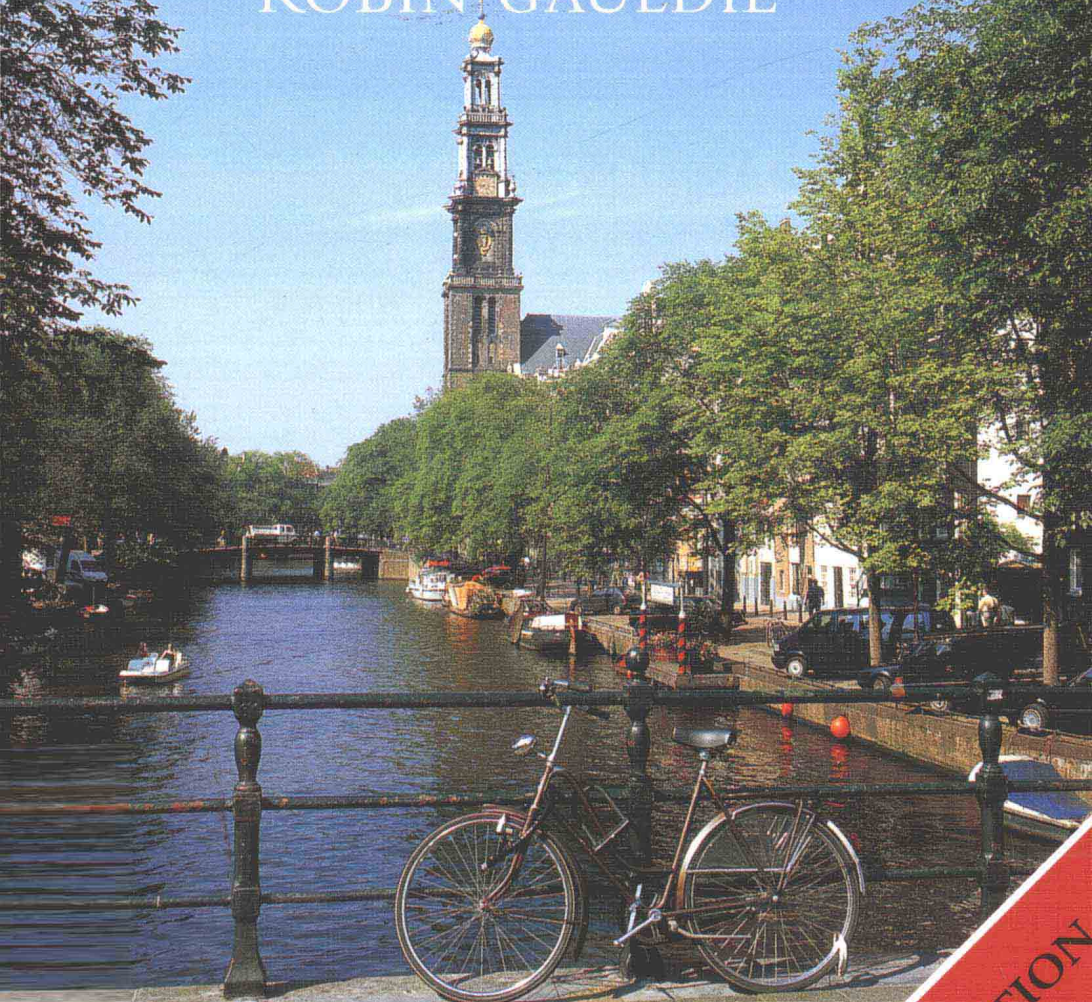


# *Walking Amsterdam*

ROBIN GAULDIE



25 ORIGINAL WALKS IN AND  
AROUND AMSTERDAM

3RD EDITION

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ROBIN GAULDIE

TWENTY-FIVE ORIGINAL WALKS  
IN AND AROUND AMSTERDAM

***Contemporary Books***

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Special thanks go to my mother, Enid Gauldie, and father, W. Sinclair Gauldie, for insights into Dutch art and architecture, the history of the House of Orange, and cheese.

## KEY TO MAPS

Each walk is accompanied by a map, on which the route and the main points of interest along it are clearly marked. None of the walks should take longer than half a day; most should take you about two to three hours, including sightseeing stops. All maps are drawn on a north–south axis unless otherwise indicated.



