

18 April

Arrive. I propose we meet up for dinner at 19.30 at Trattoria e Pizzeria Mimmo Koningin Wilhelmina Boulevard 16. The hotel restaurant is of variable standard and pricey. The hotel is at number 8, on exiting turn right passed Lage Wurft and the restaurant is by Beyaert Street



19 April

Visit to ESTEC and Keukenhof. The coach will leave the hotel at 9.45 and take us to ESTEC and the ESTEC space museum. Here we will firstly visit the space museum and then enter the site to see the test facilities. Lunch will be in the ESTEC canteen. The coach will leave at 14.00 to take us to the gardens at Keukenhof.

Keukenhof <http://www.keukenhof.nl/> boasts:

- Has won prizes as Europe's most valued attraction
- Keukenhof is unique and famous throughout the world
- It is one of the most popular attractions in the Netherlands and has clocked up more than 44 million visitors in the last 60 years
- It is the largest bulb flower park in the world
- It covers an area of 32 hectares 4.5 million tulips in 100 varieties
- It is the most photographed place in the world
- There are 15 km of footpaths
- It is the largest sculpture park in the Netherlands
- The bulbs are supplied by 91 Royal Warrant Holders
- 7 million flower bulbs planted by hand
- More than 2,500 trees in 87 varieties
- Walk of Fame with tulips named after famous people

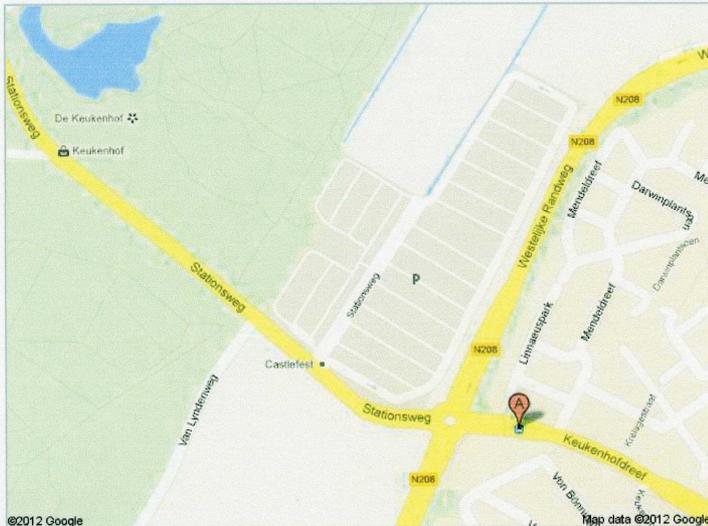
Currently our group is 22 persons and I will get a group discount rate of 12.50 euro (14.50 euro otherwise).

An easy way of getting around is by their 'whisper boats'. These boats are driven by electric engines, are environmentally friendly and are almost silent as they sail through the beautiful surrounding Dutch landscape. The boats that are used are perfectly suitable for sailing through the often shallow water. They are, in fact, old boats that used to be used by gardeners, growers and farmers for all types of work.

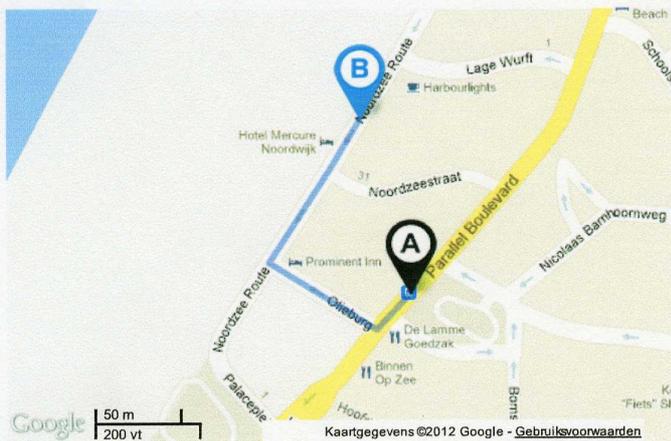
The boat trip lasts 50 to 75 minutes and guarantees you nice photographs. Per tour a limited number of seats are available. Be there in time! The price is € 7.50 p.p. (excl. Keukenhof entrance). Individual Keukenhof Visitors can't reserve a seat by telephone or email. You can buy your boat ticket on the spot (near the windmill in our park). Boats are at 13.00, 14.00, 15.00 and 16.00. Groups of 20 or more can make a reservation. If there is a general consensus for this option I will do the necessary booking.

