The International Welcome Center North (IWCN) is a one-stop shop for international people living and coming to live in the provinces of Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe.

We offer services in three areas:

• **Streamlined government formalities**
  Residence permits and municipal registration and BSN

• **Information**
  Practical information and referrals to reliable service providers

• **Social activities**
  A chance to start building a social and/or business network

Feel free to contact us by telephone or e-mail, or come by for a visit. We are open five days per week from 10:00 to 17:00 at:

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9711 HL Groningen
The Netherlands

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For more information on the IWCN, its services, and further information about all the topics included in this booklet, please visit www.iwcn.nl or contact us directly (via phone or email).
INTRODUCTION

The International Welcome Center North (IWCN) aims to better serve the working and living needs of the international community in the Northern Netherlands with a combined information and services location as well as streamlined formality procedures.

All international residents of the three Northern provinces, who come from anywhere in the world, are welcome to use the information services and join in on the social activities and events of the IWCN.

The IWCN staff are available to assist with any and all queries. As examples, do you have any questions about how to bring your car or your pet or about other practical matters? Do you want to know where you can obtain various professional services in English or other languages? Just ask the knowledgeable and friendly IWCN staff.

Are you ready to start building your social network in the Northern Netherlands? Then come and join an IWCN event or activity to make the first connections.

Do you want to learn about Dutch culture and customs or find out about the Dutch labor market? You can attend the IWCN workshops that are offered throughout the year.
The North of the Netherlands is spread over one-fifth of the area of the Netherlands, despite only consisting of one-tenth of the population. It consists of the three northern provinces of Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe and is the least densely populated region of the Netherlands, with a total population of more than 1,718,000.

The North of the Netherlands is a stronghold in various sectors of the Dutch economy. These include agri-food and bio-based industries, chemical industries, oil and gas industries, data centers, life sciences, offshore wind technology, and water technology.

According to the individual provincial statistics, there were approximately 45,000 foreigners living in the Northern Netherlands in 2017, of which almost 24,000 were calculated in Groningen, about 13,000 in Friesland, and a further 9,000 in Drenthe.
Climate

Temperatures tend to be slightly cooler than the rest of the Netherlands, due to the northerly position; however, this difference is marginal. Temperatures during the winter tend to be above zero during the daytime, although cold snaps occur at some point every year, and - although extreme - temperatures may reach as low as -10°C.

Summer average highs are around the 22°C mark, but temperatures over 30°C do occur occasionally. As with the rest of the Netherlands, the northern regions experience their fair share of rain, often unexpectedly, so carrying waterproof clothing or an umbrella can be helpful.
Multilingualism

When travelling across the Netherlands, you will notice that the Dutch are very adept at speaking foreign languages, and most can at least understand English. However, as you reach the more rural parts of the countryside, fewer people are able to respond in English. In cities and villages close to cities, on the other hand, most people will be able to help you in English.

Written documents are only occasionally available in English. More often than not, official documents will only be available in Dutch. Furthermore, many companies’ websites are also only available in Dutch.

In the border regions in east Groningen and Drenthe, you may find that German is the preferred second language over English, although this is far less common among younger generations.

Also, many regions of the northern Netherlands have their own distinct dialects, such as “Gronings” (in Groningen) or “Drèents” (in Drenthe). The province of Friesland even has its own officially recognized language – Frisian.

Regional Sources

The Northern Times (northerntimes.nl) publishes daily stories covering the most important regional news, including economic and business developments. The site also features an events calendar, pieces by internationals in their own words about their experiences living in the north, and stories about Dutch culture and traditions.

Here and Now in Groningen (hereandnow.nl) is an online personal platform recommendation agenda that allows you to access diverse cultural, networking and sport events in Groningen. Here & Now lets you choose events based on your own preferences, genres or even international-friendliness.

At Home in Groningen (athomeingroningen.com) is a website aimed at providing information on housing in Groningen for international students. It also gives information on what people should know about arranging accommodations in the region.
Language Course Options

It is highly recommended to learn Dutch, even though Dutch people usually speak very good English. In the Northern Netherlands, you might have problems communicating with older people, and the locals in general will really appreciate if you make an effort to speak Dutch. It will also help you in your daily life and with integrating into the community.

There are many types of language courses available, from home tutoring to evening classes and intensive courses. Language schools that have been established for more than ten years are:

- Centro de Estudios (Leeuwarden)
- Dagnall Talen Instituut (Assen)
- Eurolangues Taleninstituut (Leeuwarden)
- University of Groningen Language Center (Groningen)
- Volksuniversiteit (Groningen)
- Ziggurat Taaltrainingen (Groningen)

Social networking groups will also offer notices and information on local groups meeting for Dutch conversation practice.

Contact the IWCN to learn about other possibilities.
OFFICIAL MATTERS

Obtaining a Residence/ Work Permit

A residence work permit is arranged through immigration services (IND); the type of work permit is dependent upon your visa and stated purpose for being in the Netherlands. Refer to the IWCN website for further information (www.iwcn.nl).

Registering with the Local Municipality and Obtaining a BSN

Registering at the municipality to obtain your BSN: registering your vital details and address with the local municipal government (the municipality or gemeente) is required within five days of moving to the Netherlands.

What is a BSN?

A BSN is a Burgerservicenummer, or Citizen Service Number. It is necessary for several reasons, some of which are to:

1. Open a bank account
2. Get set up with HR at your place of employment in order to get paid
3. Obtain health insurance (see page 77)
4. Get a mobile phone or buy a car
5. Register for social benefits (such as employment benefits or child benefits; see pages 17 to 21)
6. File your tax return (see page 15)
Documents you need to have to obtain your BSN include:

- Municipal registration form
- A legalized copy of your birth certificate
  
  o An apostille is an international certification comparable to a notarization in domestic law; it normally supplements a local notarization of the document. These are only available to citizens from countries that are part of the Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement for Legalization for Foreign Public Documents
  
  o For those from countries not part of the Hague Convention treaty (for example, Canada), documents need to be legalized twice – once by the Ministry of Justice or Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the relevant country and then again by the Consulate of the receiving state (in this case, the Netherlands).

- Passport (original and copies) and visa (if applicable)
- Proof of address – such as a signed lease agreement, bill of sale for a house purchase, or written permission to live with someone (for the permission form, ask the IWCN)
- If applicable
  
  o Original AND legalized copies of your
    
    - Marriage certificate
    - Adoption certificate
    - Divorce certificate

See the government "Netherlands and You" website (netherlandsandyou.nl) for more information on the legalization requirements for different countries.

**Receiving the BSN**

Knowledge migrants, their families, and others who are employed by recognized companies in the North of the Netherlands AND who live in a recognized municipality can have the IWCN arrange a meeting with the municipality to obtain their BSN. If you have queries regarding this process, please contact the IWCN.

When you do receive your BSN, it will be given to you on a document, which should be considered as part of your personal portfolio. Thereafter, the BSN is shown on your health cards, Dutch driver's license, and any correspondence from the belastingdienst. Any one of these, plus a photo ID, should serve as proof of your BSN.
Dutch Tax System

For an expat, the Dutch tax system is especially complicated. The Netherlands can take more than 50% of your salary for taxes. Your personal situation (type of work, partner’s work status, residency status and other assets and earnings – particularly from abroad) will affect your tax status. You may be filing a tax return in your home country and so will have to deal with double taxation agreements.

If you live or work in the Netherlands, or if your family is based here, you are considered to be a ‘resident taxpayer’ from the first day you are here. If you live abroad but receive income that is taxable in the Netherlands, you are generally a ‘non-resident taxpayer’. Non-residents can also apply to be treated as residents for tax purposes (in order to gain access to Dutch deductible items). A category of partial non-resident taxpayers covers those eligible for what is referred to as the 30% ruling. As a resident taxpayer, you are taxed on your assets worldwide.
The tax authorities issue different types of tax forms:

- **P form**: The most common tax form for those who are in a regular employment situation and have resided in the Netherlands the entire year.

- **M form**: For those who arrived in the Netherlands during the year and became a resident or for those who were residents and left the Netherlands during the year, this form may be most beneficial because of the way the Dutch wage and income tax are calculated.
  
  - The tax for wage and income is calculated through four progressive tax brackets. The higher your income, the higher your tax bracket. There is a wage tax that is withheld from your salary. This is levied on the basis of your estimated annual salary, which is then calculated back to a monthly amount. So, if you have only worked for half a year in the Netherlands, your gross annual salary will be lower than estimated, and the wage tax withheld will be too high. An income tax return will result in a rebate of this wage tax.
  
  - Also, the national insurance contributions take up the biggest part of the first and second tax brackets. If you have only lived and worked in the Netherlands for part of the year, you may be exempt from national insurance contributions for the full year or part of the year.

- **C form**: For non-residents who have had Dutch-sourced income during the year.

- **W form**: For those who have had income from self-employment.

- **F form**: For relatives of a deceased person.

There are many expat financial specialists who can complete the tax forms for you or provide other consultant services. Refer to the back of this guide for references. The official tax service is the Belastingdienst - www.belastingdienst.nl

Their website also has information in English. (tinyurl.com/yaxxsm4f)

The Dutch fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31. Beginning in February, the tax authorities mail notices to submit your income tax return, which generally has to be submitted before April 1st. If you receive the tax form much later than February, a different submission date will be applicable. This date will be mentioned on the form. In general, tax returns are submitted digitally, except the M form, which must still be filed on paper in the year of migration. The deadline for the tax return is generally April 1st, but for the M form, it is July 1st. If you are not able to file before April 1st,
you can request an extension, if your request is within a certain time. For directions on how to file for an extension, go to tinyurl.com/ybuh88yo.

For directions on filing your tax return digitally, see tinyurl.com/ybdrrrec.

In the year of arrival and in the year of departure, filing a tax return may result in a substantial rebate.

To file a return, you will need a digital signature or DigiD (www.digid.nl). If you don’t have either of these, you will need the services of a tax consultant. The DigiD is essentially a personal login that you use with all government agencies. A DigiD allows you to make a few transactions, such as paying parking fines or applying for permits, over the internet. Security authentications differ according to the sensitivity of information in transit.

**Partners**

Where possible, partners are taxed individually, but if only one partner works, the other partner is generally entitled to a refund of a general tax credit, and deductibles can be apportioned to take advantage of tax credits. Unmarried couples may qualify as tax partners under certain circumstances, such as if they have a child or own a home together. Details are listed on the website of the *Belastingdienst* (www.belastingdienst.nl).

**Mortgages and Tax Implications**

When arranging a mortgage, it is important to look at the whole picture: interest, cost of life insurance, savings plan and investment accounts. If you are intending to sublet your house, you may need to pay off a substantial part of the mortgage to get permission from the lender. When your interest rate comes up for renewal, it is important to check that it is still competitive.

Tax implications include:

- Interest payments are tax-deductible if the property is your primary residence and the loan is used for acquisition of the house.
- There is no capital gains tax in the Netherlands, but increases in the value may impact your mortgage relief if and when you use the profits to buy another house in the Netherlands.
- Tax is levied on the deemed rental value of the house (WOZ) determined by the local authority. Expenses in financing the purchase of a house are tax-deductible.
30% Tax Ruling

The 30% facility is a tax incentive for employees who are recruited from abroad who bring specific skills to the Netherlands. Such employees are considered “extraterritorial” employees. Under this ruling, the employer may provide 30% of the wages as an allowance, including compensation for the additional extraterritorial costs of the employee’s temporary stay in the Netherlands. This allowance is tax-free and has a maximum term of eight years.

Scarcity, Specific Expertise

If an employer recruits an employee from abroad, this person is considered an incoming employee. If this employee has expertise that is unavailable or scarce on the Dutch labor market and has lived more than 150 km from the Dutch border for the past 24 months, the 30% facility for incoming employees will apply.

In assessing whether the above is the case, the Tax and Customs Administration (Belastingdienst) takes the following factors into account:

- the employee’s level of education
- the employee’s relevant experience
- the remuneration level of the position in the Netherlands in relation to the remuneration level in the employee’s country of origin

Application of the 30% facility for incoming employees requires the permission of the Tax and Customs Administration. The employer and the incoming employee will have to file a joint request to this end. The application, called “Application Income tax and national insurance 30% facility 2018”, is in English and can be downloaded on the Belastingdienst website (tinyurl.com/y7fr739v).

As of first of January 2019, the Dutch government will reduce the current term of the 30% Ruling from eight years to five years for all of the eligible recipients.
Seconded to the Netherlands by an International Group

If an employee is seconded to the Netherlands by an international group, this may involve scarce, specific expertise without the above factors having to be assessed. In that case, the employee should fulfill the following three requirements:

- the employee has been seconded to the Netherlands as part of a rotation scheme within an international group.
- the employee holds a middle or senior management position within this group.
- the employee has at least two and a half years’ experience within this group.

Change of Withholding Agent for Employees from Abroad

If an employee changes jobs, the 30% facility may be continued as usual. This will then require a joint request from the employee and his or her new employer. In this context, the period between the old and the new employment must not exceed three months. In this request, the new employer must demonstrate that the employee still fulfills the condition of scarce, specific expertise.
Benefits (Toeslagen)

For more detailed information, see iwcn.nl

There are a few benefits for which you may be eligible while living in the Netherlands. A benefit is an amount paid directly to your bank account from the Tax Service for a particular purpose. Whether you are eligible for these benefits and what the amount would be depend on a number of factors. The requirements may vary from year to year.

On the Belastingdienst site, you will find some information in English about various benefits for which you might be eligible. The trial calculation, however, is only in Dutch. Great care should be taken in applying for these benefits, so that there should be no risk of erroneously receiving funds you will have to pay back. Consulting a professional tax firm is recommended.

Health Insurance Benefit (Zorgtoeslag)

Some of the eligibility factors for 2018 are (can vary from year to year):

- you are older than 18 years
- you are covered by Dutch health insurance
- your gross annual income does not exceed € 28,720, if you live alone (amounts adjusted annually)
- if you have an ‘benefit-partner’*, your combined annual income does not exceed € 35,996 (amounts adjusted annually)
- you have Dutch nationality or are in possession of a valid residence permit
- your capital does not exceed a certain amount

However, if you are a foreign student and only in the Netherlands for the purpose of studying and are not working, you are not required to purchase Dutch health insurance. To determine if Dutch health insurance actually is mandatory for you, visit zorgwijzer.nl (tinyurl.com/ydehhfrs). If Dutch health insurance is not required, you are not eligible for the health care benefit. See the Belastingdienst for more on this information (tinyurl.com/ya6n7oaj)
Rent Benefit (*Huurtoeslag*)

Some of the eligibility factors for 2018 are (can vary from year to year):

- you are older than 18 years
- you pay the rent
- you reside in an independent living space
- you pay the rent and can prove this with bank statements
- you (and your ‘benefit-partner’*) are registered with the municipality at that address
- you (and your ‘benefit-partner’*) have Dutch nationality or are in possession of a valid residence permit
- your rent, income and combined capital do not exceed a certain amount. See the *Belastingdienst* site: (tinyurl.com/y7tada7n)

Childcare Benefit (*Kinderopvangtoeslag*)

You should apply for the child card benefit within three months after the month your child goes to a child care center for the first time. Waiting too long may cause you to miss out on the benefit. Some of the eligibility factors for 2018 are (can vary from year to year):

- you (and your partner) work, study, or are enrolled in an integration course at a certified organization
- the daycare center or child minder is registered
- the child is registered at your address
- you have a written contract with the daycare center or child minder or you have terminated a contract
- your child has not yet started secondary education
- you (or your ‘benefit-partner’*) pay for the day care yourselves
- you receive the child budget allowance
- you (and your ‘benefit’-partner’*) have Dutch nationality or are in possession of a valid residence permit or work permit
Child Budget Benefit (*Kindgebonden Budget*)

The child benefit is funds from the government meant to cover some expenses of raising a child. If you live or work in the Netherlands and have a child or children under 18, you will receive the Dutch child benefit. This is paid by the SVB (also known as *Sociale Verzekeringsbank*, similar to "social security office"). Some of the eligibility factors for 2018 are (can vary from year to year):

- you have one or more children younger than 18
- you receive ‘kinderbijslag’ (child benefit).
- your combined income does not exceed a certain amount. The income limit depends on the number of children.
- you have Dutch nationality or possess a valid residence permit
- your combined capital does not exceed a certain amount

If your child is 16 or 17 and you don’t receive ‘kinderbijslag’, you may still be eligible for child budget. For more information in English on child budget, look on the site of the SVB: (tinyurl.com/ybstexop).