Route of walk

Major building

Monument or statue

Canal or water

Park or grass area

# INTRODUCTION

Amsterdam is a city made for walkers. Within the old city-centre, traffic is light and pedestrians are respected as in few other European cities – though you have to watch out for trolley-buses and the ubiquitous cyclists, whose approach is rapid, silent, and unexpected! There are no hills to contend with, and most of the city's outstanding historic and cultural sights are packed into a compact few square kilometres. Friendly bars and cafés are dotted every few hundred metres, so there is always somewhere close at hand to restore flagging energies or escape a sudden change in the weather. Few Europeans speak English as fluently, universally and willingly as the Dutch, and communicating is never a problem. Nor is mapreading; the city's network of canals provides a ready-made orientation grid.

Public transport is efficient and plentiful: whenever your feet get tired there is a handy bus, tram, Metro train or canal cruiser to take you home. For trams and buses you can either buy tickets from the driver or conductor or purchase a 15-strip multiple-use ticket at one of the offices of the city public transport system, GVB. Public-transport maps are available at GVB information counters. Amsterdam's mass-transit system is divided into zones; all the walks described in this book start and end within the central zone.

You can save money by buying an Amsterdam Culture and Leisure Pass. This carnet of 28 coupons currently costs 29.90 guilders and gives free entry to many of Amsterdam's museums and attractions, including the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art, Amsterdam Historical Museum, Rembrandt's House and the Willet-Holthuysen, and a minimum 25 per cent discount on entry to the Dutch Maritime Museum, Tropical Museum, Madame Tussaud Scenerama and the Sloten Windmill. Other benefits include cut-price day tickets on the Museum Boat and Canal Bus ferries and special offers at restaurants and cafés around the city.

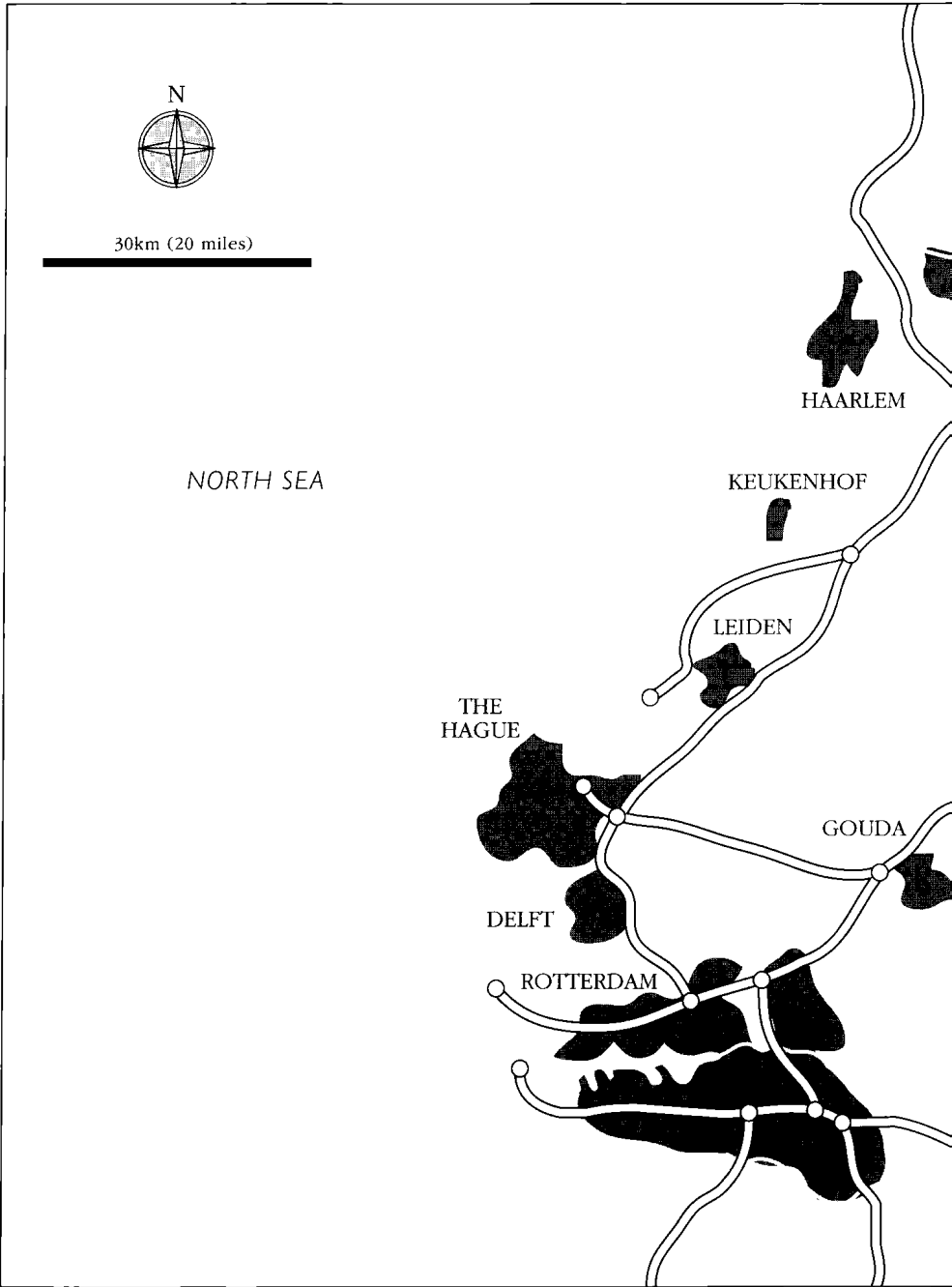
Equally walker-friendly are the historic Randstadt towns which ring Amsterdam. The best way to get to these is by rail. Trains are fast and frequent. None of the towns chosen is more than an hour from Amsterdam by train; most are less than 45 minutes away. All will repay a day's outing.

