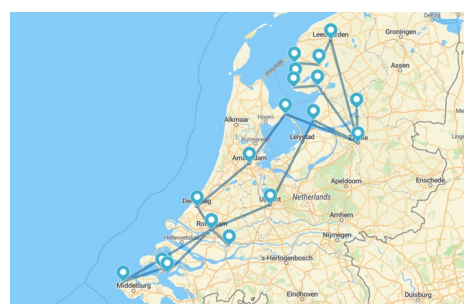




Netherlands, 11 Days · Tailor-made by car

## Route through Holland, the Land of Water

If anything characterises Holland, it's the country's determination and audacity to expand its natural borders beyond the mighty power of the sea. A historic battle of the Dutch people against the fury of water that now means that a quarter of the country's surface sits on land reclaimed from the North Sea. An incredible feat of engineering that began in the seventeenth century with the drainage of the land occupied today by the Beemster polder, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and which still keeps the ferocity of the sea at bay with impressive constructions such as the Afsluitdijk Dam or the Delta Works. The charismatic "Tour through Holland, the land of water" is one of the most stunning and surprising road trips in the whole of Europe. A truly special itinerary that will take you closer to the Dutch soul and the amazing history of a country forever linked to water. And it's also one of the most beautiful eco-tourism routes in the whole of Europe. At the wheel, you'll discover romantic villages full of traditions such as Giethoorn and the so-called Eleven Cities Tour (Friesland); idyllic windmill landscapes such as those in Kinderdijk; beautiful tulip-swatched fields and amazing nature parks like Weerribben-Wieden and De Biesbosch; picture-postcard lakes such as Beemster and Schermer; and ancient 'dry islands' such as Schokland and Urk (Flevoland). The "Tour through Holland, Land of Water" is also an invitation to enjoy life, to savour delicious Dutch cuisine and to discover fascinating cities beyond Amsterdam, such as Utrecht, Rotterdam and The Hague. Join us on this packed itinerary and discover the Holland shaped by water and the prosperity brought by trade; the rural Holland of centennial windmills and stunningly verdant meadows; and the Holland of beautiful canals, charming cafes and restaurants, endless cultural offerings and stunning art from the great Dutch maestros.



NATURE

CULTURAL

**Departure date:** Departures from June 2026 till June 2027

**From:** Cork, Shannon, Dublin

### Travel details

## DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - AMSTERDAM

Flight departure from the city of origin to Amsterdam.

Arrival and rental car pick-up.

Your adventure on Dutch soil begins here! The vibrant, active and creative city of Amsterdam has for decades been known as one of the world's top tourist destinations. It certainly doesn't lack attractions. Marked by legendary canals and considered one of the most interesting cultural hotspots in Europe, the city surprises travellers with magnificent works of art by the great Dutch maestros sitting alongside the latest international trends. Its modern and cosmopolitan atmosphere blends perfectly with its unique historical feel, dotted with stately mansions built in the Golden Age and the unmistakable beauty of its barge-filled canals. A city modeled by water that invites the traveler to explore it on foot, by bicycle and by boat. Soak up the city's vibe in its famed Museum Quarter, where you'll find iconic landmarks such as the Van Gogh Museum, the Anne Frank House, the Hermitage Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the Rembrandt House, as well as traditional bars and quaint 'bruin cafes', lively street markets, traditional shops and designer stores... And in the evening, enjoy romantic views of the city from the water and under the moonlight. Sail along the famous Singel, Herengracht, Keizergracht and Prinsengracht canals and discover the beautiful bridges along the way! Once back on dry land, soak up the atmosphere of the charming terraces that line the canals.

Overnight stay in Amsterdam.

## DAY 2 · AMSTERDAM - BEEMSTER AND SCHERMER LAKES - AMSTERDAM

More time to explore the cosmopolitan capital of the Netherlands. We recommend a daytime visit to the beautiful lakes of Beemster and Schermer. You'll step on land reclaimed from the sea where the mixture of technology and ingenious drainage works have shaped a natural area of amazing landscapes and a host of fauna. You'll definitely be surprised! After a 35-minute drive, more or less, we'll reach our first stop: the Beemster polder and its beautiful inland lake. The polder perfectly exemplifies how the Dutch have fought off the waters over the centuries. Beemster is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, described as "one of the greatest man-made masterpieces". After visiting beautiful country farms and historic villages, we'll head towards Lake Schermer, declared a World Heritage by UNESCO and located just about 15 minutes away. You seriously have to discover the history linked to this beautiful place, which involved the latest creation of polders. A masterful initiative that was possible thanks to the 52 windmills that turned this inner lake into solid ground. (Note: A different way to get to know these lands is to rent an electric boat in Schermer. For foodies, a visit to the Stoer restaurant in the Beemster polder is a must). Today is also a great chance to cycle through stunningly verdant meadows or visit the Schermerhorn mill-museum. (Note: If you have time, we recommend visiting the mill-museum. The guided tour will show you how a mill works, how the polders were drained in the Golden Age, and how a miller and his family lived. At the end of the visit, which also features a video played in several languages, you can have a quick snack and drink at the museum itself. Admission not included. Check opening hours and book in advance). Back in Amsterdam, you can continue soaking up its unmistakable atmosphere and savouring its delicious and innovative culinary proposals. Overnight stay in Amsterdam.