*PLEASE NOTE*

The term ‘benefit-partner’ may refer to your spouse or your registered partner. Someone else registered at your same address could also be considered your benefit-partner. On the *Belastingdienst* site is a calculator that will help you determine if you have a benefit-partner : (tinyurl.com/yccfjorm)
Essential Tax Contact Information

Dutch Tax Authority (Belastingdienst)
Has extensive information in English and downloadable forms and brochures. There are separate offices for resident and non-resident taxpayers. Email queries are not possible.
www.belastingdienst.nl

TaxLine
Central information line for residents. Dutch spoken.
Phone: 0800 0543
Monday to Thursday: 8:00 – 20:00 hrs
Friday: 8:00 – 17:00 hrs

Information Line for Non-resident Tax Issues
Covers businesses and individuals based abroad who are liable for Dutch tax, as well as those classified as non-residents for tax purposes. If you are calling from abroad, they are willing to try to speak English.
Phone: 055-538 5385 or +31 555 385 385

DigiD
DigiD is a way of electronically proving your identity online with participating organizations and is necessarily to file your taxes online or complete many official forms. A few days after you have received your BSN and have been integrated into the system, you can apply for your DigiD. The website has an English section.
www.digid.nl

Customs (Douane)
The Customs website has extensive information in English. If you move to the Netherlands from outside the EU or if you wish to bring your car, you can download an application form from the website for exemptions on ‘removable goods’.
www.douane.nl
SETTLING IN
HOUSING
Location

To feel at home in your new country, it is very important to find the right house. The location depends on some personal factors such as:

- whether you prefer to live in a city or in a village
- whether you need to live close to public transport
- whether you would like to live near the office or school
- how much you can spend on housing

Before buying or renting a suitable place, it may be necessary to spend time in a hotel or other temporary accommodations. Although it requires patience to live without your own household goods, it may well be worth the wait to find the right property.

Keep in mind that Dutch houses are more compact than you might be accustomed to in your home country. Everybody lives on top of each other, but there is high respect for privacy. A typical Dutch house has a combined dining and living room, steep stairways, no built-in closets, small but efficient kitchens, and separate compact toilets/bathrooms.

The majority of the houses are apartment complexes or multiple family houses (six or more houses connected with a private garden at the front and the back). However, in the Northern Netherlands, you will also find many semi-detached houses (*twee onder een kap*) and detached houses (*vrijstaand*).

There are several professional real estate agent associations in the Netherlands: NVM (with about 4100 members); VBO Makelaar (with 1,100 members); and Vastgoed Pro (with 700 members). The website Funda (in Dutch and English) shows a complete list of the properties for rent and for sale by NVM, VBO and Vastgoed Pro. VBO also operates its own website (only in Dutch). You can get a free account on Funda to receive the newest listings. There are other estate agents with individual websites as well and their listings may or may not be listed on Funda.
Renting

Due to a high demand for rental properties, rents are quite high, and availability is somewhat low. Some rentals are only available for locals who qualify for housing subsidies, which give them access to different living spaces from foreigners who want to rent on a temporary basis.

Rent is payable on the first of the month in advance, and rental agreements are usually for a minimum of 12 months but sometimes only for 3-6 months; ask your agent. Termination of the rental agreement usually requires one month’s written notice from the tenant and three months’ notice from the landlord. Ordinarily, utilities are not included in the rent. Renters are usually responsible for taxes (e.g., water, garbage and dog taxes), paid separately. When signing their lease, renters will need to pay by bank transfer only.

The documents required for the rental contract are:

- passport copy
- work contract or employer statement

Costs for the renter:

- First month’s rent
- Rental deposit (usually one month’s rent) – this deposit is returned to the tenant after a satisfactory inspection of the home upon leaving
- Estate agent fee (usually one month’s rent plus 21% tax) OR an administration fee

Additional costs to the rent may include:

- Utilities: gas, water, electricity, telephone, internet, cable TV
- Garbage and sewer tax
- Environment tax
- Water tax
- Dog tax (if you have a dog)

The cost will vary depending on usage and/or the number of people living in the household.

The landlord will pay the insurance on the accommodation itself, but if you bring your own possessions, you need to organize the insurance of your belongings. Refer to page 76 for information about insurance.
Note the following items:

- **Pre-lease agreements are not a standard procedure and should be avoided.** This is an agreement in which you sign a document stating you will lease a property before viewing it but that you will be liable for a fee even if you decide not to rent it.

- **Verbal contracts are legally binding.** Do not tell the agent that you want to lease the house unless you really want to rent the property.

- **Some websites charge a fee to access their services.** If you do not register and pay the fee, they may not answer your email enquiries.

- **Check which services are included in your rental agreement,** such as water and electricity, internet service, waste disposal taxes, TV, or service costs in apartment buildings, which may or may not include electricity for lifts and other common costs.

- **Check with the landlord to determine if pets are allowed and what the smoking policy is** before asking for a rental contract.

- **Determine how many people are allowed to live at the property;** the municipality sets occupancy limits on some housing.

- **Most rental contracts will require that you obtain personal contents insurance** to insure the personal items you bring into the accommodation and perhaps require personal liability insurance as well.

**Moving In**

- Ensure that you complete a thorough pre-check of the property with the agent prior to moving in. Take clear photos of every aspect and detail. Check for any damage, such as marks on the carpeting or walls, cracks in tiles, etc. If these are not flagged prior to moving in, you may be liable for repair costs when moving out.

- If renting a furnished property, ensure that all appliances provided are in good working order and that you receive an accurate inventory of what is provided with the property.

- Make sure that you receive a copy of this pre-check report signed by both you and the agent or landlord.

- Read the utility meters for gas/water/electricity. Taking a photo with a date/time stamp may remove any unclear information in the future.

- Take note of how many and which keys you receive on the inventory report.
Moving Out

• You must advise the agent or landlord in writing no less than 30 days prior to the first of the month nearest your move-out date. This is also necessary even if your move-out date is the end date of your lease.

• Leases automatically renew on a month-to-month basis after the contract end date. If you do not advise the agent or landlord of your wish to end the contract, you will continue to be liable for rental charges.

• Do a check-out report and read your meters. Take photos.

• The rental deposit must be returned to you within three (3) months of your departure and can never be used as your last months’ rent. Your Dutch bank account will need to remain open after you have moved in order for this amount to be deposited.
**Purchasing a House**

There are no restrictions on foreign ownership of property, whether resident or non-resident. It is very common to use a real estate agent (*makelaar*) in the Netherlands and certainly advisable as a foreigner to use one. Be sure to use a professional real estate agent association registered with the NVM, VBO Makelaar, or Vastgoed Pro. The fee will be around 1.5% plus VAT.

If you are considering buying a house, it may be advisable to join the *Vereniging Eigen Huis* (Home Owners’ Society). It is a consumer agency that looks after the benefits for house owners. They can also advise you on construction inspections, legal matters, mortgages, etc. You can find them on the website www.eigenhuis.nl (in Dutch). In addition, being a member of the *Vereniging Eigen Huis* may entitle you to discounts on many home improvement services.

Costs for the buyer include:

- Property transfer tax of 2%
- Notary Costs, depending on the type of house
- Real estate agent fees, if applicable
- Mortgage initiation fee, if applicable
- Structural report, if applicable

The process of purchasing a house usually begins with a price agreement between seller and buyer, first verbally and then signed in a contract. Most of the time, it will be organized by a real estate agent. A down payment of 10% needs to be paid to the seller through a public notary. The notary will complete the transfer of the ownership, and the purchase will be registered in the Public Registry Office (*Kadaster*).

If you need a mortgage (*hypotheek*), discuss the terms with the seller before you make an offer. You may also need to arrange a loan or banker’s guarantee to cover the deposit. You can check the website www.hypotheken.org or talk to your real estate agent or bank.

In the case of buying an apartment, it should be noted that each apartment is managed by the association *Vereniging van Eigenaren (VvE)*. They are responsible for general repairs, maintenance and home insurance. As a member, you will have to contribute to the VvE. It is wise to check beforehand what the financial status is of the apartment with the VvE before you purchase.
Verbal contracts are not legally binding for the purchase of a house. Also, purchase agreements are not legally binding after signing the agreement; there is a three-day period when more can be considered. This may include other offers on their part or a reverse decision.

**Useful Dutch Words for House Hunters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Word</strong></th>
<th><strong>Translation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>gemeubileerd</strong></td>
<td>fully furnished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The house may have everything from pots and pans to a dishwasher. It is recommended to ask for an inventory list.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>gestoffeerd</strong></td>
<td>partly or soft-furnished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will usually be flooring, window coverings, ceiling lights and/or major kitchen appliances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>kaal of ongemeubileerd</strong></td>
<td>unfurnished or bare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This means no flooring, window coverings, light fixtures, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de makelaar</strong></td>
<td>real estate agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>te koop</strong></td>
<td>to buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>te huur</strong></td>
<td>to rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>beschikbaar</strong></td>
<td>available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>verkocht</strong></td>
<td>sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de vraagprijs</strong></td>
<td>the asking price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de wijk</strong></td>
<td>neighborhood, district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de buurt</strong></td>
<td>neighborhood, area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>het huis</strong></td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>het flatgebouw</strong></td>
<td>apartment house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de flat/ het appartement</strong></td>
<td>apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de eenkamer/ tweekamerflat</strong></td>
<td>a flat with 1/2 rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de eengezinswoning</strong></td>
<td>a single-family home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>aantal kamers</strong></td>
<td>quantity, number of rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>aantal slaapkamers</strong></td>
<td>number of bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>de tuin</strong></td>
<td>garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moving House

If your address changes, you must notify the municipality because your registered address is your legal address.

You are liable for charges at your registered address until you provide evidence that you have moved. Not changing your address could also affect your benefits, such as the child benefit allowance.
Gas and Electricity

Electrical power in the Netherlands runs on a 50-cycle frequency and a voltage of 220V. Non-European lamp plugs can be converted by replacing the power plug to a Dutch one. North American electrical appliances and machines may not work properly in the Netherlands unless they are used with a transformer. The frequency is often a problem and cannot be converted; it is possible that such appliances will overheat or short out if used without proper power.

Central heating, water heaters and cooking stoves in Dutch homes almost always use natural gas.

A comparison of energy suppliers and their offers for energy can be found at the following websites:

- EnergyComparison (in English) - www.energievergelijken.nl/en
- PriceWise (in Dutch) - www.pricewise.nl/energie/energie-vergelijken/
- Independer (in Dutch) - www.independer.nl/energie/intro.aspx

These comparison sites do not, however, include a local, sustainable initiative called NLD Energie (www.energie.vanons.org) which is supported by the three provinces in the Northern Netherlands. Their website is only in Dutch at the moment, but the IWCN can be contacted for more information on this.
Water Services

Water will be connected to your house when you move in. When you move in, you must notify the water company of the change in residence and give them the meter reading. Payments are made quarterly through the regional water companies. There is no choice for water companies as they are set by region.

In case of an emergency, such as a broken pipe or severe leakage, locate and turn off your main water shut-off valve, and contact your water company for assistance.

Groningen: Waterbedrijf Groningen
050-368 86 88
www.waterbedrijfgroningen.nl/water-at-home/ (English)

Drenthe: WMD Water
0592-85 45 00
www.wmd.nl (Dutch)

Friesland: Vitens
0900-0650 or 088-884 50 60
www.vitens.nl (Dutch)

The tap water in the Netherlands is of high quality and therefore considered drinkable.

There are essentially two water bills for each household. One is for the water actually used by you in your home, and the other is the tax for water system facilities in the whole of the Netherlands (for example, waste water management, the dikes, canals, sewage, pump stations, etc.)
TV, Internet and Telephone

Many companies will offer packages with TV, internet and telephone. In most areas, it is possible to receive analog cable TV, which includes at least 30 channels with Dutch, Belgian, German, English, and French channels, as well as cable radio. It is also possible to receive digital TV with many more channels. The television and DVD system format is PAL, and the voltage is 220V. Broadband (ADSL) or cable internet is also available.

For more information about available providers, various comparison sites are available:

Aanbiederccheck (in Dutch)
www.aanbiederccheck.nl

Totaalwijzer (in Dutch)
www.totaalwijzer.nl

PriceWise (in Dutch)
www.pricewise.nl/internet/alles-in-1-pakketten-vergelijken
Laundry

European washing machines heat water internally, so there will not be a hot water spigot in the laundry area. It is also not uncommon for people to turn off the water to the washing machine when it is not in use, so if your machine is not working, check the taps.

Laundry detergent in the Netherlands is generally different for depending on the colors being washed – white, colored, or black wash.

If a dryer is used, there is usually no dryer vent; instead, a water tray must be emptied after each dryer load. Also, ensure that the lint trap of the dryer is cleaned after each use to prevent fire danger. Some dryers also have a heat exchanger that will also need to be cleaned after a number of uses (this can be done by running it under water to clean off the lint).

Useful laundry words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>was</td>
<td>wash / laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasmachine</td>
<td>washing machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voorwas</td>
<td>pre-wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasmiddel</td>
<td>laundry detergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasverzachter</td>
<td>fabric softener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katoen</td>
<td>cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synthentisch</td>
<td>synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centrifugeren</td>
<td>spin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoelen</td>
<td>rinse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kort programma</td>
<td>short / express program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kleur</td>
<td>color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wit/witte</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwart</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kleding</td>
<td>clothing / clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refuse Removal

While it may seem a simple thing, disposing of rubbish in the Netherlands might be very different from other countries. There are many types of bins and places to dispose of waste, and they may not be placed where you expect. In addition, if you dispose of rubbish incorrectly, you may have to pay a fine.
In the Netherlands, a lot of rubbish is recycled – nearly 60% of household waste on average. Items to be recycled may be collected separately:

- small household waste
- garden, fruit and vegetable waste
- paper and cardboard
- clothing
- glass
- white goods, such as refrigerators
- small chemical waste (such as batteries, paint, pharmaceuticals)
- fat from frying foods
- building waste
- plastics (depending on the municipality)

Containers for recycling glass, small chemical waste, clothing and paper/cardboard are located near most supermarkets or in certain locations in villages. Some supermarkets and other shops will have recycling bins specifically for batteries. Some items are sorted for recycling at the treatment plant, such as plastics and cans. If this is the case in your municipality, then these items can be placed with the general household waste.

The municipality will have a collection station for all other waste. Some municipalities issue residents dump access passes, while others allow anyone to drop off waste for a fee. Refer to your municipality website under Milieudienst or Reinigingsdienst for further information. Also, check with your municipality for information about where and when waste is collected.

**Household Waste**

General household rubbish is billed annually and the cost is based upon the number of residents in the house, not on the amount of waste.

Many municipalities have underground neighborhood waste containers for disposal of household garbage. Each household will be issued with a house garbage pass (*huisvuilpas*) to dispose of their rubbish. To use this card, you must first locate the corresponding waste container, which will be close by but possibly not within very near proximity to your house or apartment.
All waste containers are numbered, as is your card. Once you have located the correct container, press the button on the top and a small green light will come on. Scan your card near the light, and you will hear the container unlock. Pull up the opening, place your rubbish bag inside, and close the bin. Your rubbish will fall into an underground container that will be emptied regularly by the municipality.

If you do not have a *huisvuilpas*, you will have a dark grey household container for household waste that will usually be collected every other week. There may be rules relating to waste collection such as:

- Your bin must face a certain way to be collected or it will not be emptied
- You must not put your bin out before a certain time
- You must bring your bin in by a certain time

These rules may not relate to all areas; it is important to check with your municipality.

Some municipalities will also have a policy to collect large waste items from in front of your home. Check with your municipality for details.
Green Waste
Houses with a garden will be provided with a green bin for garden, fruit and vegetable waste. There will be a schedule on the website of the municipality indicating when the container is to be emptied. It is usually collected on the alternate weeks of the grey bin collection.

Paper Recycling
Not all paper items can be recycled in the paper recycling bins. Do not put plastic bags in with your paper; these bins are for paper products only.

