



Castle & Hanse Tour - the Heart of Holland

This tour combines everything that makes the Netherlands worthwhile visiting: beautiful castles, impressive remains of the historic Aera of the Hanse, picturesque rivers valleys and villages and nature in abundance in some of the most beautiful forests of the country.

Amsterdam Monday/Thursday 15 km / 10 miles

Arrival on board the Elodie in Amsterdam where the crew will welcome you with a nice cup of tea or coffee. Introduction to the crew, the rules on board and your personal bike. After this we will make a short tour through the rural area of North Amsterdam, so that you can get comfortable with your bike and make adjustments if required. In the evening, after dinner, your guide will take you for a walk through Amsterdam.

Amsterdam – Wijk bij Duurstede Tuesday/Friday 44 km / 27.5 miles

During breakfast, the Elodie will sail with you to Breukelen where the group starts today's ride. Here you have a chance to see the original „Brooklyn Bridge“. It looks „slightly“ different to the one you may already know. But in fact, Brooklyn was named after this pretty village when Dutch immigrants settled in America. Breukelen is also home of the impressive Castle Nijenrode. The estate which dates back to the 13th century hosts the Nyenrode Business University, so it is not open to the public. But it sure makes a fine photo stop. Along our route through De Bilt, Zeist and Langbroek we will pass an impressive number of fine estates, villas and other castles like „Slot Zeist“ and „Kasteel Sterkenburg“ until we reach today's destination Wijk bij Duurstede where the Elodie stays for the night. During our evening walk through the picturesque old town you can have a first glimpse of „Kasteel Duurstede“ which we will visit the next morning.

Wijk bij Duurstede – Arnhem Wednesday/Saturday 45 km / 27 miles

After breakfast we have the opportunity to pay a visit to the Castle of Duurstede (Kasteel Duurstede). It is not only one of the oldest medieval castles in the Netherlands — it is also truly a fairytale location. Situated on an island and surrounded by a park, it is accessibly exclusively by a drawbridge. Its' towers and the spacious courtyard are still impressive today, and so are some of the trees in the park which are up to 150 years old. From here we follow our route through the picturesque Lower Rhine Valley for a scenic ride to the city of Arnhem. The area is also well-known for its strategic position during World War II. A number of decisive battles were fought along the Rhine of which the Battle of Arnhem is probably the one best known. If time allows we can pay a visit to the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Oosterbeek, just outside Arnhem.



Arnhem — Zutphen Thursday/Sunday 42 km / 26 miles

We are leaving the Rhine Valley and continue our journey, following the IJssel River. Along the meandering stream and the outskirts of the National Park Veluwezoom with vast stretches of heath and forest. With a bit of luck we see some wildlife here, such as sheep, deer, heck cattle and a big variety of birds. The region is also home to some nice castles. There is the beautifully kept Kasteel Rosendael in the village of Rozendaal, or Kasteel Middachten in De Steeg, where we want to take a break today. We will then cross the river towards Doesburg and Bronkhorst, the oldest village of the Netherlands. With its cobblestone alleys, thatched roofs and neatly kept gardens it is surely also one of the prettiest. Little terraces and cafes invite for coffee and tea. From here we carry on to Zutphen where the Elodie will be moored for the night.

Zutphen — Zwolle Friday/Monday 53 km / 32 miles

We continue our route on the Western shores of the IJssel River again and carry on up North to Deventer where we will cross the river into town and stop for coffee. Deventer is famous not only for books but also for cakes, so you may want to take the chance and get a taste of it. Back on the Western shores again we follow our route as far as Olst and further on to the pretty village of Wijhe with an old corn mill from 1703 in the heart of the village. At Wijhe we will take the ferry to the Western shores and cycle to the little town of Hattem which is worthwhile visiting, too, before we reach our destination today, the old Hanse town of Zwolle.

