

**Your Bike & Barge Tour**

**Golden Circle**



**FGC 2012**



## GOLDEN CIRCLE

The Zuiderzee is inextricably connected with the period of prosperity in the 17th century, the Golden Age, when Holland was one of the most powerful seafaring trading countries. All around the IJsselmeer, formerly the Zuiderzee (Southern Sea) there are numerous ports, which at the time were even known at The other end of the oceans of the world. Monnickendam, Hoorn, Vollenhove, Harderwijk and of course Amsterdam, the capital, are some of these well-preserved and still very active heritage treasures.

SATURDAY: Amsterdam, boarding at 16.00 hours; round tour approx. 20 km

When you arrive on board the ship you can put your luggage away in your cabin and then enjoy a cup of coffee or tea. It is also a good moment to become acquainted with the guide, skipper and crew and of course your fellow passengers.

Your bicycle will be handed out to you and you can join a short tour on bike from the ship's berth through the quieter parts of the city. If time permits the tour will also take you a short way out of the city.

### **Amsterdam:**

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Amsterdam was nothing more than a simple settlement at the mouth of the river Amstel, directly connected to the sea. Amsterdam was granted its municipal charter between 1300 and 1306 and has since expanded continually. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century (the Golden Age), inhabitants of Amsterdam were the most prosperous Europeans. It was in the Golden Age that the famous rings of canals were dug. Powerful merchants had their abundantly decorated mansions built here, thus manifesting their riches.

Amsterdam is a city to be explored on foot and we recommend the following places of interest: the rings of canals, the Jordaan area, with its many pubs, outdoor cafés and quaint shops, Vondelpark with its open air concerts, Leidseplein, Rembrandtsplein, the antique shops in the Spiegel district, Museum Square with the Rijksmuseum (National Museum), Stedelijk Museum (Museum of Modern Art) and the Van Gogh Museum.

Amsterdam is inextricably related to the diamond-cutting industry, which has brought much fame to the city since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Other typical features of Amsterdam are its numerous 'hofjes' (almshouses), the floating flower market, and the hundreds of houseboats lining the canals.

The palace on Dam Square is sometimes called the eighth Wonder of the World as it was built on 13.650 piles.

Did you know that:

- there are 222 trams, 277 buses, 106 underground trains and 8 ferries in Amsterdam?
- the Oude Kerk (Old Church) is the oldest edifice of Amsterdam?
- there are 600.000 bicycles in Amsterdam?
- there are 165 canals and 1,281 bridges in Amsterdam?
- there are 2.500 houseboats in Amsterdam?

Back on board, after the bike ride, the programme for the next day and the rest of the week will be explained to you at dinnertime.

SUNDAY: Amsterdam – Hoorn, 50 km or sailing to Volendam, 27 km

You now leave Amsterdam, which is still very quiet at this hour. A ferry takes you to the Amsterdam Noord quarter and soon you will be cycling through the rural area of Waterland. Then the former isle of Marken is visited. Marken is a peninsula in the IJsselmeer. A storm surge in the 13<sup>th</sup> century separated the village from the mainland. The dike which was constructed in 1957 once more links the island to the mainland. The local people are a close-knit community, a result of their centuries-long isolation. The typically Marken dwellings and the traditional costume are reminiscent of the past.



Before the former Zuiderzee (Southern Sea) was closed off and became the IJsselmeer (IJssel Lake), the local people made their money from fishing. Now many people work outside Marken. These days tourism is a major source of income. The village consists of two districts, Harbor District and Church District, and eight surrounding mounds, called 'werven'. In the old days the island was flooded quite regularly. For this reason houses were built on these mounds as well as on stilts. Most of the houses are painted dark green and most side-walls project.



Traditional costume of Marken: in summer the women wear a striped underskirt during the week. They don a full, black skirt and a black apron over this. Over the jacket with striped sleeves they wear an embroidered bodice and a kind of bolero. A floral wrap is pinned to the front of the bolero. These days the women usually only wear a small bonnet made of lace, cambric and chintz. The men of the island wear a smock and knickerbockers. The youngest children of the island hardly ever wear traditional costume, except for Queen's Day (April 30<sup>th</sup>). Marken can only be visited on foot or on bike, since the islanders are the only ones allowed to use their cars.



The route is now continued to historical **Monnickendam**, a flourishing town in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This can easily be seen by its many old façades, stone tablets, churches and spires.

The route then takes you along the Gouwzee dike to **Volendam**. Originally Volendam was a small fishing community, founded by shipwrecked sailors from a beaten Spanish fleet.