These items can be recycled:
- postcards
- books
- brochures
- gift wrap
- egg cartons
- envelopes
- office paper
- cardboard boxes
- cardboard packaging
- newspapers
- paper bags
- advertising
- phone books
- magazines

These items should **not** be placed in the paper product bins:
- greaseproof paper
- wallpaper
- carbon paper
- sandpaper
- photos
- used kitchen paper
- used tissue paper
- milk cartons
- envelopes with bubble wrap
- plastic packaging
- juice cartons
- stickers & adhesive labels
- laminated paper
Child Benefit

The Dutch government assists families with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age as long as the family and children legally reside in the Netherlands and are insured under the AKW child benefit scheme*. The department responsible for child benefits is the Sociale Verzekeringsbank (SVB). This child benefit (kinderbijslag) is paid to the family on a quarterly basis.

The amount per quarter per child (for 2018):

- 0 to 5 years - €201.05
- 6 to 11 years - €244.13
- 12 to 17 years - €287.21

There are several ways to apply for the child benefit:

- via the DigiD website (www.digid.nl). Refer to page 20 of this guide for information about DigiD.
- via email through the contact form on the SVB website (tinyurl.com/ya8xrkpp) - in English
- via post: the nearest SVB office can be found by entering your postcode on the SVB website (tinyurl.com/ybccdx3x) - English

To apply, or to find more information in English, visit the SVB website (www.svb.nl or tinyurl.com/y9yxokch).
*If you are studying in the Netherlands temporarily and are not employed, you are not insured under the AKW child benefit insurance and thus are not eligible for child benefit. For a complete list of exceptions, please view the SVB website (tinyurl.com/yaj5759s). - in English

**Childcare**

In the Netherlands, there are daycare centers with qualified staff for children aged 3 months to 4 years, as well as after-school or school-holiday care for children aged 4-12 years. The general opening hours are 7:30 to 18:00 on weekdays. Depending on the age of the children, the ratio of staff to children ranges from 1:4 to 1:8. The hourly costs may vary from center to center, but they generally average around €7.00 - €8.00 per hour. Costs are generally more for early or late hours.

Another option is home daycare with a registered childcare agency (gastouderbureau). Parents can seek assistance in the registration process for the childcare allowance via several childcare agencies.

Self-employed child minders can legally look after a maximum of four children in their own homes or in the parents’ home. They tend to charge an average of €6.00 per hour to look after the children in their own homes, and this can go up to €12.00 or more if the children are cared for at the parents’ home.

**Childcare Allowance**

The Dutch government may support families by allowing them to deduct an amount of their daycare costs. English information can be found on the SVB website (tinyurl.com/y9paugwp).

The Dutch tax website (tinyurl.com/y7znmxkp) gives information about the process of applying for the childcare allowance to assist with the financial cost of using registered childcare centers. This information can be obtained in English and German.

Tip: Type “child care benefit” into the search box and you will be taken to the right webpage.
Vaccinations

*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu* (RIVM), the National Institute for Public Health and Environment, keeps track of the immunizations your children need, and these vaccinations are provided free of charge.

Once you are registered with the municipality, you will receive a letter from the RIVM. Each child will receive a calling card with the type of vaccination listed and the date and location where it can be administered.

If you have a vaccination booklet or data sheet from a foreign country, you can send all the information to the government to have the information updated in their files. Exemptions can be obtained for vaccinations already obtained.

Information about the National Immunization Program can be obtained in English on the RIVM website (tinyurl.com/yargoqmm)

Family Assistance for General Matters

The government provides family assistance on a wide range of topics. You can contact the following organizations for general information, advice and assistance on parenting, child behavior and development, and social welfare matters. You can receive advice by telephone, email or personal consultation on your personal family situation.

- *WiJ Groningen* (Care and Welfare) in Groningen - tinyurl.com/y7zkztz5  (mostly Dutch)
- Jeugdhulp Regio Drenthe divides its responsibilities among the different areas in Drenthe and services will depend upon where you live. The site (in Dutch) is www.jeugdhulpregiodrenthe.nl/
- *Jeugdhulp Friesland*, assistance for families with children under 23 - www.jeugdhulpfriesland.nl/  (in Dutch)

Activities

There are many activities for children in the Netherlands. The IWCN website has a number of links for various activity centers and day trips for children: (http://iwcn.nl/settling-in/child-matters/activities/). It is not a comprehensive list but can act as a starting point. The majority of these websites are only available in Dutch.
SETTLING IN 
**EDUCATION**

The following table is a brief overview of the terms used in the educational programs and systems available for children.

- **kinderopvang**: daycare
- **kinderopvangtoeslag**: childcare allowance
- **peuterspeelzaal**: pre-school playgroups for children aged 2 to 4 years
- **basisscholen**: primary schools
  
  Children may start primary school when they turn four, and school is mandatory after the child’s fifth birthday. The schools are divided into public, special (religious), and neutral schools. They are officially free of charge, but usually the parents are asked for a yearly contribution.

- **groepen**: grade
  
  Primary school has eight grades, called groups.

- **Cito Eindtoets**: Cito final primary education test
- **Basisonderwijs**: Final year standardized test to determine what type of secondary education is best suited for a pupil.

- **middelbare scholen**: secondary schools
  
  3 types – VMBO, HAVO and VWO
**VMBO**  
*Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs*  
pre-vocational secondary education  
lasting 4 years and qualifies students for MBO  
tertiary education

**HAVO**  
*Hoger Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs*  
higher general secondary education taking 5 years  
and qualifies students for HBO higher education

**VWO**  
*Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*  
pre-university education lasting 6 years and qualifies  
students for university

**MBO**  
middle level applied education  
Lasting 1 to 4 years and oriented towards vocational  
training

**HBO**  
*Hoger Beroepsonderwijs*  
open to graduates of HAVO and VWO and oriented  
towards higher learning and professional training

**WO**  
*Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*  
academic education, only available for graduated  
VWO students and oriented towards higher learning  
in the arts or sciences
International Schools in the North

Two international schools are located in the north in Groningen. One is the Groningse Schoolvereniging (GSV), which is specifically for students aged 6-11. More information can be found at 07wt01.mijnschool.nl

The other international school is the International School Groningen (ISG). Students in the first five years, between 11 and 16, follow the Middle Years Programme and can then move on to the internationally acclaimed IB Diploma Programme (16-19 years). The IB Diploma is accepted worldwide by universities. Information can be found at isgroningen.nl

Absence and Truancy

In the Netherlands, school attendance is compulsory for children aged 5-16. If a student is truant for more than three consecutive days, the school is required to notify the school attendance officer (leerplichtambtenaar), who is employed by the municipality. The officer will investigate the reason for the absence and may take action.
Parents are responsible for students younger than 12 years, and if they consciously allow their children to miss school, they can be prosecuted. Students over the age of twelve can also be given community service or be fined. In the case of absences during school time without the school’s permission (*luxeverzuim*), it is likely that an unofficial report is made.

Under some special circumstances, a child may obtain leave-of-absence from their compulsory education (e.g., disease, religious holiday, marriage, funeral, etc.). In these cases or in case of absences during the school time, applications must be submitted to the school’s board. If your child has a reason to be absent, you must always notify the school.

**School Holidays**

Primary and secondary schools have similar school year calendars. The Ministry of Education determines the dates for the summer, winter and one week May vacation. The other dates are governmental recommendations and can be changed by each school.

The longer summer holidays have staggered start/finish times between three regions (the northern, middle and southern provinces) to prevent families from all going on vacation simultaneously. Be aware that each school also has additional closing days (*margedagen*). Each school has information on their own exact vacation and closing dates. There is a website on school holidays for all of Europe, if you insert the country name. ([www.schoolholidayseurope.eu/](http://www.schoolholidayseurope.eu/))

School holidays in public schools include:

- Autumn Vacation (*Herfstvakantie*)
- Winter Vacation (*Kerstvakantie*)
- Spring Vacation (*Voorjaarsvakantie*)
- Easter weekend (*Pasen*)
- King’s Day (*Koningsdag*)
- May Vacation (*Meivakantie*)
- Ascension Day (*Hemelvaart*)
- Whit Monday/Pentecost (*Pinksteren*)
- Summer Vacation (*Zomervakantie*)
Bringing animals as members of the household often means a lot to people who are moving to a different country. It is important to know the rules and expectations of the Netherlands when bringing your pet here.

An EU pet passport (dierenpaspoort) is required when traveling within the European Union with your dog, cat or ferret. The pet passport is available from certified veterinarians in all EU countries. The EU Pet Passport contains the following information:

- Name and address of the owner
- Description of the animal
- Identification number
- Proof of rabies vaccination and record of other vaccinations

Your dog, cat or ferret will also require a special identifying ISO microchip (electronic identification system). A tattoo is only allowed if it was placed before July 3, 2011, and is clearly legible.
Pets in the Netherlands

*hondenuitlaatservice or hondenwandelaar* - Dog walking service
In 2017, the price varied from €7 to €10 per walk.

*honden losloopgebied* - Dog off leash area
Your dog needs to be on a leash within built-up areas. If they are not, you may receive a fine of over €90. Off-leash areas are indicated with a sign, usually “losloopterrein” and a picture of a dog.

*hondenpoep* - Dog droppings
It is compulsory to clean up your dog waste within built-up areas, or you may be fined up to €140. When you are out with your dog, it is compulsory to carry a small spade or plastic/paper bag to clean up the dog’s waste and put it in a trash receptacle. Otherwise, you could be fined up to €90. The fines themselves each incur an administrative fee.

*hondenbelasting* - Dog taxes
Many municipalities require dogs to be registered with them. Check with your municipality (gemeente) for further information.

*Nederlandse Databank voor Gezelschapsdieren* - Dutch Pet Database
It is important to register your pet’s microchip number at ndg.nl.

*dierenarts or dierenkliniek* - Veterinarians
Veterinary care is excellent in the Netherlands, and veterinarians are well trained. You will find a vet in most neighborhoods, and they will have a 24-hour emergency number.

*hondenpension or hondenhotel or hondenopvang* - Kennels
You can find a place for your dog or cat to stay during the holidays in a group or in a home setting. There are numerous arrangements to be found on the internet.

Lost Animals

Make sure your animal is wearing an identification tag with your contact details. In case of a missing animal, you can fill in a form on the NDG website (ndg.nl/) or contact the Dierenambulance (animal ambulance) at 0900-0245.
SETTLING IN
POSTAL SERVICE

PostNL is the national postal service in the Netherlands. They deliver mail five days a week, Tuesday to Saturday.

There are not many specialized post offices in the Netherlands. Many so-called “post offices” are actually located within other stores, such as supermarkets, bookstores or tobacco shops. Look for the PostNL logo. These service points offer most of the services and products of a regular post office. In smaller villages, there may also be just post boxes located on certain streets.

As a sender, you are responsible for the contents of your mail piece. The post office will not be held liable for any damage to the shipment or seizure by customs. It is important to check the rules and regulations about where and what you are posting. The PostNL website (www.postnl.nl/en/) has country-specific information and other .

The number of stamps (and therefore the cost) depends on the weight of the letter or package. Check with PostNL for current prices and policies (tinyurl.com/y83khawp).

If a package arrives when you are not at home, it is common for the postman to deliver the parcel to a neighbor’s house, leaving you a note. If you do not wish this to happen, write “only home address” on the parcel, and the postman will try to deliver the parcel later.
Receiving a package from outside of the EU may require you to pay customs duties. If you do not wish to pay, you can refuse to accept the delivery, and the parcel will be returned to sender or destroyed.

**Useful Words**

- brief: letter
- pakket: parcel
- bestemming: destination
- gewicht: weight
- aangetekend: registered
- brievenbus: post box
- postzegel: postage stamp
- postzegelverkooppunt: postage stamp selling point
- postkantoor: post office
- pakketpunt: package point
SETTLING IN BANKING

Banks in the Netherlands have fewer business hours than in other countries, but the services within the banks and authorized offices are usually more personalized.

General opening hours:

   Monday:  10:00 (or noon) – 17:00
   Tuesday – Friday:  9/10:00 – 16/17:00, depending on the branch.

At the branches, you are able to:

• set up your account(s) for personal and internet banking;
• withdraw/deposit money via the ATM (automatic teller machines). The ATMs are also located in various places all over the city. Check for fees or charges if you deposit money or withdraw from a bank of which you are not a client;
• deal with insurance and mortgage matters;
• exchange foreign money; this might take a few days because the bank sends it to GWK (Geldwisselkantoor, or Foreign Exchange office/Travelex, which is also often located at stations and airports);
• access your safety deposit box(es);
• obtain financial advice;
• conduct internet banking;
NOTE: IDEAL is a method used in the Netherlands to make online payments through your own bank; it is commonly used and considered safe.

Most banks offer additional services such as:

- special children’s bank accounts, such as savings plans
- insurance (home, belongings, auto, third party liability, etc.)
- mortgages
- financial advice
- foreign currency accounts
- telephone banking
- overdraft protection
- apps for your phone (for example, if opted with alerts, you are updated instantly on any transactions of your personal accounts)
- safety deposit boxes

NOTE: It might help to check with your bank to see if their online banking is available in English and if there are special cooperation services with your bank in your home country.

Getting a Bank Account

Opening an account needs to be done in person. An appointment is recommended for convenience; you can ask which specific documents are needed. It is recommended to open an internet account for easy bill payments and international bank transfers. Check which foreign currency can be transferred via online banking and the costs involved, and whether the foreign bank uses IBAN/BIC for European account numbers, the SWIFT system for other accounts, or ABA number for United States accounts. Daily limits do apply.

Documents needed for initial bank contact

- passport (or official country ID card)
- proof of your BSN (see page 16 of this guide)
- proof of address (letter/certificate of registration of the Town Hall or a rental contract)
- employment letter or work contract, or Guarantor information
Bank Cards

PIN Cards or Pinpas (also known as EFTPOS cards or ATM or direct debit cards in some parts of the world) A PIN card is a card linked to your personal bank account and comes with a Personal Identification Number of 4-6 numbers. It is used at ATM machines, in shops/restaurants, and/or with online banking. The amount due will be instantly transferred from your personal account to the payee. Daily limits apply, so checking the account balance is recommended.

ATMs
Not all ATMs accept all cards - you will need to check the logos (e.g., Maestro or VISA) on your card and on the ATM to determine if they are compatible. The PIN card is the most commonly used card in the Netherlands.

Credit Cards
Credit cards are not widely used in the Netherlands, and many places do not accept them. Be aware that you cannot pay real estate agents, for example, using a credit card.

Many shops and supermarkets will also only accept PIN cards or cash but not credit cards.
Bill Payments

National bills can be paid via:

**Automatic Debit Authorization (eenmalige machtiging)**
Payments will be deducted from your registered account. This must be pre-arranged with the company you are paying;

**Hardcopy (acceptgiro kaart - see photo above)**
Acceptgiros can be paid using internet banking. They can also be signed and delivered to the bank in a special drop-off box marked Acceptgiro. There may be bank costs as well as administration charges from the sender;

**iDEAL**
This is an e-commerce payment system, based on online banking. This method allows customers to buy on the internet using direct online transfers from their bank account;

**PAYPAL**
This is a payment service that is linked to your bank account and needs a password to implement a transaction. It is widely used for internet payments.

International bills can be easily settled via internet, depending on the country. An IBAN/BIC number (European countries), a SWIFT number (often for Asian countries), or an ABA number (USA) are needed for transactions. Some banks prefer to have a payee list registered beforehand, as well as in which currency you wish to send or receive money. It is also recommended to have the full details of the bank, such as the address, phone, contact person, email address, and/or fax address.
Foreign Currency

If you wish to exchange foreign currency at your bank, you will need to check the procedures. Most banks will send your currency to the GWK Travelex Geldwisselkantoor (Foreign Exchange Office – also located at the bigger railway stations and airports). You will receive the money in your local bank account after a few days. An extra charge may apply, so it might be practical and less expensive if you go to the GWK yourself.

GWK Travelex Geldwisselkantoor also can issue a Cash Passport available in Euros, British Pounds and US dollars. It is a prepaid MasterCard that can be a very useful and safe tool for internet payments as well as for overseas traveling. It can be updated with ATM or credit card payments.

Other GWK Travelex services:

- Most popular currencies are available on demand
- Traveler’s checks are available on demand
- Foreign Currency Exchange Return service
- International money transfers via Western Union

Checks / Cheques / Cash

Checks are not used in the Netherlands. Checks can sometimes be cashed with banks, but usually with a high fee, making smaller checks especially problematic.

