



Netherlands: Holland's Tulips, Windmills & Waterways Trip Notes April 13 – 25, 2017

Headlines:

- Should be called my “Grumpy Trip” and thus I didn’t send a single daily report. If you can’t say something good, say nothing at all.
- Now that I’m home, I’m coming up with more of the good.
- Hotels have a lot of importance in how I like an area. Give me a tiny or inferior room and everything pales.

Focus on the good.

- I tried. Honestly I tried. I did not do very well at it.
- Tulips are at their very best for about eight weeks and we were in the middle of the blooming time. Some were just being trimmed off (which they do to make them stronger) yet many more were just opening up.
- Memories of living in Belgium in the 70s were strong. Those were particularly good times and our little chateaux came with a gardener who planted seasonal flowers including tulips. When they were at the end of their blooming he would put them in a trench in the back lot to save them for the following year.
- The little hotel in the center of Harlem in the middle of the trip was a delight. Family owned with every-thing working and pleasant. I had meant to leave their dinner early but was unable to resist staying.
- The food, the wine, and the conversation flowed consistently. The tour guides were generous with the wine and stops for snacking. I suspect that we all added at least a couple of pounds.
- The participants were like being in a summer camp. Many knew each other and all were inclusive, kind and acted like family. It was a laugh that I thought most were old. Fortunately there was one that was older than me!
- That is the ONLY picture of me. Cute that I’m falling into the lap of our kind guide?
- Windmills in the distance and windmill museums and windmill homes where you can go in. One row of windmills along the canal numbered about 19 of which 15 are still inhabited.
- Tastes. I love snacks. Cheese shops and cheese factories, raw herring, and wines. Gin or wine with our cheese. Yet the people of Netherlands do not really have a cuisine or restaurants of their nation. They eat snacks standing up or if they go to a restaurant it might be Argentinian (their queen comes from there), Peruvian, Vietnamese, Italian, and lots of British pubs.
- Hotel - pre-tour hotel was so egregiously small and poorly designed that my post hotel felt like a treat despite its smallness. I was glad to get into a Renaissance by Marriott where the pillows were down-filled and the bed lights worked and the shower was full enough to rinse the soap, a coffee pot and supplies, a mini refrigerator, and plugs were available as needed. All those things I



expect but we're not always available. I had a wonderful breakfast provided, teatime in the afternoon and hors d'oeuvres with free wine in the evening.

Overview of my Grumps:

- Call this my grumpy trip. I had trouble identifying the good. If you were envious of my tulip submersion, or is it immersion, read on.
- It either rained, sprinkled or poured, was cloudy and cold, with heavy wind, even some hail, or all of the above at the same time, pretty much every day of my trip. The last day had me exiting the hotel in a street covered with hail that looked like snow. I heard it got colder after I left. Hard to imagine.
- Every hotel either had a few or many flaws. Either small, poorly designed, old, impossible, or all of the above. I liked the 3-star in Harlem city center the best and the 4-star in Amsterdam the least. My pre-and post-hotels were smaller than a cruise ship room and maybe more costly. (Can you imagine paying €300 a night, and having to step over the toilet to get out of the shower? Having to plug in hair device and even coffee pot on the floor?) It suggests that a room is important to me and paves the way for the rest of my day.
- Museum lines were hard to believe. With 17 million visitors a year as compared to 17 million inhabitants, and this being the week of the major flower parade, and within the 8-weeks of the tulip's blooming, it was no wonder. So I hired a guide for a skip-the-line price on my last full day.
- The tour guides sometimes acted like they had never done the tour before whereas one had done it for four years and seven times and the other did it once. They were sweet and kind but at times clueless. Just as unfortunate, the lead guide lost his voice for half of the tour. We did feel sorry for him but it was rather difficult for him to lead us on a walking tour.
- The participants were quite varied in their walking ability but that was from a little slow to slugs. We were not country walkers, we were hardly country strollers. Some never should have signed up for any walking tour. They were also mostly very old (well, at least in their 60s though one was 82.) I have been on a cruise ship with faster and younger people.
- The food was extensive but oftentimes ostentatious and/or just okay. The first night we had an elegant Michelin 2-star restaurant. It went down from there. The last night should have been elegant as it was in a 5-star hotel but it was almost silly. (The year before no one ate the beef because it was too rare. This year they served steak tartare -- which is raw). (The truffled ravioli was served in a tacky plastic wrap versus parchment). Again, the little 3-star hotel in Harlem came out on top with the best and classiest meal.
- Driving times were somewhat long -- a surprise since it's such a tiny country; more troubling were the roadways which you'd expect to be straight but they are filled with roundabouts. To those who get carsick and take a while to recover it was like being on a small country road.
- Not all body parts totally cooperated. Enough said.

Did I go to Holland or the Netherlands? A. The official name of the country is the Kingdom of the Netherlands. King Willem-Alexander is the king of the nation. Holland actually only means the two provinces of Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland. However, the name Holland is often used when all of the Netherlands is meant.