Zwolle — Zwartsluis Saturday/Tuesday 20 km / 12 miles

In the morning there will be free time for exploring Zwolle. The city of Zwolle dates back to the Middle Ages, its historic fortifications and gates, numerous museums and the nice cafes and terraces invite for a stroll or simply to sit down and enjoy the lively atmosphere. The museum „de Fundatie“ invites for more insight into the history of the area. Along the scenic „Zwarte Water“ we continue to the old Hanse town of Hasselt. Hasselt dates back to the Middle Ages when it was an important religious centre as it is situated at the junction of two major pilgrims' routes. It boasts with more than 70 National monuments. Today the city is also called „little Amsterdam“ because of its similar arrangement of canals, bridges and locks in the old town. We finish today's tour in Zwartsluis where the Elodie is waiting for us.



Zwartsluis – Giethoorn – Zwartsluis Sunday/Wednesday 50 km/31 miles

Zwartsluis is the entrance to a unique area of fairy tale scenery, nature preserve and water sports Eldorado around the former fishing village of Giethoorn — today known as the „Dutch Venice“. While the Elodie will stay in Zwartsluis, we will go on a round course through the National Park Weerribben-Wieden with a longer stop in Giethoorn for lunch and a possible boat tour there. Giethoorn is surely one of the prettiest villages in the Netherlands — if not the prettiest of all. This is partly due to the fact that in the old, central part of the village no cars are allowed. You can either walk or cycle among the traditional thatched houses, restaurants and tourist shops and the pretty, well-kept gardens or sail along one of the old, hand-dug canals. 176 bridges connect the numerous islands amongst each other — and with the main land. The „Binnenpad“, a walking/cycling path, runs right through the village. From Giethoorn we continue through the National Park Weerribben-Wieden. With its 10.000 hectares it is one of the largest continuous bogs in Europe and home to various rare species, like the copper butterfly and the otter.

Zwartsluis – Elburg Monday/Thursday 35 km / 21 miles

Leaving Zwartsluis we will cross the Zwarte Water at Genemuiden and continue to the former Hanse town of Kampen which is beautifully located on one of the nicest river fronts in the country, with an impressive skyline with historical buildings, gateways and churches. The city dates back to the 13th century and still shows plenty of monuments. At the Koggewerf you can see the famous „Kamper Kogge“, a reconstructed Kogge ship — witness of the golden Aera of the Hanse. From Kampen our route will take us along the Drontermeer and through beautiful forests to Elburg. After diner we will see some of the remains of the old fortifications in this old Hanse town.

Elburg – Spakenburg Tuesday/Friday 36 km / 22 miles

From Elburg the Elodie will bring us Harderwijk, a still bustling former Hanse town with plenty of shops, restaurants, terraces and cafes. From here our route will take us into the beautiful forests and heathland on the northern outskirts of the famous Veluwe. At the Schaapskooi Ermelo we will see an authentic traditional sheep barn. It serves as a shelter for the hundreds of sheep that live in the area. In the nearby visitor centre you can follow the track of the flock on a displayed map and learn almost everything there is to know about sheep. Through forests, meadows and heather we continue to the nice little town of Putten. If time allows we may be able to climb the 235 steps up the „Bostoren“ (= forest tower) which allows a great scenic view and surprises with a true little wood on top of it. From here we head west again, back to the waterfront. At „Strand Nulde“ we may have a nice cup of coffee before we continue our scenic route along the dyke to Spakenburg where the Elodie is waiting.



Spakenburg – Amsterdam Wednesday/Saturday 30 km / 18.5 miles

The Elodie will again sail with us during breakfast to Huizen where we start our final cycling day back into Amsterdam, our home port. Through Naarden, Muiderberg and Muiden we ride into the capital with its unique way of life. We will finally meet the Amstel river which we will follow into the heart of the city. The Elodie will welcome us back at the Oosterdok. Amsterdam is certainly well worth exploring because of its many attractions: a boat tour around the canals, the Van Gogh museum and the Rijksmuseum; or just savour the atmosphere and enjoy the colourful procession of people strolling by, while sitting at a sidewalk café. In the evening you can choose a restaurant to your liking from the many excellent eateries to be found in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam - Thursday/Sunday

It's time to say good-bye. We take leave of you after breakfast.

Please note: Daily mileages and tour planning may change according to weather or other circumstances.