Cash is also not used to deposit into banks; if done, there is usually a fee, whose amount depends on the bank.

Most transactions related to commercial, retail, bill-paying, or personal are done completely online through programs each individual bank uses (typically, this is iDEAL, but it can vary).

Depending on the bank, you may be given a card reader that works with the online Q-codes, or you can use an app that has a built-in Q-reader. Additionally, you may text or have a hard copy of Tan Codes, which are assigned for each transaction you conduct.
The Netherlands has a good quality healthcare system. The role of the family doctor, or general practitioner (huisarts), is central. For many newcomers, this is the most important difference between the Dutch medical system and that of their home country. Annual check-ups are not part of the basic system, and tests are not done automatically. These extra services are only provided if there is evidence that they are necessary. Private clinics offer such services, but these are not covered by Dutch insurers.

Dutch healthcare is generally non-interventionist in nature, so you may not leave the consultation with a prescription. Dutch doctors tend not to hand out antibiotics or anti-depressants lightly.

Health insurance is compulsory for all residents of the Netherlands. Go to page 77 for more information on insurance.
General Practitioner or Family Doctor

You will need to register with a family doctor (huisarts). The family doctor or general practitioner plays a prominent role in the Dutch health care system. The family doctor treats patients for non-surgical problems and is specialized in common and minor diseases. He or she can answer most general health questions and also cares for patients with chronic illnesses. In addition, many family doctors do minor surgical or after-care procedures. He or she will also serve as the link to other medical services, such as hospitals, specialists, home nursing, etc.

You do not have direct access to specialists and/or hospital care. The family doctor will refer you if you need specialist care. Nearly all specialists have consulting hours in hospitals at the out-patients clinic (Polikliniek). You can only be referred to a specialist by your general practitioner.

You should not be afraid to ask for information or services that you want or feel comfortable with. If you do not agree with your doctor’s assessment, you do have the right to a second opinion. However, check first to see if your health insurance will cover this. It is normal that children also go to the family doctor. Pediatricians normally see children with special needs or conditions, not healthy children.

The location of your family doctor is related to your registered address. This is to ensure that the practice is located near your home, in case of the need for home visits. To find a family doctor, you can ask around. Colleagues, friends and neighbors may be able to give recommendations. Another good source of information in may be the local pharmacy (apotheek). You can also go to the Independer website (www.independer.nl/huisarts/intro.aspx) (in Dutch) to find the nearest family doctor to your home.

Doctors can only accept a certain number of patients by Dutch law. If a doctor has reached their maximum number of patients, you may have to choose a different doctor.

An exception to this is StudentArts in Groningen, a practice that has extended its services to better meet needs of internationals. StudentArts is already serving many international students, but will now also welcome
international employees and families who live in the city of Groningen. The website of StudentArts is also in English and you can register online. Once registered, you can also set up appointments online.

Many family doctors offer an acquaintance consultation in order to discuss your medical history and the organization of the practice.

The medical assistant will inform you about the drop-in hour (spreekuur) as well as what time to call to make appointments or to consult the doctor by telephone. A brochure with this information is available at the doctor’s office (usually only in Dutch).

You normally have to make an appointment in advance and may have to wait a few days to get a slot. Many doctors have daily first-come, first-served sessions (inloop spreekuur) for short phone or drop-in consultations. You might also see the doctor’s assistant (for blood pressure readings, urine testing, or injections) or practice nurse (for monitoring chronic conditions such as asthma or diabetes.)

If you call your doctor’s practice after hours (nights, weekends and holidays), you will get a message (in Dutch) giving you the name and number of the doctor on duty in your area. There are always medical coverage during off hours.

After Hours and Emergency Healthcare

For all medical and other emergencies: call 112. You will be connected to the police, the fire brigade, or the ambulance service. Almost all hospitals (ziekenhuizen) have emergency room treatment. Look for the “Eerste Hulp” sign if you go directly to the hospital.
For urgent, but not life threatening, medical assistance outside office hours (after 17:00 and before 8:00, on weekends or on national holidays), call the provincial after-hours doctor service:

**Groningen**  
*Doktersdienst Groningen*  
www.doktersdienstgroningen.nl/EN/  
0900 - 9229

**Friesland**  
*Dokterswacht Friesland*  
www.dokterswacht.nl  
0900 - 112 7 112

**Drenthe**  
*Centrale Huisartsendienst Drenthe*  
www.chd.nl  
0900 – 112 0 112

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**Pharmacy and Prescriptions**

In the Netherlands, there are two types of stores where medications are available.

- A pharmacy (*apotheek*) provides prescription and non-prescription drugs, as well as vitamins, homeopathic remedies, and hypoallergenic skin care items. Pharmacists are very knowledgeable and can give advice on over-the-counter medications, drug interactions, and side effects. You may find that you need prescriptions for things you were able to buy over the counter at home.

- A drugstore (*drogisterij or drogist*), such as Kruidvat, DA, Etos and Trekpleister, supplies non-prescription medications as well as homeopathic agents, general toiletries, cosmetics, cleaning supplies, vitamins and baby items.
How to Find a Pharmacy

After signing on with a doctor, it is a good idea to find a pharmacy in your area that you can use on a regular basis. A pharmacy will provide medicines on prescription. You can find a list of local pharmacies on the internet under “Apotheken”. You do not have to register with a specific pharmacy, but it makes it easier for one pharmacy to have a history of your medical prescriptions.

Pharmacy Hours

On weekends, holidays, and at night, there is a pharmacy on duty in your area. You can find a list of on-duty pharmacies as well as their hours and phone numbers in the window of your local pharmacy. If you call a pharmacy during off hours, you will get a message (in Dutch) giving you the name and number of the pharmacy on duty.

Dentist

You are free to choose any dentist (tandarts) - a referral is not needed. You will find lists of dentists in your phonebook or on the internet under “Tandartsen”. If you prefer another dentist, you are free to change. You can also go online to the Independer website (www.independer.nl/tandarts/intro.aspx) to find a dentist near your home.

After you have registered with a dentist, he or she will generally contact you for a check-up every six months. Dentists perform most routine procedures themselves. Anesthesia is usually only given upon request, and dental cleaning is not part of the basic treatment. A hygienist (mondhygienist), normally a separate entity from the dentist, may do dental cleaning or other minor dental procedures.

For emergency care outside normal hours, call your dentist. You will hear a message (in Dutch) giving you the name and number of the dentist on duty in your area. There is generally emergency care available during off hours, nights, weekends and holidays. Local newspapers publish the schedule each week.

The basic health insurance policies do not cover dental expenses for people over 18. Special dental insurance policies are available. You should always check your insurance policy before starting non-routine treatment, such as crowns or orthodontic treatment.

For more information (in Dutch) regarding dental treatments and fees, go to www.allesoverhetgebit.nl/.
Home Care

Although your family doctor is your primary care provider, private home care organizations (Thuiszorgen) are umbrella organizations for all domestic medical services. Check with your medical insurance as it may provide partial coverage.

The Red Cross Associations (rode kruisverenigingen) provide home nursing care, nursing equipment, household assistance for the elderly, dietary or nutritional advice, emergency alert service and health-related courses. For more information on services (in Dutch), go to www.icare.nl or look up “Thuiszorg” online.

Mental Health

To see a psychiatrist (psychiater) or psychologist (psycholoog), you need a referral from your family doctor.

Eye Care

To visit an ophthalmologist (oogarts), you need a referral from your family doctor.

You do not need a referral to visit an optician (opticien) for an eye examination. The optician prepares glasses or contact lenses and sells contact lens solution (contactlens vloeistof). You will find lists of opticians on the internet under “Opticiens”.
Hospitals

There are many excellent hospitals (ziekenhuizen) with high standards of care. Each hospital offers a range of specialties, but many are becoming more specialized. In Groningen, be aware that the UMCG is a medical teaching hospital, so the possibility of interns or students attending your appointment exists.

You will need a referral letter from your family doctor to go to the hospital in non-emergencies, which is normally mailed to your home. You will be asked to provide details about your medical history and lifestyle on a form to be registered in the hospital database. Be sure to bring this form with you on your first hospital visit.

Upon your first visit to the hospital, you must register with the patient registration desk or hospital administration (patienten administratie). Your insurance information is taken, and you will receive a plastic ID card (ponskaartje). Bring this ID card with you to all future visits.

If you are admitted as an in-patient, you may find yourself in a shared room or ward of up to six beds (mixed gender). You will probably have a TV and phone line, but there will be a charge. Internet access is also possible at a charge. Bring your own clothes and toiletries. Visiting hours vary from hospital to hospital.
SETTLING IN TRANSPORTATION
Public Transport

The public transport system in the Netherlands is very good, compared to many other countries’ systems. Groningen, Drenthe and Friesland have extensive bus and train networks. The region is divided into zones. The fare you pay depends on the distance covered.

For all public transport travel information in the Netherlands, visit the Journey Planner (which is available in English at www.9292.nl/en) or call 0900 9292.

OV-Chipkaart (Public Transport Card)

The OV-Chip card is the means of payment for the public transport system in the Netherlands; it can be used in trams, trains, busses or metros. It is the size of a bankcard and contains an invisible chip. All information about the OV-chipkaart is available online in English at tinyurl.com/ybfcuc7s.

Before you start travelling, you need to load funds on your OV-chipkaart. This can be done at an OV-chipkaart machine at train stations (look for the yellow machines with the pink OV chip card logo), or at places such as larger supermarkets. In addition, you can buy monthly or annual travel products that can include discounted or unlimited travel.

With some of the discounted travel products, you can also apply the discount to each OV-chipkaart of up to three other travelers with you, depending upon the times you are all traveling together and on the balance they each have on each traveler’s OV-chipkaart.

With a personal OV-chipkaart, it is possible to have automatic reloading. In that case, when your funds on the OV-chipkaart has reached a certain balance, an additional amount will automatically be withdrawn from your bank account and loaded directly on your OV-chipkaart.

There are two types of OV-Chip cards available: a personal registered chip card and an anonymous (anoniem) chip card. Both initially cost €7.50, and you can then load and reload the chip with credit as required and use to travel anywhere in the Netherlands, as long as there is enough credit to cover the length of travel distance.

• The anonymous OV-chipkaart is a good choice if you do not travel often. This card is transferable and can be used by more than one person, though never at the same time. When traveling with more than one person, each person needs an OV chip card. When an anonymous card is lost or stolen, it cannot be blocked.
• The personal OV-chipkaart is registered to one person. It is like a personal ID card and has your photo and personal information on it. It can only be purchased online at www.ov-chipkaart.nl/. Special offers are often available for this type of chip card, such as 40% discount during non-peak hours. When this type of OV-chipkaart is lost or has been stolen it can be blocked within 24 hours.

These four steps are important when traveling using the OV-chipkaart:

**Step 1: Top up your OV-chipkaart**

The balance on an OV-chipkaart needs to be topped up before it can be used to pay for public transport travel. You can top up your balance at vending machines, selected service desks or buy credit or activate automatic reloading online via the web shop. €10 is reserved on the card for train travel and €4 for bus travel. You cannot travel if the balance is below this amount.
Step 2: Choose the right card reader

There may be several transport companies that operate at one place. Ensure when you check in or check out that you are scanning your chip card at the correct card reader. For example, if you are traveling on an Arriva train, you need to check in or out at an Arriva card reader. The same is true if you are traveling on an NS train: only an NS card reader will work for that particular trip.

Step 3: Check in when boarding

To check-in:

- Hold the OV-chipkaart in front of the OV-chipkaart logo on the smart card reader
- You will hear a beep and see an indicator light light up
- If you look quickly, you will see the message that the Check-in or Check-out is OK, as well as the cost of the trip and the amount left on your account
- If you check in at an access gate, the gate will open
- If you are traveling with children, each child will have to check in and pass through the gates individually.

If an inspector checks the tickets and you are not checked in, you will be fined.

Your OV-chipkaart balance is calculated when you check in. If your card includes a valid travel product, it is used for the journey. If not, you will pay for the journey with the balance on the OV-chipkaart. The boarding rate will be temporarily deducted from the OV-chipkaart balance, and the actual journey costs are settled against this boarding rate when you exit.

Step 4: Check out when exiting or transferring

- If you need to transfer (for example) from a train to a bus, you will need to check out of the train and check in to the bus.
- At the end of your journey, or when you transfer to another mode of transport, check out by holding your card against the screen on a gate or card reader. The card reader will check whether you have travelled using a travel product or using credit. If you have travelled on credit, the card reader will display the cost of your journey. The boarding fare, minus the cost of your journey, will be returned to your card.
- Don't forget to check out! Otherwise, you will lose your full boarding fare.
**Bus Travel**

You can buy a ticket on the bus; however, it is not only less expensive to use an OV-chipkaart, but it is also preferred that a card is used. If you buy a ticket directly in the bus, tell the driver your final destination and you will get one ticket that will be valid for the whole trip and will allow you to change busses (overstappen) within a limited time without paying extra. There are also personal monthly bus passes available.

Many busses in the regions of Drenthe, Groningen and Friesland are operated by the QBUZZ Company. To check bus schedules, visit the QBUZZ website (www.qbuzz.nl/GD).

There is also a bus that is mainly intended as a supplement to the regional network. The Buurtbus usually runs from villages that do not have a bus connection to places where there is a good connection with larger cities. For more information about a buurtbus, check tinyurl.com/yabuvnoz

**Trains**

Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) is the main rail company in the Netherlands. There are two kinds of trains: the “Stoptrein”, that stops at all stations and is mainly used for local traffic, and the “Intercity”, that only stops at larger stations.

Paying for a train travel is possible by using your OV-chipkaart. You need to ensure that you check in at your departure station and out at your arrival station. If you will be traveling on different train operators, you will also need to check in and out for each train company along the route that you take. If you forget to do this, you can be charged more than what the trip was worth. Note: If you change from one NS train to another NS train, you do not have to check out and check in again.
Cycling

Many people think of the Netherlands as a country full of bicycles, and this is certainly true. Statistically, there are more bicycles than people, as many people own more than one bicycle. Cycling is the easiest way to get around the cities of the Netherlands.

Special bicycle lanes (fietspaden) are marked by a blue circular sign containing a white bicycle and are often paved in red. These bicycle lanes have separate paving markings and often their own traffic signs and lights. The use of these lanes is mandatory when they are present. The bicycle lanes are also shared with race bicycles, invalid vehicles, and motorized bicycles. These bicycle lanes cover the entire country, making getting around by bicycle relatively safe and easy.

Cycle routes are clearly marked using the network of cycling point signs, the ANWB bicycle network, or Fietsknooppuntennetwerk.

It is not compulsory to wear a bicycle helmet, although most sport cyclists do wear them.
Bicycle theft is common, so an investment in a good lock and always ensuring that bike is locked securely are recommended. There are also several secure cycling storage areas available, either free or for a fee.

All bicycles are required to have the following equipment in good working order:

- Headlight and rear light
- Rear reflector
- Bell
- Brakes
- Side reflectors on the wheels and pedals

If you are missing any of these mandatory items, the police may fine you. It is mandatory to use bicycle lights in the dark; otherwise you will be fined.

Bicycle road rules must be followed to ensure the safety of all. The rules can be found here: tinyurl.com/yaq7foxy
Cars and Driving

Everyone new to the Netherlands needs to understand the basic rules of the road to drive safely. If your driving license was issued in a member state of the EU, you can drive in the Netherlands on your foreign license for 10 years after the date of issue of the license. If the 10 years has elapsed or if the license expires, you must exchange your foreign license for a Dutch one. This is done at the municipality where you are registered.

If your driving license was not issued in the European Union, you may drive for 185 days on your non-EU license after registering as a resident. If you work under the 30% tax regulation, you can exchange your license if you obtain a copy of the 30% tax statement issued by the tax office. The exchange will need to be done within the first 185 days from the date of registration in the Municipality. Your driving licence must have been issued in a particular year in which you were a resident in the country of issue for at least 185 days.

If you don’t fall under this tax ruling, you will need to take and pass both a theoretical and a practical driving test. All learning must be done with a qualified instructor. The driving school will handle all paper work for the written and practical tests.

The booklet of traffic regulations for licenses A (motorcycles) and/or B (automobiles) can be obtained from the ANWB (Algemene Nederlandse Wielrijders Bond) or the KNAC (Koninklijke Nederlandse Automobiel Club). A driving manual, Traffic Manual Passenger Car (License B) is also published in English by Verjo.