Miscellaneous

A fascinating book is "Tulipomania: The story of the world's most coveted flower and the extraordinary passions it aroused" by Mike Dash. Tulip mania was a period in the Dutch Golden Age when contract prices for bulbs of the recently introduced tulip reached extraordinarily high levels and then suddenly collapsed. There was a time when tulips cost more than a house. I heard about this book and found it at the American bookstore company in Amsterdam, a multilevel huge bookstore from a real golden age. I spent some time in their history department.

VVV is what their tourist office used to be known as. They were short hotel rooms so we would go to the VVV and be assigned to a bedroom in someone's home. We returned to the upper level of Mrs. Valentine's home many times and usually with visitors in tow.

Eating marathon in Holland

Anthony Bourdain has some interesting thoughts on eating. Per Janice MacLeod, "he is one of those guys you don't want to love. He's got this dick-ish way of being that scares happy-light-friendly ladies like me. And yet, I cannot help but nod in agreement with so much of what he says." Me, I add him since I copped out on writing much.



Anthony on debt:

"I am fanatical about not owing anybody any money. I hate it. I don't want to carry a balance, ever. I have a mortgage, but I despise the idea. That was my biggest objection to buying property, though I wasn't in the position to pay cash."

Anthony on making big bucks:

"To me, money is freedom from insecurity, freedom to move, time if you choose to make use of time."

Anthony on Ina Garten:

"I love Ina Garten. She's one of the few people on Food Network who can actually cook. When Ina Garten roasts a chicken, she roasts it correct. When Ina Garten makes mashed potatoes, those are some solid mashed potatoes. In many ways I want Ina's life. I don't want to live in her house. I don't want to spend a weekend there. It gets weird in Ina Land . . . Oh, when Jeffrey gets home, he'll be so happy I made meatloaf. And then he comes home and you're pretty sure he's not into meatloaf."

Anthony on cheese:

"You have to be a romantic to invest yourself, your money, and your time in cheese."

Anthony on retirement:

"I'm definitely looking forward to the day when I stop working — if I ever stop working. I like the idea of keeling over in my tomato vines in Sardinia or northern Italy."

Anthony on parenting:

"We know, for instance, that there is a direct, inverse relationship between frequency of family meals and social problems. Bluntly stated, members of families who eat together regularly are statistically less likely to stick up liquor stores, blow up meth labs, give birth to crack babies, commit suicide, or make donkey porn. If Little Timmy had just had more meatloaf, he might not have grown up to fill chest freezers with Cub Scout parts."

Anthony on beauty:

"Few things are more beautiful to me than a bunch of thuggish, heavily tattooed line cooks moving around each other like ballerinas on a busy Saturday night."

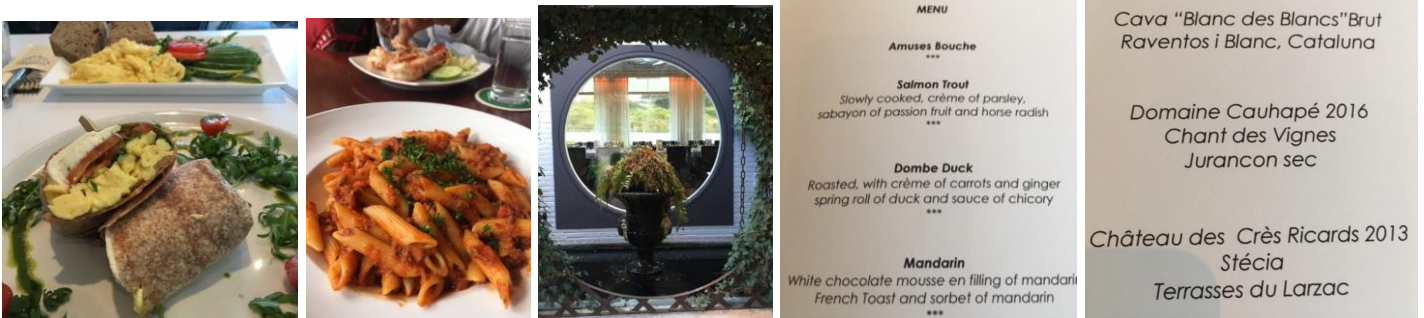
Anthony on travel:

"Travel isn't always pretty. It isn't always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts, it even breaks your heart. But that's okay. The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body."

Anthony on standing for something:

"If I'm an advocate for anything, it's to move. As far as you can, as much as you can. Across the ocean, or simply across the river. The extent to which you can walk in someone else's shoes or at least eat their food, it's a plus for everybody. Open your mind, get up off the couch, move."

MY EATS pictures:



First picture is a lovely breakfast place near to my less-than-favorite hotel. Then a dinner near the red light district where Sonya wasn't too happy with but some might have loved the huge shrimp. It only went up. That's the entry way to the Michelin 2-star.



