

## IJsselmeer Grand Tour - 10 days

So this is Holland! Now here's a challenge for you: Come to the Netherlands and cycle 439 km all the way around Lake IJsselmeer! On the way, take in the beautiful scenery and learn a big lesson in Dutch history. This is a route along the loveliest and quietest roads and bike tracks a cyclist could possibly hope for. The historical landscape around the former Zuiderzee, the many old fishing and trading towns on its shores all have a story to tell. This tour in northern Holland is marked by diverse and attractive scenery. As on all our carefree cycle tours, we provide luggage transfer and excellent accommodation.

### Day 1: Arrival in Huizen

Free parking at the hotel. If you are travelling by public transport, the journey from Amsterdam Airport should take under 90 minutes. The train will take you as far as Naarden-Bussum. From there, it's a short bus ride into Huizen.

### Day 2: Huizen > Amsterdam, ~37 km

Your first stop today is at the fortified medieval town of Naarden, built in a star shape fort to enable better use of cannons, the moat and walls have been very well preserved. Further down the route you will arrive at the town of Muiden, situated at the mouth of the River Vecht. Home to the most visited castle in the Netherlands, Muiden Castle was built on a moat in 1280 by Count Floris V of Holland to collect a toll from passing ships on the River Vecht. With the interior restored to how it looked in the 17th century it is certainly worth a visit. Then Amsterdam awaits you.

### Day 3: Amsterdam > Hoorn, ~61 km

There's so much to see and do in Amsterdam! Make sure you have an early start. Have you been to see the Gallery of Honor at the Rijksmuseum since the make-over? Why not pop in for a quick visit before you hop back on your bike and plunge into peaceful countryside. Waterland awaits you with wet meadows, wooden bridges and windswept reeds and rushes. Waterlandmuseum "De Speelklok" in the pretty village of Monnickendam explains the history of this extraordinary cultural landscape. Then cycle up the shore of Lake Markermeer to friendly Volendam. The quaint stone houses in the distinctive heart of the catholic fishing village seem to have been drawn up without an organized street plan. "De Dijk", overlooking the harbor, is lined with souvenir shops, pavement cafes and restaurants. Just around the corner is the pretty village of Edam. For centuries, small, round, salty cheeses produced by dairy farmers in neighboring polders were shipped out of Edam and exported all over Europe. For six weeks in summer a traditional Wednesday-morning cheese-market is put on for tourists by local volunteers (10.30 -12.30 hrs.). At the end of the day, you'll reach the lovely, historical town of Hoorn. Like Enkhuizen (see day 4), it has a history in whaling, shipbuilding, fishery and - most importantly - shipping and trade. Both towns housed branches ("chambers") of the Dutch East India Company.

### Day 4: Hoorn > Medemblik, ~49 km

Continue up the shore of Lake IJsselmeer, atop the old sea dike, to the beautiful town of Enkhuizen. Don't miss Zuiderzee Museum which tells the story of the days when ships from the Zuiderzee sailed the seven seas trading in bulbs and spices; the days when Holland dominated world trade and the Dutch East India Company was the first-ever multinational. This period is known as the Golden Age and roughly spans the 17th century. The museum has also combined a collection of historical architecture with demonstrations of traditional trades. On the second stretch of today's lake-side route, you'll see more crop fields, orchards and windmills before you reach Medemblik. It's an old town, with a marina, a bakery museum and a steam engine museum.

### Day 5: Medemblik > Makkum, ~59 km

Today is the day you cross the Afsluitdijk! Please note : the cycle path over this IJsselmeer dike (32 km) is closed until 2025. But there will be a free bus transfer over the dike (bikes included, each hour). You cycle through Wieringermeer Polder (created 1927 -1934) to the starting point of the dam at Den Oever. The closure dam is 34 km long and was completed in 1932. It cut off the Zuiderzee from the North Sea. This was necessary to stop the sea from flooding towns on the Zuiderzee. Once the dike was in place, the sea had become a lake. By 1940 the saltwater had been replaced by fresh water from the River IJssel. Except for the eel, none of the Zuiderzee fish survived. A new fresh-water fish population replaced them. On the other side of the closure dam, you will find yourself in Friesland province in the town of Makkum.

