

AMSTERDAM

Founded in 1270 on the Amstel River, Amsterdam is known as the "Venice of the North" for its 160 canals and 1000 bridges. The Golden Age of Amsterdam was the seventeenth century, when the Dutch were masters of the seas and Rembrandt produced his masterpieces. Today, Amsterdam still evokes that great age with its 7000 protected houses and buildings in the historical city center.

TRANSPORTATION



There are many ways of getting around Amsterdam; streetcars, buses, and the metro are cheap and efficient. Since the city is so compact it's also very convenient and pleasant to walk or go by bike. Some places where you can rent bikes: **MACBIKE**, Houtkopersburgwal, 1011 LL; **Damstraat rent-a-bike**, Pieter Jacobsz Dwarsstraat 11, 1012 HK. You can also rent watercycles (for 2 to 4 people) to explore sights and attractions by water.

BANKS AND CURRENCY



Banks are generally open Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4/5:00 pm. You can also exchange money at exchange offices indicated by the letters GWK, open Monday through Saturday 8:00 am-8:00 pm and Sundays 10:00 am- 4:00 pm, or at the Central Station, open 24 hours.

Amsterdam's currency is the Euro. Coins in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 cents and 1 & 2 Euros. Bank notes of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 Euros are legal tender.



POSTAGE

Post offices are open 8:30 am- 5:00 pm weekdays, and some are open 8:30- noon Saturdays. You can also buy stamps from tobacco shops and kiosks selling postcards and souvenirs.



SHOPPING

The most famous shopping streets in the city are the Kalverstraat, the Nieuwendijk, and the Leidsestraat, but there are also many smaller, specialized shops. There is one that sells nothing but toothbrushes, and another that sells only beads. The Spiegel Quarter by the Rijksmuseum has many antique shops, or you can browse the flea market on the Waterlooplein. The best buys in Amsterdam are Delft and other pottery, and diamonds.



EATING

Almost every cuisine in the world is represented in Amsterdam, but if you specifically want Dutch cooking, look for the **Neerlands Dis** sign (a red, white and blue soup terrine) which signifies restaurants serving Dutch specialties. These Dutch specialties include salt herring, pea soup, sauerkraut, curly kale with sausage, steamed eel, beans and bacon, and ham and asparagus. But the most famous national dish has an Indonesian flavor, invoking the days of the Dutch colonial empire: *rijsttafel* ("rice table") is a potpourri of hot and cold dishes arranged around a steaming bowl of rice. For a quick lunch go to a *broodjeswinkel* (sandwich shop), or try a floating restaurant, where you can combine meals with scenery. There are also many restaurants that offer a tourist menu for a fixed price.

Some restaurants to try for authentic Dutch cooking: **De Boemerang**, Weteringschans 171, tel. 234251; **Hollands Glorie**, Kerkstraat 220-222, tel. 244764; **De Groene Lantaerne**, Haarlemmerstraat 43, tel. 192452.

You shouldn't miss a typical Amsterdam "brown café", where you can try the Dutch specialty drink *genever*, strong, tart, and served ice-cold in tulip glasses. The brown cafés are open from 4:00 pm to 1:00 am (2:00 am on weekends).



NIGHTLIFE

Many of the city's nightclubs are located in the Rembrantsplein-Leidseplein area. The magazine "Amsterdam this Week" will give visitors some idea of the events going on and clubs to visit.



MUSEUMS

Amsterdam has over 50 museums. Some of the more famous are the **Rijksmuseum**, containing the largest art collection in the Netherlands; the **Vincent Van Gogh** museum, which houses the world's largest collection of his works, and also works by Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, and other contemporaries of Van Gogh's; the **Stedelijk** museum, with a modern art collection of paintings, sculptures, videos, and photography; and the **Anne Frank House**, where she wrote her famous diary during the Nazi occupation in 1942-44.

National Emergency Alarm Number: **06-11** (police, ambulance, fire)