Appetizers/teasers. Many lovely and artsy courses and finally light but rich endings to include a dome covered chocolate egg in honor of Easter.



The next best meal was in our Harlem 3-star hotel's restaurant. I'm told that MORE chocolate arrived after I left.



Holland is known for their pancakes. Like a giant crepe but ingredients cooked within and generally covering an entire huge plate.



There were wine and cheese tastings before our 5-star hotel's deluxe meal which did NOT impress me. I like steak tartare but most do not. I like parchment and truffles but the plastic wrap was tacky and the dessert in a canning jar was too cutesy. I rather like the Dutch method of eating standing up – thus the picture window of Dutch Delicacy.



Transportation offerings in Holland



Houseboats are common but not cheap. They are totally hooked up to all utilities and sewer, proven by the fact that they have swim-meets in the canal. A museum with old ship replica and a stormy canal.



That panorama picture is a multi-level bicycle parking garage. 60,000 bicycles are stolen each year. 30,000 are found in the canal in the yearly dredging.



Maybe no one wants to steal a CD covered bicycle studded with rhinestones? The Deux Cheval was spotless, and the two sleeping children in a wagon while at Keukenhof were much appreciated.



In June 2018 we will return to Holland at the end of our Basel to Amsterdam journey and I assume it's to this same chain of 19 inhabited windmill, since I saw Viking River Cruises parked nearby. Yep – UBER Eats. A beer mobile and a super stretch party car that's hard to imagine could negotiate the streets.



Tiny trucks, platform scooters, mobile food carts abound, as do flower covered bicycles as signage. But wait a minute! The Green Electric Rental cars are red!

Netherland Facts:

- 1) *The herring with chopped raw onions and pickles is a national dish. The Dutch consume 12 million kilograms every year, which translates to at least 5 fish per person.*
- 2) *Netherlands and Holland are not synonymous. Holland is largely the western coastal region of the Netherlands, comprising of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Haarlem, Leiden and The Hague.*
- 3) *The first country to legalise same sex marriages in 2001.*
- 4) *The Dutch are the world experts on keeping back water from the sea and rivers turning Netherlands into an Atlantis. The US government turned to the Dutch for help during the hurricane Katrina disaster.*
- 5) *70% of the world's bacon comes from Netherlands.*
- 6) *The Dutch are the tallest in the world with an average height of 184 cm for men and 170 cm for women. Some believe it's the combined result of DNA and dairy.*
- 7) *Gin was invented in the Netherlands. Called "jenever", it was originally used for medicinal purposes in the 16th century.*
- 8) *The Schiphol Airport is actually 4.5 m below sea level.*
- 9) *It is only logical that the Van Gogh Museum and the Kröller-Müller Museum house the largest Van Gogh collections in the world.*
- 10) *For 4 evenings in a row during May and June since 1909, thousands of Dutch school children and their parents walk 5 or 10 km at a time through streets in huge processions called the avondvierdaagse, or 'evening four-day marches' while slurping on half-cut lemons and sweets on strings around their necks.*
- 11) *75% of the world's flower bulb production comes from Netherlands.*
- 12) *Most graves are leased for 10, 15 or 20 years only and not purchased due to the short supply of grave space.*
- 13) *It has more than 4,000 km of navigable canals, rivers and lakes.*
- 14) *It was one of the six founding members of the European Union.*
- 15) *The highest point in Netherlands, Vaalserberg, is only 323 meters above sea level. The rest of the nation is as flat as a pancake.*
- 16) *Parental leave for both full-time working mothers and fathers, is up to 57 days and can be taken at any time until the child is 8 years old.*
- 17) *The main square of every city has its own brightly lit Christmas tree.*
- 18) *A person drinks on average 74 litres of beer a year in the Netherlands.*
- 19) *Dutch love abbreviations, using 3 alphabets as a quick way of saying "please", "mainly", "so-called", "starting at", "except for", "in relation to", "instead of" and "well-known Dutch person".*
- 20) *Its elaborate mosaic of dikes if strung together would stretch for nearly 80,000 kilometres.*
- 21) *The Dutch are the world's biggest coffee drinkers after the Scandinavians with an average of 140 litres of coffee a year or 3.2 cups a day.*
- 22) *The Dutch have the lowest incidence of lactose intolerance of any country at only 1%.*
- 23) *An average of 2 kilograms of drop or Dutch salty-sweet liquorice is consumed by each person per year with over 80 "typical" kinds of liquorice available to choose from.*



24) The famous Dutch windmills were used to pump away water for hundreds of years.

25) About 2/3 of Netherlands is vulnerable to flooding with 25 percent below sea level and 50 percent less than 1m above sea level.

26) Fans of Victoria's Secret will be interested to know that one of the lingerie brand's Angels, Doutzen is Dutch and one of the world's top earning supermodels, with her own wax figure in the Amsterdam Madame Tussaud's.

27) 86% of the population speak English as a second language.

28) Rotterdam is the second largest port in the world.