Dutch weather can change from warm and sunny to chilly and wet in the blink of an eye, even in high summer. Pack a light waterproof or carry an umbrella. Winters are cold; warm clothes, waterproof footwear, hats and gloves are recommended from October until the end of April. The best walking months are between mid-April and mid-October.

This book includes a varied menu of walks for all seasons, from longer rambles in parks and countryside to shorter city-centre itineraries with plenty of breaks in museums, art galleries and historic buildings. Some walks can be paired up to give a longer itinerary.



*Walking Amsterdam*





# A CITY'S HISTORY

**A**msterdam is an upstart among the great cities of Europe. Most of the buildings you will see on your walks around the city date from no earlier than the 17th century. On the other hand, much of the city's historic heart survives intact or restored, with surprisingly little modern intrusion.

In prehistoric and Roman times, and through the Dark Ages, the site on which the city now stands was empty marshland between the North Sea and the waters of the IJ and the Amstel. Later it became a small fishing settlement. By the early 13th century it had grown into a prosperous little merchant town within the territory of the Bishops of Utrecht, who ceded it in 1313 to the Count of Holland.

## THE CITY AND THE SEA

At the same time the city had to battle another antagonist: the North Sea. Though the sea brought prosperity, it continually threatened to overwhelm the city and the farmland around it. Stubbornness and ingenuity pushed the sea back: with the introduction of steam-driven pumping engines in the 19th century the tide finally turned in favour of the Amsterdammers.

This struggle with the sea shaped Amsterdam. Land for building was always in short supply, so houses are squeezed side by side along the canals. These buildings are narrow, five and six storeys high, and set on a foundation of piles driven through the soft surface to the hard ground below. Inevitably, some have subsided with the passage of time; today you can see many older buildings leaning drunkenly against their neighbours.

The sea gave Amsterdam a highway to ports all over Europe, while the rivers carried its trade goods far inland. Through the Middle Ages Amsterdam's prosperity was boosted by commerce, first with other North Sea ports, then with the Baltic and ever further afield. By the mid-15th century it had become the most important port in northern Europe, trading across the length and breadth of the mighty Holy Roman Empire. In 1489 the Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) granted it the imperial seal. With a population of 9000, it was one of the biggest cities in Europe.

## Reformation and revolution

The radical ideas of the Protestant Reformation were quickly taken up by traditionally independent-minded and tolerant Amsterdammers. The city, now ruled by Philip II of Spain (1527–1598), patron of the notorious Spanish Inquisition, nevertheless became a refuge for Protestants from less liberal parts of the continent. Dissidence turned to armed resistance in 1568, following the brutal occupation of Amsterdam by the Spanish Duke of

Alva (1508–1582). Led by the Protestant Duke William of Orange (1533–1584) – William the Silent – the rebels evicted Alva's Spanish army from the surrounding provinces and besieged Amsterdam, which eventually surrendered to William in 1578.

## **The Golden Age**

The overthrow of Spanish rule ushered in a Golden Age for Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic. Its greatest former rival, Antwerp, having backed the Spanish side, had been sacked following the siege of 1584–5; refugees from there brought wealth and new skills to Amsterdam. The city became a haven for painters and philosophers.

