



AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam is a progressive way of life housed in Europe's most 17th-century city. Physically, it's built upon millions of pilings. But more than that, it's built on good living, cozy cafés, great art, street-corner jazz, stately history, and a spirit of live-and-let-live. It has 737,000 people and almost as many bikes. It also has more canals than Venice...and about as many tourists.

During its Golden Age in the 1600s, Amsterdam was the world's richest city, an international sea-trading port, and the cradle of capitalism. Wealthy, democratic burghers built a planned city of canals lined with trees and townhouses topped with fancy gables. Immigrants, Jews, outcasts, and political rebels were drawn here by its tolerant atmosphere, while painters such as young Rembrandt captured that atmosphere on canvas.



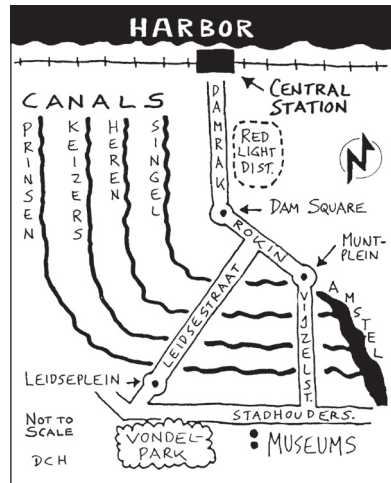
The Dutch are unique. They may be the world's most handsome people—tall, healthy, with good posture—and the most open, honest, and refreshingly blunt. They like to laugh. As connoisseurs of world culture, they appreciate Rembrandt paintings, Indonesian food, and the latest French film—but with an unsnooty, blue-jeans attitude.

Approach Amsterdam as an ethnologist observing a strange culture. Roll or stroll through any neighborhood and see things that are commonplace here, but rarely

found elsewhere. Carillons chime quaintly in neighborhoods selling sex, as young professionals smoke pot with impunity next to old ladies in bonnets selling flowers. Observe the neighborhood's "social control," where an elderly man feels safe in his home knowing he's being watched by the prostitutes next door.

Be warned: Amsterdam, a bold experiment in freedom, may box your Puritan ears. Take it all in, then pause to watch the sunset—at 10:00 P.M. during summer—and see the Golden Age reflected in a quiet canal.

Amsterdam Overview



Accessibility in Amsterdam

For travelers with limited mobility, Amsterdam is both challenging and rewarding. While locals have a friendly attitude toward people with disabilities, they also have great respect for the historical nature of their beautiful (and largely non-accessible) canalside buildings. The city has strict rules about making adaptations to monumental structures—useful for historical preservation, not so helpful for accessibility. The good news is that attitudes regarding accessibility are slowly improving.

The streets and sidewalks of Amsterdam have a certain freedom of movement: thousands of bikes mingling and merging with cars and pedestrians. Wheelchair users here are smart to adapt to the chaos—maneuvering their way through the streets, across trolley tracks, along the pink bike-only paths, and on the sidewalks. Stay alert and keep a steady line as you make your way through this bustling city.

Many Amsterdam sights are fully accessible to travelers with limited mobility (Level 1): Van Gogh Museum, Heineken Brewery, Anne Frank House Museum (but not the house interior), Royal Palace, New Church, Begijnhof, Amsterdam History Museum (except the carillon loft), Stedelijk Museum CS, the museum at Rembrandt's House (but not the house itself), Dutch Theater, Dutch Resistance Museum, RedLight District, and the Old Church.

Other sights are only moderately accessible (Level 2): Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Film Museum, Houseboat Museum, Westerkerk (except for the tower), *Holland Experience* 3-D movie, Gassan Diamonds tour, Hermitage Amsterdam Museum, De Hortus Botanical Garden, Jewish

Accessibility Levels

This book rates sights, hotels, and restaurants using four levels:

Level 1—Fully Accessible: A Level 1 building is completely barrier-free. Entryways, elevators, and other facilities are specifically adapted to accommodate a person using a wheelchair. If there's a bathroom, it has wide doors and an adapted toilet and sink. Where applicable, the bathing facilities are also fully adapted (including such features as bath boards, grab bars, or a roll-in, no-rim shower). Fully adapted hotel rooms often have an alarm system with pull cords for emergencies.

Level 2—Moderately Accessible: A Level 2 building is suitable for, but not specifically adapted to accommodate, a person using a wheelchair. This level will generally work for a wheelchair user who can make transfers and take a few steps. A person who is permanently in a wheelchair may require some assistance here (either from a companion or from staff).

Level 3—Minimally Accessible: A Level 3 building is satisfactory for people who have minimal mobility difficulties (that is, people who usually do not use a wheelchair, but take more time to do things than a non-disabled person). This building may have some steps and a few other barriers—but not too many. Level 3 buildings are best suited to slow walkers; wheelchair users will require substantial assistance here.

Level 4—Not Accessible: Unfortunately, some places in this book are simply not accessible to people with limited mobility. This means that barriers such as staircases, tight interiors and facilities (elevators, bathrooms, etc.), or other impediments interfere with passage for travelers with disabilities. Buildings in this category might include a church tower that has several flights of steep stairs, or a museum interior that has many levels with lots of steps and no elevator.

For a complete listing of the Accessibility Codes used in this chapter, please see pages 6–7.

History Museum, sex museums, and Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum.

Unfortunately, these Amsterdam sights are not accessible to travelers with limited mobility (Level 3 or 4): the interior of the Anne Frank House, the loft at the Amsterdam History Museum, Rembrandt's House, and Amstelkring Museum.

ORIENTATION

(area code: 020)

Amsterdam's Central Train Station, on the north edge of the city, is your starting point (TI and trams fanning out to all points). Damrak is the main north-south street axis, connecting Central Station with Dam Square (people-watching and hangout center) and its Royal Palace. From this spine, the city spreads out like a fan, with 90 islands, hundreds of bridges, and a series of concentric canals—named Herengracht (Gentleman's Canal), Keizersgracht (Emperor's Canal), and Prinsengracht (Prince's Canal)—that were laid out in the 17th century, Holland's Golden Age. Amsterdam's major sights are near Dam Square.

To the east of Damrak is the oldest part of the city (today's Red Light District), and to the west is the newer part, where you'll find the Anne Frank House and the Jordaan neighborhood. Museums and Leidseplein nightlife cluster at the southern edge of the city center.

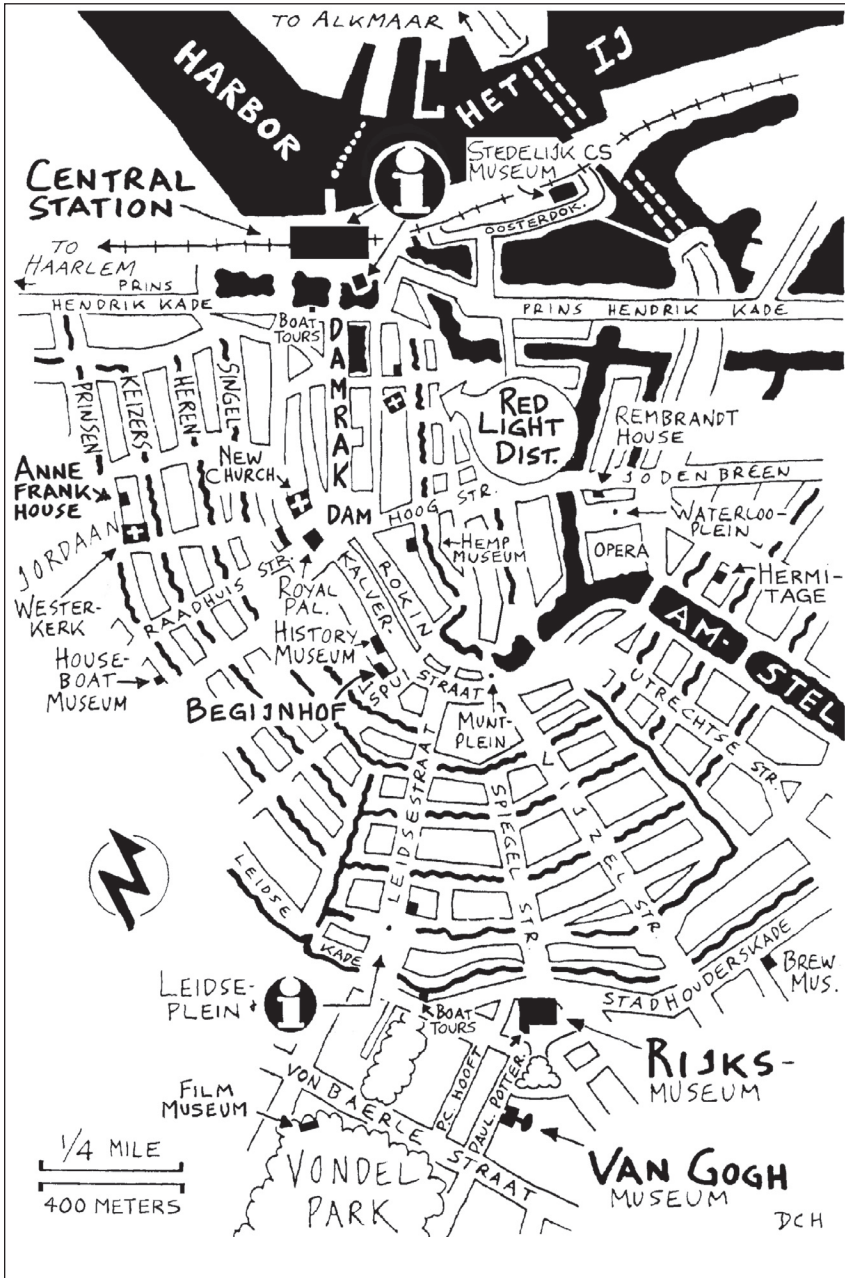
Tourist Information

There are four VVV offices. "VVV," pronounced "vay vay vay," is Dutch for "TI," a tourist information office. These are inside of Central Station at track 2b (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, wheelchair-accessible elevator, press outside button to get staff's attention; Mon-Sat 8:00-20:00, Sun 9:00-17:00), in front of Central Station (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; daily 9:00-17:00, most crowded), on Leidsestraat (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 4" entry step; daily 9:00-19:00, less crowded), and at the airport (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; daily 7:00-22:00).

Avoid Amsterdam's crowded, inefficient tourist offices if you can. For €0.60 a minute, you can save yourself a trip by calling the TI toll line at 0900-400-4040 (Mon-Fri 9:00-17:00). If you're staying in nearby Haarlem, ask your Amsterdam questions and pick up the brochures at the helpful, friendly, and rarely crowded Haarlem TI (see page *TK).

At any Amsterdam TI, ask for the extremely helpful *Amsterdam Accessibility Guide* (sometimes you have to ask more than one person to find it, but it's there). This resource provides information about levels of accessibility at hotels, restaurants, museums, theaters, cinemas, and other attractions around the city. You'll also find all the details on getting around Amsterdam if you have a disability—including renting a modified car, requesting a wheelchair-accessible taxi, finding accessible parking, and getting assistance at train stations and airports. For more information, call 020/577-7955.

Amsterdam



Also at the TI, consider buying a city map (€2) and any of the self-guided tour brochures (€1.50 each, including *Discovery Tour Through the Center*, *The Former Jewish Quarter*, and *Walks Through Jordaan*; these aren't designed for wheelchair users, but they contain interesting information). For entertainment, pick up the *Day by Day* calendar (€1.75), call the Last Minute Ticket Shop (tickets for theater, classical music, and major rock shows, tel. 0900-0191, www.lastminuteticketshop.nl), and check out this chapter's "Nightlife" section (page *TK).

Don't use the TI or a booking service to find a room; you'll pay €5 per person and your host loses 13 percent—meaning you'll likely be charged a higher rate. The phone system is easy, everyone speaks English, and the listings in this book are a better value than the potluck booking you'd get from the TI.

***I amsterdam* Card:** At many Amsterdam museums, a wheelchair user pays for entry, but his or her companion enters for free. If you're doing lots of sightseeing in a limited amount of time, consider buying an *I amsterdam* Card. This card includes free entry to most city sights, discounts on other sights and attractions, two free canal boat tours, and unlimited use of the trams, buses, and metro (€33/24 hrs, €43/48 hrs, €53/72 hrs, sold at TIs, www.iamsterdamcard.com). The pass covers most major Amsterdam museums, including the Van Gogh and the Rijksmuseum (but not the Anne Frank House). This is only worthwhile for very busy sightseers. For example, if you visit the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum, and the Amsterdam History Museum, plus take a canal boat tour—all in one day—this pass will save you a little money (€2.50). While they are sold at the TI, avoid the line by buying it at the adjacent GVB transit office (across from the station).

Tourist Information Online: Try www.visitamsterdam.nl (Amsterdam Tourism Board), www.amsterdam.nl (City of Amsterdam), and www.holland.com (Netherlands Board of Tourism).

Arrival in Amsterdam

By Train: Amsterdam swings, and the hinge that connects it to the world is its perfectly central Central Station. Expect a chaotic construction zone—the station is being renovated through 2010. The international ticket office should be at track 2, and luggage lockers are at the far east end of the building (from €5.70/24 hrs, daily 7:00–23:00, ID required).

Go out the door of the station, and you're in the heart of the city. Just in front are trams ready to take you anywhere in town. Straight ahead is Damrak street, leading to Dam Square. With your back to the entrance of the station, the TI and GVB public-transit offices are just ahead and

Dutch Landmarks

Dam (pronounced dahm)	Amsterdam's main square
Damrak (DAHM-rock)	Main street between Central Station and Dam Square
Spui (spow, rhymes with cow)	Both a street and square
Rokin (roh-KEEN)	Street connecting Dam Square and Spui
Kalverstraat (KAL-ver-strot)	Pedestrian street
Leidseplein (LIDE-zuh-pline)	Lively square
Jordaan (yor-DAHNN)	Neighborhood in southwest Amsterdam
Museumplein (myoo-ZAY-um-pline)	Square with Rijks and Van Gogh museums
gracht (khrockt, guttural)	canal
straat (straht)	street
plein (pline)	public square
huis (house)	house
kerk (kerk)	church

to your left. And on your right is a vast, multistory bike garage.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. All train platforms have wheelchair-accessible elevators (except platform 15). There is a wheelchair-accessible toilet (€0.35) in the Balcon Restaurant, located on platform 2.

Contact the Disability Service Line in advance if you'll be arriving by train and want help making arrangements for assistance, including getting to a taxi to your destination (tel. 030/235-7822, daily 7:00–23:00, call at least 3 hours ahead). This service is available at larger stations throughout the Netherlands.

By Plane: For details on getting from Schiphol Airport into downtown Amsterdam, see page *TK.

Helpful Hints

Theft Alert: Tourists are considered green and rich, and the city has more than its share of hungry thieves—especially on trams and at the many hostels. Wear your money belt.

Street Smarts: Most canals are lined by streets with the same name. When moving around town, beware of the silent transportation—trams and bicycles. Slow walkers shouldn't walk on tram tracks or

If You Need Medical Help

Your hotel is the best first point of contact. But if you need to get help on your own, Amsterdam's main hospital is the Academic Medical Center (Meibergdreef 9, tel. 020/566-9111). Also consider the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe Gasthuis (Eerste Oosterparkstraat 179, tel. 020/599-9111). Most hospitals have clinics for emergencies.

In an emergency (to summon an ambulance, the police, or the fire department), dial 112 (operators speak English). Other useful emergency phone numbers include the Crisis Help Line (tel. 020/675-7575) and the Central Medical Service (24-hour emergency and dental service, tel. 020/592-3434).

A convenient pharmacy in the city center is Dam Apotheek (Damstraat 2, tel. 020/624-4331). The emergency pharmacy number is 020/212-1568.

