



Your Bike & Barge Tour

Island Hopping



WAD 2012



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The Dutch Wadden Islands Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog make up part of a large Wadden area that continues along the northern coast of Germany and the western coast of Denmark.

The Waddenzee (Wadden Sea) is the largest unbroken wetland area of The Netherlands and has a great biodiversity due to the mudflats, sand bars, tidal marshes and sands, but it also has a rich history.

Sailing over the Waddenzee and putting in at harbors with your barge will give you a fantastic impression of the diverse atmospheres of the different islands.

SATURDAY: Stavoren, boarding at 4 pm, round trip 20 km

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. The bicycles are distributed and you can make a round tour from **Stavoren**.



Stavoren was once a famous and prosperous Hanseatic town.

The statue of the legendary "Lady of Stavoren" at the entrance to the harbor reminds visitors of this fact.

The saga about this lady goes like this: a rich merchant's widow lived in a house in Stavoren with gold floors and silver walls. She owned more ships than all the other merchants of the town together and grew richer every day. In spite of her great wealth she was still not satisfied: she wanted to have the most precious thing on earth. She therefore ordered a captain to go find and get it for her. After a long search the captain returned from Danzig with his holds full of wheat, which seemed to him more valuable than gold. However, this was not what the lady thought. She furiously asked him: 'On which side did you load the grain?' 'On starboard side.' 'Then throw it into the sea on port side!' A passer-by heard her say this and told her she had better not have this done; should she ever be reduced to beggary she would definitely find wheat more valuable than gold. She then took off her gold ring from her finger and threw it far into the sea, adding: 'I poor? How dare you? This ring will return to my hand before I am ever left a pauper!' Then one day one of her servants brought her a fish for dinner. When cutting the fish on her plate she hit on something hard; it was her own gold ring. From then on the tide started to turn for the lady. Eventually her life ended in poverty.

The Vrouwenzand (Lady's Sand), a sandbank near Stavoren, is the place where people say the valuable cargo was thrown overboard. A grain-like vegetation is said to grow there - without any grains of corns in the ears.

Stavoren was a member town of the German Hanseatic League. This was a powerful association of trading towns that negotiated with the kings of Norway, Sweden and Denmark on behalf of the different member towns and tried to ensure that these nobles kept their promises.

Currently Stavoren is the busiest water sport area in Friesland thanks to its good location on the IJsselmeer and a good water connection with the Frisian lakes that are so well-visited, especially in the summer.

In the evening you dine on board, after which the plan for the next day and the routine for the rest of the week are explained.

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SUNDAY: Stavoren – sailing to Den Oever, round trip Wieringen 20/40 km

After sailing over the IJsselmeer you berth at Wieringen, an area that was an island for many centuries.

Over 150,000 years ago the Norwegian glaciers pushed up the boulder clay and other material to a great height, thus creating the hilly isle of Wieringen. The Vikings regarded the island as a safe place to bury a silver treasure here. The original inhabitants lived off the land and off the sea, or off both.



They developed a culture of their own on the island. Wieringen has a slightly undulating appearance, the roads are winding and the variety of wild flowers, bushes and trees make Wieringen even more friendly. The main colors on Wieringen are green (the meadows and roads lined with hedges), blue (the skies) and black-and-white (the contented cows in the fields).

The typical farms with their 'dakschoorstienen' (unique type of chimneys on the roofs) are characteristic for Wieringen. The winding Hoelmer Wierdijk reminds us of the days when seaweed cutting was a normal job. The seaweed was left to dry and then used as a filling for mattresses, but also to build dikes.

The past gets an extra dimension when you pay a visit to one of the old small cemeteries (e.g. the one in Stroe) or when you walk into an old church such as Michael's Church in Oosterland. In this church you can still see the sword of Bloys of Treslong, the 'watergeus' ('sea beggar') and pirate who paid a visit to Wieringen in 1572.

It is certain that several mediaeval villages around Wieringen have disappeared over time (north of Wieringen, now Waddenzee; on the western side, now Anna Paulowna Polder and Wieringerwaard; and south of Wieringen, now Wieringermeer Polder). In the southern part of the Wieringermeer the remains have been found of the mediaeval village of Gonsende or Gawijzend, of which it is known to have been swallowed by the sea around 1350.



Without any doubt there once were more villages and one of them, maybe even the largest, was called Grebbe. The location most mentioned for its position is Balgzand, in the Waddenzee, halfway between Wieringen and Den Helder. Other sources claim a place north of Vatroop on the Breehorn to have been Grebbe. Up to this day potsherds from the Middle Ages are found in this part of the Waddenzee.

