



INTRODUCTION

Amsterdam has more canals than Venice, more bridges than Paris, more bicycles than cars, and perhaps more tolerance than any other city in the world. It's what makes Amsterdam truly unique ... and such a wonderful place to visit.

Because the city is so compact, you can see a lot even if your stay is short—and its sights are as diverse as its residents, including beautiful churches, lovely gardens, and, of course, the infamous Red-Light District.

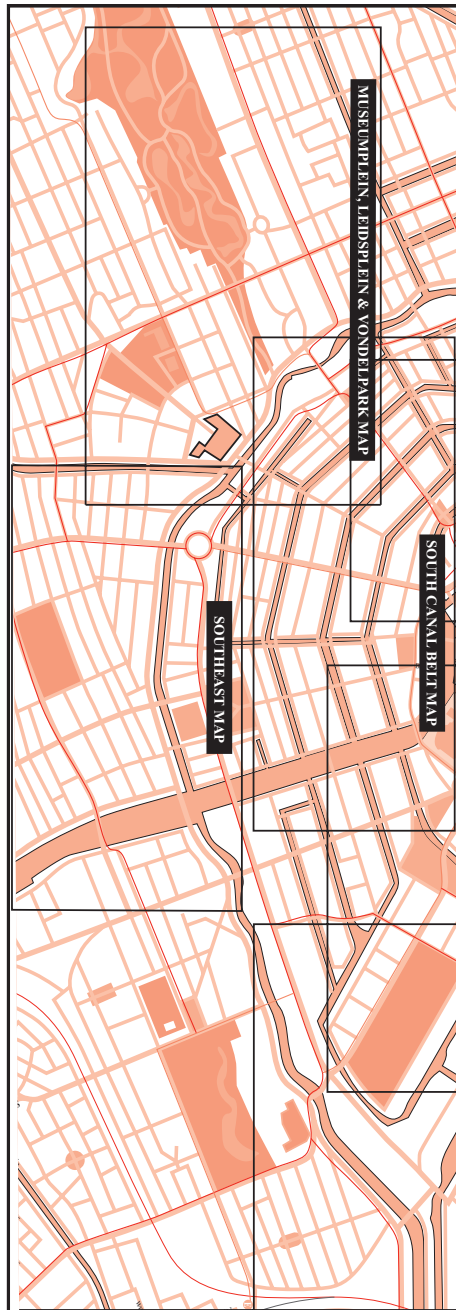
If you're interested in museums, there's something for everyone. The famous Rijksmuseum offers paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, the Stedelijk Museum has contemporary art, and the Torture Museum ... well, how should we say this? ... is filled with stuff you probably didn't need to see!

Cultured, vibrant, fun—and easy to get around—Amsterdam is the perfect European city to explore.

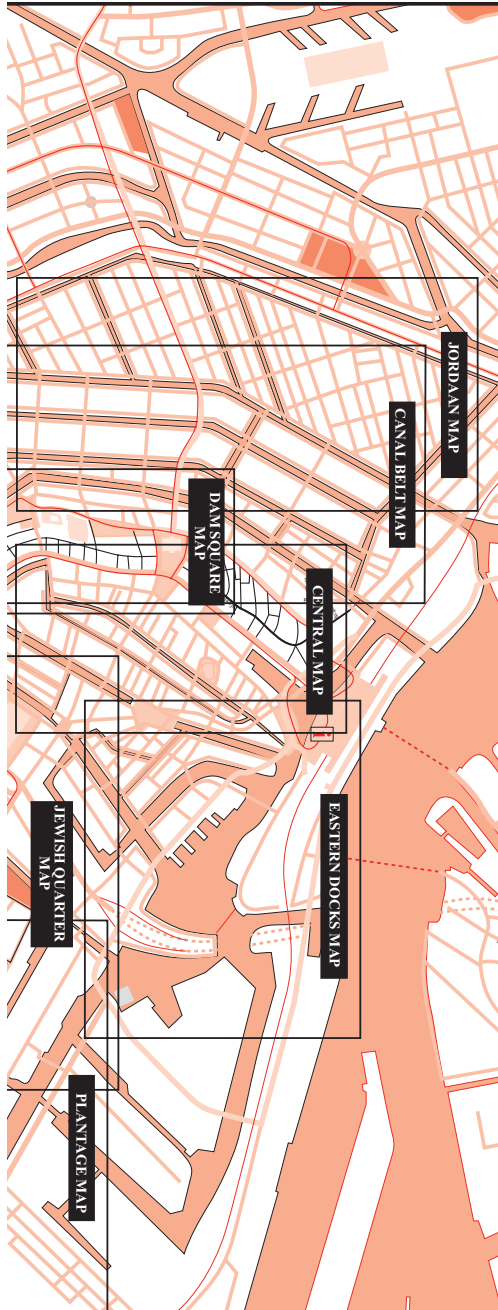
As our title says, this little guide will make your trip to Amsterdam easy. Tuck it into your pocket and head out for a great day of sightseeing: You'll have over 100 places of interest at your fingertips, with insider tips on cafés, restaurants, shops, and outdoor markets. We've also given directions for sight-filled walks around the city, along the canals and, of course, through the "naughty" part of town (this is Amsterdam, after all!).

