

Glorious Gezelligheid:

Two Days in Amsterdam

Ah, the famous Dutch *gezelligheid* – translated loosely as snug, friendly, informal and companionable, it's a quality better experienced than defined. And Amsterdam is one of the best places to gain a full understanding. Read on for your first lesson...

AVENUES & ALLEYWAYS

Start the day with a magnificent breakfast laden with cheese, p ate and eggs at window-lined **Caf e Reibach** (Brouwersgracht 139) in the Jordaan. From there, sneak a peak at the **Noordermarkt**, which hosts lively markets on Monday and Saturday mornings, before backtracking and taking in the delights on the **Prinsengracht**. Join a one-hour tour to climb the tower of the **Westerkerk** (shut Sundays) for a gorgeous view of the Canal Belt.

Stop for a pils or two at convivial brown caf e **t'Smalle** (Egelantiersgracht 12) before beginning your tour of the backstreets of the **Jordaan**, a centre for photographic arts and eclectic shops and galleries. Retail temptations include chocolate bonbons with wasabi at **Arnold Cornelis** (Elandsgracht 78; www.cornelis.nl), Dutch interior design at **Internationaal Design Centrum** (Rozengracht 215-217) and pink plastic chandeliers at **Kitsch Kitchen** (Rozengracht 8-12).

You'll have worked up enough of an appetite for lunch at snug **Van Puffelen** (Prinsengracht 377), a brown caf e popular among cashed-up professionals and intellectual types. If you can prise yourself away, call in at the **Houseboat Museum** (Prinsengracht, opposite No 296; www.houseboatmuseum.nl) for a sense of life on the water. Built in 1914, the sailing boat's interior boasts *gezellige* sleeping, living, cooking and dining quarters with all mod-cons (plus a curious slideshow of houseboat disasters).

The rest of the day should be given over to the serious art of mooching. You'd be hard pressed to find a better place than the **Negen Straatjes**. The 'nine alleys' straddling Prinsengracht, Keizergracht, Herengracht and Singel canals sit like a tic-tac-toe board in the southern reaches of the Western Canal Belt. The *straatjes* (little streets) are full of quirky shops dealing in antiques, fashions and one-offs – you'll find everything from toothbrushes to antique eyeglass frames. Among our favourite shops: **Laura Dols** (vintage clothing; Wolvenstraat 7), **Mendo** (advertising agency with its own art gallery; Berenstraat 11) and **de Kaaskamer** (cheese; Runstraat 7).

The Negen Straatjes are filled with caf es to match their divine boutiques. Lap up the canal views at **Buffet van Odette & Yvette** (Herengracht 309; www.buffet-amsterdam.nl) or try the chocolate and cake shop **Pompadour** (Huidenstraat 12). For something a little more potent, pop in for a *genever* at **De Admiraal** (Herengracht 319), the grandest of Amsterdam's tasting houses, cosy up at **De Doffer** (Runstraat 12-14) or shake down at slick **Brix** (Wolvenstraat 16).

For dinner, check out traditional **De Belhamel** (Brouwersgracht 60; www.belhamel.nl), with its canalside location and Art Nouveau interior, or **Het Papeneiland** (Prinsengracht 2), a tile-adorned caf e dating back to 1642.

It'd be plain rude not to end the night in one of the many bars of the Southern Canal Belt. Start off with a drink at amiable **De Pieper** (Prinsengracht 424) before heading to Korte Leidsedwardsstraat, where you'll find decadent **Suzy Wong** (No 45) and one-time artists' retreat **Eylders** (No 47). Near the Leidesplein, Marnixstraat offers a clutch of funky bars –

Glorious Gezelligheid:

Two Days in Amsterdam



try **Weber** (No 397), **Kamer 401** (No 401) and **Lux** (No 403).

RED LIGHT MEANS GO

After the night you've had, start the day gently in the **Vondelpark**, south of the centre, a perfect spot for people-watching. Stop for a coffee at the **Round Blue Teahouse** ('t Blauwe Theehuis; Vondelpark 5; www.blauwetheehuis.nl) and then continue your recovery with brunch at **Café Vertigo** in the Filmmuseum (Vondelpark 3; www.filmmuseum.nl). The *uitsmijter* Vertigo (basically a full cooked breakfast in a sandwich) should do the trick. Spend an hour or so poking around the memorabilia and archive films on show. With any luck, there'll be a showing in the museum's Art Deco theatre.

Once fully fortified, cross back into the centre to the **Spiegel Quarter**. Even if you have neither the inclination nor the money to buy art, luxury antiques or collectables, it is well worth taking a look at Nieuwe Spiegelstraat and its pretty extension the Spiegelgracht. Many of the shops and galleries here feel like museums in their own right. Check out the **Reflex Art Galleries** (Weteringschans 79A & 83), **Eduard Kramer** (Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 64) for Dutch antiques and homewares, **TinkerBell** (Spiegelgracht 10) for toys and **Decorativa** (Nieuwe Spiegelstraat) for vintage gifts.

From here, amble up to Singel for the famous **Bloemenmarkt** (floating flower market) before cutting west up Herengracht. As you reach Herengracht Bridge, look left for a view of Amsterdam's prettiest canal – the **Reguliersgracht**, or the Canal of the Seven Bridges. Continue on to **Museum Willet-Holthuysen** (Herengracht 605; www.willetholthuysen.nl), a sumptuously remodelled house museum dating from 1685. If pils are in order, head to **Café Schiller** (Rembrandtplein 26) and its fabulous Deco interior.

The evening holds two choices depending on your state of mind. Plunge into the **Red Light District** for a bar and café crawl (top tips: **De Sluyswacht** on Jodenbreenstraat 1, **De**

Bekeerde Suster on Kloveniersburgwal and **Lime** on Zeedijk 104). Alternatively head out of town to the Eastern Islands and bar/restaurant/cultural centre **11** (Oosterdokskade 3-5; www.ilove11.nl) for a grand interior, a convivial atmosphere and the best views in town bar none.

If you've got a good sense of gezelligheid after these two days, you're free to go home. If not, you'll just have to stay in Amsterdam till you do.

SLEEPING

Budget:

Hotel Brian (www.hotelbrian.com) Ardently shabby and relaxed joint, with fun, knowledgeable staff.

Midrange:

Seven Bridges (www.sevenbridgeshotel.nl) One of the city's loveliest little hotels on one of its loveliest canals.

Top End:

The Dylan (www.dylanamsterdam.com) A true temple of style, with sophisticated rooms in a 17th-century canal house.

For more reviews of Amsterdam accommodation, check out the Sleep section on www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation.

By Amanda Canning

For the complete guide to Amsterdam grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *Amsterdam* guide; or get right under the skin of the city with *Best of Amsterdam*. Both books are available online at shop.lonelyplanet.com.