Dutch road rules conform to most European regulations. It is highly recommended that you read the official driving manual, but here are some of the main road rules:

- Minimum driving age is 18.
- Drive on the right hand side of the road, and overtake on the left.
- Unless otherwise stated, give way to vehicles coming from the right.
- On yellow diamond signed roads, you have the right of way over the other traffic wishing to enter the road on which you are traveling. On these diamond signed roads, “sharks’ teeth” markings are located at the intersection of the side road with the main road – indicating that vehicles on the side road need to give way or yield.
- Motorists on a roundabout have right of way.
- At many intersections, there are separate traffic lights for turning traffic.
and ongoing traffic. Turning right on a red light is not legal.

- All vehicle occupants must wear a seat belt, both in the front and in the back for all ages.
- Children under 1.35 meters must sit in an approved car seat.
- Mobile phones may only be used with a hands-free system while driving. Even holding a mobile phone in a moving vehicle is considered an offence.
- Motorcyclists must wear a helmet.
- Cyclists should obey the road rules, but they often do not, so caution is recommended. Even when a cyclist is not observing the rules, they are considered to have right of way, regardless of the situation. When there is an accident between a bicycle and a car, the car driver is nearly always considered to be at fault.

**Speed Limits**

The following speed limits apply in the Netherlands:

- In a built-up area: 50 km/h (approximately 30 mph)
- Outside a built-up area: 80 km/h (approximately 50 mph)
- A-roads and dual carriageways: 100 km/h (approximately 62 mph) (usually designated by green paint within the two middle stripes on the road)
- Motorways: 120 or 130 km/h (approximately 75 mph or 80 mph)

**Automobile Club**

An annual membership in an automobile club, such as the Netherlands Automobile Association (ANWB), is recommended. Some services are:

- Road Service Membership within the Netherlands, except where you live.
- Home Road Service where you live.
- Replacement Car Service
- International Assistance and Travel Insurance
- Car Testing Service (*technische keuring*) if you are buying or selling a car.
- Information on camping and touring, road conditions and road maps, hotel and restaurant information, etc.
Car Insurance

It is compulsory to have at least third-party insurance on all motor vehicles. Limited conditions, as well as fully comprehensive insurance, are available. Check details of coverage with the insurance agent.

Once you obtain insurance, you will receive a green card (known as the International Motor Insurance Card), which you must always carry with you in the car.

What to have in the car at all times

- Drivers’ license and registration certification
- Proof of car insurance (International Motor Insurance card)
- Red warning triangle (in case of breakdown this musts be placed 30 m behind your car)
- Car accident report form

What to do if you have an accident

- Do not leave the scene of the accident until you and the other person have agreed on what happened and signed the accident form.
- It is important that both parties sign the accident report form.
- Police involvement is required if injury or death is involved, and, for the completion of the accident report if the parties do not agree on the question of blame.
- You must pass this form onto your insurance company.

Importing your car

The rules for importing your vehicle are complex and subject to change. To obtain the most up-to-date information, please visit the IWCN website (http://iwcn.nl/settling-in/transport/importing-a-motor-vehicle/).
Parking

For some areas, parking is free of charge; in others, it is paid parking. In metered parking areas (P-one), you must purchase a parking ticket from a machine that can usually be found by the side of the road. Check the times and days on signs when you are allowed to park there and if you are required to pay.

With your blue parking disk, you may park for free in the designated blue zone for a limited number of hours. If you need one, you can purchase a parking disk from tobacco shops, car supply shops and police stations.

Parking is not allowed next to black and white or yellow curbs and where P-signs prohibit this.

Make sure that you do not park for longer than the allowable period in an area, as parking fines are expensive, and your car may be towed away.
Drinking and Driving

The legal limit for driving in the Netherlands is 0.5 grams per liter of blood. For novice drivers (those who have had their driver’s license for less than five years), the legal limit is 0.2 grams per liter of blood. If a breath test for alcohol proves positive, you must accompany the police to the police station, where you must blow into a breathalyzer. If the result is positive, you will receive a summons and a driving ban for 24 hours. The results of breathalyzers are accepted as evidence in court. The penalty for drunken driving depends on the level of alcohol in the blood. In the Netherlands, random testing is allowed.

Taxis

Taxis can be recognized by the lit “taxi” sign on their roof. They have blue license plates.

They cannot be hailed on the street, but there are taxi stands at most stations and by hotels.

If you want one to pick you up from your home you will need to phone a local company.
The type and the amount of insurance you want to purchase is mostly a personal decision. The following main types of insurance are available:

- Health insurance (mandatory)
- Vehicle insurance (mandatory for those with a vehicle)
- Personal liability (third-party) insurance
- House (bricks and mortar) insurance
- House contents insurance
- Legal fees insurance
- Travel insurance
Health Insurance

Everyone living in the Netherlands or paying wage taxes here is required by law to have health care insurance. You must have a BSN and, if your nationality is outside the EU, a residence permit to apply. You can apply for temporary health insurance until you have a BSN and/or a residence permit.

Children (18 and younger) receive basic coverage free of charge and do not need to have their own policy. They must be named on the policy of one of their parents and will receive the same coverage as their parents.

Many people are covered by their employer’s scheme. In this case, their HR manager advises them on the correct procedure. Those who need to take out their own health insurance must contact an insurance company. Under certain specific conditions, people may be exempt from this requirement. To test if you are exempt, see the SVB website (tinyurl.com/y85op5oo). If you are a foreign student or a posted worker, see the IWCN site. (iwcn.nl/settling-in/health-matters/)

Health insurance cover changes annually and health insurance can be changed only once a year – in December, prior to 1 January. You might want to do this if you think you need services that were not previously covered, for instance. The increased coverage usually amounts to increased costs, which should be considered beforehand, as you must then wait until the next year before other changes can be implemented.

In the Netherlands, there is a mandatory deductible (own-risk) system. Adults have to pay part of their medical costs for selected services up to a certain amount per year, per person. There is also the possibility of choosing an additional personal liability per year to help reduce policy costs. In this case, the amount of the additional deductible is paid before the health insurance begins to cover the costs.

EU citizens who can provide an S1 or E106 from their home country can get a treaty policy and will be insured up to the level of Dutch basic coverage. Those with a European Insurance Card (EHIC) will also have access to Dutch health care.

It may be worthwhile to shop around for the right insurance for you and your family. For more information, you can contact the Consumers Union (Consumentenbond). Their website at www.consumentenbond.nl/ is in Dutch only. A website, www.zorgwijzer.nl/zorgvergelijker/english, in English, and www.independer.nl, in Dutch, can help compare different health insurers and policies.
Here are the most important insurance terms:

**basispakket**  
**basic insurance package**  
Includes general medical care, most prescription medicine, hospital stays, pregnancy care, medical equipment, and ambulance transportation.

**naturapolis**  
**standard policy**  
The insurer arranges contracts with care providers and pay directly for the services provided. You can go to any caregiver that is listed with the insurance company.

**restitutiepolis**  
**refund policy**  
You choose the caregiver, pay the bills directly, and apply for reimbursement from the insurer. The insurer decides how much to reimburse.

**aanvullende verzekering**  
**supplemental coverage**  
You can choose to take out supplemental coverage for additional costs, such as physiotherapy.
Vehicle Insurance

For vehicle use in the Netherlands, third-party insurance (\textit{autoverzekering}) is legally required. This insurance covers damages to third parties caused by the driver of the vehicle. It is possible to purchase a more comprehensive insurance policy, which covers, for example, damage to your own car. An insurance policy is purchased for a car, not for a particular driver. As soon as the vehicle is insured, every driver who meets the specifications of the policy is covered while driving the car.

Other Types of Insurance

\textit{aansprakelijkheidverzekering} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Personal liability insurance}

Although not legally required, it is quite common for people in the Netherlands to have personal third party insurance. This insurance covers circumstances where you or your family may accidentally injure a third party or damage their property.

\textit{opstalverzekering} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Home-owners insurance}

Usually the owners of furnished rental properties pay for house insurance against damage or theft, but if renting, then you should confirm this with the owner. Tenants will still need contents insurance if they wish to cover their personal possessions that they bring into the house.

\textit{inboedelverzekering} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{House contents insurance}

House contents insurance covers personal possessions inside the house. It is common to take extra insurance for unusual items, even in furnished accommodations.

\textit{rechtsbijstandverzekering} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Legal fees insurance}

In the case of litigation, legal fees insurance covers legal fees and provides legal support when needed.

\textit{reisverzekering} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Travel insurance}

As long as you stay in the Netherlands, most of the circumstances covered by travel insurance are already covered by other insurances like the health insurance. It might still come in useful to have travel insurance if, for example, your luggage gets lost or if you spend your holidays outside the Netherlands.
SETTLING IN
FINDING A JOB

Because finding a job can be a complex process, the IWCN website offers insight into many aspects of the job search, preparation, procedures, and so forth. From finding job opportunities to the work conditions to pension schemes, there is much information offered on the site, as well as links to other resources (www.iwcn.nl/settling-in/careers/).

Four Stages of Looking for a Job

When looking for a job, some aspects to consider are: **preparation, job search, application, and maintenance**. All of these stages are intertwined and ongoing during the total job search. At each stage, there are conditions to handle or steps to complete.

In the **preparation** stage, some of the items to have in your repertoire can include:

- a well-thought out, logically ordered LinkedIn page
- a well-designed Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- a portfolio of any certificates, diplomas, related experience documents
- several different templates of cover letters and motivation letters
- contact cards with your information
- proper clothing available for interviews, cold calls, and meetings
In the **job search** stage, you may want to do the following:

- *join as many social groups as possible for networking purposes*
- *compile a list of employment sites and links for vacancies*
- *attend employment, job assistance, and coaching workshops to obtain more information on companies and vacancies*

In the **application** stage,

- *send letters and applications to the companies you are interested in working at for any open positions as well as specific positions*
- *keep a diary of where you have applied, of any responses you may have received, and of any follow-up communication you may have done*
- *follow up on any letters, applications, and interviews with thank you notes*

In the **maintenance** stage,

- *keep updating your CV’s or letter templates with any changes in your experiences, capabilities, or availability*
- *seek new references and contacts in LinkedIn as you gain different experiences*
- *volunteer to get some experience while job searching (also good for practicing a new language, getting new experience in a similar field, and putting new experience on your CV to show initiative)*
- *search for and use job and training resources in LinkedIn, social media sites, employment websites, networking groups, etc.*
- *take online courses that may be related to future job requirements, expansion possibilities, or capabilities that will serve you well when you are employed*
- *take time to learn and practice Dutch or other languages*

No matter at which stage you find yourself, it's important to take the time for socialization and relaxation. Finding a job is a job in itself.
Orientation Year Highly-educated

The new “Orientation year highly-educated persons” residence permit replaces, combines and extends the former Orientation year for graduates and Orientation year for highly educated people permits. The new permit allows talented, highly-educated foreigners to apply for this residence permit within 3 years of completing a study or research project (specific conditions apply).

The permit is valid for 1 year during which the permit holder is allowed to work without any restrictions. After the Orientation Year permit is finished, employers may hire the highly-educated foreigner as a highly-skilled migrant but with a reduced salary level compared to a regular highly-skilled migrant. In 2018, this reduced salary is €2.314 per month, excluding vacation pay.

Another advantage of the new permit is that people may apply for the 1 year permit within 3 years of completion of each degree or research position.

For a complete listing of all the relevant conditions, please view the following link on the IND website: tinyurl.com/ycd3mxdk. Additional information can also be found at the Holland Alumni website: tinyurl.com/ycp92tqc

The application must still be submitted directly to the IND, but if it is approved, the residence permit card may be collected at the IWCN.

Starting a Business via the Start-up Permit

Could you make it in the Netherlands as an entrepreneur? In 2015 the Dutch government brought in new regulations to help ambitious businesspeople from non-EU countries. A one-year ‘start-up’ residency permit has been specially designed to help people like you in the Netherlands. As part of the scheme, all entrepreneurs are required to have a mentor, or ‘facilitator’ on-board and for their start-up to offer something innovative in the Dutch market.

At this link (http://iwcn.nl/official-matters/permits-and-procedures/start-up-permit/), you’ll find helpful explanations of the new regulations, useful links and vital documents for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Find a ‘Facilitator’

You can think of the ‘facilitator’ as a mentor who also has a more official role. The facilitator must have a minimum of two years of experience in guiding start-ups and they must also agree a specific plan for your start-up.
This means that their support is tailored to you, whether that is in operational management, marketing, research, investing acquisition, or anything else.

There are three facilitators recognized by the RVO in the Northern Netherlands:

• LaunchCafe, Groningen
• Inqubator, Leeuwarden
• Growing Workplace, Emmen

A list of other RVO-accredited facilitators is available here: tinyurl.com/yascyfb6

What are the requirements for a Start-up Permit?

• Collaboration with a facilitator. This must be enshrined in a signed document between you and your facilitator.

• A step-by-step business plan, containing a structure of the organization, showing the entrepreneur's active role; a description of the innovative product/service; and a one-year plan of activities

• Registration of the entrepreneur in the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (Kamer van Koophandel)

• Provable financial means to live and reside in the Netherlands. This is €1,139.90 per month. The entire 12-month’s worth of funds must be in a Dutch bank account at the time of application; or you should have an agreement of funding from your facilitator; or proof of a regular flow of funds can act as a supporting document

• Submit the application together with your facilitator to the IND. The application costs 321 euros.

Top Dutch Talent Program

The Top Dutch Talent project aims to build an interactive, innovative platform to help unite internationally-oriented talent in the North with innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Northern Netherlands has around 53,000 internationals (including 10,000 students) and there is an increasing demand for highly skilled workers. Top Dutch Talent aims to connect international talent in the three Northern provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe more effectively with international companies. Given the currently-shrinking labor force and
the growing need for talent, it is crucial that the North as a region tries to match available international talent with the high quality jobs that currently or potentially exist in the provinces. The project hopes to reduce the growing mismatch between the business world and international talent, therefore keeping and attracting both industry and further international talent in the North. This will simultaneously strengthen the economy of the region.

The project is a collaboration between multiple parties. The core of the group is formed by the International Welcome Centre North (IWCN), the University of Groningen (RuG), the Hanze University of Applied Science, the Municipality of Groningen, the World Trade Center (WTC) Leeuwarden, the Metal Industry, IT companies (Samenwerking Noord), and the Life Science Industry (Campus Groningen).

The project consists of various components that are aimed at providing an innovative digital platform for the Northern Netherlands, as well as a mix of on- and off-line activities. Below is an explanation of the components of Top Dutch Talent:

**The Northern Times**

A first in the Netherlands, The Northern Times is a digital news website for internationals in the region. It is updated with English-language news, activities and reviews several times per week and is free to access for internationals both in and outside the region. A daily subscriber-only newsletter and linked Facebook page will help to drive engagement further. The website will also carry in-depth journalism and interviews from the region.

**Here and Now**

Here and Now will be the cultural platform for the Northern Netherlands in which all events across Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe will be listed. Part of the platform is information on upcoming events, museums, music, performance art, accessible for internationals in the north. The platform has been developed for Groningen, and is now being expanded towards the two other Northern provinces: Friesland and Drenthe.

**Job Portal**

This will be an online vacancy portal for the Northern Netherlands, where international SME’s, educational institutions and international people are linked together. Companies looking for highly skilled international employees currently have issues with finding the right talent. The portal will advertise professional vacancies, time jobs, internships, graduate courses and traineeships for highly-educated internationals.
Companies will be able to place their vacancies for free and similarly, internationals will be able to upload their CV’s for free. The portal will match SME’s and internationals, whilst also providing career information, support and advice. The Job Portal is the heart of the project, which will connect all other parts, like career events and a digital map of international companies.

Digital Map

A digital map has been designed to help match international talent with SME’s. The map makes affiliated and internationally-focused companies more visible, whilst also promoting links between companies who wish to export from the Northern Netherlands. Features will include full profiles for companies, which will be linked to the Job Portal, as well as a way of letting these firms indicate that they are interested in joining a trade delegation.

Career Events

This initiative aims to give an overview and of all existing career events. It is envisaged that a yearly international career event will be held, where knowledge institutions, SME’s and international alumni will be brought together. The idea is to bring companies and internationals into contact with each other to enlarge job opportunities and vacancy matching. In addition to the exchange of information, company presentations and entrepreneurial workshops will also occur. The events offer the unique opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with companies; whether formally or in an informal networking segment.