Further along the dike in a northerly direction towards Hoorn. The attractive city of Hoorn was given a municipal charter in 1357. In addition to Amsterdam, Edam, Monnickendam, Enkhuizen and Medemblik Hoorn was a major harbor in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. From here ships sailed for the

Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), America, Scandinavia and the Mediterranean. The most impressive façade is the one on the former town hall, Statenpoort, which now houses an interesting museum with paintings and exhibits concerning the VOC (United East Indian Company). The VOC was a very powerful, almost monopolistic trading company in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

MONDAY: Hoorn – Enkhuizen, 27 km; visit to Zuiderzeemuseum, sailing to Urk.

Departure on the bikes to Enkhuizen, partly along the dike, with wide views, and partly through the long-stretched villages of De Streek, with beautiful houses, farms and gardens. In the past Enkhuizen was one of the main VOC cities, which is still visible by its many old façades. The centre surrounding the old defence tower called Dromedaris (Dromedary) still breathes the atmosphere of the famous old days.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was Enkhuizen's heyday. In those days the city had the largest herring fleet of the Netherlands and one of the VOC Chambers resided here. The West Indian Company was represented in Enkhuizen as well. Trading with the Baltic states, England, West Africa and Indonesia made Enkhuizen a very prosperous city. The city had 25,000 inhabitants, quite a few more than nowadays. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the decline set in. The wars with England and the growing importance of Amsterdam as a trading city made Enkhuizen one of the dead towns on the Zuiderzee.

Nowadays **Enkhuizen** is the home port of part of the 'brown fleet', former cargo sailing ships that now carry passengers.



Enkhuizen houses the Zuiderzeemuseum. In this museum approximately 150 original buildings which used to be around the entire former Zuiderzee have been brought together here. Various houses, farms and barns are conveniently laid out on a small scale and thus form a small village of its own. The general theme is living from, with and on the water. The museum will give you a good picture of the places you are visiting during this week's trip. All kinds of activity are going on in this 'village'. The

sheep are bleating at the 'town farm', the torn sails of the fishing boats are being repaired at the sail loft and the barber is ready to use his razor. You may start up a conversation with a fisherman from Urk who was grounded after an accident at sea or have a cup of tea with a villager from Zoutkamp. The smell, wind and environment give you the impression of being one hundred years back in time. The museum has definitely succeeded in its aim to reflect the atmosphere of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Older visitors will recognize their grandparents' farm – it will not have been the same one, but they, too, may have spent the summer nights in the upstairs room, below where in wintertime the cows would be. The history of the Zuiderzee is not really that old!

In the afternoon, you sail to Urk, another former Zuiderzee town. The mainstay of the town's economy has always been fishing, and the products of the sea coming in through Urk's harbor continue to be exported widely, although today Urk's fishing boats must travel greater distances to gather them than was required in most historical periods. Religious life has also traditionally been very important to Urk's inhabitants, with active, conservative congregations of the Dutch Reformed denominations playing key roles in the life of the community.



TUESDAY: Urk, sailing to Genemuiden or Zwartsluis. Round trip Giethoorn and Weerribben 45/61

The area of the Wieden and the Weerribben adds up to the most important marshland of north-western Europe. Nowadays reed is the main product here, as is obvious by the large number of thatched roofs. De Wieden is old peat bogs land, where lakes came into being as a result of peat cutting. You cycle through the famous village of **Giethoorn**, with a little irony



sometimes called 'Venice of the North'.

Like in the other peat villages that you pass through all transport of goods and human beings would be carried out on little boats, called 'punters'. These are small, flat-bottomed boats, and then propelled by manpower, but nowadays also by outboard motors (as such called 'whispering boats'). In Giethoorn even cows are transported on these punters. The bridges across the narrow canals are high, to allow the boats stacked with hay to sail underneath. Giethoorn started as a settlement

of peat cutters in about 1280. Today the beauty of the villages in this peat land can also be seen from the bicycle tracks, with their numerous little bridges.

In the longer route you also pay a visit to the Weerribben, a large National Park, dominated by water and reed. A rich faunal variety can be found here: the purple heron, black tern, great bittern, reed warbler, Savi's warbler, golden oriole, copper as well as mammals such as deer, fox and otter. In the visitors' centre there is a permanent exposition about this area. Both Giethoorn and the Weerribben offer you the possibility of making a boat trip.



Once back on the 'high land' with its green pastures, wooded banks and old farms you cycle back to Genemuiden or Zwartsluis.

WEDNESDAY: Genemuiden or Zwartsluis – sailing to Roggebotsluis – cycling to Harderwijk, 45 km. It is possible to shorten the route.

The ship will take you to Roggebotsluis. Here today's trip starts off in the forests of the 'new land', polder land created in 1957. You will cycle about 6 metres below sea level.