### DAY 3 · AMSTERDAM - ENKHUIZEN - AFSLUITDIJK - FRIESLAND - ZWOLLE

After breakfast, one of the most intense and attractive days of this fantastic "Route through Holland, the Land of Water" lies ahead. Off we go!

We'll head up to the north of the country, famous for having a long list of unforgettable destinations related to the sheer might of water and Dutch people's determination to control it and reclaim land. Holland has been waging its own battle against water for centuries in order to expand the country's borders. The result: a quarter of the Netherlands is made up of land reclaimed from the North Sea. Amazing! A legendary and unprecedented battle that has been helped by the most cutting-edge engineering and the gritty Dutch spirit. Then back on the road.

Our first stop will be Enkhuisen, a small but fascinating town about one hour north of Amsterdam. As soon as you arrive, you'll feel like time has stood still. Marvel at the typically rural cottages and soak up the maritime atmosphere of this part of the country! On the shore of Lake IJsselmeer, it could be said that this diminutive fishing village has become a living museum in miniature, reminding visitors of bygone life beside the Zuiderzee. Get ready to see, feel and experience what life was like before the Afsluitdijk turned the Zuiderzee into the IJsselmeer!

We recommend a visit to the Zuiderzee Museum to get a full insight into the history of the province and to see the largest collection of wooden fishing boats in Holland. (Note: Admission not included. From spring to October, the outdoor area is open to the public, where you can take boat trips and see buildings from the golden age of the area and houses transported from their original locations). Onward with our journey north. After about twenty-five minutes on the road, you'll arrive at a huge dam with an unpronounceable name: the legendary Afsluitdijk. You'll be astonished to see how it still keeps the fury of the sea at bay. You're looking at one of the most famous engineering works in the Netherlands. Cross the world's most famous dam and feel the power of the water! The 32-kilometre dike (the A-7 motorway) that connects the provinces of Friesland and North Holland is one of the most amazing roads you'll ever drive along. For the more daring, another option is to cycle along the dike (there's a great bike lane). (Note: On the dike itself, you'll see a monument in honour of Cornelys Lely, an engineer who designed the drainage plan of Flevoland. You'll also come across a restaurant and an observation tower, from where you'll get the best photos of the area). From this year, you'll also find a new project waiting for you at the gateway to Friesland: the Wadden Sea Centre. This Centre is located at the end of the dike and provides an interactive experience all about the Wadden Sea, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It explains how the dike encourages fish migration, as well as talking about the area around Lake IJssel and the evolution and changes seen by the Afsluitdijk dam and its surroundings over the years. For a true adrenaline rush, you could have a go at hang-gliding to get a bird's-eye view of the wonderful countryside nearby. Aside from that, a comprehensive audio guide is available in several languages on the benefits of aquatic engineering and the future plans of the dam. We'll round the day off today in the province of Friesland, which is dotted with lakes and green areas that are the perfect backdrop for some well-deserved relaxation and delicious Dutch cuisine. Overnight stay in Zwolle.

#### ● DAY 4 · PROVINCE OF FRIESLAND (LEEWARDEN - SPNEEK - MAKKUN - HINDELOOPEN - STAVOREN - SLOTEN - WOU DAGEMAAL) - GIETHOORN - ZWOLLE

