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Dear ACCESS readers



Steve Voyce

ACCESS Editor

editor@access-nl.org

ACCESS has years of experience helping internationals with questions about accommodation

Finding somewhere to live is stressful. For internationals in the Netherlands looking for accommodation, as a new arrival or having lived here for a while, we might need to get used to different ways of doing things, different regulations, new neighbourhoods, and all, potentially, in a new language. Luckily ACCESS has years of experience helping internationals with questions about accommodation.

In this issue, Anuja Tipnis-Randive investigated the regulations around finding somewhere to rent or buy in the Netherlands, and also looked at what to expect if you ever find yourself as a landlord. After living here for over twenty years I must admit that while aware of Dutch social housing, I wasn't too clear about how it worked. So Molly Quell's excellent Dutch Lifestyle article about social housing proved insightful and informative.

In a densely-populated country like the Netherlands, space-saving is a part of life, as anyone who has lived in an apartment here will testify. Therefore the *Tiny House* movement feels like a natural fit for the Netherlands. For our Cover Story, Hannah Behrens spoke to two inspirational and creative couples who have taken pared-down living to heart and built remarkable, smaller homes.

Our Health and Wellbeing article looks at how positively transforming your home environment can help your mood and wellbeing. Elsewhere our foodie, Magdalini Zografou, has a recipe for simple (and slightly boozy) coffee ice cream.

In our Review section, Tracey Taylor writes "Anne Frank's story is world famous, and for those living in the Netherlands perhaps takes on more poignant sentiments," and reports that the creators of a new version of Anne's diary have managed to retain this importance while creating something interestingly unique.

After a chilly spring, I'm sure we're all hoping for a gorgeous summer. Focusing on warmer days and school holidays, we look at things to do in Utrecht with kids, and a great way to spend a few summer days: Oerol, a fantastic arts festival that takes over a beautiful Dutch island. And finally, Huw Hughes discovers that it is never too late to learn to swim.

ACCESS is...

a dynamic volunteer run, not-for-profit organisation that serves the needs and interests of the international community in the Netherlands. We do so by:

- personally responding to inquiries and providing information through our helpdesks
- providing face-to-face support through the expat centres we work with
- offering answers to the most frequently asked questions on our website
- fostering cultural diversity, facilitating connections and encouraging growth for the volunteers we work with
- offering childbirth preparation courses in The Hague, Amsterdam, Utrecht and Rotterdam
- maintaining an on-call Counselling Services Network
- facilitating a network of Trainers to support the community
- producing an informative magazine intended to help the community get to know the Netherlands
- being available to international employers and their HRs to support their staff, partners & families



0900 2 ACCESS (0900 2 222 377)
local rate 20c per minute



helpdesk@access-nl.org



www.access-nl.org



Laan van Meerdervoort 70 - 1st Floor
2517 AN The Hague



Colophon

Publisher

Stichting ACCESS

Editorial content

editor@access-nl.org

Advertising

070 345 1700

fnd@access-nl.org

Editor

Steve Voyce

Assistant Editor

Nancy Kroonenberg

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Cover image

Roel Ottow, ottow.nl

Contents images (clockwise)

Peter Myers, Dex, Hans Dinkelberg,
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Contributors

Hannah Behrens, Olivia van den Broek-
Neri, Carolyn van Es-Vines, Geetanjali
Gupta, Huw Hughes, Roel Ottow,
Madhavi Mistry-Ajgaonkar, Dainahara
Polonia, Molly Quell, Anuja Tipnis-
Randive, Tracey Taylor, Deborah
Valentine.

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PHOTO: ACCESS

ACCESSing information for internationals

BY OLIVIA VAN DEN BROEK-NERI

Since 1986, ACCESS has been a valuable information source for the international community. We collect and organise key information for internationals, with a multitude of volunteers responsible for compiling it.

The ACCESS Helpdesk can be contacted by phone or email, and we endeavour to respond to inquiries via email within two working days. Making use of our database of “expat referred and preferred” service suppliers, we try to provide our clients with three options to answer their inquiry.

Our volunteers, once new (or returning) arrivals have a unique insight into the questions asked upon arrival in the Netherlands. Our group of volunteers

keep up with the issues facing internationals in the Netherlands to ensure our Helpdesks and website are always up-to-date.

The ACCESS website has a comprehensive collection of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) compiled from our years of answering client questions. Beyond that, if internationals have a question not answered on our website, they can get in touch and we will research and provide guidance how to best support them.

Our DAISY database

At the heart of this knowledge is the Database Access Information System, an integral part of ACCESS. Known as DAISY, this database is continuously updated by a group of ACCESS volunteers making it a valuable source of the information provided via the ACCESS Helpdesks and website.

Originally from Germany, Heiner Pierenkemper manages the IRD (Information Research Department), and with three other volunteers constantly updates the database. As of April 2019, there were 5,344 listings covering an array of services. Categories include: support groups, helplines and counselling, dog walking services and children's activities. "We are constantly striving to find new service providers," says Heiner.

The database includes contact details and a two or three sentence description about the types of services each provider offers. "You can compare it to an address book," he explains. While there is no charge to be included in the database, services or providers must meet certain requirements. IRD is responsible for checking these requirements.

Another key resource

"A lot has changed over the years," says Madhavi Mistry. Originally from India, Mahdavi has lived in the Netherlands for 28 years, volunteered in different ACCESS positions and been Communications Manager for two years.

ACCESS launched its new website in 2018, and FAQs were incorporated and presented in a new and more user-friendly format. Madhavi says, "We have made them more concise." These FAQs are the go-to place for many internationals thinking of moving to the Netherlands, arriving here, or even having lived here for a while.

For answers to your questions, don't hesitate to contact us. You will get an answer!

"We also have feature articles on the website," Madhavi says, "that our partners and trainers write for us." These articles cover a range of topics, including the Dutch school system and career tips. "It is another way to provide information to the expat community," she says.

Online articles are also shared with a larger population via the organisation's social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and ACCESS uses these channels to engage, share and respond to inquiries.

Different questions

While the Helpdesks receive many questions, some have become standard. "For example, people often ask about the difference between international schools and Dutch schools," Madhavi says. "And how will that affect their children's later education."

While other questions can focus on such areas as healthcare, housing, childcare, and transport, recently the Helpdesk volunteers are getting more questions about pensions, and the most downloaded FAQ covers dual careers—advice for "accompanying spouses" on building a networking community and keeping professional skills updated. »



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From a book to a booklet to DAISY

During 13 years of ACCESS volunteer service, Dutch native Geneveva Geppaart has seen the organisation undergo a major transformation. When she began, it was not compulsory to begin at the Helpdesk, whereas now it is maybe an invaluable starting point for all volunteers. Back then, “the phone was ringing all of the time,” she recalls. “At ACCESS in those days, we didn’t get a lot of email contact. Unlike now.”

Geneveva explains how information was in booklet and fact sheet form that volunteers referred to. “I became coordinator of the fact sheets,” she says. Her first assignment was to change the format of the fact sheets. The Publications Department designed a new format and guides were born.

Helping throughout the expat cycle

These guides grew as new questions were answered by volunteers. “We were doing a lot of work for people who were new to the Netherlands, but almost every international leaves the Netherlands at some point,” Geneveva says. By adding information about leaving the country, Geneveva pointed out that ACCESS would be addressing all parts of the expat’s “life cycle” in the Netherlands. Another guide was created.

Questions might be getting harder

“The questions seem more complicated nowadays,” says Geneveva. “Maybe because people have already started looking online before they contact us.” But because ACCESS’ vision remains the same, to help people successfully settle in the Netherlands by providing essential and comprehensive assistance, DAISY and the knowledge of the volunteers is still key.

We know what new arrivals do not yet know



PHOTO: NATALIYA VOLOSOVYCH

ACCESS volunteers reflect the clients we serve. We have been on the journey they are on, from the pre-arrival, arrival and settling-in process. We know what new arrivals do not yet know, where to find the answers, and who to contact for solutions. Our information database is a valuable tool in helping us to assist our clients.

“We are a non-profit organisation, and we are here to help expats who come to the Netherlands and provide free information so please visit our website,” says Mahdavi. “If you don’t find answers to your questions, don’t hesitate to contact us. You will get an answer!” «

About the author

California-native Olivia van den Broek-Neri works as Project Coordinator Communications & Events at Holland Expat Center South in Eindhoven, and was previously an ACCESS volunteer.