Market Research

The Market Research program is being set up to benefit internationally-focused SME’s. It will help to acquire new market insights, using knowledge from the companies’ home markets combined with input, linguistic skills and experience of for example partners of highly skilled migrants. This means, of course, that it will also deliver jobs for internationals, including performing market research, utilizing the WTC database (5.1 Million contacts) to explore partnerships, and translations.

Knowledge Insight

This component will attempt to develop a digital overview of education, knowledge institutions and knowledge projects done with SME’s. It will provide an overview of programs, talent and areas where this talent can be deployed- as well as contributing to the international character of training courses and talent groups. All of the knowledge institutions’ courses and research directions will be included, making them findable and indeed participatory for talent and companies.
Dutch people can be very outspoken and brutally honest, and sometimes this might be interpreted as being rude. In an informal conversation, they don’t avoid any subjects except for what one earns. Most people speak English, but some may choose not to, especially if they are older.

Meeting People for the First Time

When you meet someone for the first time, you will shake hands (both men and women) and say your name. You need to take the initiative for introductions, rather than wait to be introduced. For example, at work or in a new neighborhood, Dutch people usually wait for you to take the first step.

Formal Interactions

Use sir (meneer) or madam (mevrouw) when talking to an older person, anyone you don’t know, or a person with authority. In Dutch, you use the word “you” in different ways, formally and informally: “jij” or “je” are the informal uses, and “u” is the formal use. Use “u” in case of an older person, someone you don’t know well, or a person with authority. They will let you know if they want you to use the informal. The Dutch tend to do this fairly quickly.
Body Language

It is important to look someone in the eyes when talking, but keep in mind that Dutch people like their personal space. They are maybe a bit more distant than you are used to, literally and figuratively.

If you know someone better, you will be greeted by kisses on each cheek, sometimes two kisses, but usually three. It is fully accepted to show affection in public.

What to Wear

In the Netherlands, people tend to dress more casually than in other countries when they walk on the street, go to a restaurant or theater, etc.

On the Phone

It is customary for the caller and receiver to say their first and surname. For example, Jan Smit would say, “U spreekt met Jan Smit”, or “met Jan Smit.” When you call a business, mention your name and the reason for calling. Don’t make a personal call before 9 am or after 10 pm, or during dinnertime (6-7 pm).

Business Etiquette

Before making a decision, everyone is entitled to give their opinion, and discussions are open. Hierarchies are quite flat, and often, management is called by their first name. Casual clothing is frequently accepted at the office. A verbal commitment is just as strong as a written one. Be on time and meet deadlines. Don’t schedule meetings during school holidays. Meetings are formal with determined agendas. If one wants to add something, they should let this be known at the beginning of the meeting. Strict time rules apply.

In the Netherlands, it is not common that company get-togethers include the partners or spouses or families of the employees.
SOCIAL & LEISURE
MEETING PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN NETHERLANDS
As it is everywhere for adults, the question of how to meet people can be a challenging one, especially if you’ve just arrived in a new country. If you came to the Netherlands with a job offer in hand and are able to meet people at work, the question is mostly answered for you, luckily! However, even then, becoming friends with colleagues at work in the Netherlands is less common, as many Dutch people tend to keep their work and private lives separate.

If you are the trailing partner of a new employee, the usual answer of “the workplace” to the question of “Where can I meet people?” doesn’t hold true in your case. It’s possible to meet people at your partner’s workplace, but this is not often realistic. After all, you’ll be meeting people who are working during times of the day when you’ll be free.

If you have children, there is almost a built-in network with children, schools, and their activities, and you at least have a common bond with other parents who may be in the same circumstances as yourself.

However, what about the rest of us? Or what if you would like to meet people outside of work or school? Well, here’s a list of ideas to create a network of people who may become your friends, or at least become one of your acquaintances, so that you can begin to feel at home here in Northern Netherlands.

• Join ex-pat groups, such as Connect International, InterNations or an international student group; they have events and get-togethers on a regular basis and can represent all three provinces.
• Enroll in language courses (see the Education section in iwcn.nl).
• Participate in language meet up groups (Humanitas, Gezellig Nederlands, Las Lenguas, etc).
• Join a public speaking club (Toastmasters, POWERtalk International).
• Take crafts, arts, and garden courses.
• Attend sports courses or workshops at your local sports complex or gym.
• Participate in a comedy improvisation group (Stranger Things Have Happened.)
• Join sports associations (sportverenigingen).
• Participate in the international-friendly events offered by City Central in Groningen, which also offers Dutch language support and contact through My Local Friend as well as locally-made gifts and coffee, and foreign papers and magazines. Visit their website (citycentral.nl).
• Join social media groups. Facebook has several groups in each province that usually have to do with “expats” or whatever interest or hobby you have:
  • Expats in Groningen
  • Connect International
  • Expats in Leeuwarden and Friesland
  • IamExpat in the Netherlands
• Do a culinary workshop (Connect International) or workshops offered through various restaurants.
• Join religious organizations or events.
• Seek volunteer opportunities.
• Go to sporting events (search the internet for your favorite sport and region).
  • Participate in the arts and culture (theaters, playhouses, music clubs, art clubs, museums, etc.)
  • Host a get-together for some of your partner’s colleagues and their families. It can be small (such as a coffee night) or large (such as a potluck).
• Write and submit articles for local newspapers or newsletters, based on your experiences or interests.
• Have an outdoor neighborhood coffee event or barbecue or potluck; be sure to invite everyone, so everyone knows what’s happening, even if they decide not to participate.
• Visit your local artist (he or she may have workshops, exhibitions, or information on activities or groups you may be interested in).
• Attend local concerts, bands, musical performances and ask about joining or volunteering.
• Be a contestant in an international pub quiz that frequently occur in some of the local cafes.
• Join a professional organization associated with your expertise and attend their events.
• Get, borrow, or volunteer to walk a dog. It’s amazing how many people you can meet at dog parks.
Whatever you do, be proactive and get involved. Talk to the people you meet: tell a bit about yourself and ask questions about them. If you are looking for work, mention this to the people you meet. Many jobs are found through just this type of networking. The sooner you start building up your personal network, whether it’s for social or business purposes, the more at home you will feel.
Manners

Punctuality

Dutch people always watch the clock and are very punctual. If you have been invited but are running late, let the other person know. The Dutch have a diary for appointments, which they call an “agenda.” Don’t be surprised when, if you want to organize a get-together, Dutch people pull out their agenda (diary) or smart phone to plan the date, sometimes weeks in advance.

In general, they are unlikely to drop by uninvited or to expect you to drop by uninvited. Normally, they don’t invite people on Sundays as this is considered family time. If you are throwing a party at your house or are renovating, let the neighbors know. They will expect you to tone it down after 11pm.

Common Considerations

• Cover your mouth when yawning
• Don’t pass between conversations between other people
• When someone else sneezes, say “gezondheid”
• Smoking is prohibited in many areas. It’s a courtesy to ask your companion first before lighting a cigarette

Polite Language

Hello: Hallo, Dag, Goede morgen/middag/avond
Goodbye: Tot ziens (see you later) or Tot straks (see you soon)
Please: Alstublieft (formal) or Alsjeblieft (familiar)
Thank you: Dank u (formal), Dank je or Bedankt (familiar)
Excuse me: Pardon or Sorry
I am sorry: Het spijt me
I beg your pardon: Neem me niet kwelijk
SOCIAL & LEISURE CELEBRATIONS
Birthdays

Birthdays are considered a very important day, and all family and friends will be invited (by word of mouth, not by invitations). It is customary to not only say congratulations (gefeliciteerd!) to the birthday boy or girl, but also to all the other relatives and friends in the room. It is customary to give a wrapped present, and it will usually be unwrapped right away.

The party typically starts at 8pm with coffee and one slice of (store-bought) cake. After coffee, other beverages, such as soft drinks, wine, and beer are served, along with finger food. At work, if it is your birthday, you can bring a cake or pie to share over coffee. In case of a child, they will treat everyone in class.

A birthday milestone is turning 50. If a man turns 50, it is said that he sees Abraham. If a women turns 50, she sees Sarah.

Don’t forget to buy a birthday calendar to remind you of all the birthdays. Traditionally, this is displayed in the WC (toilet).

Diploma

When a high school student has passed their final exams, people will celebrate this by hanging the school bag on a flagpole, with the national flag, outside their house.

Births

Many Dutch women choose to give birth at home and not in the hospital, without anesthesia or medical help. They don’t organize baby showers, but after the birth, the parents will send a birth announcement which invites you to come and visit the newborn child (kraambezoek.) They will serve a traditional treat: Dutch rusks spread with butter and topped with pink (if a girl) or blue (if a boy) sugar coated anise seeds (beschuit met muisjes).

Deaths

Relatives usually send an announcement to the local paper with details of the funeral or cremation. There is time to pay last respects and sign a book of condolences. In villages, it is not uncommon for the deceased to lie in state in the house, so that people can say their last goodbyes and offer comfort to those left behind. After the service, guests can address the relatives with consolations, and coffee and cake will be served.
Weddings

Many Dutch couples don’t go through the formalities of getting married, but if they do, the average age is not before 30. It is very common for couples to live together instead of getting married, or before they get married. They can have a registered partnership (samenslevingcontract.) Same-sex marriage is allowed, with the same rights as a traditional marriage.

The wedding is announced by a wedding invitation. The civil ceremony can only normally be held in the city hall or a specific wedding-appointed location (trouwlocatie), usually with only family and a few close friends invited. The wedding ceremony may also be performed in a church, if the couple is more religious, but it is the civil ceremony that is recognized as legal. After the formalities, a dinner may follow to which usually the same people who were at the civil ceremony will be invited. Everyone else is usually invited to a party or reception after the dinner takes place.
SOCIAL & LEISURE
EATING & DRINKING

The Dutch Kitchen

The coastal and island areas obviously have a long tradition of seafood dishes. The Wadden Sea shrimps and oysters are especially worth a try. Going just a bit further land inward, however, traditional staples are typically heavy, nutritious goods like beans, grains and potatoes. As in many places, sweet dishes from these areas seem to have survived the test of time best and remain common both in family homes and on restaurant menus.

Dûmkes, cookies with nuts, are popular on mainland Friesland and on the island of Ameland. Poffert, with varieties in Friesland known as boffert is a type of simple cake, somewhere between a brioche and a cake, and served in slices. Oudewievenkoek (or old lady’s cake) is a spiced cake with a taste of anise seeds widely available in the region. Groningerkoek is traditionally made with a cinnamon/anise spice, and Groninger mosterdsoep is a unique local soup made with the area’s crop of mustard seed.

There is a growing interest in locally produced goods, and the region is rediscovering old traditions as well as establishing new ones. The island of Terschelling is known for its cranberry bogs, and Texel is famous for its mutton, which you might find on menus all over the country. Sheep cheeses are local specialties traditionally produced there and in other parts of the Northern Netherlands, including Drenthe. Dried and spiced sausages are another popular regional product, with each province offering a different taste.
Local Note

In terms of production, bitters and gins play a much larger part in the Northern Netherlands than beer. One of the largest distilleries in the country, Hooghoudt, was founded here and still has its main offices in Groningen. It produces a wide range of liquors and gins and has adopted several traditional alcoholic drink recipes from the Northern Netherlands. Remarkably, it also produces a range of non-alcoholic lemonades.

Although it is originally from Amsterdam, the popularity of berenburg (made of Dutch gin and herbs) was initially larger in the Northern Netherlands. Regional varieties include Sonnema Berenburg and Weduwe Joustra. A Dokkumer coffee is the regional interpretation of an Irish coffee and consists of coffee with berenburg and whipped cream. The Frisian Islands have their own kinds of bitters, called a Juttertje (on Texel) or Schylger Jutters-Bitter (on Terschelling). Less popular but surely traditional is Fladderak, a liquor flavoured with lemon and cinnamon.
Eating

Dinners at homes are served around 6pm and will only take half an hour. The kitchens in restaurants normally close at 9pm. At a restaurant, a tip of 5-10% is appropriate if the meal was good. When two people go out for dinner, they usually split the bill (‘going Dutch’). In a larger group, everyone pays their own share. If a Dutch person pays for the meal, he will let you know when you are invited.

In general, the Dutch have three meals a day. In the past, they had meat, vegetables, and potatoes for dinner, but nowadays, they are influenced by other culinary tastes. This is also reflected in the variety of restaurants. Lunch will normally consist of bread and cheese or light spread and will be taken between 12.00 and 1.00.

A very traditional dinner dish is stamppot – the name for several variations of a winter dish with mashed potatoes and vegetables, such as hutspot with carrots and onions, stamppot boerenkool with green kale, or stamppot zuurkool with sauerkraut. Erwtensoep or snert (two different types of pea soup) are well known and traditionally eaten after ice skating or working hard in the cold. Groningen is known for its amazing mosterdsoep (mustard soup)
The Dutch eat a lot of cheese (on bread). Another typical bread topping is hagelslag (chocolate sprinkles) that is not only eaten by children but by adults as well. A surprisingly wide variety of hagelslag is available in the supermarket.

There are vending machines built into the walls of snack bars where you can purchase a snack (kroketten, frikandellen, etc.) without a shop assistant. They call it “eten uit de muur” (eating from the wall).

Some other typical foods include:

- **Haring**: raw herring; it’s seasonal and the first barrel in June is auctioned for charity. You eat them by hand with raw onion at stands on the street or at the fish shop.
- **Poffertjes**: mini pancakes. You can buy them at special stalls, and they are served with butter and icing sugar.
- **Pannekoeken**: plate-sized thin crepe-like pancakes, with either sweet or savory fillings/toppings.
- **Drop**: Licorice
- **Stroopwafel**: Waffle cookies with a syrup or caramel middle
- **Taart**: typically fruit-filled pies with cookie-like crust.

### Social Dinners - Dos and Don’ts

If you invite Dutch people for dinner, prepare your own type of food and style as they love to try something different. They are not used to potluck dinners and buffets. They will not help themselves to drinks as it is considered rude, unless specifically invited to do so.

If you are invited, make sure you are on time. If they say 8pm, they mean 8pm. Most of the time, they will only invite you when they know you well. It is very considerate to bring a small gift like a bunch of flowers, a bottle of wine, or a box of chocolates. They won’t open the wine, but they might serve the chocolates with coffee.

Don’t offer to bring a plate of food, to help prepare the meal, or to take a doggy bag home. Wait with starting to drink wine until the host has raised his or her glass. Only start eating when your host has taken the first bite. Expect that you will be offered seconds, but only after everyone has finished their plates.
Drinking
The tap water in the Netherlands is of high quality and therefore considered drinkable.

After-work Drinks, or Borrel
The Dutch usually don’t socialize with their colleagues and will keep work and private life separate. They don’t like working late or coming in over the weekend as they like to keep this their personal time. They might go for drinks after work (borrel) but tend to go home after 1.5 hours for dinner. The drinks take place at a “bruin café” where they serve Dutch and Belgian beer, wine and spirits such as Dutch jenever, and of course, soft drinks. No meals are served, but snacks like “bitterballen” and cubes of cheese may be present.

Coffee and Tea Time
If people invite you for coffee, ask if they mean in the morning or in the evening. Coffee in the morning is around 10:00 – 10:30 and in the evening, at 8:00. Tea time is around 3pm. Be aware that it is not a light meal, but normally cake is served.
Dutch workers have a relatively high number of vacation days (about 25). They like to spend their holidays camping with a tent or caravan. France, Italy, and Greece are popular holiday destinations.

In the summer, especially when the schoolchildren are out of school, business activities may slow down or even close, as the owners take their vacation times. Construction workers and builders actually have a particular time during the summer when they can choose to take the time off for their bouwvak, or building vacation. This may mean limited supplies as well as postponed building projects and const activities.

School Holidays

Holland is divided into three regions when it comes to school holidays: north, middle and south. You can find the dates at www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/schoolvakanties.

- **voorjaarsvakantie** (Spring Break): February 1 week
- **zomervakantie** (Summer Holiday): July/August 6 weeks
- **herfstvakantie** (Autumn Break): October 1 week
- **kerstvakantie** (Winter Vacation): December 2 weeks
National Holidays

The following national holidays are celebrated on the same day in the whole country:

**Goede Vrijdag**
Good Friday
Banks and post offices are closed. Most stores and other businesses are open but may close earlier than usual. Public transport services operate a normal or slightly reduced service. There are some restrictions on selling alcohol on Good Friday.