Today is all about exploring the stunning province of Friesland. A unique place where you can enjoy countless leisure and entertainment ideas. We recommend driving along part of the famous "Eleven Cities Route", an itinerary that shot to fame when locals would travel from one city to another by skating along the frozen canals. Must-visits are the towns of Leeuwarden, Sneek and Sloten. And if you have time, we also recommend a trip to the enchanting towns of Makkun, Hindeloopen and Stavoren. A different option is to visit the steam pumping station of Woudagemaal, another of the landmark hydraulic constructions in this "Route through Holland, the Land of Water". Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for its history and architectural style, the station was built in 1920 and is the only one in the world with such features currently in operation. (Note: You'll be surprised to learn that Woudagemaal is capable of pumping four million litres of water per minute in the direction of the IJsselmeer. Open to the public, the station offers the traveller interesting itineraries with self-guide in nine languages, a 3D animation and interactive displays explaining its operation. The Visitor Centre has stunning panoramic views over the IJsselmeer and Lemmer Bay. What's more, you can rent out a little electric boat to see it from the water). We'll round the day off in the romantic town of Giethoorn, affectionately known by many Dutch people as the "Venice of the North". Sail around the most picturesque town in the Netherlands! Nestled in an idyllic setting dotted with small lakes, canals, reed beds and forests, this picture-postcard place is famous for its thatched houses (that can only be seen from the water) and its 170 wooden bridges. Savouring its fantastic cuisine on the terraces overlooking the water allows the traveller to understand the Dutch essence and the beauty of life surrounded by canals. Overnight stay in Zwolle.

#### ● DAY 5 · ZWOLLE - GIETHOORN - WEERRIBBEN-WIEDEN NATIONAL PARK - ZWOLLE

After breakfast, and if you have time, you can explore the nearby Giethoorn.

Today will be a day for amazing views, as admiring the sunrise in one of Holland's most beautiful locations is always worthwhile.

The city wins over even the most experienced traveller with rural scenery that seems to have been plucked from a romantic canvas. You'll be surprised to learn how the extraction of peat gave rise to lakes and ponds. And these islands soon became the home to stunning thatched cottages framed in a wooded landscape of unlimited verdant tones. Make sure you explore Giethoorn aboard a typical 'punter', a silent boat propelled with a long oar by a 'punteren' (the equivalent of a gondolier in Venice). Nature lovers are in luck, as very close to this charming town is the well-known Weerribben-Wieden National Park, one of the largest freshwater wetlands in Europe. Its 6,000 hectares is home to one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in Europe, taking on different shades according to the season. Charge up your camera as you'll be taking hundreds of pictures! Its impressive reed beds and stunning lakeside villages will be one of the most beautiful images you'll see in Holland. An undoubted haven for your spirit. (Note: In recent years, there has been a huge increase in outdoor activities on offer here. During your visit to the Natural Park, you can enjoy water sports and rent canoes and rowboats to sail through the irrigation ditches, canals and lakes. And riding a bike!, a Dutch classic. We recommend the bike routes of "Wieden" and "Weerribben"). Overnight stay in Zwolle.

## DAY 6 · ZWOLLE - SCHOKLAND - URK - PROVINCE OF FLEVOLAND - UTRECHT

Bid farewell to Zwolle as we head towards Schokland and Urk. Get ready to discover the most authentic fishing villages in Holland! You'll be amazed to see that they're actually on dry islands! As you'll soon find out, Holland's tireless struggle to regain land from the sea has given shape to unusual landscapes such as the centuries-old 'dry islands' of Schokland and Urk. Located on the Noordoostpolder polder, in Flevoland, these islands were in ancient times an important safe haven to take refuge from the ever-threatening Zuiderzee. Today, these two islands merge into the nearby landscape, separated only by a surprising ring of trees that surrounds them and that will remind you of the former border that once separated the mainland from the wild waters. Savour the delicious local fish dishes while you let your imagination run wild! The area is home to archaeological sites dating back more than 4,000 years.

Back on the road.

If there's one thing that proves the ingenuity and perseverance of the Dutch people, it's Flevoland.

Did you know that this beautiful Dutch region stems from the largest polder-building project in the world? This is the only region in the country that was completely regained from the sea. Less than a century ago, Flevoland was totally awash with water. Discover life in a place completely reclaimed from the sea!

The construction of the famous Afsluitdijk Dam gave life to this province of stunning landscapes dotted with 'dry islands' and charming cities such as Almere and Lelystad. We'll finish today in the beautiful city of Utrecht. This rough diamond combines its historical wealth and lively university atmosphere with beautiful circular channels (singels). Overnight stay in Utrecht.

