

NETHERLANDS

— Amsterdam · Rotterdam —

“Amsterdam earns every cliché and quietly transcends them. Rotterdam is what happens when a city loses its medieval centre and decides not to fake one back.”



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By Ayushi & Harshit Jain

Netherlands at a glance

The Netherlands in two cities: Amsterdam the icon (canals, bicycles, museums that justify the crowds), and Rotterdam the antithesis (modern, forward-looking, gritty with confidence). Together they show a country that has been here for centuries and is still building.



Best time	September-October (bulb season April-May, but crowded)
Visa (IN)	Schengen (Indian passport)
Currency	EUR (€)
Getting around	Trains connect Amsterdam-Rotterdam in 1 hour; both cities walkable and bike-friendly.
If we did it again	Not staying longer in Rotterdam; not renting bikes earlier in Amsterdam.

The top 10 — our personal highlights

Ten moments worth flying back for. Ranked roughly in the order they made us go “oh.”

- 1 Canal Ring Grachtengordel at dusk · Amsterdam**
UNESCO 17th-century urban planning; walk Prinsengracht at golden hour

- 2 Anne Frank House · Amsterdam**
Book online, months ahead; go late afternoon if possible

- 3 Rijksmuseum Vermeer and Rembrandt · Amsterdam**
Half day minimum; The Milkmaid is smaller than expected, devastating in person

- 4 Van Gogh Museum chronological · Amsterdam**
Late works with his letters to Theo; a different experience than scattered collections

- 5 Canal cruise at night · Amsterdam**
Skip initially out of principle; regret that immediately

- 6 Cube Houses Kubuswoningen · Rotterdam**
38 tilted yellow cubes; the Show Cube lets you inside the idea

- 7 Erasmusbrug at sunset · Rotterdam**
White swan bridge; walk it for the working harbour feeling

- 8 Markthal covered market · Rotterdam**
Lunch under Europe's largest interior artwork; oddly brilliant

- 9 Jordaan brown cafes · Amsterdam**
Neighbourhood bars; dark, wooden, decades of conversation in the walls

- 10 Kinderdijk windmills day trip · Rotterdam area**
19 UNESCO windmills; go weekday morning by waterbus

Amsterdam

Canal rings, bicycles, museums and the quiet genius of Dutch Golden Age

Amsterdam works because it was built by people who knew what they were doing. The canals still drain, the streets still make sense, the museums contain masterpieces, and the bicycles move in formations that resemble schools of fish. It earns the clichés.



Top 5 here

- **The Canal Ring Grachtengordel walk** — UNESCO 17th-century design; walk at dusk when the light catches the water
- **Anne Frank House** — Book months ahead; timed entry only; go late afternoon if possible
- **Rijksmuseum** — Vermeer's Milkmaid, room of Rembrandts; half day minimum for standing still
- **Van Gogh Museum** — Chronological; his late works with letters to Theo; a different perspective
- **Jordaan neighbourhood** — Brown cafes, hofjes courtyards, narrow streets; the real Amsterdam

Days 3-4 days minimum; museums take time, canals reward wandering

Where we stayed Grachtengordel canal ring for location; Jordaan for neighbourhood feel.

Getting around Walking is primary; bikes for second half of visit; water taxi for fun.

Where we ate Market stroopwafels, herring at stalls, cheese wheels, brown cafe beers

Reality check Touristy in the centre; genuinely charming elsewhere; the bicycle culture is real

→ Read the full Amsterdam guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/netherlands-amsterdam.html

Rotterdam

Cube houses, harbours and a city that rebuilt itself forward

Rotterdam was flattened in 1940 and decided not to fake it back. The result is the most architecturally adventurous city in the Netherlands. Cube houses tilted on stalks, a concert hall shaped like an enormous square sailing ship, and a working harbour that feels genuinely worked. It's grittier and cooler than Amsterdam.



Top 5 here

- **Cube Houses Kubuswoningen** — 38 tilted yellow cubes designed by Piet Blom; tour the Show Cube
- **Erasmusbrug Swan Bridge at sunset** — Walk it for harbour light and container cranes and the feeling of a city comfortable with its future
- **Markthal food market** — Lunch under Europe's largest interior artwork; absurdly delightful
- **Witte de Withstraat cultural quarter** — Galleries, restaurants, bars; the city's confident younger pulse
- **Kinderdijk UNESCO windmills day trip** — 19 historic windmills; waterbus 30 minutes; go weekday morning

Days 2-3 days; one for Cube Houses and Erasmusbrug, one for Kinderdijk day trip

Where we stayed Central Rotterdam near Erasmusbrug or Witte de Withstraat cultural quarter.

Getting around Train from Amsterdam 1 hour; waterbus to Kinderdijk 30 minutes.

Where we ate Indonesian rijsttafel, market food, Markthal lunch, brown cafe beer

Reality check Less touristy than Amsterdam; genuinely forward-looking; quietly confident

→ Read the full Rotterdam guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/netherlands-rotterdam.html

Costs — where the rupees went

Mid-range, vegetarian-friendly, two travellers splitting stays. Numbers are per-person, rounded honestly. Flights vary the most.

Accommodation	Amsterdam hostels: 25-35/night; mid-range: 70-100/night; Rotterdam: 20-30/night	650-1050 for 7 days
Food	Cafes: 5-8/coffee; Albert Cuyp market: 5-10/lunch; restaurants: 18-28/dinner	350-500 for 7 days
Transport	Train Amsterdam-Rotterdam: 12 return; day passes: 10-15/day	100-150 for 7 days
Attractions	Anne Frank: 14; Rijksmuseum: 22.50; Van Gogh: 20; Cube House: 3	150-200 for 7 days
Food (regional)	Stroopwafel: 3-5; Dutch cheese: 8-12; Herring: 3-4; Bitterballen: 4-6	included in food
Bike rental	City bike: 10-15/day; multi-day discounts available	50-100 optional
Day trips	Kinderdijk waterbus from Rotterdam: 15 return; Marken island boat: 10	25-50 optional
Misc	Tips, incidentals, beer at a brown cafe	80-120 for 7 days

Total: 20,000-26,000 per person

One last thing

Rent a city bike in Amsterdam once you're calibrated; it changes how you move.

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