 365 38 43; Kerkplein 6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-8pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (Map p198; ☎ 09003403505; www.denhaag.com; Hofweg 1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun)

**Scheveningen Tourist Office** (Map p196; ☎ 09003403405; www.scheveningen.nl; Gevers Deynootweg 1134; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun)

## Dangers & Annoyances

The area south of the centre (the Schilderswijk) near HS can seem far removed from its urbane counterpart to the north. Watch out for pickpockets.

## Sights & Activities

Den Haag has no true core, rather a scattering of districts. All are easily reached by public transport or bike.

### MAURITSHUIS

The small but grand Mauritshuis (Map p198; ☎ 302 34 56; www.mauritshuis.nl; Korte Vijverberg 8; adult/under 18yr incl audiotor €11.50/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) museum houses Dutch and Flemish masterpieces. It includes several of the most famous Vermeers, and a touch of the contemporary with Andy Warhol's *Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands*.

The building was constructed as a mansion in 1640 in classical style; all its dimensions are roughly the same (25m), and the detailing shows exquisite care. In 1822 it was made the home of the royal collection.

The collection is displayed in 16 rooms on two floors – almost every piece is a masterpiece. Even if you're just passing Den Haag on the train, it's worth hopping off to visit.

Highlights include *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Vermeer and *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* by Rembrandt. Note that some paintings are loaned occasionally.

### BINNENHOF

Adjoining the Mauritshuis, the Binnenhof (Inner Court; Map p198) is surrounded by parliamentary buildings that have long been at the heart of Dutch politics, though parliament now meets in a modern building on the south side.

The central courtyard looks sterile now but was once used for executions. A highlight of the complex is the 13th-century **Ridderzaal** (Knights' Hall). The Gothic dining hall has been carefully restored.

The North Wing is still home to the Upper Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, in 17th-century splendour. The Lower Chamber used to meet in the ballroom, in the 19th-century wing. It all looks a bit twee and you can see why the politicians were anxious to decamp to the sleek new extension nearby.

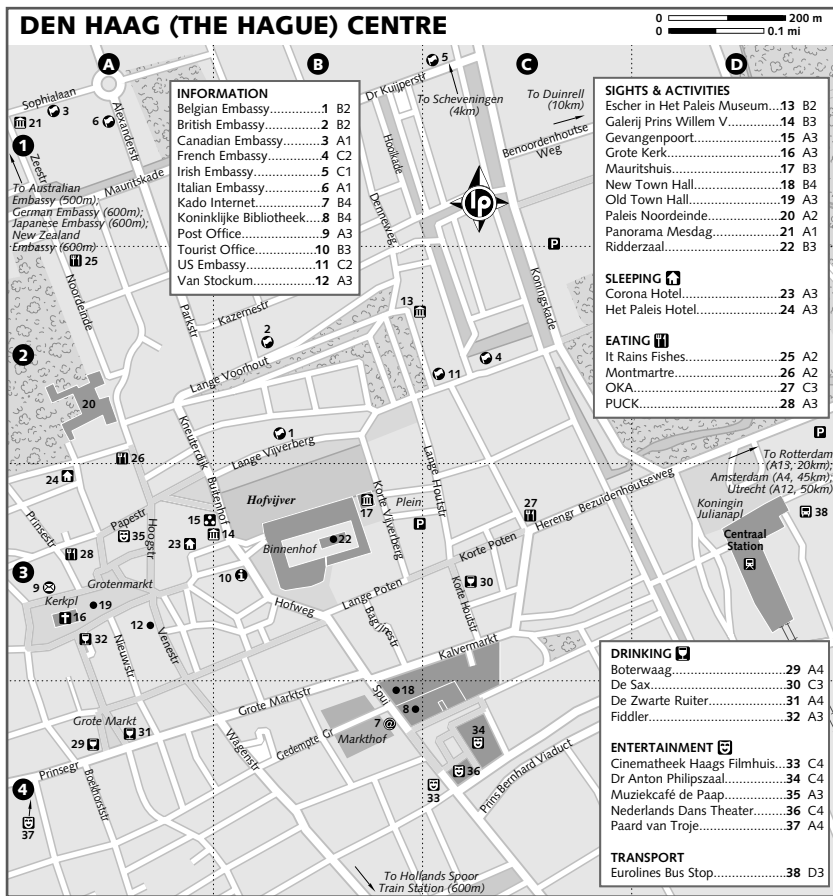
The best way to see the Binnenhof's buildings is on a one-hour tour, which leaves from the **visitors centre** (☎ 364 61 44; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat). Here you can see a model showing the hotchpotch of buildings that make up the Binnenhof, and you can learn about the turbulent past of the Low Countries, where invaders have flooded in more often than the waters.

After your walk, stroll around the Hofvijver, where the reflections of the Binnenhof and the Mauritshuis have inspired countless snapshots.

### DEN HAAG: OLD & NEW

Across the Hofvijver from the Binnenhof, the **Gevangenpoort** (Prison Gate; Map p198; ☎ 346 08 61; www.gevangenpoort.nl; Buitenhof 33; tour adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) is a surviving remnant of the 13th-century city fortifications. It has hourly tours showing how justice was dispensed back then.

Next door, the **Galerij Prins Willem V** (Map p198; ☎ 362 44 44; Buitenhof 35; adult/child €1.50/1; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun) was the first public museum in the Netherlands when it opened in 1773. It's been restored to its original appearance and the paintings are hung in the manner popular



in the 18th century; not a skerrick of wall is left bare.

The **Grote Kerk** (Map p198; ☎ 302 86 30; Rond de Grote Kerk 12), dating from 1450, has a fine pulpit that was constructed 100 years later. The neighbouring **1565 old town hall** (Map p198) is a splendid example of Dutch Renaissance architecture.

The huge **new town hall** (Map p198; Spui 170) is the hotly debated work by US architect Richard Meier. The 'official' nickname of the building is the 'white swan', but locals prefer the 'ice palace'. Even better are the local nicknames for two government buildings nearby; if allowed, take the elevator to the town hall's 11th floor and look at the complex that has two pointed towers at one end and a dome-

topped round tower at the other. The local moniker is 'the tits and penis'.

Names are more polite for the king's and queen's official quarters at **Paleis Noordeinde** (Map p198). The Renaissance formality of the structure bespeaks regal digs. It's not open to the public, and the strong gates ensure security in case the populace revolts for having their taxes spent on anatomically suggestive buildings.

#### ESCHER IN HET PALEIS MUSEUM

The Lange Voorhout Palace was once Queen Emma's residence. Now it's home to the work of Dutch graphic artist MC Escher. **Escher in het Paleis Museum** (Map p198; ☎ 338 11 20; www.escherinhetpaleis.nl; Lange Voorhout; adult/under 15yr €7.50/5;

☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a permanent exhibition featuring notes, letters, drafts, photos and fully mature works covering Escher's entire career, from his early realism to the later phantasmagoria. There are some imaginative displays, including a virtual reality reconstruction of Escher's impossible buildings and four-dimensional spatial dynamics, and an optical illusion photo booth, where you can take a picture of yourself as if you were actually in an Escher drawing.

#### GEMEENTEMUSEUM

Admirers of De Stijl, and in particular of Piet Mondrian, mustn't miss the Berlage-designed **Gemeentemuseum** (Map p196; Municipal Museum; ☎ 338 11 20; www.gemeentemuseum.nl; Stadhouderslaan 41; adult/under 18yr €8/free; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sat). It houses a large collection of works by neoplasticist artists and others from the late 19th century, as well as extensive exhibits of applied arts, costumes and musical instruments.

Mondrian's unfinished *Victory Boogie Woogie* takes pride of place (as it should: the museum paid €30 million for it), and there are also a few Picassos and other works by some of the better-known names of the 20th century. A great repository on a par with many others of similar size in the country, it's also home to a fabulous **Photography Museum**.

#### PANORAMA MESDAG

Just past the north end of Noordeinde, the **Panorama Mesdag** (Map p198; ☎ 364 45 44; www.panorama-mesdag.nl; Zeestraat 65; adult/child under 13yr €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun & holidays) contains the *Panorama* (1881), a huge 360-degree painting of Scheveningen that was painted by Hendrik Willem Mesdag. The panorama is viewed from a constructed dune, with real sand and beach chairs; birdsong and wave sounds are piped through. Mesdag's command of perspective and minute detail was masterly: it's a fully immersive experience.

#### VREDESPALEIS

The United Nations' International Court of Justice is housed in the **Vredespaleis** (Peace Palace; Map p196; ☎ 302 41 37; Carnegieplein 2; tours adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri). The grand building was donated by American steel maker Andrew Carnegie for use by the International Court of Arbitration, an early international body whose goal was the prevention of war. Sadly, WWI broke out one year after it opened in 1913.

There are hourly guided tours, but if the courts are in session these tours may be cancelled – check with the tourist office. You need to book ahead (security is strict). Take tram 7 from CS or tram 8 from HS.

#### MADURODAM

Complete with 1:25 scale versions of Schiphol, Amsterdam, windmills and tulips, Rotterdam harbour, and the Delta dikes, **Madurodam** (Map p196; ☎ 355 39 00; www.madurodam.nl; George Maduroplein 1; adult/child under 11yr €12.50/9; ☎ 9am-8pm) is a miniaturised Netherlands. It's an enlightening example of the Dutch tendency to put their world under a microscope (see p37).

Take tram 1 from CS, or tram 1 or 9 from HS.

#### SCHEVENINGEN

The long beach at **Scheveningen** (Map p196; www.scheveningen.nl) attracts nine million visitors per year. Crowds can get up close and personal when the weather gets warm, and the shopping strip gets crassly commercial, but the attraction of sea and sand keeps the peace. A palpable frisson of frivolity sweetens the air.

Escape the crowds by heading north along the beach past the end of the tram line. Here the dunes are more pristine and the further you walk or ride, the greater the rewards. You'll also pass a series of WWII bunkers, part of the Nazi Atlantic Wall defence system and an eerie reminder of the Netherlands' place in European history.

Here's another reminder, an oft-repeated story that relates how Dutch resistance fighters during WWII used 'Scheveningen' as a password. It seems that while the Germans could easily learn Dutch, for them the accent required to properly pronounce 'Scheveningen' was impossible to learn. Go on, give it a go: say s'CHay-fuh-ninger.

#### Tours

The tourist office offers a good bus tour; an 'Architecture Tour' using a specialist guide; and a great range of boat tours. Contact the office for times, as they change with demand.

**De Ooievaart** (www.ooievaart.nl; adult/3-12yr €8.95/4.95; ☎ departures 11am-4.45pm) also offers boat tours over four different 1½-hour routes, taking in Den Haag's most interesting sights at canal level.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Stayokay Den Haag** (Map p196; ☎ 315 78 88; www.stayokay.com/denhaag; Scheepmakerstraat 27; dm from €21) This branch of the Stayokay hostel chain has all the usual facilities including a bar, a restaurant, Internet and games. It's around 15 minutes' walk from Hollands Spoor station.

**Duinhorst** (☎ 324 22 70; www.duinhorst.nl; Buurtweg 135; camp site per tent €4.65; ☎ Apr-Sep) To get to this camp site; take bus 28 from HS or bus 29 from CS to the end of the line at Oude Waalsdorperweg and then walk about 1km west, or take a taxi.

### MIDRANGE

**Corona Hotel** (Map p198; ☎ 363 79 30; www.corona.nl; Buitenhof 39-42; r from €74) This pleasant hotel is across the way from the Binnenhof and has all the usual facilities and amenities, plus super-comfy rooms that come in a range of un-Dutchlike styles such as 'Colonial English'.

**Strandhotel** (Map p196; ☎ 354 01 93; www.strandhotel.demon.nl; Zeekant 111 & Gevers Deynootweg 1344, Scheveningen; s/d from €40/65) It's on the beach, and the rooms have an unreconstructed 1950s motif. Book ahead and keep an eye on the weather – prices soar in summer. Service can be perfunctory.

**Hotel Astoria** (Map p196; ☎ 384 04 01; Stationsweg 139; s/d €42/55) The rooms are small and a touch bleak (although they do have private facilities, which sweetens the deal).

### TOP END

**our pick** **Steigenberger Kurhaus Hotel** (Map p196; ☎ 416 26 36; www.kurhaus.nl; Gevers Deynootplein 30, Scheveningen; r from €275; ☎ ☎ ☎) At the top end of things and right on the beach. First built in 1885, this sumptuous, elegant building has been extended and restored several times. The noted thermal baths are there still, among a plethora of luxuries that includes a casino.

**Het Paleis Hotel** (Map p198; ☎ 362 46 21; www.paleishotel.nl; Molenstraat 26; s/d from €175/185) Near the Noordeinde and historic Den Haag, its location is atmospheric enough, and the antique trimmings in the room match all that superbly. The rooms are well equipped and very comfortable.

## Eating

Den Haag's gastronomic scene is fairly central and very good, with quality matched by variety. The cobbled streets off Denneweg are one of the livelier areas.

**It Rains Fishes** (Map p198; ☎ 365 25 98; www.itrainsfishes.nl; Noordeinde 123; mains €13-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) It's the 'restaurant on the sunny side of the street', a multi-award-winning seafood concern serving grilled, fried and poached fish, mussels and scallops.

**PUCK** (Pure Unique Californian Kitchen; Map p198; ☎ 427 76 49; www.puckfoodandwines.nl; Prinsestraat 33; mains €18-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) The restaurant's vibrant paint job is apparently a tribute to the owner's daughter's love of M&Ms, and that refreshing lack of attitude and formality carries over to the fusion menu. A case in point: pan-sautéed duck breast over oven-roasted fries, with Napa cabbage and maple syrup.

**Topkapi Sense Restaurant** (Map p196; ☎ 358 53 50; www.topkapi-scheveningen.nl; Gevers Deynootplein 36, Scheveningen; mains €11-22; ☎ lunch & dinner) An 'Ottoman' restaurant with cuisine from Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Morocco... The couscous with sea bass is a winner, as is the baked, stuffed zucchini. Ruby-red drapes and beads combine with low lighting to create a suitable atmosphere, although the guy in the corner playing cheesy tunes on his synthetic organ tempers it.

**OKA** (Map p198; ☎ 392 01 33; Herengracht 2-6; dishes €15-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This swish, authentic Japanese restaurant serves up delectable sushi and *teppanyaki*. The hostess, Ms JoJo Phang, is a bit of a personality – she says she can arrange on-site bachelor parties, ironing out all the details in a 'private talk tailored to that evening's party boy'.