## DAY 7 · UTRECHT - ROTTERDAM

You'll wake up today in the beautiful historic city of Utrecht. Founded by the Romans and known throughout the world for the famous Treaty of Utrecht (1715), this central city receives visitors with open arms. Lively and bustling, Utrecht spreads out around the omnipresent Dom Tower, the city's main landmark and the highest bell tower in the country. Visible from anywhere in the old town, its imposing demeanour and the unmistakable sound of its bells will fascinate you. Utrecht is famous for its unique circular canals (singels), its enchanting coffee shops and charming terraces, its hundreds of monuments, churches and convents, its picturesque squares and beautiful parks, its imaginative cultural and gastronomic offerings, and an extensive list of excellent museums such as the Dick Bruna House, Catharijneconvent, the Centraal Museum, the Museum Speelklok and the famous Rietveld Schröder House, a landmark of the "De Stijl" art style which has been declared a World Heritage Site for its huge influence on modern architecture. A short walk through the south of the city will let you see another of its most recognisable snapshots: the magnificent residences built alongside the canals by the nobility in the Golden Age. Don't leave Utrecht without visiting its lively markets or exploring its verdant surroundings full of castles. After lunch, it's back on the road. After travelling about 60 kilometres, you'll arrive at the avant-garde city of Rotterdam, another of the great cities on this tour. Major publications list it as one of the top ten destinations in the world. Its creativity, forward thinking and constant desire for reinvention make it truly unique and well worth discovering. And the home of Erasmus is used to breaking the mould. The city's modern urban appearance and amazing skyline have made it "the architectural capital of the Netherlands". Discover a city that never stops reinventing itself, surprising the world with enormous challenges such as De Rotterdam, the largest building in the country at 160,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the Het Potlood apartments (The Pencil), the Maritime Museum, and the recently opened Markthal (the country's largest indoor market) from the architects MVRDV... No wonder it's known as "Manhattan on the Maas". You have before you the perfect home for lovers of contemporary architecture, for sybarites and, in general, for all those with good taste. Vibrant and welcoming, and home to the largest commercial port in Europe, Rotterdam's former maritime districts have been converted into "trendy" areas such as Katendrecht. Overnight stay in Rotterdam.

## DAY 8 · ROTTERDAM - WINDMILLS AT KINDERDIJK - DORDRECHT - DE BIESBOSCH NATIONAL PARK - ROTTERDAM

After breakfast among the skyscrapers, it's time to get back on the road. Ahead is an exciting itinerary through some of the most impressive sights on the "Route through Holland, Land of Waters". About 30 minutes away by car are the 19 mills of Kinderdijk, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the best-known icons of Holland. Did you know that Holland has more windmills than any other country in the world? The mills have played a key role in the so-called "Dutch miracle". Many were designed to drain water and keep the land reclaimed from the North Sea dry. The picture-postcard image of these windmills built in the mid-eighteenth century pulls in thousands of tourists. Not to be missed! You'll be able to see how many of them are still in operation, and you can also take a boat trip along the canals. (Note: If you're travelling in winter, have a go at ice skating among the mills). Onward to Dordrecht, the oldest city in Holland and home to more than one thousand monuments. Full of beautiful canals and truly unique architecture, the city is intimately linked to water. Make sure you visit its old ports, monuments and museums. Must-sees include the Grote Kerk church, the magnificent collection of the Dordrechts Museum and the stunning interiors of the Van Gijn House. Near Dordrecht is the breathtaking natural area of Biesbosch National Park, one of the most impressive wetlands in the Netherlands. Make sure you explore this freshwater labyrinth! Besides its extraordinary natural charm, this National Park will give you an insight into Holland's past and the waters that shaped it, as well as the personal stories that surrounded the floods and the construction of the polders. What's more, you'll understand how man can face up to nature through windmills, pumping stations... A visit to reflect on the movable border that separates the sea from the mainland. (Note: The area has many places where you can enjoy this fascinatingly beautiful eco-tourist destination). After taking in this unforgettable region, it's time to drive back to Rotterdam, half an hour away. Once there, its futuristic appearance and gourmet scene will whisk you back to ultra-modern Holland. Overnight stay in Rotterdam.