**Pasen**
Easter
There are Easter egg hunts, egg-painting, and shops are full of chocolate eggs and decorations. Two official holidays, Sunday and Monday.

**Hemelvaartsdag**
Ascension Day
Always on a Thursday, this day is the 40th day of Easter.

**Pinksteren**
Whitsunday
The celebration of the Pentecost, seven weeks after Easter. Two official holidays, Sunday and Monday.

**Koningsdag**
King’s birthday
April 27th
The national holiday in honor of the king’s birthday with many festivities including flea markets and parties. Orange clothing is rampant. Traditionally, the king visits a couple of cities of the country. Amsterdam is the unofficial center of King’s Day.

**Dodenherdenking**
Remembrance Day
May 4th
A day of remembrance for war victims. Flags fly at half-mast from sunrise till sunset, and there is a remembrance service at De Dam in Amsterdam. At 8pm, all activities stop while the nation observes two-minutes of silence.

**Bevrijdingsdag**
Liberation Day
May 5th
The nation celebrates liberation from Germany in WWII. Dutch schools are closed, and while it is not a vacation day for employees, many open-air concerts are organized.

**Prinsjesdag**
Prince’s Day
September
On the third Tuesday in September, the king rides from his palace to Parliament in a golden coach, and at the Ridderzaal in The Hague, reads the State of the Union, which states the government policy for the coming year.

**Sint Maarten**
Saint Maarten’s Day
November 11th
Children go trick or treating with lanterns at doors and sing special songs for treats, similar to Halloween.
Sinterklaas  St. Nicholas’s Day  December 5th
In the middle of November, Sinterklaas and his Zwarte Pieten helpers sail from Spain to the Netherlands. From that day until the 5th of December, children can put their shoes at the chimney or door and hope to find some treats or small presents the next morning. On the 5th of December itself, they celebrate Sinterklaas’ birthday, and family and friends exchange gifts. A poem accompanies each gift. Sometimes the presents will be camouflaged and may look like something else, called a “surprise”.

Kerstmis  Christmas  December 25th & 26th
The first day is a family day, and the second day is for seeing friends. On the second day, many shops are open, and numerous restaurants offer special menus. Only after Sinterklaas will people put up their Christmas tree. On the 6th of January they will take the tree down.

Oudejaarsavond  New Year’s Eve  December 31st
Many people celebrate this evening at home with family and close friends. Traditionally you can buy oliebollen (a kind of doughnut). Most restaurants are closed, and employees are off from work earlier that day. Fireworks may only be sold on the last 3 days of the year but can only be lit between 31st of December at 10am until the 1st of January at 2am. Keep your pets inside!
Several websites refer to the northern region of the Netherlands as the most rural and unexplored area of the country, as well as being obscure among foreigners. However, each province has its own identity and its own signature cities. Groningen, the largest city in the north, is a lively student city with a well-known museum and much historic heritage. Friesland has Leeuwarden, which will be known as the European Capital of Culture in 2018. Drenthe has Assen, home to the famous Dutch TT Circuit. There are also the five West Frisian Islands. Each island has something unique to offer.

Outside the larger cities, the provinces of Friesland and Groningen mostly consist of meadows and arable land with a few lakes that are ideal for water-based activities such as sailing or fishing. Drenthe is a little different in that it has large forests and more hilly terrain. Life is generally lived at a somewhat slower pace than in the west.

Shopping
Opening hours

On Monday mornings, most shops in the city centers are closed until 1pm, although this does not apply to all stores. On all open days, most shops are open until 6pm. There is evening shopping (koopavond) in many places on Thursday evenings, when shops stay open until 8 or 9pm. In addition, there
are Sunday opening hours (*koopzondag*) ten times a year, during which shops may be open from noon until 5pm. The list of these days can be found in the local newspaper or on the website (www.koopzondagen.net).

During the Sunday opening hours in Groningen, there is often a goods market on the Grote Markt Square, usually complemented by free musical or theatrical performances on the Waagplein Square. Naturally, the City bus is in operation during Sunday opening hours.

**Festivals**

Every month of the year there is a festival in at least one of the three Northern provinces. Several information sources, such as newspapers, advertisement posters, and flyers are frequently seen throughout the villages and cities of the provinces. You can also search the internet for event information in the individual villages, cities, or provinces.

The biggest festivals associated with each province are:

**Groningen**

**Eurosonic Noorderslag** - live music festival *(January)*
www.esns.nl

**Noorderlicht Photofestival** - international photo festival *(August-October)*
www.noorderlicht.com/en/photofestival/

**Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival** - international arts fest *(August)*
www.noorderzon.nl/en/startpagina
Friesland

IFKS Skûtsjesilen - sailing competition (July-September)
www.ifks.fr

Noordelijk Film Festival - film festival (November)
www.noordelijkfilmfestival.nl/

Drenthe

Asser Bluesdagen - blues music festival (January)
www.bluesassen.nl

TT Assen - motorcycle racing (June)
www.ttcircuit.com/en/

Donderdag Meppeldag - culture and music festival (August)
www.donderdagmeppeldag.nl

Shakespeare Theater Diever - Shakespeare festival (August–September)
www.shakespearetheaterdiever.nl

Sports

For sports and fitness activities, many people bike to school or work or just for leisure. Other popular sports activities in the Netherlands include voetbal (soccer), field hockey, volleyball, running, fitness, swimming, skie len (a type of inline skating), ice skating, and tennis.

Outdoor Sports

As the northern countryside offers anything from forests and agricultural fields to lake areas, walking and biking are popular activities. The lack of hills and mountains offers great cycling routes for everyone.

Mudflat hiking (wadlopen) should also be mentioned. At low tide in the shallow Wadden Sea, it’s temporarily possible to walk from the northern coast to one of the Frisian Islands. However, this should be done under the supervision of a professional guide because of the risk of unexpected tide runs. Good starting points include Pieterburen and Holwerd.
Boating and sailing are tremendously popular. The extensive network of waterways and, of course, the Wadden Sea to the north, make it possible to explore large parts of the Northern Netherlands by boat. Good places to start tours of the Frisian lakes include Sneek, Grou and Lemmer, although virtually every village on the water has boat rental options.

Throughout the northern region, ice skating is a major passion in the winter. Because the area is a bit colder than the rest of the country, the first chances for outdoor ice skating often happen in the north. Indoor ice skating begins in September when the two ice rinks open (Kardinge in Groningen and Thialf in Heerenveen). Both venues have an ice track (ijsbaan) for speed skating and a rink for ice hockey (ijshockeybaan). Even if you’re not planning on any ice skating for yourself, watching one of the competitions is a fun way to experience Dutch culture.

Team Sports

In order to participate in any organized sport in the Netherlands, you must belong to a relevant sport club. About a quarter of the people living here are registered to one of the 35,000 sports clubs. About two thirds of the population who are older than 15 years participate in sports weekly.

The most popular sport in the Netherlands is voetbal (soccer), with field hockey and volleyball as the second and third most popular team sports. Ice skating (schaatsen), tennis, gymnastics, and golf are some of the popular individual sports.

For spectator sporting events, it is best to search online for the sport for the particular city.
In several cities and villages in the northern region of the Netherlands, there are village associations (*dorpsverenigingen*) or neighborhood centers (*buurtcentrums*) where activities, events, or meetings for the community take place. There are also associations for just about any sort of interest, hobby, sport, or membership. Check in your city, village, gemeente, or province to find out where the closest neighborhood community is to you.

**Volunteering**

Volunteering time, efforts, and attention to an organization or cause is an admirable way of assimilating into a community. In the Netherlands, there are numerous opportunities, but information on where to volunteer and what is needed is often only available by word of mouth. Also, frequently, a little knowledge of the Dutch language is needed but not always required. All in all, volunteering is a good way to meet people, to practice learning the language, to learn about the organization, and to contribute to the community.

Links to various organizations that seek volunteers can be found on the IWCN website.
The Netherlands is a former colonial and shipping power which had interests as far east as Indonesia, as far south as South Africa, and as far west as the Caribbean. Many residents of these colonies settled in the Netherlands, along with guest workers from all over the world, international business people and their families, and religious and political refugees from many countries. These non-native residents have created an interesting tapestry of homeland-oriented communities with various cultures and interests throughout the Netherlands.

People living in the Netherlands can become part of an international community where Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, and other beliefs can be practiced or followed in churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other venues, with services conducted in many languages. There are organizations and group activities oriented to varied interests, with the added benefit of greatly enriching life through friendships with people from all over the world, including, of course, the Dutch.
Groningen

This province is known more for the countryside north and east of the city of Groningen. Small towns, little fishing communities, little castles (*borgen*) and windmills are excellent to explore by car or bike.

- **Delfzijl** – Cheerful harbor town, known for its Delfsail sailing event.
- **Appingedam** – Small, medieval town with the famous “hanging kitchens”.
- **Pieterburen** – Home of the “*zeehondencrèche*” (seal hospital), which includes a small visitor’s center, guided tours and film.
- **Uithuizen** – Picturesque village, famous for the Menkemaborg, a small castle with a labyrinth and beautiful gardens. It also has a large museum dedicated to World War II.
- **Bourtange** – An historic fortified town in the shape of a star that has been lovingly restored.
- **Leek** – Friendly town with a large estate recreation park (Nienoord).
Outdoor Activities

• *Wadlopen* (walking through the mud during low tide) is a great way to experience the Waddenzee an area of great natural beauty full of seabirds and some seals. For more experienced “*wadlopers*,” there are even trips to the island of Schiermonnikoog.

• Take a bath or spend a day in the sauna at Fontana in Nieuweschans.

• Go for a tour along the old fortified housing estates called “*borgen*” at Slochteren (Freylemaborg), Leek (Nienoord), Leens (Verhildersum) and Uithuizen (Menkemaborg).

• Go sailing or swimming at Leek at the “Leekstermeer” or Paterswolde at the “Paterswoldse Meer”.

• Try the Groningen City walk, a guided tour through the inner city of Groningen, with lots of interesting buildings and historical garden areas (such as the Prinsenhof).

• Take the stairs at the Martinitoren. Climb to the top of the tower and enjoy the view.
WANT TO EXPLORE GRONINGEN IN YOUR FREE TIME?

FIND ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED ABOUT EVENTS, NIGHTLIFE, CULTURE, SHOPPING, SIGHTS, EATING & DRINKING ON: TOURISM.GRONINGEN.NL

NOTHING TOPS GRONINGEN

www.visitgroningen.com/en/home
Friesland

- Sneek – Known for the annual Sneekweek boating event, gateway to the Frisian Lakes.

- Wieuwerd – A small town where a local church crypt created the right conditions for natural mummification.

- Bolsward – Has the Frisian brewery where Ūs Heit (Our Father) is brewed, as well as the distillery of the only Frisian whisky Frysk Hynder (Frisian Horse).

- Leeuwarden – Home of the local Fries museum and capital of Friesland.

- Workum – Has the Jopie Huisman museum, dedicated to an eel fisher turned realist painter.

- Franeker – Eise Eisinga’s Planetarium, the world’s oldest still working planetarium (1774).

- Drachten – Visit the colorful Papegaaienbuurt (Parrot Neighborhood) or De Drait yacht marina.

Skûtsjesilen is the annual early August Frisian sailing contest with 14 ships on the various lakes. The fourteen traditional 10-meter long boats called Skûtsje, each with a crew of more than ten people, compete in over 14 matches on any vessel from the huge IJsselmeer to the tiny Veenhoop.

Two Frisian sports, kaatsen and fierljeppen, can be learned in Friesland. Kaatsen, also known as Frisian handball, is an ancestor of tennis. Fierljeppen (far-jumping) has contestants attempting to jump as far as possible over a ditch using a 10-foot pole, which used to come in handy in the old days of flooding.

The Eleven City Tour (Elfstedentocht) is an event where ice skaters skate over 200 kilometers through 11 Frisian cities. Because it has not been cold enough to be safe on the ice, this important and historic national ice-skating event has not been held in almost two decades. People can, however, follow the route of the Elfstedentocht by car or by bicycle through Leeuwarden, Sneek, IJlst, Sloten, Stavoren, Hindeloopen, Workum, Bolsward, Harlingen, Franeker, and Dokkum. You can get a detailed map of the route at tourist offices throughout the area, and suggestions on how to traverse the route.
Drenthe

- Assen – Capital of Drenthe, home of the famous annual TT Assen motorcycle circuit.
- Emmen – Friendly town, which has grown to be bigger than Assen, and is famous for its zoo.
- Zuidlaren – Rustic and relaxing village with an annual big animal fair.
- Dwingeloo – Access to Dwingelose heide, a national green park with paths and sights.
- Borger – Area where the largest hunnebed (prehistoric burial mound) of the Netherlands is to be found; 52 of the 54 hunnebedden in the Netherlands are found in Drenthe.
- Roden - About 16km southwest of Groningen is a charming village in Drenthe just next to the Friesland border with a golf course (Golfclub Holthuizen) and a mansion with a culinary museum and other exhibits (Landgoed Havezate Mensinge).

Besides the TT Circuit, one of the biggest events in Drenthe takes place in the 31st week of the year. For five days, the village of Odoorn hosts around 24 dance groups of about 600 dancers and becomes an amazing international community where different cultures meet in peace and friendship. There are around 35,000 visitors during the opening parade to the dance rounds and folklore market to the closing gala and last dance rounds. Campgrounds, hotels, and other lodgings are bursting with race revelers and enthusiasts.
SERVICE PARTNERS

The IWCN has a wide range of reliable service partners for internationals living in the Northern Netherlands. The partners offer expert services in various areas, including Housing & Relocation; Legal Services, Insurance & Finance; Tax Consulting; Health & Child Care; Payroll & HR; Travel & Leisure; Education: Recruitment; and Career Support. All of the partners of the IWCN offer services in English.

RELOCATION SERVICES

Connect Relocation B.V.