29) The Dutch city of Eindhoven is also known as the "City of Light" because the electronics giant Philips started there with products like light bulbs.

30) The Dutch were the first to import coffee to Europe on a large scale as early as the 1600s and 1700s

31) Dutch brewery Heineken is the 3rd largest beer brewer in the world with over 140 breweries in over 70 countries. Back home, it owns around 50 percent of the Dutch beer market

32) There are specially-designated "fietspaden" or bike paths all over the country and pedestrians cannot walk on them.

33) According to The Brewers of Europe, the Netherlands exports the largest proportion of beer production of any country in the world with approximately 50%.

34) Its commitment to foreign aid is 2nd among the leading 18 nations according to UNICEF.

35) It has the highest population density in Europe with 487 inhabitants per square kilometre.

36) About 30% of all Dutch births happen at home as a result of a large and established network of certified midwives.

37) The Dutch have been making cheese since 400 AD.

38) It is the largest exporter of cheese in the world with a dairy industry turning over around EUR7 billion.

39) The Maeslantkering, a movable storm surge barrier near Rotterdam that is twice as long as the Eiffel Tower is tall.

40) The world-famous tulips and tulip fields of Netherlands do not originate from the country. The first tulip bulbs were actually imported from Turkey.



41) Vincent Willem van Gogh (1853 - 1890) famed for his post-Impressionist work and far-reaching influence on 20th century art was Dutch. In addition to his world-famous vase of sunflowers and stary night, he produced more than 2,000 paintings in just over 10 years with most of his best-known works in his final 2 years.

42) It would take just 48 hours for an entire province of Flevoland, 3 times the size of Manhattan, New York to be submerged in water if a dike broke in that area.

43) There are close to 1,000 museums in Netherlands.

44) It the highest number of part-time workers in the European Union with four in every ten people.

45) Dutch electronic dance music has conquered the world with DJs like Armin van Buuren, Tiësto and Afrojack exporting their music to the remotest corners of the world. The exports totalled EUR 81.5 million in 2010.

46) One of the most popular snacks in the Netherlands is french fries dipped in mayonnaise.

47) It is still the historic windmill capital of the world with over 1,000 vertical mills still in working condition. Imagine the sight when it once had 10,000 windmills.

48) Dutch cheese is the best cheese in the world, as agreed by 40 judges from 17 countries who judged 2,500 cheeses in the 2012 World Cheese Making Contest held in the US.

49) One of the greatest painters and printmakers in European art history, Rembrandt van Rijn (15 July 1606 – 4 October 1669), is Dutch. He is also an important art figure in Dutch history, famous for his work "The Night Watch" (1642).

50) Wooden shoes or clogs or "Klompen" have been popular in the Netherlands for about 700 years as industrial footwear worn by farmers, fishermen, factory workers, artisans and others to protect their feet from injury and keep them dry.

51) Orange is the official colour of Netherlands because of the House of Orange, who led the Dutch revolt against Spain and later became the Dutch royal family.

52) On average, the Dutch person cycles 2.5 km per day and 900 km per year.

53) Despite soft drugs being legal in Netherlands, you almost never see a Dutch person getting high.

54) The Dutch beer brands Heineken, Grolsch and Amstel are among the most famous brews in the world.

55) The 19 polder draining windmills of the Kinderdijk is a UNESCO site.

56) Dutch adults love to put sprinkles (the kind kids put on ice cream) on toast.

57) Cheese markets where farmers' cheeses have been weighed, tasted and prices for the past 300 years still exist in Woerden and Gouda.

58) Despite the rainy weather, the Dutch use raincoats and rain "suits" instead of umbrellas because the windy is too strong and it an acrobatic feat to hold one and cycle at the same time

59) Although the colours of the Dutch National flag are Red, white and Blue as per the royal decree by Queen Wilhelmina in 1937, a orange pennant is flown as a sign of allegiance of the Dutch people to the House of Orange to accompany the national flag.

60) It is the bicycle capital of the world with more than 18 million in the country. That's more than 1 bicycle per person.



Rijks Museum doll house:

<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/BK-NM-1010>

This used to be the top sight for our visitors. We'd head into the museum and make a bee-line to the top floor and the doll houses. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/rijksstudio/works-of-art/dolls-houses>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/books/2014/08/29/jessie-burton-on-petronella-oortman-and-her-beautiful-cabinet-house/14757513/>

Vermeer fakes:

<http://www.meegeren.net/>

There are very few available since he didn't paint many. Where Van Gogh might paint a few a day, Vermeer painted one a year. There might have been more fake Vermeer's than real ones, and the story is stunning about how many museum curators got fooled.

The cat boat:

<http://depoezenboot.nl/en>

Nice story of saving cats. They live on the waters.

At that I'm going to Cry Uncle and quit. There really are plenty of good things about the trip when I get myself out of the tiny hotel rooms and away from the windy, cold, rainy weather and take the time to think about it instead of thinking what to Grump about. There's more I'd like to tell about but I'm off to Piedmont Italy for another hike, this one expected to be more challenging. Then on June 1 we leave to Slovenia for hiking in the Julian Alps. There's more That I'll save for another report.

