

Everything you would like to know before travelling to Netherlands...

The Netherlands' evolution

The Netherlands are situated in Europe, have Amsterdam for capital and it is one of the countries you have to visit. We are going to explain the history of the Netherlands to make you understand it is one of the richest in Europe. Since the Middle Ages the Netherlands have been very developed which makes it one of the richest areas in Europe. We can see it through its agriculture along with crafts and commerce, rich towns and important trading links reaching as far as Asia and North Africa. After that strong period of economical development, the Netherlands became independent at the end of the 17th century, which allowed the beginning of the country's rise as a commercial and maritime power. From their independence, the

Netherlands became one of the colonial powers of Europe. They colonized many territories such as Asia, South Africa, or the Netherlands Antilles, thanks to their powerful fleet. As we said, the Netherlands' fleet was very important, which contributed in making Rotterdam the biggest port of Europe and also a big city where the commerce has an important place. Like Rotterdam, Amsterdam was one of Europe's wealthiest trading cities.

We are sure you know that the Netherlands are famous for being below the sea level but do you know that Rotterdam is the only city with a true skyline? To finish prostitution is legal there, and it became the first nation in the world to legalize same-sex marriage in 2000, which makes the Netherlands best-known for their "liberty".

Colonies

Each European power created its own type of colony based on its own needs at the time. As we said the Netherlands colonized India because it was a very attractive place to go thanks to its exotic resources and its prime location for trade. The colonization of South Africa is linked to the India's coloni-

zation, because South Africa is situated on their route to the lucrative trade in India. The Netherlands also colonized a part of America like parts of the Caribbean, Netherlands Antilles, Brazil, Chile...



Special Shops

We said that the Netherlands are a free country, well they also allow the consumption of drugs. The Netherlands is one of the only countries where the consumption and sale of cannabis has been authorized since 1976 by the *Baan* report. A coffee shop is an establishment where the sale of cannabis for personal consumption is tolerated with some conditions; you must be at least eighteen years old and sometimes twenty-one to have to right to enter a coffee shop. A maximum of five grams per customer per day must be respected and you can't drink alcohol there since 2009. The majority of coffee shops are situated in Amsterdam and the most famous of all are "Bulldog's". These establishments are touristic places. Do you know the 105 of the 443 towns have at least one coffee shop? And that none of them are allowed to be situated near a school? Contrary to what you've heard, the Dutch are not stoned everyday! In

fact, most of the customers are not even Dutch. Moreover, the Netherlands possess an attractive place, the red-light district which is most famous for its prostitution. In the streets the women, of all nationalities

parade behind the windows of salons in which shines a red light. This is the case of the district De Wallen which is the largest and the best-known red-light district in Amsterdam.



Let's have fun

The festivals are a classic in Holland. Each year, lots of people from countries around the world come to Holland to assist to these big events. Firstly, let's talk about music festivals which are very present in this country. For example, the biggest electronic music festival in the world takes place in Holland, the Amsterdam Dance Event. Also, we have the festival named PINK POP, which is one of the greatest outdoor festivals in the world. It hosts some of the most famous pop rock stars, like the Red Hot Chilli Peppers or the Foo Fighters... The list of music festivals is so long that we can't mention them all. This shows that music holds a special place in Holland. Otherwise, we have a very good number of cultural festivals which symbolize exactly what Dutch culture is like. For example, the Bevrijdingspop festival aims to show residents freedom in Holland and how lucky they are to have a country like that. Also, cinema is also important in the Dutch culture, consequently, lots of cinema festi-

vals are organized, for example, the international festival of the film of Rotterdam.