Back on the 'old land' you call at the fortified town of Elburg. As far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century this was a lively trading port. Just like Kampen and Harderwijk it was a member of the Hanseatic League, an organisation of merchants from north-western Europe in the late middle Ages). The lay-out of fortified Elburg makes one think of a chessboard, surrounded by city walls and a moat. For those who like to cycle a little less today there is the option of leaving the ship only at Elburg. From here you continue along the former Zuiderzee shore. If the weather is nice you may want to go for a swim.



The last part of the route will take you through the large woods of the Veluwe, with its undulating landscape a remainder of the Ice Age. The Veluwe is the largest connected nature reserve of the Netherlands, totally consisting of sandy soil. Should you take the larger route you will see more of this region and pass through some heaths.

Harderwijk is, like Elburg, a Hanseatic town. Its charming boulevard, the little beaches and the largest mammal zoo (including dolphins) of Europe make Harderwijk an important tourist attraction.



THURSDAY: Harderwijk – Spakenburg 27/46/59 km.

Today's itinerary first leads you through the Veluwe forests and then through a peaceful agricultural area. Then you have the choice of cycling to your destination via Nijkerk and the Zuiderzee dike or making a detour via Amersfoort.



If you do the latter a well laid-out bike trail will lead you to and through the city, thus taking you to the very centre of town in an easy way. **Amersfoort** is one of the oldest cities of the Netherlands and was granted a municipal charter as early as 1259. Much of its history has remained. Small canals, the 100 metres' tall Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe-Toren (Our Beloved Lady Tower), St Joris Church, the famous Koppelpoort (a city gate) and other attractions can be part of an interesting tour on foot. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Amersfoort was a city of

beer brewers. Since 1989 the new Amersfoort municipal brewery 'The Three Rings' has made beer once again in the old way, thus keeping the old brewing history of the city alive. There will be plenty of time for lunch and sightseeing here.

In the afternoon the trip continues along the Eem River, a small river flowing into the Eem Lake, west of Spakenburg. In spite of the enormous density of population of the province of Utrecht, you can still find green countryside here.

Following the dike you enter **Spakenburg** from the west. Spakenburg has always been a fishermen's port and now forms a kind of twin village with Bunschoten. Many wonderful wooden fishing boats are moored here and you may come across villagers in their traditional dress.

The 27 km option takes you all the way along the Zuiderzee shore. Another possibility is to sail the first part, pick up cycling near Nijkerk and then follow the route via Amersfoort.



FRIDAY: Spakenburg – Amsterdam, 47/60 km.

Today the route takes you through quiet polder land and a wooded area to one of the best-preserved fortified towns of the country, Naarden-Vesting.

In **Muiden** the **Muiderslot (Muider Castle)** can be visited; a medieval castle which is still in good condition. The castle is a square water fortress with round towers on each corner. Within the walls there is a large building with step-gables.



The Muiderslot was built in 1280 by Count Floris V, an immensely rich person ('stone rich' as we say in Dutch: in times when almost anything was built out of wood he could afford to have a stone castle built). The castle is situated on the spot where the Vecht flowed into the Zuiderzee, today's IJsselmeer. Nearby is Muiden with its picturesque harbour. In

Floris's days toll would be levied on passing ships by placing a chain across the river. After his death the Muiderslot was mainly occupied by castellans, governors of the castle looking after the it for their lords, i.e. bishops or landgraves. In the Eighty Years' War the castle was seized by William of Orange in 1577.

The furniture, utensils and paintings that can now be seen in the castle all date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In those days the writer Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft lived at the castle. Hooft was surrounded by a group of people of importance, called the 'Muiderkring' (Muider Circle).

During the French occupation the castle was used as a barracks for the French army. Since 1795 nobody lived in it any more and the castle started falling into decay. Restoration was taken up only in 1895, executed under the guidance of the well-known architect Pieter Cuypers.

The castle has a moat with a drawbridge. Outside the walls there is a plum orchard, which was already there in Hooft's days. The old decorative gardens and the functional gardens for kitchen use have been rehabilitated.



Winding roads along the little rivers Vecht and Gaasp will take you back to **Amsterdam**. A shorter way is also possible: from Muiden straight into town along the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal.

In the Middle Ages the Vecht was an important shipping route between the Zuiderzee, from where North-Western Europe could be reached, and the Rhine, giving access to what is now called Germany. Some of the castles on the Vecht built for strategical purpose are Nijenrode Castle and Muider Castle. The river itself was also part of the Holland Water Defence Line, an ingenious system of fortifications, sluice gates and areas that could

be inundated and which could serve as a defence line against attacks from the east on the province of Holland. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Golden Age, wealthy Amsterdam tradesmen had country houses built and renovated along the river Vecht.

At about 4 o'clock you will be back at the place you left on Sunday.

Time to hand in your bicycle and several hours ahead of you, to further explore the city of Amsterdam.

SATURDAY: Amsterdam, end of trip after breakfast