## DAY 9 · ROTTERDAM - ZEELAND (DOMBURG - ZIERIKZEE- OUWERKERK / WATERSNOODMUSEUM) - ROTTERDAM

Today, we'll explore the Zeeland region to discover the fascinating engineering works of the famous "Delta Plan", the most important water defence project ever built. Beautiful landscapes and culinary delights will be awaiting you throughout the day. First stop will be Domburg, a seaside resort with stunning architecture. Then, northwards to explore the "Deltawerken" or Delta Plan, one of the largest and most modern engineering projects that currently exists in the world, created after the 1953 floods with the aim of preventing further catastrophes in the region. We recommend having lunch in the area afterwards. Make sure you try the excellent oysters and local mussels! A good idea then would be to head over to Zierikzee, a pretty town. The last stop today will be the Watersnoodmuseum, in Ouwerkerk. A national emblem since its creation, this museum offers the traveller a fascinating insight into water safety, while recalling the tragic events surrounding the floods of 1953, when a violent storm swept away the dykes, triggering one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the country. Located on the island of Schouwen-Duiveland (Ouwerkerk), this museum offers an emotional visual journey and introduces the visitor to the personal stories of a devastating flood that changed Holland forever. The museum is housed in one of the four caissons used on 6 November 1953 to plug the gap in the Ouwerkerk dyke following the flood. It is also a so-called National Monument. (Note: If you want to stretch your legs, you can go from Zierikzee to the Museum by bike. The ride will take about 25 minutes). What's more, since February visitors have been able to see the new exhibition that takes a close look at Holland's constant battle with water and efficient water management. The exhibition is located in the fourth room of the Museum complex. The great flood of 1953 is the starting point for the new exhibition, which showcases the development of possible water resources both now and in the future. Every day, hundreds of people strive hard to keep the country dry and habitable. But... what happens in the rest of the world? An interactive game is all you need to help you discover the answer! Choose between two situations: "Water problems" and "A daily battle". Start out by digging the polder, then build dikes and drain excess water by pumping it into the aqueduct. The exhibition pays special attention to the role of floods in culture and politics over the course of history. After the visit, return journey and overnight stay in Rotterdam.

## DAY 10 · ROTTERDAM - THE HAGUE - AMSTERDAM

Today is the penultimate day of the trip. Bid farewell to Rotterdam to see another of Holland's essential cities: the royal city of The Hague, located about 30 minutes' drive away. Administrative capital of the country and seat of government and ministries, home to the Dutch Royal Family and location of the International Court of Justice, this fascinating city captivates the traveller with its historic neighbourhoods, elegant villas and grandiose palaces and monuments. With top-flight artistic and cultural attractions and magnificent museums such as the Mauritshuis, where you can admire world-famous paintings like "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Vermeer or "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp" by Rembrandt, the city boasts thousands of tucked away corners that are well worth discovering. We recommend eating at the trendy restaurants of Het Plein and Grote Markt; setting aside some time to visit the Madurodam and the Omniservium; and strolling around the "Haagse Markt", the largest open-air market in Europe. And if you have time, make sure to take a walk on one of the country's best beaches: Scheveningen...Yes! The Hague is also a coastal city. You'll end the day today in Amsterdam, located less than 1 hour away, where you can take the opportunity to visit places you didn't manage to see on day one of the trip. Overnight stay in Amsterdam.

## DAY 11 · AMSTERDAM - CITY OF ORIGIN

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

## Your trip includes

### Your trip includes

- ✓ Return flight.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Amsterdam.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Amsterdam.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Zwolle.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Zwolle.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Utrecht.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Utrecht.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Rotterdam.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Rotterdam.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.

### Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Accommodation taxes in Holland direct payment in facility.
- ✗ Accommodation taxes in Utrecht direct payment in facility.
- ✗ Accommodation taxes in Rotterdam direct payment in facility.
- ✗ Possible toll charges.
- ✗ Insolvency protection.

## Destinations Visited

Amsterdam



Leeuwarden

Enkhuizen



Sneek

Zwolle



Makkum



Hindeloopen



Stavoren



Sloten



Giethoorn



Urk



Utrecht



Rotterdam



Dordrecht



Domburg



Zierikzee



Ouwkerk



Hague



## Important remarks

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- To avoid queues and crowds, you can book tickets to the most outstanding museums and exhibition halls online and in advance. We recommend trying to visit the museums early in the morning or in the afternoon. To obtain discounts on tickets and save yourself from having to queue, you can purchase cards such as the Holland Pass, the Museumkaart, the I Amsterdam City Card or the Rotterdam Welcome Card. Many museums offer special discounts for minors, students and pensioners.
- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far as possible.
- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.
- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.
- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.
- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.
- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.
- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.
- This itinerary has been developed in collaboration with the NBTC Netherlands Bureau of Tourism and Congress.
- Don't miss the futuristic-looking "Gates of Light", a permanent art installation attributable to creative artist Daan Roosegaarde that you can enjoy at Afsluitdijk. A spectacular explosion of art and light designed to commemorate the first centenary of the construction of the Afsluitdijk causeway, one of the greatest feats of engineering accomplished by man. "People who live, build their future": this is the phrase that accompanies the monument in the middle of the causeway, a phrase that perfectly sums up the great aspirations and determination to succeed by the Dutch who, with endeavour and audacity, have managed to make nature a source of energy, light and life. At 32 kilometres in length, this spectacular causeway has managed to close off the flow of water towards the North Sea, turning the 'Zuiderzee' ('South Sea') into Lake IJsselmeer and realising one of the country's greatest engineering landmarks.