

Your Bike & Barge Tour

Southern Relax Tour



FZR 2012



SOUTHERN RELAX TOUR

Bulb growing and painting; two subjects in which the Dutch reached mastery. The paintings of Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Van Gogh, and the spectacular bulb fields in the province Zuid-Holland: two faces of one and the same enjoyable and relaxing tour.

SATURDAY: Amsterdam, boarding at 14.00 hours:

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.

At 15.00 pm (at least) the ship will sail to Vianen.

Amsterdam:

In the 12th century Amsterdam was no more than a modest settlement at the mouth of the river Amstel, with open connection to the sea. In those days fishermen and craftsmen built a dam in the Amstel (now the site of the National Monument) and Amstel-re-damme was born. Amsterdam was granted a municipal charter in 1275 and has since expanded continually. In the 17th and 18th century Amsterdamers were the most prosperous Europeans. The famous rings of canals were dug in the Golden Age, the 17th century. Powerful merchants had their abundantly ornamented 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), Van Gogh Museum and off course the Anne Frank House.

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

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

The palace on Dam Square is sometimes called the eighth Wonder of the World as it was built on 13,659 piles.

Did you know that:

- there are 222 trams, 277 buses, 106 underground trains and eight 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?



Vianen



Vianen received city rights in 1336. Vianen thrived under the counts of Brederode, who acquired its lordship through marriage early in the 15th century. It formed a self-proclaimed sovereign seignory until 1795, including Vianen, Lexmond, Hei- en Boeicop and Meerkerk. During the Middle Ages, as a "free city," Vianen could be a haven for felons and escaped serfs. Of the three castles built during the town's history, Castle Batestein was said to be one of the most beautiful in the Netherlands. Its only remnants are a 17th century brick gate and water-pump. Remnants of the old city wall are visible girdling parts of the old downtown.

In case it is not possible to moore here, the ship will sail to Schoonhoven/Nieuwpoort, a nice tour with beautiful sights in the river.

At dinnertime the programme for the next day and the routine for the rest of the week will be explained.

SUNDAY: Vianen-Gouda 40 km

From Vianen the cycle route goes along the river Lek to Schoonhoven.

Schoonhoven

A visit to Schoonhoven means getting to know the rich past of the centuries-old traditional silversmith craft.



After visiting Schoonhoven, you cycle along the river " de Vlist" to Gouda.

The river '**Vlist**' is a small river that flows from Schoonhoven to Haastrecht where she ends in the Hollandsche IJssel. The Vlist is about 10 km and is a so-called peat river. It was formerly used as a basin for the polders surrounding this river. You could find many mills in this area. Today the river more or less has a tourist function. In particular cyclists and hikers use the area for their tours.

Today you end in **Gouda**, cheese city. Whoever says Gouda not only thinks immediately of cheese, pipes, treacle waffles and earthenware, but also of stained glass windows, a picturesque town hall and romantic canals. Gouda is a real old Dutch town with a virtually intact town centre.

The 123-metre long St. Janskerk (St. John's Church) with its world-famous stained-glass windows (closed on Sunday), the fabulous Gothic Town Hall and the Waag (Weigh House) are well worth a visit. The Gouda museums are the Catharina Gasthuis, formerly the municipal hospital, the pipe and earthenware museum the Moriaan and the Verzetsmuseum Zuid-Holland (Resistance Museum).

Also visit the Cultural and Harbour Quarter with Weeshuisplein (Orphanage Square), the Catharinatuin (Catherina Garden, various hofjes (almshouses) and Museumhaven Gouda (Gouda Harbour Museum).



MONDAY: Gouda – Rotterdam – Delft 40 km

From Gouda you cycle past scenic polders via Kinderdijk to Rotterdam. Kinderdijk has the largest group of windmills in the Netherlands. The windmills at Kinderdijk were still actively used until 1950. These days, a large pumping station is responsible for controlling the water level in the polder. Here you can visit a windmill.

In Rotterdam you embark and from there the ship takes you to Delft.

Delft is famous for its pottery, the 'Delft blue'. The painter Johannes Vermeer has made the town famous, but it is also known as the town of William of Orange. William of Orange lies buried in the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft, the church where members of the House of Orange are still buried.

Some attractions in Delft are the Botanical Gardens, the Prinsenhof (Prince's Residence) and the Tabaks Historic Museum (Tobacco Historical Museum). The Botanical Gardens are an oasis of peace, colour, scent and silence, with various walking routes showing you various aspects of plant life in the garden.