Itinerary

Thu Apr 13 - Diana

5:55pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#70P

Fri Apr 14 - Diana

7:35am Arrive in Amsterdam AMS

Hotel- 1 Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken – 2 nights (Sonya staying at Bilderberg also)
Jan Luykenstraat 58, Amsterdam Holland Tel 011 31 20 573 0730
Email jan-luyken.reservation@bilderberg.nl
www.bilderberg.nl/uk/hotels/hotel-jan-luyken/

Per CW for host hotel: Hotel is located 6-7 miles from Schiphol Airport. “Connexion” Schiphol hotel shuttles depart the airport every 30 minutes and stops in front of the Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken. Cost: 17 euros per person. www.schipholhotelshuttle.nl Or taxi takes 20-30 minutes for about 40 Euros.

Bilderberg: A charming boutique hotel in a classic mansion in the heart of Amsterdam. A short walk from the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum and the stylish shops of the P.C. Hoofstraat area.

Fri Apr 14 - Sonya

American Airlines 78, Depart: Dallas/ Fort Worth (DFW) April 13, 2017 7:10 PM
Arrive: London (LHR) April 14, 2017 10:25 AM

American Airlines 6398 operated by British Airways, Depart: London (LHR) April 14, 2017 1:15 PM
Arrive: Amsterdam (AMS) April 14, 2017 3:35 PM

Sat Apr 15

Re-acquaint with Amsterdam; bike tour?

Sun Apr 16

9:00 a.m. Meet CW guide in lobby of Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken

Overview by www.CountryWalkers.com - Visitors are drawn to Holland to celebrate its legendary windmills, myriad waterways, and brilliant spring tulips. This tour is easily accessible to all walkers and incorporates ample time to explore Holland’s historic cities and world-class museums. Together, a relaxed introduction to the best of this gateway to Europe. After a walking tour of Amsterdam, the itinerary progresses to Holland’s signature fields of tulips in peak bloom at the stunning Keukenhof Gardens. You continue to the trails of Holland’s most famous national parks: the windswept dunes of De Kennemerduinen on the North Sea coast and De Hoge Veluwe, home to deer and boar, and also housing a sculpture garden and the renowned Kröller-Müller Museum, with its fabled collection of Van Gogh and other modern works. A tour of Holland would not be complete without a visit to the famous 18th-century Kinderdijk windmills, which powered the land reclamation projects that quite literally made this densely populated country habitable. Your accommodations are in carefully renovated historic buildings in the heart of the cities of Haarlem and Utrecht. Haarlem is the home of the Franz Hals Museum, featuring prime examples of Holland’s glorious 16th-century art, and Utrecht, originally founded as a Roman outpost, later became a Christian stronghold with its grand cathedral. Food and drink are equally satisfying—locally produced, exotic Indonesian, or bistro fare, accompanied by Holland’s crisp brews.

Sun Apr 16 - DAY 1 of hike

Walking tour of Amsterdam; 5 miles, easy city walking

This springtime sojourn in the Netherlands begins in its capital and largest city, Amsterdam. After meeting the guides, you set out on a morning walking tour of its vibrant and historic neighborhoods, including the Old South area, known for the early 20th-century Dutch School of Architecture. Also on the route in the Zuid neighborhood is the house where Anne Frank lived before she and her family went into hiding. Lunch is at a local restaurant, overlooking the canals.

After lunch, you have a short rest on the short drive to the city of Haarlem. Your hotel is located in the historic center and upon check-in, time permitting, you can begin exploring this fascinating city directly from the hotel's central location; museums, medieval churches, monuments, and enticing shops are all a short stroll away. You gather in the evening for a short transfer to a Michelin two star restaurant surrounded by wooded dunes. This modern venue is an ideal location to toast your new friends over a welcome dinner of delicately prepared local specialties.

Hotel Stempels Hotel, Haarlem – 1st of 3 nights
 Klokhuisplein 9 2011 HK Haarlem
 Tel 011 31 23 512 3910 Email info@stempelsin haarlem.nl
 www.stempelsin haarlem.nl
 Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.
 NO Coffee or tea pot available

Stempels website: Hotel is situated in a historic location in Haarlem's monumental, pedestrian heart. It's a welcoming, heart-warming location where you can enjoy tasty food and beverages, celebrations, meetings and overnight stays. The setting for all of this is the former premises of printing company Joh. Enschedé, where for a long time the Dutch national banknotes and the stamps for many other countries were printed. It's a place steeped in history, stylishly converted into a modern hospitality company full of atmosphere right in the centre of Haarlem, one of the best cultural and shopping cities in the country.

In a perfect location in the pedestrian center of Harlem, this charming hotel occupies the former offices and type foundry of the Royal Joh Enschedé printing press. Fully renovated in 2006, contemporary guestrooms have polished wood floors and neutral tones. On-site are a restaurant and brasserie.