When you are ready to leave you can return to the hotel by service bus. The bus stop is A close to the car parks. The park closes at 19.30

A. Keukenhofdreef
Netherlands



**Bushalte Parallel Boulevard Koningin
Wilhelmina Boulevard 8**



There are two buses, both involve changes. Bus 89 goes to Leiden transferium A44 and catch the 95 to Noordwijk or the 57 to Ruigenhoek, Noordwijkerhout and then the 90 to Noordwijk. Both stop at Parallel Boulevard. The bus drivers know enough English to stop for you at the appropriate stop, if there is not an on board stop indicator. The bus stops at A and the hotel is at B.

20 April

The coach will leave at 9.30 to take us to Venlo, where Floriade is being held. The coach will take about 2hours. Floriade is arranged every 10 years. “The Floriade <http://www.floriade.com/> is a global spectacle in which many dozens of countries participate. This will also be the case in 2012. You will find yourself immersed in a melting pot of cultures where you will be introduced to different customs and rituals. And of course there will also be plenty of attention for the regional culture of the province of Limburg. Enjoy typical gastronomic delights in our attractive restaurants! Here we will be serving regional dishes and refreshments, and all the meals will be prepared using seasonal products.”

- 66 hectares of park, 40 hectares of show grounds
- Five Theme Worlds: Relax & Heal, Green Engine, Education & Innovation,
- Environment, World Show Stage
- Gardens and pavilions (buildings) with approx. 100 exhibitors
- Horticulture sectors, Dutch organisations and international participants
- Daily cultural programme featuring music, dance, theatre and graphic art
- The biggest cable car ride in the Netherlands: capacity 4000 people per hour

- Two permanent buildings: Innovatoren and Villa Flora
- Villa Flora: the biggest indoor flower exhibition in Europe
- Five restaurants and lots of food stalls

The coach will leave at 16.00 to take us back to the hotel.

21 April

The timing of this visit has been chosen to include the popular “bulb” parade on the 21 April, which starts from Noordwijk at 9.30. “On Saturday April 21 at 9.30 hours, the annual Flower Parade will leave Noordwijk to travel its 40-km route, along the main roads, to arrive in Haarlem at about 21:00 hours. The (2011) procession comprised of 20 large floats and more than 30 decorated luxury cars, interspersed with marching bands.”

At 10.30 the coach will take us from the hotel to the museum at Valkenburg am Meer. The museum will be open and their narrow gauge steam railway operating. See <http://www.smalspoormuseum.nl/Museum/index.html>. This web site is in Dutch but if you have set up your browser (I use Chrome) it will provide an English translation. I have provisionally booked a ride for us on the steam train, which runs by the lake (at 11.30).