The Prinsenhof Museum is housed in the former St Agatha's monastery. In 1572 William of Orange chose the convent as one of his residences. It was from here that he led the revolt against the Spanish tyranny of Holland. He was murdered on the steps of the Prinsenhof on July 10, 1584, by Balthazar Gerards, a Spanish sympathiser. Two bullet holes in the wall of the stairs bear witness to this event.

TUESDAY: Delft - Katwijk - Leiden, 40 km

From Delft we cycle in the direction of The Hague, through the Haagse Bosch, a large park, and past the Royal Huis ten Bosch Palace.

A tranquil cycle path through the dunes leads you to Wassenaarse Slag. Here some remains of the Atlantikwall can still be seen. Five bunkers are connected by nearly 3,000-foot-long brick tunnels. Now the underground network serves as a bat reserve.



The Atlantikwall was a 1,700 miles' defence line, running from Norway via Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France to the border with Spain. This defence line, which was never completed, consisted of bunkers, canons and mine fields. At some places the bunkers are still there, such as in Zandvoort, Scheveningen, Oostende (Belgium) and Normandy (France).

Further through the dunes, to **Katwijk aan Zee**, an old fishing village. The old inhabitants of Katwijk still speak their own dialect, 'Kattuks'.

Following the course of the Oude Rijn (Old Rhine) we cycle to **Leiden**.



Leiden originated around 800 AD as a market place at the confluence of the Old and New Rhine rivers, the Vliet River and the Mare ('Leyten' means 'at the waters'). For a long time it was the second city after Amsterdam. It was the centre of the textile industry in medieval times. A well-known episode from the history of Leiden is the siege of 1574 by the Spanish. These were finally driven away after dikes had been broken through and a Watergeuzen (see Rotterdam) fleet had come to help.

The relief of Leiden is still celebrated every year on 3 October. In 1575 Leiden was given the right to establish a university as a reward for the courage shown during the siege. It is also the birthplace of Rembrandt (van Rijn!).

Leiden boasts 14 museums, including the Rijksmuseum for Anthropology with many priceless foreign objects, the Municipal Museum (Lakenhal, 1640) including works by Dou, Steen, Rembrandt and Van Goyen, the Rijksmuseum of Antiquities with Egyptian antiquities. The Hortus Botanicus (Botanical Garden), a 400-year-old garden with innumerable exotic plants and trees, is certainly worth seeing. In the centre of town you can go shopping or enjoy sitting on an outdoor terrace on the water's edge.

The ship is moored near the Zijlpoort, a gate that once formed part of the city walls.

WEDNESDAY: Leiden – round tour Kagerplassen, 30 km

The Dutch lakes have not always existed. As a result of dying down of a virgin forest fenland came into being. Much later the inhabitants dug out the peat and thus created open water. The direct connection between these waters and the open sea, via the Haarlemmermeer Lake and the IJ, caused a continual erosion of the lake borders. Lower-lying parts submerged and eventually a large surface of water was the result. Several areas in this region owe their names to the times of the open connection with the IJ Lake. One example is the Hellegatspolder, Hell's Hole Polder, where in the old days many a ship went down. In the 17th century there was a lot of activity around the lakes, such as agriculture, cattle-breeding and peat-cutting, but also shipbuilding. In the 20th century tourism strongly grew in importance in this region, aquatic sports associations were founded and the number of marinas and camping sites grew. For cyclists, hikers and sunbathers there are various possibilities in this lake district. Your cycling tour takes you along windmills, meadows, farms, picturesque villages and, of course, a lot of water. Little ferries take you across to the next village or island. When the weather is warm and sunny many locals try and find some cooling off on or near the water. There are several beaches and lawns for sunbathing close to the water.

For nature lovers, too, there is a lot to be enjoyed. The Kagerplassen (Kager Lakes), Braassem and Wijde Aa are part of the Holland-Utrecht peat and meadowland, an ultra-Dutch landscape of international fame. In springtime the marigolds dye the meadows yellow. This is also the breeding-season of the lapwing, the godwit, the redshank and all sorts of ducks. The brown marsh harrier likes to breed in the reedy borders of the islands. Only after all the birds have hatched the grass is mown. Quite some undertaking, since all haymaking machines and tractors are taken across by ferry. And after mowing all the equipment, as well as the hay, must be taken back again. Discover and enjoy the many aspects of the Kaag and Braassem region.



Or you choose to visit Leiden by yourself.