Forget those large, bulky travel tomes. This handy little pocket guide to Amsterdam is all you need to make your visit enjoyable, memorable—and easy.

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SIGHTS 9



1. SIGHTS



TOP SIGHTS

Canals: From the Singel to the Prinsengracht, Amsterdam's canals and the Golden Age homes that line them make Amsterdam a unique destination.

Begijnhof: The courtyard of this 14th-century hofje (almshouse) is a peaceful getaway from the bustling city. **Anne Frankhuis:** Anne Frank's hiding place, where she penned her famous diary, comes to life in this poignant museum.

Rijksmuseum: The Royal Museum is one of the world's greatest art museums with masterpieces by Rembrandt, Vermeer, and countless others.

van Gogh Museum: A study of not only van Gogh's art, but also his fascinating life.

Amsterdams Historisch Museum: Follow the history of Amsterdam from fishing village to modern metropolis.

Red-Light District: The oldest profession in the world sells itself (legally) in a new type of window-shopping.

Museum Amstelkring: Gorgeous clandestine church in, of all places, an attic.

Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art: One of the world's most prestigious modern-art museums.

Coffeeshops: What's that smell? It certainly isn't coffee. Because of Amsterdam's tolerant attitude to certain drugs, you'll find them "served" in the city's numerous coffeeshops.



Central Amsterdam

Centraal Station (Central Station)

Built in the 1880s in the neo-Renaissance style, the brick façade of this massive train station features scenes of trade and travel. It's the transportation hub of the city, with over 1,500 trains arriving and departing daily. Take a look at all the fascinating destinations on the schedule board.

Restaurant Tip:

Eerste Klas (1e Klas)
Platform 2b in Centraal Station
Tel. 020/625-0131
Open daily 9am-10pm

This beautiful former first-class lounge in Centraal Station will make you forget all those bad cafés and restaurants in other train stations. Even if you don't want to have a meal here, come in, have a drink, and admire the beautiful Art Nouveau interior. Moderate (drinks) to Expensive (dinner).

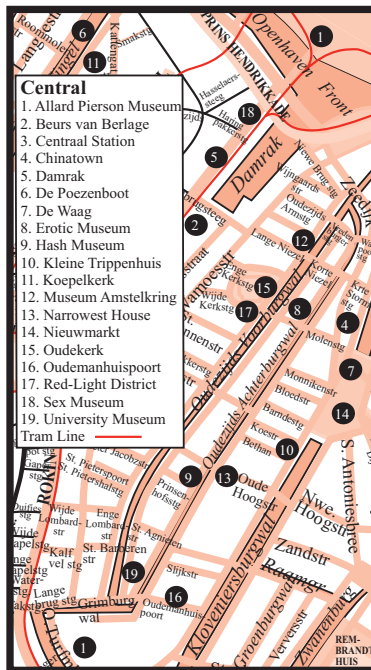
Stationsplein

In front of Centraal Station

This square is always busy with tourists, locals, street performers, and "entrepreneurs" trying to sell you something. Trams depart from here on the many lines originating at Centraal Station.