To reach the Netherlands Disabled Assistance, dial 030/291-7822 (daily 7:00–23:00).

pink bicycle paths, but wheelchair users will find that bike paths are sometimes the only way to go.

Accessible Toilets: Your best bets for wheelchair-accessible toilets are modern **restaurants** (for example, just about any McDonald's, or near the restaurant inside the Krasnapolsky Grand Hotel at Dam Square 9) or major **museums** (including the Anne Frank House, Van Gogh Museum, Rijksmuseum, and many more—as listed below).

Wheelchair Rental: Try Beumer de Jong (book in advance, Haarlemmermeerstraat 47-53, tel. 020/615-7188, www.beumer-de-jong.nl). For more options, see www.welzorg.nl.

Shop Hours: Most shops are open Tuesday through Saturday 10:00–18:00, and Sunday and Monday 12:00–18:00. Some shops stay open later (21:00) on Thursdays. Supermarkets are generally open Monday through Saturday 8:00–20:00, and closed on Sundays.

Internet Access: It's easy at cafés all over town. Two huge **easyInternet-cafés** offer hundreds of terminals with fast, cheap (€2.50/hr) access: there's one a block in front of the train station at Damrak 33 (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; daily 10:00–20:00) and another between Mint Tower and Rembrandtplein at Reguliersbreestraat 22 (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; daily 9:00–21:00). "Coffeeshops," which sell marijuana, usually also offer Internet access—letting you surf the Net with a special bravado.

English Bookstore: For fiction and guidebooks—including mine—try the **American Book Center** (AE, AI, AL, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) at Kalverstraat 125 (Mon–Sat 10:00–20:00, Sun 11:00–18:30) or the huge and helpful **Scheltema** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), near the Leidsestraat at Koningsplein 20 (included in Amsterdam City Roll or Stroll—see page *TK, store open Mon–Sat 10:00–18:00, Thu until 21:00, Sun 12:00–18:00; lots of English novels, guidebooks, and maps).

Maps: The free and cheap tourist maps can be confusing. Consider paying a bit more (around €2) for a top-notch map. I like the *Carto Studio Centrumkaart Amsterdam* or, better yet, the *Amsterdam: Go Where the Locals Go* map by Amsterdam Anything.

Queen's Day: On Queen's Day, April 30, Amsterdam turns into a gigantic garage sale/street market.

Getting Around Amsterdam

The longest roll or stroll a tourist would take is from the station to the Rijksmuseum (about 1.5 miles). Watch out for silent but potentially dangerous bikes and trams.

To cover distances more quickly, you have several other options. Many trams are fully accessible. If your destination is not on an accessible tram route, and you use a wheelchair, take a taxi instead.

By Tram, Bus, and Metro

Trams #2 and #5 travel the north–south axis from Central Station to Dam Square to Leidseplein to Museumplein. Tram #14 goes east–west (Westerkerk–Dam Square–Muntplein–Waterlooplein–Plantage). If you get lost in Amsterdam, 10 of the city's 17 trams take you back to Central Station. The metro (underground train) is used mostly for commuting to the suburbs, but it does connect Central Station with some sights east of Damrak (Nieuwmarkt–Waterlooplein–Weesperplein).

Access: The newest **trams**, with low central doors, are fully adapted (AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible; look for the low-to-the-ground section in the middle of the train for easy boarding). There are also several older, inaccessible trams in service (AE+A, AI+A, Level 2—Moderately



Daily Reminder

The biggest Amsterdam sights—the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, and the Anne Frank House—are open daily year-round. The city's naughty sights, as you might expect, stay open late every day (Erotic Museum until 24:00, Damrak Sex Museum until 23:30, and the Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum until 22:00).

Sunday: These sights have limited, afternoon-only hours today: the Amstelkring Museum (13:00–17:00), New Church (13:00–18:00), and the Old Church (13:00–17:00). The Westerkerk church and tower are closed, and the Waterlooplein flea market is shut down.

Monday: These are closed today: the Heineken Brewery and Houseboat Museum (also closed Tue–Thu Nov–Feb).

Tuesday–Thursday: All recommended sights are open.

Friday: These are open late—the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum (both until 22:00), plus Rembrandt's House (until 21:00).

Saturday: All recommended sights are open.

Accessible, entry steps and very narrow aisles, and also often a post at the entry). The adapted trams run sporadically on all lines except #6. Since they stagger accessible and inaccessible trams on the same route, you may have to wait for an accessible tram to come along.

Amsterdam's **buses** are built low to the ground, but they have no ramps. These low buses are a challenge for someone who uses a wheelchair, but they can work if you are able take a few steps.

As for the **metro**, some—but not all—stops on the handy Nieuwemarkt–Waterlooplein–Weesplein line are wheelchair-accessible (virtually level entrances, access provided by a lift or a ramp). Ask about access on your specific route at the GVB transit information office (in front of train station) or ticket-seller before purchasing your ticket.

Tickets and Passes: The helpful GVB public transit information office (**AE, AI**, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is in front of the train station (next to TI, daily 8:00–21:00). Its free, multilingual *Public Transport Amsterdam Tourist Guide* includes a transit map and explains ticket options and tram connections to all the sights. In keeping with the Dutch mission to automate life, they'll tack on a €0.50 penalty if you buy your transit tickets from a human ticket-seller, rather than from a machine.

You have various ticket options:

- **Individual tickets** cost €1.60 and give you an hour on the buses, trams, and metro system (pay as you board on trams and buses; for

the metro, buy tickets from machines).

- The **24-hour** (€6.30), **48-hour** (€10), or **72-hour** (€13) **tickets** give you unlimited transportation on Amsterdam's (and the Netherlands') public transit network. Buy them at the GVB public-transit office (all versions available) or as you board (24-hr version only, costs €0.50 extra).
- **Strip tickets** (*strippenkaart*), cheaper than individual tickets, are good on buses, trams, and the metro in Amsterdam and anywhere in the Netherlands. The further you go, the more strips you'll use: Any downtown ride in Amsterdam costs two strips (good for 1 hr of transfers). A card with 15 strips costs €6.50 (you can share them with your partner). Shorter strip tickets (2, 3, and 8 strips) are sold on some buses and trams, but the per-strip cost is about double. It's cheapest to buy the 15-strip tickets at the GVB public-transit office, machines at the train station, bookstores, post offices, airport, or tobacco shops throughout the country. You can also buy them (for a little more) directly from the driver.

Armed with your *strippenkaart*, board the tram (you may have to press a button to open the doors) and have your strip ticket stamped by a conductor/driver or a machine. For the machine, fold over the number of strips you need (2 for rides in central Amsterdam), stick that end in the slot, and it will stamp the time. To transfer (good for 1 hr), just show the conductor/driver your stamped *strippenkaart*.

- If you need assistance traveling on public transport, your companion is eligible for a free **Public Transport Escort Pass** that covers them on all local journeys (call 030/235-4661, open Mon–Fri 9:00–12:00).
- Along with its sightseeing perks, the ***I amsterdam* Card** offers unlimited use of the tram, bus, and metro for its duration (1, 2, or 3 days, see above).

By Taxi

Amsterdam's non-adapted taxis are expensive (€3.50 drop, €2 per kilometer). You can wave them down, find a rare taxi stand, or call one (tel. 020/677-7777). While taxis are often not a good value, they can save time, energy, and frustration if you're unsure of your route.

Access: On standard taxis (described above; **AE+A**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), the driver will assist the wheelchair user and place the folded wheelchair in the trunk.

Three companies offer fully accessible minivan taxis with ramps (**AE**, **AI**, Level 1—Fully Accessible). They charge more than standard taxis (a flat rate of €36/hr). Call an hour before you need the taxi: **Boonstra**

(tel. 020/613-4134), **Connexion Taxi Services** (tel. 020/606-2200 or 020/609-0103), and **Lagerberg Taxi** (tel. 020/647-4700).

Bike Taxis: You'll also see bike taxis, particularly near Dam Square and Leidseplein. Negotiate a rate for the trip before you board (no meter) and they'll wheel you wherever you want to go. While these probably won't work for wheelchair users, slow walkers who can climb into the taxi might find them useful (30 min-€10, no surcharge for baggage or extra weight, sample fare from Leidseplein to Anne Frank House: about €6).

By Boat

Several companies do "hop-on, hop-off" boat tours with several stops to shuttle tourists between sights, but none is fully wheelchair-accessible. **Canal Bus** (all-day ticket-€16), with three steps to the boat, offers better access than **Museum Boat** (€14), with several steps to the dock and then more to the boat (both boats: about hourly, daily 10:00-17:00). The sales booths in front of the Central Station (and the boats) offer handy, free brochures with museum times and admission prices. These boats are designed as transportation, but for wheelchair riders and slow walkers, taxis and trams are more accessible and convenient. If you want a boat experience, the easier option is a nonstop tour, which gives more information, covers more distance, and costs less (see "Tours," below).

By Car

Forget it—all you'll find are frustrating one-way streets, terrible parking, and meter maids with a passion for booting cars wrongly parked.

TOURS

▲▲Canal Boat Tours—These long, low, tourist-laden boats leave continually from several docks around the town for a relaxing one-hour, nonstop introduction to the city (with recorded, uninspiring headphone commentary). Two companies offer fully accessible boats:

Rederij Noord-Zuid (AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible), across from the Casino at Leidseplein, has four adapted boats that work for people who use wheelchairs (call 2 days ahead to get schedule for accessible boats; €9, covered by *I amsterdam* Card during the day but not in evening, April–Oct daily 10:00–18:00, Nov–March daily 10:00–17:00, tel. 020/679-1370, www.canal-cruises.nl).

Lovers Cruises (AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible) operates one fully accessible boat called the *Ganneslovers* (call ahead to check schedule for accessible boat and reserve; €8.50, departs from in front of Central

Amsterdam at a Glance

▲▲▲**Rijksmuseum** Best collection anywhere of the Dutch Masters: Rembrandt, Hals, Vermeer, and Steen. **Hours:** Daily 9:00–18:00. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

▲▲▲**Van Gogh Museum** 200 paintings by the angst-ridden artist. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–18:00, Fri until 22:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**Anne Frank House** Young Anne's hideaway during the Nazi occupation. **Hours:** April–Aug daily 9:00–21:00, Sept–March 9:00–19:00. **Access:** The house is Level 4—Not Accessible; the adjacent museum is Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Dutch Resistance Museum** History of the Dutch struggle against the Nazis. **Hours:** Tue–Fri 10:00–17:00, Sat–Mon 12:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Amstelkring Museum** Catholic church hidden in the attic of a 17th-century merchant's house. **Hours:** Mon–Sat 10:00–17:00, Sun 13:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 4—Not Accessible.

▲▲**Red Light District** Women on the job at the world's oldest profession. **Hours:** Best between noon and night—avoid late night. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Heineken Brewery** Best beer tour in Europe. **Hours:** Tue–Sun 10:00–18:00, closed Mon. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Station by the Ibis Hotel at Prinshendrik Kade 25–27, tel. 020/530-1090, www.lovers.nl). No fishing is allowed—but bring your camera. Some prefer to cruise at night, when the bridges are illuminated.

Private Guide—Ab Walet is a likeable, hardworking, and knowledgeable local guide who enjoys personalizing tours for Americans interested in knowing his city better. He specializes in history and architecture and exudes a passion for Amsterdam. He can also take you to nearby towns (wheelchair riders and slow walkers welcome, €40/2 hrs, €80/4 hrs, for small groups of up to 4 people, tel. 020/671-2588, mobile 06-2069-7882, abwalet@yahoo.com). Ab says that his favorite clients are elderly folks

▲**Begijnhof** Quiet courtyard lined with picturesque houses. **Hours:** Daily 8:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Amsterdam History Museum** Shows city's growth from fishing village to trading capital to today, including some Rembrandts and a playable carillon. **Hours:** Mon–Fri 10:00–17:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible, except loft with carillon, which is Level 4—Not Accessible.

▲**Rembrandt's House** The master's reconstructed house, displaying his etchings. **Hours:** Sat–Thu 10:00–17:00, Fri 10:00–21:00. **Access:** The house itself is Level 4—Not Accessible, but the attached museum is Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Diamonds** Tours at shops throughout the city, most notably Gassan near Rembrandt's House. **Hours:** Generally daily 9:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

▲**Hermitage Amsterdam Museum** Russia's Tsarist treasures on loan from St. Petersburg **Hours:** Daily 10:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

▲**Dutch Theater** Moving memorial in former Jewish detention center. **Hours:** Daily 11:00–16:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum** All the dope, from history and science to memorabilia. **Hours:** Daily 11:00–22:00. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

who just enjoy taking their time seeing the sights.

Red Light District Tours—You have two walking/wheeling tour options for seeing Amsterdam's most infamous neighborhood with a guide. For either company, call ahead to explain your mobility level (Randy Roy's offers better access).

Randy Roy's Red Light Tours consists of one ex-pat American woman, Kimberly. She lived in the Red Light District for years, and she gives fun, casual, yet informative 90-minute tours through this fascinating and eye-popping neighborhood. While the actual information is light, you'll explore various porn and drug shops and have an expert

along to answer your questions (€12.50 includes a drink in a colorful bar at the end, nightly at 20:00, occasional Fri and Sat 22:00 tours, meet in front of Victoria Hotel—in front of the station, mobile 06-4185-3288, call her to confirm).

Zoom Amsterdam Citywalk starts at a café in the Tower of Tears (located across from Central Station, to the southwest). This building is not accessible—if you can climb the eight entry steps, you'll do fine on the rest of the tour. You'll listen to an initial 30-minute spiel about the history of the city. Then hit the streets for another two hours to find out the complicated story behind the Red Light District, including some fascinating, locals-only info (such as the scams that unscrupulous bar owners use on the many young male Brits who flock here). If you're curious about the area but would rather explore with a group, Zoom Amsterdam is a good way to go (€12.50, daily at 17:00; book ahead at VVV, through hotel, or by calling 020/623-6302; www.zoomamsterdam.com).

SIGHTS

One of Amsterdam's delights is that it has perhaps more small specialty museums than any other city its size. From houseboats to sex, cannabis to costumes, you can find a museum to suit your interests. Note that most museums require baggage check (usually free, often in coin-op lockers where you get your coin back).