On your bike you can do a round, clockwise trip from Den Oever over the former island and see all the aspects. You will also ride through the polder area bordering Wieringen. This area contrasts strikingly with Wieringen: vast farmlands, but also forests planted in areas where the seabed was not fertile enough.

MONDAY: Den Oever – sailing to Texel, round trip Texel 40/50/60 km

The isle of Texel, which is one municipality, is the largest of the Dutch Waddeneilanden (Wadden islands). The average length of Texel is twenty kilometers and the average width eight kilometers.



The first inhabitants of Texel may date from the Middle Stone Age (80,000-45,000 BC). In 1415 the island was granted a municipal charter, which made it the largest official city of the country, in the matter of surface.

Texel is highly appreciated by bird-watchers. In springtime about 80 different types of birds breed here, mainly in the dune areas, and all in all about 300 different species have been found on Texel.

As early as in the 16th and 17th centuries the Texel sheep's cheese was well-known abroad. This was not only the usual white cheese but in particular a special, green cheese. The cheese was green as a result of the juice of boiled sheep droppings, which was stirred through the milk. However, because of hygienic reasons this was forbidden by the Dutch Food Inspection Department in 1930.

Texel is the most northerly place in Europe where spoonbills breed. These elegant white birds feel at home on the island due to the absence of their greatest enemy; the fox. The largest spoonbill colony in the Netherlands is located in the nature reserve De Geul. These beautiful birds can be watched from nearby here, from the early spring onwards



TUESDAY: Texel: Roundtrip 40/50/60 km.



A tour around this island with its numerous cycle tracks is well worth the effort. The largest village on the island is Den Burg, which has a rural character with its circles of roads around the old church. You will find most of the shops on the island in this village. The local museum gives a good impression of island life and is housed in a building dating from 1599.

De Koog, one of the oldest villages, is the principal bathing resort and is only a stone's throw from the widest beach on the island. The nature centre nearby is a rescue centre for seals and gives a lot of information about the flora and fauna to be found on Texel.

De **Cocksdorp**, the northernmost village, is entered through a tunnel of interlocking tree branches, which gives it a unique character. If you cycle to the most extreme northerly tip of the island you may be able to see Vlieland, the next island making up the chain of Wadden islands. On the way up north you can pay a visit to the Slufter, a nature reserve open to the sea and the rhythm of the tides.

The villages of **Den Hoorn**, **Oosterend** and **De Waal** have escaped modern architectural influences and are all officially protected. In Den Hoorn some of the old 'Commandeurs' dwellings have been preserved. These were the houses belonging to the captains of the whaling ships that sailed from Texel. Texel's oldest church is situated in Oosterend. In an old barn in De Waal there is a farm museum called the Wagenmuseum (cart museum). De Waal already existed in the 12th century and was on the coastline until 1613. Then the Waalenburg Polder was drained and since then De Waal has been in the centre of the island.

Oudeschild used to be the main port of entry for Texel, but in 1962 a ferry connection was established between the mainland and the southernmost tip of the island ('t Horntje). Nowadays only fishing boats, sailing boats and boats working on marine engineering projects use the picturesque harbor of Oudeschild. Here too, the maritime museum is housed in two old granaries and next to this museum you can find the Juttersmuseum (Beachcombers' Museum) in a shed originally used for storing sea ware.

If the weather is fine you might like to combine a cycling tour of the island with a nice rest on one of the wide, clean and very peaceful beaches.

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WEDNESDAY: Texel, sailing to Terschelling - round trip 20/40 km

Terschelling is the second largest Wadden island and has a lot to offer in the way of beach, natural beauty, landscape, attractions, museums and cycle paths; it is certainly worthwhile spending two days here to ride around.

On both days you ride a route that shows you all sides of the island: the wide dunes area with access to the beaches, the sheltered area behind the dunes, the cheerful villages with various attractions, the quiet, expansive polders and the Waddendijkpad (Wadden dike path) with fantastic views of the Wadden.

The 'kooibosjes' (cage woods) are typical of Terschelling: small primeval forests between boggy meadows and plots of alder thickets.



The valuable nature reserve the Bosplaat or Boschplaat sits on the eastern part of Terschelling and is nearly ten kilometres in length. The reserve originated after a 'stuifdijk' ('drifting dike') was made here between 1932 and 1936, thus permanently connecting a formerly separate sandbank with Terschelling. A rich mudflat vegetation grew up on the sand bar, with wide stretches of sea lavender (*Limonium Vulgare*), 'zeealsem' (*Seriphidium Maritimum*, a plant similar to sagebrush), *Atriplex Pedunculatus* and many other salt-loving plants. Many birds nest on the Boschplaat, such as the spoonbill, great tern, northern tern, common tern, little tern, the lesser black-headed gull, great black-headed gull, herring gull, common gull, great cormorant and other types of birds. The Boschplaat has been given the status of European Nature Reserve.