Tourist Information Center (VVV)

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*Open daily 9am-5pm
www.visitamsterdam.nl*

The main tourist information center (VVV) is right outside Centraal Station. The friendly and helpful staff all speak English. They'll assist you with

XXX

You'll see **XXX** on places throughout the Red-Light District, and I'm sure you'll know what it means. But you'll also see XXX on the city's coat of arms, flags, and street posts. That's because it's been the symbol of the city for centuries. Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Amsterdam, was crucified on a cross in the shape of an X. Queen Wilhelmina decreed in 1947 that the meaning of XXX would be the virtues of the city: Compassion, resolution, and heroism. Each X is also said to represent, and protect Amsterdam from, three disasters that the city has endured: the plague, floods and fires.

information on public transportation, current events, and day trips. And if you don't have a place to sleep, they'll find one for you for a fee of €3.

Damrak

From Centraal Station to Dam Square

The first street that most travelers to Amsterdam explore is Damrak, the main street connecting Centraal Station and Dam Square. It's filled with fast food outlets and souvenir shops selling everything from wooden shoes to Dutch chocolate. It's probably Amsterdam's least attractive street. It was a river until 1222 when the Amstel River was dammed, and that's how the city got its name.

Victoria Hotel

1-5 Damrak at the corner of Prins Hendrikkade

If you take a close look at the façade of this hotel along the street Prins Hendrikkade, you'll see two small 17th-century homes surrounded by the rest of this historic building. It's said that the owners refused to sell their homes so the builder just decided to build around them.

De Poezenboot*(Cat Boat)**40 Singel**Tel. 020/625-8794**Open daily 1pm-3pm**Admission: Donation**www.poezenboot.nl*

In 1966, Henriette van Weelde decided to take in a cat and her kittens. Things sort of got out of hand. Henriette kept taking in more and more cats until she couldn't fit all of them in her house. Ultimately, she established a refuge for abandoned and stray cats. The Cat Boat is the only animal sanctuary in the Netherlands that literally floats. It's on a houseboat in the Singel and has become a popular tourist destination. Who said cats don't like water?

Restaurant Tip:**De Silveren Spiegel***4-6 Kattengat**Tel. 020/624-6589**Open daily 6pm-11pm. Lunch by reservation only**www.desilverenspiegel.com*

Admit it: You have a bad impression of Dutch cooking. You'll change your mind after enjoying modern Dutch cooking made with regional products at this elegant and romantic restaurant (the name

means "the silver mirror"). It's located in a quaint 1614 building not too far from Centraal Station, next to the domed Koepelkerk. This is Dutch food at its best, including fillet of cod glazed with apple, carrot, leek, and celery purée, and roast suckling pig with gin sauce. There's an interesting story connected to this restaurant: During the Nazi occupation, while SS officers were dining here, the manager hid a family of eleven Jews upstairs. You can still visit the small door leading to the hiding place. Expensive.

Koepelkerk*1 Kattengat**Open for conventions only*

This large domed building was a Lutheran church (and the subject of a van Gogh painting). Now it's the convention center for the Renaissance Hotel across the street.

Sex Museum*18 Damrak (near Centraal Station)**Tel. 020/622-8376**Open daily 10am-11:30pm**Admission: €3**www.sexmuseumamsterdam.com*

Eroticism from Greco-Roman times to today, from erotic art to ancient phallic symbols (can

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you say "dildos"?) to vintage porn films. Just the type of museum you'd expect in this tolerant city.

Tourist Tram

*From Prins Hendrikkade (across from Victoria Hotel)
Tel. 0900/423-1100
Sundays July-Sept noon-4pm
Admission: €5
<http://www.museumtram-amsterdam.nl>*

This 1920s tram circles the center city in a 50-minute tour.