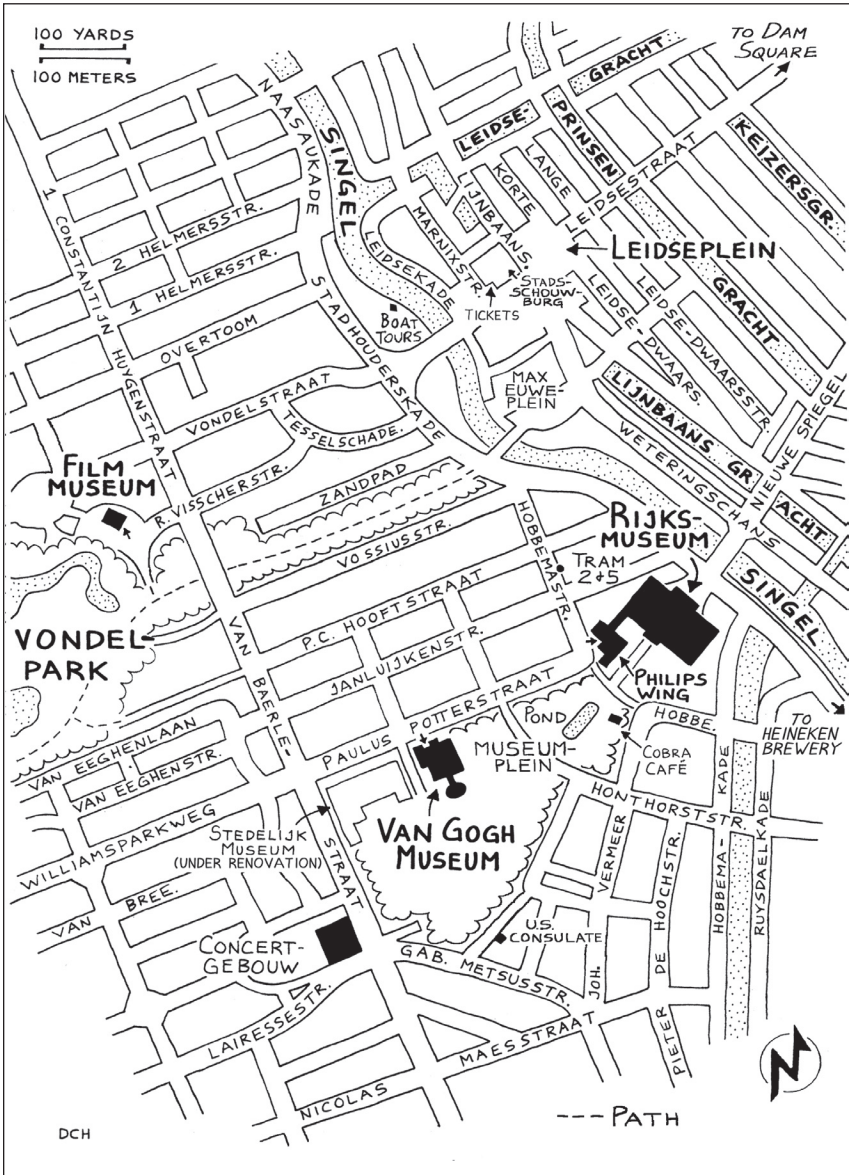
The following sights are arranged by neighborhood for handy sight-seeing.

Southwest Amsterdam

▲▲▲**Rijksmuseum**—Built to house the nation's great art, the Rijksmuseum owns several thousand paintings, including an incomparable collection of Dutch masters: Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, and Steen. The museum has made it easy for you to focus on the highlights, because that's all that is on display while most of the building undergoes several years of renovation (due to reopen in summer 2008). Wander through the Rijksmuseum's Philips Wing for a wonderful, concentrated dose of 17th-century Dutch masterpieces.



Southwest Amsterdam



Access: AE+A, AI, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Wheelchair users can cut to the head of the line. Ask at the entry for assistance in finding the accessible entrance (which may change during renovation). Interior lifts provide access to all floors. A wheelchair-accessible toilet is located in the basement on the “A” entry side. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

Cost, Hours, Location: €10, covered by *I Amsterdam* Card, audioguide-€4, daily 9:00–18:00, Friday until 22:00, tram #2 or #5 from train station to Hobbemastraat, tel. 020/674-7047, www.rijksmuseum.com. The Philips Wing entrance is near the corner of Hobbemastraat and Jan Luijkenstraat on the south side of the Rijks—the part of the huge building nearest the Van Gogh Museum.



▲▲▲**Van Gogh Museum**—Near the Rijksmuseum, this remarkable museum showcases works by the troubled Dutch artist whose art seemed to mirror his life. Vincent, who killed himself in 1890 at age 37, is best known for sunny, Impressionist canvases that vibrate and pulse with life. The museum’s 200 paintings, a taste of the artist’s work and life, were owned by Theo, Vincent’s younger, art-dealer brother. Highlights include *Sunflowers*, *The Bedroom*, *The Potato Eaters*, and many brooding self-portraits. The third floor shows works that influenced Vincent, from Monet and Pissarro to Gauguin, Cézanne, and Toulouse-Lautrec. The worthwhile audioguide includes insightful commentaries and quotes from Vincent himself.

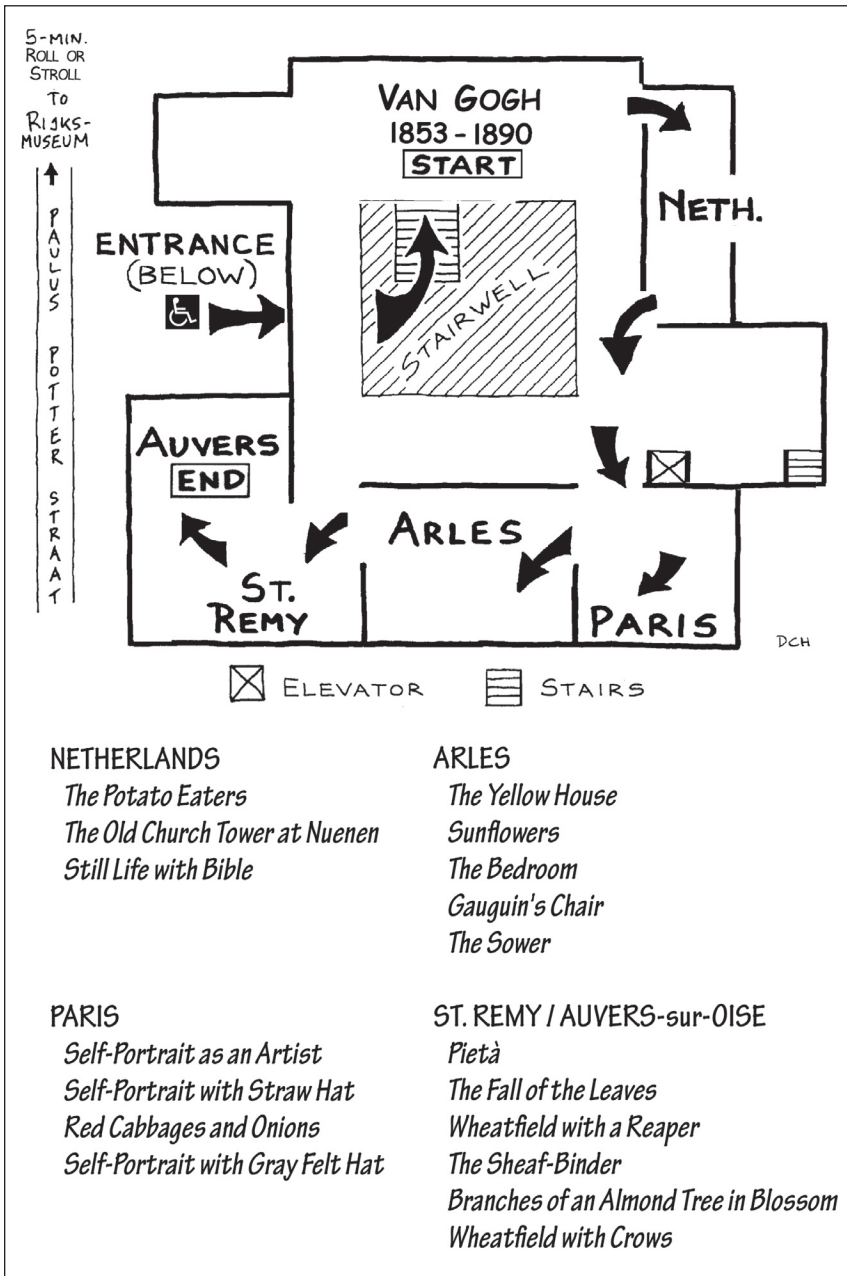


Access: AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Wheelchair users can cut to the head of the line. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

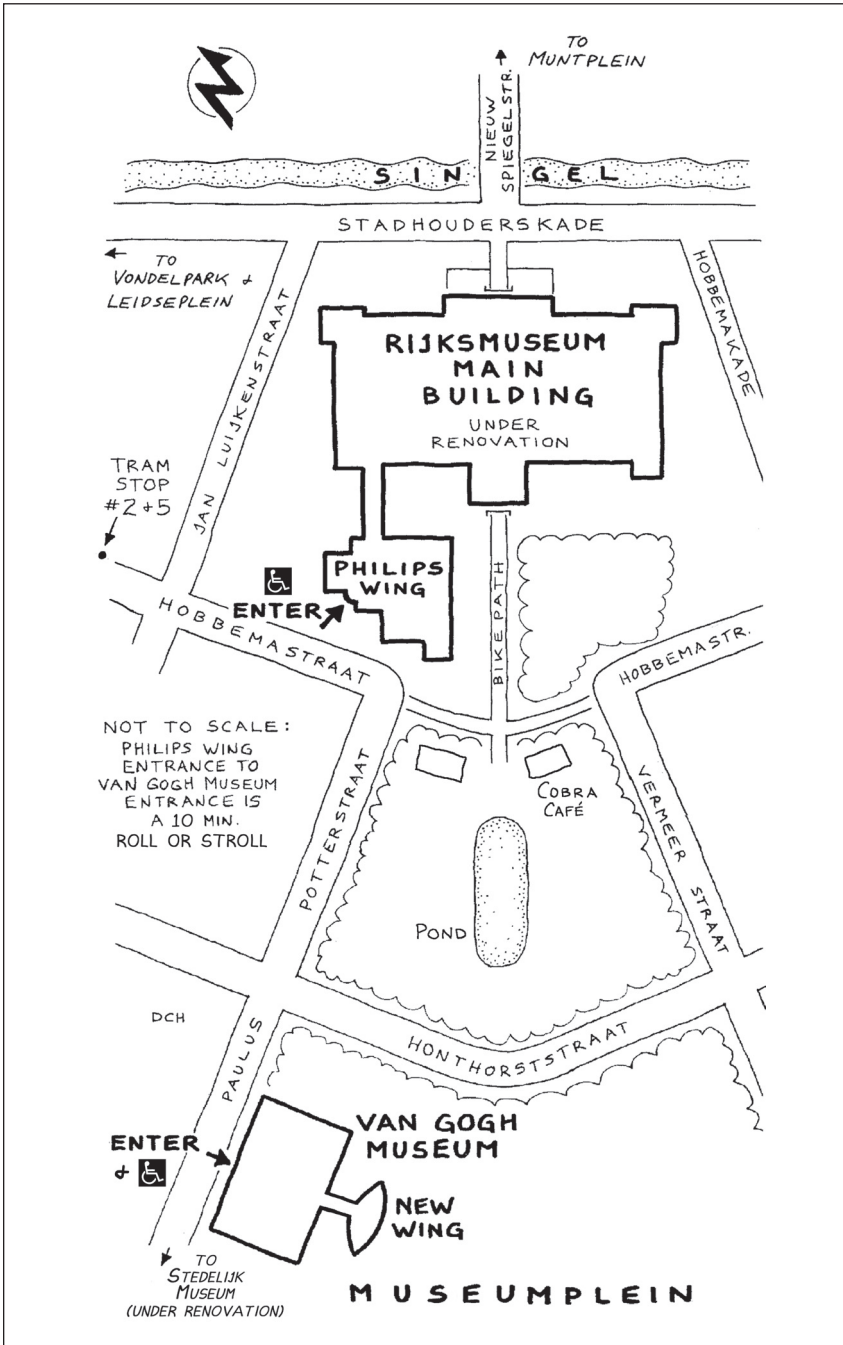
Cost, Hours, Location: €10, covered by *I Amsterdam* Card, audioguide-€4, daily 10:00–18:00, Fri until 22:00, Paulus Potterstraat 7, tel. 020/570-5200, www.vangoghmuseum.nl).

▲**Museumplein**—Bordered by the Rijks, Van Gogh, and the Concertgebouw (classical music hall), this square is interesting even to art-haters. Amsterdam’s best acoustics are found underneath the Rijksmuseum, where street musicians perform everything from chamber music to Mongolian throat singing. Mimes, human statues, and crafts booths dot the square. Skateboarders careen across a concrete tube, while locals enjoy a park bench or a coffee at the Cobra Café.

Van Gogh Museum



Museumplein



Access: Level 1—The square is fully accessible and has adapted toilets.

▲Heineken Brewery—The leading Dutch beer is no longer brewed here, but this old brewery now welcomes visitors to a slick and entertaining beer-appreciation experience. It's the most enjoyable brewery tour I've encountered in Europe. You'll learn as much as you want, marvel at the huge vats and towering ceilings, see videos, and go on rides. "What's it like to be a Heineken bottle and be filled with one of the best beers in the world? Try it for yourself." An important section recognizes a budding problem of our age, vital to people as well as to beer: this planet's scarcity of clean water. With globalization, corporations are well on their way to owning the world's water supplies.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €10 for self-guided, 75-minute tour and 3 beers or soft drinks; must be over age 18, Tue–Sun 10:00–18:00, last entry 17:00, closed Mon, tram #16 or #24 to Heinekenplein, close to Rijksmuseum, tel. 020/523-9666.

▲Leidseplein—Brimming with cafés, this people-watching mecca is an impromptu stage for street artists, accordionists, jugglers, and unicyclists. Sunny afternoons are liveliest. The Boom Chicago theater fronts this square (see page *TK). Roll or stroll nearby Lange Leidsedwardsstraat (1 block north) for a taste-bud tour of ethnic eateries, from Greek to Indonesian.

Access: Level 1—Fully Accessible. The sidewalks in this area are all wheelchair-accessible. You'll also find the accessible Rederij Noord-Zuid canal boat tour (see "Tours," above).

▲▲Vondelpark—This huge and lively city park is popular with the Dutch—families with little kids, romantic couples, strolling seniors, and hippies sharing blankets and beers. It's a favored venue for free summer concerts. On a sunny afternoon, it's a hedonistic scene that seems to say, "Parents...relax."



Access: Level 1—Fully Accessible. Wheelchair users can travel on the bike-way or on the two dirt paths on either side

of the bikeway.

Amsterdam Film Museum—This is actually not a museum, but a movie theater. In its three 80-seat theaters, it shows several films a day, from small foreign productions to 70-mm classics drawn from its massive archives.

Access: AE+A, AI+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Wheelchair users will find barriers both at the entry and inside the building.

Cost, Hours, Location: €8, always in the original language, often English subtitles, Vondelpark 3, tel. 020/589-1400, www.filmmuseum.nl.

Rembrandtplein and Tuschinski Theater—One of the city's premier nightlife spots is the leafy **Rembrandtplein** (the artist's modest statue stands here) and the adjoining Thorbeckeplein. Several late-night dance clubs (such as IT, a half-block east down Amstelstraat) keep the area lively into the wee hours. Utrechtsestraat is lined with upscale shops and restaurants.

The **Tuschinski Theater**, a movie palace from the 1920s (a half block from Rembrandtplein down Reguliersbreestraat) glitters inside and out.



