

EXPLORE!



Self-Guided Highlights of Holland by Bike

8 days

Netherlands - Trip code CSNL

Self-Guided Highlights of Holland by Bike

On this self-guided exploration of the highlights of Holland by bike our route visits the cultural highlights of Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, Delft and Gouda. Along the way you cycle on the country's superb network of cycle paths and in the countryside you can see typical scenes with polders, dikes, windmills, fields of flowers (in spring), lakes and rivers.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Amsterdam** - Discover this vibrant historic Capital city
- ★ **Green heart of Holland** - a countryside of polders, windmills, villages and meadows
- ★ **Historic towns** - Haarlem, Gouda and Delft
- ★ **Art** - The opportunity throughout the trip to see beautiful works by the Dutch grandmasters

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for anyone who enjoys easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Holiday starts in Amsterdam

If you get here early you may opt to wander around the gorgeous and surprisingly peaceful seventeenth century canal ring area (UNESCO World Heritage Site). If you like bustle, make your way to the city's famous squares: Dam, Rembrandtplein and Leidseplein. Should you prefer to roam off the beaten track, saunter up Brouwersgracht or hire a canal bike and find out what the city looks like from the water. Your bike will be delivered either today or tomorrow morning.



Accommodation: Westcord Art Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Cycle through Kennemerland countryside to Haarlem

You may choose to get an early start and beat the queues at the Van Gogh or Anne Frank museum. Alternatively you wish to move on first thing after breakfast, say "tot ziens!" to amazing Amsterdam and mount your bike to journey through Kennemerland where a great variety of lovely countryside awaits: vast polders, wild(life) gardens, country estates, woods and beautiful peatland. You will stay the night in the elegant city of Haarlem. The attractive city centre offers a wealth of possibilities for shopping, delving into art and culture, or relaxing in cafes and restaurants.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 21 kilometres.



Accommodation: Golden Tulip Lion d'Or (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Ride past colourful flower fields (seasonal) to Leiden

Downtown Haarlem deserves to be thoroughly explored. We recommend a city walk to discover the city's hidden "hofjes". A hofje is a square of old tiny almshouses set around an idyllic courtyard, often built by the church or by private charity to house older people. Also dating back to the Dutch Golden Age, the works of Haarlem painter Frans Hals (group portraiture) and his townsmen including Jacob Ruysdael (land- and seascapes) and Pieter Saenredam (church interiors) are on display at the Frans Hals museum.

In the afternoon get set for a colourful bike trip through the dune and bulb region. Perhaps visit between April and mid-May to capture the flower bulb fields in their full splendour! Tulips, crocuses, daffodils and hyacinths are grown here commercially (for bulb export) and temporarily transform the landscape into one of the country's best-loved tourist attractions. Leiden is Holland's oldest university town, with a very busy cultural events calendar and a friendly city centre with canals, monuments, windmills and museums. The historical botanical gardens get special mention.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres.



Accommodation: Fitland Hotel Leiden (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Cycle through past polders, windmills and pastures to historic Delft

After taking your leave of lively Leiden, peace and quiet will reign once more in today's typically Dutch scenery. Note all the orderly rectangles in this man-made polder landscape (mostly peatland reclamations). Let shining lakes and green pastures, old windmills and farmhouses pass you by whilst pedalling on to the famous city of Delft. The quiet charm of historical Delft is breathtaking. Most will associate Delft with its blue and white hand-painted pottery: Delftware. But did you know that painter Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) lived in Delft all his life? The Vermeer Centre gives illuminating insights into his life, works and city (no original paintings on show here).

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 24 kilometres.



Accommodation: Best Western Museum Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Ride through Holland's 'green heart' to Gouda

This stretch of the cycle route takes you through the 'Groene Hart' area; a protected green belt adjacent to the urban sprawl of the 'Randstad conurbation', made up of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Balancing atop polder dikes, delight in characteristic villages, far horizons and pleasingly strict rectangles cut in fields of vibrant green. As you wander around the city of Gouda at the end of the day, don't miss the gothic town hall (1450); the Weighing House (1667); the romantic inner city canals and the stained glass windows in St. John's Church. Gouda is also famous for making syrup waffles (try one hot!) and candles. If you're travelling in summer, you may like to plan your trip so that you can witness the traditional Thursday morning cheese market at the start of Day 6 (last Thursday in May till last Thursday in August - please check!).