By the mid-17th century Amsterdam was home to more than 200,000 people. The city had already taken on its modern form. Work began as early as 1613 on the three canal rings – Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Prinsengracht – which today separate historic Amsterdam from the later outer suburbs. Rich merchants built luxurious townhouses along the new canals, and their wealth trickled down to painters and craftsmen. The élite commissioned Rembrandt and his peers, but ordinary folk could afford the cheaper work of hacks of the artists' guild. Visitors were awed by the city's prosperity, clean streets and public works; by 1670, when cities like London and Paris were mostly sewage-scented slums, Amsterdam boasted streets lit each night by 2000 oil lanterns.

The war with Philip II had closed the ports of Spain and Portugal to Dutch traders, who promptly set out to forge their own trade routes to the New World. In 1595 Cornelis de Houtman (c.1540–1599) launched an expedition break the Spanish–Portuguese monopoly of the hugely profitable trade routes to the East Indies. Two successful voyages triggered a stampede to get into the trade. In 1602 the rival merchants agreed to stop cutting each other's throats and formed instead the United East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie). With its own navy and army to protect its ships and factories, the VOC was enormously powerful and incredibly wealthy.

In the 17th and 18th centuries came wars with England and France sapped the country's energies and drained its coffers. In 1795 revolutionaries backed by the new French Republic overthrew the government of the Stadhouder William V (1748–1806) and the States-General and declared a Batavian Republic. This was soon swept away and Louis Bonaparte (1778–1846) was installed as King of the Netherlands.

## **The 19th century**

With the Bonapartist star waning, William V's son William (1772–1843) returned in 1813 to become, in 1815, King William I of an expanded Netherlands, which from 1814 included for the first time the southern provinces (now Belgium). The union was not to last long; in 1831–2 the southern provinces rose in revolt and Belgium became an independent kingdom (Luxembourg followed suit in 1867). The age of steam made Amsterdam a vital link between Europe's booming railway networks and the transatlantic liner and freight services, while wealth poured into the city from the newly discovered South African diamond mines.

## *Walking Amsterdam*

### **Occupation and liberation**

Germany occupied the Netherlands during World War II. By 1941 the occupiers had begun rounding up Amsterdam's Jewish citizens for transportation to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. Underground resistance groups and individuals helped shelter Jews and other fugitives. Allied troops liberated the Netherlands in May 1945, arriving in Amsterdam on 7 May, only a few days before the German surrender and the end of the war in Europe.

### **AMSTERDAM TODAY**

The modern city of Amsterdam is a mixture of bohemianism, sleaze and stolid respectability. On the Old Side, it is not unusual to see an elderly housewife carrying her shopping into an apartment doorway flanked on one side by a neon-lit window in which a plump prostitute displays her charms and on the other by a 'coffee shop' where the fumes of hash are heavy on the air. The age-old tradition of turning a blind eye continues to thrive.

The compact city-centre – within the ring of the inner Singel Canal – buzzes with tourism year-round, but the heart of the city is still very much a place where local people live, work and play. In the more modern suburbs outside the old city-centre – and even in the Jordaan and the harbour neighbourhoods – there is hardly a visitor in sight.

### **KEY DATES AND PEOPLE**

- Around 1000: Earliest primitive settlements around the Amstel
- 11th century: Gijsbrecht van Aemstel builds castle on banks of the Amstel
- 1300: Gijsbrecht IV ousted by Bishop of Utrecht
- 1317: Amsterdam granted to William, Count of Holland
- Mid-15th century: Amsterdam established as major merchant city; Netherlands ruled by succession of Hapsburg princes and princesses
- 1517: Beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Germany; Lutheran and Calvinist ideas popularized in Amsterdam and the Netherlands
- 1565: Birth of Hendrick de Keyser (died 1621)
- 1566: Protestant iconoclasts smash statues and burn churches. Philip II of Spain, now ruler of the Low Countries, sends 10,000 troops under the Duke of Alva
- 1567: Reign of terror; Alva's 'Council of Blood' executes thousands of Protestants, and many more flee to England or France
- 1568: William the Silent defeated in attempt to drive out Spaniards; Eighty Years' War begins
- 1572: William begins campaign of naval guerrilla warfare; most Randstadt towns fall into rebel Dutch hands
- 1572–3: Rebel towns besieged, then relieved by William; Amsterdam remains in Spanish hands