**Montmartre** (Map p198; ☎ 365 64 54; Molenstraat 4C; snacks €4.30-12.50; ☎ lunch) This brasserie has décor that's a little bit lacy and a brunch menu that's very French: understated, yet refined, with lavish attention to detail. The baguettes are seriously pleasing, with all kinds of cheeses and extras like marinated eggplant.

## Drinking

**Kurzaal Bar** (Map p196; ☎ 416 26 36; Steigenberger Kurhaus Hotel, Gevers Deynootplein 30, Scheveningen) Even if you're not staying at the plush, 19th-century Kurhaus Hotel, it's worth popping in for a drink at its bar (but wear your best shoes). The Kurzaal's on the edge of a stunning dancehall/restaurant with period trimmings, painted ceiling, frescoes, chandeliers, huge potted plants, portholes, artworks, and photos of Jacques Brel, Bing Crosby... The Rolling Stones played their shortest-ever concert here – just three minutes, before rioting teenage girls took over.

**Boterwaag** (Map p198; ☎ 365 96 86; www.september.nl; Grote Markt 8A; ☎ lunch & dinner) This old weigh-house serves as a café-restaurant and provides a distinctive drinking and eating experience, with its high ceilings, large windows, candle fetish, nooks and crannies to hide out in, and great beer list. When we were here, a kooky kid was riding around inside on a unicycle and no-one batted an eyelid.

**De Zwarte Ruiter** (The Black Rider; Map p198; ☎ 364 95 49; www.september.nl; Grote Markt 27) The Rider faces off with the Boterwaag across the Markt like rival Kings of Cool. With its terrace and Deco mezzanine – light-filled, split-level and cavernous – it's like the interior of an abandoned theatre. This is a classic café, cool bar and casual meeting point all in one.

**De Sax** (Map p198; ☎ 346 67 55; Korte Houtstraat 14A) This little jazz bar, just off the Plein, is quite the chilled establishment. It has a good vibe, not the least of which is due to the cool music oozing from the sound system. Very dark, very cosy, very friendly.

**Fiddler** (Map p198; ☎ 365 19 55; www.fiddler.nl; Riviervismarkt 1) This large, split-level, wood-panelled English microbrewery always has a decent crowd snacking on the OK pub food and the Fiddler's own beers: an ale, a pale ale and a stout. In the end, it's probably a bit too cavernous – intimacy's hard to come by. Good location: in the eye of the Grote Kerk.

## Entertainment

**Nederlands Dans Theater** (Map p198; ☎ 880 01 00; www.ndt.nl; Schedeldoekshaven 60) This renowned dance company has gained worldwide fame since its formation in 1959. It was created by a group of dancers frustrated with the ossified creativity of the old Ballet of the Netherlands company. The group has three components: NDT1, the main troupe of 32 dancers; NDT2, a small group of 12 dancers under 21; and NDT3, a group of dancers over 40 who perform more dramatic works.

**Paard van Troje** (Map p198; ☎ 750 34 34; www.paard.nl; Prinsegracht 12) This emporium has club nights and live music, as well as a café. The programming's eclectic: everything from booty-shaking drum'n'bass DJs to bowel-destroying sonic maniacs The Hafler Trio.

**Muziekcafé de Paap** (Map p198; ☎ 365 20 02; www.depaap.nl; Papestraat 32) Den Haag's best place for live music, and just a great, versatile nightspot. It's atmospheric, and has a fab restaurant and bar where you can kick off early. It's a young-

ish, cool crowd, but really geared to anyone who's into music.

Other options:

**Cinematheek Haags Filmhuis** (Map p198; ☎ 365 60 30; www.filmhuisdenhaag.nl; Spui 191) Screens foreign and art movies.

**Dr Anton Philipszaal** (Map p198; ☎ 360 98 10; www.dapz.ltd.nl; Spui 150) Home to the Residentie Orkest, Den Haag's classical symphony orchestra.

## Shopping

There are several good streets for galleries, antiques and interesting boutiques; try Denneweg, Noordeinde – which also has some great restaurants and bars – and Molenstraat.

## Getting There & Away

Den Haag has two main train stations. CS – a terminus – is close to the centre. It has the usual amenities and is a hub for local trams and buses.

HS is about 1km south of the centre and is on the main railway line between Amsterdam and Rotterdam and the south. Thalys high-speed trains to/from Paris stop here, as do many other through-services. HS also has all the usual services.

## BUS

Eurolines long-distance buses stop on the east side of CS. Regional buses depart from the bus station above the tracks at CS.

## TRAIN

Sample train services:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	9.50	50	4
Leiden	2.80	13	4
Rotterdam	4.10	22	4
Utrecht	9.10	40	4

## Getting Around

Most tram routes converge on CS, at the tram and bus station above the tracks. A number of routes also serve HS, including the jack-of-all-trades tram 1, which starts in Scheveningen and runs all the way to Delft, passing the centre of Den Haag and CS along the way. Trams 1, 8 and 9 link Scheveningen with Den Haag; the fare is three strips. The last tram runs in either direction at about 1.30am.

Call **ATC Taxi** (☎ 317 8877) for a cab. You can hail any available taxi, if you can find one.

The **bicycle shop** (☎ 385 32 35) in CS is under the terminal. The **HS bicycle shop** (☎ 389 08 30) is at the southern end of that station. Both shops rent out bikes.

## GOUDA

☎ 0182 / pop 71,797

Gouda's association with cheesy comestibles has made it famous – the town's namesake fermented curd is among the Netherlands' best-known exports. But Gouda, the town, has a bit more to it than that.

Gouda enjoyed economic success and decline in the same manner as the rest of Holland from the 16th century onwards. Its cheese has brought recent wealth, as has the country's largest candle factory, which stays busy supplying all those Dutch brown cafés. The acclaimed 16th-century stained-glass windows in its church are a highlight.

Gouda makes an ideal day trip, easily accessible from any city in Zuid Holland. The compact centre is entirely ringed by canals and is less than five minutes' walk from the station. The large central square, the Markt, is the focus of the town.

## Information

**Post office** (☎ 52 21 00; Westhaven 37; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1.30pm Sat) South of the Markt.

**Tourist office** (☎ 090046832888; www.vvvgouda.nl; Markt 27; ☎ 1-5.30pm Mon, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat)

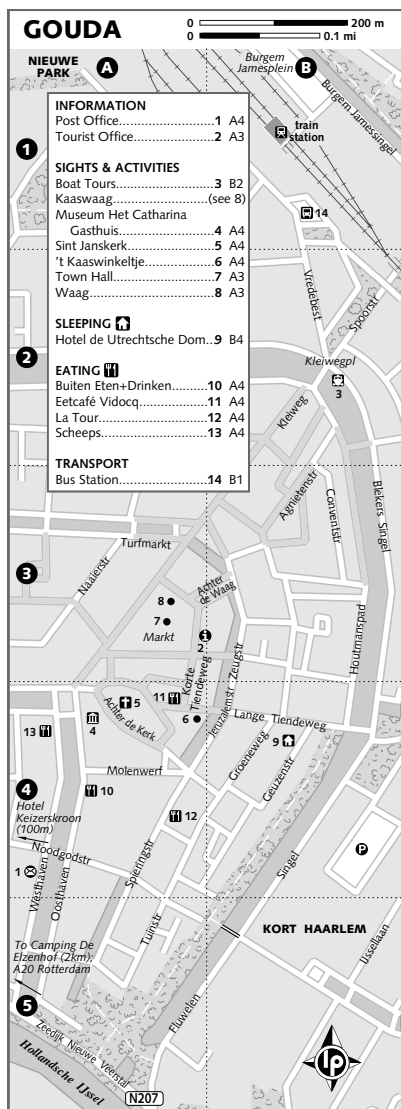
## Sights

Most of the notable sights are within 10 minutes' walk of the strangely enormous Markt.

## MARKT

The central Markt is one of the largest such squares in the Netherlands. Right in the middle is the mid-15th-century **town hall**. Constructed from shimmering sandstone, this regal Gothic structure bespeaks the wealth Gouda enjoyed from the cloth trade when it was built. The red-and-white shutters provide a fine counterpoint to the carefully maintained stonework.

On the north side of the Markt, you can't miss the **Waag**, a former cheese-weighing house built in 1668. If you have any doubt about its use, check out the reliefs carved into the side showing the cheese being weighed. It houses the **Kaaswaag** (☎ 52 99 96; adult/child €2.50/1;



☎ 1-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), a museum that follows the history of the cheese trade in the Netherlands, especially its history in Gouda.

## SINT JANSKERK & AROUND

Just to the south of the Markt is **Sint Janskerk** (☎ 51 26 84; Achter de Kerk; adult/child €2.50/1.75; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat Mar-Nov, 9am-5pm Dec-Feb). The church

itself had chequered beginnings: it burned down with ungodly regularity every 100 years or so from 1361 until the mid-16th century, when what you see today was completed.

Architecturally, Sint Janskerk is an attractive late-Gothic church in need of a better steeple, but its huge windows set it apart, especially those created by Dirck Crabeth, his brother Wouter, and Lambert van Noort from around 1550 to 1570. Their works, which are numbered, include highlights such as window No 6 (John the Baptist; the folks on either side paid for the window) and No 22 (Jesus purifies the temple; note the look on the face of the moneychanger).

To the immediate southwest of the church, near a small canal, the **Museum het Catharina Gasthuis** (☎ 58 84 40; Oosthaven 10; adult/child €2.50/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), housed in an old hospital, covers Gouda's history and has a few artworks.

## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Wandering the streets away from the Markt is rewarding, especially Lange Tiendeweg and Zeugstraat with its tiny canal and even tinier bridges. To prove that Gouda cheese really isn't bland, visit **'t Kaaswinkeltje** (☎ 51 42 69; www.kaaswinkeltje.com; Lange Tiendeweg 30). This cheese shop is filled with fabulous smells and it's here that you can sample some of the aged Goudas that the Dutch wisely keep for themselves. The older the cheese, the sharper the flavour, and some of the very old Goudas have a Parmesan-like texture and a rich, smoky taste. With a little mustard smeared on, a hunk of this cheese is great with beer.

## Tours

In July and August there are two daily boat trips (€6, three hours) through the canals around Gouda to the nearby Reeuwijk lake district. Contact the tourist office for details.

## Festivals & Events

Once upon a time, the Gouda cheese market was the real thing, as the Waag will attest. But the days when more than 1000 dairymen and cheese makers would assemble in the Markt for a raucous day of buying, selling and trading are long past. Now hundreds of tour buses assemble every Thursday morning from June to August for an orgy of buying, selling and very little trading. A few men dress up in traditional costume and go through the motions.

## Sleeping

Given that Gouda is such a natural day trip, you might not think of staying here, but you may just appreciate its somnolent charms after dark. The tourist office has a list of a few private rooms it will book for a small fee. These rooms usually cost €20 to €30 per person.

**Camping De Elzenhof** (☎ 52 44 56; Broekweg 6; camp sites from €10) This camp site is a 45-minute haul from town – you have to detour around canals and waterways and there's no bus. Go south from the centre of Gouda, cross the Julianasluis bridge and follow the signs.

**Hotel de Utrechtsche Dom** (☎ 52 88 33; www.hotelgouda.nl; Geuzenstraat 6; s/d from €57/75) Neat, clean and on a quiet street, this is a lovely, low-key place to stay, with good amenities. There're a big, spacious breakfast room and hospitable managers – what more could you ask for?

**Hotel Keizerskroon** (☎ 52 80 96; www.hotelkeizerskroon.nl; Keizerstraat 11-13; s/d from €62/72) This one's centrally located, and is homely, cosy, comfortable, warm, welcoming and friendly. Choose from a range of suites, ranging from 'standard' to 'luxury'. Oh, and there's an on-site bar and restaurant.

## Eating & Drinking

**Buiten Eten+Drinken** (☎ 52 48 84; www.buiteneteneten.com; Oosthaven 23A; 3-course menu from €26; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) Buiten has perhaps the best view of Gouda's restaurants, overlooking the pretty canal that rings this town. The global menu delivers, too – French, Asian and Mediterranean palates combining with a good vegetarian selection. Inside, there's a fireplace and seasonal art on the ceilings and walls, and it's all very inviting.

**Scheeps** (☎ 51 75 72; www.restaurantscheeps.nl; Westhaven 4; mains €17-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) A considered body of local opinion states that Scheeps is Gouda's best restaurant. That may be, considering the fine choice of fish and local specialities on offer (vegetarians haven't been forgotten, either). In summer, dine outside in the lovely garden.

**La Tour** (☎ 52 47 17; www.la-tour.nl; Spieringstraat 101; mains €17-22; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) This intimate, relaxed place draws on French and Italian influences for its delectable menu. You could do much worse than sample the furnace-baked cod fish, or indeed the tournedoups from Madagascar peppers.



**Eetcafé Vidocq** (☎ 52 28 19; www.eetcafevidocq.nl; Koster Gijzensteeg 5-8; mains €16-20; ☺ lunch & dinner) This Gouda classic café has been around for ages. Menu items on offer might include tournedos, cordon bleu rib-eye steak and chilli salmon trout covered with bread-crumbs.

### Getting There & Around

Gouda's train station is close to the centre and all you'll need are your feet for local transport. The lockers are in the tunnel under the tracks. Sample fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	9.40	80	2
Den Haag	4.80	19	4
Rotterdam	4.30	19	3
Utrecht	5.30	22	2

The bus station is immediately to the left as you exit the train station on the Centrum side. The one bus of interest here is the 180 to Oudewater (p188).

There are large car parks for your car or motorcycle on the town's periphery. Gouda is near the A12 motorway between Den Haag and Utrecht and the A20 to Rotterdam.

The **bicycle shop** (☎ 51 97 51) is in the train station.

### DELFT

☎ 015 / pop 94,486

Ah, lovely Delft: compact, charming, relaxed. It's a very popular tourist destination – day-trippers (and lovers of beauty and refinement) clamour to stroll Delft's narrow, canal-lined streets, gazing at the remarkable old buildings and meditating on the life and career of Golden Age painter Johannes Vermeer. The artist was born in Delft and lived here – *View of Delft*, one of his best-loved works, is an enigmatic, nonrealist vision of the town. Delft is also famous for its 'delftware', the distinctive blue-and-white pottery originally duplicated from Chinese porcelain by 17th-century artisans.