Mon Apr 17 - DAY 2 of hike

Keukenhof Tulip Show and Tulip Fields; 3-5 miles, easy

Today is devoted to basking in the Netherlands' incomparable flowers and gardens. A short ride this morning brings you to neighboring Lisse, just south of Haarlem. Lisse is the center of the annual Keukenhof Tulip Show, where the vast displays of tulips and other bulb flowers may be blooming at their colorful peak. Here, you stroll through Keukenhof's stunning landscaped gardens and view exhibitions showcasing Holland's flower industry (accounting for \$12 billion worth of Holland's exports). Along the way you are presented with ample opportunities to photograph the glorious fields of flowers including hyacinths and tulips which begin to blossom from April to mid-May, depending on the weather. The idea of creating the world's largest flower garden was conceived by the town's mayor in 1949 and designed on the Keukenhof Estate, which literally means "kitchen garden," as it was placed on the site of the herb and vegetable garden of the 15th-century Countess of Holland, Jacoba van Beieren. Choose lunch in one of the many cafés within the gardens, before strolling farther through the tulip fields, where you may find more photo opportunities. Returning to Haarlem later in the afternoon, you set off with your guides on an easy walking tour of the city for a more in-depth exploration. You stroll through the famed main square (Grote Markt) with its 14th-century City Hall and St. Bavokerk Church.

This evening you dine at the hotel's restaurant, the place where Dutch bank notes and international stamps were once pressed. Highlights of the menu include beautifully prepared fish and seafood, a reminder of Holland's centuries of seafaring and exploration.

Hotel Stempels Hotel, Haarlem – 2nd of 3 nights

Tue Apr 18 - DAY 3 of hike

Haarlem to Kennemerduinen National Park; 6 miles, easy. Haarlem city tour, 2 miles, easy

Beer brewing was a very important industry in Haarlem, and as a result of this history you are able to walk directly from the hotel this morning along the old brewers' canal, called the Brouwersgracht. Following this trail to the Kennemerduinen National Park on the North Sea Coast, you arrive at the most extensive and unspoiled dunes in Holland. Here, trails pass into quiet mixed deciduous and coniferous forest, over fields of wild-growing shrubs, and undulating sand dunes. You pause for a delicious lunch in a restaurant overlooking the open sea.

Returning to Harlem, time permitting, you may visit the Frans Hals Museum, which houses a large selection of works by this painter, as well as other famous Dutch artists from the 15th century to the present. Another special Haarlem museum is the Teyler Museum—Holland's oldest—which is housed in the former home of a wealthy 18th-century merchant and banker and offers a fascinating collection of paintings and artifacts. Spicy and exotic, this evening's dinner takes place at one of the city center's many Indonesian restaurants, popular in Holland since the colonial period.

Hotel Stempels Hotel, Haarlem – 3rd of 3 nights

Wed Apr 19 - DAY 4 of hike

De Hoge Veluwe National Park; 3 miles, easy. Kröller-Müller Museum visit

Rested and packed, you set off promptly this morning for one of Holland's oldest and largest national parks, De Hoge Veluwe, a vast landscape with a variety of ecosystems. Here, heath land dating from the Middle Ages evolved into large expanses of drifting sand as inhabitants cut peat to fertilize fields. Eventually trees were planted to stop the drifting, but the drifted sand is now being partially restored. Almost 4,000 acres of cultivated woodland—chiefly pine and red oak—remain. An extensive trail network throughout the park provides access to fascinating living ecology lessons with beautiful and rare plant species. You may even spot some of the animals who make their home in this nature reserve, species such as red deer, roe deer, a wild sheep called "Mouflon" (originally native to Corsica and Sardinia), and even wild boar.

The park is also the location of the Kröller-Müller Museum, which houses an excellent collection of nearly 300 of Van Gogh's paintings (including "The Potato Eaters") as well as works by other modern European painters. Outside the museum is Europe's largest sculpture garden, which includes works by Rodin, Moore, Lupchitz, and others. The De Hoge Veluwe Park provides a harmonious blend of nature, art, and architecture. Late in the afternoon, continue on to your second home of the week—a boutique hotel located in the heart of this vibrant city. After settling in, dinner is at the hotel's restaurant, a comfortable and relaxed brasserie.

Hotel Grand Hotel Karel V, Utrecht – 1st of 3 nights

Geertebolwerk 1, 3511 XA Utrecht

Tel 011 31 30 233 7555 Email: info@karelv.nl www.karelv.nl

WiFi free, hair dryers, and laundry service available. Coffee yes; refrigerator yes.

Medieval charm and modern luxury come together in this unique 5-star hotel in the historic center of Utrecht. The splendid complex of buildings and magnificent courtyard gardens dates from the 14th century. On-site is the convivial Brasserie Goeie Louisa and wellness center with indoor swimming pool.