Still a working theater, it's a delightful old place to see first-run movies. The exterior is an interesting hybrid of styles, forcing the round peg of Art Nouveau into the square hole of Art Deco. The stone-and-tile facade features stripped down, functional Art Deco squares and rectangles, but is ornamented with Art Nouveau elements—Tiffany-style windows, garlands, curvy iron lamps, Egyptian pharaohs, and exotic gold lettering over the door. Inside (lobby is free), the sumptuous decor features red

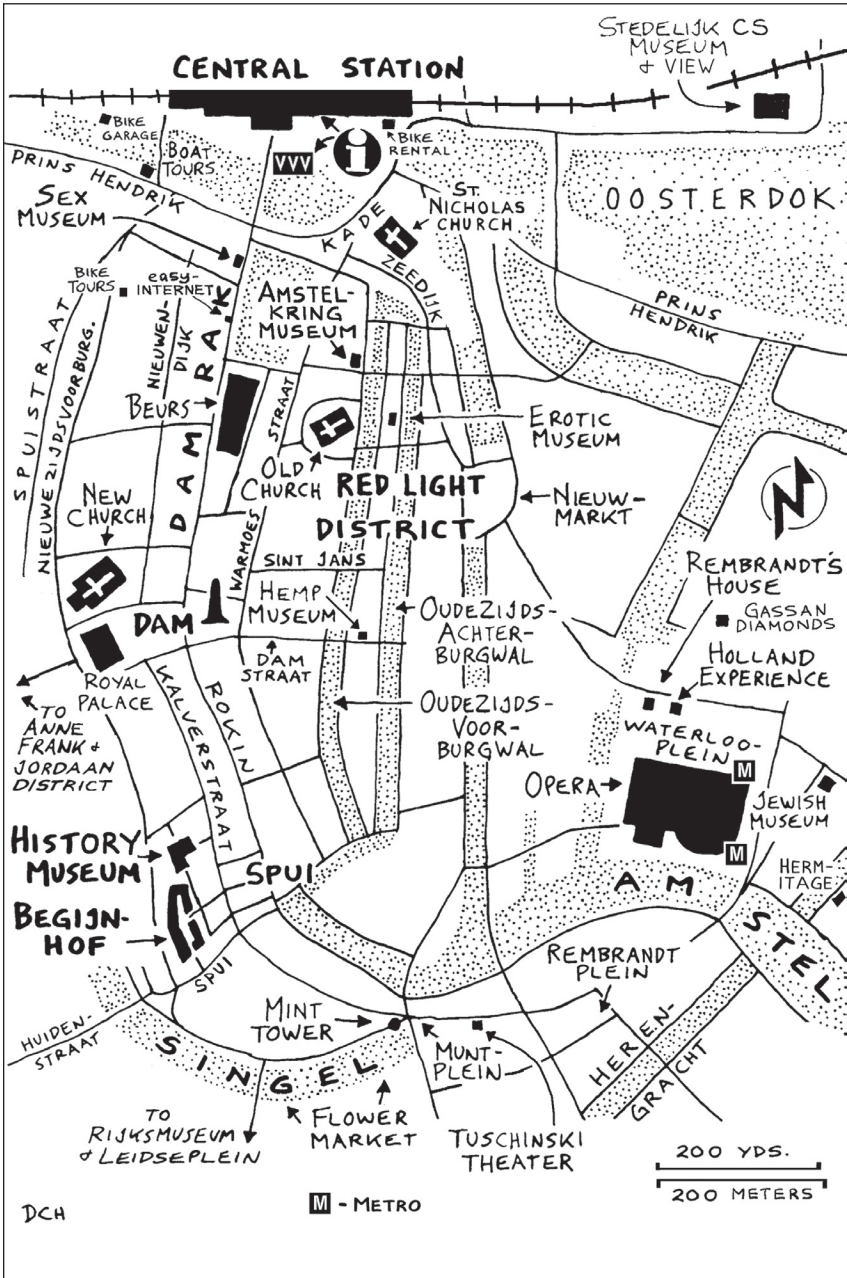
carpets, nymphs on the walls, and semi-abstract designs. Watch the ceiling morph (Reguliersbreestraat 26–28).

Access: AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible, four 7" entry steps.

Houseboat Museum (Woonbootmuseum)—In the 1930s, modern cargo ships came into widespread use—making small, sail-powered cargo boats obsolete. In danger of extinction, these little vessels found new life as houseboats lining the canals of Amsterdam. Today, 2,500 such boats—their cargo holds turned into classy, comfortable living rooms—are called home by locals. For a peek into this *gezellig* (cozy) world, visit this tiny museum. Captain Vincent enjoys showing visitors around the houseboat, which feels lived-in because, until 1997, it was.

Access: AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. The staff will assist you getting in the small entry. Once inside, it's barrier-free.

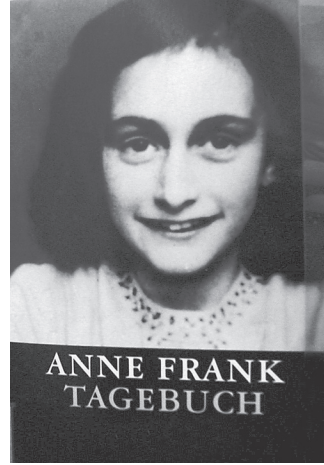
Central Amsterdam



Cost, Hours, Location: €3, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, March–Oct Tue–Sun 11:00–17:00, closed Mon; Nov–Feb Fri–Sun 11:00–17:00, closed Mon–Thu; on Prinsengracht, opposite #296 facing Elandsgracht, tel. 020/427-0750, www.houseboatmuseum.nl.

Central Amsterdam, near Dam Square

▲▲▲**Anne Frank House**—A pilgrimage for many, this house offers a fascinating look at the hideaway of young Anne during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Anne, her parents, an older sister, and four others spent just over two years in a “Secret Annex” behind her father’s business. While in hiding, 13-year-old Anne kept a diary chronicling her extraordinary experience. Acting on a tip, the Nazis arrested them in August 1944 and sent the group to concentration camps in Poland and Germany. Anne and her sister died of typhus in March 1945, only weeks before their camp was liberated. Of the eight inhabitants of the Secret Annex, only Anne’s father, Otto Frank, survived. He returned to Amsterdam and arranged for his daughter’s diary to be published in 1947. It was followed by many translations, a play, and a movie.



Pick up the English pamphlet at the door. The exhibit offers thorough coverage of the Frank family, the diary, the stories of others who hid, and the Holocaust. In summer, skip the hour-long daytime lines by arriving after 18:00 (last entry is 20:30) and visit after dinner. For an interesting glimpse of Holland under the Nazis, rent the powerful movie *Soldier of Orange* before you leave home.

Access: The house is Level 4—Not Accessible, with many stairs and tight hallways; the adjacent museum is **AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible. In the museum, wheelchair users and other travelers with limited mobility can watch a “virtual” tour of the house. Ask for entry at the ticket booth.

Cost, Hours, Location: €7.50, April–Aug daily 9:00–21:00, Sept–March daily 9:00–19:00, closed for Yom Kippur, last entry 30 min before closing, strict and required baggage check for large bags, Prinsengracht 267, near Westerkerk, tel. 020/556-7100, www.annefrank.org.

Westerkerk—Near the Anne Frank House, this landmark church has a barren interior, Rembrandt’s body buried somewhere under the pews, and Amsterdam’s tallest steeple.

Access: AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. The church tower, which doesn't have an elevator, is Level 4—Not Accessible.

Cost and Hours: Free, generally open April–Sept Mon–Sat 10:00–15:00, closed Sun.

Royal Palace (Koninklijk Huis)—The palace, which will be closed for renovation through 2008, is right on Dam Square. It was built as a lavish City Hall for Amsterdam, when the country was a proud new republic and Amsterdam was the richest city on the planet—awash in profit from trade. When constructed in 1648, this building was one of Europe's finest, with a sumptuous interior. Today, it's the official (but not actual) residence of the queen (tel. 020/620-4060, www.koninklijkhuis.nl).

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

New Church (Nieuwe Kerk)—Barely newer than the “Old” Church (located in the Red Light District), this 15th-century church has an intentionally dull interior, after the decoration was removed by 16th-century iconoclastic Protestants seeking to unclutter their communion with God. This is where many Dutch royal weddings and all coronations take place, and it hosts temporary exhibits.

Access: AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The associated restaurant (to the right) is also fully accessible and has adapted toilets.

Cost, Hours, Location: While there's a steep €8 entrance fee to see the various exhibitions (covered by *I amsterdam* Card), anyone can pop in free for a look at the vast interior (Mon–Sat 10:00–18:00, Sun 13:00–18:00, on Dam Square, tel. 020/638-6909, www.nieuwekerk.nl; also see page *TK).

▲**Begijnhof**—Entering this tiny, idyllic courtyard in the city center, you escape into the charm of old Amsterdam. Notice house #34, a 500-year-old wooden structure (rare, since repeated fires taught city fathers a trick called brick). Peek into the hidden Catholic church, dating from the time when post-Reformation Dutch Catholics couldn't worship in public. It's opposite the English Reformed church, where the Pilgrims worshipped while waiting for their voyage to the New World (marked by a plaque near the door). Be considerate of the people who live around the courtyard.

Access: AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The entrance on the east side of the courtyard has no steps. The courtyard has fully accessible pathways. The hidden Catholic church (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) has large doors and two 2” steps, one on either side of the landing.

Cost, Hours, Location: Free, daily 8:00–17:00, on Begijnensteeg lane, just off Kalverstraat between #130 and #132, pick up flier at office

near entrance; for more details, see page *TK.

▲Amsterdam History Museum (Amsterdams Historisch Museum)—

Follow the city's growth from fishing village to world trader to hippie haven. Housed in a 500-year-old former orphanage, this creative and hardworking museum features Rembrandt's paintings, fine English descriptions, and a carillon loft. The loft comes with push-button recordings of the town bell tower's greatest hits, and a self-serve carillon "keyboard" that lets you ring a few bells yourself.

Access: Museum is **AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The loft is Level 4—Not Accessible. The museum has wheelchair-accessible elevators (that do not go to the loft) and an adapted toilet (near the fully accessible David and Goliath café). Loaner wheelchairs are available.

Cost, Hours, Location: €6.50, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, Mon–Fri 10:00–17:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–17:00, pleasant restaurant, next to Begijnhof, Kalverstraat 92, tel. 020/523-1822, www.ahm.nl. The museum's free pedestrian corridor—lined with old-time group portraits—is a powerful teaser.

Southeast Amsterdam

To reach these sights from the train station, take tram #9 or #14 (both Level 1—Fully Accessible). All of these sights are close to each other and can easily be connected into an interesting roll or stroll. Several of the sights in southeast Amsterdam cluster near the large square, Waterlooplein, dominated by the modern opera house. Most sights are covered by the *I amsterdam* Card.

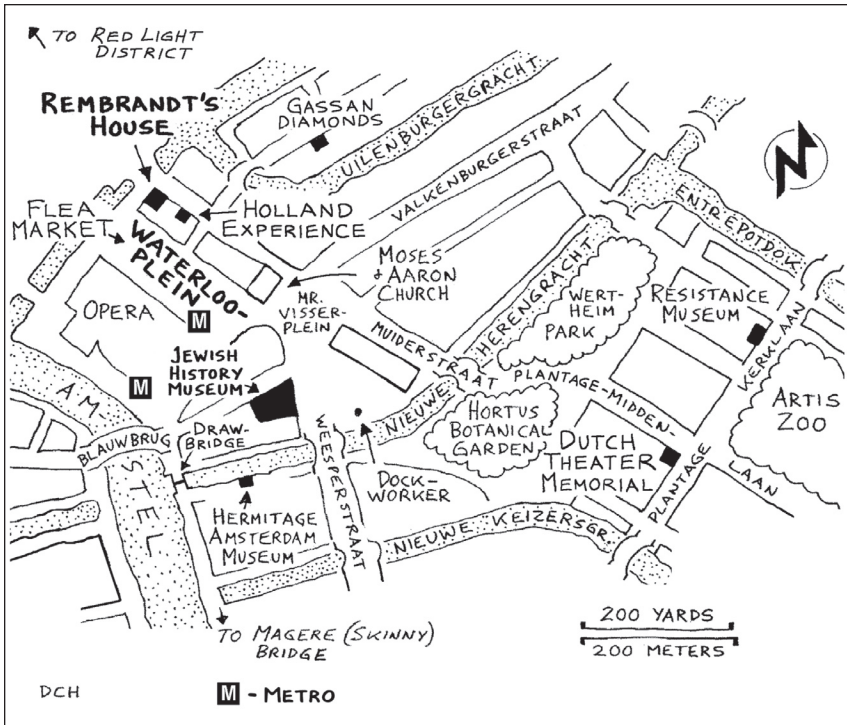
For an orientation, survey the neighborhood from the accessible, lamp-lined Blauwbrug ("Blue Bridge")—a modest, modern version of Paris' Pont Alexandre III. The bridge crosses the Amstel River. From this point, the river is channeled to form the city's canals.

Pan clockwise. The big, curved modern facade belongs to the new opera house (commonly called the "Stopera," after a public outcry wanting to stop its construction). Behind the Stopera are these sights (not visible from here, but described below): the Waterlooplein flea market, Rembrandt's House, *Holland Experience*, and Gassan Diamonds. To the right of the Stopera are the twin gray steeples of the Moses and Aaron Church, which sits roughly in the center of the former Jewish Quarter.

Several Jewish sights cluster to the right of the Moses and Aaron Church: the Jewish Historical Museum, the Portuguese Synagogue, and the dockworker memorial. Just east of those is the De Hortus Botanical Garden.

The modern drawbridge in the foreground, though not famous, is

Southeast Amsterdam



photogenic. Beyond that is the Hermitage Amsterdam Museum (see below). Crossing the Amstel upstream is one of the city's romantic spots, the Magere Brug ("Skinny Bridge").



Waterlooplein Flea Market—For more than a hundred years, the Jewish Quarter flea market has raged daily except Sunday behind the Rembrandt House. The long, narrow park is filled with stalls selling cheap clothes, hippie stuff, old records, tourist knickknacks, and garage-sale junk. (The flea market is right at the Waterlooplein metro station.)

Access: Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Rembrandt's House (Rembrandthuis Museum)**—A middle-aged Rembrandt lived here after his wife's death, as his popularity and wealth dwindled down to obscurity and bankruptcy (1639–1658). If you are able, tour the place this way: See the 10-minute introductory video (Dutch and English showings alternate); explore Rembrandt's reconstructed

house (filled with exactly what his bankruptcy inventory of 1656 said he owned); imagine him at work in his reconstructed studio; marvel at his personal collection of exotic objects, many of which he included in paintings; ask the printer to explain the etching process (drawing in soft wax on a metal plate that's then dipped in acid, inked up, and printed); then, for the finale, enjoy several rooms of original Rembrandt etchings. While the permanent collection includes only two Rembrandt paintings, the etchings are marvelous and well-described. I came away wanting to know more about the man and his art.

Access: The house itself is Level 4—Not Accessible. The museum—including the video and gallery of etchings—is **AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €7.50, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, €13.50 combo-ticket includes *Holland Experience*—see below, Sat–Thu 10:00–17:00, Fri 10:00–21:00, Jodenbreestraat 4, tel. 020/520-0400, www.rembrandthuis.nl.

Holland Experience—Bragging “Experience Holland in 30 minutes,” this 3-D movie takes you traveling through an idealized montage of Dutch clichés. There are no words, but lots of images. While it's a cheesy presentation (and the schedule, with showings only every couple hours, is frustrating), the *Experience* is relaxing, and puts you in a Dutch frame of mind. The men's urinal is a trip to the beach. Plan for it. There's also a goofy chance to pose in a fake Red Light District window.

Access: **AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €8.50, €13.50 combo-ticket includes Rembrandt's House, daily 10:00–18:00, several shows a day, alternating in 2006 with a Rembrandt video, adjacent to Rembrandt's House at Jodenbreestraat 8, tel. 020/422-2233, www.holland-experience.nl.

▲Diamonds—Many shops in the “city of diamonds” offer tours. These tours come with two parts: a chance to see experts behind magnifying glasses polishing the facets of precious diamonds, followed by a visit to an intimate sales room to see (and perhaps buy) a mighty shiny yet very tiny souvenir.

The handy and professional **Gassan Diamonds** facility fills a huge warehouse a block from Rembrandt's House. A visit here puts you in the big-tour-group fray (notice how each tour group has a color-coded sticker, so they know which guide gets the commission on what they buy). You'll get a sticker, join a tour



to see a polisher at work, and hear a general explanation of the process (free, 15 min). Then you'll have an opportunity to have color and clarity described and illustrated with diamonds ranging in value from \$100 to \$30,000. Before or after, you can have a free cup of coffee in the waiting room across the parking lot.

Access: AE+A, AI, AL, AT+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. There's one 6" entry step and an accessible restaurant.

Cost, Hours, Location: Daily 9:00–17:00, Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173, tel. 020/622-5333, www.gassandiamonds.com.