Circular tour Leiden, with visit to Lakenhal



In Leiden you can visit De Lakenhal (Clothmakers' Hall) where twenty of the best-known paintings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam are exhibited, painted in the Golden Age and the Renaissance Period by artists then living in Leiden. The Municipal Museum De Lakenhal is located in a beautiful historical building from 1640. It was opened to the public as a museum in 1874. However, until 1800 it had served a totally different purpose: this is where the famous Leiden cloth was appraised and this is where the governors and the Syndic of the Cloth Guild would meet.

The Lakenhal shows you the typical Dutch city life from the 16th century to the present day. Among other things the museum has a unique collection of (Leiden) silverware, engraved glass, pewter, tiles and paintings by famous Leiden citizens like Cornelis Engebrechtsz and Lucas van Leyden (16th century) and 17th century painters such as the young Rembrandt, Lievens, David Bailly, Jan Steen, Gerard Dou and the so-called 'Leidse Fijnschilders' among whom the Van Mieris family. Matching their own exhibition of the Dutch landscape (such as works by Van Goyen and Porcellis) the museum has an important collection of Dutch landscape paintings on loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst (Agency for the Visual Arts). The museum regularly organises exhibitions of old and modern art as well as of current historical subjects.

Leiden has always been a source of inspiration to many artists. In the 16th century Lucas van Leyden excelled and the golden Age added to the glory of the arts. In Rembrandt's Leiden days and the years to follow there may have been as many as 150 artists in the hustle and bustle of Leiden in those times. Many of them were to gain fame and their works can still be found in museums and catalogues all over the world. Leiden's artistic leaders were Rembrandt, Jan Steen, Jan Lievens, Gerrit Dou and other painters.

In Breestraat was the well-known artists' pub 'Elsevier'. Around 1650 Jan Steen owned an inn at Langeburg. We do not know who met whom in which pubs in those days.

After the 17th century Leiden had its celebrities, too. The most trendsetting person was perhaps Theo van Doesburg, founder of De Stijl (The Style) in his Galgewater studio.

THURSDAY: Leiden – Haarlem, 37 km

Through the dunes you will cycle to the beach and then to Haarlem.

The Haarlemmermeer (Haarlemmer Lake) is a former lake, but nowadays a polder. Schiphol Airport (Schiphol = Ships' Hell!) is situated here, some 13 feet below sea level, which makes it necessary to constantly pump water out to keep a dry soil. The water from the polder is pumped into a circular canal around the polder. From here the water is transported to the sea.

You may want to visit the 'Cruquiusgemaal', Cruquius Pumping Station, one of the three steam-powered pumping stations that drained the Haarlemmermeer between 1849 and 1852. Today it is a museum, giving a clear idea of the Dutch 'battle against the sea'.

Once in the city of **Haarlem** you make a short tour through the city to see some typical 'hofjes' (almshouses), old houses around a central courtyard, now usually housing elderly people. These 'hofjes' are definitely worth a visit.

Haarlem, which rendered its name to Harlem, New York, is a lively city with good shopping possibilities. At the same time there are many interesting 17th-century sights here. In particular the Grote Markt (Market Square) with the Great or St Bavo's Church (1390-1520) is well-known. Mozart was only one of the many St Bavo's organ players. Other famous attractions are the Frans Hals Museum (with many 17th-century paintings), the Town Hall, the Weigh House and the Vleeshal (Meat Hall, branch of the Frans Hals Museum, also with many 17th-century Dutch masters).

On the river Spaarne the oldest museum of the Netherlands can be found: Teyler's Museum, with drawings by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael and others.



The ship is berthed in the city centre, with a view of St Bavo's Church and with easy access to the Grote Markt with its many outdoor cafés.

FRIDAY: Haarlem – Amsterdam, 40 km



From Haarlem you sail to Spaarndam, a picturesque village on the edge of Haarlem, in the direction of Amsterdam. Spaarndam's name comes from the dam built in the Spaarne river to limit the danger of flooding from the sea. Here you can find the statue of Hansje Brinker on the IJdijk. Hansje is a character from an American novel, who saved the country from flooding by putting his finger in the dike.

The Buitenhuisen ferry takes you across the North Sea Canal and from there you cycle to the **Zaanse Schans**.

The Zaanse Schans, with its traditional weatherboard houses, warehouses and windmills may give you the feeling of stepping back into the 17th or 18th century. Yet this is no open air museum, but a lively neighborhood where people live and work. Among other things a cheese farm, a clog maker and an old bakery can be visited here.



SATURDAY: Amsterdam, end of the tour after breakfast.