Delft was founded around 1100 and grew rich from weaving and trade in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the 15th century a canal was dug to the Maas River, and the small port there, Delfshaven, was eventually absorbed by Rotterdam.

### Orientation

The train station and neighbouring bus station are a 10-minute stroll south of the central Markt.

### Information

**Boekhandel Huyser** (☎ 212 38 20; Choorstraat 12-14) Good travel section and lots of English-language books.

**Library** (☎ 212 34 50; Kruisstraat 71; internet per hr €3; ☺ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat)

**Post office** (☎ 212 45 11; Hippolytusbuurt 14; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 09005151555; www.delft.nl; Hippolytusbuurt 4; ☺ 11am-4pm Mon, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Free internet access.

### Sights & Activities

Delft is best seen on foot: almost all the interesting sights lie within a 1km radius of the Markt.

### DELFTWARE

The town's ubiquitous blue-and-white china is almost a cliché. Given that the process was first developed in China, it's ironic that the mass of fake delftware sold in tourist shops also comes from China. The real stuff is produced in fairly small quantities at four factories in and around Delft. There are three places where you can actually see the artists at work.

The most central and modest outfit is the **Aardewerkatelier de Candelaer** (☎ 213 18 48; www.candelaer.nl; Kerkstraat 13; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat & 9am-5pm Sun Mar-Oct), just off the Markt. It has five artists, a few of whom work most days. When it's quiet they'll give you a detailed tour of the manufacturing process.

The other two locations, outside the town centre, are basically factories. **De Delftse Pauw** (The Delft Peacock; ☎ 212 49 20; www.delftsepauw.com; Delftweg 133; ☺ 9am-4.30pm) is the smaller of the two, employing 35 painters who work mainly from home. It has daily tours, but you won't see the painters on weekends. Take tram 1 to Vrijenbanselaan.

**Royal Delft** (☎ 251 20 30; Rotterdamseweg 196; ☺ 9.30am-5pm daily Apr-Oct, closed Sun Nov-Mar) is the only original factory operating since the 1650s. Bus 63 from the train station stops nearby at Jaffalaan, or it's a 25-minute walk from the town centre.

The **Museum Lambert van Meerten** (☎ 260 23 58; Oude Delft 199; adult/child €5/4; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) has a fine collection of porcelain tiles and delftware dating back to the 16th century.

## DELFT

0 200 m  
0 0.1 mi

To Delftse Hout camping

To De Delftse Pauw

To Royal Delft

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## CHURCHES

The 14th-century **Nieuwe Kerk** (☎ 212 30 25; www.nieuwekerk-delft.nl; Markt; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Apr, closed Sun) houses the crypt of the Dutch royal family and the mausoleum of Willem the Silent. There are exhibitions about the House of Orange and the church.

The fee includes entrance to the Gothic **Oude Kerk** (☎ 212 30 15; www.oudekerk-delft.nl; Heilige Geestkerkhof; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Mar, closed Sun) – and vice versa. The latter, 800 years old, is a surreal sight: its tower leans 2m from the vertical. One of the tombs inside is Vermeer's.

## MUSEUMS

Opposite the Oude Kerk is the **Municipal Museum het Prinsenhof** (☎ 260 23 58; www.prinsenhof-delft.nl; St Agathaplein 1; adult/child under 16yr €5/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), a former convent where Willem the Silent was assassinated in 1584 (the bullet hole in the wall is covered in Perspex to protect it from inquisitive visitors). The museum displays various objects telling the story of the 80-year war with Spain, as well as 17th-century paintings.

The **Legermuseum** (☎ 215 05 00; www.legermuseum.nl; Korte Geer 1; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) has a collection of old Dutch military hardware displayed in a restored 17th-century arsenal. There are also

exhibits on the modern Dutch army, including the controversial and disastrous role it played as part of the Bosnian peacekeeping force during the 1990s.

## OLD DELFT

Much of the town dates from the 17th century and is remarkably well preserved. Before you leave the crowded Markt, note the **town hall**, with its unusual combination of Renaissance construction surrounding a 13th-century tower. Behind it, the **Waag** is a 1644 weigh-house.

East of here, **Beestenmarkt** is a large open space surrounded by fine buildings. Further east, **Oostpoort** is the sole surviving piece of the town's walls. **Koornmarkt**, leading south from the Waag, is a quiet and tree-lined canal.

## Tours

One of the best ways to see Delft is by a boat tour on the canals. Visit the tourist office for more details.

## Sleeping

Note that in summer Delft's accommodation is heavily booked. Reserve well ahead, or visit the town as a day trip.

## BUDGET

**Delftse Hout** (☎ 213 00 40; Korftlaan 5; camp sites incl 2 people, car, tent, caravan or motor home from €20) This

camping ground is just northeast of town. Take bus 64 from the station.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel de Plataan** (☎ 212 60 46; www.hoteldeplataan.nl; Doelenplein 10; s/d €88/99) Delft's finest accommodation is on a delightful square, and features an ace café and a downright dignified breakfast room. Standard rooms are small but elegant. Then there are the wonderfully opulent theme rooms, which come on like a Japanese love hotel: there's the 'Garden of Eden'; the 'Amber', based on Eastern stylings; or the jaw-dropping 'Tamarinde', themed after a desert island.

**Hotel De Emauspoort** (☎ 219 02 19; www.emauspoort.nl; Vrouwenregt 9-11; s/d €80/90, s/d caravan €75/85) Comfy, old-style rooms, plus two attentively restored gypsy caravans out the back (named 'Pipo de Clown' and 'Mammaloe'). Delightful. Big fat bonus: the bakery-confectionery store next door provides the big fat breakfast.

Other options:

**Hotel de Kok** (☎ 212 21 25; www.hoteldekok.nl; Houttuinen 15; s/d from €66/80) Simple rooms but very conveniently located, near the train station, with a sweet garden terrace.

**Hotel de Koophandel** (☎ 214 23 02; www.hoteldekoophandel.nl; Beestenmarkt 30; s/d from €78/91) A little bland, but spotlessly clean.

## TOP END

**Hotel-Restaurant Johannes Vermeer** (☎ 212 64 66; www.hotelvermeer.nl; Molslaan 18; s/d €112/125) This one's an ersatz Vermeer museum, its rooms decorated with Vermeer prints. To be honest, it's a bit tacky, although there are immaculate views of old Delft (canals, churches and street scenes on all sides). The restaurant features rare kettles hanging from the roof and reproductions of all of Vermeer's known works, including a wall-length *Girl with a Pearl Earring* surrounded by exposed brickwork.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

**Artusi** (☎ 212 03 54; www.restaurant-artusi.nl; Voorstraat 20A; mains €18-22; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) It's a bar as well as a restaurant, and Italian dishes are the name of the game. It's a stylish place, but not too snobby. Thank God for that. All the usual Italian faves are here, plus ramped up, out-of-left-field goodies like duck udder with olives and balsamic sauce.

**Stadys Koffyhuys** (☎ 212 46 25; www.stadys-koffyhuys.nl; Oude Delft 133; pancakes €7-10) This warm and friendly café has a real ace in the hole: a terrace barge moored out front, where you can take your coffee and eat your delicious sandwiches and pancakes while admiring possibly the best view in Delft – the Oude Kerk, just ahead at the end of the canal.

Other options:

**Abessinië** (☎ 213 52 60; Kromstraat 21; mains €10-17; ☎ dinner) West African cuisine with starchy tubers, meats and pulses combined with spices, sauces and herbs.

**De Zaag en De Vries** (☎ 213 70 15; Vrouw Julianend 17; mains €18; ☎ dinner, closed Mon) Great food in a cheery orange place with a long vegetarian menu.

**De Zeven Zonden** (The Seven Sins; ☎ 215 86 89; www.dezevenzonden.nl; Oude Delft 78; mains €17; ☎ dinner) Unique, offbeat and cosy – try the kangaroo dish cooked French-provincial style.

## CAFÉS

**Vlaanderen** (☎ 213 33 11; Beestenmarkt 16; mains €18-21; ☎ lunch & dinner) This café-restaurant has a Flemish name but a French-inspired menu. It's good for people-watching, too, with its convivial terrace. Baked and smoked diamond hare gives you an idea of the dishes on offer.

**Etectaf De Ruif** (☎ 214 22 06; www.ruif.nl; Kerkstraat 22; mains €12-16; ☎ lunch & dinner) Wonderfully rustic, with a low ceiling, canal views and yummolunches, like goat-cheese salads and Stellendam shrimps (seafood that's apparently very highly prized round these here parts). At night it's busier, morphing into an exceedingly popular carousing option.

## Drinking

**Locus Publicus** (☎ 213 46 32; Brabantse Turfmarkt 67) With more than 200 beers, it's one of the best beer cafés around. It's also friendly, with good music and warm vibes.

**Café 't Proeflokaal** (☎ 212 49 22; Gasthuislaan 36-40) Here there are 300 beers to choose from. Service is friendly and attentive.

## Entertainment

**Bebop Jazzcafé** (☎ 213 52 10; Kromstraat 33) Dark and small, with moody music and a great selection of beers.

**OJV de Koornbeurs** (☎ 212 47 42; www.koornbeurs.nl; Voldersgracht 1) An underground dance floor with alternative tunes.

**Filmhuis Lumen** (☎ 214 02 26; www.filmhuis-lumen.nl; Doelenplein 5) Screens alternative films.

## VERMEER'S DELFT

Johannes Vermeer, one of the greatest of the Dutch old masters, lived his entire life in Delft (1632–75), fathering 11 children and leaving behind just 35 incredible paintings. Vermeer's works have rich and meticulous colouring and he captures light as few other painters have ever managed. His scenes come from everyday life in Delft, his interiors capturing simple things such as the famous *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, giving a proto-cinematographic quality to his compositions.

Vermeer's best-known exterior work, *View of Delft*, brilliantly captures the play of light and shadow of a partly cloudy day. Visit the location where he painted it, across the canal at Hooikade, southeast of the train station. Unfortunately, none of Vermeer's works remain in Delft. The two works mentioned above can be seen at the Mauritshuis in Den Haag (p197), while arguably his most famous painting, *The Milkmaid*, spends most of its time in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum (p106).

Vermeer has become a media darling of late. In 2003 the film *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (based on Tracy Chevalier's novel) speculated on his relationship with the eponymous girl.

The following year, a work long thought to be a forgery was finally confirmed as authentic – *Young Woman Seated at the Virginals* was the first Vermeer to be auctioned in more than 80 years, selling to an anonymous buyer for €24 million.

Watch out for the opening of the **Vermeercentrum** (☎ 213 85 88; www.vermeerdelft.nl; Voldersgracht 21; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), which promises to offer 'a fascinating voyage of discovery through the life and work of Johannes Vermeer' – at the time of research, opening day was set for sometime in April 2007. As the publicity bellows, 'Experience life in 17th-century Delft. Experience his studio, and get to know his work'.

## Getting There & Around

Sample train service fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	10.80	50	2
Den Haag	2.20	8	2
Rotterdam	2.90	13	4

Lockers are in the train station's main concourse and there are all the usual amenities.

Alternatively, bus 129 makes the run to/from Rotterdam every hour along a pretty canal. The ride lasts 30 minutes and takes five strips. Buses depart from the front of the station.

Den Haag is also linked to Delft by tram 1, which takes 30 minutes and costs five strips.

The bicycle shop is in the train station.

## ROTTERDAM

☎ 010 / pop 605,000

Rotterdam, the Netherlands' 'second city', was bombed flat during WWII and spent the following decades rebuilding. You won't find the classic Dutch medieval centre here – it was swept away along with the other rubble and detritus of war. In its place is an architectural aesthetic that's unique in Europe, a progressive perpetual-motion approach to construction that's clearly a result of the city's postwar, postmodern 'anything goes' philosophy.

But tradition is strong elsewhere, for Rotterdam is Europe's busiest port (and second in the world) – a lineage as a shipping nexus that dates back to 1572, when Spaniards being pursued by the rebel Sea Beggars were given shelter in the harbour. Rotterdam became a major port during the conflict, and it remains so to this day.

Rotterdam has a crackling energy, with superb nightlife, a multicultural community, a gritty arts scene, and a clutch of excellent museums. It also has a long-standing rivalry with Amsterdam, reflected in most aspects of culture. When local football team, Feyenoord, meets Ajax of Amsterdam, the fur *always* flies. And when Rotterdam unleashed its extreme form of techno, gabber, on the world in the early '90s, one of its most enduring targets was Amsterdam: an early gabber single was memorably titled 'Amsterdam, Waar Lech Dat Dan?' ('Amsterdam, Where the F\*\*\* is That?').

## Orientation

Rotterdam, split by the Nieuwe Maas shipping channel, is crossed by a series of tunnels and bridges, notably the Erasmusbrug. The centre is on the northern side of the water, and new neighbourhoods are rising to the south. From Centraal Station (CS), a 15-minute walk along the canal-like ponds leads to the waterfront. The commercial centre is to the east and most museums are to the west. The historic neighbourhood of Delfshaven is a further 3km west.

## Information

### DISCOUNT CARD

The Rotterdam Card offers discounts in hotels and restaurants; it's €22.46/43.11 for 24/72 hours. The card is even available as a watch. Buy it from the tourist office.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**EasyInternetCafé** (Map p212; www.easyeverything.com/map/rot; Stadhuisplein 16-18; internet per hr €3; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun)

### LIBRARIES

**Centrale Bibliotheek** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 281 61 14; Hoogstraat 110; internet per hr €3; ☎ 1-8pm Mon, 10am-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) An attraction in itself, with a café, an indoor life-sized chessboard and internet access.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

For a doctor, call ☎ 420 11 00.

**Erasmus MC** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 463 92 22; 's-Gravendijkwal 320) Major teaching hospital.

### POST

**Post office** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 233 02 55; Coolsingel 42; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 8.30pm Thu, 9.30am-3pm Sat)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (Map p212; ☎ 271 01 28; www.rotterdam.info; Coolsingel 5; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun) Free internet access.

**Use-It** (Map p212; ☎ 240 91 58; www.use-it.nl; Schaatsbaan 41-45; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-May–mid-Sep, to 5pm Tue-Sat mid-Sep–mid-May) Aimed at young travellers but suitable for anyone who wants information that's more engaging than that from the po-faced official tourist body. Also books accommodation with substantial discounts.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Note that the area about 1km west of CS is the scene of many hard-drug deals and accompanying dubious behaviour.

Bike theft, as in any Dutch city with a significant junkie population, is rampant.