- 1575–6: William besieges Amsterdam
- 1578: Amsterdam yields to William
- 1579–1609: Catholic southern provinces side with Spain (Union of Arras); northern provinces form Union of Utrecht, and decades of war follow
- 1581: Northern provinces renounce allegiance to Spain and declare republic ruled by the States General (made up of representatives of each of the seven provinces, called Advocates) and the Stadhouder, William the Silent
- 1584: William the Silent assassinated; Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625) becomes Stadhouder
- 1585: Birth in Haarlem of Frans Hals (died 1666)
- 1586–1618: Johan (Jan) van Oldenbarneveldt (1547–1619), Advocate of province of Holland, dominates civil wing of government
- 1602: Dutch East India Company formed
- 1606: Birth in Leiden of Rembrandt van Rijn (died 1669)
- 1609: Twelve Years' Truce signed with Spain, recognizing Dutch independence and ushering in Amsterdam's Golden Age of prosperity
- 1621: Renewed hostilities; Thirty Years' War involves much of Europe
- 1624: Dutch West India Company formed
- 1632: Birth in Delft of Jan Vermeer (died 1675)
- 1648: Peace of Westphalia ends Thirty Years' War
- 1651–53: War with England
- 1689: Deposition of James II & VII of England and Scotland (1633–1701); Stadhouder Prince William III of Orange (1650–1702), through his wife Mary Stuart (1662–1694), invited to become King William III of England and Scotland
- 1701–14: Netherlands involved in War of Spanish Succession against France
- 1787: Patriot rising crushed in Amsterdam
- 1795: French Revolutionary Army occupies Amsterdam and Netherlands with widespread popular support
- 1806: Napoleon places younger brother Louis Bonaparte on the throne
- 1813: French withdrawal; return of Stadhouder William VI, who becomes King William I of the Netherlands
- 1848–49: Parliamentary reform, carried out by Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798–1872) to avert revolution, widens franchise
- 1853: Birth in Zundert of Vincent Van Gogh (died 1890)
- 1872: Birth in Amersfoort of Piet Mondrian (died 1944)
- 1914–18: Netherlands preserves neutrality in World War I
- 1940–45: German Occupation
- 1940s–50s: Netherlands withdraws from overseas empire; completion of Zuiderzee reclamation
- 1960s–70s: Liberal city regime in Amsterdam makes it a gathering place for artists and bohemians from all over Europe
- 1980s: Squatters oppose demolition of housing in city-centre to make way for office blocks

## CATEGORIES OF WALKS

### **Museum Walks**

- Prinsengracht: *Noorderkerk to Weesperplein*
- Rijksmuseum and the Vondelpark
- Westelijk Eilanden: *The Western Islands*
- The Hague 1: *Historic Buildings*
- Rotterdam 2: *Parks and museums*
- Haarlem 2: *Museums and monuments*
- Leiden 3: *Museums*

### **Canal and River Walks**

- The Old Side and the Red Light District
- Around Herengracht
- Prinsengracht: *Noorderkerk to Weesperplein*
- Markets and the Amstel

### **Harbours and the Sea**

- Oosterdok: *The East Harbour*
- Westelijk Eilanden: *The Western Islands*
- Scheveningen
- Rotterdam 1: *Weena to the Maas*

### **Parks and Gardens**

- The Rijksmuseum and the Vondelpark
- The Plantage and the Artis Zoo
- The Keukenhof
- Rotterdam 2: *Parks and museums*

### **Shopping and Markets**

- The Jordaan
- The Hague 2: *Art, antiques and parks*
- Nieuwmarkt to Waterlooplein: *The Jewish Quarter/The Plantage and the Artis Zoo*
- Markets and the Amstel/The Plantage and the Artis Zoo
- Rotterdam 1/Rotterdam 2
- Haarlem 1/Haarlem 2

### **Architecture and Historic Buildings**

- The Dam: *Old Amsterdam*
- Around Herengracht
- The Hague 1: *Historic Buildings*
- Rotterdam 1: *Weena to the Maas*
- Haarlem 1/Haarlem 2
- Delft
- Gouda
- Utrecht
- Leiden 2: *City almshouses*

### **Circular Walks**

- The Dam: *Old Amsterdam*
- The Old Side and the Red Light District
- The Rijksmuseum and the Vondelpark
- The Plantage and the Artis Zoo
- Oosterdok: *The East Harbour*
- Westelijk Eilanden: *The Western Islands*
- The Hague 1: *Historic buildings*
- Scheveningen
- Rotterdam 1/Rotterdam 2
- Haarlem 1: *The Grote Market and Flemish Haarlem*
- Haarlem 2: *Museums and monuments*
- Delft
- Gouda
- Utrecht
- Leiden 1: *Young Rembrandt*
- Leiden 2: *City almshouses*
- Leiden 3: *Museums*
- The Keukenhof

### **Connecting Walks**

- Old Side and the Red Light District/  
Nieuwmarkt to Waterlooplein: *The Jewish Quarter*

## WALKS IN ORDER OF LENGTH

(Lengths given are approximate.)