Beurs van Berlage

*(Berglage Stock Exchange)
277 Damrak (entrance on Beursplein)
Tel. 020/530-4141
Open Tues-Sun 10am-6pm
Admission: €5
www.beursvanberlage.nl*

Hendrik Berlage was the father of modern Dutch architecture. This building with its large bell tower was completed in 1903, and housed the Dutch Stock Exchange. Today, it's the home of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, the Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra, and the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. Its meeting hall has been used for royal weddings. There's a permanent exhibit on the history of the stock

exchange, but the building itself is the real star.

Restaurant Tip:

Beurs van Berlage Café

*Beursplein
Tel. 020/638-3914
Open Tues-Sun 10am-6pm
Looking onto the Beursplein, this beautiful café with tile-wall tableaux in the former stock exchange is open for lunch. A great place to enjoy a drink. Moderate.*

Museum Amstelkring

*(Our Dear Lord in the Attic Museum)
40 Oudezijds Voorburgwal at Heintje Hoekssteeg (on the edge of the Red-Light District)
Tel. 020/624-6604
Open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 11am-5pm
Admission: €6
www.museumamstelkring.nl*

After the Protestant Reformation, Catholics were forced to worship secretly in clandestine churches. In the mid-1660s, three canal houses were purchased for the purpose of housing a "secret" church. On the ground floor is the merchant's shop and 19th-century kitchen. On the first floor you'll see the formal reception room as it was in the 17th century. The priest's room and the confessional are

on the second floor. The highlight is in the attic where you'll be shocked to find a beautiful church complete with pews that can seat 150 people, an 18th-century organ, and an ornate Baroque altar.

Allard Pierson Museum

127 Oude Turfmarkt
Tel. 020/525-2556
Open Tues-Fri 10am-5pm,
Sat-Sun 1pm-5pm
Admission: €5
www.uba.uva.nl/apm

This former bank building now houses a collection of archeological finds from Rome, Greece, and Egypt, including statuary, pottery, and mummies.

SHOPPING TIP

De Klompenboer

51 Sint
Antoniesbreestraat/20
Nieuwezijds
Voorburgwal
Tel. 020/623-0632
Open Mon 1pm-6pm,
Tues-Wed-Fri 10am-
6pm, Thurs 10am-
9pm, Sat 10am-5pm

You just have to have a pair of klompen (wooden shoes), don't you? This place has a huge selection.

Zuiderkerk

(South Church)
72 Zuiderkerkhof (at Sint
Antoniesbreestraat)
Tel. 020/622-2962. Tower:
020/689-2565
Open Mon 11am-4pm, Tues-
Wed-Fri 9am-4pm, Thurs
9am-8pm
Admission: Free

This was the first Protestant church built after the Reformation in the early 1600s. Today, it houses a free exhibit on the history of urban planning. The church has a world-famous carillon (bell tower), which you can climb for a small price (guided tours leave on the hour between June and October, Wed.-Sun. 2 p.m.-4 p.m.).

Nieuwmarkt

(New Market)
At the north end of
Kloveniersburgwal and the
south end of Geldersekaade

A marketplace since the 15th century, you can visit the interesting antique market every Sunday during the summer.

Restaurant Tip:

Café Bern
9 Nieuwmarkt
Tel. 020/622-0034
Open daily 4pm-1am
No credit cards

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The Swiss aren't the only ones who can properly do fondue. Here you'll find cheese fondue with a Dutch touch. They've been serving fondue and beer here forever. It's not for everyone, but it sure can be a fun experience. Inexpensive.

De Waag

(The Waag)

4 Nieuwmarkt

Tel. 020/557-9898

Open daily

Admission: Depends on the exhibit

www.waag.org

In the center of Nieuwmarkt is this former city gate and commercial weigh house (from which it takes its name). It looks like a castle and dates back to 1488. Its lively café is in great contrast to its former uses: It was once a prison, the site of public executions, an operating theater for medical students, and, during the Nazi occupation, a processing house for those to be shipped to concentration camps. (It's here that Rembrandt is said to have gotten inspiration for his painting, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Jan Deijman*, now on display in the Amsterdam Historical Museum.) The multimedia center **Waag Society for Old and New Media** is also housed here (Tel. 020/557-9898).