## Sights & Activities

Rotterdam is easy to navigate, with so many memorable buildings and landmarks with which to orientate yourself. The centre is also a lot smaller than it seems for such a bustling metropolis – you might never need to use the efficient public transport. The best way to see it is by bike, though be alert – both bike theft and car use are higher in Rotterdam than in cities of similar size. Many galleries are concentrated around Museumpark.

### MUSEUM BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN

Among Europe's very finest museums, the **Museum Boijmans van Beuningen** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 441 94 00; www.boijmans.nl; Museumpark 18-20; adult/under 18yr €8/free; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a permanent collection spanning all eras of Dutch and European art, including superb old masters. Among the highlights are *The Marriage at Cana* by Hieronymus Bosch, the *Three Marias at the Open Sepulchre* by Van Eyck, the minutely detailed *Tower of Babel* by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, and *Portrait of Titus* and *Man in a Red Cap* by Rembrandt. Renaissance Italy is well represented; look for *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* by Tintoretto and *Satyr and Nymph* by Titian.

Paintings and sculpture since the mid-19th century are another strength. There are many Monets and other French impressionists; Van Gogh and Gauguin are given space; and there are statues by Degas. The museum rightly prides itself on its collection by a group it calls 'the other surrealists' including Marcel Duchamp, René Magritte and Man Ray. Salvador Dalí gained a special room in the recent expansion and the collection is one of the largest of his work outside Spain and France. All in all, the surrealist wing is utterly absorbing, with ephemera and paraphernalia rubbing against famous works.

Modern modes are not forgotten, and the whole place is nothing if not eclectic: a nude or an old master might be nestled next to a '70s bubble TV – some kind of installation – or a vibrating table.

There's also a good café, a pleasant sculpture garden (featuring Claes Oldenburg's famous *Bent Screw*, among others), a library with more than 125,000 reference books, and wheelchair access/assistance throughout.

Even the traditional 'museum floor plan' is abetted by an innovation the curators call 'The Data Cloud'. It's a three-D interactive multimedia map on the entrance floor that is a brilliant work of design in itself – it allows visitors to find instantly, via a 'holographic projection portal', the location of (and information about) any item in the museum's 120,000 piece collection.

### KUNSTHAL

At the south end of Museumpark, the **Kunsthall** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 440 03 00; www.kunsthall.nl; Westzeedijk 341; adult/under 18yr €8.50/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun & holidays) hosts around 20 temporary exhibitions (including art and design) each year. As the publicity says, everything from 'elitist to popular' gets an airing.

### EUROMAST

At 185m, a shimmy up the **Euromast** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 48 11; www.euromast.com; Parkhaven 20; adult/under 11yr €8/5.20; ☎ 9.30am-11pm Apr-Sep, 10am-11pm Oct-Mar) is a must. It offers unparalleled 360-degree views of Rotterdam, with its rotating, glass-walled 'Euroscope' contraption ascending to near the summit. There is a luxury accommodation suite and the Panorama restaurant (p216) near the top. Book an abseiling session (€39.50).

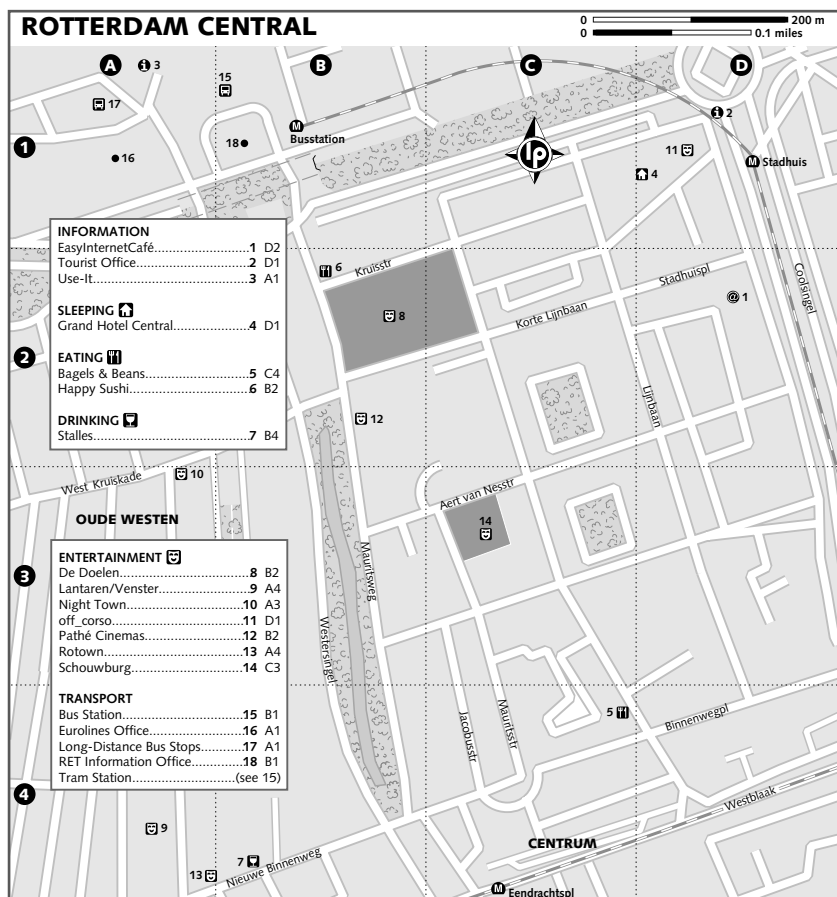
### DELFSHAVEN

One of Rotterdam's few districts to survive the war, Delfshaven was once the official seaport for the city of Delft. A reconstructed 18th-century **windmill** overlooks the water at Voorhaven 210. One of the area's claims to fame is that it was where the Pilgrims left Holland for America aboard the *Speedwell*. They could barely keep the leaky boat afloat and, in England, eventually transferred to the *Mayflower* – the rest is history. The **Oude Kerk** on Voorhaven is where the Pilgrims prayed for the last time before leaving on 22 July 1620.

Just south, **De Dubbelde Palmboom** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 476 15 33; www.hmr.rotterdam.nl; Voorhaven 12; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun & holidays) is a history museum housing an excellent collection of items relating to Rotterdam's history as a port. Displays are spread throughout the 1826 warehouse, and many have a sociological bent.

Delfshaven is easily reached from the metro stop of the same name by walking 1km east or by taking tram 4, 6 or 9.





through overview of Dutch architecture. Exhibitions are revelatory, and a recent multimedia presentation devoted to utopian genius Hendrik Wijdeveld was mind-expanding. The NAI is a worthy monument in a city that celebrates built space like no other in the land.

Included in the admission price is a ticket to **Huis Sonneveld** (Map pp210-11; Jongkindstraat25), designed by Brinkman and Van der Vlugt and an outstanding example of the Dutch New Building architectural strain (also known as Dutch functionalism). This 1933 villa has been lovingly restored, with furniture, wallpaper and fixtures present and correct – it is an astonishing experience, almost like virtual reality.

The design and aesthetic seems thoroughly current today; during the '30s it must have seemed the ultimate in futurism, making full use of light and space, and filled with tubular-steel furniture and tech gizmos – including no fewer than 12 telephones, considered the height of modern life at the time.

#### OTHER SIGHTS

**Maritiem Museum Rotterdam** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 413 26 80; www.maritiemmuseum.nl; Leuvehaven 1; adult/4-16yr €5/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat & 11am-5pm Sun year-round, 10am-5pm Mon Jul & Aug) is a comprehensive museum that looks at the Netherlands' rich maritime traditions. There's an array of models that any youngster would love to take into the tub, plus more interesting and explanatory displays.

Near here, on Schiedamsedijk, is the **Rotterdam Walk of Fame** (Map pp210-11), featuring handprints from luminaries including Bryan Adams, Bryan Ferry, Dizzy Gillespie, 'Diamond' David Lee Roth, Kamahl, Roxette, Willie Nelson – and even Spandau Ballet (the Netherlands being perhaps the only country in the world that still remembers who they are).

The **Oude Haven** area, near the Blaak train, metro and tram station, preserves the oldest part of the harbour, some of which dates from the 14th century. It's a decent place for a stroll, especially if you take time to look at the large collection of historic boats.

The **Openlucht Binnenvaart Museum** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 411 88 67; Koningsdam 1; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm) has a collection of historic inland waterway boats that fills much of the basin. You can see the ongoing restoration and can stroll around looking at the boats, even outside the official opening hours.

The city's history is preserved at one of the centre's few surviving 17th-century buildings, at the **Historisch Museum het Schielandhuis** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 217 67 67; www.hmr.rotterdam.nl; Korte Hoogstraat 31; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun). Exhibits focus on everyday life through the ages, such as the (purportedly) oldest surviving wooden shoe. Clogs ahoy!

The **Nederlands Fotomuseum** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 213 20 11; www.nederlandsfotomuseum.nl; Witte de Withstraat 63; adult/child €3.50/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a fabulous photo museum that's also an archive and information centre for photographers. Its activities were recently bolstered by a bequest from one H Weertheim, who wanted to 'further the interests of photography in the Netherlands'. Note that the museum is moving to Wilhelminakade 66 in 2007.

Nearby, the **Wereldmuseum** (World Museum; Map pp210-11; ☎ 270 71 72; www.wereldmuseum.rotterdam.nl; Willemskade 25; adult/child €8/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat) is dedicated to providing a user-friendly repository of multiculturalism for people to use to better understand each other. It's wonderfully apt that it's in a polyglot port like Rotterdam. The building is dominated by a huge sculpture of a stylised woman by artist Nikki de Saint Phalle. Enter through the statue's legs.

On the south side of the Koningshaven, in the middle of an old dock district being reborn as a trendy neighbourhood, there is a solemn reminder of the recent past. A fragment of a **wall** has been preserved here – the wall once surrounded a warehouse that, during WWII,

was the departure point for Jews being sent first to Westerbork and then on to concentration camps.

#### Walking Tour

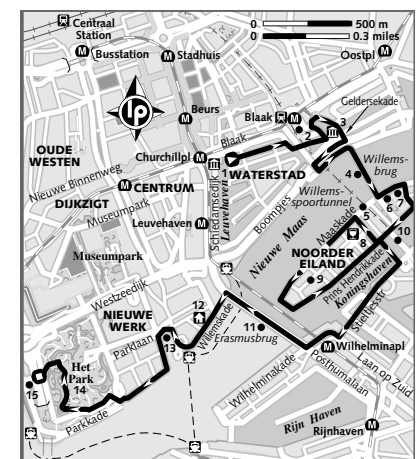
Start at the **Maritiem Museum Rotterdam** (1; opposite) for a maritime history lesson, before making your way to **Oude Haven** (2; left) for real-world aquatic nostalgia.

View the vessels on display at the **Openlucht Binnenvaart Museum** (3; left), then cross the **Willemsbrug** (4; p211), drinking in the superb views over the river, before emerging on the other side in **Noordereiland** (5), a residential island that has been styled as the MS *Noordereiland*, a 'ship on the Maas', by artist Joe Cillen, with its 3000 'sailors' (residents). To the left is **De Brug** (6), an apartment block with Cillen-constructed starboard lights on the roof (green and red).

Walk towards Noordereiland's eastern tip, where you'll find the ship's **engine room** (7) – an alleyway behind the Aldi supermarket that's been decorated with mechanical sculptures by local artists and kids. Backtrack and walk west along Maaskade, admiring more watery views before stopping in at the maritime-themed pub also named **Willemsbrug** (8; p217). Here

#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Maritiem Museum Rotterdam  
**Finish** Euromast  
**Duration** Three hours



you can have a beer and a sea-dog sing-along with the feisty locals.

Emerging from the cigar smoke, walk through the 'ship's' **cargo holds (9)**, actually the streets and alleys bisecting the island, before making your way across the Koninginnebrug. Look to the left as you cross the water: **De Hef (10)** is a magnificent railway bridge from the 1920s that's been preserved as a National Monument, its drawbridge permanently raised high in the air.

Walk west along Stieltjesstraat, before crossing the incredible **Erasmusbrug (11; p211)**. Back on the Maas' northern side, walk west along Willemskade, past the **Maritime Hotel Rotterdam (12; opposite)**, where sailors like to sleep, before pausing at **Veerhaven (13)**, a little inlet where numerous boats and yachts are docked. Look back towards the Erasmusbrug and marvel at how the bridge's struts in the background blend in with the sails and masts in the foreground – a thoroughly shiplike bridge for a maritime city *par excellence*.

Continue on down Westerkade, then Parkkade, passing the government boats anchored in the harbour, before walking through the beautiful, and surprisingly green, **Het Park (14)** to the **Euromast (15; p209)**. Once there, travel to the summit and look back over the city: from a height of 185m you'll be able to pick out in exact detail the entire route you've just travelled, as well as fully appreciate just how mighty the harbour is.

## Tours

There are harbour tours offered daily by **Spido** (☎ 275 99 88; www.spido.nl; Willemsplein 85; adult/child €8.50/5.50; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Jun–Sep, 11am–3.30pm Oct, to 2pm Thu–Sun Nov–Mar). Departures are from the pier at Leuvehoofd near the Erasmusbrug and the Leuvehaven metro stop. Longer trips are possible in the high season.

**Rotterdam ByCycle** (www.rotterdambycycle.nl) conducts pedal-powered tours (from €15) and also rents out bikes, while **Rotterdam ArchiGuides** (www.rotterdam-archiguide.nl) takes groups on a tour of built space – the city's architectural highlights – via bicycle, bus or shoe leather (group prices only). The tourist office, in association with the Netherlands Architectuur Instituut (p211), also offers Rotterdam architecture tours. For more detailed information, call the NAI or drop into the tourist office.

## Festivals & Events

### JANUARY–FEBRUARY

**International Film Festival Rotterdam** (www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com) From late January to early February. A top-notch selection of independent and experimental films.

### JUNE

**De Parade** (www.deparade.nl) A nationwide inverse-circus tour, where the audiences are in the ring and all manner of music, theatre, film and variety performances go on around them. It hits all the big cities and has an incredibly lively atmosphere. Entry's usually free and performances are on a pay-per-view basis.

**Poetry International Festival** (www.poetry.nl) Held in late June, hosting top-notch poets from all over the world.

### JULY

**North Sea Jazz Festival** (www.northseajazz.nl) One of the world's most-respected jazz events, drawing some of the best musicians on the planet. Rooms throughout the region will be at a premium as thousands of fans descend on the city from all around. You're best off staying elsewhere and commuting, or booking far in advance. A lot of the acts organise smokin' unofficial jams outside the festival dates, a kind of pre-festival minifestival. It's held in mid-July.

