



Cultural Identity

In the Netherlands, as well as in other countries in the world, there are lots of discussions about 'national identity' and 'the feeling of homecoming'. So now and then it seems that we are a polarized country, but luckily there are more things that are typical for the Netherlands and its inhabitants. In this chapter you will find out which aspects belong to the general knowledge of the Dutch.

History and religion

More than half (54 percent) of Dutch people aged 15 or over do not consider themselves to belong to a religious movement. In 2019, 20 percent of the Dutch considered themselves to be members of the Catholic Church, 15 percent were Protestant, 5 percent Muslim and 6 percent belonged to another religious group.

Habits and attitude

The polder model is seen as a typical Dutch form of consultation economy and consensus model, which goes back to the Middle Ages. The first Dutch landscapes, also called 'polders' arose in the 11th century AD. During this time, dikes were already placed around an area filled with water, after which this area was pumped empty to gain extra land. The term 'polder model' comes from the cooperation that was necessary to keep the water out of the new polders. In periods of flooding, nobles and citizens were forced to work together to stop the flood. Nowadays the polder model is the name given to the Dutch consensus model in which employers, trade unions and government sit down to negotiate about working conditions and wages.

Values and believes

The Netherlands is a democracy, and our society is based on the principles of the rule of law. This means that everyone has the same rights and that everyone must stick to the same rules. In the Netherlands, freedom, equality and solidarity play a central role in society. These values can only be maintained if everyone contributes to society actively. Participation is extremely important in the Netherlands.

Language

In the top 5 of what people consider most typical of the Netherlands, the Dutch language is proudly on top. Dutch is the main official language of the Netherlands. Dutch Sign Language (NGT) and the Frisian language in the province of Fryslân are also both recognized as official languages by law in the Netherlands.

VOC

An important influence on our language is our so-called VOC mentality. Being a small country where trade is very important, our children are taught languages such as English, French, Spanish and German from an early age. No wonder our language is so full of expressions or words that come from other languages. An enrichment for some, an abomination for language purists.

11 Stedentocht

Almost everybody in the Netherlands knows the 11 stedentocht "11 city tour". The famous tour is an ice skatingtour of almost 200km that passes 11 cities in Friesland. Friesland is the province in the upper part of the Netherlands. The tour is starting in Leeuwarden and is ending in Leeuwarden. When the ice is thick enough, complete holland is turning crazy to be part of the 11 stedentocht. The attendees are from the whole Netherlands, plus some from Belgium and Germany as well. From the first edition in 1907 till the last one took in place in 1997, the tour was rode 15 times. Besides the iceskating, there is also one on by bike, motorbike, oldtimer cars, steps and even one with triathlon.

Fierljeppen



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Fierljeppen is a traditional sport in the Dutch province of Fryslân. Farmers of Fryslân were leaping with a long pole over the waterway to access different plots of land, because the Netherlands has many waterways.

Back in the days, it was normal for the Frisian farmers to access all their land by pole.

How do you fierljep by yourself? You should have a long pole between the 8 and 13 metres with a flat round plate on the bottom to prevent it from sinking into the ground/mud.

You should sprint to the pole, jump and grab it, then climbing so high as possible to the top and lean forward with your body so you are on the opposite side of the water.

Kaatsen

Kaatsen is a ball game with 2 teams of 3 players. They play against each other on grass, where one team takes care of the service and the other party takes care of the return stroke from the perk. The rules are quite difficult to explain. But it is the one of the oldest games in the Netherlands. Originally it stems from the north of France (jeu de paume). There are many variations nowadays, like fives in England and Pallone col braccide.

Skûtsjesilen

Skûtsjesilen is synonymous with sailing competitions with old cargo ships, flat-bottomed boats that were built at the beginning of the last century to bring peat, manure and other cargo to the farms. For this, the ships had to enter shallow channels. That is why the ships were made long and flat. When there were competitions, and the skipper could earn a few extra cents, all household goods were removed from the skûtsje and put on shore.

The competition is taking place each summer in different kind of cities and villages in Fryslân. Only 14 skûtsjes can join the game and if you want to be a captain, you should have 7 or more years' experience in sailing with a skûtsje.

It is a big happening each summer where a lot of Frisian and Dutch people come over to see the skûtsjes sailing. There are a lot of people who see the game from the water in their own boat.

Arts and crafts

Many Dutch artists have become world famous throughout the years. Rembrandt and Van Gogh are two of the most well-known Dutch painters of all time but these days the Dutch are especially known for their DJs, especially by the younger people.

The arts and culture is something that the Dutch government tries to promote for young people. Libraries, museums and music schools for example are subsidised so children and teens are engaged in the cultural sector. Schools take young people out on excursions to explore historical and cultural sites, like paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, with the Rijksmuseum as the number one destination in the top of the Dutch museums.

On the website Tripadvisor, a list of the best museums is provided. For the Netherlands the number two (at the moment of writing) is the Anne Frank house. This museum is popular with both local and international tourists and shows a bit of Dutch history. Location museums like de Zaanse Schans and the Zuiderzee museum give people a good taste of what the Netherlands was like, not only focussing on culture but also traditional crafts. One internationally acclaimed craft is 'Delft blue' or 'Delftware', pottery that is still highly popular.

As mentioned before: the Netherlands has some renowned DJs like Tiësto and Hardwell but also in classical music the Dutch Metropole Orchestra is well-known. In other performing arts there is the National Ballet and in both theatre and film the Netherlands are blessed with some great performers like for example Carice van Houten who is known by many people as priestess Melisandre from the fantasy series Game of Thrones.

