



Britsoc

'Serving the expat community since 1920'

WELCOME PACK



AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam is a unique city of tolerance and diversity. It has all the advantages of a big city; culture, nightlife, international restaurants, good transport - but is quiet and largely thanks to its canals, has a little road traffic. In Amsterdam your destination is never far away.

Appealing to all ages and background, Amsterdam offers plenty of free concerts and cultural events as well as popular entertainment throughout the year not to mention the wide selection of markets offering fresh local fare. The city is teeming with bar, restaurants and café though try not to confuse café with coffee shop (the latter most obvious from the rather heady aroma wafting from the doorways that doesn't resemble coffee). If it's a Cappuccino you're after then head for a café instead.

WEATHER

Typically, the weather ranges from a little around freezing in the depths of winter (sometimes cold enough to allow a spot of ice-skating on the canals) to pleasantly sunny and warm in the summer. In the spring and autumn Holland can be a bit murky and wet, although on the whole the conditions do not vary that much from a typical English climate.

CURRENCY

The Netherlands uses Euro and whilst credit cards are widely accepted in tourist establishments, always enquire first if you intend to pay by credit; particularly in small shops or markets because many shops only accept debit card transactions (Maestro). ATM machines are dotted around the city.



SAFETY

On the whole, compared to other major cities, Amsterdam is relatively safe city, and there is nothing to fear from walking in any part of the city, even in the red-light district and surrounding areas. However, as in any large city you should beware of pick pockets, particularly in stations and at tourists sights and remember that there are always cheats looking for an easy target.

LANGUAGE

Just about everyone speaks English in Amsterdam, and is obviously very proud of the fact. Many Dutch also speak German and French as well, so it is relatively easy to get by, even with the most basic of language skills. However, if you are attempting to learn the Dutch language it can sometimes be quite frustrating as, more often than not, you will be spoken to in your own tongue whether you like it or not!

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GETTING AROUND

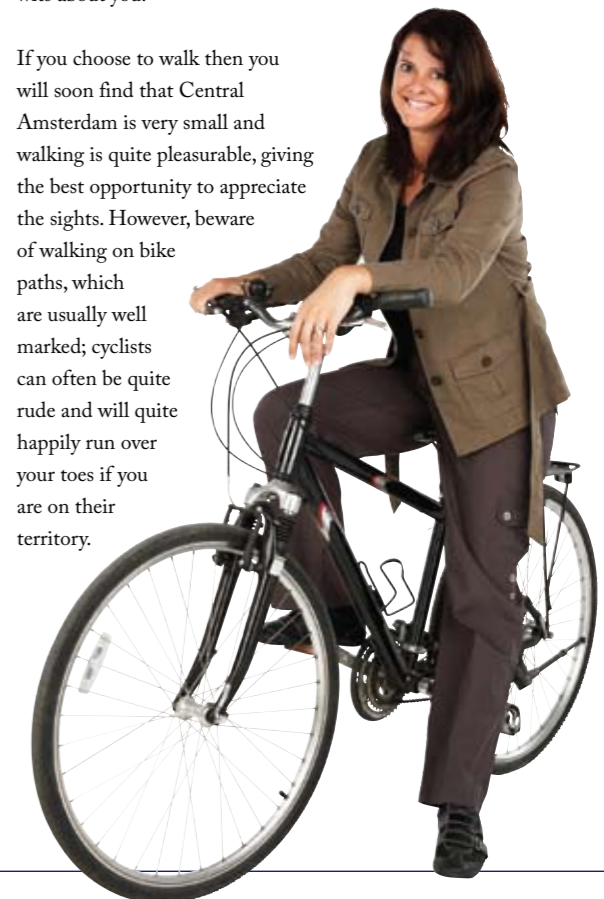
Amsterdam has excellent public transport facilities and is currently planning extending their underground system. This is likely to cause traffic disruptions for quite a few years. There are excellent facilities for cyclists, including special bike lanes, and separate traffic lights. Walking is always an option too and often the best way to see the city, which, once you get your bearings, is not nearly as big as it might seem. However, the best way to travel is by tram, all of which are generally frequent, dependable and cheap. You can buy tickets from the conductor; however, it is considerably cheaper if you buy a 'strippenkaart' from a tobacconist, post office or railway station beforehand. To pay for your journey you simply get on at the back of the tram, give the details of your journey and the conductor stamps your ticket. You can also stamp the card yourself in appropriate machines. Once stamped, a ticket is valid for an hour, regardless of how often you change tram or bus. There is a free map of all tram and bus routes in Amsterdam available from tourist offices or the GVB office in front of Central Station.