▲Hermitage Amsterdam Museum—The famous Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, loans art to Amsterdam for display in the Amstelhof, a 17th-century former nursing home on the Amstel River. The exhibit changes twice a year. For the latest, ask at the TI or check www.hermitage.nl.

Why all this Russian-owned art in Amsterdam? The Hermitage collection in St. Petersburg is so vast that they can only show about 5 percent of it at any one time. Therefore, the Hermitage is establishing satellite collections around the world. The one here in Amsterdam is the biggest, and will be growing considerably as the museum takes over more of the Amstelhof. By law, the great Russian collection can only be out of the country for six months at a time, so the collection will always be rotating. Curators in Amsterdam make a point to display art that complements—rather than just repeats—what the city's other museums show so well.

Access: AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. The staff will assist you with the three entry steps.

Cost, Hours, Location: €6, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, daily 10:00–17:00, Nieuwe Herengracht 14, tram #4 to Rembrandtplein or #9 to Waterlooplein, tel. 020/531-8751, www.hermitage.nl.

De Hortus Botanical Garden—This is a unique oasis of tranquility within the city (no mobile phones are allowed, because “our collection of plants is a precious community—treat it with respect”). One of the oldest botanical gardens in the world, it dates from 1638, when medicinal herbs were grown here. Today, among its 6,000 different kinds of plants—most of which were collected by the Dutch East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries—you'll find medicinal herbs, cacti, several greenhouses (one with a fluttery butterfly house—a hit with kids), and a tropical palm house. Much of it is described in English: “A Dutch merchant snuck a coffee plant out of Ethiopia, which ended up in this garden in 1706. This first coffee plant in Europe was the literal granddaddy of the coffee cultures of Brazil—long the world's biggest coffee producer.”

Jews in Amsterdam

In 1940, one in ten Amsterdammers was Jewish, and most lived in the neighborhood behind Waterlooplein. Jewish traders had long been welcome in a city that cared more about business than religion. In the late 1500s, many Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal immigrated, fleeing persecution. (The philosopher Baruch Spinoza's ancestors were among them.) In the 1630s, Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews (Ashkenazi) poured in. By 1700, the Jewish Quarter was a bustling, exotic, multicultural world, with more people speaking Portuguese, German, and Yiddish than Dutch.

Jews were not first-class citizens. They needed the city's permission to settle there, and they couldn't hold public office (but then, neither could Catholics under Calvinist rule). Still, the Jewish Quarter was not a ghetto (enforced segregation), there were no special taxes, and cosmopolitan Amsterdam was well-acquainted with all types of beliefs and customs.

In 1796, Jews were given full citizenship. In exchange, they were required to learn the Dutch language and submit to the city's legal system...and the Jewish culture began assimilating into the Dutch.

In 1940, Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands. On February 22, 1941, the Nazis began rounding up Jews—herding hundreds of them to Jonas Daniel Meyerplein to be shipped to extermination camps in Eastern Europe. The citizens responded with a general strike that shut down the entire city, a heroic gesture honored today with a statue of a striking dockworker on Jonas Daniel Meyerplein. Despite the strike, the roundups continued. By war's end, more than 100,000 of the city's 130,000 Jews had died.

Today, about 25,000 Jews live in Amsterdam, and the Jewish Quarter has blended in with the modern city.

Access: AE, AI+A, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Loaner wheelchairs are available. While the “Museum Maps” rate the garden as wheelchair-accessible, the stone path makes it a challenge, especially in the spots where the stones are at their deepest. They do have a wheelchair-accessible toilet.

Cost, Hours, Location: €6, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, Mon–Fri 9:00–17:00, Sat–Sun 10:00–17:00, until 16:00 in winter, Plantage Middenlaan 2A, tel. 020/625-9021, www.hortus-botanicus.nl.

Jewish Historical Museum (Joods Historisch Museum)—Four historic buildings have been joined by steel and glass to make one modern

complex that tells the story of Amsterdam's Jews through the centuries, while serving as a good introduction to Judaism in general. There are several sections ("Jews in Amsterdam," children's museum, temporary exhibits), but the highlight is the Great Synagogue, restored in 1981.

Sit in the high-ceilinged synagogue, surrounded by religious objects, and imagine it in its prime (1671–1943). The hall would be full for a service—men downstairs, women above in the gallery. On the east wall (the symbolic direction of Jerusalem) is the ark, where they keep the scrolls of the Torah (the Jewish scriptures, which include the first 5 books of the Christian bible). The rabbi and other men, wearing thigh-length prayer shawls, would approach the ark and carry the Torah to the raised platform in the center of the room. After unwrapping it from its drapery and silver cap, one would use a *yad* (ceremonial pointer) to follow along while singing the text aloud.

Video displays around the room explain Jewish customs, from birth (circumcision) to puberty (the bar/bat mitzvah, celebrating the entry into adulthood) to marriage—culminating in the groom stomping on a glass while everyone shouts, "Mazel tov!"

Access: AE+A, AI, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Wheelchair users enter through a side door; ring the bell to gain entrance. The museum has accessible toilets.

Cost, Hours, Location: €6.50, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, daily 11:00–17:00, free audioguide but displays all have English explanations, good kosher café, Jonas Daniel Meijerplein 2, tel. 020/626-9945, www.jhm.nl.

▲Dutch Theater (Hollandsche Schouwburg)—Once a lively theater in the Jewish neighborhood, and today a moving memorial, this building was used as an assembly hall for local Jews destined for Nazi concentration camps. On the wall, 6,700 family names pay tribute to the 104,000 Jews deported and killed by the Nazis. Some 70,000 victims spent time here, awaiting transfer to concentration camps. Upstairs is a small history exhibit with photos and memorabilia of some victims, putting a human face on the staggering numbers. Press the buttons on a model of the neighborhood to see round-up spots from the Nazi occupation. The ruined theater actually offers little to see but plenty to think about. Back on the ground floor, notice the hopeful messages that visiting school groups attach to the wooden tulips.

Access: AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Enter to the left of the main door (ring bell to gain entry). Loaner wheelchairs are available.

Cost, Hours, Location: Free, daily 11:00–16:00, Plantage

Middenlaan 24, tel. 020/626-9945, www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl.

▲▲Dutch Resistance Museum (Verzetsmuseum)—This is an impressive look at how the Dutch resisted their Nazi occupiers from 1940 to 1945. You'll see propaganda movie clips, study forged ID cards under a magnifying glass, and read about ingenious and courageous efforts—big and small—to hide local Jews from the Germans and undermine the Nazi regime.

The first dozen displays set the stage, showing peaceful, upright Dutch people of the 1930s, living oblivious to the rise of fascism. Then—bam—it's May 1940 and the Germans invade the Netherlands, pummel Rotterdam, send Queen Wilhelmina into exile, and—in four short days of fighting—hammer home the message that resistance is futile. The Germans install local Dutch Nazis in power (the “NSB”), led by Anton Mussert.

Next, in the corner of the exhibition area, push a button to see photos of the event that first mobilized organized resistance. In February 1941, Nazis started rounding up Jews from the neighborhood, killing nine protesters. Amsterdammers responded by shutting down the trams, schools, and businesses in a massive two-day strike. (The next display makes it clear that this brave action still did little to save 100,000 Jews from extermination.)

Turning the corner into the main room, you'll see numerous exhibits on Nazi rule and the many ways the Dutch resisted it: schoolkids telling “Kraut jokes,” vandals turning Nazi V-for-Victory posters into W-for-Wilhelmina, preachers giving pointed sermons, printers distributing underground newspapers (such as *Het Parool*, which became a major daily paper), counterfeiters forging documents, and ordinary people hiding radios under floorboards and Jews inside closets. As the war progressed, the armed Dutch Resistance became bolder and more violent, killing German occupiers and Dutch collaborators. In September 1944, the Allies liberated Antwerp, and the Netherlands started celebrating... too soon. The Nazis dug in and punished the country by cutting off rations, plunging West Holland into the “Hunger Winter” of 1944–1945, in which 20,000 died. Finally, springtime came. The Allies liberated the country, and at war's end, Nazi helmets were turned into bedpans.

Besides the history lesson, this thought-provoking exhibit examines the moral dilemmas of life under oppressive rule. Is it right to give money to poor people if the charity is run by Nazis? Should I quit my government job when the Nazis take control, or stay on to do what good I can? If I disagree with my government, is it okay to lie? To vandalize? To kill?

Access: AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. If you need a loaner wheelchair, call ahead to reserve one.

Cost, Hours, Location: €5, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, Tue–Fri 10:00–17:00, Sat–Mon 12:00–17:00, well-described in English, no flash photos, tram #9 from station, Plantage Kerklaan 61, tel. 020/620-2535, www.verzetsmuseum.org. The recommended Restaurant Plancius is adjacent to the museum (see page *TK) and Amsterdam’s famous zoo is just across the street.

Northeast Amsterdam

Stedelijk Museum CS—The modern art museum, temporarily located on the second and third floors of the towering post office building, features art that would normally be displayed at the main Stedelijk Museum building (near the Rijksmuseum), but it’s under renovation until 2008. The fun, far-out, refreshing collection consists of post-1945 experimental and conceptual art. The Stedelijk’s famous masterpieces (works by Picasso, Chagall, Cézanne, Kandinsky, and Mondrian) will not be on display until the museum moves back into its regular home (which is also Level 1—Fully Accessible).

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €9, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, daily 10:00–18:00, just east of Central Station—to the left as you exit—look for *Post CS* tower at Oosterdokskade 5, tel. 020/573-2911, www.stedelijk.nl.

Best Amsterdam Viewpoint: Along with the Westerkerk’s tower, the best viewpoint of the city is from the 11th floor of the Post building (near the train station, which temporarily houses the Stedelijk Museum). Café 11 is a trendy nightspot that doubles as an eatery during the day. Ride the fully accessible elevator to the 11th floor to see the view for free.

Red Light District

▲▲Amstelkring Museum (Our Lord in the Attic)—While Amsterdam has long been known for its tolerant attitudes, 16th-century politics forced Dutch Catholics to worship discreetly. Near the train station in the Red Light District, you’ll find a fascinating hidden Catholic church filling the attic of three 17th-century merchants’ houses. Don’t miss the silver collection and other exhibits of daily life from 300 years ago.

Access: Level 4—Not Accessible. The many stairs leading to this attic make it accessible only to energetic slow walkers.

Cost, Hours, Location: €7, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, Mon–Sat 10:00–17:00, Sun and holidays 13:00–17:00, closed Jan 1

and April 30, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40, tel. 020/624-6604, www.museumamstelkring.nl.

▲▲**Red Light District**—Europe's most touristed ladies of the night tease and tempt, as they have for centuries here, in 450 display-case windows around Oudezijds Achterburgwal and Oudezijds Voorburgwal, surrounding the Old Church (Oude Kerk, see below). Drunks and druggies make the streets uncomfortable late at night, after the gawking tour groups leave (around 23:00), but it's a fascinating roll or stroll between noon and nightfall.

The neighborhood, one of Amsterdam's oldest, has had prostitutes since 1200. Prostitution is entirely legal here, and the prostitutes are generally entrepreneurs, renting space and running their own businesses. Popular prostitutes net around €500 a day (S&F, €25–50), fill out tax returns, and even pay union dues.



Access: The Red Light District neighborhood is fully accessible.

Sex Museums—Amsterdam has two sex museums: one in the Red Light District, and another a block in front of the train station on Damrak. While visiting one can be called sightseeing, visiting both is hard to explain. Here's a comparison:

The **Erotic Museum (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible)** in the Red Light District is less offensive. Its five floors rely heavily on badly dressed dummies of prostitutes in various acts. It also has a lot of uninspired paintings, videos, phone sex, old photos, and sculpture (€5, daily 11:00–24:00, along the canal at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 54, tel. 020/624-7303).

The **Damrak Sex Museum** goes farther, telling the story of pornography from Roman times through 1960. Every sexual deviation is revealed in various displays, and the nude and pornographic art is a cut above that of the other sex museum. Also interesting are the early French pornographic photos and memorabilia from Europe, India, and Asia. You'll find a Marilyn Monroe tribute and some S&M displays, too. The museum's first floor is moderately accessible (**AE, AI**), but the upper level is not (€2.50, daily 10:00–23:30, Damrak 18, a block in front of station).

Old Church (Oude Kerk)—This 14th-century landmark—the needle around which the Red Light District spins—has served as a reassuring welcome-home symbol to sailors, a refuge to the downtrodden, an

ideological battlefield of the Counter-Reformation, and today, a tourist sight with a dull interior.

Access: AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. There is an adapted toilet; ask at the reception desk.

Cost, Hours, Location: €4, covered by *I amsterdam* Card, Mon–Sat 11:00–17:00, Sun 13:00–17:00, www.oudekerk.nl.

▲Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum—This is a collection of dope facts, history, science, and memorabilia. While small, it has a shocking finale: the high-tech grow room, in which dozens of varieties of marijuana are cultivated in optimal hydroponic (among other) environments. Some plants stand five feet tall and shine under the intense grow lamps. The view is actually through glass walls into the neighboring Sensi Seed Bank Grow Shop, which sells carefully cultivated seeds and all the gear needed to grow them (Seed Bank may move 50 yards north in 2006).



Access: AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €5.70, daily 11:00–22:00, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 148, tel. 020/623-5961, www.hashmuseum.com.

The **Cannabis College**, “dedicated to ending the global war against the cannabis plant through public education,” is a half-block away at #124.

Access: Level 3—Minimally Accessible. There are seven 8” entry steps and no accessible toilets.

Cost, Hours, Information: Free, daily 11:00–19:00, tel. 020/423-4420, www.cannabiscollege.com.

SMOKING

Tobacco

A third of Dutch people smoke tobacco. You don’t have to like it, but expect it—in restaurants, bars, bus stops, almost everywhere. Holland has a long tradition as a smoking culture, being among the first to import the tobacco plant from the New World. Tobacco shops such as the House of Hajenius glorify the habit (see page *TK). Smoking seems to be part of an overall diet and regimen that—no denying it—makes the Dutch people among the healthiest in the world. Tanned, trim, firm, 60-something Dutch people sip their beer, take a drag, and ask me why Americans murder themselves with Big Macs.

Still, their version of the Surgeon General is finally waking up to the drug's many potential health problems. Since 2002, warning stickers bigger than America's are required on cigarette packs, and some of them are almost comically blunt, such as: "Smoking will make you impotent... and then you die." (The warnings prompted gag stickers like, "If you can read this, you're healthy enough," and "Life can kill you.")

Smoking was recently prohibited on trains. It's unclear how much this will be obeyed or enforced.

Marijuana (a.k.a. Cannabis)

Amsterdam, Europe's counterculture mecca, thinks the concept of a "victimless crime" is a contradiction in terms. Heroin and cocaine are strictly illegal in the Netherlands, and the police stringently enforce laws prohibiting their sale and use. But, while hard drugs are definitely out, marijuana causes about as much excitement as a bottle of beer. If tourists call an ambulance after smoking too much pot, medics just say, "Drink something sweet and wait it out."

Throughout the Netherlands, you'll see "coffeeshops"—pubs selling marijuana. The minimum age for purchase is 18. Coffeeshops can sell up



to five grams of marijuana per person per day. Locals buy marijuana by asking, "Can I see the cannabis menu?" The menu looks like the inventory of a drug bust. Display cases show various joints or baggies for sale.