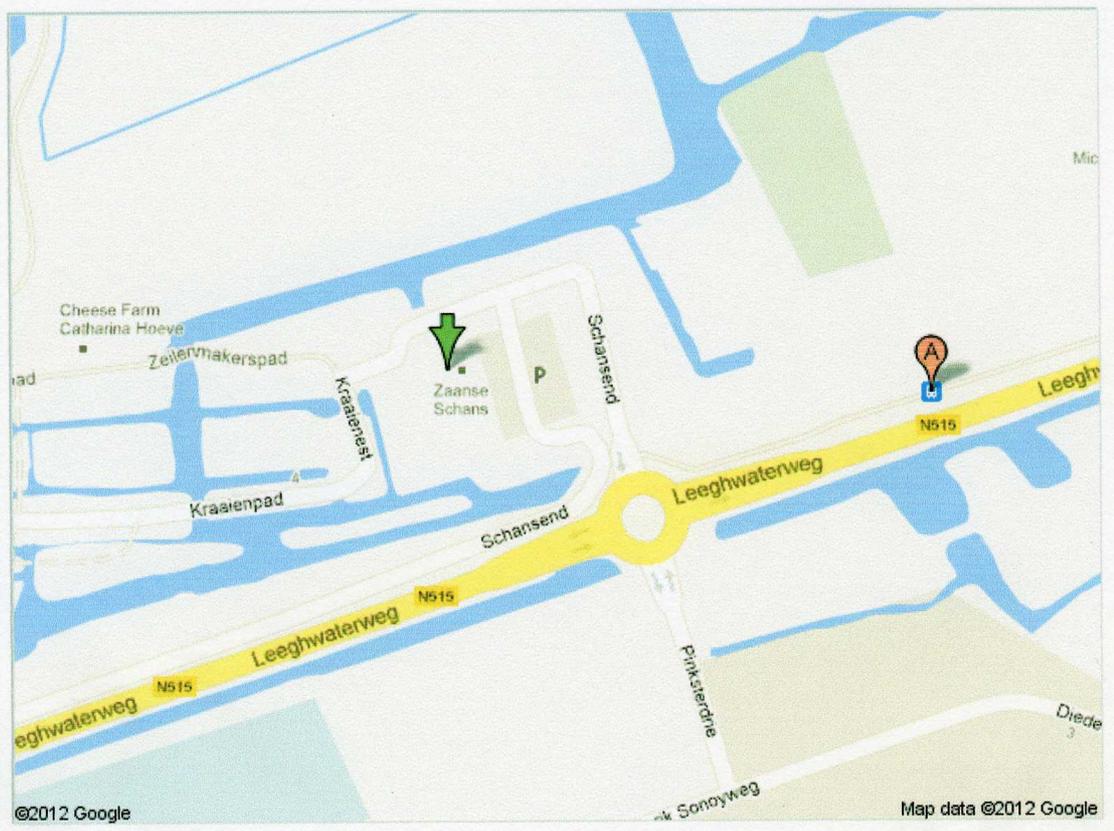


From here the coach will take us to Zaanse Schans <http://www.zaanseschans.nl/>

“The Zaanse Schans is a village on the banks of the river Zaan with characteristic green wooden houses, charming stylized gardens, small hump-backed bridges, tradesmen's workshops, historic windmills and engaging little shops. Apart from the cluster of windmills, characteristic wooden houses and delightful shops to visit, there are intriguing traditional Dutch crafts such as wooden shoes, pewter and cheese making, several fascinating museums, restaurants and even the possibility of taking a boat trip on the river.” Return to the hotel is by public transport. By train it is only four stops (20 minutes) by train to Amsterdam Central Station from Koog-Zaandijk, which is a ten minute walk to the station. Alternatively the 391 bus picks up at St. Michael College (A on the map) next to the Zaanse Museum and Zaanse Schans and terminates at Amsterdam central station. It runs every 15 mins. Hence train to Leiden and the number 40 bus.

A. Zaanse Schans
Netherlands

B. Beeldentuin
Netherlands



22 April

The coach will leave the hotel at 9.30 and drop us in central Amsterdam.

A good starting point to plan your visit to Amsterdam is <http://www.iamsterdam.com/en>. You can download a detailed map of Amsterdam at <http://www.amsterdam.info/print/map/>. A 24 hour public transport ticket costs 7.50 euro, which covers buses trams and the metro. Alternatively you can explore by hop on hop off canal bus see <http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/visiting/things-to-do/canalbus-hopon-hopoff>. This costs 18 euro bought in advance over the internet or 20 euros on the day.

Amsterdam tourist attractions and sights

Amsterdam has a broad spectrum of recreational and cultural sights that range from fascinating old buildings, like the [Oude Kerk](#), to oddities such as the Hash Marihuana Museum.

