

Amsterdam Events & General Information

Agenda 2003



* This information was provided by www.holland.com for more information and details please contact the above website. Thanks.

Some of the main attractions in Amsterdam:

Albert Cuyp

Amsterdam's most famous day market, with stalls lining both sides of the Albert Cuyp street. Like all other day markets, in part due to stronger legislation regarding the sale of perishables, this icon of Amsterdam street trade sees a shift towards the sale of cheap textiles. It still retains some of its old charm though, and especially on a sunny day the Albert Cuyp is a bustling multicultural street filled with the famous Amsterdam humour. Don't miss the fish vendors, and if you're lucky you might witness a cunning hawker trying to sell you the latest in potato peelers. Open Mon-Sat 8am-6pm (closes earlier in winter, and can close early due to bad weather).



Begijnhof

Just off Amsterdam's main shopping allee you'll find the Begijnhof, a secluded court of almshouses with a quiet inner garden and the English Reformed Church in their midst. Dating from the 14th century, the Begijnhof used to house devout laywomen who did religious work for the adjacent nunnery, mostly in education and nursing. Most of the houses were renovated during the 17th and 18th century and only one of the original medieval wooden houses remains (no 34, dated 1475). True to tradition the Begijnhof still houses the elderly poor, and this island of tranquillity is certainly worth a visit. The Begijnhof can be reached through a doorway on the Spui, or from Within the **Amsterdam's Historish Museum**.



Canals



The canals of course are one of the major attractions of the 'Venice of the North'. By daytime already very charming, by night they become even more enchanting because a lot of the canal houses and bridges are beautifully illuminated. The four main city centre canals are Prinsengracht, Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Singel, and of course there are numerous smaller canals, of which the Brouwersgracht, the Bloemgracht and the Leliegracht are especially pleasant.

You can sample the canal views by taking a canal tour with one of the shipping companies on the Damrak or Rokin. A basic tour will cost around €10 with special arrangements like 'candle light cruises' available. You could also try the more adventurous pedal boats; rental outlets are at strategic points in town, including the **Anne Frank house** and the **Rijksmuseum**. Life on water is very different from life ashore, and if you care to venture into the canals on your own you'll soon find out that it's difficult to get your bearing while afloat. Bring a good map! You can also order a water taxi (tel 535 63 63) to get you from A to B in a pleasant though more expensive way.

Dam

During the sixties flower power in the Netherlands was symbolized by the famous Damslapers, a 'bunch of hippies camping out on Dam square'. Nowadays the square has lost a lot of its former easygoing charm but it's still one of the focal points of the city. Not surprising, as Dam square is the physical centre of the city ever since the dam was built to keep the Zuiderzee (Southern Sea) out. In the midst of the square is the National Monument, dedicated to the Dutch soldiers and members of the resistance who died during World War Two. To the west the square is flanked by the **Royal Palace**.



Jordaan

A former working class area which has become very sought after. Especially the expensive converted warehouses are popular, and a colourful mixture of original 'Jordanezen', students, and well-to-do businessmen and creatives now inhabits the Jordaan. There aren't any major sights to see here, it is the Jordaan area itself, which is remarkable: easygoing and peaceful, with lots of bars, restaurants and interesting little shops. The Noordermarkt hosts a flea market, joined on Saturday mornings by alternative farmers selling their produce out of the back of their cars. Just a great area to stroll around for a couple of hours.



Leidseplein

During the sixties when Amsterdam was divided between Nozems (greasers) and Provos (hippies) the Leidseplein was the major Nozem hangout, and thus a very cool place. Nowadays the area has deteriorated a bit, with an abundance of fast food, travel agencies and moneychangers. Nonetheless, the Leidseplein itself is a pleasant enough small square, flanked on three sides by bars and with a large tree-shaded terrace in the middle. During summer the square comes alive with street performers; everything from jugglers and fire-eaters to percussionist, mime players and clowns.



Red Light District

This area is famous for its window prostitution, which is legal in Holland. The windows are illuminated by red lights, hence the name. Though you might suspect otherwise this section of town isn't really that seedy, and it's a common sight to see a busload of tourists take an organized tour of the district. Besides the windows the area sports various 'erotic' bars and theatres.