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 34 kilometres.



Accommodation: Best Western Plus Gouda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Continue cycling through the 'green heart' to Woerden

After a hearty breakfast at your hotel, get back on your bike and set off on the longest leg of this bike tour. Still in the 'green heart', the scenery is punctuated by rivers, small villages, meadows, polders and lakes (bird lovers, bring your binoculars). You may be tempted to stop for a sample of Dutch style apple tart! Thus fortified, continue on your way to Woerden.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres.



Accommodation: Best Western Hotel Woerden (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Cycle along the beautiful River Amstel to Amsterdam

Today is a short day so you have time to spend the afternoon in Amsterdam. From Mijdrecht you cycle towards the beautiful River Amstel. Amsterdam took its name from this river and also Amstel beer is named after the river. The Amstel brewery, as a lot of other breweries, was situated close to the Amstel river because clean river water was used to produce the beer. With the river as your guide you will cycle back to Amsterdam.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 47 kilometres.



Accommodation: Westcord Art Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Holiday ends in Amsterdam

After breakfast, the organised part of your cycling holiday comes to an end. Enjoy a big hearty breakfast one last time - don't forget to try chocolate sprinkles! - and then it's time to go home.

Cycling information

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General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 196 km over six days (an average of 33 km per day). We travel mainly on quiet backroads (busier near the major towns) and dedicated cycle paths on flat terrain with occasional inclines. We have graded the route as easy.

Bike included

24 gear Batavus or Gazelle hybrid bike.

Bike information

Your included bike is a 24 gear Batavus or Gazelle hybrid bike and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. Each bike is fitted with one lateral pannier bag (20 litres) and a handlebar bag with map holder. A water bottle holder is included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A lock, pump, spare inner tube and puncture repair kit with tyre levers is included. All you need to bring is your own helmet (or you can hire when booking). You will be required to sign an agreement of care upon receipt of the bike.

Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday. You will be required to pay a refundable deposit upon collection of the e-bike in country. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

Electric bikes (e-bikes) and road bikes are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday. You will be required to pay a refundable deposit upon collection of the e-bike in country. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike or road bike.

Cycling grade

Easy

□

Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a pump, lock, spare inner tube and tyre levers. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bicycle



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Netherlands

Climate

Due to its location, the Netherlands has a typical marine climate. It's not too cold during the winter and not too hot during the summer. In the summer the average temperatures are between 17 - 20C and rainfall is common year round, although dryer between April and September.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Religion

Christianity

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

Bring cycling gear such as quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts and cycle gloves. The wind can be strong in this part of Europe so you should bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A waterproof cycle jacket is recommended in case of rain. A light windproof jacket is always useful.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of baggage as per your airline luggage allowance, maximum 20 kg per person. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage if using public transport so don't overload yourself. Luggage transfers between hotels are normally arranged by the hoteliers. Mark your bags clearly and leave them at the place and time arranged with them. When travelling on public transport you should always take your luggage with you.

Luggage transfer

Included between each hotel.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Local fees

There are a small number of short ferry crossings which are not included and the price is about 1 Euro per person. The ferry between Breskens and Vlissingen is included and a ticket will be provided upon arrival.

Country Information

Netherlands

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price
£18

Water price
£1.2

Foreign Exchange

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can be changed in banks and exchange offices.

Where To Exchange

It's possible to exchange in banks, post offices and exchange offices throughout the country. Many hotels also offer this facility.

ATM Availability

Available in all cities and large towns.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bicycle

Recommended airport

Amsterdam

Flying to your destination

We recommend return flights into Amsterdam.

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Arrival and departure information

At the start of your trip you can fly into Amsterdam Airport or catch the Eurostar there instead. From Amsterdam Schipol train station catch a train into the city centre and from here either walk or take a taxi to your hotel.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Netherlands: Visas are not required by British passports holders, endorsed \British Citizen\. If you hold another type of British nationality, you should check entry requirements. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station. Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers. If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Netherlands

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
