

**Your Bike & Barge Tour**

**SOUTHERN TOUR**



**FVZ 2012**



### **Character of the tour**

You will be cycling through the green, cultural heart of the Netherlands, a tour with a lot of variety, which guarantees an impressive introduction to this area. One day you may be traversing the centres of Haarlem, Leiden or 16<sup>th</sup> century Delft, the next day you may peacefully cycle along the reedy borders of the rivers Lek or Vecht.

SATERDAY: Amsterdam, boarding at 4 pm; 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 modest settlement at the mouth of the river Amstel, directly connected to the sea. Amsterdam was granted a municipal charter around 1300 and has since expanded continuously. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century (the Golden Age) Amsterdamers were the most prosperous Europeans. It was in the Golden Age that the famous rings of canals were dug. 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, Rembrandtplein, 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 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?

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 dinner time.

## SUNDAY: Amsterdam – Haarlem, 47 km

The ship is left behind and a ferry takes you across the IJ where the cycling starts in the Amsterdam-Noord district. Soon you are out of the city, pedalling through the recreation area 't Twiske (a 650 hectares' area, one third of which is water) 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 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Yet this is no open air museum, but a lively neighbourhood where people live and work. Among other things a cheese farm, a clog maker and an old bakery can be visited here.

When you have spent enough time at the Zaanse Schans you continue on your way and cycle along the green-painted timber houses that are so typical for this area. After crossing the IJ once again you cycle to Spaarndam.

**Spaarndam** is a village on the river Spaarne. Here you can find the statue of Hansje Brinker on the IJdijk. Hansje is a character from an American novel that saved the country from flooding by putting his finger in the dike.

Further on to Haarlem.

**Haarlem** offers you many interesting sites from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Grote Markt (Market Square) with the Grote Kerk (Great Church) or St. Bavo Kerk ((1390-1520) is particularly well-known; Mozart is one of the people who once gave a concert here. The city of Haarlem (origin of the name Harlem in New York) is a lively and friendly place for shopping. Other famous places besides the St Bavo Church are the Town Hall, the Waag (weighing-house) and the Vleeshal (the former Meat Hall, now housing part of the Frans Hals museum with many 17<sup>th</sup>-century old masters).

On the Spaarne you may see and visit the oldest museum in the Netherlands: the Teylers Museum. It displays drawings by great artists such as Rembrandt, Michelangelo and Raphael. The almshouses, where many old people live, are certainly also worth a visit.

## MONDAY: Haarlem – through the dune area or via Keukenhof (April/May) – Leiden 38/48 km

Today starts with a short tour on bike through the centre of Haarlem, to have a better look at some of the city's typical almshouses. Upon departure from Haarlem you may cycle to the 'Cruquiusgemeal' (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'.

The Haarlemmermeer Polder, a former large lake, is 4.5 meters below sea level. The area is still continually pumped out to keep the land dry, the water being pumped into a canal which encircles the polder area. From the canal the water is transported to the sea. Schiphol (Ships' Hell!), the Dutch national airport, is situated in this polder.

In summer you now cycle through the dunes to the beach, in springtime you can cycle through the bulb field area to the Keukenhof.

The Keukenhof is a 32 hectares' park where every spring (March-May) the very best and most beautiful bulb flowers are shown to the world. The Keukenhof has become one of the best-known places of our country and is now one of the most-photographed sites in the world. In the neatly laid-out fields over 7,000,000 daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and other flowers can be seen.



The night is spent in **Leiden**.

Leiden is a historic city with many little courtyards, façades, and historical buildings built between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Leiden, meaning 'built on waters', came into existence around 800 AD as a market place at the confluence of the rivers Old and New Rhine, the Vliet and the Mare. It was a centre for the mediaeval linen industry. For a long time it was second only to Amsterdam in importance. A well-known episode of Leiden's history is the Spanish occupation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1574 the Spanish siege was eventually broken as a result of a deliberate inundation and the assistance of the Protestant fleet called the 'Geuzenvloot'. This fact is still celebrated annually on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. As a reward for its courage in face of the Spaniards, Leiden was given the right to found a university in 1575. Leiden is also the city where Rembrandt van Rijn was born.

There are 14 museums in the town: the State Museum for Cultural Anthropology with many valuable exotic exhibits; the Municipal Museum (the Lakenhal, 1640), which houses works by many famous Dutch painters such as Dou, Steen, Rembrandt and van Goyen; the State Museum of Archaeology with, among other artefacts, a well-stocked Egyptian wing. The famous 400-year-old Hortus Botanicus (Horticultural Garden) with its countless exotic plants and trees is also well worth a visit. The town centre has many shops to browse through and many outdoor cafés along the waterfront. The ship is moored near the Zeilpoort.