PHOTOS: MARJOLEININHETKLEIN.COM

Tiny house life

Historically, finding sanctuary for shelter, refuge, comfort and enjoyment has been a quest. Seeking housing in a densely-populated country like the Netherlands has always been a great challenge. The perfect Dutch house is a stereotype in itself; canal side townhouses, 19th century converted ships, quirky windmills, working barge boats, and an endless stream of unique (and sometimes illegal) living situations.

BY HANNAH BEHRENS

A recent housing trend in the Netherlands is the tiny house movement which has grown over the past five years. But finding the right—smaller than average—accommodation is not simply about building the house; it is a commitment to a lifestyle: living within one's means, paying attention to every object that you own, and being handy with power tools, water systems, plumbing and electricity. Having an aptitude for adaptability, open mindedness, and being creative and solution-oriented are also necessary traits for embarking on the tiny house life.

A tiny house at the centre of a community

Jan and Ineke are more than just local residents of their small Dutch town, Nijkerk. Their tiny little house is located in the driveway of the Nijkerk voedselbank, a community foodbank which the couple has been running for almost 13 years. Every week volunteers and families come for a shared meal, and fresh food and clothes are distributed to those in need of assistance.

Behind the foodbank, hidden just out of view of the town centre parking lot and grocery store, is a cheerful little house with a bright red roof and door. Inspired by watching tiny house TV shows, Jan and Ineke set out to find a space where they could live comfortably while continuing their mission and community work. Five years ago they acquired a house, at a very low price, which had been on the market for two years: a stripped down, one room shell of a building used as a play area for children. The couple bought the structure, had it moved to the current location, and lived in a campervan onsite for two years while Jan, using his handyman and carpentry skills, built their home.

When the basic fixtures were in place, Ineke and Jan moved into their little house which felt huge after the cramped quarters of the campervan, and Ineke set about adding the “heart and soul” finishing touches to enhance the space. Everything in their home has a customized quality, with a unique and creative feel. There is a wall of brightly coloured floral paper, a stained-glass window built into a pocket door, a bathroom sink made from a blue enamel fish pan, and even a tiny box-bed for when their grandchild comes to visit. Ineke's advice for anyone considering a move toward the tiny house lifestyle is “be practical first, and then make it cosy.” »



There is something truly rewarding and surprising about creating a tiny home

Serving those in need

Jan openly describes how the idea of living small and simply is synonymous with his Christian faith. “I was an addict for 30 years. 18 or 19 years ago, after my divorce, someone said to me, ‘you need

Jesus’ and I said, ‘what for?’”

His conversion guided him toward a new life and a new vision of what was possible. “I made a choice between my own plan of what I thought I knew, and a higher purpose for my life, which spoke right to my heart.” Before he came

to run the foodbank, he worked there as a truck driver. He met Ineke, when she started as a volunteer, they were married shortly after, and believe their calling from God is to serve those in need.

While fully at home in their tiny house, Jan and Ineke are prepared for changes in the future. The plot where their home stands, along with the food bank warehouse, are slated for redevelopment by the end

of the year. Small and large cities all over the country are under pressure to keep up with the demand for new housing, and Nijkerk is no exception. However, many cities are welcoming options and developments for tiny house communities, and Jan and Ineke plan to be involved in the planning process, perhaps constructing shipping container homes, and expanding their community toward those in need. Even Nijkerk municipality has purchased 28 tiny homes and is currently considering where to locate them, along with a new, more accessible location for the foodbank. Jan and Ineke remain hopeful, “We will be where God wants us to be.”

Living with less

In September of 2017, Anniek and Mattias took an extended campervan trip through Morocco, Albania, Turkey, Georgia and Ukraine. They were inspired to see how different societies could live with very little, saw living standards which differed greatly from the typical Dutch home, and nomadic cultures that had a minimalist approach to possessions and travel.

For Anniek and Mattias, living adventurously out of a campervan helped them see that they too could rely on very little to feel content and satisfied. They felt inspired to take a different approach toward how they wanted to live when they returned to the Netherlands, and life on the road gave them time to dream up their future. They researched tiny houses, campervans, and houseboat living, eventually searching for tiny house communities around the Netherlands. After purchasing their little cold-storage truck while on the road, upon returning they hired a workspace and began construction.

An off-grid community of tiny houses

Anniek and Mattias, along with their dog Tobi (also brought home from their travels), are the newest residents in a small community of five houses, not far from the city centre of Alkmaar. The community was founded by fellow resident Marjolein, who started the realisation of her tiny house dream in 2015. With permission from the



PHOTOS: HANNAH BEHRENS

city of Alkmaar, Marjolein came up with a plan for a small group of temporary houses on a temporarily unused plot of land owned by the city of Alkmaar. The only stipulations are that the houses be off grid and that residents leave when the land is ready to be redeveloped, sometime during the next three to five years.

Before the community arrived, the location had a reputation for attracting bad behaviour, but the presence of the tiny house neighbourhood has created a new face for the area much to the appreciation of local residents.

The small group of neighbours meet officially every two weeks, and everyone puts effort into their shared gardens, while other interactions like having a coffee or beer add to the community spirit, with a similarity in philosophy and always building advice to share. With the knowledge that they will eventually have to relocate, Annik and Mattias focussed the main design of their home on mobility. "All we need is a crane and a truck in order to move. Even the box garden, built on wood pallets, is designed to be mobile."

Environmentally minded

Annik and Mattias cite their environmentally minded philosophy as one of the chief motivations for pursuing the tiny house life. Living with a small ecological footprint is literally built in to the lifestyle. "When you move in something new, you have to move something out. Living small forces you into choices," says Annik. "Here, you *have* to take short showers."

While it might be frustrating or too rustic for some, for this couple this is an adventurous and fun way to live. "Sometimes you run out of water, and sometimes you run out of energy," Annik adds. "It's not really fun in that moment, but it makes your life more interesting." The other built-in reward, besides low environmental impact, is the cost of living. Lower fixed costs mean tiny house residents can have more freedom to enjoy life.



PHOTO: MARJOLEININHEKLEIN.COM

Did you know...
The Netherlands has a tiny house community. Visit the blog tinyhousenederland.nl or join the Facebook forum at facebook.com/groups/tinyhousenederland/

Patience and learning

A challenge of building a tiny house is experimenting through trial and error. Mattias and Annik gave themselves a very short window of time for turning their converted cold storage truck into a liveable space with windows, doors, a bedroom and a working kitchen. They put in up to 80 hours a week for the first few months to create a minimal shelter and sometimes had to rethink their design.

"Off grid living involves many components, and you have to work with what is available, as well as understand how everything works. Making things work efficiently is a process of patience and learning. »



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Living with a small ecological footprint is literally built into the lifestyle

It takes a lot of time to adjust and re-adjust, making amendments as you go; and you really can't expect everything to be perfect." The lifestyle forces you to be creative, thrifty, social and innovative.

Looking to the future, Anniek and Mattias would eventually like to have their own land, perhaps buy a farmhouse to remodel and relocate their tiny house to live in while they build. But for now, in their little green area in Alkmaar they look forward to seeing their garden grow and have just completed a fenced enclosure for Tobi. Anniek and Mattias' advice for future tiny house residents is to "try to find an initiative in your area, and if there isn't one, take it upon yourself to begin one. If you really want to get started with a tiny house, just start building, even if it is on a temporary area or a rented driveway. Municipalities across the country are interested in supporting motivated residents."

Difficult but rewarding

The tiny house movement can seem like a beautiful and idealistic picture, but this often misrepresents how difficult it can be in reality. Tiny house life takes a tremendous amount of willpower, adaptability, time, energy, planning and hard work, and the lifestyle is not for everyone, especially for those who can't live without eternally flowing water taps.

Tiny house options range from very rustic to very luxurious, and can be as expensive as any conventional home. Before beginning the journey, get solid information and make proper planning, and be realistic and practical, particularly if considering self-building the house.



PHOTOS: HANNAH BEHRENS

However, looking past the hardships and challenges, there is something truly rewarding and surprising about creating a tiny home. The result is a true sense of satisfaction, alongside a symbiotic relationship with the community, natural resources, and personal possessions. Life can be pretty sweet within a tiny house.



As the Netherlands continues to build toward a more harmonious future and toward the happiness of its citizens and residents, many more take inspiration and find harmony in the simple life. «

About the author

Hannah Behrens is a freelance writer, editor, poet and writing coach. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Colorado and has been a Netherlands resident since 2016. She writes a blog, weedsandwilderness.com, leads Weeds and Wilderness Creative Writing Meetup in Amsterdam, and is currently working towards her PhD in Expressive Arts Therapy.