Thu Apr 20 - DAY 5 of hike

Historic Utrecht; 1-2 miles, easy. Utrecht to Amelisweerd; 5 miles, easy. Visit to Amelisweerd Estate. Free afternoon time permitting

This morning you explore historic Utrecht on foot, leaving directly from the hotel. You follow a path into the green Wilhemina Park and the landmark modernist classic Rietveld-Schröder House, designed by the architect Rietveld. You continue your lovely stroll along the winding Kromme Rijn River. An exclusive lunch of local organic fare is served at the Amelisweerd Estate's charming carriage house, with its wood stove and open kitchen.

After lunch, you take a short walk through the grounds of this 17th-century estate preserved as a regional park and board your van to return to Utrecht. The late afternoon and evening are yours to design: you may spend the afternoon in the fascinating Centraal Museum, Holland's oldest municipal museum. The Centraal is located in a renovated medieval cloister and houses a wide collection divided into five categories: old masters, modern art, design, fashion, and local history. With shops open until late in the evening, there is ample time to find unique souvenirs. **Dining tonight is on your own.** Due to the city's central location, dining options in Utrecht are very representative of Dutch cuisine.

Hotel Grand Hotel Karel V, Utrecht – 2nd of 3 nights

Fri Apr 21 - DAY 6 of hike

Kinderdijk windmills; 5 miles, easy to moderate

A full immersion into Dutch history and culture, today you visit and experience what Holland is best known for—windmills, picturesque villages, and tidy farmhouses. Set off for the southwest and the famed and highly picturesque windmills east of Rotterdam at Kinderdijk. The 19 windmills at Kinderdijk, built during the 18th century, were the “high-tech” development of the day, harnessing the power of the coastal winds to pump water and build up land. You learn firsthand about this crucial part of Holland's history while you walk on trails along the canals and directly beneath the windmills.

Along the way you are immersed in quintessential Dutch countryside—grazing sheep and abundant wildflowers as well as a wetland nature reserve with rare birds such as black tern and marsh harrier. Finally, you cross the Lek River by ferry passing characteristically quaint Dutch villages.

Lunchtime finds you at a typical pancake restaurant, and afterward visiting a cheese farm—a glimpse into this Dutch product renowned the world over. The final dinner is a festive celebration of your exploration of the Netherlands' natural places and cultural treasures.

Hotel Grand Hotel Karel V, Utrecht – 3rd of 3 nights

Sat Apr 22 - DAY 7 of hike - Diana

Departure – two departure times to airport only, scheduled to arrive at the airport either 8am and 10:30am.

After breakfast your guides provide two group transfers to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport for early morning and mid-morning departures.

Hotel Renaissance Amsterdam Hotel – 1 room for 3 nights – change to 2 nights?
Kattengat 1, Amsterdam, 1012 SZ, Netherlands Tele 31 20 621 2223
<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/amsrd-renaissance-amsterdam-hotel/>

Note: May stay at Renaissance 3 nights due to onerous penalty fee for changes after February 21!

Per Renaissance - Trains directly connect Schiphol International Airport with Amsterdam Central Station. From here you can walk to the hotel. Head south on the Kampersbrug towards the Prins Hendrikkade. Turn right on the Prins Hendrikkade. Turn left on the Martelaarsgracht and continue on the right hand side when the road splits. You will see the hotel at the right-hand side. Train cost is approx. € 4- per person per way.

Taxis are available in front of the arrivals hall of Schiphol International Airport at the designated taxi stand. Taxi cost is approx. €50- per way.

- Sonya
Hotel citizenM Schiphol Airport hotel – 1 night
(<https://www.citizenm.com/destinations/amsterdam/schiphol-airport-hotel>)
Jan Plezierweg 2, 1118 BB Schiphol, Netherlands Tele: (31) 20 811 7080

Sun Apr 23 – Sonya

10:20am Departing AMS via AA#6435 to London – check departure time; 20 minute flight?
10:45am Arriving LHR for plane change
12:50pm Departing LHR via AA#81
5:05pm Arriving DFW

Mon Apr 24

Transfer to airport area late afternoon

Hotel Courtyard Amsterdam Airport – 1 night
Bosweb 15, Hoofddorp, 2131 LX Netherlands Tele 31 23 5569000

Note: May cancel and agree to penalty due to onerous penalty fee for Renaissance Feb 22-25.