Reguliersdwarsstraat

The Reguliersdwarsstraat is definitely the hippest street in Amsterdam, as far as nightlife is concerned. The street is a mixture of upmarket gay bars, restaurants serving expensive French cuisine, and assorted nightclubs catering to a slightly older crowd of media buffs, businessmen and local celebrities.

Rembrandtplein

This is the major 'entertainment' area for rowdy Amsterdammers and out-of-towners. Bars chock-a-block with people singing along to Dutch folk songs at the top of their voices, and a few large disco's with heavy security at the door. Because all bars and disco's close at the same moment, sometimes things get out of hand a bit. Strangely enough the square is surrounded by major gay spots like the **iT**, and just off the square is the Halvemaansteeg, a small street packed with gay bars. No problem here, so maybe Amsterdam really is a tolerant city. Also nearby is **Reguliersdwarsstraat**, currently the hippest nightlife street of Amsterdam.



Royal Palace

At first sight the Royal Palace on **Dam Square** doesn't seem very royal, and doesn't even look like a palace at all. All very understandable because Jacob van Campen designed this building as a city hall, which it was until 1808, when Napoleon's brother Louis Bonaparte ruled Holland for 5 years. He thought the building fit for a king, and ever since this has been the official palace for the reigning queen or king of the Netherlands. Except for official receptions it is not used much. In summer you can take a guided tour of the palace, the highlights of its interior being the Empire furniture Bonaparte left behind, and paintings by Rembrandt's pupils Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol.



Vondelpark

The largest park of the city, close to the **Leidseplein** and the big **museums** and by far the most popular with visitors and locals alike, especially during summer and on sunny winter days. The park is always alive with skaters, joggers and all sorts of street performers. In the summer the **Vondelpark open air theatre** stages regular performances, while you can quench your thirst in nearby **Dora's Blikkenbar**. There are several other bars in the park, all of course with their own outside terrace, and **Vertigo** also offers good food at reasonable prices. All in all a very pleasant place to spend a lazy sunny afternoon.



Waterlooplein

After a temporary relocation the Waterlooplein in the centre of the former Jewish neighbourhood is again host to Amsterdam's largest flea market. In the old days the merchants on this square used to sell everything from bric-a-brac to genuine antiques, genuine junk, goods of dubious origin and second-hand clothes. Since the reinstatement of the flea market on its original location the merchandise has become more geared towards visiting tourists with lots of second-hand apparel and smoking paraphernalia, but for cheap clothes it's still hard to beat.



Amsterdam is often referred to as one of the most colourful and exciting cities in the world. At **Communitivators** we hope that this short list of events and attractions can help you to make the most out of your visit while attending to our Business Conference.

| Dates | General Events | Location |
|--------------|---|--|
| 01/01-31/12 | 150th Anniversary of Vincent Van Gogh | Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum |
| 01/01-13/04 | Brood Jaten bij de Beren- Visitors experience the unique events, which took place in secret during World War II. | Amsterdam Artis Zoo |
| 02/01-21/04 | De Rijkdom van Stroganoff – The story of one of the best-known noble families in Russia. The Stroganoffs works by Rembrandt, Botticelli, Poussin and Wateau. | Amsterdam Nieuwe Kerk |
| 07/02-04/05 | Asger Jorn – Danish artist was one of the main innovators of the 20 th century art. Abstract painting in the 30's and 40's are the contributions to the Cobra Movement. | Amstelveen Cobra Museum voor Moderne Kunst |
| 14/02-15/06 | De Keuze Van Vincent – An exhibition of 150 works by artists who Van Gogh admired | Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum |
| 01/04-30/09 | Amsterdam Garden & Architecture Tour by architect Andre Ancion. Visit a number of canal houses from the 17 th and 18 th century | Amsterdam +31 (20) 688 1243 |
| 21/03-18/05 | Keukenhof – Major Flower Exhibition | Lisse |

Agenda / March

Windmill Days - All four working windmills are open to the public at this re-created old village and open-air museum in the Zaanstreek, just north of Amsterdam. Contact **VVV Zaanstreek/Waterland** (tel. **075/616-2221**). March to October.