### Day 6: Makkum > Oudemirdum/Rijs, ~47 km

### Services:

9 nights in 3\*\*\* and 4\*\*\*\* hotels  
 9x breakfast  
 luggage transfer to each hotel (1 piece per person)  
 detailed tour description with maps and information  
 GPS tracks on request  
 service hotline  
 tourist taxes

### additional services:

extra night, single, BnB, Amsterdam	180 €
extra night, double, BnB, Amsterdam	105 €
theft insurance for the bike	27 €
theft insurance for the e-bike	54 €
rental bike	118 €
helmet	10 €
bike accident service	36 €
electric bike	244 €
own bike	0 €

### Price:



The people of Friesland have their own language (a proper language, not a dialect) closely related to English. When they say butter, bread and green cheese in Frisian, it sounds like English and not like Dutch "boter, brood en groene kaas". You will find bi-lingual road signs and local Frisian specialties such as "Fryske Dumkes" (hazelnut biscuits). Drift south along a string of interesting old villages of which Hindeloopen is a favorite. It is famous for its colorful traditional costumes and painted furniture. At the village of Workum, stop to consider for a minute that for 250 years, up until the Second World War, fishermen from this town caught eel only to sell it... in England. They even had their own mooring places on the Thames. Today, like Makkum, the place is better known for its pottery.

**Day 7: Oudemirdum > Zwartsluis, ~65 km**

In the morning, you will cycle through Gaasterland, undulating and woody, to your first port of call, the picturesque town of Lemmer, a favorite with boaters in summer. Next, it's full steam ahead to a World Heritage Site: Wouda steam-driven pumping station has been operational since 1920 and was used to drain a lake. For centuries, windmills took care of water management in the Netherlands before steam engines took over. Nowadays most of our 1600 pumping stations are electrically powered. In the afternoon, nature lovers will bask in the beauty of Weerribben-Wieden National Park where water, reeds and rushes dominate the landscape. It is said to be the most valuable marshland of north-western Europe.

**Day 8: Zwartsluis > Harderwijk, ~62 km**

After exploring Zwartsluis, popular with boaters and other water sports enthusiasts, you will set off atop the old Kamperzeedijken (Kampen sea dikes) to the marvelous town of Kampen. It has one of the best-preserved town centers in the country. Check out the town gates on the River IJssel side of town. Kampen was a member of the Hanseatic League, a northern European alliance of trading guilds in the 13th-17th centuries. Their main aim was to ensure safe passage for travelling merchants. They also helped each other with information, knowledge, contacts and privileges. This network generated income, allowing merchants to invest in culture and architecture. Perhaps this explains why Hansa towns, centuries on, are so attractive to tourists. The River IJssel, which emptied into Zuiderzee Sea, counted several Hansa communities on its banks. In the afternoon, pick up the route again and follow the fringes of Veluwe Forest down to Harderwijk. Just think, this was once a bustling fishing town on the Zuiderzee and now it stands on a lake overlooking a polder...

**Day 9: Harderwijk > Huizen, ~49 km**

Set those wheels in motion and pedal along the shores of Randmeren lakes. Arkemheen-Eemland is wide open, empty and a National Heritage Landscape. The area was surrounded by dikes in the year 1360 to stop crop fields from being flooded by the sea. Arkemheen polder is special because the original lots are still intact. The lots are divided by curvy creeks, remnants of Zuiderzee tidal streams. Some plant species still recall the influence of salt water. Part of the polder is being preserved as a bird habitat for "Natura 2000". The visitors' center has more information. Should you have an abiding interest in the Age of Steam, you may like to visit steam-driven pumping station Hertog Reijnout. It controlled water levels in the low-lying polder from 1883, taking over from a windmill with the same name.

**Day 10: Departure or extension**

After breakfast, it's time to go home.