Tue Apr 25

9:15am Depart Amsterdam AMS via UA#71K
11:30am Arrive Newark EWR

To do in Amsterdam:

Walking tour including one of the red light district or one of the coffee shops

Pizza cruise

Pub crawl

Bike tour including outside to the windmills

Canal barge tour

Museums: Van Gogh, Rijks

Food tour

Emergency contact:

Call International Email mail@oncallinternational.com. If communicating from within the US Text 603.945.0103 Tel 800.555.9095 If calling from outside the US Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from. In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you

are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

Participants:

Darby and Gregory (Greg) Peterson – Atlanta GA
Victoria (Vicky) Pearlman – Chicago IL
Diana Burton – Middletown NJ
Natalie Brody – New York NY
Barbara Apstein – Newton Center MA
Alita and Robert (Bob Sowell) – Orangeville CA
Sonya Bland – Plano TX
Diane and Thomas (Tim) Harward – Raleigh NC
Judith and Jeffrey (Jeff) Kremen – Riderwood MC
Diane Northway – San Carlos CA
Bonnie and Robert (Bob) Temple – Washington DC

Marie-Christine Ruijs, tour guide, is a translator (English, Spanish, and French) and a Dutch teacher. She loves walking in nature in all its seasons and looks forward to introducing guests to her native Holland. In addition to a passion for sailing that she shares with her husband and sons, she also enjoys cooking, yoga, and reading.

Hennie Vaessen, tour guide, is a published artist and illustrator. Hennie is also passionate about the outdoors, especially walking. Fluent in three languages, and certified to teach English, Hennie runs a small publishing firm with his wife and they recently published a graphic novel trilogy on the Second World War's Battle of Arnhem in Holland. When not delving into his art, Hennie also enjoys music, movies, T'ai Chi, and discovering new trails.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance, and unforeseen circumstances that mandate change may arise. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

Keeping It Local: In Holland, you can't get more local than a visit to Amelisweerd Estate. Preserved as a regional park, this stunning estate features a 17th-century mansion set along the winding Rhine River—the perfect spot for an exclusive Country Walkers lunch! At the charming carriage house with its woodstove and open kitchen, enjoy local organic fare in a most authentic and tranquil setting.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken (lobby), Amsterdam, Holland, 9:00 a.m. Jan Luykenstraat 58, Amsterdam Holland Tel 011 31 20 573 0730 Email jan-luyken.reservation@bilderberg.nl bilderberg.nl/uk/hotels/hotel-jan-luyken/

NIGHTS 1, 2 & 3

Stempels Hotel Haarlem, Holland Tel 011 31 23 512 3910 Email info@stempelsinhaarlem.nl stempelsinhaarlem.nl Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 4, 5 & 6

Grand Hotel Karel V Utrecht, Holland Tel 011 31 30 233 7555 Email info@karelv.nl info@karelv.nl <http://www.karelv.nl> Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIMES

Schiphol International Airport (AMS), Amsterdam, Holland, 8:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE) - 7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE - Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME - Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken (lobby), Amsterdam, Holland, 9:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIMES - Schiphol International Airport (AMS), Amsterdam, Holland, 8:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL - This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy, with an average of 3 to 6 miles per day. Because the terrain in Holland is relatively flat, there are no elevation gains and losses. The walking is along well-maintained hiking trails, on chalk dunes, city streets, and alongside canals and rivers. The walks along the canals may have some uneven terrain. The pace of this tour allows you to appreciate the culture and history of the areas you visit. Because this tour takes place in the spring, you can see, in full bloom, the flower fields and gardens for which Holland is known.

INCLUSIONS - Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7 » All meals except for one lunch and one dinner; local wine or beer included with dinners » All accommodations while on tour » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point » Entrance fees and special

events as noted in the itinerary » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN - Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive: » Luggage tags » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES - Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME - Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken (lobby), Amsterdam, 9:00 a.m. Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for easy city walking.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT - Schiphol Airport (AMS), Amsterdam, Holland schiphol.nl

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT - The Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken is located 6 to 7 miles from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

"Connexion" Schiphol hotel shuttles depart the airport every 30 minutes and stop in front of the Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken. Cost: 17 euros per person (schipholhotelshuttle.nl).

Taxi from Schiphol Airport: time: 20-30 minutes (depending on the traffic); cost: approximately 40 euros.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS - If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken, our meeting-point hotel.

Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken Jan Luykenstraat 58, Amsterdam Holland Tel 011 31 20 573 0730 Fax 011 31 20 676 3841 Email jan-luyken.reservation@bilderberg.nl bilderberg.nl/uk/hotels/hotel-jan-luyken/ Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

A charming boutique hotel in a classic mansion in the heart of Amsterdam, the Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken is a short walk from the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum and the stylish shops of the P.C. Hoofstraat area. Please contact the hotel directly for reservations. We recommend that you make your reservations as early as possible as the tulip-blossoming month of April is a busy time of year in Amsterdam! You can make a reservation on their website. Rates: single/double/twin rooms from approximately 230 euros per night (exclusive of a 5 percent city tax and breakfast).

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS - If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIMES - Schiphol International Airport (AMS), Amsterdam, Holland, 8:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

If you plan to schedule your return flights immediately after the tour's conclusion, please contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

LEAVING UTRECHT - There are no walks scheduled on the final day of the tour. We offer two included group transfers to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport: the first transfer is scheduled to arrive at 8:00 a.m. and the second to arrive at 10:30 a.m. Should you wish to depart at a different time, you may arrange a taxi for approximately 80-90 euros (45 minute transfer).