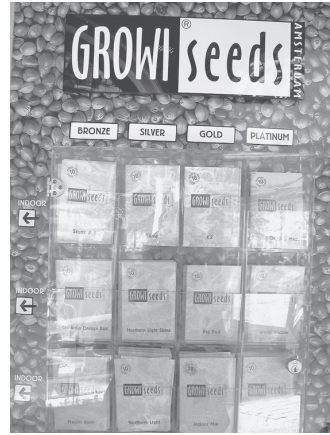
The Dutch usually include a little tobacco in their pre-rolled joints (though a few coffeeshops sell joints of pure marijuana). To avoid the tobacco, smokers roll their own (cigarette papers are free with the purchase, dispensed like toothpicks) or borrow a pipe or bong. Baggies of marijuana usually cost €10–15, and a smaller amount means better quality. As long as you're a paying customer (e.g., buy a cup of coffee), you can pop into any coffeeshop and light up, even if you didn't buy your pot there.

Pot should never be bought on the street in Amsterdam. Well-established coffeeshops are considered much safer. Coffeeshop owners have an interest in keeping their trade safe and healthy. They warn Americans—unused to the strength of the local stuff—to try a lighter leaf. In fact, they are generally very patient in explaining the varieties available.

Several forms of the cannabis plant are sold. Locals smoke more hashish (the sap of the cannabis plant) than the leaf of the plant (which they call “marijuana” or “grass”). White varieties (called “White Widow” or “Amsterdam White”) are popular, featuring marijuana with white, fiber-like strands.

So, what am I? Pro-marijuana? Let’s put it this way: I agree with the Dutch people, who remind me that a society either has to allow alternative lifestyles...or build more prisons. Last year alone, more than 700,000 Americans were arrested for marijuana use; only Russia incarcerates more of its citizens. The Dutch are not necessarily pro-marijuana, but they do believe that a prohibition on marijuana would cause more problems than it solves. Statistics support the Dutch belief that their system works. They have fewer hard drug problems than other countries. And they believe America’s policy—like so many other touchy issues in the news lately—is based on electoral politics, rather than rationality.

To learn more about marijuana, drop by Amsterdam’s Cannabis College or the Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum. To see where cannabis growers buy their seeds, stop by the Sensi Seed Bank Store. These three places are located on Oudezijds Achterburgwal street (see page *TK). Back home, if you’d like to support an outfit dedicated to taking the crime out of pot, read up on the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (www.norml.org).



Coffeeshops

Most of downtown Amsterdam’s coffeeshops feel grungy and foreboding to anyone over 30. The neighborhood places (and those in small towns around the countryside) are much more inviting to people without piercings, tattoos, and favorite techno artists. I’ve listed a few places with a more pub-like ambience for Americans wanting to go local, but within reason. For locations, see the map on page *TK.

Paradox (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one accessible table on same level as entry) is the most *gezellig* (cozy) coffeeshop I found—a mellow, graceful place. The managers, Ludo and Jan, are patient with descriptions and happy to explain all your options. This is a rare coffeeshop that serves light meals. The juice is fresh, the music is easy, and the neighborhood is charming. Colorful murals with bright

blue skies are all over the walls, creating a fresh and open feeling (loaner bongos, games, daily 10:00–20:00, 2 blocks from Anne Frank House at Eerste Bloemdwarsstraat 2, tel. 020/623-5639, www.paradoxamsterdam.demon.nl).

The Grey Area (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, two 10” entry steps, narrow door) is a cool, welcoming, and smoky hole-in-the-wall appreciated among local aficionados as winner of Amsterdam’s Cannabis Cup awards. Judging by the proud autographed photos on the wall, many famous Americans have dropped in. You’re welcome to just nurse a bottomless cup of coffee (open Tue–Sun high noon to 20:00, closed Mon, between Dam Square and Anne Frank House at Oude Leliestraat 2, tel. 020/420-4301, www.greyarea.nl, run by 2 friendly Americans, Steven and Jon—who know the value of a bottomless cup of coffee).



Coffee Shop Relax (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, two 5” entry steps) is simply the neighborhood pub serving a different drug.

It’s relaxed and has a helpful staff and homey atmosphere, with plants, couches, and bar seating. The great, straightforward menu chalked onto the board details what it has to offer (daily 10:00–24:00, a bit out of the way, but a pleasant Jordaan wander to Binnen Orangestraat 9).

Siberie Coffeeshop (AE, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, lots of room) is central, but feels cozy, with a friendly canalside ambience (daily 11:00–23:00, Internet access, helpful staff, fun English menu that explains the personality of each item, Brouwersgracht 11, www.siberie.net).

La Tertulia (AE, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one wheelchair-accessible table near entry door) is a sweet little mother-and-daughter-run place with pastel decor and a cheery terrarium ambience (Tue–Sat 11:00–19:00, closed Sun–Mon, sandwiches, brownies, games, Prinsengracht 312, www.coffeeshopamsterdam.com).

The Bulldog (Level 3—Minimally Accessible) is the high-profile, leading touristy chain of coffeeshops. These establishments are young but welcoming, with reliable selections. They’re pretty comfortable for green tourists wanting to just hang out for a while. The flagship branch, in a former police station right on Leidseplein, is very handy, offering

fun outdoor seating where you can watch the world skateboard by (daily 9:00–1:00 in the morning, Leidseplein 17, tel. 020/625-6278, www.bulldog.nl). They opened up their first café (on the canal near the Old Church in the Red Light District) in 1975.

Rookies (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), a block east of Leidseplein along “Restaurant Row,” is one of the rare coffeeshops that sells individual, pre-rolled, decent-quality joints of pure marijuana—with no tobacco (€5.50, daily 10:00–1:00 in the morning, Fri-Sat until 3:00 in the morning, Korte Leidsedwardsstraat 14).

The Dampkring (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is one of very few coffeeshops that also serve alcohol. It’s a high-profile and busy place, filled with a young clientele, but the owners still take the time to explain what they offer. Scenes from the movie *Ocean’s Twelve* were filmed here (daily 11:00–1:00 in the morning, close to Spui at Handboogstraat 29).



Smartshops

These business establishments (one is listed on page *TK) sell “natural” drugs that are legal. Many are harmless nutritional supplements, but they also sell hallucinogenic mushrooms, stimulants similar to Ecstasy, and strange drug cocktails rolled into joints. It’s all perfectly legal, but if you’ve never taken drugs recreationally, don’t start here.

NIGHTLIFE

Amsterdam hotels serve breakfast until 11:00 because so many people—visitors and locals—live for nighttime in Amsterdam.



On summer evenings, people flock to the main squares for drinks at outdoor tables. Leidseplein is the glitziest, surrounded by theaters, restaurants, and nightclubs. The slightly quieter Rembrandtplein (with adjoining Thorbeckeplein) is the center of gay discos. Spui features a full city block of

bars. And Nieuwmarkt, on the east edge of the Red Light District, is a bit rough, but is probably the most local.

The Red Light District (particularly Oudezijds Achterburgwal) is less sleazy at night and almost carnival-like, as the neon comes on and the streets fill with Japanese tour groups.

Information

Boom! and *Uitkrant* are two free publications (available at TIs and many bars) that list festivals and performances of theater, film, dance, cabaret, and live rock, pop, jazz, and classical music. The irreverent *Boom!*, which has the best lowdown on the youth and nightlife scene, is packed with practical tips and countercultural insights (includes €3 discount on the Boom Chicago R-rated comedy theater act described below). *Uitkrant* is in Dutch, but it's just a calendar of events, and anyone can figure out the name of the event and its date, time, and location.

There's also *What's On in Amsterdam*, *Time Out Amsterdam*, the Thursday edition of many Dutch papers, and the *International Herald Tribune's* special Netherlands inserts (all sold at newsstands).

The Last Minute Ticket Shop (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) at Stadsschouwburg Theater (Leidseplein 26, tel. 0900-0191, www.lastminuteticketshop.nl) is the best one-stop-shopping box office for theater, classical music, and major rock shows. They also sell same-day (after 12:00), half-price tickets to select shows.

Music

You'll find classical music at the Concertgebouw (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; free 12:30 lunch concerts on Wed, at far south end of Museumplein, tel. 020/671-8345, www.concertgebouw.nl) and at the former Beurs on Damrak (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible). For opera and dance, try the new opera house on Waterlooplein (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; tel. 020/551-8100). In the summer, Vondelpark hosts open-air concerts.

Two rock music (and hip-hop) clubs near Leidseplein are Melkweg (**AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; Lijnbaansgracht 234a, tel. 020/531-8181, www.melkweg.nl) and Paradiso (Level 4—Not Accessible; Weteringschans 6, tel. 020/626-4521, www.paradiso.nl). They present big-name acts that you might recognize if you're younger than I am.

The nearby town of Haarlem offers free pipe organ concerts on Tuesdays in summer at its 15th-century church, the Grote Kerk (at 20:15 mid-May–mid Oct, see page *TK).

Comedy

Boom Chicago (AE, AI, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible), an R-rated comedy improv act, was started 10 years ago by a group of Americans on a graduation tour. They have been entertaining tourists and locals alike ever since. The show is a series of rude, clever, and high-powered improvisational skits offering a raucous look at Dutch culture and local tourism (€18–20, 25 percent discount with *I Amsterdam* Card, Sun–Fri at 20:15, Fri also at 23:30, Sat at 19:30 and 22:45, in Leidseplein Theater, Leidseplein 12, tel. 020/423-0101, www.boomchicago.nl). They do various shows: *Best of Boom* (a collection of their greatest hits over the years), as well as new shows for locals and return customers. You'll sit in a 300-seat theater with optional meal and drink service.

Theater

Amsterdam is one of the world centers for experimental live theater (much of it in English). Many theaters cluster around the street called the Nes, which stretches south from Dam Square.

Movies

Catch modern movies in the 1920s setting of the classic Tuschinski Theater (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, four 7" entry steps; between Muntplein and Rembrandtplein, described on page *TK). The Amsterdam Film Museum, which has some evening showings, is also worth checking out (AE+A, AI+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; Vondelstraat 69, near Vondelpark, tel. 020/589-1400, www.filmmuseum.nl, see page *TK). It's not unusual for movies at many cinemas to be sold out—consider buying tickets during the day.

Museums

Several of Amsterdam's museums stay open late. The Anne Frank House is open daily until 21:00 in summer (April–Aug) and until 19:00 the rest of the year. The Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum are open on Fridays until 22:00. The Hash, Marijuana, and Hemp Museum is open daily until 22:00.

SLEEPING

Greeting a new day overlooking a leafy canalside scene—graceful bridges, historic gables, and bikes clattering on cobbles—is a fun part of experiencing Amsterdam. But Amsterdam is a tough city for budget accommodations, and any room under €140 will have rough edges. Still,

Sleep Code

(€1 = about \$1.20, country code: 31, area code: 020)

Sleep Code: **S** = Single, **D** = Double/Twin, **T** = Triple, **Q** = Quad, **b** = bathroom, **s** = shower only. Nearly everyone speaks English in the Netherlands. Credit cards are accepted, and prices include breakfast and tax unless otherwise noted. Where I've listed a range of prices, the actual price depends on the season.

you can sleep well and safely in a great location for €80 per double. I've also listed some fully accessible splurges.

Amsterdam is jammed during convention periods, Queen's Day (usually April 30), and on summer weekends. Many hotels will not take weekend bookings for people staying fewer than three nights.

Parking in Amsterdam is even worse than driving. You'll pay €32 a day to park safely in a garage—which can be blocks from your hotel.

If you'd rather trade big-city action for small-town coziness, consider sleeping in Haarlem, 15 minutes away by train (see page *TK).



Near the Train Station

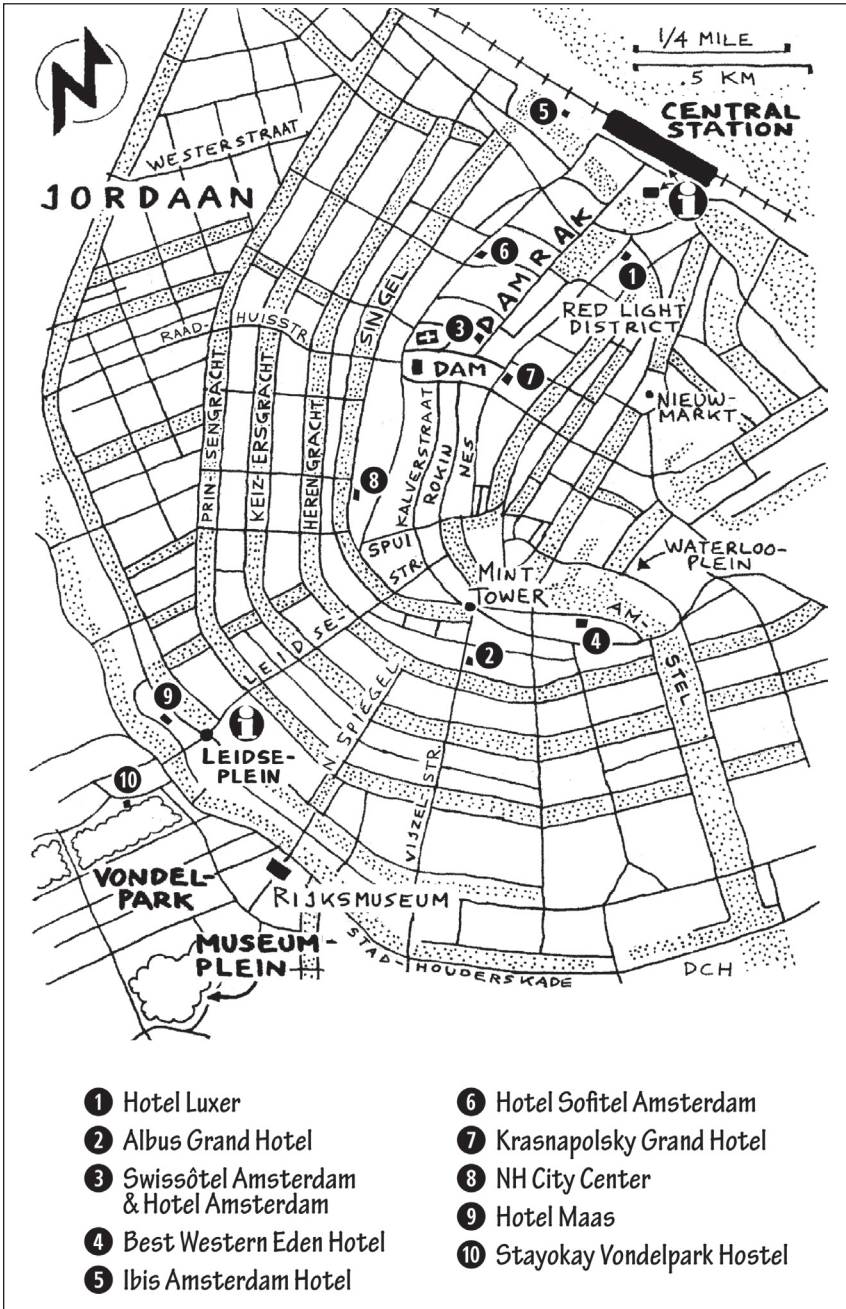
Level 1—Fully Accessible

Hotel Luxer (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), near Central Station and just around the corner from the Red Light District, is a cozy, modestly modern, English-style hotel. Two of its 47 rooms are adapted (Db-€90–130, Warmoesstraat 11, tel. 020/330-3205, fax 020/330-3206, www.hotelluxer.com, info@hotelluxer.com).

Albus Grand Hotel (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, ♥) is a modern yet warm and elegant three-star hotel (with four-star amenities) that offers a friendly welcome and excellent value. It's centrally located just off Rembrandt Square near the Flower Market (Db-€135–180, breakfast not included, Vijzelstraat 49, tel. 020/530-6215, fax 020/530-6299, www.albusgrandhotel.com, info@albusgrandhotel.com). There are several adapted rooms for full accessibility.

Swissôtel Amsterdam (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, ♥) is a centrally located, stylish, modern boutique hotel with 109 rooms—two of them

Amsterdam Hotels



adapted—and a fully accessible restaurant (Db-€125–360, breakfast-€17.50, Damrak 92, tel. 020/522-3344, fax 020/522-3223, <http://amsterdam.swissotel.com>, ask-us.amsterdam@swissotel.com).