**Zomer Carnaval** (Summer Carnival; www.zomercarnaval.nl) Usually held on the last weekend of July. A carnival-like bash with music, parades, dancing and parties.

**Zomerpodium** (Summer Stage; www.loederevents.nl/zomer.html) Starting towards the end of July and running into August, Zomerpodium features all manner of outlandish excuses to get crazy in the streets of Rotterdam. There's been a Bollywood Ball, brass band contests, stand-up comedy and more.

### AUGUST

**FFWD Heineken Dance Parade** (www.ffwdheineken.danceparade.nl) Turns the centre into one big open-air club with areas for techno, hip-hop, big beat etc. Floats on the backs of trucks drive through town, catering to a crowd of around 350,000 people.

### SEPTEMBER

**Wereld Havendagen** (World Harbour Festival; www.wereldhavendagen.nl) Celebrates the role of the harbour, which directly or indirectly employs over 300,000 people. There are lots of open houses, ship tours and fireworks.

## Sleeping

The tourist office makes room reservations, as does Use-It (p208), the latter with substantial – sometimes incredible – discounts. In fact, it's worth checking with Use-It before you do anything sleep-related.

## BUDGET

**Hotel Amar** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 425 57 95; www.amarhotel.nl; Mathenesserlaan 316; s/d €30/50; ☎) This friendly, small place is in a leafy neighbourhood close to the Museumpark and to good shopping and nightlife. Rooms are simple but comfy, and the ones at the back overlook a large and peaceful garden.

**Short Stay Accommodations** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 295 35 62; Willem Buytewechstraat 206; d/€18; ☎) This great budget apartment setup spans three floors with a couple of different sharing options. The owners are just fine and the place is clean, with laundry facilities and linen included.

**Hotel Boat De Clipper** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 331 42 44; Scheepmakershaven; B&B from €30; ☎) This 'botel', docked in Rotterdam's old harbour, is perfect for soaking up the city's maritime atmosphere, even if the quarters are, inevitably, a little cramped.

Other options:

**City Camping of Rotterdam** (☎ 415 34 40; Kanaalweg 84; camp sites per person/tent €4.95/3.90, 2-person cabins €30) A 20-minute walk northwest from CS, or take bus 33 (direction: Airport).

**Stayokay Rotterdam** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 57 63; www.stayokay.com/rotterdam; Rochussenstraat 107-109; dm from €20.25; ☎) Typically well-run link in the Stayokay chain; well placed for the museums and with a low-key bar.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel New York** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 439 05 00; www.hotelnewyork.nl; Koninginnenhoofd 1; d from €98) The city's favourite hotel is housed in the former headquarters of the Holland-America passenger-ship line, and has excellent service and facilities. Often booked far in advance, it's noted for its views, café and boat shuttle that takes guests across the Nieuwe Maas to the centre. The Art Nouveau rooms – with many original and painstakingly restored décor items and fittings –

are divine and come in various configurations, from standard to penthouse.

**Maritime Hotel Rotterdam** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 411 92 60; www.maritimhotel.nl; Willemskade 13; s/tw from €69/88; ☎) This hotel ostensibly caters to sea-men ashore from their boats, but all are welcome. The modern facility boasts free internet access, a big breakfast buffet and a cheap bar with pool table. It's a friendly, all-in kind of place.

**Grand Hotel Central** (Map p212; ☎ 414 07 44; Kruiskade 12; s/d €80/95) If you're into kitsch, you'll like it here: the décor looks like it hasn't been updated for 40 years, yet it's addictively comfy and invitingly atmospheric. You'll feel like kicking back with a Martini while wearing something bright orange and flammable. The rooms are great, service similar.

**Hotel Ocean Paradise** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 17 02; www.oceanparadise.nl; Parkhaven 21; s/d from €58/68) The Ocean Paradise is actually a floating hotel/Chinese restaurant/Asian supermarket pavilion; it looks like an aquatic temple. Naturally, the rooms have an Oriental theme, and are not too bad, although they get a little hot in summer. It's in a nice part of town, next to the Euromast and surrounding parks and greenery.

Other options:

**Hotel Bienvenue** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 466 93 94; www.hotelbienvenue.nl; Spoorinsel 24B; s/d from €48/65; ☎) In a quiet, though central, area; cosy rooms.

**Hotel Breitterner** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 02 62; www.hotelbreitterner.nl; Breitternerstraat 23; s/d from €68/85; ☎) Near Museumpark.

**Hotel Emma** (Map p212; ☎ 436 55 33; www.hotelemma.nl; Nieuwe Binnenweg 6; s/d from €79/99; ☎) Good locale; comfy rooms.

## TOP END

**Hotel Stroom** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 221 40 60; www.stroomrotterdam.nl; Lloydstraat 1; d from €135) Stroom is the rising star of the Rotto accommodation scene, a brand-new designer hotel that's actually a

## MIDDLE EAST MEETS ROTTERDAM

**Bazar Hotel & Restaurant** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 206 51 51; www.hotelbazar.nl; Witte de Withstraat 16; s/d from €60/75) Bazar is deservedly popular for its Middle Eastern, African and South American-themed rooms: lush, brocaded curtains, exotically tiled bathrooms, comfy beds, and copies of *Tales from the Arabian Nights* scattered about. Breakfast is spectacular: Turkish breads, international cheeses, yogurt, fruit, cold cuts and coffee.

This is an exceptional place to wind down, particularly as its ground-floor bar and restaurant (mains €8 to €13.90, open lunch and dinner) is among the town's best, coming up trumps with similarly stylised Middle Eastern décor and matching menu: dolmades, falafel, mussels, sardines, couscous and kebabs served up in tangy, attention-grabbing combinations.

converted power station. Spiffy design studios come in a range of configurations, such as the 'videostudio' option, a jaw-dropping split-level fancy under a glass roof with a downstairs open bathroom.

**Bilderberg Parkhotel Rotterdam** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 36 11; www.parkhotelrotterdam.nl; Westersingel 70; s/d from €115/165; ♿ ♻️ ♻️ ♻️) Smack bang amid Rotterdam's most notable sights and attractions, the Parkhotel mainly caters to short stay business travellers year-round – that means bargains and last-minute deals (for leisure travellers) when summer occupancy is well down. Rooms are comfy, clean and have all the mod cons.

## Eating

Rotterdam has many wonderful places to eat. The city's (always growing) multicultural population and a steady stream of corporate clientele floating through town on business means that choices are widely varied.

**Dudok** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 433 31 02; www.dudok.nl; Meent 88; breakfast €1.90-11, lunch €3.30-9.50, dinner €9.90-14.90; ♿ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This Rotterdam institution, housed in a former insurance office designed by WM Dudok, has a wonderful spacious feel with its high ceilings and big windows. Whether you're here for a meal, a drink or a snack, you must try the scrummy apple pie (€2.90), famous throughout Rotterdam and surrounds. Solo travellers will love the large reading table.

## RESTAURANTS

**Parkheuvel** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 05 30; Heuvellaan 21; 3-course menu from €50; ♿ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Some say it's the Netherlands' best restaurant – as one of only two Dutch fancies with three Michelin stars, it's got a strong claim. The French-international menu is especially fab with seafood – red mullet with balsamic dressing, anyone?

**Blits** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 282 90 51; www.blits-rotterdam.nl; Boompjes 701; mains €12-25; ♿ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) It was only a matter of time. In a city that loves diverse food and cutting-edge architecture, here's a restaurant that combines both: wall-length windows looking out over the Maas, and a classy international menu. Seating arrangements are 'out there': try the bench with pillows or the 'Love Suite', a heart-shaped, rich-red enclosure.

**Look** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 70 00; www.restaurantlook.nl; 's-Gravendijkwal; mains €13-20; ♿ dinner Wed-Sun)

This one's especially recommended for single people, Buffy and Francophiles. Look is a cosy little restaurant that specialises in garlic-based dishes: steamed garlic, fried garlic, garlic soup, garlic vegetables...even garlic dessert, on occasion. It's delicious and you can even be a spoilsport and plump for nongarlic dishes.

**Panorama** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 48 11; www.euro-mast.nl; Euromast, Parkhaven 20; mains €11-20; ♿ lunch & dinner) This brasserie has the best location, in the midsection of the Euromast tower. At 100m it almost doesn't matter about the food, with that kind of view and a design to maximise it (the angled windows impart the odd sensation of eating in mid-air). It's a bonus, then, that the menu is up to scratch: fillet of suckling pig and grilled mackerel were recent offerings.

**Kip** (Chicken; Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 99 23; www.kip-rotterdam.nl; Van Vollenhovenstraat 25; mains €20-25; ♿ dinner Tue-Sun) A lovely place that's more elegant than its moniker might imply. It's won a swag of 'Lekkers' (the Dutch restaurant awards) and has crisp, white tablecloths, a dainty dining room, and delicious and immaculately prepared meat, poultry and vegetable concoctions with a haute cuisine feel.

Other options:

**Dewi Sri** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 02 63; www.dewisri.nl; Westerkade 20; mains €15-20; ♿ lunch & dinner) Great Indonesian food. Also at Grindweg 650 (☎ 422 36 25).

**Zinc** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 436 65 79; Calandstraat 12A; set menu €25; ♿ dinner Tue-Sun) Cosy, chic French/Mediterranean bistro using only organic produce.

## CAFÉS

**Café Gallery Abrikoos** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 477 41 40; www.abrikoos.nl; Aelbrechtskolk 51; tapas from €4.75; ♿ dinner Tue-Sun) This is a bright and cheery tapas bar filled with art and a variety of soups, salads and mains, and wicked Mediterranean mini-meals. Addictive – and a great way to start a long evening.

**Dizzy Jazzcafé** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 477 30 14; 's-Gravendijkwal 129; mains €10-15; ♿ lunch & dinner) One of the city's best music bars (opposite) is also a popular restaurant, with a gorgeous garden terrace. Authentic Dutch dishes keep it real, including a dessert called 'Chocolate Slut'.

## QUICK EATS

**Daily Wok** (☎ 411 20 02; www.dailywok.nl; Oude Binnenweg 106C; dishes €4-7; ♿ lunch & dinner) Wicked noodles – all persuasions and varieties, including vegetarian.

**Happy Sushi** (Map p212; ☎ 433 47 30; Kruisplein 42; sushi from €1.60; ♿ lunch & dinner) Sushi on a conveyor belt; you can't go wrong.

**Bagels & Beans** (Map p212; www.bagelsbeans.nl; Lijnbaan 150; bagels from €2.95; ♿ 11am-6pm Mon, 9.30am-6pm Tue-Thu, 9.30am-9pm Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun) Tasty bagels, good coffee, wi-fi access.

**Maoz** (www.maozveg.com; Coolingel 87; felafels €3.50; ♿ lunch) Felafel pita-bread sandwiches that can be refilled as much as you like with salad toppings and sauces.

## Drinking

**Stalles** (Map p212; ☎ 436 16 55; Nieuwe Binnenweg 11A) This classic brown café is on a great stretch of road near plenty of good shops, cafés and bars. It has an extensive range of single malt whiskys and some reasonable food, including pizza and lasagne.

**Locus Publicus** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 433 17 61; www.locus-publicus.com; Oostzeedijk 364) With more than 200 beers on its menu, this is an outstanding specialist beer café.

**Willemsbrug** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 413 58 68; Maaskade 95) This old-time, maritime-themed pub attracts salty sea dogs. It's not for those with weak lungs – the air's blue with cigarette, cigar and pipe smoke (and probably blue with salty language if you understand Dutch well enough). But the staff and clientele are a bit of a laugh – they're liable to turn the cheesy music up full bore and indulge in a woefully off-key sing-along at any time.

## Entertainment

### CLUBS

**Now & Wow** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 477 10 74; www.now-wow.com; Maashaven 1) Many believe this to be Rotto's best club. It's an astoundingly popular and cool place, divided in two: 'Now' for mainstream house, and 'Wow' for funky beats. Theme nights with titles like 'Superbimbo' say it all. Watch out for the door bitch: she doesn't like shabby backpackers.

**off\_corso** (Map p212; ☎ 411 38 97; www.off-corso.nl; Kruiskade 22) Then there are others who say that this is where it's at – a varied roster of entertainment and late-night action that sees bleeding-edge local and international DJs mashing up a high-fibre diet of bleeps'n'beats.

**Night Town** (Map p212; ☎ 436 12 10; www.nighttown.nl; West Kruiskade 26-28) Fencesitters, on the other hand, might come here for a fun-kung-fu-sion urban mash up of jazz, reggae, pop, Latin, funk and house choons: phat beats from the

phar side for phreaks and scenesters who like it meaty, beaty, big and bouncy. Restaurant's good, too.

**Gay Palace** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 414 14 86; www.gay-palace.nl; Schiedamsesingel 139) And here we have Rotterdam's only weekly gay nightclub, with four floors of throbbing gay action – different scenes on each floor – to work you into a lather and get you sweaty.

**Club Rotterdam** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 290 84 42; www.caférotterdam.nl; Willhelminakade 699) A popular club-bar-café complex that draws clubbers, groovers, wannabes and hangers-on.

## LIVE MUSIC

**Rotown** (Map p212; ☎ 436 26 69; www.rotown.nl; Nieuwe Binnenweg 19) A smooth bar, a dependable live rock venue, an agreeable restaurant, a popular meeting place. The musical programme features new local talent, established international acts and crossover experiments.

**Dizzy Jazzcafé** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 477 30 14; www.dizzy.nl; 's-Gravendijkwal 129) Live music Tuesday nights and Sunday afternoons. The evening performances are scorching: everything from hot jazz to fast and funky Brazilian and salsa, with a very lively, sweaty crowd jumping out of their skins.

**De Doelen** (Map p212; ☎ 217 17 17; www.dedoelen.nl; Schouwburgplein 50) This is where you will find the 'home ground' of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, a sumptuous concert centre that dates from 1935 and seats 1300. The orchestra is world class.

## COFFEESHOPS

There's a huge number of coffeeshops in Rotterdam, probably the highest concentration outside the capital. Some are dodgy – ask Use-It for a list of reliable faves.

## THEATRE

**Schouwburg** (Map p212; ☎ 411 81 10; www.schouwburg.rotterdam.nl; Schouwburgplein 25) The main cultural centre, the Schouwburg has a rotating calendar of dance, theatre and drama. Note the intriguing light fixtures with red necks out the front.