Anne Frank's Diary

The Graphic Adaptation

The Diary of a Young Girl has been translated into more than 70 languages and has sold over 30 million copies worldwide. Now for the first time, a graphic novel adaptation of the story of Anne Frank has been published.

BY TRACEY TAYLOR



IMAGE BY ANNE FRANK FONDS

The When

"Dear Kitty, I hope I will be able to confide everything to you..." Anne Frank

The story of Anne Frank is world famous, and for those living in the Netherlands it perhaps takes on more poignant sentiments. If you have never been to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, be sure to put it on your list. If you have not yet read *The Diary of a Young Girl*, you should take the time to do so.

The Where

"... think about the trains going east, then the room will seem huge..." Margot Frank

Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation is the first publication of its kind and was released (in English) in late 2018 by Penguin Random House UK. This graphic novel version of *The Diary of a Young Girl* is endorsed by the Anne Frank Fonds Basel, the organisation founded by Otto Frank in 1963 to keep the legacy of his daughter alive.

"The stunning visual imagery adds depth and dimension to the story"

While there could be reservations about such a publication, as graphic novels are often presumed to revolve around stories of Marvel superheroes and manga charac-

ters, any concerns about whether a graphic novel would be an “unsuitable” format for Anne’s story were quickly dispelled as the team who put this book together have done so with a huge amount of care and compassion.

The Who

Ari Folman, Israeli director, screenwriter and film score composer, took on the brave task of editing and adapting the diary by reflecting on certain events over the course of the diary’s two-year period.

“I wish to declare that we are sensitive to and aware of the liberties we have taken”, says Folman, “and that our goal was always foremost to honour and preserve the spirit of Anne Frank in each and every frame”.

Together with illustrator David Polonsky, a graduate from Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design in Jerusalem, the result is a collection of extracts and full quotations from the actual diary, which are cleverly interspersed with stunning illustrations. Expressive and sympathetic artwork brings Anne’s story to life through pages of colour, shadow and emotion.

The What

“No one would believe me, but at the age of 13, I feel totally alone in this world...” Anne Frank

The graphic adaptation begins on 12 June, 1942 (Anne’s birthday), and quite soon into the book we are introduced to Kitty, Anne’s name for her beloved diary.

This adaptation does not remove integrity from the original diary but instead the stunning visual imagery adds depth and dimension to the story. It also does not shy away from the darker side of Anne’s mind nor the struggles of the war she finds herself in and her teenage angst. The book is also not afraid to touch on her depression, her underlying fears, and her frustrations with the often-fraught atmosphere of life in the confines of the Secret Annex.

The Why

“...trying to find a way to become what I’d like to be and what I could be if... if only there were no other people in the world...”

Anne Frank

Given the impracticalities of graphically adapting the entire diary, some readers may find they miss the full historical content of the original book. While adults are not necessarily the target audience, as the graphic adaptation is perhaps aimed at a younger readership, there is still something here for all age groups.

Dearest Kitty...

“A bundle of contradictions...” Anne Frank

The last entry made in *The Diary of a Young Girl* was on 1 August 1944.

On the morning of 4 August, a car pulled up at Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam and arrested the eight people who were hiding in the annex.

Annelies Marie (Anne) Frank is believed to have died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp near Hanover, Germany in February of 1945.

She was 15 years old. «



IMAGE BY ANNE FRANK FONDS

Text by Anne Frank
Adapted by Ari Folman
Illustrated by David Polonsky

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About the Author

Tracey Taylor lives in Maastricht with boyfriend, Dave and cat, Tubbs. She’s a writer, foodie and radio co-host @traceytaylor_nl @littletubbs_nl @themaastrichtedition

BSN: Welcoming new families

Moving to a new country with your family is not always easy to do. You and your children are uprooted from their school and from friends and daily routines.



This can be a stressful time for the whole family. There are many things that need to be organised, such as finding a new school, a new home and new friends. And add to that, finding your way around another culture.



Five tips for settling in a new school

Settling into a new school however, is a thing in itself. The British School in The Netherlands (BSN) understands this and has many years of experience with transitioning families and making children and their parents feel at home.

Here are easy five tips that will help you and your children settle in their new environment.

1. Relax Try to be as relaxed as possible. Your children will feel it if you are anxious. The more relaxed you are about their first day in school, the easier it will be

for them. Children are resilient and will make friends easily if they are relaxed.

2. Participate Participate in the events organised by the school. The BSN organises coffee mornings on each campus weekly for instance, where you can meet other mums and dads and set up play dates for your children. And perhaps you make some new friends yourself.

3. Volunteer Contact the Family Association at your school. Each campus has International Reps (Representatives) that are there to help you settle in. These are parents that have been through what you are going through! You can also join the Family Association to help organise their events.

4. Join Join a local expat group. There are many groups online on Facebook or Instagram for expat parents that will provide support and organise social events.

5. Explore Explore your new surroundings! Take advantage of the public transport and bicycle paths to take your children for an adventure and discover all the Netherlands has to offer. Not forgetting the beaches and parks in The Hague!

“Bringing people together, having fun, learning more to support our students and creating an active and inspiring community is what the Family Association is all about. We are here for you and your family, enriching your experience as part of the BSN community.”

Lorraine Webster, Family Association Chair

The British School in The Netherlands has many years of experience to help make new families feel welcome. Let them help you make it easy for your family. Find out more about the BSN at britishschool.nl «

Admissions Department
070 315 4077
admissions@britishschool.nl

International Community

While the Netherlands has always welcomed internationals with open arms, one downside is an increased demand for real estate. Finding accommodation is a major challenge for internationals, but with the correct research, advice and general awareness it can be a smooth process.



ILLUSTRATION: ROEL OTTOW

Finding a home

BY ANUJA
TIPNIS-RANDIVE

Upon arrival in the Netherlands, internationals often opt for renting a property, and if subsequently they decide to stay for a longer term, many purchase their own property. Very often, property-owning internationals rent out or sell their home when they leave the Netherlands.

Whether renting or buying, finding a home in a different country involves becoming familiar with new rules, regulations and customs.

Renting

While renting accommodation might seem straightforward enough, internationals should be aware of their rights regarding regulations imposed by land-

lords. Disputes between tenants and landlords can be common in the Netherlands, especially when a landlord imposes his/her own rules for staying in a house without tenants being initially aware of their rights.

Dafna Eccles, legal housing advisor for !WOON, gives advice to help tenants avoid getting into conflict with their respective landlords or falling into scams. Her essential points for renting a property are:

- Be aware: Gain knowledge about the legal implications on renting imposed by the government. Bear in mind that legal rules always supercede those made by a landlord. The landlord is not »

Be aware when renting

While there are many legitimate letting agents in the Netherlands, unfortunately a few unpleasant characters target tenants, particularly expats. In general it is safer to rent through members of established realtors' organisations—MVA or NVM—than through un-attached agencies.

!WOON give some tips on being vigilant in the Dutch rental market:

- Does the offer sound too good to be true? Then it probably is. Cheap rental accommodation in city centres is extremely rare.
- Don't do business with landlords or agents who only offer an email address, a mobile phone number and/or a Facebook page.
- Establish who the landlord or the agent is. Ask for proof of ID, check it, and do an Internet search about the person or company.
- Check who owns the apartment via the [Kadaster](#) property register.
- Be extra careful about renting an apartment you haven't seen. If you're not in the country yet, ask someone to inspect the apartment for you.
- Before you hand over large sums of money, check the keys and make sure they work.
- Social media or online marketplace accommodation adverts aren't always reliable and may be illegal sublets.
- Ask if you can register with the council at the address ("inschrijven"). If the answer is no, that's a red flag.
- Don't allow yourself to be pressured. Don't feel pushed into quickly signing the lease.
- While deposits are legal, often many other fees such as agency fees, disproportionately high administration fees, or contract fees are not.
- Pay via bank transfer. Demands for wire transfers and cash payments are another red flag.
- Keep a record of all communications—emails, text messages and conversations—with the agent or landlord.
- If possible, talk to the neighbours. Do they know the apartment? Do they know who lives there?

allowed to make his/her own rules as they are not legally binding. Don't panic, but be cautious and sensible.

- Be clear about the term of the contract: Read the contract properly to understand if it is for a fixed term or is indefinite. If the fixed term contract gets

extended, it automatically becomes indefinite. If the contract is in Dutch, ask the landlord for an English version, and you can also take your contract to a !WOON walk-in to have it explained.