### 3–3.5km (around 2 miles)

- The Dam: *Old Amsterdam*
- The Old Side and the Red Light District
- The Rijksmuseum and the Vondelpark
- Westelijk Eilanden: *The Western Islands*
- Rotterdam 1: *Weena to the Maas*

### 4–5km (2½–3 miles)

- Nieuwmarkt to Waterlooplein: *The Jewish Quarter*
- Around Herengracht
- Markets and the Amstel
- The Plantage and the Artis Zoo
- Oosterdok: *The East Harbour*
- Scheveningen
- Rotterdam 2: *Parks and museums*

- Haarlem 2: *Museums and monuments*
- Delft
- Gouda
- Leiden 3: *Museums*

### 6–8km (4–5 miles)

- Prinsengracht: *Noorderkerk to Weesperplein*
- The Jordaan
- The Hague 1: *Historic buildings*
- The Hague 2: *Art, antiques and parks*
- Haarlem 1: *The Grote Markt and Flemish Haarlem*
- Utrecht
- Leiden 1: *Young Rembrandt*
- Leiden 2: *City almshouses*
- The Keukenhof

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# AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam stands on the estuary of the River IJ, close to its mouth on the landlocked IJsselmeer (formerly known as the Zuiderzee) and about 20km (12 miles) from the North Sea coast. Throughout its 800-year history, Amsterdam has combined a hard-headed approach to commerce and business with a remarkable willingness to experiment with new ideas, from the rationalism of Erasmus and the revolutionary Protestantism of Luther, through the republicanism of the 17th century to, more recently, the famously liberal approach to the problems of drug abuse and commercial sex.

Modern Amsterdam benefits from the legacy of its prosperous past. The city's 16th- and 17th-century merchant princes used their wealth to build gracious homes which still line the canal, and, they were the patrons of a generation of Europe's greatest painters, giving impetus to an artistic tradition which makes Amsterdam one of Europe's great centres of the visual arts today.



## The Dam: Old Amsterdam

*This circular walk introduces you to central Amsterdam, taking you from the city's original waterfront into its historic heart.*

- Start/finish:** Stationsplein Metro, served by all trams  
**Length:** 3km (2 miles)  
**Time:** 2hr  
**Refreshments:** Cafes, restaurants and taverns at frequent intervals along the way  
**Which day:** Any day  
**To visit:**
- Nieuwe Kerk: daily 11.00–17.00
  - Koninklijk Paleis (Royal Palace): June–August daily 12.30–17.00, September–May Tuesday–Sunday 12.30–17.00
  - Madame Tussaud Scenerama: July–August daily 09.30–20.30, September–June daily 10.00–17.00
  - Oude Kerk: Monday–Saturday 11.00–17.00, Sunday and public holidays 13.00–17.00
  - Museum Amstelkring: Monday–Saturday 10.00–17.00, Sunday and public holidays 11.00–17.00
  - Geels & Co. Koffie en Theemuseum: Tuesday, Friday and Saturday 14.00–17.00

Amsterdam Centraal Station is a fitting gateway to the city. Built in 1882–89, at the height of the steam age, it was designed by P.J.H. Cuypers (1827–1921), who also designed the Rijksmuseum (see page 60). Both buildings are now regarded as important parts of the city's architectural heritage, but when they were built Cuypers' then innovative designs were harshly criticized. The station, built on a man-made island resting on 26,000 wooden piles, shuts central Amsterdam off from the open waters of the IJ basin. Its towered central block is elaborately turreted and ornamented.

Leaving the grandiose station façade behind you, cross the Open Haven canal dock to Prins Hendrikkade – the long boulevard which forms the northern boundary of central Amsterdam – at its junction with Martelaarsgracht. On the corner, the Café Karpershoek, a traditional 'brown tavern', claims to be the oldest in Amsterdam. About 100m (110yd) south, fork left onto Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal. The buildings which line it are a mixture of old and new. Nos. 29 and 31 lean at precarious angles.

Look above the door of no. 29 for the typical gablestone, this one depicting the Holy Family on their flight from Egypt. In earlier times, when many city-folk were