

INSIGHT  GUIDES

EXPLORE

# AMSTERDAM





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# How To Use This E-Book

This **Explore Guide** has been produced by the editors of Insight Guides, whose books have set the standard for visual travel guides since 1970. With top-quality photography and authoritative recommendations, these guidebooks bring you the very best routes and itineraries in the world's most exciting destinations.

## *Best Routes*

The routes in this book provide something to suit all budgets, tastes and trip lengths. As well as covering the destination's many classic attractions, the itineraries track lesser-known sights, and there are also excursions for those who want to extend their visit outside the city. The routes embrace a range of interests, so whether you are an art fan, a gourmet, a history buff or have kids to entertain, you will find an option to suit.

We recommend reading the whole of a route before setting out. This should help you to familiarise yourself with it and enable you to plan where to stop for refreshments – options are shown in the 'Food and Drink' box at the end of each tour.

## *Introduction*

The routes are set in context by this introductory section, giving an overview of the destination to set the scene, plus background information on food and drink, shopping and more, while a succinct history timeline highlights the key events over the centuries.

## *Directory*

Also supporting the routes is a Directory chapter, with a clearly organised A–Z of practical information, our pick of where to stay while you are there and select restaurant listings; these eateries complement the more low-key cafés and restaurants that feature within the routes and are intended to offer a wider choice for evening dining. Also included here are some nightlife listings, and our recommendations for books and films about the destination.

## *Getting around the e-book*

In the Table of Contents and throughout this e-book you will see hyperlinked references. Just tap a hyperlink once to skip to the section you would like to read. Practical information and listings are also hyperlinked, so as long as you have an external connection to the internet, you can tap a link to go directly to the website for more information.

## *Maps*

All key attractions and sights mentioned in the text are numbered and cross-referenced to high-quality maps. Wherever you see the reference [map] just tap this to go straight to the related map. You can also double-tap any map for a zoom view.

## *Images*

You'll find hundreds of beautiful high-resolution images that capture the essence of the destination.

Simply double-tap on an image to see it full-screen.

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# Legend

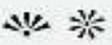
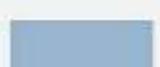
-  Start of tour
-  Tour and route direction

-  Recommended sight
-  Recommended restaurant or café

## City Maps

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-  Tourist information
-  Statue / monument
-  Main post office
-  Bus station
-  Theatre
-  Cathedral or church
-  Main library
-  Beach
-  Ferry route
-  City wall
-  Urban area
-  Notable building
-  Hotel
-  Pedestrian area
-  Shop / market
-  Park
-  Transport hub

## Regional Maps

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-  Lighthouse
-  Monastery
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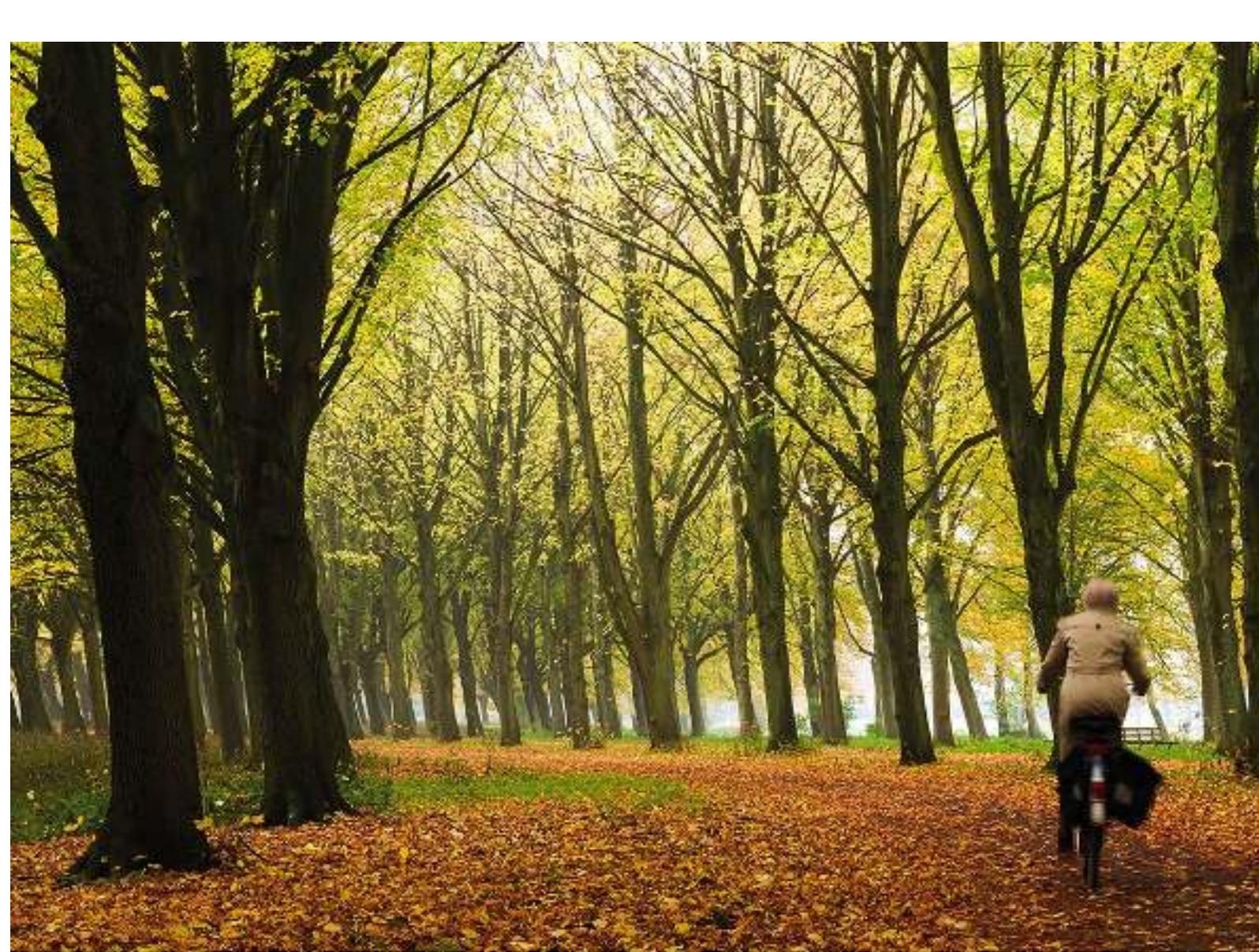