- Know your human rights (as per the European treaty): Every individual residing in the country has a right to a family and a right to privacy. A landlord cannot deny a tenant couple having a family or visit the house without the tenant's permission. It is advisable that a tenant changes the locks after receiving the keys to the property.
- Research the essentials: Conduct research into the area where you are considering living—rent prices and connectivity. A *makelaar* (licensed estate agent) can help.
- Document everything: Tenants are advised to keep proof of any communications and charges they receive up to and after signing a contract. Keep an inventory of the contents of the property and ask for a pre-inspection of utilities before moving in.

Get your contract read by a legal advisor to avoid any surprises

Rental contracts can end automatically—if they are fixed term—and tenants can sometimes be forced to vacate the property. If tenants don't agree, the landlord might need a court order, but if tenants lose in court they might end up having to vacate anyway in addition to paying legal costs. But this depends on the contract, so the important thing is that tenants check their legal situation before responding to any vacation notice from their landlord.

Buying

Over the past few years, many internationals in the Netherlands have bought property, and with rents rising many are taking this more permanent step to finding the right accommodation.

The process of purchasing an apartment or a house might be different in the Netherlands compared to other countries. Here, banks can provide a mortgage for the property with no down payment.

The process of buying a property will usually involve a mortgage or financial advisor, a notary and an estate agent. It is always advisable for the buyer to have prior knowledge about the procedures and the cost involved. What buyers should take into account during or after purchasing a property:

- Read and understand all the legal documents carefully, mainly the purchase contract and the transfer deed. It is important that you include a financial clause in the purchase contract which states that you are eligible to break the deal at any time without paying a fee if the mortgage is not approved. If possible, get your contract read by a legal advisor to avoid any surprises.
- If you have bought an apartment, ensure that you know all the conditions of the owners' association of the building (VvE) and the costs and rules involved.

From the landlord's perspective

Often property-owning internationals will rent out their property when they move away from the Netherlands. So it's not just tenants who need to be aware of issues involved; landlords do too.

When renting out a property, the landlord has to abide by the government legal implications and regulations set by the owners' association.

Landlords should also be aware of regulations about the number of people permitted to be registered at an address (many municipalities have limits on the number of tenants, but not all. These limits might only apply to non-related adults, not to families. Even if there are limits on the number of tenants this can be sorted by getting the correct permit), take an inventory before and after renting, and continue to manage the upkeep of their property.



PHOTO: MARTIN DE WITTE

Did you know...
Each property in the Netherlands has a designated rental value based on a points system

The main advice to prospective landlords is to check the status of the contracts they are using—fixed-term or indefinite—and if the apartment would be rent controlled. Individual rooms rented out in shared housing are always rent controlled.

Renting or Buying?

As an international away from home, it is mainly a personal and economic decision to buy or rent, but it is wise to get as much information as possible, be aware of details and know essential housing rights to make any process hassle-free. And above all, stay calm! «

About the author

Anuja Tipnis-Randive is an expat living in Amstelveen for the past four years, and loves the lush greenery and serene environment of her neighbourhood.

A place to renew

As a graduate student, I moved house every year. Even though it was always within a 20-mile radius, packing up all my stuff, coordinating friends to help me lift heavy furniture, loading it and unpacking it all again was not only physically draining, but stressful.

BY CAROLYN
VAN ES-VINES

It soon occurred to me that I wasn't even using the majority of the stuff I was shifting from place to place. So I made the decision to go through my stuff and give away everything that, in the words of Marie Kondo, didn't "spark joy." I whittled it down to the bed, books, computer and clothes that I used daily. I ended up sitting on an oversized bean bag while watching TV balancing plates of homemade enchiladas on a stack of books.

Clutter be gone

I'd just experienced first-hand the impact that the stuff in our houses has on physical, mental and emotional well-being. In a mobile lifestyle, it's easy to collect stuff and before we know it be surrounded by an accumulation of things we don't love, need, use or even want. According to Katarina Gaborova, a member of the ACCESS Counselling Network, "clutter in your living space has been linked to



PHOTO: TIMOTHY BUCK

increased production of the stress hormone cortisol, which can make us feel more stressed, anxious, helpless, overwhelmed, frustrated or even depressed.” The more clutter we have around us, the more distracted and overstimulated we can feel. Gaborova points out that it’s not simply enough to clean up and store our stuff, because “we know it’s there and that we still need to deal with it.”

Feng Shui: connecting energy and space

Eline Cointepas, Wassenaar-based interior decorator and feng shui practitioner, believes that we choose a house with the heart, not with the head. Our home should be where we return to relax and unwind, and the one place where we should be able to feel vulnerable. “Choosing the wrong house or the wrong decoration,” she asserts, “can zap your energy.”

Make your house into a place to recharge

This was the case with her former client, a single mother who’d often felt drained of energy, and Cointepas knew why even before going inside her house. The garden around the front door was unkempt, overgrown with bushes almost blocking the entrance. Inside, the front hallway was cluttered with stuff and the living room filled with unpacked boxes, toys and strewn books. Cointepas’ first order of business was to encourage her client to tidy up the front entrance so, according to a key feng shui principle, clean, life energy—or Chi—could flow freely into the house. Cointepas also recommended a fence around the back yard to contain her home’s Chi. After the changes, her client experienced a boost in energy and a growth in confidence.

Letting go of our stuff

We all know the heavy, unsettling feeling we get when we enter a room full of unpacked boxes or crowded with furniture. Everything we own carries

energy, positive or negative. The basic tenet of feng shui is to work with the energy in our surroundings to create beneficial effects in our lives.

“(Re)decorating is an inner process,” says Cointepas, which starts to explain why letting go of our stuff is hard. We’ve become emotionally attached to it. Instead of dealing with the reasons for our attachments (homesickness, fear of the future, being stuck in the past), we store them away in a drawer, closet or storage unit. A mobile lifestyle can present the perfect opportunity to begin sorting through those emotional attachments.

Gaborova concurs. When the issue of attachment comes up in her practice, it’s usually linked to missing something from the past like one’s home or family. “An object given to someone that carries sentimental value can bring a sense of comfort. It can also trigger other feelings like homesickness. The ACCESS counselling network is there to help clients find the right balance in these situations.” To see the potential our home has, it is crucial that we clear space. This means going through our personal belongings, paying close attention to the feelings they illicit and discarding articles that don’t feel good. This process starts to clear the clutter in our heads. This is a powerful step to becoming free of the thoughts of inadequacy. “Our brain has to analyse and process a lot of data,” says Gaborova, “so a simple, well-organised space surrounding us feels more soothing.”

Moving to a new place is a wonderful opportunity to redecorate our home and to redesign who we are. We are not alone, there is always support from fellow expats like Gaborova and Cointepas to “make our house into a place to recharge so outside we can live to our potential.” «

About the author

Carolyn van Es-Vines is a life coach and trainer as well an author of *black and (A)broad: traveling beyond the limitations of identity*.

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pating in sailing competitions. Jan's love of boats comes from these experiences while growing up. He even spent his first three years of life on a vessel. His father was a skipper, he lived on a freighter, and now boats are a central part of his life.

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Come join our unique boat tours for a pleasant cruise through the canals, or join one of our many special events. The 75-minute canal cruise costs €12 per person and departs from Mauritskade 10 (Next to Hilton Hotel) daily from Thursday through Sunday.

Our boat Daisy is open with 30 seats and is also available to be hired privately, whether for a corporate event, family reunion, birthday, brainstorming session or bachelor party.

Beautiful private cruises with tailor made packages, you can determine where the cruise begins and ends.

On a private tour, please feel free to bring your own food and drink, but of course we can also take care of catering for you. In collaboration with a number of restaurants, catering can also be arranged for any time of the day—breakfast, lunch, drinks or dinner. We will be happy to advise you to find the best catering option for you. «

Welcome on board!

Oerol

a festival in the heart of nature

One of Europe's foremost performing arts festivals, Oerol is as unique as its UNESCO World Heritage Site location. For ten days every summer, the festival transforms the island of Terschelling into an alternate world that pushes visitors' senses into overdrive.

BY GEETANJALI GUPTA

Oerol—meaning *everywhere* in the Terschellinger dialect—celebrates art and performance against the distinctive island landscape, by accentuating the topography, showcasing unique artistic expression and making topical commentaries.

The Oerol festival comes alive for ten days and the island of Terschelling evolves into a throbbing party zone with a difference. Acts, performances and activities spring up across the island, changing it into a work of art. The island's beaches, dunes, dykes, woods and towns serve as perfect performance venues.

Dramatic landscapes and performances

Terschelling, in West Friesland, one of the five islands collectively called the “Pearls of the Netherlands,” juts out of the Wadden Sea, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's largest tidal flat system. The daily ebb and flow of water from the North Sea serves as an intense backdrop to the island's already dramatic landscape.