#### TUESDAY: Leiden – Delft, 49 km

You leave the city in a southerly direction and cycle along the Vliet canal. In Voorschoten you turn westwards towards the coastline. At 'Wassenaarse Slag' you can take a break on the beach.

**The Wassenaarse Slag** is an entrance to the beach near the Dutch town of Wassenaar. The coastline is over 8 km. long. The beaches can be reached through the Meijendelse Slag on the southern end and the Wassenaarse Slag in the northern direction (or through Katwijk aan Zee, the Zuidduinen and then the beach).

At the Wassenaarse Slag you will still find some remains of the **Atlantikwall** from the Second World War. These underground bunkers can not be visited, but are the homes of large numbers of bats. The bunkers are connected through corridors with an height of 1.80 m. and a width of appr. 1 m. The length of the remaining corridors is appr. 900 m. During wintertime these bunkers are inhabited by many bats.

The route to Delft takes you along the water once again.

The old centre is well worth a visit. When the weather is clear the view from the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) is spectacular; a large part of the Southern Tour can be seen from here!

This is a well-conserved mediaeval city with canals, a magnificent town hall and a royal tomb in the Nieuwe Kerk.

It is here that the famous Delft Blue pottery originated. This distinctive blue and white pottery is still produced by hand.

By the way, Delft Pottery also exists in black and even in green, which is just as beautiful as the better-known blue and white variety. If there is enough time you can visit one of the Delft Blue factories.



There are numerous museums and other sites of interest in Delft. This is not only a city of culture but also a city of science. The Netherlands are known around the world for their water management projects. Most of these projects were designed here.

### WEDNESDAY: Visit to The Hague.

The city of The Hague has an international character with its wide avenues, parks and stately mansions.

Possible visits:

- Peace Palace (housing the International Court of Justice)
- the 'Binnenhof' with the 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'Ridderzaal' (Knights' Hall), seat of the Dutch Government and Parliament. Every third Tuesday of September the Queen's Speech is delivered in the Ridderzaal.



- 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, depicting 19<sup>th</sup>-century Scheveningen.
- Of the many royal palaces in The Hague only a few are still operational. You may see the Noordeinde Palace, where our Queen works and the Huis ten Bosch Palace, where she lives.



### THURSDAY: Delft – sailing to Rotterdam, fast ferry to Kinderdijk – cycling to Schoonhoven/Vianen, 44/52 km

The first part of today's route will be sailed through the centre of Rotterdam, thus giving you the best view of the modern architecture of this port. You're cycling day starts in Kinderdijk and then take you through the Alblasserwaard, situated in between rivers and showing you wide scenery of water and meadows. The many inundations and the slowly sinking surface made water management essential in this fenland. Canals and ditches were dug and windmills were constructed; of the latter nineteen remain today. Their job has nearly totally been taken over by electric pumping stations. After a visit to one of the mills you will continue on bike.



Via the 'storks' village' of Groot-Ammers you cross the river Lek and enter Schoonhoven renowned for its silver industry. In the Bartholomeus Church Olivier van Noort was buried, the first Hollander who made a trip around the world, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The bells in the little open tower of the town hall were cast out of his ship's cannons. On the square in front of the town hall a stone circle in the pavement reminds us of the place where once a witch was burnt.

The short route then mainly follows the Lek until Vianen; the somewhat longer route goes along the idyllic little river Vlist via Haastrecht to Oudewater. Here you can visit the 'Heksenwaag' (witches' weighhouse), where in the old days women were weighed and declared a witch if weighing too little. Then you cross the river and follow the dike to IJsselstein.

One more river crossing takes you into Vianen, a small, old, fortified town where we spend the night.

#### FRIDAY: Vianen – sailing to Breukelen - cycling to Amsterdam, 42 km

While having a breakfast cruise you pass through the dramatic locks in the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal. Disembarkation in Breukelen, the charming town that rendered its name to Brooklyn, the well-known New York district.

The final stretch takes you along meandering waterways and through smaller and larger villages. The diverse scenery of this route is very picturesque. On the river Vecht numerous 17<sup>th</sup>-century country houses for the upper middle class of those days can be seen. Elegant gazebos or 'teahouses' mark the corners of the spacious gardens on the water front.



You cycle through Vreeland, Loenen and Nieuwersluis. Loenen is definitely one of the most beautiful towns upon the Vecht. Nieuwersluis is mainly known for the Willem III Kazerne, a military detention place.

Almost without noticing you enter Amsterdam, following the Amstel River. The extensive network of bicycle paths ensures a relatively easy way back into the city, showing you some remarkable sites in the centre. Then it is time to say goodbye to your bike. Before the farewell dinner you may want to go for a walk in town.

At night there you may want to take a canal trip or go on a city walk through the centre of the city.

#### SATURDAY:

Amsterdam, End of the trip after breakfast.