

Fascinating Netherlands and Belgium

This strip of land in the heart of Europe is one of the most beautiful cultural and recreational areas on the continent. You can enjoy the harmonious, as well as exciting interaction, between nature and culture and also experience traditional and present-day Dutch and Belgian history here in the region.

Day 1

Upon arrival you will be picked up at the airport and transferred to your hotel. After a short rest your guide will take you for a walk in the centre of Amsterdam. This tour takes you past some of the main city-center points of interest in the Nieuwe Zijde (New Side). It sidesteps into the Oude Zijde (Old Side), the oldest part of town, the first part of which, around the university, is a place of tranquil canals, and then weaves through the Red Light District. You might be surprised to discover that this sex-for-sale zone occupies a handsome area of 16th-century canals and gabled houses and that "ordinary" people still live here and go on with the daily business of life - as you'll observe if you take your eyes for a moment off the barely-clad women behind the red-lit windows.

We also enjoy the wonderful attraction of Amsterdam – a boat on the world-famous canals.

After the tour an excellent dinner in the heart of Amsterdam



Old Amsterdam

Day 2

After breakfast we're going to Brussels along the picturesque landscape: green fields, grazing cows, tens of beautiful rivers and charming villages and small towns. We eat lunch upon arrival to Brussels and then start our fascinating afternoon in this beautiful city.

The tour starts with a short walk to the famous GRAND'PLACE where you learn about the history of the remarkable city hall and quaint guild houses. Then it continues to the beautiful St. Michael's cathedral, the Congress column and the Heysel district with the world-famous Atomium. We can't miss at the sight of the Chinese Pavilion and the Japanese Tower. Passing the Royal Residence our bus returns into the city center so that we can see the Sablon district with countless antique dealer shops.

After a tea/coffee we continue to see the magnificent Palace of Justice and the fashionable Louise Square. Passing the stately Royal Square, the Royal Palace and the Houses of Parliament we arrive in the Cinquantenaire district and the Triumph Arch. The splendid Art Nouveau houses are the highlights of this part of Brussels.

Here, we are also at the very heart of the European Union: we drive in front of the imposing EU buildings housing the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.



Brussels Grand Place



Atomium

After this impressive tour we're heading back to Amsterdam. Dinner en-route in the NL.

Day 3

We start our day with a fascinating visit of a Diamond Factory. During this tour you will be shown a diamond factory, where the process of cutting and polishing a diamond is explained in detail. After the tour, visitors have the opportunity to browse around in the spacious showrooms.



Diamond Factory - Amsterdam

After the tour we're driving on to the Hague where we have a short city tour. The Hague is a very important city in the Netherlands, because it's the governmental city and also the city where the queen lives. *Binnenhof* - the oldest parts of this medieval count's castle, the Ridderzaal (Knight's Hall) and the Rolgebouw (Roll Building), situated at the rear, date from the 13th century. In the centuries that followed alteration work has been carried out and extensions have been added to the Binnenhof. This complex housed the local government as early as the 15th century. *Noordeinde Palace* has always been the residence of the reigning Stadtholder or monarch. The first inhabitant was Louise de Coligny, the last wife of William the Silent. In the 17th century, Frederik Hendrik and Amalia van Solms had the Huis ten Bosch Palace built.

Further, we continue the sightseeing with a miniature city of Madurodam. Madurodam, for more than 50 years Holland's smallest city, is opened all year round. The canal houses of

Amsterdam, the Alkmaar cheese market and parts of the Delta Works, all replicated in minute detail on a 1:25 scale. All is set in beautiful gardens. Windmills turn, ships sail through the harbour and trains are traversing the city on the world's largest miniature railway.



Madurodam miniature city

Having seen Holland in miniature we're heading back to Amsterdam for dinner and overnight. After dinner you can take a walk and see Amsterdam by night.



Amsterdam by night

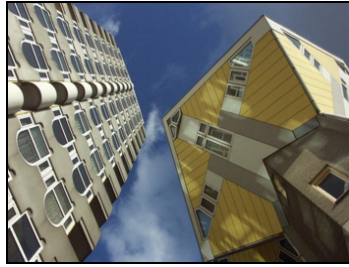
Day 4

In the morning we visit Zaanse Schans. This is a delightful old hamlet on the banks of the river Zaan with characteristic green wooden houses, charming stylized gardens, small hump-backed bridges, tradesmen's workshops, historic windmills and engaging little shops. This enchanting hamlet gives an excellent impression of how a typical Zaanse village must have looked like in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



Zaanse Schans

From here we go by bus to Rotterdam. Lunchboxes are served during the transfer. At the foot of the Erasmus Bridge, you can enjoy the surprising tour along the imposing architecture of Rotterdam. During the tour you are able to make beautiful pictures of the famous hotel New York and you pass by the Euromast and the picturesque Veerhaven.



Rotterdam cubic house



Boat trip

After the boat tour of Rotterdam, we take a drive around the city's most impressive architectural sites. Next to the city centre the most interesting planning developments of Rotterdam can be found along the Maas-river. The Erasmus bridge, the new landmark/ icon of changing Rotterdam, leads to the Kop van Zuid ("Head of the South"), a former harbour area. During the last years outstanding housing projects were built here, the Luxor Theatre as well as many public buildings and office high rises were constructed. The developments on the south bank finally give a central position to the river Maas within the city. The historical buildings on the Wihelminapier extend with new functions the programmatic range.

The day ends with a transfer to Amsterdam and delicious dinner in the heart of the city.

Day 5

After breakfast we're going to Utrecht. A charming city, full of beautiful buildings and canals. Our short tour starts with the Dom Tower, more than 600 years old, and the highest in the Netherlands. Climb the 465 steps with a guide and you will be rewarded with a fantastic view over Utrecht's characteristic canals, wharves and mediaeval churches. After the tour you have some time to do some shopping and each lunch. Utrecht is great for shopping!

In the afternoon we're heading to the Loo Palace because it is too beautiful to miss. Situated in the woodland setting of Apeldoorn in the heart of The Netherlands, it was built around 1690 for Prince Willem III and Queen Mary, who were also the King and Queen of England. Since 1984 the Palace has served as a museum after a spectacular restoration of the building and the gardens, returning them to their original 17th century state.

From de palace we are going back to Amsterdam for the dinner and overnight.



Het Loo Palace



Shopping in Utrecht

Day 6

The morning is reserved for your last shopping spree. Around noon – a transfer to the airport for the flight back.

Included:

- 4 overnights in hotel****
- Breakfasts, lunches, dinners
- Non-stop professional Chinese guide
- All transfers in luxurious coach (A/C, toilet, DVD, minibar)
- Entry to Van Gogh museum
- Boat trip Amsterdam
- Tour + coffee diamond factory
- Mill / wooden shoes / cheese – Zaanse Schans
- Tour of Alkmaar, Volendam, Delft, Scheveningen
- Visit to Madurodam miniature town

Excluded:

- travel insurance
- drinks with meals
- tips
- personal expenses