Museums are the main tourist attraction in Amsterdam. Everyone knows the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum, but there is much, much more. Amsterdam has over fifty museums which attract many millions of visitors every year. Read more about the [museums in Amsterdam](#). The following sites and monuments should also be of interest and are an essential part of the Amsterdam experience.

[Oude Kerk](#)

This old church with little houses clinging to its sides, remains a calm haven at the heart of the red light district. Its buildings especially the Gothic-renaissance style octagonal bell tower, were used by sailors to get their bearings.



[Dam square](#)

The Dam is the very centre and heart of Amsterdam, although there are arguably prettier sights in the city. As an historical site however, it is fascinating and worth taking the time to appreciate. The Dam has seen many historical dramas unfold over the years, and was for example, the reception area for Napoleon and his troops during the 1808 take-over of the city. The impressive history of the square is well documented in the [Amsterdam Historical Museum](#). The [Royal Palace](#) (Koninklijk Paleis) which dominates the square, was originally used as the town hall and its classical facade and fine sculptures were intended to glorify the city of Amsterdam and its government. In contrast to its turbulent history, the square is now a peaceful place and is home to hundreds of pigeons and tourists resting their tired feet.



[Begijnhof](#)

A narrow, vaulted passageway leads to this charming garden surrounded by old houses. The houses in the courtyard were once occupied by devout celibate Béguine nuns and are still home to single women today. In the centre of the lawns is a medieval church and at No.34 stands the oldest house in Amsterdam. The entrance is on the Spui and is indicated by a carved sign. Entry is free, but you must be quiet!



[Amsterdam's canals](#)

The number of canals have led Amsterdam to become known as "The Venice of the North". And thus, a trip to Amsterdam is not complete without a boat cruise. A [canal tour](#) can be both fascinating and relaxing by day and enchanting and romantic at night when many of the houses and bridges are illuminated. The four main city centre canals are Prinsengracht, Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Singel. There are also numerous smaller canals in the neighbourhood of Jordaan, of which the Brouwersgracht, the Bloemgracht and the Leliegracht are especially pleasant.

[Magere Brug](#)

Of Amsterdam's 1280 or so bridges, the Magere Brug, or "Skinny Bridge" is the most famous. It is a traditional double-leaf, Dutch draw-bridge connecting the banks of the river Amstel. Approximately every twenty minutes, the bridge opens to let boats through.



The original bridge was built in 1670, but as the traffic on Amstel increased, a wider bridge was built to replace the narrow one.

Jordaan

Once a working class area, Amsterdam's Jordaan has become greatly sought after. The converted warehouses are especially popular, and the Jordaan is now inhabited by a colourful mixture of students, well-to-do businessmen and creative professionals. The Jordaan oozes atmosphere with its narrow streets, picturesque canals, [brown cafes](#), art galleries and unique [shops](#). You can easily lose yourself in a pleasant stroll through the enchanting streets that connect the 3 main canals.

Rembrandtplein (square)

Rembrandtplein is lined with pubs, restaurants, cafes and hotels and is thus a tourist magnet. A popular centre for nightlife, it also includes traditional Dutch pubs which play real Dutch music. In summer, the terraces are packed with people enjoying a drink and watching the world go by. In the centre of the square is a small but pleasant park where you can relax or pay homage at the statue of Rembrandt. Around the area you'll also find quality night clubs, gay venues, respectable diamond dealers and the inevitable tacky souvenir shops.



Leidseplein (square)

The Leidseplein or Leidse-square is one of Amsterdam's most popular centres for nightlife. With many restaurants, clubs, coffeeshops, cinemas and [theatres](#) in the area, the Leidseplein is vibrant and colourful. On warm summer evenings, tourists and locals alike take advantage of the pubs' outdoor seating for a long, lazy drinks with friends. Street musicians, jugglers, fire-eaters and other performers liven up the square, often till the early hours.