You will probably have noticed by now that the preferred mode of transport, certainly for the Dutch, is by bike and there are many places where you can hire

or buy a second hand bike at a reasonable price. However, it is really not worth spending too much money on something snazzy as bike theft is quite common, which is why most bikes you will see are on their last legs! So, for obvious reasons, lock your bike to something solid when leaving it unattended. Also, keep in mind that you are new to the city and be careful until you have mastered the road system. Seasoned Dutch cyclists can be something of a challenge to cars, pedestrians and fellow cyclists too so keep your wits about you!

If you choose to walk then you will soon find that Central Amsterdam is very small and walking is quite pleasurable, giving the best opportunity to appreciate the sights. However, beware of walking on bike paths, which are usually well marked; cyclists can often be quite rude and will quite happily run over your toes if you are on their territory.

Also, take care when crossing roads as cyclists consider themselves pedestrians in Amsterdam, so tend to ignore traffic lights. When you've mastered the dangers of those on two wheels then you will also need to consider the trams. Many pedestrianised streets, particularly in the Centre, also have tram lines running straight down the middle so be aware of your surroundings at all times, particularly if you have children with you. The main rule is - if you hear a bell then move out of the way fast!



Britsoc Membership

Whether you have just moved to the Netherlands or have been here for some time, sometimes it can be hard to re-start your life in a new or unfamiliar country. Becoming accustomed to the culture, familiar with the area and comfortable with meeting new people can be difficult if not a little intimidating! That is where membership of the British Society can help - by providing a forum for you to meet other people in the same situation, thus enabling you to get more out of your life in Holland and helping you settle into your new environment.

The Society offers social and educational activities and welcomes all English speakers to its extensive range of events. Regular activities range from weekly sporting events such as badminton and squash or even Scottish dancing, to less physically demanding but equally enjoyable events, such as restaurant visits, pub nights, film nights, bridge, Dutch conversation and play reading. The list is endless. There are also several annual events: our very successful annual Burn's Night, followed by Shakespeare's birthday celebration, the local cellar wine tasting, Family picnic, Blind Date, Amsterdam's own Guy Fawkes Night and last, but not least, our spectacular Christmas Ball. We welcome new members of all ages and tastes so, whatever your interests, Britsoc aims to offer "something for everyone".

The Society is a pro-active and multi-cultural organization run by its members for its members. The committee and key contacts are all volunteers and are always looking for new blood! Anybody can be on the committee, just as long as they are a member of the Society. This can be a great way to get yourself involved in the Dutch way of life and meet like-minded individuals, whilst giving something back to your new community. Whether you want to get involved in organizing one of the more regular activities or you have your own idea for a new addition to the events calendar, the committee is always there to give advice and support - you can involve yourself as little or as much as you like and will be a welcome addition to the existing team



WHY JOIN THE BritSoc?

Established in 1920, BritSoc (The British Society of Amsterdam) is open to people of every nationality looking to meet new friends, socialise and take part in the many activities we organise where the common currency of communication is the English language.

BritSoc is a pro-active and multi-cultural organisation that has something to suit all tastes and all ages. We offer you the opportunity to meet new people, and also get more out of your life here in the Netherlands. Whether you are here permanently or only for a short time, BritSoc offers a wide range of social and sporting activities on a weekly and monthly basis:

SPORTS & GAMES

Badminton, Golf, Football, Sailing,

Squash, Cricket, Yoga, Bridge, Culture, Literature & Language, Play Reading, Book Clubs, Cinema Club, Writers Circle, Scottish Country Dancing.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Coffee Morning, World Cuisine, Friday Night Pub, Play Groups, Mothers and Others, Read me a Story.

Annual Events

Blind Date, Jazz Cruise, Summer Party, St. Georges Day Party, Grand Family Picnic, Excursions to the WW1 Battlefields, Bonfire Night, and last, but not least, our fabulous Christmas Ball.

WHAT DO I RECEIVE AS A MEMBER?

Members receive a free monthly bulletin packed with information about what's coming up that month and a full range of discounts to many of our events.

HOW MUCH IS MEMBERSHIP?

Joining the BritSoc costs just €30 for an individual and €55 for a joint or family membership. Due to the inevitability of members joining and renewing throughout the year, there will now be official periods in which you can pay your annual subscription. Your annual subscription entitles you to a full year's membership regardless of when you pay. Payments made in a particular quarter will be valid until the end of the month of that quarter in the following year. BritSoc is also an annual supporter of Amsterdam British Consul's Benevolent Fund as well as a number of charities.

HOW DO I JOIN?

You can join on-line at www.britsoc.nl or Write to us at
The British Society of Amsterdam
Postbus 7429
1007 JK Amsterdam