Running this year from 14 to 23 June, Oerol is an annual event that converts the whole island into a natural stage for theatre, dance, music performances »



PHOTO: ANKE TEUNISSEN



For ten days the island of Terschelling becomes a throbbing party zone

and art installations. The organisers are also dedicated to integrating aspects of art with science and nature. Terschelling's landscape enhances each event's drama. The dunes backdrop acrobatic spectacles, mime shows and theatre performances, the expansive

beaches frame art installations, and winding footpaths lead walking expeditions through hidden installations and exhibitions. Make sure to take a step off the beaten path which often leads to the discovery of something surprising.



Arts & Entertainment | Oerol: a festival in the heart of nature

Festival info

Tickets

Given Oerol's increasing popularity, it's a good idea to buy tickets online in advance. But late deciders need not lose heart, as around 30 percent of tickets are reserved for day sale at festival sites.

Go to oerol.nl/en/festivalbandje to purchase tickets.

Getting around

Biking is the preferred mode of transport at Oerol and increases the chance of running into more spontaneous performances and artwork while traversing across the island. Visitors can bring in their own bikes or can rent from any town on the island, but it's advisable to reserve a bike in advance.

Stay

Visitors can make it a day trip or stay for a few days to imbibe the spirit of the festival. There are hotels, holiday homes, caravans and campsites to suit every pocket. While a high budget will get you a luxurious hotel room, a medium budget is good for nights on a boat or B&B. Going low budget with a campsite can actually be a more-for-less opportunity to make new friends. Bring your own tent or rent-a-tent. But once again, it is important to reserve your choice well in time.

Oerol All-In

The convenient All-in package starting from €139 per person includes boat tickets, a rental bike, a camping spot, two theatre tickets per person and a festival wristband.

Oerol Festival details can be found at oerol.nl/en/

Facebook: [@OerolTerschelling](https://www.facebook.com/OerolTerschelling) and

Instagram: [@oerolterschelling](https://www.instagram.com/oerolterschelling)

A passion for nature

Started in 1982 as street theatre, today this vision of founder and former director Joop Mulder ranks highly among global annual festivals. A passionate love for nature propelled Mulder to realise a festival with harmony with the environment as its essence. Oerol draws attention and appreciation to the unique island while adding to the Terschelling economy.

The festival's soaring popularity brings an increasing number of visitors to Terschelling, with around 55,000 visitors and 140,000 tickets sold last year, and national and international artists consider it a privilege to receive an invite to showcase their work.

Perhaps the festival's unique angle is that it is not only a sensory treat but also an opportunity for introspection. This year's theme of "Changing Perspectives" will investigate society, nature and culture, and Wilco Admiraal, a member of the Oerol marketing team explains, "the theme is very broad-based with a variety of programmes to bring forth current global challenges like racism, gay rights and climate change. We are not looking for solutions but rather providing a safe space to open discussions and start a thinking process." While already broad-based, Oerol strives to engage visitors—with the organisers aiming to become even more inclusive. »



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Not-to-be-missed

The Oerol programme promises something for all. Out of 35 theatre shows, 15 will be national premieres and three will be world premieres. With dozens of pop-up performances, 16 expeditions and more than 50 live music acts, there is no dearth choice. So if you are up for adventure, exploration, art and fun—get, set and go Oerol!

Language neutral

Already broad-based to engage visitors of all ages—kids, teens, adults and grandparents—the organisers are taking cues from the changing visitor profile to become more inclusive. “Most of our events are language neutral: Mimes, music, art display, we even try to schedule two to three shows per day in English,” explains Admiraal. This has been reflected in the rise in popularity of Oerol with both non-Dutch performers and visitors.

Non-Dutch speakers won't want to miss:

Lost Tango is a multidisciplinary spectacle about a cruise ship where the crew is keeping up appearances while the ship seems to be sinking. Brought with the cooperation of Via Berlin (with famous actor Merel Polat) and the Ragazze Quartet (originated by piazzola player Carel Kraayenhof), *Lost Tango* looks to be a theatrical treat.

Another crowd puller will be a maritime opera based on the novel by Carsten Jensen, *Wij, de Verdronkenen / Vi, de druknede / We, the drowned*. The Antwerp-based crew of Walpurgis and the musical magicians of Bot join forces to bring a surprising soundscape filled with stories from long-lost and more recent times.

An expedition project curated by Eindhoven's Atelier NL and executed by Maarten Kolk and Guus Kusters showcases a giant kite that resembles a flock of geese and aims to address the problem that the overpopulation of geese is currently causing in the Netherlands.

Look out for the Mezrab storytelling company with its own storytelling arena in the village of Hoorn.



PHOTO: NICHON GLERUM

“Most of our events are language neutral”

The *Secret Garden Sessions* is a series of neo-classical concerts that will take place in the idyllic surroundings of a flower garden, where visitors can pick fruits and notes and seek inspiration from music made by, amongst others, the violinist Sarah Neufeld and catch a special performance by Orpheo McCord.

The festival's music program is a tour around the world in ten days with Fogo Fogo, Conjuto Papa Upa, Turboguru and a selection of Dutch Artists: HAEVN, Thijs Boontjes, Karel, Jay-Way and many others. «

About the author

Geetanjali Gupta is a freelance writer and a volunteer at ACCESS, has been in the Netherlands for little over a year and is busy exploring Europe and learning Dutch.

When to call a lawyer about housing

Your home is your castle, especially as an expat. When things go wrong, you need help you can trust—but which situations justify involving a lawyer? Raymond de Mooij of GMW lawyers shares his top tips for when to call a lawyer about your property.



BY RAYMOND DE MOOIJ



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When you're buying or selling a house

Property is a significant investment, and dealing with another country's laws and language can increase the risk of something going wrong. If you plan to buy or sell a house, call a lawyer. They can advise you on what to do and what to check before and after the sale, helping to avoid problems and misunderstandings.

When you find defects

If you've bought or rented a house, the owner is obliged to inform you of any defects or deficiencies that are known to them. If you discover more defects after signing, or find that defects have not been fixed as previously agreed, call a lawyer. They can advise you on your rights, and how best to proceed.

When you want to rent out your house

If you own a home in the Netherlands and you plan to rent it out, it is wise to get legal advice about your rights and obligations as a landlord. This includes setting up

a tenancy contract that is legally valid, protects your rights and limits your liability. Should you then, for example, face a tenant who is not paying their rent, your lawyer can help you take appropriate action.

When you need to know your rights

Unsure if you are within your legal rights about your property? Call a lawyer. Whether you have an issue with a neighbour, nuisance from a construction site, or a dispute over a boundary line, understanding your rights is the first step to deciding how to proceed.

We can work it out

If you need help with Dutch property law, we can help. We understand the specific challenges that expats face and have the expertise to help you work it out. Meet our lawyers—visit gmw.nl/en «

Raymond de Mooij is a specialist in Dutch property law and one of the founders of GMW lawyers. He advises and litigates for property owners, developers, housing associations and business owners.



No-churn coffee ice cream

This is one of the easiest ice creams to make and perhaps one of the most creamy and smooth.

RECIPE AND PHOTO BY MAGDALINI ZOGRAFOU



Ingredients

Yields around 850 grams

- 300 millilitres cream, full-fat (35%), cold
- 180 grams sweetened condensed milk
- 8 grams (2 tablespoons) instant espresso powder
- 30 millilitres (2 tablespoons) coffee liqueur (like Kahlua)
- A pinch of sea salt

Rich, with a strong but not overwhelming coffee flavour, and reminiscent of decadent, icy, flavoured coffees that are perfect for a blistering hot day.

This ice cream is perfect for those who don't have an ice cream machine, since only a mixer is needed. It's ideal for anyone who wants to spend the least time possible in the kitchen during a hot day but still have homemade ice cream.

The magical thing about this ice cream is that you can eat it straight from the freezer as it stays creamy and soft for days. There are two reasons why this happens: first, the low water content of the ice cream prevents the formation of ice crystals and secondly, the addition of alcohol in the form of the coffee liqueur.

It may be calorific, and perhaps not the ice cream of choice for those who want to have a summer beach-body, but sometimes it's fun to splurge on desserts and foods that make you happy, don't you agree?

Note: No fancy coffee, special beans or grinding your coffee is needed for this ice cream; just some good quality, strong espresso powder.

In the bowl of your stand mixer (or in a large bowl), add all five ingredients and using the whisk attachment (or a hand-held mixer), whisk on high speed until soft peaks form when you lift the whisk and the mixture is airy and fluffy like a light whipped cream.