Best Western Eden Hotel (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is close to the Flower Market on a canal near Rembrandt Square (Db-€135–180, Amstel 144, tel. 020/530-7888, fax 020/624-2946, res.eden@hotelgroup.com). There is one fully adapted room and five other ground-floor rooms that are suitable for wheelchair users.

Ibis Amsterdam Hotel (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a modern and efficient, 187-room place towering over the station and a multistory bicycle garage. It offers a central location, comfort, and good value, without a hint of charm (Db-€122, Qb-€179, €10 extra Fri-Sat, skip breakfast and save €15 per person, check Web site for deals, book long in advance, air-con, smoke-free floor, Stationsplein 49, tel. 020/638-9999, fax 020/620-0156, www.ibishotel.com, h1556-fo@accor-hotels.com). When business is slow, they often rent rooms to same-day drop-ins for €105. The hotel has one fully adapted room (#701) with an adapted bathroom and shower.

Hotel Sofitel Amsterdam (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is an upscale modern chain hotel tastefully set in a restored 17th-century building just off Dam Square. Everything is first-class—including the prices. They have an excellent central location, a restaurant and bar, an adapted room for full accessibility, and all the top-end amenities to make your stay comfortable (Db-€255–305, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 67, tel. 020/627-5900, fax 020/623-8932, h1159@accor-hotels.com).

Level 2—Moderately Accessible

Hotel Amsterdam (AE, AI, AL, AR+A, AB+A, ♥), on Dam Square, is large and well-maintained, combining modern comforts with a historic location (Db-€185–210, Damrak 93–94, tel. 020/555-0666, fax 020/620-4716, www.hotelamsterdam.nl, info@hotelamsterdam.nl). Even though the rooms have not been adapted, they are suitable for wheelchair users. The hotel has hosted wheelchair users in the past, and the staff is eager to offer assistance. The hotel also has a fully accessible restaurant.

Between Dam Square and the Anne Frank House

Level 1—Fully Accessible

Krasnapolsky Grand Hotel (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), not to be confused with the Grand Hotel next door, is over 130 years old, but has been modernized to include one wheelchair-accessible room (flexible rates, Db-€140–200, Dam 9, tel. 020/554-9111, fax 020/622-8607,

www.nh-hotels.com, nhkrasnapolsky@nh-hotels.nl). They welcome wheelchair users, and the staff is ready to assist as needed. The adapted room includes a fully wheelchair-accessible toilet and shower. The hotel also has two wheelchair-accessible restaurants, with an accessible toilet nearby.

Leidseplein Neighborhood

The area around Amsterdam's rip-roaring nightlife center (Leidseplein) is colorful, comfortable, and convenient. These places are within a few blocks of Leidseplein, but in generally quiet and characteristic settings.

Level 1—Fully Accessible

NH City Center (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is antique on the outside, fresh and trendy on the inside. The hotel's 289 rooms (one of them fully adapted) put you in the heart of the shopping and close to museum areas (Db-€110–150, Spuistraat 288–292, tel. 020/420-4545, fax 020/430-4300, www.nh-hotels.com, nhcitycentre@nh-hotels.com).

Hotel Maas (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a big, quiet, and stiffly hotelesque place. Though it's on a busy street rather than a canal, it's a handy option (S-€99, D-€95, Db-€145, suite-€205, prices vary with view and room size, extra person-€20, hearty breakfast, elevator; tram #1, #2, or accessible #5 from station; Leidsekade 91, tel. 020/623-3868, fax 020/622-2613, www.hotelmaas.nl, info@hotelmaas.nl). They have a few adapted rooms and are welcoming to wheelchair users.

Stayokay Vondelpark (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, ♥) is Amsterdam's top hostel (€19.50–27 per bed, D-€68–80, family rooms, higher prices are for March–Oct, non-members pay €2.50 extra, cash only, lots of school groups, 4–20 beds per room, lockers, right on Vondelpark at Zandpad 5, tel. 020/589-8996, fax 020/589-8955, www.stayokay.com). With three adapted rooms (including roll-in showers), this hostel prides itself on its accessibility.

EATING

Traditional Dutch food is basic and hearty, with lots of bread, cheese, soup, and fish. Lunch and dinner are served at American times (roughly 12:00–14:00 and 18:00–21:00).

Dutch treats include cheese, pancakes (*pannenkoeken*), gin (*jenever*), light, pilsner-type beer, and “syrup waffles” (*stroopwafel*).

Experiences you owe your tongue in Holland: trying a raw herring at an outdoor herring stand, lingering over coffee in a “brown café,” sipping an old *jenever* with a new friend, and consuming an Indonesian

feast—a *rijsttafel*.

Budget Tips: Get a sandwich to go and munch a canalside picnic. Sandwiches (*broodjes*) of delicious cheese on fresh bread are cheap at snack bars, delis, and *broodjes* restaurants. Ethnic fast-food stands abound, offering a variety of meats wrapped in pita bread. Easy to buy at grocery stores, yogurt in the Netherlands (and throughout Northern Europe) is delicious and often drinkable right out of its plastic container.



Types of Eateries

Any place labeled “restaurant” will serve full meals for lunch or dinner. But there are other places to fill the tank.

An *eetcafé* is a simple restaurant serving basic soups, salads, sandwiches, and traditional meat-and-potatoes meals in a generally comfortable but no-nonsense setting.

A *salon de thé* serves tea and coffee, yes, but also croissants, pastries, and sandwiches for a light brunch, lunch, or afternoon snack.

Cafés are all-purpose establishments, serving light meals at meal-times and coffee, drinks, and snacks the rest of the day and night. *Bruin cafés* (“brown cafés,” named for their nicotine-stained walls) are usually a little more bar-like, with dimmer lighting, wood paneling, and more tobacco smoke.

A *proeflokaal* is a bar (with snacks) for tasting wine, spirits, or beer.

Coffeshop is the code word for an establishment where marijuana is sold and consumed, though most also offer drinks and munchies, too (for details, see “Smoking” on page *TK).

There’s no shortage of take-out places serving fast food, sandwiches, and all kinds of quick ethnic fare.

No matter what the type of establishment you choose, expect it to be *gezellig*—a much-prized Dutch virtue, meaning an atmosphere of relaxed coziness.

Etiquette and Tipping

The Dutch are easygoing. Pay as you go or pay after? Usually it’s your choice. Tip or don’t tip? Your call. Wait for table service or order at the bar? Whatever you do, you won’t be scolded for your *faux pas*, as you might be in France or Italy. Dutch establishments are *gezellig*. Still, here are some guidelines:

- Tipping is not necessary in restaurants (15 percent service is usually already included in the menu price), but a tip of about 5 percent is a nice reward for good service. In bars, rounding up to the next euro (“keep the change”) is appropriate if you get table service, rather than order at the bar.
- When ordering drinks in a café or bar, you can just pay as you go (especially if the bar is crowded), or wait until the end to settle up, as many locals do. If you get table service, take the cue from your waiter.
- Cafés with outdoor tables generally do not charge more if you sit outside (unlike in France or Italy).
- Expect tobacco smoke in any establishment.
- Waiters constantly say “*Alstublieft*” (AHL-stoo-bleeft). It’s a catch-all polite word meaning, “please,” “here’s your order,” “enjoy,” and “you’re welcome.” You can respond with a thank you by saying, “Dank u wel” (dahnk oo vehl).

Typical Meals

Breakfast: Breakfasts are big by continental standards—bread, meat, cheese, and maybe an egg or omelet. Hotels generally put out a buffet spread, including juice and cereal.

Lunch: Simple sandwiches are called *broodjes* (most commonly made with cheese and/or ham). An open-face sandwich of ham and cheese topped with two fried eggs is an *uitsmijter* (OUTS-mi-ter). Soup is popular for lunch.

Snacks and Take-out Food: Small stands sell french fries (*frites*) with mayonnaise; raw or marinated herring; falafel (fried chickpea balls in pita bread); *shoarmas* (lamb tucked in pita bread); and *doner kebabs* (Turkish version of a *shoarma*). Delis have deep-fried croquettes (*kroketten*).

Dinner: It’s the biggest meal of the day, consisting of meat or seafood with boiled potatoes, cooked vegetables, and a salad. Hearty stews are served in winter. These days, many people eat more vegetarian fare.

Sweets: Try *poffertjes* (small, sugared doughnuts without holes), *pannenkoeken* (pancakes with fruit and cream), *stroopwafels* (syrup waffles), and *appelgebak* (apple pie).

Local Specialties

Cheeses: Edam (covered with red wax) or Gouda (HOW-dah). Gouda can be young or old: *jong* is mellow, and *oude* is salty, crumbly, and strong, sometimes seasoned with cumin or cloves.

French Fries: Commonly served with mayonnaise (ketchup and curry sauce are often available) on a paper tray or in a newspaper cone. Flemish (*Vlaamse*) *frites* are made from whole potatoes, not pulp.

Haring (herring): Fresh, raw herring, marinated or salted, often served with onions or pickles, sometimes with sour cream, on a thick, soft, white bun.

Hutspot: Hearty meat stew with mashed potatoes, onions, and carrots, especially popular on winter days.

Kroketten (croquettes): Log-shaped rolls of meats and vegetables (kind of like corn dogs) breaded and deep-fried, such as *bitterballen* (meatballs), *frikandelen* (sausage), or *vlammetjes* (spring rolls).

Pannenkoeken: Either sweet dessert pancakes or crêpe-like dinner pancakes.



Ethnic Foods

If you're not in the mood for meat and potatoes, sample some of Amsterdam's abundant ethnic offerings.

Indonesian (Indisch): The tastiest “Dutch” food is Indonesian, from the former colony. Find any Indisch restaurant and experience a *rijst-tafel* (rice table). With as many as 30 spicy dishes and a big bowl of rice (or noodles), a *rijst-tafel* can be split and still fill two hungry tourists. *Nasi rames* is a cheaper, smaller version of a *rijst-tafel*. Another popular dish is *bami goreng*—stir-fried noodles served with meat, vegetables, and *rijst-tafel* items. *Nasi goreng* is like *bami*, but comes with fried rice. *Saté* is skewered meat, and *gado-gado* consists of steamed vegetables and hard-boiled eggs with peanut sauce. Among the most common sauces are peanut, red chili (*sambal*), and dark soy.

Middle Eastern: Try a *shoarma* (roasted lamb with garlic in pita bread, served with bowls of different sauces), falafel, gyros, or a *doner kebab*.

Surinamese (Surinaamse): Surinamese cuisine is a mix of Caribbean and Indonesian influences, featuring *roti* (spiced chicken wrapped in a tortilla) and rice (white or fried) served with meats in sauces (curry and spices). Why Surinamese food in Amsterdam? In 1667, Holland traded New York City (“New Amsterdam”) to Britain in exchange for the small country of Surinam (which borders Guyana on the northeast coast of South America). For the next three centuries, Surinam (renamed Dutch Guyana) was a Dutch colony, which is why it has indigenous Indians,

Creoles, and Indonesian immigrants who all speak Dutch. When Surinam gained independence in 1975, 100,000 Surinamese emigrated to Amsterdam, sparking a rash of Surinamese fast-food outlets.

Drinks

Beer: Order “a beer,” and you’ll get a *pils*, a light lager/pilsner-type beer in a 10-ounce glass with a thick head leveled off with a stick. (Typical brands are Heineken, Grolsch, Oranjeboom, and Amstel.) A common tap beer is Palm Speciale, an amber ale served in a stemmed, wide-mouth glass. Belgian beers are popular, always available in bottles and sometimes on tap. *Witte* (white) beer is light-colored and summery, sometimes served with a lemon slice (it’s like American Hefeweizen, but yeastier).

Jenever: This is Dutch gin made from juniper berries. *Jong* (young) is sharper; *oude* (old) is mellow. Served chilled, *jenever* (yah-NAY-ver) is meant to be chugged with a *pils* chaser (this combination is called a *kopstoot*—head-butt). While cheese gets harder and sharper with age, *jenever* grows smooth and soft. Old *jenever* is best.

Liqueur: You’ll find a variety of local fruit brandies and cognacs.

Wine: Dutch people drink a lot of fine wine, but it’s almost all imported.

Coffee: The Dutch love their coffee, enjoying many of the same drinks (espresso, cappuccino) served in American or Italian coffee shops. Coffee usually comes with a small spice cookie. A *koffie verkeerd* (fer-KEERT, “coffee wrong”) is an espresso with a lot of steamed milk.

Soft Drinks: You’ll find the full array.

Orange Juice: Many cafés/bars have a juicer for making fresh-squeezed orange juice.

Water: The Dutch (unlike many Europeans) drink tap water with meals, but many prefer mineral water, still or sparkling (Spa brand is popular).

Restaurants

Of Amsterdam’s thousand-plus restaurants, no one knows which are best. I’d pick an area and explore. The rowdy food ghetto thrives around Leidseplein; wander along Leidsedwardsstraat, Restaurant Row. The area around Spui canal and that end of Spuistraat is also trendy and not as noisy. For fewer crowds and more charm, find something in the Jordaan district. Most hoteliers keep a reliable eating list for their neighborhood and know which places keep their travelers happy.

Unless otherwise noted (by **AT** or **AT+A**), these restaurants do *not* have accessible toilets.

Amsterdam Restaurants and Coffeeshops



Near Spui, in the Center

The first four places cluster along the colorful, student-filled Grimburgwal lane, near the intersection of Spui and Rokin (midway between Dam Square and the Mint Tower).

Atrium University Cafeteria (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) feeds students and travelers well at great prices. Enjoy the budget eats among all the Amsterdam University students (€6 meals, Mon–Fri 11:00–15:00 & 17:00–19:30, closed Sat–Sun, from Spui, roll or stroll west down Landebrug Steeg past canalside Café ’t Gasthuys 3 blocks to Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237, go through arched doorway on the right; tel. 020/525-3999). Once inside, find the Manager’s Office and ask to have the gate to the food lines unlocked, and if needed, the key to the adapted toilet.

Restaurant Kapitein Zeppos (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 2” entry step, double doors open for easier access), named for an old-time Belgian TV star, serves French-Dutch food in dressy yet unpretentious 1940s ambience. The light lunch specials—soups and sandwiches—cost €5–10. Dinner plates go for around €20 (€30 *menu*, daily 11:00–15:30 & 17:30–23:00, good Belgian beer on tap, just off Grimburgwal at Gebed Zonder End 5, tel. 020/624-2057).

Restaurant Haesje Claes (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is popular with tour groups for traditional Dutch cooking in the center. It’s the Dutch equivalent of TGI Friday’s: big, with fast service, edible food, and reasonable prices (€20 *menu*, daily 12:00–22:00, Spuistraat 275, tel. 020/624-9998). The area around it is a huge and festive bar scene. Wheelchair access is through the entrance at Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 320 or through the door on the side between the buildings. The area around the restaurant is a huge and festive bar scene.

Restaurant Kantjil en de Tijger (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a plain yet thriving place, full of happy eaters who know a good value. The food is purely Indonesian; the waiters are happy to explain your many enticing options. Their three *rijsttafels* (traditional “rice tables” with 11 dishes) range €20–30 per person (ask for a description of each). While they are designed for two, there’s plenty of food for more. Their mini-*rijsttafel* (*Nasi Rames*—with rice, and *Bami Rames*—with noodles) will fill you memorably for €13 (daily 16:30–22:30, reserve on weekends, mostly indoor with a little outdoor seating, non-smoking section, Spuistraat 291, tel. 020/620-0994).