Food on the Run Tip:

In de Waag

4 Nieuwmarkt

Tel. 020/422-7772

Open daily 10am-1am

www.indewaag.nl

This café and restaurant in the historic De Waag is a great place to take a break. There's a large selection of reading material (some in English), so you can sip a cup of coffee or glass of wine or beer and catch up on the news or local activities. The café is lively and the restaurant, lit by 300 candles, is quite romantic. Moderate – Expensive (dinner).

Kleine Trippenhuys

(House of Mr. Trip's Coachman)

26 Kloveniersburgwal

Not open to the public

The widest old house in Amsterdam (72 feet) is located at 29 Kloveniersburgwal and now houses the Dutch Academy of Science. It was built in 1660 by the Trip brothers, wealthy merchants and ammunition dealers. Legend has it that the coachman said that he'd be happy with a house as wide as his master's door, so Mr. Trip had this home built for his servant. At less than eight feet wide, it's one of the narrowest houses in the city.

The Narrowest House
22 Oude Hoogstraat
Not open to the public

This house is the narrowest in the city (despite claims by others) and that's saying a lot in

this city of narrow houses! Its three-and-one-half stories are only six feet wide and 15 feet long. It's said to have once been a storage area for dead bodies.



Red Light District

De Walletjes/De Wallen
(Red-Light District)
Behind Dam Square between
Oudezijds Voorburgwal and
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
www.red-light-district.nl

A new spin on window-shopping! Prostitution has been regulated and, of course, taxed in Amsterdam since 1984, and even has its own union. Along the narrow streets of the Red-Light District, women and some men wait in windows for their next customer. The storefront rooms have curtains that are closed when "business" is being conducted. You'll see lots of foreign businessmen and tourists milling around (many very drunk). Be careful at night as the area is a prime pickpocket spot. By the way, don't even think about taking photos. Your camera will likely be confis-

cated. (Can you believe that it has a web site?)

Chinatown
From the Red-Light District to
Nieuwmarkt (and along
Geldersekade)
Metro to Nieuwmarkt

SHOPPING TIP

Condomerie Het
Gulden Vlies
141 Warmoesstraat
Tel. 020/627-4174
Open Mon-Sat 11am-
6pm
www.condomerie.nl

What would the Red-Light District be without a condom shop? Hundreds of different kinds of condoms along with lubricants and other "gifts." Only in Amsterdam!

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Amsterdam's "Chinatown" is a misnomer as it's also home to Indonesian, Thai, and Malaysian establishments. Chinatown used to be entirely in the Red-Light District, but today it has expanded to the surrounding area (especially to the Nieuwmarkt). Ducks hang in the windows of the many Chinese restaurants, and you'll also find many Thai and Indonesian restaurants in the area. The new **Chinese Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist Temple** on Zeedijk can be visited daily from noon-5 p.m. (Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.) and also has a vegetarian restaurant.

Sex and Amsterdam

From sex clubs to live sex shows (especially the famous **Casa Rosso** at 106 Oudezijds Achterburgwal), sex is a big part of Amsterdam's tourist industry. Locals don't bat an eye at any of this, but you might. If you're not interested in seeing any of it, stay away from the Red-Light District and the area around it. You can easily visit Amsterdam's other wonderful sights without encountering any of the sex industry.

Erotic Museum

*54 Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Tel. 020/624-7303
Open Thurs-Mon 11am-1am*

(Fri-Sat until 2am)

Admission: €4

It's appropriate that the Erotic Museum is located in the Red-Light District. The history of S&M, porn, sex shows-you get the idea-are on display at this museum. Lots of mannequins doing naughty things. It proudly displays erotic drawings by John Lennon.