Empty the mixture into a container suitable for the freezer, cover it and freeze for at least six hours before serving. It can be stored in the freezer for a week. «

About the author

Find Magdalini at mylittlexpatkitchen.blogspot.com - A Greek girl cooking in her little expat kitchen in the Netherlands.

There's not enough housing in the Netherlands and, what is available, is too expensive. It's a common complaint among not just internationals living in the Netherlands, but also the Dutch themselves.

Social housing

BY MOLLY QUELL

However, the Dutch government has been involved in providing affordable housing in the country for well over 100 years. The system, known as *sociale huurwoningen*, or social housing, is often maligned and frequently misunderstood.

Public Sector vs. Private Sector Rent

The Netherlands has strong protections in place for tenants. But if you're not familiar with the rules, you don't know what your rights are.

"I had no idea what the rules were," says Margaret Collins*, a UK national who lives in Amsterdam in an apartment which is in the process of being re-classified as social housing. She initially rented the apartment on the private market and later, asked !WOON, a non-profit organisation which provides information to tenants about their rights, to look into whether the rent on her apartment was fair.

The Netherlands has two systems for renting: the private market, which is for more expensive properties and has fewer regulations, or a social housing dwelling, which is less expensive and aimed at people with lower incomes.

After investigating, !WOON felt Collins was being overcharged for rent and helped her take her case to the *Huurcommissie* (Rent Commission), a government organisation that mediates landlord-tenant disputes. Collins won a rent reduction of €300 per month, which is retroactive. "My landlord now owes me around €6,000," she says. Anyone who wants to appeal their rent must do so within six months of signing their lease. Just because she won,

however, doesn't mean everything worked out well for Collins. "Now my landlord is trying to evict me," she says. Though having your rent lowered is not grounds for eviction, she's looking for a new place to live.

Point System

The Dutch government sets the maximum rent that can be charged in social housing, which is €720.42 in 2019. This maximum applies not just to dwellings owned by housing corporations but also by individual landlords. The government uses a point system based on size and amenities to determine if a home qualifies as social housing.

Did you know...
Housing associations are also responsible for local parks, sports facilities and parking in the area.

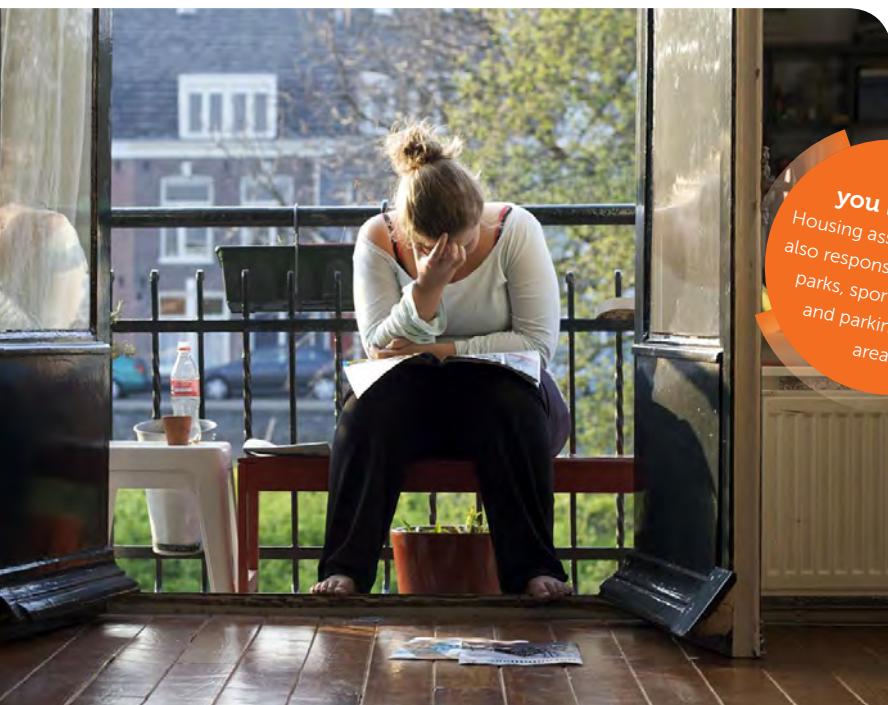


PHOTO: MINGO HAGEN



PHOTO: NIELS VAN DER PAS

History

The origins of social housing in the Netherlands find their roots in factory housing built to house workers. As the Dutch economy shifted from agricultural to industrial, people moved from the countryside to the cities, where they found a shortage of quality houses. In 1901, the government passed the *Woningwet* or housing act, which set standards for accommodation, expanded housing stock and allowed for the creation of *woningcorporatie* (housing corporations) which had the explicit mandate to provide affordable housing for the poor.

Commonality

“One third of the housing stock in the Netherlands is owned by housing corporations,” says Maarten Vos, the strategy and innovation manager at Vidomes, a housing corporation in The Hague area.

Housing prices are already high, without social housing this problem would be worse

Vos is referring to the total number of houses and apartments. In the rental market, 75% of the stock is owned by a housing corporation.

Vos sees this as a positive thing. “Compared to other countries, there is much less stigma in the Netherlands about living in social housing,” he says. Further, he points out, since many people living in social housing are employed, social housing isn’t just a place for the very poor or those unable to maintain employment. »



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PHOTO: JACKIE NEVER

It's a common misconception that only the Dutch can live in social housing

Who Can Live In Social Housing?

"It's a common misconception that only the Dutch can live in social housing," says Dafna Eccles, who works for !WOON. "You only must be 18 years old and a legal resident in the Netherlands."

Until 2011, the Dutch government left it up to the housing corporations to determine who would qualify for social housing. However, after losing a case at the European Court of Justice, the government set regulations for who would qualify for this housing.

To qualify for social housing in 2019, you must make less than €38,000 per year. Housing corporations are required to rent 90% of their housing stock to people making less than this minimum. There is some leeway for local governments to set their own criteria with the remaining 10%.

Waiting Lists

"The waiting list is long," says Kasper Eekhout who lives in social housing in Delft. Amsterdam, unsurprisingly, has the longest list. "It's around 15 years," says Eccles. At !WOON, she advises everyone to put themselves on the waiting list, regardless of your current need. "You never know what might happen in the future," she says. Costs vary, but generally, you pay an initial registration fee and then a yearly fee to stay on the list.

People who qualify for priority housing can skip to the top of the list. "This can include people already in social housing who are being forced to move, if the building they are living in is being torn down for example or if an elderly person falls and needs to move to a house without stairs," says Eccles.

Benefits

Many countries have a system to provide housing to economically disadvantaged people. The Netherlands comes with its own quirks, "I would not qualify for an apartment on the private market," says Natasha Cloutier, who is self-employed. Many private sector landlords want to see an employment contract as proof of income, which Cloutier does not have.

"Land is scarce," says Vos. The Netherlands has one of the highest population densities in all of Europe. "Housing prices are already high," he says, "Without social housing this problem would be worse." «

(*She declined to use her real name for this article due to fear of further retribution from her landlord.)

About the author

Molly Quell is an American journalist, based in Delft. She is The Hague correspondent for Courthouse News Service and a contributing editor at Dutch News. When she's not working, you can find her enjoying a beer and hanging out with her dog. You can follow her on Twitter at @mollyquell.

Taking the plunge

BY HUW HUGHES

For many Dutch people, swimming comes as second nature. It's a skill they learn at a young age, much like riding a bike, and is one they'll never forget. But what if you didn't learn to swim as a child?



PHOTO: EV FOTOGRAFIE

Perhaps more than in many other countries, schools in the Netherlands traditionally focus on swimming from a young age. In fact, once schools across the country gave compulsory swimming lessons. While that's no longer the case, many schools still offer the activity as part of their curriculum.

It is unsurprising that a country with almost a third of its land below sea level makes such an effort to teach people to swim. With the immense network of waterways twisting throughout the country, it makes sense that people should learn how to swim from a young age. But swimming offers more benefits than simply acting as a safety measure for the clumsy ones among us.

A 2017 study, conducted by Swim England, found that swimmers have a 28 percent lower risk of early death and 41 percent lower risk of death due to heart disease and stroke than their non-swimming counterparts. And the benefits aren't only physical. The same study found that swimming helps children to develop more quickly and can help older people stay mentally fit.

Adult swimming lessons

Christina Popma learnt to swim with her siblings at age four in the municipal pool in Zoeterwoude, and now owns Your Personal Swim Coach (YPSC),

As easy as ABC

Swimming in the Netherlands is taught as A, B, C levels and each one demonstrates a certain skill and strength in the water. A diploma can be gained for each level.