## ART LOVERS

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With three outstanding art museums (the Van Gogh, the Stedelijk and the Rijksmuseum), Amsterdam's Museum Quarter ([route 3](#)) matches any in the world, while Rembrandt's House can be found in the Jewish Quarter ([route 11](#)).

NBTC



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## ESCAPING THE CROWDS

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It's easy to escape the city by taking a bike north along the coast ([route 17](#)) across what used to be the Zuiderzee, or heading south to the wooded park, the Amsterdamse Bos ([route 12](#)).

iStock



## FAMILIES

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See the zoo and the Tropenmuseum Junior in the Zoo District ([route 5](#)), or the NEMO Science Centre and the Maritime Museum around the harbour ([route 6](#)).

Greg Gladman/Apa Publications



## HISTORY BUFFS

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The Old Centre ([route 4](#)) includes the old Stock Exchange and Oude Kerk, while the canals of the 16th- and 17th-century Golden Age can be strolled along on [route 1](#).

Greg Gladman/Apa Publications



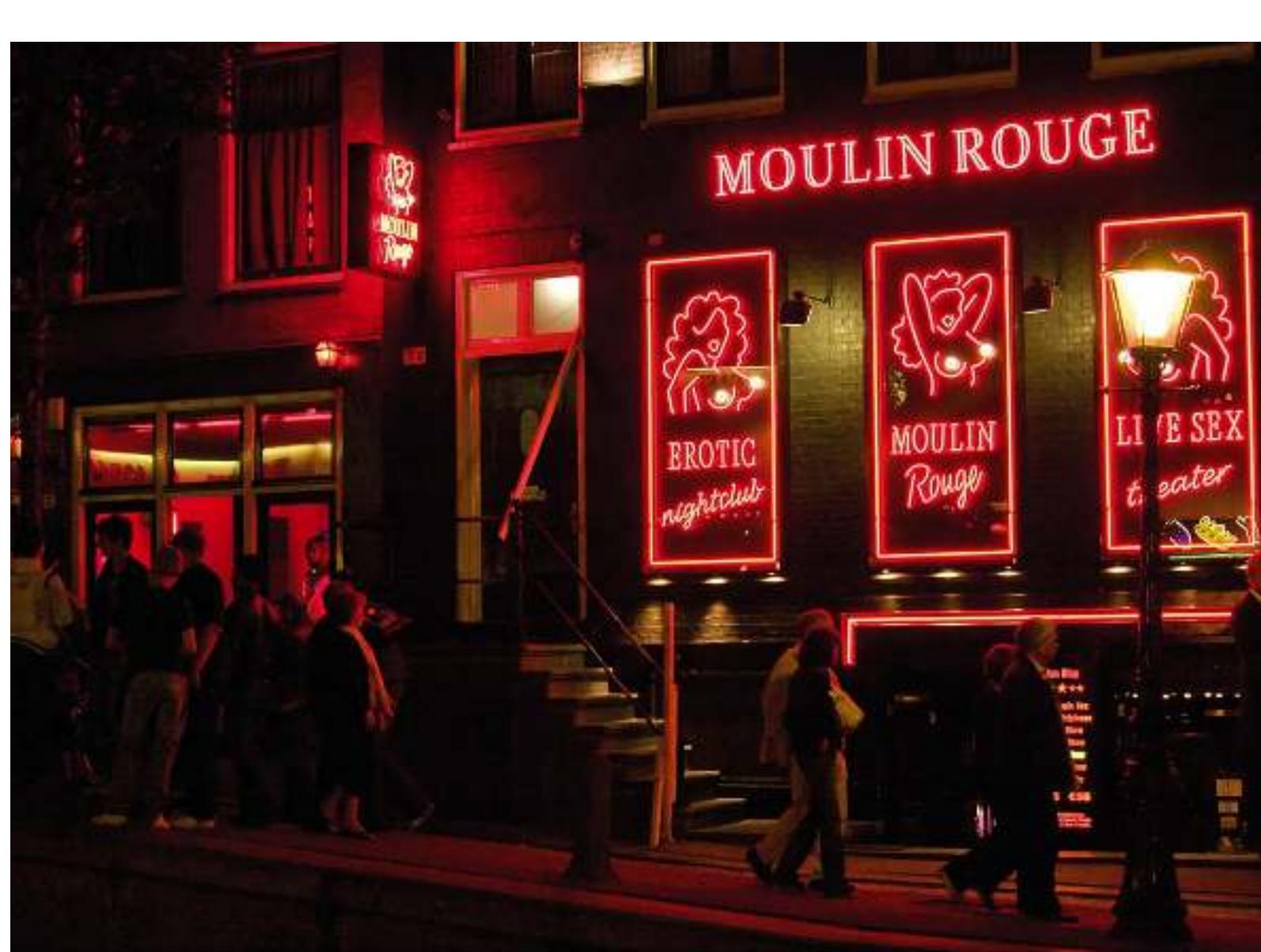
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## MUSIC LOVERS

