Your first trip to the Netherlands

5 decisions to make before you book

A practical planning checklist

exploring the netherlands

helping you plan your perfect trip to the Netherlands

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A little help before you start

Planning your first trip to the Netherlands? You probably already have a few places on your list. Amsterdam, windmills, tulips, perhaps some of those lovely Dutch towns you've seen in photos.

But before you start booking hotels and activities, there are a few decisions worth making.

I'm Daniela, the writer behind Exploring the Netherlands. After living in the country for around 15 years and exploring it extensively, I've learned that a good trip often comes down to a few decisions you make before leaving home.

This checklist will help you make those decisions.

Let's get started.



01

When should you visit, and for how long?

The Netherlands is worth visiting throughout the year, but the experience can be quite different depending on when you go.

Spring is famous for its tulips, summer is a lovely time to explore the coast, and the weeks leading up to Christmas bring markets and winter festivities. Your travel dates will influence which places and activities make sense for your trip.

Don't plan your entire visit around one seasonal attraction, though. There's much more to discover, and plenty of places are enjoyable throughout the year.



01

Your checklist

- [ ] Choose your travel dates, taking seasonal attractions into account.
- [ ] Count your actual sightseeing days. Arrival and departure days rarely give you a full day to explore.
- [ ] Check whether the attractions you most want to visit will be open during your stay.
- [ ] Leave some flexibility in your plans. Dutch weather doesn't always cooperate.

Explore further

- Spring: Where to See Tulips in the Netherlands
- Summer: Dutch Summer by the Sea: Coastal Towns Worth Visiting
- Christmas: Christmas Markets in the Netherlands

02

What do you really want to see?

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is trying to fit too much into your trip.

The Netherlands may look small on a map, but travelling between places still takes time. You'll enjoy your visit much more if you decide what matters most to you before putting together your route.

And remember, there's a whole country to discover beyond Amsterdam.

Daniela's Tip

Don't choose places simply because they're popular. A day exploring a smaller Dutch city or walking through a national park can be just as memorable as visiting a famous attraction.



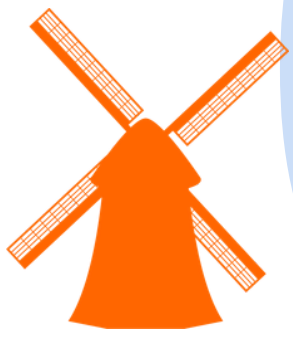
02

Your checklist

- [ ] Write down the three experiences or places you most want to include.
- [ ] Decide what interests you most: cities, museums, historic towns, nature, the coast, or a mixture.
- [ ] Look for places outside Amsterdam that match those interests.
- [ ] Mark your choices on a map to see which ones are close together.
- [ ] Separate your must-sees from places you'd visit only if you have extra time.

Explore further

- The Most Beautiful Places in the Netherlands
- The National Parks of the Netherlands



03 Where should you stay, and how will you get around?

You don't necessarily need to change hotels every time you visit another city.

The Netherlands has an extensive public transport network, making it possible to explore many places from one base. However, depending on your itinerary, staying in two locations might save you some travelling time.

The important thing is to check the connections before booking your accommodation.

Daniela's Tip

A hotel in the heart of Amsterdam isn't always the most convenient choice. Depending on your plans, somewhere with a good train connection might work better.



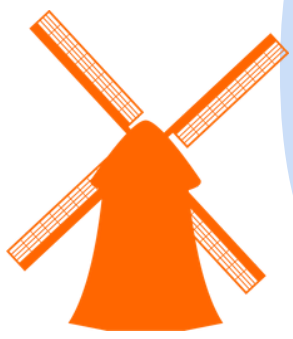
Your checklist

- [ ] Decide if one base is enough or if splitting your stay makes more sense.
- [ ] Check the journey from your accommodation to the places you want to visit, not just the distance between cities.
- [ ] Compare accommodation near train stations or other convenient transport connections.
- [ ] Decide if you'll mainly use public transport or need a rental car for part of your trip.
- [ ] Consider the time spent checking out, moving luggage, and checking into another hotel.

Explore further

- Where to Stay in Amsterdam
- How to Use Public Transport in the Netherlands

You can also compare accommodation options here.



04 How much can you realistically fit into one day?

It's tempting to create a long list of attractions for every day. But remember that sightseeing takes more time than the actual visit.

You need to get there, find your way around, stop for lunch, and occasionally just enjoy where you are.

When planning a day trip, check the journey from door to door. A train ride might take only 30 minutes, but reaching the station and getting to your first attraction will add to that time.

A realistic itinerary gives you time to experience a place instead of constantly rushing to the next one.



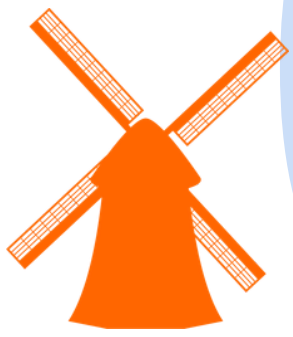
04

Your checklist

- [ ] Group nearby attractions together instead of crossing the country several times in one day.
- [ ] Allow time to travel between places, including walks to and from stations.
- [ ] Choose one main activity for each day, then add smaller stops if time allows.
- [ ] Check how long museums and other attractions typically take to visit.
- [ ] Leave some free time for unexpected discoveries or a change of plans.

Explore further

- Day Trips from Amsterdam
- Museums in Amsterdam



05 What should you book before you leave?

Once you've decided when you're travelling, where you're staying, and what you'd like to see, it's time to make the important reservations.

You don't need to book every hour of your trip. But some attractions use timed-entry tickets, and popular activities can sell out.

Book the experiences that matter most to you first, then plan the rest of your days around them. That gives you a structure without turning your holiday into a rigid timetable.



05

Your checklist

- [ ] Check the passport, visa, and other entry requirements that apply to your nationality.
- [ ] Book your accommodation once you've settled on your route.
- [ ] Identify attractions that require advance reservations or timed-entry tickets.
- [ ] Check transport options and whether any journeys need to be booked ahead.
- [ ] Save your tickets, hotel details, and important addresses where you can access them offline.

Useful resources

- NetherlandsWorldwide for official travel and entry information
- NS for Dutch train journeys
- 9292 for public transport connections
- GetYourGuide to browse tours and activities

Ready to plan your Netherlands trip?

You've made the five decisions that will shape your trip. Now comes the enjoyable part: putting everything together.

Start with the places you're most excited about, build a route that makes sense, and leave yourself enough time to enjoy them.

And if you'd like a ready-made starting point, I've also created a 10-day itinerary for the Netherlands, with a day-by-day route and practical travel tips.

You can follow it or adapt it to your own interests.

Explore the 10-Day Netherlands Itinerary

Happy travels!

Daniela

Disclosure:
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