A diploma: The basics. When you have this diploma it means that you can swim so won't drown instantly. This is an introduction to the swimming life.

B diploma: This shows your endurance. This diploma shows that you are becoming independent with your swimming.

C diploma: This shows that you are a completely confident and independent swimmer, who is prepared for any situation. You will be able to assist others in an emergency.

a national organisation that teaches adults how to swim. Her interest in teaching adults to swim was sparked while living in Kenya, where she was surprised to see that outside of the Netherlands many adults couldn't swim, and some were even afraid of the water—a concept that seemed somewhat alien to Popma.

“I met many children and adults who did not dare to jump in the pool at all, which was a new phenomenon for me,” she says. “I didn't realise that swimming, or water, could be threatening if you didn't know how to swim.” Popma went on to help people in Kenya improve their swimming ability and enjoyed it so much that when she eventually moved back to the Netherlands, she enrolled to become a qualified swim coach and began teaching at an international swim school in her hometown, The Hague.

With almost a third of the Netherlands lying below sea level it makes sense to teach people to swim

For many simply taking that initial plunge as an adult can be a scary experience, but Popma encourages those unsure to give it a try. “It is never too late to learn. Just bring a smile and show up,” she said. “We do realise that the first lesson is the biggest step. We have people on our list who keep postponing for all kinds of reasons. But at the point when they feel that they are ready, they are welcomed by our coaches with open arms.”

Learning to do it

There is no substitute for getting in the water and taking the plunge. While learners will often watch online swimming instruction videos before signing up, and these can be good for inspiration and understanding, nothing can replace being coached in the pool. Learning as an adult can be a hard journey »



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PHOTO: EV FOTOGRAFIE

Did you know...

Try combining learning to swim with practising language skills by asking to be taught in Dutch.

but is ultimately worthwhile. For the coaches, too, teaching is an experience full of satisfaction, “I get so much joy out of encouraging people to join in,” says Popma. “And working with internationals also brought back good memories of my time in Kenya, where I was part of the expat crowd.” Although these days, the conditions for her students in her classes are more pleasant than when she learned as a child, “Lessons at 7:00 in an outdoor pool... Spartan conditions.”

Finding a school

For Popma, “the water sees no differences.” Swim schools are available nationally for people to learn, regardless of age or background, and offer classes for all ages and often women-only classes. While these are popular, many learners will also ask for a female coach, which Popma believes adds extra comfort to some learners during what can be a stressful time. YPSC’s lessons in English make the experience as smooth as possible for non-Dutch speakers and they have smaller group classes for a personally-tailored experience. YPSC also offers trial lessons for a taster before making a commitment.

Ninety percent of try-out swimmers continue until they become competent swimmers

According to Popma, around 90 percent of try-out swimmers who come to her school continue until they become competent swimmers, while around five out of 10 go on to achieve the official swimming diploma that the school offers as its final objective. “In general it takes 10 months for the transformation into a swimmer,” Popma says. “In addition, our swimmers get connected in the group. I know of some who still get together weekly after meeting in one of our pools.”

Summer swimming

Being in the water feels like an integral part of summer, particularly in the Netherlands. Being comfortable and safe around water, and being able to swim can open up a host of new experiences. While the health benefits of swimming can be utilised all year at your local pool, in summer trips to a river, the beach or on a boat take on a whole new meaning.

“During the summer, I go back to Zoeterwoude to swim with my 78 year-old father,” says Popma. “We climb into the open water and cross lakes surrounded by grassland and cows. Although I can’t live without the smell of chlorine water, nothing beats those summer evening swims.” «

About the author

Originally from Bath in the south of England, Huw Hughes is currently an editor for Amsterdam-based B2B fashion news platform FashionUnited. When he’s not working, Huw enjoys travelling and socialising, and has a weakness for good Dutch beer and good English tea.

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ISH spreading its wings

The long-anticipated opening of the new wing of the Primary School of The International School of The Hague (ISH) has finally arrived.



070 328 1450
www.ishthehague.nl

This light, open, beautiful, multipurpose building was constructed on the existing campus, linking to the existing school, and houses our Reception to Year 4 classes.

Our Principal, Juliette van Eerdewijk, is deeply proud of the new wing, which embodies the school's educational philosophy: we encourage our students to be lifelong learners who are curious, connected and compassionate.

"We wanted to create a light and spacious learning environment, bigger classrooms, and more light."

Each age group was thought about individually: The early years classrooms, for example, were designed to facilitate a free-flow philosophy—seamlessly connecting the playground to classrooms and collaborative spaces.

More collaborative spaces have been created outside all classrooms. Though the classrooms themselves were designed to be more spacious, it was important to create flexible learning spaces so that the school can adapt to learning in this building for the next chapter in its history.

There were also specific spots created in which learning could occur more privately, for those students who come to our school who need more support with either the language or other aspects of the curriculum.

Great care was taken to choose colours to promote a calming environment for both teaching and learning. It was vital that both staff and students felt at ease in the space. For the staff a new staffroom was made, as well as offices and meeting rooms, in which there are more options to relax, socialise, and work individually or collaboratively.

Special features which will add to options available to students are the purpose-built kitchen, which can be incorporated in learning, and the impressive gym, which is much closer and more convenient for little legs.

The construction of such a large and specific building never runs completely smoothly, and many lessons were learnt along the way. A project like this brings together people from so many different disciplines, each with their unique perspective. Finding what works both aesthetically and practically can be challenging, but a challenge which in this case was met with great success. This building was worth the wait. «

Social Engagement at The German International School The Hague

The German International School The Hague (DISDH) places great importance on sending students out into the world with an open mind and an open heart.



070 354 9494
www.disdh.nl

Students not only need excellent academic skills to embark on their paths after High School, but also a sense of social engagement to ensure their mark in society.

Students from Grade 8 onwards are expected to commit to 15 hours of community work each school year. The tasks and interests are wide but each activity encourages the students to look beyond their own circumstances and develop a sensitivity for others.

Making a difference

For three years, James has been working as a Cub Scout Leader for “Scouting Nederland”. He loved being a Scout and says, “I want to make sure that other children have the opportunity and experience that I did”. By taking on this responsibility, James learns how to deal with children, and is given a chance to use his Dutch skills, stepping out of the expat environment and integrating into Dutch society.

Jessica takes an active role at her church each Sunday, where she supports the religious education teachers working with young children. She loves answering their questions, gaining new and different perspectives from inquisitive young minds. Jessica has improved her organisational skills and the experience is guiding her future career. “I want to help people in life and am even thinking about becoming a teacher.”

Christopher works as a life guard at Scheveningen beach. He has trained and acquired the necessary qualifications and enjoys working in different languages—English, Dutch and German—and says “it’s interesting to work with people of different ages and backgrounds.”

Nico is involved in “Tentakel,” a cultural festival in Rotterdam, helping out at creative workshops for children in less privileged neighbourhoods. The experience has opened his eyes to the difficulties faced by others less fortunate than himself and expanded his view on politics and policy.

Improving lives

Whichever activity the student chooses, they enrich not only the lives of those they are helping but expand their own horizons and learn the importance of volunteering. «

Expanding horizons through volunteering



Utrecht, a kid's paradise

With the summer vacation upon us, finding things to do with kids in a city can be challenging for parents. Luckily, Utrecht leads the way in child-friendly hotspots that keep kids busy and parents happy.

BY DAINAHARA POLONIA

Utrecht, a city for kids of all ages

Utrecht city centre is packed with cosy and fun hangouts for both kids and their parents. Many cafés and restaurants welcome children and have even created spaces specifically for the smaller ones.

Jozef, located on the Mariaplaats, a lovely square in the beating heart of Utrecht, has a little living room with comfy seating corners, and behind the restaurant a huge area made for the little ones to have fun and play.

Just a few minutes' walk through the city centre along the canal and past the Dom Tower is *De Rechtbank* on the Korte Nieuwstraat. This hotel and restaurant has an enormous square protected by a gate where kids can run wild without parents worrying about traffic, and alongside the terrace a playground. *De Rechtbank* also organises kids' events, occasionally with a giant bouncy castle that will make parents wish they were kids again.