Red Light District

Beer and party atmosphere, sex for sale, and limitless people-watching. The stores are full of hardcore videos, magazines and sex toys. The Red Light District is somewhat of a sexual amusement park and often not taken too seriously by the hordes of tourist who frequent it. The famous red window lights are striking against the quaint, old canal houses and even the fairy lights that line the bridges at night are coloured red. Although it is generally considered to be a very safe area, care should still be taken when walking through the quieter streets of the area. There is a strict "no photography" policy.



Albert Cuyp market

The Albert Cuypmarkt is arguably the best-known and busiest outdoor market in Europe. It attracts thousands of visitors every day, and is especially popular on Saturdays. There are over 300 stalls and goods range from fresh produce, to clothes, to odds and ends, with prices among the cheapest in Amsterdam. The market is located in [the Pijp](#) district, surrounded by many pleasant cafes and small shops. There are a number of regular [street markets in Amsterdam](#).



Artis ZOO

Right in the centre of Amsterdam, you can also find the oldest Zoo of Holland. It consists of four main areas: Zoo, Planetarium, Botanical Gardens and Geological and Zoological museum. In the zoo itself you will find animals from all over the world. In addition, a unique canal aquarium shows you which animals roam the canals of Amsterdam. The planetarium offers children a trip through the universe. In the peaceful gardens, you can find many old trees and statues of contemporary artists as well as an impressive, tropical rainforest greenhouse. The Geological museum shows you how the planet has evolved over the past 4 billion years.



Vondelpark

The Vondelpark is located in the south of Amsterdam, just five minutes walk from the Leidseplein and in walking distance from the Rijksmuseum, Stedelijk Museum and Van Gogh Museum. With 10 million visitors a year, the Vondelpark is the most famous park in the Netherlands.



[Hortus Botanicus - the Botanical Garden](#)

Amsterdam has a big and attractive botanical garden called Hortus Botanicus, one of the oldest in the world (est. 1632). It has more than 6000 plants and some of the plants are really unique as 2000 years old agave cactus. In the recently renovated Orangery of Hortus Botanicus, a beautiful café with a large outside terrace open to the garden welcomes the visitors. Located in a short walking distance from the Rembrandts House, very close to Artis – Amsterdam ZOO, the Jewish Historical Museum and the Resistance Museum, Hortus Botanicus remains a pleasurable oasis of peace in the busy and crowded Amsterdam centre.

[Squares in Amsterdam](#)

The city squares symbolize the whole areas of the city with their activity and character. Big and open Dam square with the Palace of the Queen and the best department store has a central role in town; Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein are entertainment and tourism centres while the Museumplein name speaks for itself. Nieuwmarkt, Westermarkt and Noordermarkt are old markets, which find today a new function, each of them different. Even a small square called het Spui has its own special character making it a real fun to visit.

[Amsterdam parks](#)

Amsterdam has a number of beautiful, quiet parks where you can relax during the busy day in town. The largest of them - [Vondelpark](#) is located in the very centre of the city. Other parks as Beatrixpark, Frankendael, Sarphatipark, Amstelpark, Westerpark are quiet, well-maintained community parks. An artificial forest just South of Amsterdam – [Amsterdamse Bos](#) is today a big nature reserve, with many attractions.

[Amsterdam windmills](#)

A trip to Holland just wouldn't be complete without a visit to a windmill. Believe it or not, there are 8 stunning windmills in the heart of the city just waiting to be admired. Don't forget to take your camera.

[Landmark hotels of Amsterdam](#)

Finally, Amsterdam has a number of the landmark hotels, which stand out above the hundreds of buildings in the town. Among them are the old and dignified historic hotels such as Hotel Krasnapolsky and Amstel Hotel, and the modern, international hotels such as Amsterdam Hilton and Okura Amsterdam, along with several other excellent, five-star hotels.