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Lovers of classical music should check the concerts on at the Concertgebouw ([route 3](#)), while rock fans will want to see who's playing at the Melkweg, one of the city's top music clubs ([route 13](#)).

Greg Gladman/Apa Publications



## NIGHT OWLS

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The Leidseplein ([route 13](#)) and Rembrandtplein ([route 14](#)) offers bars and nightclubs galore, while the Red-Light District provides other entertainment for the broad-minded ([route 15](#)).

Greg Gladman/Apa Publications



## RAINY DAYS

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When you have Amsterdam's wonderful Museum Quarter ([route 3](#)) you can escape the rain for hours, while another option is to go exploring Amsterdam by tram: see the sights and stay dry ([route 8](#)).

Greg Gladman/Apa Publications



## SEASIDE FUN

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Head to The Hague ([route 18](#)) and its neighbouring seaside resort of Scheveningen, or the brasher resort of Zandvoort near Haarlem ([route 16](#)), both easily reached from Amsterdam.

Shutterstock

# EXPLORE AMSTERDAM

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*Amsterdam is one of the friendliest and most romantic cities in Europe. Its canals delight, its museums impress, yet it's also an edgy city known for its liberal views. It is, in short, a city like no other.*

Amsterdam grew out of nothing, turning from a tiny fishing village to the heart of the Dutch Empire. Its Dutch East Indian influences in particular are still evident, from grand buildings constructed during that era to a sizeable Indonesian population whose food is a tantalisingly spicy contrast to the more solid Dutch dishes.

Water is central to Amsterdam's history, geography and culture. The fishermen who first built their huts at the mouth of the River Amstel at the beginning of the 13th century earned a good living from the fertile fishing grounds of the Zuiderzee, although they and their families were at the mercy of wind and sea in that low-lying, swampy delta. Yet the community flourished, particularly once a dam was built to hold the Zuiderzee at bay. A by-product of this Amstel dam was the creation of a good anchorage, at the point where the Centraal Station now stands.

Yet for all its rich history, Amsterdam is very much a 21st-century city, famed for its tolerant attitudes to sex and drugs in particular – tolerant but never unconcerned, and the city's laws and attitudes do change. What doesn't change is its appeal to visitors, who flock there from all over the world.



*The Blauwbrug and the River Amstel.*

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## GEOGRAPHY

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With a population of over 800,000, Amsterdam is the Netherlands' biggest city, and its capital, though the seat of government is nearby in The Hague (see [route 18](#)). It's located in the Netherlands province of North Holland, and the country is often referred to as Holland although The Kingdom of the Netherlands is the full correct name.

A large part of Amsterdam's charm lies in its network of canals. The *grachtengordel*, the horseshoe of concentric canals that encloses the city centre, is the city's most timeless area. Names such as Prinsengracht (Princes' Canal), Herengracht (Gentlemen's Canal) and Keizersgracht (Emperor's Canal) are redolent of Amsterdam's Golden Age elegance.

From a visitor's point of view it means you're never far away from a delightful canal view. It also means parts of the city are not easy to navigate by car, making it somewhere best-explored on foot. The main danger is in stepping out in front of a bicycle, the city's most popular form of transport. There's also a good public transport system (for more information, [click here](#)), though it's used much more by locals than by visitors as walking is so easy – and easy on the eye.

- [\*Rembrandt's Hat online\*](#)
- [Ramage's Prize \(The Lord Ramage Novels, Volume 5\) here](#)
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