On the other side of town along the Weerdsuis, *Meneer Peer*, is one of the cutest kid cafés in Utrecht. While children find it tough to leave the play corner, parents are also reluctant to depart because *Meneer Peer* has some of the tastiest cakes in town. »



PHOTO: MARIËKE WIJNTJES

Summer with kids in Utrecht

- Fort Ruighoek holds events and open days throughout the summer tweetakt.nl/locaties/fort-ruigehoek
- Discover the secrets of the universe at Museum and Sterrenwacht Sonnenborgh, all summer long sonnenborgh.nl
- The Dom Tower organises a tour especially for the little ones to admire the beautiful tower and views across Utrecht. domtoren.nl/en
- Go on a hunt at castle De Haar. Kids will get a map to track down all the treasures in and around the castle. kasteeldehaar.nl/english
- Discover Utrecht's past underneath the Domplein. Take the stairs down below to explore the history of the Dom Tower and loads more. utrechtdownunder.nl/en

Experience the museums

While exploring the city centre of Utrecht, be sure not to miss the Nijntje (Miffy) Museum, Spoorwegmuseum and Museum Speelklok, with their innovative, interactive exhibitions that are both fun to look at and play with.

For something a little different, try Museum Speelklok, where music leaps out from every corner

Kids of every age should find something here; little ones will enjoy Miffy's playhouse, and older kids can explore the old train stations and trains at the Spoorwegmuseum. For something a little different, try Museum Speelklok, which takes visitors on a journey through the world of self-playing musical instruments, and during this summer you can even earn your own organ-player diploma!

Explore the neighbourhoods

Leaving behind the bustling city centre finds further child-friendly treats, like Rocking Chair on Willem van Noortstraat, a small but cool coffee place perfect for a few hours of playful fun and a bite to eat.

Situated in the same neighbourhood, Bij Guusjes has a special kids' menu and a good selection of toys and board games. Bij Guusjes—a real neighbourhood café where locals love to go for coffee—is also only a short walk from the Torteltuif, a hidden gem of a playground where kids can play safely.

Utrecht's richly diverse neighbourhoods offer unique atmospheres. One favourite area is Lombok, which is full of surprises such as the Molen de Ster, a well-preserved old mill. Be sure to also visit their petting zoo and look out for open-house days to experience



PHOTO: MUSEUM SPEELKLOK



PHOTO: EMMELY VAN MIERLO & CORNE CLEMENS

the mill in action. The mill's café serves organic juices for the kids and locally-brewed beer for the grown-ups, and has a canal-side terrace with charming views. A great place to rest after all that milling and animal-petting.

Not far away, a restaurant housed in an old toothpaste factory, *Buurten in de Fabriek*, has a great play corner and a huge terrace where kids can run around and play hide-and-seek.

Enjoy the parks, estates and forts

Sometimes kids just need to burn off all that energy. Utrecht's Julianapark and Griftpark have enough to offer the most energetic child. Think monkey bars, zip lines, cool swings and enormous sand boxes, and for quieter moments vegetable gardens and even fuzzy farm animals and birds.

Utrecht's historic forts and their surroundings are great for outdoor activities. Set in the forest between Zeist, De Bilt, Utrecht and Bunnik, Fort Rijnauwen is a cultural and historical monument and valuable natural habitat where you can walk along its footpaths immersed in nature and history.

All that nature and history can be exhausting, so stop for a pancake lunch at *Theehuis Rijnauwen*, where they seem to have thought of every pancake combination possible, sweet, savoury, or both! Or pick cherries in the lovely cherry orchard and eat them (after you have paid of course) while watching canoers on the charming river flowing past.

Less than 15 minutes by bike from the Dom, down a lovely route past beautiful boathouses with gorgeous gardens, Fort de Klop is great for a visit on a sunny day. Nearby, Lunet 1, part of the four Lunetten forts, is a smaller fort, but no less fun. Both are perfect for a day spent absorbed in nature and Dutch history.

How does greenery with a lunch café sound?
Somewhere to pick fruit and herbs while taking a break from jumping around on a playground?



PHOTO: DAINAHARA POLONIA

You can do all at De Moestuin and even spoil yourself with high tea while your kids make new friends. A great way to spend the day.

Summer in the city with kids

Summer vacation can be a blessing and a curse for parents, as kids need to be kept occupied while grown-ups need their interest sustained too. Cities, like Utrecht, can offer the solution, with plenty to do for people of all ages. Keep up to date with local newspapers and city websites for child-friendly events and hotspots in Utrecht, and your city, this summer. «

About the author

Dainahara Polonia runs the online magazine, exploreutrecht.nl, an insider's guide to the best places to eat, drink and explore in Utrecht, whether you're a local looking to check out the hottest restaurants, or a traveller trying to make the most of your stay.

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naisr.nl
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Nestled in the leafy suburb of Hilleegersberg, Nord Anglia International School Rotterdam (NAISR) was founded sixty years ago as a co-educational day school for internationally-minded expatriate and Dutch families. The school's most exciting chapter yet commenced nine months ago, when NAISR (formerly the American International School Rotterdam) became a member of Nord Anglia Education, the world's leading premium schools organisation. As Neal Dilk, Director of the school for the past seven years, says:

"Joining the Nord Anglia family in July 2018 was a momentous occasion for this international school in Rotterdam. Our ambition is to seize this wonderful opportunity by aligning the quality of the school's educational offering with NAE's global norms, whilst also retaining the warm and welcoming culture that makes the school so special and unique."

One of the school's first areas of focus was on refurbishment, with significant investment planned in the facilities ramping up through this summer. Major improvements are in progress for the playground, maker-space, reception area, and more. Meanwhile improved lighting, some fresh paint and updated signs have given the school a brightened aspect.

Mr. Dilk says, "New facilities are fantastic, and our families are delighted about these. However, the truly unique opportunity with Nord Anglia Education is in the learning opportunities it provides. Our students are instantly linked via Nord Anglia Education's Global Campus to over 60,000 other students around the world to collaborate, exchange and learn together. Additionally, NAISR teachers now have access to Nord Anglia University, a digital platform which offers access to an extensive range of professional development resources."

NAISR is currently laying the foundation and training teachers to be able to offer Nord Anglia's STEAM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics), co-developed with the world-leading Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This leading-edge educational programme trains students to tackle challenges and solve real-world problems with a broad, multi-disciplinary perspective.

Each child becomes the best version of themselves

This exciting new chapter in the school's history is a welcome addition to Rotterdam's international school offering, and there is no better place to learn more than to visit the school's brand new website naisr.nl. Also don't forget to check out the school's beloved Shark mascot, which received a fantastic makeover with just the right amount of "fiercification, according to the students!"

Nord Anglia International School Rotterdam is thrilled to be part of delivering on Nord Anglia's commitment to supporting every child in being the best they can possibly be, by delivering high quality, transformational education that goes above and beyond traditional learning. NAISR's engaging, welcoming and inclusive environment is one to watch as it continues to go from strength to strength. «

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For further support from the community, or to find out what is happening and where more information can be found, we refer you to the back page.

Acknowledging our Partners, Counsellors, Trainers & Volunteer Managers
ACCESS is grateful for many things, not the least, the work of our strong and diverse volunteer community. They do the work – but the partners invest in us so that we are able to carry out our mission to serve the international community. Should you make use of them, do mention ACCESS referred you. Should you wish to help us serve the international community and include you in our acknowledgements, get in touch with prd@access-nl.org.

17 June, Monday

Meet us at The Hague International Centre's CONNECT event on Leisure.

 www.thehagueinternationalcentre.nl/events

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Discover more



Tips from our team for Summer

• Tip from
Steve Voyce



Museum Stoomtram

Travel to by-gone eras by steam tram and ferry. First jump aboard the antique tram cum museum in Hoorn headed to Medemblik, viewing restored stations along the route. Children can participate in a “Steam Safari,” shoveling coal and delivering packages. Upon disembarkation, board the m/v Friesland headed to Enkhuizen. Your museum card is valid for this excursion!

• Tip from
Genoveva Geppart



Sail op Scheveningen

From 20 to 23 June, tall ships—historical sailing ships—come to Scheveningen. Entrance is free. You can visit the ships in the harbour, or for an exciting experience, individuals and groups can take a short cruise on one of the ships (for a fee). Find more information at sailopscheveningen.nl

Community & Media Partners

Our community partner groups and initiatives are listed below for additional support and information. Looking for something else, missing your community? Get in touch with our Helpdesk so we can help you further.

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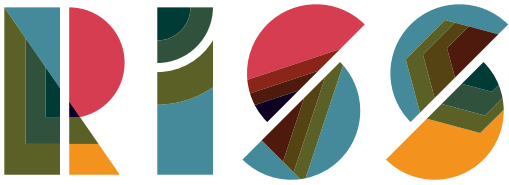
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