

## THE NETHERLANDS – HIGHLIGHTS OF HOLLAND

8-day/7-nights Easy **PREMIUM** GUIDED cycling cruise - Amsterdam to Leiden, Delft & Gouda



This cycling cruise explores some of the most fascinating towns and cities in Holland – the historical centres of Haarlem, Leiden and Delft, the ‘cheese town’ of Gouda, and of course cosmopolitan Amsterdam. Explore the sand dunes and coastline near The Hague as the Dutch like to do and cruise through the world’s largest seaport at Rotterdam. Visit the nineteen windmills at Kinderdijk; built around 1750 to assist with flood mitigation and now largely decorative, they are still an iconic and spectacular sight. The relaxed pace allows for plenty of free time at each day’s destination. This cruise, with easy cycling over flat countryside, is ideal for those considering a cycling holiday for the first time.

Bike & Barge cruises combine two popular ways of exploring Europe, cycling and river cruising, allowing partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for leisure cyclists OR enthusiasts). You unpack once and come ‘home’ each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom. Well-maintained multi-gear bikes are provided (you can bring your own if you prefer).

Aboard these well-equipped barges the crew have a reputation for their hospitality and excellent meals (daily breakfast and three-course dinner are onboard, lunch is a picnic taken from the breakfast buffet). They pay keen attention to their guests’ needs and strive to make everyone feel that this is your home away from home. Comfortable cabins are simply furnished with lower beds and a small ensuite toilet / shower.

**Cost from:**            **\$2490** per person twin share            Single cabin supplement from \$635  
Season supplements from \$260 - \$505 apply to selected dates

**Departures:**        Low season            4, 11, 18 July,    1, 8 August 2024  
                              Regular season    9, 16, 23, 30 May,    6, 20 June,    15, 22, 29 August,    3 October 2024  
                              High season        5, 12 September 2024

**Includes:**            7 nights’ accommodation in twin-share cabin (lower beds) with a shower/toilet, 7 buffet breakfasts, 6 picnic lunches, 7 dinners, multi-gear hybrid bike hire (including bike insurance, helmet, pannier and lock), route information (one set per cabin), ferry tickets en route, experienced English speaking tour guide.

**Not included:**      Transfers to/from the boat, drinks, items of a personal nature, bike insurance or travel insurance, tour guide / crew gratuities, entrance fees.

**E-Bikes:**            A limited number of E-Bikes are available for hire at additional cost – please ask for details.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations**



**Suggested itinerary:** the route is at the discretion of the captain or tour guide with different cycling distances or mooring points according to local conditions:

**Day 1: Amsterdam**

**warm up ride 15km**

Board your barge in central Amsterdam by 1.30pm, stow your luggage in your cabin and enjoy coffee or tea and get to know the guide, skipper and crew and your fellow passengers. The journey begins at 2.00pm with a cruise to Spaarndam – known as the village of Hansje Brinker – and from there take an easy warm-up ride into the beautiful city of Haarlem. Back on board, after dinner, the guide and crew will brief you on the week ahead.

**Day 2: Haarlem – through the dunes to Leiden**

**cycling @ 45km**

A short bike ride through the centre of Haarlem, to have a better look at some of the city's typical almshouses. On leaving Haarlem we cycle to the *Cruquiusgemaal* (Cruquius Pumping Station), one of the three steam-powered pumping stations that drained the Haarlemmer Lake between 1849 and 1852. Now a museum, it gives you an excellent idea of the Dutch 'battle against the water'. Cycle on paths through the dunes to Leiden, birthplace of Rembrandt van Rijn and home to the oldest university in the Netherlands.

**Day 3: Leiden – Delft**

**cycling @ 40km**

We leave the city in a southerly direction and cycle along the Vliet canal until we get to Voorschoten where we turn westwards towards the coastline. At *Wassenaarse Slag*, an access point to the seashore near the Dutch town of Wassenaar, we may like to take a break on the beach. Continuing on, the route to Delft takes us alongside the water once again. The old centre is well worth a visit. This is a well-preserved medieval city with canals and a magnificent town hall.

**Day 4: Delft**

**free day to explore or relax**

Today is a free day. You can stay in Delft, visit The Hague by public transport or bike, or cycle to Rotterdam.