**Luxor Theater** (Map pp210-11; ☎ 484 33 33; www.luxortheater.nl; Posthumalaan 1) A major new performance venue, the Luxor features every kind of entertainment you can possibly imagine. Check out its excellent website or pick up one of its abundant programmes around town for more details.

**CINEMA**

Rotterdam hosts the annual International Film Festival (p214), which has been described as the 'European Sundance'.

**De Pleinbioscoop** (Lloyd Multiplein; ☎ mid-Aug–Sep) Annual, free, open-air screening season: classics, art-house and blockbusters.

**Lantaren/Venster** (Map p212; ☎ cashier 277 22 66; Gouvernestraat 133) Great central art-house alternative.

**Pathé Cinemas** (Map p212; ☎ www.pathe.nl; Schouwburgplein 101) This multiplex has the usual Hollywood selection as well as some lesser lights.

**Shopping**

Unlike the rest of the country, Rotterdam has gone for Sunday shopping in a big way. Most stores in the centre are open noon to 5pm. The Beurstraverse (known locally as the Koopgoot, or Shopping Ditch) runs from Lijnbaan to Hoogstraat and passes under Coolsingel. Nieuwe Binnenweg is a mix of stylish restaurants, coffee shops, old boozers and stores selling used CDs, vintage clothing and plastic/fluorescent club wear. The Meent has secondhand and retro clothing shops, and West Kruiskade has a welter of ethnic groceries and stores. There's a cluster of great cafés, restaurants and shops on and near the Witte de Withstraat.

**Getting There & Away****AIR**

See p304 for details of air services to and from Rotterdam.

**BUS**

Rotterdam is a hub for Eurolines bus services to the rest of Europe. See p301 for details.

**BOAT**

The **Fast Ferry** (☎ 09002666399; www.fastferry.nl; per passenger one way/return €2.50/3.50, bike €1/2) links Rotterdam with Dordrecht and is a good option for day trips, or in place of the train. The boat leaves from Willemskade at least once an hour during the day, and takes 45 minutes.

**CAR & MOTORCYCLE**

Rotterdam is well linked by motorways to the rest of the Netherlands and Belgium. Car rental firms at the airport:

**Avis** (☎ 298 24 24)

**Budget** (☎ 437 86 22)

**Europcar** (☎ 437 18 26)

**Hertz** (☎ 415 82 39)

**TRAIN**

Rotterdam CS is on the main line from Amsterdam south, and Thalys services between Brussels and Paris stop here. See p308 for details.

Sample fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	12.60	62	4
Den Haag	4.10	15	4
Middelburg	17.60	90	1
Utrecht	8.60	40	2

**Getting Around****TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Bus 33 makes the 15-minute run from the airport to CS every 12 minutes throughout the day. A taxi takes 10 minutes to get to the centre and costs around €20.

**BICYCLE**

The bicycle shop at CS is underground, off the metro station.

**CAR & MOTORCYCLE**

Rotterdam has numerous places to park, including along the streets. Look for the blue P signs for large and enclosed garages.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Rotterdam's trams, buses and metro are provided by **RET** (☎ 447 69 11; www.ret.nl). Most converge in front of CS, where there is an **information office** (☎ 6am–11pm Mon–Fri, 8am–11pm Sat & Sun) that also sells tickets. There are other information booths in the major metro stations.

Public transport in Rotterdam is easy. For destinations in the centre you won't need to use it, but for Delfshaven and even Oude Haven you might want a lift.

The metro operates two lines, one of which terminates at CS. Beurs/Churchillplein is the interchange station between the lines. Machines to validate tickets are at the station entrances.

Fast and frequent trams cover much of the city. Validate your strip ticket on board. On buses, have the driver validate your strips.

**TAXI**

For a taxi, call the **Rotterdamse Taxi Centrale** (☎ 462 60 60).

**AROUND ROTTERDAM**  
**Kinderdijk**

The **Kinderdijk** (Child's Dike; www.kinderdijk.nl) is the best spot in the Netherlands to see windmills. Declared a Unesco World Heritage site in 1997, it has 19 windmills strung out on both sides of canals. These canals were dug behind the tall dykes constructed at the confluence of the Lek river and several tributaries and channels.

This spot has been a focus of Dutch efforts to reclaim land from the water for centuries. It's a starkly beautiful area, with the windmills rising above the empty marshes and waterways. Exacerbating the feeling of having stepped through a ripple in the space–time continuum is the endless structural creaking and groaning of the shiplike mills. It's only once you hear these ghostly sounds that can you really appreciate what delicate skill must have been (and must still be) required to operate a mill, particularly in inclement weather.

**BLOWING IN THE WIND**

You don't need us to tell you that windmills are a Dutch icon, but did you know that the earliest known windmills appeared in the 13th century, simply built around a tree trunk? The next leap in technology came 100 years later, when a series of gears ensured the mill could be used for all manner of activities, the most important of which was pumping water. Hundreds of these windmills were soon built on dykes throughout Holland and the mass drainage of land began.

The next major advancement in Dutch windmill technology came in the 16th century with the invention of the rotating cap mill. Rather than having to turn the huge body of the mill-top to face the wind, the operators could rotate just the tip, which contained the hub of the sails. This made it possible for mills to be operated by just one person.

Besides pumping water, mills were used for many other industrial purposes, such as sawing wood, making clay for pottery and, most importantly for art lovers, crushing the pigments used by painters.

By the mid-19th century there were over 10,000 windmills operating in all parts of the Netherlands. But the invention of the steam engine soon made them obsolete. By the end of the 20th century there were only 950 operable windmills left, but this number seems to have stabilised and there is great interest in preserving the survivors. The Dutch government runs a three-year school for prospective windmill operators, who must be licensed.

Running one of the mills on a windy day is as complex as being the skipper of a large sailing ship, and anyone who's been inside a mill and listened to the massive timbers creaking will be aware of the similarities. The greatest hazard is a runaway, when the sails begin turning so fast that they can't be slowed down. This frequently ends in catastrophe as the mill remorselessly tears itself apart.

It's sad to see abandoned mills stripped of sails and standing forlorn and denuded, especially since these days you're more likely to see turbine-powered wind farms in the Dutch countryside rather than rows of windmills. However, there are opportunities to see working examples, especially at **Kinderdijk** (above), and at **Zaanse Schans** (p154) in Noord Holland.

Just about every operable windmill in the nation is open to visitors on National Mill Day, usually on the second Saturday of May. Look for windmills flying little blue flags.

Several of the most important types of windmills are here, including hollow post mills and rotating cap mills. The latter are among the highest in the country as they were built to better catch the wind. The mills are kept in operating condition and date from the 18th century.

A visit to Kinderdijk can easily occupy at least half a day. From the bus stop and parking area there are more than 4km of paths along the dykes that run past the windmills. On any Saturday in July and August from 2pm to 5pm, all of the 19 windmills are in operation, an unforgettable sight that was once common but is now impossible to find anywhere else. At other times of the year, one of the mills functions as a **visitors centre** (☎ 078-613 28 00; admission €2; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm Mon–Sat Apr–Sep).

Take a local train from Rotterdam CS to Rotterdam Lombardijen station, then catch the hourly bus 154. By car, take the N210 12km east from Rotterdam.



## DORDRECHT

☎ 078 / pop 118,649

Affable Dordrecht, with its lovely canals and busy port, sits at the confluence of the Oude Maas river and several tributaries and channels. This strategic trading position (precipitating a boom in the wine trade), along with the fact that it is the oldest Dutch city (having been granted a town charter in 1220), ensured that Dordrecht was one of the most powerful Dutch regions until the mid- to late 16th century. Accordingly, in 1572, it was here that town leaders from all over Holland met to declare independence from Spain.

Dordrecht's historical significance – and former affluence – is evidenced in its intact,

charming architecture, a legacy you'll fully appreciate as you wander the oval-shaped old town.

### Orientation

The train station is a good 700m walk from the centre, a journey that passes through some less interesting, newer areas. In the old town, most of the sights are on or near the three old canals – the Nieuwehaven, the Wolwevershaven and the Wijnhaven.

### Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 632 24 40; www.vvvzhz.nl; Stationsweg 1; ☎ noon-5.30pm Mon, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) is near the train station, as is the **post office** (☎ 613 21 11; Johan de Wittstraat 120; ☎ 9am-6pm

Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). The **library** (☎ 613 00 77; Groenmarkt 53; internet per hr €2; ☎ noon-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) is in a large, modernised building.

### Sights & Activities

See Dordrecht on foot: it's eminently suited to it. Begin at the **Visbrug**, the bridge over Wijnhaven that gives fine views of the dignified **town hall**. At the north end of Visbrug, turn right onto Groenmarkt. As you walk northeast you'll pass the oldest houses in town, many from the early 1600s.

At the next square, Scheffersplein, cross diagonally to Voorstraat, the main retail street. The canal runs under this area, which is home to numerous markets.

The **Augustinerkerk**, an old church with a façade dating from 1773, is a little further along on the right. Just past it, watch carefully for a passage leading to **Het Hof**, where the setting alone – especially at night – is moody and evocative. It was here that the states of Holland and Zeeland met in 1572.

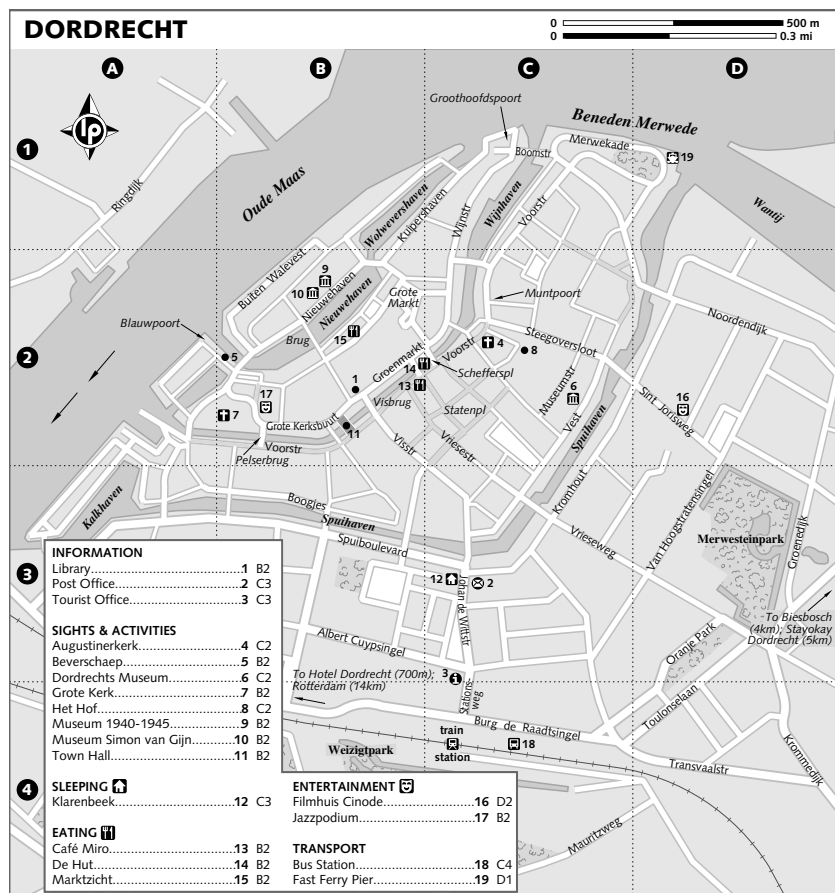
Back on Voorstraat, continue north to the next bridge over the canal: Nieuwbrug. Cross over to Wijnstraat and turn right, continuing north. Many of the lopsided houses along here

date from the peak of the wine trade, when the nearby canals were filled with boats bearing the fruits of the fermented grape.

The street ends at an attractive bridge. Pass along the west or left side of the canal to the river – and the **Groothoofdspoort**, once the main gate into town. Walk west along the pavement and view the traffic on the waterways and Oude Maas river.

Circling to the south you'll see the Kuipershaven, the street along the Wolwevershaven, another old canal lined with beautifully restored wine warehouses and filled with many pleasure boats. Watch for artisans at work in their studios in the old buildings. At the tiny bridge, cross over to the north side of the Nieuwehaven. On the right, watch for the **Museum 1940-1945** (☎ 613 01 72; http://museum4045.100free.com/index.htm; Nieuwehaven 28; adult/child €1.50/0.75; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun). It has a collection of materials from WWII and shows the privations of the region during the war. Look for the propeller prised from a Lancaster bomber.

Nearby, the **Museum Simon van Gijn** (☎ 613 37 93; http://cms.dordrecht.nl/gijn; Nieuwehaven 29; admission €5; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) depicts the life of an



### A SHEEPISH TOWN

Dordrecht has a long association with squat, hooved and horned mammals. The town's nickname is Ooi-en Ramsgat (Ewe's and Ram's Hole) and the locals are known as Schapenkoppen (Sheepheads), nomenclatures deriving from the 17th century when sheep from elsewhere were heavily taxed.

Legend says that a farmer and his son bought a choice, fat sheep from outside town and then attempted to smuggle it inside the city gates, dressing the bemused beast to look like a small, fat child – with baggy breeches, a voluminous shirt, and a hat with a wide, floppy brim. The two geniuses then grabbed a foreleg each and made the sheep walk, with a noticeable wobble, on its hind legs.

Confronted by a guard at the town gate, they explained away the sheep-child's wobbling gait as 'tiredness' and were through with no problems – until the sheep, who'd had enough, let out a very loud, very unmistakable, 'baaaaa'. Thus the deception was unravelled and the farmer had to pay double the tax.

What this bizarre tale says about the beauty, intelligence or posture of the locals at that time is for you to judge, but, to be fair, Dordrecht wasn't the only 17th-century Dutch town to have had an unnatural attachment to stupidity and livestock (see p262 for the tale of Kampen and the cows).

Actually, Dordrecht was pretty sheepish even in the 16th century: a Man of God at the time declared that 'there are some ten or twelve places in the neighbourhood of Dordrecht...with neither ministers nor services. The inhabitants of these same places daily complain and cry out, "Alas we are like sheep without shepherds, we live without religion and hear nothing of God".'

Even today the town can't escape the past: Dordrecht's football team features a player called – what else? – Olaf Sheep.

Honestly, you couldn't make this stuff up.

18th-century patrician, with vintage knickknacks, furnishings and tapestries.