HISWA - Annual Amsterdam Boat Show at the RAI Convention Centre. Contact **RAI** (tel. **020/549-1212**).

Stille Omgang - This is a silent procession along Kalverstraat, walked by Catholics every year to celebrate the "Miracle of the Host," which occurred in 1345. The procession begins at the Royal Palace on the Dam and goes from midnight to 2:30am. Contact the **Gezelschap voor de Stille Omgang** (tel. **020/524-5415**). Sunday closest to March 15.

Opening of Keukenhof Flower Gardens - Lisse. The greatest flower show. Spectacular display of tulips and narcissi, daffodils and hyacinths, bluebells, crocuses, lilies, amaryllis, and many other flowers at this 70-acre garden in the heart of the bulb country. Contact **Keukenhof Gardens** (tel. **025/246-5555**). Late March to mid-May.

April

National Museum Weekend - A weekend during which most museums in Amsterdam and 440 throughout the Netherlands offer free and reduced admission and have special exhibitions. Contact **Stichting Museumjaarkaart** (tel. **0900/404-0910**). April 12 and 13, 2003.

Bloemencorso (Flower Parade) - Floats keyed to a different floral theme each year parade from Noordwijk to Haarlem. Contact **VVV Noorwijk** (tel. **071/361-9321**). April 26, 2003.

Koninginnedag (Queen's Day) - This nationwide holiday for the House of Orange is vigorously celebrated in Amsterdam, with the city centre. A street market all over the city features masses of stalls, run by everyone from individual kids selling old toys to professional market folk in town to make a killing. Orange ribbons, orange hair, and orange-painted faces are everywhere, as are Dutch flags. Street music and theatre combine with probably too much drinking, but Koninginnedag remains a good-natured if boisterous affair. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). Gay and lesbian celebrations centre on the city's main gay areas and the Homomonument. There are stage performances, from belly-dancing to drag, stalls publicizing various gay and lesbian organizations, and food and drink. April 30.

May

Herdenkingsdag (Memorial Day) - Countrywide observance honouring the victims of World War II, principally marked by 2 minutes of silence at 8pm. Be on the street at 8pm. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). May 4.

Bevrijdingsdag (Liberation Day) - Recalling the country's liberation from Nazi occupation at the end of World War II. Canadian troops made it into the city first, so Canadian flags are popular accessories. More street markets, music, and theatre. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). Gay and lesbian participation includes stage performances, from belly-dancing to drag, stalls publicizing various gay and lesbian organizations, and food and drink. May 5.

Oosterpark Festival - A multicultural festival of song and dance held at the Oosterpark in multiracial district Amsterdam Oost (East). Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). First week of May.

National Windmill Day - Around two-thirds of the country's almost 1,000 windmills spin their sails and are open to the public, including Amsterdam's six. Contact **Vereniging de Hollandse Molen** (tel. **020/623-8703**). Second Saturday in May.

National Cycling Day - On this day, Dutch people get on their bikes and pedal. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**) for special events and routes in the city. Second Saturday in May.

Drum Rhythm Festival - Westergasfabriek. Annual festival that attracts some good acts. Contact **Westergasfabriek** (tel. **020/581-0425**). Mid-May.

Floating Amsterdam - Transforms the lower reaches of the Amstel River into an outdoor theatre. Performances are held near the Muziektheater. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**) or **Amsterdam Uit Buro** (tel. **0900/019-1040**). Last 2 weeks in May.

Vlaggetjesdag (Flag Day) - Scheveningen and IJmuiden. Fishing ports open the herring season with a highly competitive race to bring the first herring back for Queen Beatrix. Contact **VVV Scheveningen** (tel. **0900/340-3505**) and **VVV IJmuiden** (tel. **025/551-5611**). End of May.

Open Ateliers, the Jordaan - Could be subtitled "Artists Working in Garrets," as around 50 Jordaan artists throw open the doors of their studios to an awestruck public. This is a biennial event. Contact **Open Ateliers Jordaan** (tel. **020/638-1885**). End of May, 2003.