Kantjil To Go (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a tiny take-out bar serving up inexpensive Indonesian fare (€4–6 meals, vegetarian specials, daily 12:00–21:00, storefront at Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal

342, connected through a back hallway to main sit-down restaurant listed directly above, tel. 020/620-3074).

In the Train Station

Stationsrestaurantie (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a surprisingly good budget, self-service option inside the station on platform 2 (daily 8:00–20:00). The entire platform 2 is lined with eateries, including the tall, venerable, 1920s-style First Class Grand Café. Many of the restaurants are wheelchair-accessible. There is one adapted toilet (in the Balcon restaurant).

Near Dam Square

Brasserie Restaurant de Roode Leeuw (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible, hotel receptionist has key for accessible toilet) offers a respite from the crush of Damrak. Choose the restaurant in back (finer service and tablecloths, higher prices) or the brasserie in front (casual, simpler menu from same kitchen, better people-watching on the Damrak). Either way, you'll get a menu filled with traditional Dutch food, good service, and the company of plenty of tourists (restaurant: €18–23 entrées, €30 for a 3-course *menu* with lots of intriguing choices; brasserie: €10–13 entrées; daily 12:00–22:00, Damrak 93–94, tel. 020/555-0666).

Near the Anne Frank House and in the Jordaan District

Nearly all of these places are within a few scenic blocks of the Anne Frank House, providing handy lunches and atmospheric dinners in Amsterdam's most characteristic neighborhood. The area is filled with enchanting little restaurants. But be warned that it's especially difficult to find a truly accessible place (with an accessible toilet) here.

Café 't Kalfje (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, narrow front door but most wheelchairs can squeak through) is a small, inviting eatery run by knowledgeable and friendly Chef Emiel. Prices won't break the bank, and the diversity of his menu changes with his moods (3-course *menu* for €19.50, entrées for €8–15, daily 18:00–1:00 in the morning, Prinsenstraat 5, tel. 020/626-3370).

Café de Klepel (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a friendly neighborhood hangout where locals come to read the paper, have a smoke, talk about the weather, and linger over a drink. Only 14 meals a day are lovingly created in Madame's tiny kitchen. Come early if you want to get one of her fine dinners (€9–10 meals, daily 16:00–1:00 in the morning, Prinsenstraat 22, tel. 020/623-8244).

Restaurant de Luwte (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 2" entry step) is a romantic place, on a picturesque street overlooking a canal, with lots of candles, a muted but fresh modern interior, a few cool outdoor canalside tables, and French Mediterranean cuisine (€20 entrées, €32 for a 3-course *menu*, big dinner salads for €16, non-smoking section, daily 18:00–22:00, Leliegracht 26–28, tel. 020/625-8548, Marko). In the daytime (daily 12:00–15:00), a second team of owners is on duty—operating a casual and colorful *eetcafé* serving great food (but only in the tiny bar section of the restaurant). Even during the day, the atmosphere is mellow candlelight, and the price is a fraction of what you pay at night (€5–11 lunches).

The Pancake Bakery (AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible, staff will assist with three 7" entry steps) serves good pancakes in a nothing-special, family atmosphere. The menu features a fun selection of ethnic-themed pancakes—including Indonesian, for those who want two experiences in one (€8–12 pancakes, 25 percent discount with *I amsterdam* card, splitting is OK, daily 12:00–21:30, Prinsengracht 191, tel. 020/625-1333).

De Bolhoed (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) serves serious vegetarian and vegan food in a colorful setting that Buddha would dig (€15 meals, light lunches, daily 12:00–22:00, serious dinners from 17:00, Prinsengracht 60, tel. 020/626-1803).

De Groene Lantaarn (AE, AI+A, Level 3—Minimally Accessible, six 6" steps with railing after entry) is fun for fondue. The menu offers fish, meat, and cheese (Dutch and Swiss) with salad and fruit for €17–25 (Thu–Sun from 18:00, closed Mon–Wed, a few blocks into the Jordaan at Bloemgracht 47, tel. 020/620-2088).

Café Restaurant de Reiger (AE+A, Level 3—Minimally Accessible, three 8" entry steps and small doorway) must offer the best cooking of any *eetcafé* in the Jordaan. It's famous for its fresh ingredients and delightful bistro ambience. In addition to an English menu, ask for a translation of the €15–18 daily specials on the chalkboard. The café, which is crowded late and on weekends, takes no reservations, but you're welcome to have a drink at the bar while you wait. While there's a non-smoking section in front, the energy is with the smokers in the back room (they're proud of their fresh fish, glass of house wine-€2.50, veggie options, daily 18:00–22:30, Nieuwe Leliestraat 34, tel. 020/624-7426).

Café 't Papeneiland (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, staff can assist with the one 7" entry step), a classic brown café with Delft tiles, an evocative old stove, and a stay-awhile perch overlooking a canal with welcoming benches, has been the neighborhood hangout

since the 17th century (drinks but no food, overlooking northwest end of Prinsengracht at #2, tel. 020/624-1989). It feels a little exclusive; patrons who come here to drink and chat aren't eager to see it overrun by tourists. The café's name literally means "Papists' Island," since this was once a refuge for Catholics (there used to be an escape tunnel here for priests on the run).

Café 't Smalle (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is extremely charming, with three zones where you can enjoy a light lunch or a drink: canalside, inside around the bar, and up some steep stairs in a quaint little loft. While the café is open daily until midnight, food (salads, soup, and fresh sandwiches) is served only at lunch from 12:00 to 17:00 (plenty of fine Belgian beers on tap and interesting wines by the glass posted, at Egelantiersgracht 12 where it hits Prinsengracht, tel. 020/623-9617).

Restaurant Vliegende Schotel (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, special accessible door available upon request) is a folksy, unvarnished little Jordaan eatery decorated with children's crayon art. Its cheap and fun, meatless menu features fish and vegetarian fare. Choose a table (I'd avoid the empty non-smoking section and eat with the regulars), and then order at the counter. Nothing trendy about this place—just locals who like vegetarian food and don't want to cook. Their €8 *Vliegende Schotel* salad is a vegetarian extravaganza (€8–11 entrées, wine by the glass, daily 17:00–23:00, Nieuwe Leliestraat 162, tel. 020/625-2041).

Catering Small World (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 3" entry step) is a cozy sandwich bar with good coffee, the best muffins in town, and only a few seats (€4–10 items, Mon–Sat 10:30–20:00, Sun 12:00–20:00, Binnen Oranjestraat 14).

Ruhe Delicatessen (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), run for decades by Mr. Ruhe, is the perfect late-night deli for a quick, cheap picnic dinner. The front door is small, but he will come out and take your order if you tap on his window (daily 12:00–22:00, Prinsenstraat 13, tel. 020/626-7438).

Toscana Italian Restaurant (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is the Jordaan's favorite place for good, inexpensive Italian, including pizza, in a woody Dutch-beer-hall setting (pizza-€4–8, pastas-€7, daily 16:00–24:00, Haarlemmerstraat 130, tel. 020/622-0353). This is a favorite place for local wheelchair users, and if you need help over the entry step, the staff will assist.

Near the Botanical Garden and Dutch Resistance Museum

Restaurant Plancius (AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible, use door facing museum and sidewalk, accessible toilet in nearby museum), adjacent to the Dutch Resistance Museum, is a mod, handy spot for lunch. Its good indoor and outdoor seating make it popular with the broadcasters from the nearby local TV studios (creative breakfasts, light €4–8 lunches and €15–18 dinners, daily 10:00–22:00, Plantage Kerklaan 61a, tel. 020/330-9469).

Taman Sari Restaurant (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is the local choice for Indonesian, serving hearty, quality €9.50 dinners and *rijsttafel* dinners for €16–22.50 (daily 17:00–23:00, Plantage Kerklaan 32, tel. 020/623-7130). They will seat a wheelchair user at their table near the front door to avoid steps.

Near Vondelpark

Café Vertigo (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, accessible outdoor tables, interior access through Film Museum with staff assistance) offers a fun selection of excellent soups and sandwiches. The service can be slow, but if you grab an outdoor table, you can watch the world spin by (daily 11:00–24:00, beneath Film Museum, Vondelpark 3, tel. 020/612-3021).

Munching Cheap

Traditional fish stands sell €3 herring sandwiches and other salty treats, usually from easy-to-understand photo menus. **Stubbe's Haring** (AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible, just roll up to this little stand at the locks), where the Stubbe family has been selling herring for 100 years, is handy and well-established (Tue–Sat 10:00–18:00, closed Sun–Mon, at the locks where Singel canal arrives at the train station). Grab a sandwich and picnic canalside. There's another accessible herring stand called **Wil Ganstraa's Frites** at the Westerkerk around the corner from the Anne Frank House.

New York Pizza (AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible) serves hearty €2.50 pizza slices that are much loved by local students (same price munched on a stool or to go; at Spui 2 just across from the end of Rokin Canal). Find another accessible New York Pizza at Leidsestraat 23.

TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

Amsterdam's train-information center can require a long wait. Save lots of time by getting train tickets and information in a small-town station (such as Haarlem), at the airport upon arrival, or from a travel agency. Remember, you can use *strippenkaart* on any train that travels within the Netherlands.

You have two options for buying train tickets in the Netherlands: at a ticket window (costs €0.50 extra), or at an automated machine (no extra charge). Some machines have instructions only in Dutch, and you can pay in euros (no credit cards). Frustratingly, the newer machines—which have instructions in English—accept only Dutch debit cards (no cash, Visa, or MasterCard). If you're having trouble, visit the yellow information booth, or enlist the help of any official-looking employees (most wear portable computers with timetables) to help you with train departure times, or to navigate your way through the older, Dutch-only machine menus. If lines are short and frustration levels high, pay the extra €0.50 to buy your ticket at the window.

The easiest way to get train schedules is online. The German Rail site has comprehensive schedules for virtually anywhere in Europe (<http://bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en>). Or try the Dutch Rail site (www.ns.nl). For phone information, dial 0900-9292 for local trains or 0900-9296 for international trains (€0.50/min, daily 7:00–24:00, wait through recording and hold...hold...hold...).

From Amsterdam by Train to: Schiphol Airport (6/hr, 20 min, €3.40, have coins to buy from a machine to avoid lines, train usually departs from track 13a), **Haarlem** (6/hr, 15 min, €3.40 one-way, €6 same-day round-trip), **The Hague/Den Haag** (every 10 min, 45 min, may require switch in Leiden to get to main station), **Delft** (every 10 min, 50 min), **Arnhem** (2/hr, 75 min, transfer likely), **Rotterdam** (4/hr, 1 hr), **Brussels** (hrly, 3 hrs, €30–42.50), **Ostende** (hrly, 4 hrs, change in Antwerp), **Copenhagen** (hrly, 15 hrs, requires multiple transfers), **Frankfurt** (hrly, 4–5 hrs, some are direct, others involve transfer in Köln or Duisburg), **Munich** (7/day, 7–8 hrs, transfer in Frankfurt or Düsseldorf), **Bonn** (10/day, 3 hrs, some direct but most transfer in Köln), **Bern** (5/day, 9 hrs, 1 direct but most transfer in Mannheim)

To Paris: 5/day direct on fast Thalys train, 4 hrs; more with a transfer in Brussels, 5 hrs. For details, see “To Brussels and Amsterdam by Thalys Train,” page *TK.

To Bruges: Hourly, 3.5 hrs, transfer in Brussels or Antwerp's central station; transfer can be timed closely—be alert and check with conductor.

To London: 6–7/day, 6 hrs, with transfer to Eurostar Chunnel train in Brussels, Eurostar discounted with railpass, www.eurostar.com. For details on the Eurostar train, see page *TK.

Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport

Schiphol (SKIP-pol) Airport, like most of Holland, is English-speaking, user-friendly, and below sea level.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Let the airline know in advance what your needs are. The airport offers a service called IHD (International Help for the Disabled) that specializes in assisting travelers with limited mobility. For more information on airport accessibility, call 020/316-1414 or visit www.ihd-schiphol.nl.

Information: Schiphol flight information (tel. 0900-7244-7465) can give you flight times and your airline's Amsterdam phone number for reconfirmation before going home (€0.45/min to climb through its phone tree—or visit www.schiphol.nl). To reach the airlines directly, call: KLM and Northwest, tel. 020/649-9123 or 020/474-7747; Martinair, tel. 020/601-1222; SAS, tel. 0900-746-63727; American Airlines, tel. 06/022-7844; British Air, tel. 023/554-7555; and easyJet, tel. 023/568-4880.

Services: The ABN/AMRO banks offer fair rates (in arrivals and lounge area). The GWK public transit office is located in Schiphol Plaza. Surf the Internet and make phone calls at the Communication Centre on the top level of lounge 2 (daily 6:00–20:00, behind customs—not available once you've left the security checkpoint). Convenient luggage lockers are at various points around the terminal—and a big bank of them is on the bottom floor—allowing you to leave your bag at the airport on a lengthy layover (both short-term and long-term lockers).

If you have extra time to kill at Schiphol, check out some **fine art**, actual Dutch Masters by Rembrandt, Vermeer, and others. The Rijksmuseum loans a dozen or so of its minor masterpieces from the Golden Age to the unique airport museum “Rijksmuseum Amsterdam Schiphol,” a little art gallery behind the passport check at Holland Boulevard between piers E and F. Yes, this is really true (free, daily 7:00–20:00). To escape the crowds in the airport, follow signs for the *Panorama Terrace* to the third floor, where you'll find a quieter, locals-only cafeteria, a kids' play area, and, a view terrace where you can watch planes come and go while you nurse a coffee.

Transportation Connections: The most accessible way into either Amsterdam or Haarlem from the airport is by taxi. For information on calling an accessible taxi in Amsterdam, see page *TK. The airport

also has easy **train** connections with **Amsterdam** (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; every 10 min, 20 min, €3.40) and **Haarlem** (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; 4/hr, 40 min, transfer at Amsterdam-Sloterdijk, €4.55).

The airport has a train station of its own. You can validate your Eurailpass and hit the rails immediately, or, to stretch your railpass, buy an inexpensive ticket into Amsterdam today and start the pass later.

From Schiphol Airport by Train to: The Hague/Den Haag (2/hr, 30 min), **Delft** (4/hr, 45 min, transfer in The Hague or Leiden), **Rotterdam** (3/hr, 45 min). International trains to Belgium run every hour: **Brussels** (2.5 hrs), **Bruges** (3.25 hrs, change in Antwerp or Brussels).

Sleeping at Schiphol: Ibis Amsterdam Airport Hotel (**AE, AI, AL, AT, AR, AB**, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a modern and efficient 644-room place. It offers close proximity to the airport, comfort, and good value (Db-€95–122, book long in advance, air-con, non-smoking rooms, Schipholweg 181, reservation tel. 020/502-5111, reception tel. 020/502-5100, fax 020/657-0199, www.ibishotel.com). This hotel has one wheelchair-accessible room, including an adapted bathroom and shower.

From the Airport to Haarlem: The big #300 **bus** is direct, stopping at Haarlem's train station and near the Market Square (4/hr, 40 min, €5.80—buy ticket from driver, or use 7 strips on your bus card, departs from lane B2 in front of airport). This bus is **AE, AI**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, but can take only one wheelchair user at a time.

From the Airport to Amsterdam: The Connexxion **shuttle bus** takes you to your hotel neighborhood; since there are various routes, ask the attendant which works best for your hotel (2/hr, 20 min, €11 one-way, €17.50 round-trip, one route stops at Westerkerk near Anne Frank House and many recommended hotels, bus to other hotels may cost a couple euros more, departs from lane A7 in front of airport, tel. 020/653-4975, www.airporthotelshuttle.nl). The standard buses are Level 2—Moderately Accessible (**AE+A**, must be able to transfer into bus), but if you reserve in advance, they can provide you with a fully adapted minivan (**AE, AI**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, may cost a few euros extra).