Coffeeshops/Smart Shops

Recreational drugs are a big part of Amsterdam's appeal to some tourists. **Coffeeshops** are not cafés. You drink coffee, smoke cigarettes and have a snack at a café. You buy and smoke marijuana at a coffeeshop. How can you tell the difference? Other than the telltale smell, most coffeeshops display a Rastafarian flag (red, yellow and green). Sanctioned shops display a sticker that says "Coffeeshop BCD." Marijuana is sold openly in Amsterdam (although it and all hard drugs remain illegal). About 250 cafés are licensed to sell a maximum of 5 grams per adult. Coffeeshops feature lists of types of marijuana, hashish and stickie (a hashish joint rolled with tobacco) from which to choose. It's taxed and regulated. Some shops even have delivery service! They sell cakes, muffins, brownies and

chocolates made with hash or marijuana with names like "space cakes" or "space sweets." **Smart Shops** sell hallucinogens (especially "magic mushrooms") and "herbal enhancers" that range from harmless herbal supplements to stimulants that mimic such drugs as Ecstasy. Don't smoke pot on the street as it's considered rude. Never buy drugs from street dealers, and if you choose to partake in the drugs available at these shops, make sure you know what you're getting yourself into. There are many locations of **Bulldog**, said to be the oldest coffeeshop in the city (www.bulldog.nl). Some other coffeeshops around the city include:

- **De Supermarkt**, 69 Frederik Hendrikstraat, www.desupermarkt.net
- **Grey Area**, 2 Oude Leliestraat, www.greyarea.nl
- **La Tertulia**, 312 Prinsengracht, www.coffeeshopamsterdam.com
- **Siberië**, 11 Brouwersgracht, www.siberie.net

Hash Marihuana Hemp Museum

(Hash Marijuana Hemp Museum)
148 Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Tel. 020/623-5961
Open daily 11am-10pm

Admission: €6
www.hashmuseum.com

Everything you ever wanted to know about cannabis-complete with grow room!

Het KinderKookKafé

(Kids' Café)
193 Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Tel. 020/625-3257
Open Sat 6pm-8pm for dinner,
Sun 5pm-6pm for high tea
Admission: €2.50 ages 2-4, €5
ages 5-12, €8 over 12

This cooking school is solely for children. At the café, children between the ages of five and twelve try out their culinary skills on customers. Some seats are in the shape of fried eggs, and the artwork is made of colored pasta and candy. If you're over 100, you get to eat free. It's advisable to book ahead as there is often a waiting list.

Oude Kerk

(Old Church)
Oudekerksplein
Tel. 020/625-8284
Open Mon-Sat 11am-5pm,
Sun 1pm-5pm
Admission: €5
www.oudekerk.nl

Oude Kerk (Old Church) is exactly that. It's Amsterdam's

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oldest church. Parts of it date back to the 13th century. Today this Gothic basilica is almost totally surrounded by the Red-Light District. The church is known for its musical concerts. It has a world-famous organ dating back to 1724 and a restored 47-bell carillon. The organ stands on marble pillars that were cleaned and restored in the late 1970s. It's said that you can see the restorer's face in the marble (if you've smoked enough pot) to the left above floor level. Its beautiful stained-glass windows (depicting the death of the Virgin Mary), decorated pillars, 15th-century carved choir stalls and painted ceiling make this landmark a must for all visitors. There's a great view of the city if you want to climb up the 16th-century bell tower (guided tours). The church is frequently used for exhibitions, and carillon concerts are held frequently.

Oudemanhuispoort

*(Old Men's Home Alley)
Between Oudezijds Achterburgwal
and Kloveniersburgwal*

Once an old men's home, today it's part of the University of Amsterdam. It's Amsterdam's version of les bouquinistes, those little green stands along the Seine River in Paris that sell old postcards and books. Here, the covered walkway has small red-shuttered stalls selling ancient (and some not-so-ancient) books.

Food on the Run Tip:

Puccini Bomboni

*17 Staalstraat
Tel. 020/626-5474
Open Tues-Sat 9am-6pm, Sun
noon-6pm
www.puccinibomboni.com*

Calling all chocoholics! You can watch them make fabulous sweets (all made without artificial ingredients) and then buy lots of them to eat.

University Museum

*231 Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Tel. 020/525-3339
Open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
Admission: Free*

You can visit the oldest building of the University of Amsterdam and its medieval chapel.