June

Holland Festival - Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht. Each year, these four cities join forces to present a cultural buffet of music, opera, theater, film, and dance. The schedule includes all the major Dutch companies and visiting companies and soloists from around the world. Contact **Stichting Holland Festival** (tel. **020/627-6566**). Throughout June.

Frisian Eleven Cities Bike Race - Bolsward, Friesland. A biking version of Friesland's famous Elfstedentocht Ice-Skating Race, based on enthusiasm and the idea that roads and bikes are more reliable than frozen canals and skates. Contact **Provincial VVV Friesland** (tel. **0900/202-4060**). June 9, 2003; May 31, 2004.

Echo Grachtenloop (Echo Canal Run) - People run along the city-centre canals. The routes are 5km, 10km, and 18km (3, 6, and 11 miles). Contact **De Echo** (tel. **020/585-9222**). First Sunday in June.

Kunst RAI - An annual arts fair at the RAI Congress Centre, in which many Dutch art galleries participate. The theme is the art of a different country each year. Contact the **RAI** (tel. **020/549-1212**). First half of June.

Amsterdam Roots Festival - Various venues. This festival features music and dance from all over the world. Workshops, films, and exhibits are also offered. Contact **Stichting Melkweg** (tel. **020/624-1777**). Early to mid-June.

Open Garden Days - Herengracht, Keizersgracht, and Prinsengracht. If you wonder what the gardens behind the gables of all those fancy canalside houses look like, this is your chance to find out. A number of the best are open to the public for a few days each June. Contact **Stichting De Amsterdamse Grachtentuin** (tel. **020/422-2379**). Mid-June.

Vondelpark Open-Air Theater - Theatre, music (including full-scale concerts by the famed Concertgebouw Orchestra) dance, even operetta. Contact **Vondelpark Open-Air Theater** (tel. **020/673-1499**). June to end of August.

Over Het IJ Festival - Opposite Centraal Station, on the other side of the IJ channel. Avant-garde theater, music, and dance performed beside the water on an old wharf. Contact **Over Het IJ Festival** (tel. **020/673-1499**). End of June to end of July.

July

Arts Adventure - Venues throughout the city. An extension of the cultural program through the previously dormant summer months--when most tourists visit the city. It includes more offbeat and informal events across the full range of the arts than would be the case with the main (Sept-June) cultural program of opera, ballet, and classical music. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**) or **Amsterdam Uit Buro** (tel. **0900/019-1040**). July and August.

Tourist Market - Hoorn. Colourful crafts collections are on display in the streets of this pretty harbour town on the IJsselmeer, north of Amsterdam. Contact **VVV Hoorn** (tel. **0900/403-1055**). Every Wednesday from July to mid-August.

North Sea Jazz Festival - The Hague. One of the world's leading gatherings of top international jazz (and blues) musicians unfolds over 3 concert-packed days at the city's giant Nederlands Congresgebouw. Last-minute tickets are scarce, so book as far ahead as you can. Contact **North Sea Jazz Festival** (tel. **015/215-7756**; www.northseajazz.nl). July 11 to 13, 2003; July 9 to 11, 2004.

Skûtsjesilen - The Frisian Lakes. Sailing races with traditional Frisian sailing ships, called *skûtsjes*. Contact **Provincial VVV Friesland** (tel. **0900/202-4060**). Mid-July.

August

Gay Pride Festival - This is a big event in Europe's most gay-friendly city. A crowd of 150,000 people turns out to watch the highlight Boat Parade's display of 100 or so outrageously decorated boats cruising on the canals. In addition, there are street discos and open-air theater performances, a sports program, and a film festival. (The entire festival's future is in the balance, and subject to the City Council not revoking its permission on "public order" grounds.) Contact **Gay Business Amsterdam** (tel./fax **020/620-8807**). July 31 to August 3, 2003, with the Boat Parade August 2; and August 5 to 8, 2004, with the Boat Parade August 7.