Continue southwest to the Engelenburgerbrug over the Nieuwehaven's access to the Oude Maas. Take an immediate right onto narrow Engelenburgerkade. At No 18, **Bever-schaep** (Beaver & Sheep House) is a 1658 structure that takes its name from the animals supporting a coat of arms over the door.

At the end of the street is **Blauwpoort**, another old trading gate.

### GROTE KERK

The massive tower of the 14th- to 15th-century **Grote Kerk** (☎ 614 46 60; www.grotekerk-dordrecht.nl; Langegelderskade 2; admission church free, tower adult/child €170.50; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Apr-Oct, noon-4pm Sun) was originally meant to have been much higher, but it took on a lean during its 150-year-plus construction. You can climb to the top – 275 steps – to enjoy excellent views of the town. Inside, the choir stalls are finely carved and there are several pleasing stained-glass windows.

### DORDRECHTS MUSEUM

Away from the old town, the **Dordrechts Museum** (☎ 648 21 48; www.dordrechtsmuseum.nl; Museumstraat 40; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) has works by local artists. Most noteworthy are pieces by Jan van Goyen (1596–1656) and Albert Cuyp (1620–91). Van Goyen was one of the first Dutch painters to capture the interplay of light on landscapes – look for his *View of Dordrecht* – while Cuyp, who lived in Dordrecht his entire life, is known for his many works painted in and around his hometown. These included, in his early career, landscapes featuring, inevitably, the town mascot: sheep.

### Sleeping

Hotel choices in Dordrecht are limited. B&Bs might be a better bet – ask the tourist office to set you up. Stayokay Dordrecht, on the edge of Biesbosch National Park, is a combined youth hostel, camping ground and hotel (see opposite).

**Hotel Dordrecht** (☎ 613 60 11; www.hoteldordrecht.nl; Achterhakkers 72; s/d from €89.50/119) A pleasant option, centrally located, with excellent, spacious rooms that feature four-poster beds with curtains. Some rooms have private balconies. They're nice people, here: they'll even let you use their private golf buggy for free at the Golf Club Crayestein.

Other options:

**Klarenbeek** (☎ 614 41 33; Johan de Wittstraat 35; s/d €65/75) Near the tourist office.

**Bastion Hotel** (☎ 651 15 33; Laan der Verenigde Naties 363; d from €78) Business hotel near an industrial estate on the ring road.

**Mercure Hotel Dordrecht** (☎ 618 44 44; Rijksweg 30; s/d €99/109) Standard business hotel, with all the usual facilities.

### Eating

**Café Miro** (☎ 620 00 17; fax 684 98 50; Voorstraat 256B; tapas from €4) A bright, bold yellow tapas bar that's visually unmissable and named after one of Spain's greatest 20th-century painters. The Latina vibe carries through from the décor to the tapas on offer. The food is great; fresh, tasty and fairly priced. It's definitely a design highlight on the otherwise bland shopping street that is the Voorstraat.

**De Hut** (☎ 635 20 01; Voorstraat 293; daily special €9; ☎ lunch & dinner) An innovative fast-food option fusing Dutch and Indonesian styles, meaning hearty ingredients livened up by spicier sauces. Cheap *broodjes* (sandwiches; €2.50 to €4) are fresh, tasty and best accompanied by one of the excellent juices.

**Marktzicht** (☎ 613 25 84; www.visrestaurant-marktzicht.nl; Varkenmarkt 17-19; mains €20-35; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) Well, this is nice! Here you will find most-agreeable, superfresh seafood served in a somewhat old-world, aquatic-themed interior. Angler-fish medallions, bluefin tuna pepper-steaks and scampi burgers were some of the recent delights on offer.

### Entertainment

**Filmhuis Ginode** (☎ 639 79 79; St Jorisweg 76) Serious cinema devoted to offbeat and artistic films.

**Jazzpodium** (☎ 614 08 15; Grotekerksplein 1; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed & Fri-Sun) Modern and improvisational jazz and blues.

### Getting There & Away

The train station has all the usual services and is right on the main line from Rotterdam south to Belgium. Sample fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	15.10	80	4
Breda	5.10	17	3
Rotterdam	3.70	15	6

Buses leave from the area to your right as you exit the train station. You'll find bus 388 serves Utrecht every hour.

For those with car or motorcycle in tow, the busy E19 south to Belgium and north to Rotterdam and beyond passes close to town.

The **Fast Ferry** (☎ 09002666399; www.fastferry.nl; per passenger one way/return €2.50/3.50, bike €1/2) links Dordrecht with Rotterdam. The boat leaves from Merwekade, which is at stop 12 on the bus 20 route, and takes 45 minutes.

### BIESBOSCH NATIONAL PARK

Covering 7100 hectares, Biesbosch National Park encompasses an area on both banks of the Nieuwe Merwede River, east and south of Dordrecht. It's so big that it sprawls across a provincial border; there's a region known as the Brabantse Biesbosch, further east, while the part in this province is the Hollandse Biesbosch. Before 1421 the area was polder land and had a population of over 100,000 living in over 70 villages. However, the huge storm on St Elizabeth's Day (18 November) that year breached the dykes, and floodwaters destroyed all the villages – virtually everyone lost their life.

However, out of this calamity grew both new life and a new lifestyle. The floods created several channels in their wake, including what is today called the Nieuwe Merwede. Linked to the sea, these areas were subject to twice-daily high tides, leading to the growth of tide-loving reed plants, which the descendants of the flood's survivors took to cultivating.

Fast forward to 1970 when the Delta Project (see the boxed text, p228) shut off the tides to the area. The reeds, which had been growing wild during the decades since the collapse of the reed markets, began to die, focusing attention on what is one of the largest expanses of natural space left in the Netherlands.

The park is home to beavers (reintroduced to the Brabant area of the park in 1988) and voles, along with scores of birds. There's an observation point right near the visitors centre where you can observe some that have been fenced off in their own little pond.

### Information

The **visitors centre** (☎ 630 53 53; www.biesbosch.org; Baanhoekweg 53; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun year-round, 1-5pm Mon May & Jun, 9am-5pm Mon Jul & Aug) is some 7km east of the Dordrecht train station. There are all the usual displays about the park's ecology,

and you can rent kayaks and canoes (from €5 per half an hour) to explore the park and its many channels and streams. There are also numerous trails through the marshlands and along the river.

The centre is also the boarding place for a variety of boat tours of the Biesbosch. The longer cruises are better value, though, because they go to more places, including the **Biesboschmuseum** on the southern shore of the Nieuwe Merwede.

### Sleeping

**Stayokay Dordrecht** (☎ 621 21 67; www.stayokay.com/dordrecht; Baanhoekweg 25; dm from €22.25) This place includes a youth hostel, camping ground and hotel. The hotel, which has a bar and restaurant, is in a modern building right next to the park and is 1km west of the visitors centre. It's a good idea to reserve accommodation here in advance.

### Getting There & Away

The Stayokay and the park are easy bike rides from the Dordrecht train station. Otherwise, bus 5 (every 30 minutes) travels to within 2km of Stayokay and 3km of the park.

The easiest option is to get a taxi from Dordrecht station direct to the Stayokay site, then rent a bike there and use it to get around the park/area or into town.

## ZEELAND

The province of Zeeland consists of three slivers of land that nestle in the middle of a vast delta through which many of Europe's rivers drain. As you survey the calm, flat landscape, consider that for centuries the plucky Zeelanders have been battling the North Sea waters, and not always with success. In fact the region has suffered two massive waterborne tragedies.

In 1421 the St Elizabeth's Day flood killed over 100,000, irrevocably altering the landscape – and some say the disposition – of the Netherlands and its people.

In 1953, yet another flood laid waste to 2000 lives and 800km of dykes, leaving 500,000 homeless and leading to the Delta Project, an enormous multidecade construction programme that aims to finally ensure the security of these lands. It ranks among the world's greatest engineering feats (see boxed text, p228).

Middelburg is the somnolent historic capital, while the coast along the North Sea is lined with beaches beyond the ever-present dykes. Many people venture to this place of tenuous land and omnipresent water just to see the sheer size of the Delta Project's dykes and barriers.

### Getting There & Away

In Zeeland, Middelburg is easily reached by train, but for most other towns you'll need to rely on the many buses. The most important include bus 104, which makes a marathon 2½-hour journey between Rotterdam's Centraal Station and Vlissingen and follows the western edge of the province along the Delta Project. It runs every 30 minutes in both directions.

## MIDDELBURG

☎ 0118 / pop 47,000

Pleasant and prosperous Middelburg, Zeeland's sleepy capital, is a friendly, low-key settlement. It's not exactly flush with nightlife, but it's a perfect base for exploring the region.

Although Germany destroyed the town's historic centre in 1940, much has been rebuilt and you can still get a solid feel for what life must have been like hundreds of years ago. The fortifications built by the Sea Beggars in 1595 can still be traced in the pattern of the main canals encircling the old town.

As the main town of the Walcheren peninsula, Middelburg is fairly removed from the rest of the Netherlands – crowds are seldom a

problem. Note that many of the town's sights are closed in winter.

There's no VVV tourist office, but there is a **tourist shop** (☎ 67 43 00; www.touristshop.nl; Markt 65C; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat), and the **Zeeland Regional Library** (☎ 65 40 00; Kousteensedijk 7; internet per hr €3; ☎ 5.30-9pm Mon, 10am-9pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat) has net access. The **post office** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) is at Lange Noordstraat 48.

For bibliophiles, **De Drvkkery** (☎ 88 68 86; www.de-drvkkery.nl; Markt 51) is one of the country's best bookshops, drawing customers from as far as Belgium and Germany. It has an excellent magazine selection, a café, internet access (€3 per hour), art and photography displays on the walls – and oodles of books.

### Orientation

The train station for Middelburg is a five-minute walk from the centre, across two canals. The Markt is the focus of commercial life, but Middelburg's history is concentrated on the medieval Abdij (Abbey).

### Sights & Activities

This pretty, airy little town is eminently suitable for walking, with cobblestones and snaking alleyways leading in and away from the town square, which hosts a famous market on Thursdays.

### ABDIJ

This huge abbey complex dates from the 12th century and houses the regional government as well as three churches and two museums. Start with the **Historama** (☎ 62 66 55; www.middelburgsekerken.nl; adult/child €2.50/1; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Oct), in the heart of the complex, which portrays the bleaker aspects of cloistered life and covers the history of the abbey.

The three churches are all in a cluster. The **Wandelkerk** dates from the 1600s and holds the tombs of Jan and Cornelis Evertsen, admirals and brothers killed fighting the English in 1666. It encompasses Lange Jan ('Long John', it has its own locally brewed beer named after it), the 91m tower. Just east is the **Koorkerk**, parts of which date from the 1300s. Just west is **Nieuwe Kerk**, which has a famous organ and dates from the 16th century.

Call ☎ 61 35 96 to check the opening hours and accessibility of the churches. These are subject to more variation than usual while the

Zeeuws Museum undergoes its big face-lift. You should still be able to scale the heights of Lange Jan (€2.50), though.

The **Zeeuws Museum** (☎ 62 66 55; www.zeeuwsmuseum.nl) is housed in the former monks' dormitories, and has some of the best first-hand accounts and archival information on the 1953 disaster. However, it's closed for refurbishment until spring 2007.

### TOWN HALL

Dominating the Markt, the **town hall** (☎ 67 54 52; admission €2.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Oct) grabs the eye. It's staggeringly beautiful, and a pastiche of styles: the Gothic side facing the Markt is from the 1400s; the more-classical portion on Noordstraat dates from the 1600s.

Inside there are several sumptuous ceremonial rooms that boast treasures such as the ubiquitous Belgian tapestries. Visits to the building are by one-hour guided tours only.

### OTHER SIGHTS

The area around **Damplein** (east of the Abdij) preserves many 18th-century houses, some of which have recently been turned into interesting shops and cafés.

There is a fairly large old **Jewish Cemetery** on the Walensingel. It has the all-too-common stark memorial to the many Middelburg Jews taken away to their deaths by the Nazis.

### Tours

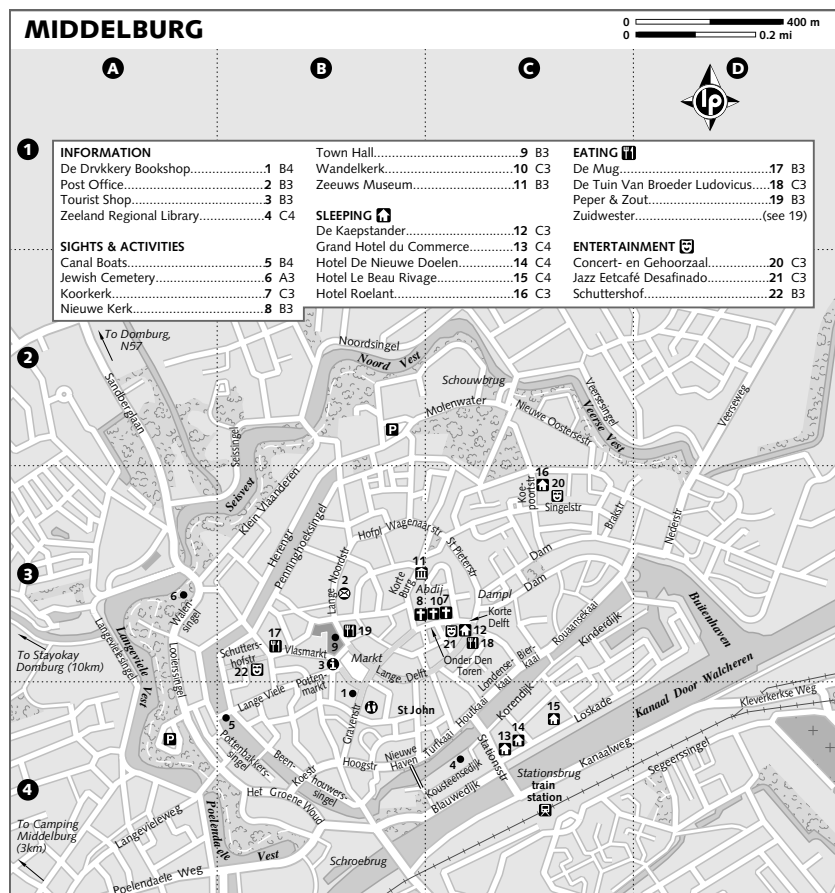
The tourist shop can arrange tours of the canals and guided walking tours of the centre. Inquire within.