Canal Bus routes:

Green line - The Original Cruise

Central Station West > Anne Frank House/Prinsengracht > Rijksmuseum/Van Gogh Museum > Leidseplein > Rembrandtplein > Rembrandt House > Central Station West

The first regular service we launched takes you past the city's highlights. It's the perfect introduction to 17th-century Amsterdam. Be amazed by the beautiful views of the canals, the wealth of bridges - including the Skinny Bridge - the magnificent merchants' mansions, the gables and the houseboats. Soak up the atmosphere of the Golden Age and hop off to visit the Jordaan and the famous 'Nine Streets' districts.

Red line - Top-5 Museum Cruise

Central Station East > Sea Palace/NEMO > Gassan Diamonds > City Hall > Hermitage > Rijksmuseum/Van Gogh Museum > Leidseplein > Anne Frank House/Keizersgracht > Central Station East

This cruise stops at Amsterdam's most-visited museums, such as the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum, the Anne Frank House, the Hermitage and the Amsterdam Historical Museum. Hop off within easy walking distance of the many museums, but also hop off to shop in the famous Kalverstraat. Visit Dam Square and discover the historical buildings, restaurants, hotels and bars around.

Orange line - Grand Canal Cruise

Central Station West > Passenger Terminal > Maritime Museum/Artis Zoo > Dapper Market > Tropenmuseum > AlbertCuyp Market > Rijksmuseum/Van Gogh Museum > Leidseplein > Anne Frank House/Keizersgracht > Central Station West

This extensive canal cruise provides a spectacular overview of Amsterdam's unique riches, from the historic city centre's monuments to state-of-the-art 21st-century architecture. You'll glide past a

windmill, warehouses, two of the busiest street markets, museums and take in the IJ, Amsterdam's former docklands now transformed into an innovative vibrant urban district.

Opera

There is also an afternoon performance of Rossini's *Il Turco in Italia* 1.30 at The Muziektheater Amsterdam, Waterlooplein 22, Tel: (Box Office) 020 625 5455. (Musical direction: Carlo Rizzi, Director: David Hermann, Cast: Alex Esposito, Olga Peretyatko, Renato Girolami, Lawrence Brownlee, Vito Priante, Luciana Mancini, Enea Scala, Orchestra: Dutch Philharmonic.)
<http://www.het-muziektheater.nl/programma/2011-2012/il-turco-italia/>

The recommended hotel is the Golden Tulip Beach Hotel Noordwijk aan Zee, where all have booked in. Their web site is <http://www.goldentulipnoordwijkbeach.nl/>. This hotel is also close to the Parallel Boulevard stop where the Leiden bus arrives. This enables return journeys to be done independently and so provide flexibility for "standing and staring or simply snoozing".

Getting there. Several airlines go from UK to Schiphol eg Easyjet, KLM and BA. When I checked in October BA was offering returns at £100 for April. By train go to Leiden and take the half hourly bus from the station. You can arrange this through http://www.b-europe.co.uk/Travel?gclid=CKWMhqL-960CFcx_fAod_WSwQA E.g. leaving St Pancras at 8.57 gets you to Leiden at 15.56 with changes at Brussels and Rotterdam and costs about £120 pp return. Driving is also fairly straight forward and it is about 220 miles from Calais. I plan to be at the airport (at the meeting point) to meet you when you arrive and sort out any problems caused by delayed flights. You may need to enable roaming on your mobile phone.

Bus times

40 from Leiden station

17.05; 17.20; 17.35; 17.50; 18.05; 18.20; 18.35; 18.45; 19.17; 20.03; 21.03; 22.03; 23.03; 00.03

On Sundays they are every half hour at xx.27 & xx.57 until 18.01 then hourly last bus is 00.02

57 from Keukenhof

15.24; 15.54; 16.24*; 16.54; 17.23*; 17.53; 18.22; 18.52; 19.22*

* at next stop (5 mins) you can transfer to the number 90 bus (direction Den Haag) at Ruigenhoek, Noordwijkerhout otherwise continue to Leiden central station.

90 Ruigenhoek, Noordwijkerhout

16.35; 17.35; 18.27; 19.35 20.35

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