

UNESCO World Heritage

Grachtengordel Amsterdam

The first systematically designed and constructed project in the world on such a large scale is 'the canal belt' of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. In the 17th century, the canal belt was designed in such a way that living, working and traffic would be well coordinated. Hereby the functionality and beauty were combined at a very high level by the civil government.

Amsterdam was the largest trading city in the world in the 17th century. The center of this trade network was the canal belt in Amsterdam, consisting of large warehouses and merchant houses. Trade was distributed from all over the world. As a result, Amsterdam was the 'department store of the world' for more than a century. Because trade came from all over the world, language, culture and knowledge from all over the world were also brought to Amsterdam. As a result, Amsterdam also became the 'intellectual department store of the world'.

Of all canal cities, in which not road traffic but water traffic determines the layout of the city, Amsterdam is the greatest example. A fun fact is that the streets were created by excavating the canals. The basis of the infrastructure of the canal city is the canal plan with canals, locks, bridges and quays.

The canal belt is divided into a core and buffer zone. Here the core zone is the red area on the map and the buffer zone is the gray area. The red area is recognized as a World Heritage area. The gray zone is the area that surrounds it and is protection of the core zone.

Waddenzee

With 1,143,403 ha, the Wadden Sea is a vast area of water. This sea is shared between the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany and is a place where many different plants and animal species live. It is one of the last large-scale intertidal ecosystems in the world.

That is also when you can actually walk (mudflat hiking) across large parts of the Wadden Sea. In total there are 37 islands in the entire Wadden Sea. Of these, 14 are located in the Netherlands. Five of these islands are inhabited but the other nine are mainly oversized sandbanks.

Due to the strong currents in the Wadden Sea, there are actually over 1200 schipwrecks at the bottom of sea. Not only is the Wadden Sea an archeological treasure chest, it is also a migration stopover for many different species of birds.

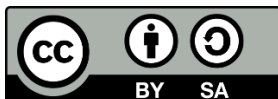
The East Atlantic Flyway is not the only important factor, but the Wadden Sea plays a critical role in the conservation of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds. Up to 6.1 million birds can be present in the Wadden Sea at the same time and 10-12 million pass through this area annually.

The mills of Kinderdijk

'Kinderdijk' is a special name for a group of 19 windmills in the Alblasserwaard area. There is a legend for the origin of this name, but first you will learn something about the origin of this special and ancient area. The area where Kinderdijk is located is completely below sea level, which makes it necessary to work together with the wind and the water to keep your feet dry.

History

A thousand years ago this whole area was a large peat bog. Hunters and fishermen came here only in the summer, when the water was low enough. It was a fertile area, close to the fast-growing trading cities, so the first permanent residents eventually settled here. They built their houses on sand dunes to keep their heads above water during a flood.



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Subsequently, dikes were built to keep out the river water, which are called polders. These dikes created a new problem: the groundwater and rainwater had to be discharged into the rivers, otherwise the polders would be flooded again. With a system of ditches and weirs, the water from the Alblasserwaard was drained to the lowest point of the area, in the western corner. That point is Kinderdijk.

Four locks were built here; these Elshout sluices were the first technological leap forward in the water management system that you still see working here.

The legend of 'Kinderdijk'

And then, on a stormy November night in 1421, disaster struck. The infamous St. Elisabeth Flood destroyed the poorly maintained dikes that protected the polder, causing thousands of people to drown. According to legend, the name Kinderdijk originated here. After the flood, when the survivors dared to go out again, they saw a cradle floating along the dike, from which the crying of a child could be heard. The bobbing cradle was kept in balance by a cat, which kept the basket from sinking by jumping back and forth. The child was saved: was this how the name Kinderdijk was born?

De Saint Elisabeth's flood was a disaster, but subsidence also started to become an increasing problem. Various techniques were used to drain the water, but in the end the water boards decided that the best way to solve the problem was... you guessed it: windmills!



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