**Delft** is a beautiful town to explore. The view from the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) on a clear day is spectacular and a large part of our cycling route can be seen from here. Delft is famous for its pottery, the '*Delft blue*'. The painter Johannes Vermeer made the town famous (learn more about his life at the Vermeer Centre), but it is also known as the burial place of William of Orange, who is interred in the Nieuwe Kerk (where members of the House of Orange are still buried). In Delft you can visit the Botanical Gardens, the Prinsenhof (Prince's Residence) or the Tabaks Historic Museum (Tobacco Historical Museum).

**The Hague** has wide avenues, parks and stately mansions. Visit the International Court of Justice and the *Binnenhof* with the 13<sup>th</sup> Century *Ridderzaal* (Knights' Hall), seat of the Dutch Government and Parliament. See the *Mauritshuis*, a former palace, now a famous museum with paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt and Rubens. '*Panorama Mesdag*', the largest panoramic, circular painting in the world, depicts 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scheveningen and is well worth seeing. There are many royal palaces in The Hague; only a few are still occupied. You may see the Noordeinde Palace and the Huis ten Bosch Palace, where the Dutch royal family reside.

**Rotterdam** a bustling city, has many architectural highlights and interesting museums. It is the main port of Holland. On the Maas River, Erasmus Bridge is the gateway to the Kop van Zuid district, known as '*Manhattan on the Maas*'. Here you can find the New Orleans and the Maastoren, the highest residential tower and the highest office building in the Netherlands. The city has some interesting museums such as the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, where you can find Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Dali and many Dutch artists. The ride to Rotterdam and return to Delft is approximately 40 kilometres.

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**Day 5: Delft – sailing to Rotterdam/Kinderdijk – cycling to Gouda** **cycling @ 40km**

A morning cruise through the centre of Rotterdam for some of the best views of its modern city architecture. Our cycling starts at Kinderdijk with its World Heritage listed windmills, then through the Alblasserwaard, a wide landscape of water and pastureland. The regular flooding and slowly sinking surface made water management essential in this fenland. Canals and ditches were dug and many windmills were constructed; nineteen windmills still remain today. Their work has mostly been taken over by electric pumping stations.

We continue cycling to Gouda with its cheese market and 'stroopwafels' (treacle waffles), picturesque town hall, romantic canals and a virtually intact town centre. See St. Janskerk (St. John's Church) with its stained-glass windows, the Gothic Town Hall and Weigh House. Museums in Gouda include the Catharina Gasthuis, formerly the municipal hospital, the pipe and earthenware museum the Moriaan, and Verzetsmuseum Zuid-Holland (Resistance Museum). Also worth a visit is the Harbour Quarter with Weeshuisplein, and the Catherina Garden.

**Day 6: Gouda – Oude Wetering** **cycling @ 45km**

From Gouda we cycle on country roads and beside banks and channels through the area known as the *Green Heart of Holland* with its dramatic polders. Around 1885, several fortifications were built around Oude Wetering and Uithoorn as part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a 135km long ring of fortifications. Overnight in Oude Wetering, the last stop before we return to Amsterdam.

**Day 7: Oude Wetering – Amsterdam** **cycling @ 45km**

Today begins with a ride to the village of Uithoorn then continues along a polder and alongside the rivers Waver and Amstel. Amsterdam's name derives from *Amstelredamme* (originally a dam on the river Amstel). Almost without noticing we enter Amsterdam and the extensive network of bicycle paths allows us to ease back into the city. Our route takes us past some remarkable sites in the centre where we moor overnight. There is free time to explore the many attractions of the city after dinner.

**Day 8: Amsterdam**

Tour ends after breakfast.



**Outdoor Travel** offer Bike & Barge cycling cruises along the rivers and canals of Europe in France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Austria, Scotland, Romania or Hungary. Bike & Boat holidays are available in Italy, Croatia, Greece, Turkey and Vietnam.

Cycling holiday specialists Outdoor Travel offer inn-to-inn guided or self-guided cycling tours in most destinations throughout Europe, New Zealand, the USA or Canada, Vietnam & Australia. We offer walking holidays or river and canal hotel barge cruises in many areas of Europe and self-skipped narrowboat hire in the UK.

**Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:**

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