### Festivals & Events

The Ringrijdendagen (Ring riding days) are held on two separate days, the first in July around the Abbey square, the second in August at the Molenwater. 'Ring riders' charge about with big sticks and in fancy dress on horses towards a target, trying to tilt it.

### Sleeping

**De Kaepstander** (☎ 64 28 48; www.kaepstander.nl; Koorkerkhof 10; s/d with shared bathroom €38.50/65) This place has four rooms featuring B&B-style accommodation, and a downstairs lounge and TV room for all guests. It's cosy and peaceful but, best of all, it's next door to Jazz Eetcafé Desafinado (see p226).



**Grand Hotel du Commerce** (☎ 63 60 51; www.fletcher.nl; Loskade 1; s/d from €61/71) In a building that would look at home on the Cannes beachfront, this hotel has gaudy red awnings juxtaposed against whitewashed, sun-bleached walls; it's all a bit more faded than the brochures suggest, though. Still, the light-filled rooms are fine, the staff are attentive and the place has all the conveniences. As with all hotels on this road, the front rooms are noisiest.

**Hotel Roelant** (☎ 62 76 59; www.familiehotelroelant.nl; Koepoortstraat 10; d from €85) Dating from 1530, this building has basic, comfortable rooms with bathroom. It's a small, family-run establishment, a pleasant walk away from the centre on a beautiful old cobbled street. There's a nice garden and an excellent restaurant.

**Hotel De Nieuwe Doelen** (☎ 61 21 21; www.hoteldenieuwedoelen.nl; Loskade 3-7; s/d from €70/90) This is an older-style hotel with simple, colourful rooms (with private facilities) that are pleasingly decorated, plus the added bonus of lovely staff. There's an enclosed garden, perfect for breakfast in fine weather.

Other options:

**Camping Middelburg** (☎ 62 53 95; www.campingmiddelburg.nl; Koninginmelaan 55; camp site per car from €3) Three kilometres from the train station – take bus 56 or 58 and tell the driver where you want to get off.

**Hotel Le Beau Rivage** (☎ 63 80 60; Loskade 19; s/d from €75/105) Large, quiet rooms – some with sofas. It's the furthest place away from traffic on this road.

## Eating

**Peper & Zout** (Pepper & Salt; ☎ 62 70 58; www.peperenzout.com; Lange Noordstraat 8; mains €12-19; ☎ lunch & dinner) Peper & Zout has a casual yet elegant interior. The menu concentrates on fresh seafood, mainly various kinds of local fish. It's a popular place with a great wine list.

**De Mug** (The Mosquito; ☎ 61 48 51; www.demug.nl; Vlasmarkt 54-56; mains €16-21; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) Don't be fooled by the Heineken signs; the beer list is long and boasts many rare Trappist varieties. Also try the Mug Bitter, heavy on the hops. In the kitchen, De Mug has quite a reputation for its trademark dishes prepared with unusual beers. The accommodation (rooms from €30) is clean and comforting.

Other options:

**De Tuin Van Broeder Ludovicus** (☎ 62 60 11; Lange Delft 2A) A health-food store with an organic bakery, cheese case and more.

**Zuidwester** (☎ 65 00 40; www.zuidwester.info; Lange Noordstraat 6; mains €10-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sat,

dinner Sun & Mon) Latin-tinged, homemade salads and pastas plus organic wines.

## Entertainment

**Jazz Eetcafé Desafinado** (☎ 64 07 67; www.desafinado.nl; Koorkerkstraat 1; mains €13-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) It does exactly what it says on the tin: serves up steaming portions of hot jazz in wood-bound surroundings, with authentic jazz and blues on the stereo, old-time vinyl adorning the walls, and live jazz on Wednesday nights. The food's not too bad, although watch out for those little snail things they serve up as nibbles.

**Concert-en Gehoorzaal** (☎ 61 27 00; Singelstraat 13) This old concert hall, with a plush interior, hosts frequent performances of chamber and other classical music.

**Schuttershof** (☎ 61 34 82; www.schuttershoftheater.nl; Schuttershofstraat 1) The Schuttershof is a cinema that sometimes has live music.

## Getting There & Around

Middelburg is near the end of the train line in Zeeland, and the attractive but austere station has that end-of-line feel. Services are limited: there's a very small newsstand and the lockers are hidden away in the bicycle shop. Sample fares and schedules:

Destination	Price (€)	Duration (min)	Frequency (per hr)
Amsterdam	26.30	150	1
Roosendaal	10.40	45	2
Rotterdam	17.50	60	1

Regional buses, including the 104, stop along Kanaalweg in front of the train station.

The bicycle shop is to the left as you leave the station. A charming cycle route runs along the coastal dykes (see p72).

## AROUND MIDDELBURG

The Walcheren peninsula is a very enjoyable place for bicycling: combine journeys to old towns with time at the beach.

### Veere

☎ 0118 / pop 1520

Veere is a former fishing village that found a new industry – tourism – when its access to the sea on the Veerse Meer (Veere Lake) was closed as part of the Delta Project. The town now boasts a busy yacht harbour. Much of

Veere dates from the early 16th century – thus, it's an atmospheric place to stroll around.

The **tourist office** (☎ 09002020280; Oudestraat 28; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 1.30-4.30pm Sep-Jun) is in a small building near the Grote Kerk. Staff can advise on boat rentals and bike routes.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Here, you'll feel like you're in a Vermeer painting: rich Gothic houses abound, a testament to the wealth brought in by the wool trade with the Scots, and at the waterfront, the **Campveerse Toren** was part of the old fortifications. Look for the indications on the side showing the levels of various floods.

The **town hall** on the Markt dates from 1474 but was mostly completed in 1599. Its tower is still stuffed with bells – 48 at last count.

At the south end of town is the 16th-century **Grote Kerk**, another edifice that never matched its designer's intentions – its stump of a steeple (42m) looms ominously.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Hotel de Campveerse Toren** (☎ 50 12 91; www.campveersestoren.nl; Kade 2; d from €116) A smart place in a historic, castle-shaped building right on the waterfront. It offers really comfortable rooms and particularly fabulous views. Occupancy rises with the thermometer, as do prices.

**Hotel 't Waepen van Veere** (☎ 50 12 31; www.waepenvanveere.nl; Markt 23-27; d from €75) Veere's other hotel is on the central square, and it's a small place, with just 11 rooms – although all of them are excellent. It also has an elegant restaurant (mains €16 to €26).

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Veere is an easy bike ride from Middelburg (6km). Otherwise, bus 53 makes the 12-minute run every hour (every two hours on Sunday).

### Domburg

☎ 0118 / pop 1251

Although Domburg is a fairly low-key seaside town by Dutch standards, in summer it's jam-packed. However, it's the **beach** that's the main event. To escape the urban crowds, head south along the tall dunes. Keep going past the golf course for a good 4km.

The **tourist office** (☎ 58 13 42; www.vwwnb.nl; Schuitvlotstraat 32; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun) is near the entrance to town on Roosjesweg.

The staff are experts at ferreting out accommodation.

For information on a 35km bicycle route, the Mantelingen, which begins and ends at Domburg, see p72.

### SLEEPING & EATING

The tourist office has myriad additional accommodation options.

**Camping Hof Domburg** (☎ 58 82 00; info@roompot.nl; Schelpweg 7; camp sites from €10; ☎ year-round) Located west of the centre; sites accommodating up to five people.

**Stayokay Domburg** (☎ 58 12 54; www.stayokay.com/domburg; Duinvlietweg 8; dm from €22.25; ☎ Apr-Oct) A hostel notable for its location in a real castle, complete with moat, 2km east of Domburg and 1km from the beach. Reserve in advance, as the beach is very popular. Bus 53 from Middelburg stops along the N287 near the entrance.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 52 and 53 link Domburg to Middelburg every hour (every two hours on Sunday). Bus 53 continues south along the beaches.

## WATERLAND NEELTJE JANS

Travelling the N57, you can't help but notice the many massive developments of the Delta Project: a succession of huge dykes and dams, designed to avoid a repeat of the many floods. Possibly the most impressive stretch is between Noord Beveland and Schouwen-Duiveland, to the north. The long causeway built atop the massive movable inlets is designed to allow the sea tides in and out of the Oosterschelde. This storm-surge barrier, over 3km long and spanning three inlets and two artificial islands, took 10 years to build, beginning in 1976.

At about the midway point (Haringsvliet), the **Waterland Neeltje Jans** (☎ 111-655 655; www.neeltjelijans.nl; winter/summer €11/16; ☎ 10am-5pm), located by the main surge barrier, is a terrific complex that explains the project in minute detail, with working models, and hilarious public-service films from the '70s (complete with bad hair and funky soundtracks). There's also an exhilarating boat trip that takes you out onto the Oosterschelde for a panoramic view of the barriers and beyond.

Several floors deal with the effects of the floods and show how the entire massive project was built. You can also visit one of the nearby complex pylons of the storm-surge barrier and see how the huge movable gate works.

### THE DELTA PROJECT

Begun in 1958, the Delta Project consumed billions of guilders, millions of labour hours and untold volumes of concrete and rock before it was completed in 1996. The goal was to avoid a repeat of the catastrophic floods of 1953, when a huge storm surge rushed up the Delta estuaries of Zeeland and broke through inland dykes. This caused a serial failure of dykes throughout the region, and much of the province was flooded.

The original idea was to block up the estuaries and create one vast freshwater network. But by the 1960s this kind of sweeping transformation was unacceptable to the Dutch public, now more environmentally aware. So the Oosterschelde was left open to the sea tides, and 3km of movable barriers were constructed that could be lowered ahead of a possible storm surge. This barrier, between Noord-Beveland and Schouwen-Duiveland, is the most dramatic part of the Delta Project and the focus of the Waterland Neeltje Jans, which details the enormous efforts to complete the barrier.

The project raised and strengthened the region's dykes and added a movable barrier at Rotterdam harbour, the last part to be completed. Public opinion later shifted, but large areas of water had already been dammed and made into freshwater lakes. At Veerse Meer (p226) the fishing industry has vanished and been replaced by holidaymakers and sailboats.

The impact of the Delta Project is still being felt. At Biesbosch National Park (p223), the reduction of tides is killing reeds that have grown for centuries. But those who recall the 1953 floods will trade some reeds for their farms any day.

There's an ironic – and ever-tragic – twist to all this. After the 1953 floods, Dutch officials travelled to Louisiana on a fact-finding mission to learn from the levees installed along the Mississippi River. Applying this knowledge directly fed into the actual mechanics of the Delta project.

Fast forward to 2005, and the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster: this time, Louisiana officials travelled to Zeeland to learn from the Delta Project, similarly in the hope of preventing future catastrophes from ever happening again.

The level of tidal control is truly astounding. Operators are able to balance the mix of fresh water draining out into the sea against the tidal influx of sea water to such an extent that they can affect the rate of corrosion on the hulls of container-ships moored in Rotterdam. This seemingly innocuous feat has saved shipping firms millions of dollars in maintenance and repair costs since the sluice operations started.

Bus 104 stops at the Expo on its run between Rotterdam's Spijkennis metro station (25 minutes from Rotterdam CS) and Vlissingen. The buses take about an hour from Rotterdam and 30 minutes from Middelburg and run every 30 minutes.

### SCHOUWEN-DUIVELAND

The middle 'finger' of the Delta, Schouwen-Duiveland, is a compact island of dunes.

#### Zierikzee

☎ 0111 / pop 10,313

Zierikzee grew wealthy in the 14th century from trade with the Hanseatic League, but

things took a turn for the worse in 1576 when a bunch of Spaniards waded over from the mainland at low tide and captured the town, precipitating a long economic decline.

The **tourist office** (☎ 41 24 50; www.vvvschouwen-duiveland.nl; Meelstraat 4; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-1pm Sat Oct-Apr, 10am-3pm Sat May-Sep) can supply you with a list of local rooms for overnight stays; the **post office** (☎ 41 55 55; Poststraat 39; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) offers the usual services, and the **library** (☎ 41 45 48; Haringvlietplein 2; internet per hr €3; ☎ 2-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 9.30am-noon Wed & Sat) has internet access.

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Maritiem Museum** (☎ 45 44 64; Mol 25; combined ticket with town hall adult/child €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) is just off Havenpark. It is in the 's-Gravensteen, a sturdy 16th-century prison that still has its bars. Besides the displays on local seafaring, there's a fine garden out the back.

The **town hall** (☎ 45 44 64; Meelstraat 6-8; combined ticket with Maritiem Museum adult/child €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) has a unique 16th-

century wooden tower topped with a statue of Neptune.

At Oude Haven, at the east end of town, the **Noordhavenpoort** and the **Zuidhavenpoort** are old city gates from the 16th and 14th centuries respectively.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The bus stop is north of the centre, a five-minute walk across the canal along Grachtweg. Bus 132 makes the 30-minute run to Goes at least every 30 minutes. Bus 133 runs to Rotterdam's Zuidplein metro station (the 75-minute ride leaves at least every hour).

#### Westerschouwen

☎ 0111 / pop 18,000

Sheltered by tall dunes, this small town at the west end of Schouwen-Duiveland adjoins a vast park set among the sands and woods. There are hiking and biking trails for outdoors enthusiasts, and, although busy in summer, you can easily find solitude in some of the more remote parts of the park.

The **tourist office** (☎ 65 15 13; Noordstraat 45A; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat), in the neighbouring town of Burgh-Haamstede, can help you with camping, private rooms and hotel accommodation.

Bus 133 from Rotterdam via Zierikzee and Bus 134 from Zierikzee both stop right at the sand dunes. Both run every 30 minutes. Bus 104, the Vlissingen-Rotterdam bus, stops about 2km from Westerschouwen in Burgh-Haamstede.

#### ZEEUWS-VLAANDEREN

Running along the Belgian border south of the Westerschelde, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is an unremarkable place with numerous farms and a few chemical plants.

The many small villages, such as IJzendijk, all have their 'holy trinity' of the Dutch country skyline: a church steeple, a town hall tower and a windmill.

No part of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is joined to the rest of the Netherlands by land. Instead, there are two ferry connections. The Vlissingen-Breskens ferry is a link for the Belgian channel ferry ports.

Foot passengers can travel from Brugge in Belgium by bus 2 to Breskens (75 minutes, hourly). From the port in Vlissingen, catch a bus or ferry to points beyond.

The other ferry route, Perkpolder to Kruieningen on Zuid-Beveland, is primarily useful to local motorists. The ferry (€6 per car) runs every 30 minutes in both directions.

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