Prinsengracht Concert - Prinsengracht Canal. Classical music floats up from a boat moored outside the Pulitzer Hotel on an evening in August. Contact **Hotel Pulitzer Amsterdam** (tel. **020/523-5235**). Third week in August.

Holland Festival of Early Music - Utrecht. Marvelous concerts of music from the Middle Ages through the Romantic era. Contact **Organisatie Oude Muziek** (tel. **030/236-2236**). August 29 to September 7, 2003; August 27 to September 5, 2004.

Uitmarkt - Dam and other venues. Amsterdam cultural season with this great open market of information and free performances at impromptu outdoor venues and theatre and concert halls. Both professional and amateur groups take part in the shows, which run the gamut of music, opera, dance, theatre, and cabaret. Contact **Amsterdam Uitmarkt** (tel. **020/626-2656**). Last weekend in August.

International Fireworks Festival - On the Pier and Boulevard of Scheveningen. Contact **VVV Scheveningen** (tel. **0900/340-3505**). Late August.

September

World Port Days - Events and festivities around Rotterdam's harbour. Contact **VVV Rotterdam** (tel. **0900/403-4065**). Early September.

Jordaan Festival - This loosely organized festival in the trendy Jordaan neighborhood features food, games, fun, and lots of drinking and music in the street and in many cafes in the area. Contact **Stichting Jordaan Festival** (tel. **020/624-6908**). Early September.

Bloemencorso - Aalsmeer to Amsterdam. Every year for nearly half a century, Amsterdam has been the final destination for the Flower Parade that originates in Aalsmeer. The parade features a large number of floats that carry a variety of in-season flowers (so don't expect to see tulips). The parade follows an established route and ends at the Dam. Contact **Stichting Bloemencorso** (tel. **029/793-9393**). First Saturday in September.

Open Monumentendag - all over the country. A chance to see historical buildings and monuments that are usually not open to the public--and to get in free as well. Contact **Vereniging Open Monumentendag** (tel. **020/470-1170**). Second Saturday in September.

State Opening of Parliament - Queen Beatrix rides in a splendid gold coach to the Ridderzaal (Knights' Hall) in The Hague to open the legislative session. Contact **VVV Den Haag** (tel. **0900/340-5051**). Third Tuesday in September.

October

Leidens Ontzet (Relief of Leiden) - Leiden. Procession and festivities commemorating the raising of the 1574 Spanish siege that came close to starving the town into submission. *Haring en witte brood* (herring and white bread) are distributed. Contact **VVV Leiden** (tel. **0900/222-2333**). October 3 (Oct 4 when the 3rd is a Sun).

Herfstflora - Naarden. Splendid display of autumn flowers at this old fortress town in Het Gooi, east of Amsterdam. Contact **VVV Naarden** (tel. **035/694-2836**). Early October.

November

Leather Pride - Is a growing happening of parties and other events for gays and lesbians from around the world. Contact **Leather Pride Nederland** (tel. and fax **020/422-3737**). First weekend of November.

International Flower Show - Largest exhibit of autumn-blooming flowers, in Aalsmeer. Contact **KMPT** (tel. **029/734-4033**). Early November.

Sinterklaas Arrives - Holland's equivalent of Santa Claus (St. Nicholas) launches the Christmas season when he arrives in the city by boat at the Centraal Station pier. Accompanied by black-painted assistants, called *Zwarte Piet* (Black Peter), who hand out sweets to kids along the way, he goes in stately procession through Amsterdam before being given the keys to the city by the mayor at the Dam. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). Third Saturday of November.

Crossing Border Festival - Amsterdam. Literature, pop music, and cinema are combined in this international festival. Contact **VVV Amsterdam** (tel. **0900/400-4040**). Mid-November.

Spiegelkwartier Open House - Spiegel Quarter. Amsterdam's famous art and antiques quarter throws open its doors to all for 2 days--of course, you won't be locked out at other times either. Late November or early December.

December

Sinterklaas - Throughout Holland. Saint Nicholas's Eve is the traditional day in Holland for exchanging Christmas gifts. Join some Dutch friends or a Dutch family if possible. December 5.