In the dunes you come across the cranberry. This plant, originally from America, came to the island when a barrel containing the berries was washed ashore in 1845. The locals still call the cranberry 'Pieter Sipkes heather', after the finder of the berry, Pieter Sipkes Cupido. The cranberry ran wild and was discovered by botanist Fransiscus Holtema in 1868 in a hollow in the dunes called Studentenplak. Terschelling is the birthplace of Willem Barentsz who attempted to discover India in 1596 via the North Pole; on his third attempt he got stuck and had to spend the winter on Nova Zembla. The famous lighthouse (the oldest in The Netherlands) is the Brandaris, built in 1594 to replace the St. Brandariskapel (St Brandaris Chapel) that was swallowed up by the sea.

Terschelling has a very active choir life. Art-lovers especially like the island because of the annual theatre festival 'Oerol'. This festival was started in 1981 by Joop Mulder, in those days owner of the 'Stoep' pub in Midsland. By now Oerol has developed into one of the biggest theatre festivals on location in Europe.

THURSDAY: Terschelling, round trip 20/40 km

When talking about the 'Wadden' (the Flats) we usually refer to the Waddenzee, the mudflat area of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark and the row of islands belonging to this area. But 'wadden' or mudflats literally means stretches of land outside the dikes that are flooded at high tide – which indeed is the case for the Wadden.

The Waddenzee is the largest mudflat area in the world. Off the African west coast there is also a mudflat area, but this is much smaller in size than the Dutch Flats. The flats continuously change as great amounts of sand are moved with the tides from one place to another. They have a large variety of flora and fauna.



Proportionally a large part of the water in the flats comes from the North Sea, but partly it is from the discharge of the rivers Eems, Elbe and Weser and from the IJsselmeer.

The area does not only consist of water, but also of sandbanks, marshes and gullies. The gullies are the lower-lying parts that are always under water. The parts of the flats that are mostly above the water level are called 'kwelders', tidal marshes. The actual flat is located between the mainland and the Wadden islands.

The enormous force of the water sweeps parts of the island away on the west coasts of the Wadden islands, whereas new land is added on the eastern sides. In other words, the islands move, which has resulted in their nickname of 'walking islands'.

The rich variety of life forms a unique ecosystem, with vegetable plankton and zoo plankton, seals and many species of fish and birds. This ecosystem had a food chain of its own and any disturbance of the food chain, whether created by man or by natural disasters, would have great effects on the whole ecosystem of the flats.



At low tide it is possible to go walking on the mud flats, in particular in late spring, in summer and in autumn. Accompanied by a guide there is a wide range of routes that can be taken.

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FRIDAY: Terschelling – sailing to Makkum, cycling to Stavoren 33/40/45 km

After visiting the oldest earthenware factory in The Netherlands, the 'Koninklijke Tichelaar Makkum', known worldwide for its earthenware and tiles, you cycle over narrow paths and roads right through the Frisian country 'De Greidhoek' (the meadow area): large expanses of pasture land with cows, birds and hay-making farmers and here and there a lonely farmhouse. On your way you pass two compact old towns with rich trade histories, **Workum** and **Hindeloopen**. Both places offer several interesting museums and attractions and in the summer it is pleasantly busy here. Take the time to have a good look around.



Workum used to be a thriving harbour town. The two canals in the centre of town have been filled in and now form a lovely marketplace. There is an earthenware factory here too, that still supplies the real Frisian farm earthenware in green and brown.

The Jopie Huisman Museum is a special museum. Jopie Huisman was born in 1922 in the town of Workum. In his daily life he was a rag-and-bone man, but at the same time he improved himself on producing realistic paintings. His subjects always had something to do with his main job. Rags, old shoes and other discarded things were depicted by him in an arresting way.

Besides he also made portraits of people among his acquaintances. Huisman never sold his paintings, but would give them away to people who he thought deserved them! In 1986 he founded his own museum in his place of birth, Workum. He died in 2000.

You continue on to **Hindeloopen**. Hindeloopen is situated on a peninsula in the former Zuiderzee and is very well-known for its woodcutting and painting crafts, its beautiful captains' homes and traditional costume. Hindeloopen is great to visit on foot. You cross narrow bridges and walk through small passageways.

After Hindeloopen you first ride along the dike, later through pasture land, until familiar territory appears: **Stavoren**. This is where your bike trip ends.



SATURDAY: Stavoren, end of the trip after breakfast