Successful relocation is a complex process. It requires organization, professional implementation and comprehensive follow through. Connect Relocation covers all relocation stages: immigration, pre-arrival information and orientation, home-finding and settling in. We bring a wealth of personal experience with relocating and living in another country. We know the importance of your expectations meeting the reality once you arrive in a host country. Individual relocation services are our core competence, but we also manage short and long-term assignments of larger employee groups. ‘We go the extra mile’ by providing services that support our customers and help them have an uncomplicated new beginning.

www.connect-relocation.com
Kromme Elleboog 25
9751 RB Haren
+31 (0)50 211 2645
info@connect-relocation.com
RELOCATION SERVICES

Expat Management Group

What’s in a name??! The Expat Management Group is a dynamic corporate group of recognized legal experts in the Netherlands. We deliver specialized services in the main professional aspects of expat mobility management to the Netherlands (immigration, relocation and tax) and provide comprehensive immigration solutions for corporates, individuals, entrepreneurs and investors alike. Next to the end-to-end mobility services to the Netherlands, our extensive global network of international immigration offices and partners allows us to actively coordinate and assist our clients to set their footprints in new jurisdictions and send their employees across the globe.

www.expatmanagementgroup.com
Keizersgracht 127
1015 CJ Amsterdam
+31 (0)20 707 0551
info@expatmanagementgroup.com

Expats at Ease

Your company recruits professionals from abroad. Expats at Ease understands that the expat (impat) has a more-than-full-time job, which does not leave much time to make all arrangements. We can assist you with all International Assignment Services and arrange for a smooth integration of all family members for which we have developed a tailored workshop, “Gezellig hè?” Never underestimate local knowledge. Your success is our goal.

www.expatsatease.nl
Libanonweg 11
8051 NT HATTEM
+31 (0)65 515 2424
info@expatsatease.nl
RELOCATION SERVICES

Focuz Support

Focuz Support provides a wide variety of services, ranging from housing accommodation, Hertz Rent a Car service, hotel booking agent to facility management. We are ‘focuzzed’ on service and quality in everything we do. Please visit our website or contact us to see what we can do for you!

www.focuzsupport.nl/en/
Westereensweg 5
9979 XP Eemshaven
+31 (0)59 687 0029
info@focuzsupport.nl
Housing4u.nl

Housing4u.nl is a special service of Thuisinwoningen.nl. We offer a list of quality rental properties for internationals. With over 15 years of experience in the housing market in the region of Groningen, Thuisinwoningen.nl can help you with the buying, selling, renting, styling, mortgage advice or value appraisal of your home. By listening to your needs and giving good advice with the right information, we can assist you to sell your current house and to find the house of your dreams.

www.thuisinwoningen.nl/housing4u/
Tjalk 73
9606 RG Kropswolde
+31 (0)50 205 3060
info@housing4u.nl

AnderZ Makelaar

AnderZ Makelaar, with Groningen Real Estate as a sub-division, has been active in the North for over 20 years. We focus on helping internationals find their new home abroad. We guide you at the viewings, assist you in looking for potential problems, and help you ask the right questions. Our ultimate goal is to help you find a dream home, not just a place to live in. We also specialize in buying, selling and renting property as well as buying investment property or helping you find a mortgage. No cure, no pay! So you have every reason to call us.

www.groningenrealestate.com
Paterswoldseweg 17
9726 BA Groningen
+31 (0)50 204 1292
info@groningenrealestate.com
Lefier

Lefier strives every day to provide affordable housing in good neighborhoods. We are client-focused and involved in the local communities. Lefier rents good accommodations for a fair price and in diverse price classes. Soft-furnished and fully-furnished rentals are both possible.

www.lefier.nl
Gedempte Zuiderdiep 22
9711 HG Groningen
+31 (0)88 203 3000
info@lefier.nl

Postillion Hotel Haren

Postillion Hotel Haren Groningen is a comfortable three-star hotel, conveniently located near the city of Groningen. The hotel is located in a beautiful area in the center of Haren, which is a town near the Paterswoldsemeer and Groningen Airport Eelde, and only a five-minute drive from the city of Groningen. Moreover, the municipality of Haren has been awarded ‘Best Municipality of 2011’.

www.postillionhotels.com/en-gb/hotels/postillion-hotel-haren-groningen
Emmalaan 33
9752 KS Haren
+31 (0)50 534 7041
hotel.haren@postillionhotels.com
Real Estate Consultancy Vastgoed

Real Estate Consultancy Vastgoed is known for its personal approach, creativity and involvement. We assist our customers throughout the rental process, which a tenant or landlord can be unfamiliar with, and we consistently keep all parties informed. Renting properties from landlords and accompanying tenants in finding the right accommodations are our strengths! Real Estate Consultancy is distinguished by the high level of expertise in the Expat market. If you are looking to buy a house or rent an accommodation, you can reach us seven days a week. We handle varied accommodations from fully furnished accommodations to short- or long-term agreements.

www.recvastgoed.nl/en/
Rijksstraatweg 13
9752 AA Haren
+31 (0)50 525 3525
info@recvastgoed.nl

The Student Hotel Groningen

Centrally located in the artistic Ebbingel Quarter, The Student Hotel Groningen is the perfect launchpad for adventures in this youthful, cultural city. Explore car-free Groningen centre by foot or bicycle, and visit local highlights: the iconic Martini Tower, Mendini’s Groningen Museum and Noorderplantsoen, the city park. The Student Hotel is a one-of-a-kind space that combines the energy and spontaneity of a university campus with the style and full-service amenities of a boutique hotel. In our super sleek communal spaces, everyone is welcome to kick back, relax, play a game of ping pong and soak up some of that groovy atmosphere.

www.thestudenthotel.com/groningen/
Boterdiep 9
9712 LH Groningen
+31 (0)50 206 9161
groningen@thestudenthotel.com
Van der Meulen Makelaars

Van der Meulen Makelaars is a major rental agent in Groningen. Specializing in the rental of furnished accommodation in Groningen, their wide range of properties consists of houses and apartments, with or without gardens, for both temporary or indefinite stays in and around Groningen.

www.vandermeulenmakelaars.nl/en/
Verlengde Hereweg 14
9722 AB Groningen
+31 (0)50 318 8989
info@vandermeulenmakelaars.nl
HOME SERVICES

Clean World NL

At Clean WorldNL pleasant working environments are key to working productively. Clean and attractive working surroundings help employees get the most out of every day and are an important part of maintaining well-being and inspiring job satisfaction. A tidy office is equally crucial when meeting new clients, hosting current clients, or cultivating a good company image. You can focus on your business, whilst we specialise in managing all your cleaning needs. Although every company is unique, we have a work team for almost every occasion. We understand our clients’ company needs, and our commitment to our clients is beyond repute.

www.cleanworldnl.nl/en/
Laan van Vollenhove 1311
3706 ER Zeist, Utrecht
+31 (0)68 327 2146
info@cleanworldnl.nl

FVB De Boer Financial Consultants

Expat in The Netherlands? Buying and financing your home in The Netherlands can be a challenging operation. De Boer Financial Consultants are financial advisors with a deep understanding of the hurdles that Expats encounter when buying a property in The Netherlands. We are specialized in expat mortgages. Although there are standard issues we encounter on a daily basis, you will never be a standard client to us. We will try to give you the best and most efficient service possible and be your beacon during the house buying and financing process and beyond. We remain at your disposal in the future and gladly give you guidance on financial planning issues.

www.fvbdeboer.nl
Gang 3
2242 KD Wassenaar
+31 (0)70 511 8788
info@fvbdeboer.nl
HOME SERVICES

**Klusbedrijf Plantinga**

Klusbedrijf Plantinga is an all-round handyman company specialized in housing maintenance, renovations and redecorations, as well as almost any kind of odd job. A few examples of our services: interior and exterior painting, wallpapering, bathroom renovations, tiling, sanitary and plumbing. Our focus is on quality and service. You can be sure of getting your job well done, on time and care-free. Of course all our work is guaranteed.

[website](http://www.klusbedrijfplantinga.nl/en/home-2/)
Kloosterlaan 13
9677 PP Heiligerlee
+31 (0)59 741 8469
+31 (0)65 021 1088
info@klusbedrijfplantinga.nl

LEGAL & PAYROLL

**Expat Management Group**

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[website](http://www.expatmanagementgroup.com)
Keizersgracht 127
1015 CJ Amsterdam
+31 (0)20 707 0551
info@expatmanagementgroup.com
Holland Payroll

As a fully recognized sponsor within the Dutch Immigration Department (IND), Holland Payroll can apply for, transfer and administer expatriate entry, working & residence permits, allowing you/your contractor(s) to legally live and work in the Netherlands. Following this process sees Holland Payroll become the legal Dutch employer and is therefore responsible for issuing of employment contracts, the 30% Ruling application, payment of income taxes and net salary(ies). Our dedicated Highly Skilled Migrant unit is ready and willing to take on this responsibility so that you can focus on the exciting challenges ahead.

www.hollandpayroll.nl/foreign-employees
Koornbeursweg 73, unit 11
8442 DJ Heerenveen
+31 (0)51 384 5491
info@hollandpayroll.nl

HLB Nannen Tax Lawyers

The accountants and tax lawyers firm HLB Nannen has sites in Groningen and Emmen. Although we are part of a national and international network, HLB Nannen has retained its local focus. Our company has been rooted in the north of the Netherlands since its beginnings in 1942 – our employees are from our region, speak the language and are involved. We like to provide personal advice on your tax matters and make sure you do not miss opportunities. It goes without saying that we can help you meet your fiscal obligations.

www.hlb-nannen.nl/en/
Paterswoldseweg 812
9728 BM Groningen
+31 (0)50 526 6533
groningen@hlb-nannen.nl
Pallas Attorneys-at-Law

Pallas Attorneys specializes in employment law and employee participation law. Within this area of expertise, Pallas Attorneys engages in advising, guiding and litigation for employers, employees, directors, expatriates, freelancers and works councils.

www.pallaslaw.nl
Willemsparkweg 82
1071 HL Amsterdam
+31 (0)20 470 9364
info@pallaslaw.nl

Rothwell International

Rothwell International, a contract management company, specializes in the unique financial needs of stakeholders in the contracting industry. Our mission is to be the best in the industry and to maintain sustainable growth. Highly skilled Consultants (IT or Technical) who market themselves and/or find their own contracts and negotiate their own rates need Rothwell’s services to handle the administration of their contracts. Rothwell International assists in arranging work- and resident permits, tax registrations and applications for the 30% ruling (where applicable). We can manage your yearly tax return to the Dutch Tax Authorities, free of charge under certain conditions.

www.rothwell.nl
Herengracht 105
1398 AE Muiden
+31 (0)30 890 3273
info@rothwell.nl
FINANCE & INSURANCE

ABN AMRO Bank

ABN AMRO: experts in Financial Services for International Clients. ABN AMRO is a full-service bank with many years of international experience. We have developed special services for our international clients, which include: A personal Account Manager/ Multi-Lingual financial advice/ English documentation/ Free Internet Banking in English/ Worldwide access to your account/ Quick and efficient services/ Financial experts in payments, savings, insurances, credit (cards), mortgages, loans and investments.

We are aware of the differences International Clients will encounter in the Netherlands. That is why we will do everything to ensure that you won’t have to worry about your banking matters.

www.abnamro.nl/en/personal/index.html
International Clients, The Base 3rd floor
Evert van de Beekstraat 1
1118 CL Schiphol
+31 (0) 20 343 4002
expat.clients@nl.abnamro.com

Domus Aegis B.V.

FOR SUBSIDIES, GRANTS AND PROJECT FUNDING

Domus Aegis BV is active in the project funding business since her start and combines the today’s 25 years of experience of her founder, Onno van der Kuip LLM, in this branch. Project funding, grants and subsidies are considered as complex and legal matters. For that reason start-ups, scale-ups and companies with expansion contract Domus Aegis to guide them from the start till the end of a funding process. Domus Aegis is experienced on: Start-ups & Scale-ups Investments/ Business Expansion/ Research & Development/ Sustainable Energy/ Biobased Economy/ Smart Industry & IoT

www.domusaegis.nl/en/
Bedrijvenpark Leeksterhout,
Kamerlingh-Onnesstraat 14
9351 VD Leek
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info@domusaegis.nl
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www.hlbnannen.nl/en/
Paterswoldseweg 812
9728 BM Groningen
+31 (0)50 526 6533
groningen@hlb-nannen.nl
Rabobank Assen en Noord-Drenthe

Rabobank helps expats to work abroad without financial worries. Arranging financial needs in a new country can be overwhelming and stressful. To help expatriates in the Netherlands with their specific questions and needs, the Rabobank has set up the Rabobank Expat Desk. Specialized staff assist in making the transition to the monetary system in the Netherlands smooth and efficient. Rabobank Expat Desk offers the following products: Checking and savings/ Investments/ Mortgages/ Insurance

Rabobank Group is an international financial services provider operating on the basis of cooperative principles. It offers retail banking, wholesale banking, asset management, leasing and real estate services.

www.rabobank.nl/assen-nd
Neptunusplein 2
9401 CZ Assen
+31 (0)59 232 3911
info.assen-nd@rabobank.nl

Wij Verzekeren B.V.

Wij Verzekeren insurance company is located in Groningen center within walking distance of the IWCN. Our team of nine individuals enjoy finding the best insurance for you. As a foreign professional, it is important to be well-insured, and we can assist you in the arrangements. We work independently and negotiate with all insurers to find the best tailor-made solution for you. Our way of working may seem unconventional, but we always have your best interests at heart. We believe that strictly following the protocol does not always provide the best results for our clients. We look forward to helping you!

www.wij-verzekeren.nl/expat-insurance/
Stationsweg 3E
9726 AC Groningen
+31 (0)50 782 0934
Info@wij-verzekeren.nl
TAX CONSULTANTS

Blue Umbrella - Dutch Tax Matters

Blue Umbrella is the #1 tax return service provider in the Netherlands. Completing your tax return needn’t be stressful, complicated or expensive. At a fixed fee of just €135 including VAT, we make it easy, stress free and affordable. We’re suitably qualified and experienced in advice on any tax questions. It’s all included in the service we offer, no hidden costs! No matter how complex your personal tax situation is, filing your income tax return with us is simple, straightforward, affordable and completely online. This service is also available to expats with the 30% ruling and is also for self-employed.

www.blueumbrella.nl
Weesperstraat 106
1018 ND Amsterdam
+31 (0)20 468 7560
info@blueumbrella.nl

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TAX CONSULTANTS

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www.hlb-nannen.nl/en/
Paterswoldseweg 812
9728 BM Groningen
+31 (0)50 526 6533
groningen@hlb-nannen.nl

Paping Belastingadvies B.V.

Welcome to the Netherlands. We have a very generous, but complicated tax code. Dealing with the tax authorities can be difficult when arriving new in the Netherlands, they only communicate in Dutch. I can advise you about different tax benefits and allowances you can use and assist you in tax filing. Furthermore I am also specialized in the M-form which you need to file for the year you arrive or leave the country. The introductory meeting is always free. It is always easier to do things right from the start, rather than fix them later.

www.papingbelastingadvies.nl/iwcn/
Plutolaan 525
9742 GP Groningen
+31 (0)63 854 9616
info@papingbelastingadvies.nl
Fysiotherapie 90

Physiotherapy 90 offers Physiotherapy and Manual Therapy with three locations in Groningen. We work together with our partners within the health industry; thus, general practitioners are an integral part of our practice. Quality is of utmost importance, and we maintain a very high standard of care, ensure our professional knowledge is up to date and encourage our physiotherapists to focus on their own specific specialties. We use well-equipped training spaces and offer the largest possible range of services. This enables us to be a good partner for your healthcare needs and to assist you in maintaining a healthy, fit body.

www.fysiotherapienegentig.nl/index.php/afspraak/
Zonnelaan 26
9742 BL Groningen
+31 (0)50 571 7157
info@fysiotherapienegentig.nl

SKSG

SKSG DoReMi is a daycare centre that welcomes children from ages 6 weeks to 4 years old. The building is spacious but cosy and includes 6 Dutch speaking groups and one English speaking group. There is a lovely big garden in which the children can explore and go on an adventure. SKSG Preschool also offers a special program for 3 years old, providing them with the ideal preparation for primary school.

www.sksg.nl/en/
SKSG Daycare
Haydnlaan 2
9722 CH GRONINGEN
+31 (0)50 526 8294
daycare@sksg.nl

SKSG Preschool
Chopinlaan 4
9722 KE GRONINGEN
+31 (0)50 527 0357
preschool@sksg.nl
Groningen Airport Eelde

Groningen Airport Eelde is situated very closely to Groningen, Assen and Leeuwarden. The airport is known for:
- Excellent accessibility
- Convenient arrival and departure times
- Fast check-in procedures.
Groningen Airport Eelde offers direct flights to such destinations as Copenhagen, Munich, London and Gran Canaria (year round); Algarve, Crete, Mallorca, Nice and Ibiza in the summer; and Tenerife in the winter.
Via Copenhagen, there are connections to many additional destinations, including Singapore, Boston, Gothenburg, Stockholm, Reykjavik, Tallinn, Dublin, Manchester, Glasgow, and New York.

www.groningenairport.nl/en
Machlaan 14a
9761 KT Eelde
+31 (0)50 309 7070

High Standard Travel

High Standard Travel focuses on organizing beautiful, accessible and high quality trips for individuals as well as groups. These trips can be daytrips but also multiple-day trips abroad. The company knows its destinations, its accommodations, and its guides, and the bus is driven by one of the founders. In almost all cases, the organization can satisfy the requirements of the clients.

www.highstandardtravel.nl
Aalscholver 19
9728 XK Groningen
+31 (0)50 527 3142
info@highstandardtravel.nl
Pathé Groningen

A modern cinema in the heart of Groningen city center. There is a cafe that can be used for various occasions and events. There is a car park under the cinema.
- Perfect image and sound quality
- Comfortable seats
- Pathé Café for a welcome, drinks or event
- Centrally located
- Well accessible by car and public transport, parking under the cinema
- Climate control system
- Nine theaters with varying capacity (86-545 seats)

https://en.pathe.nl/
Gedempte Zuiderdiep 78
9711 HL Groningen
+31 (0)50 584 4055
esther.daems@pathe.nl

Postillion Hotel Haren

Postillion Hotel Haren Groningen is a comfortable three-star hotel, conveniently located near the city of Groningen. The hotel is located in a beautiful area in the center of Haren, which is a town near the Paterswoldsemeer and Groningen Airport Eelde, and only a five-minute drive from the city of Groningen. Moreover, the municipality of Haren has been awarded ‘Best Municipality of 2011’.

www.postillionhotels.com/en-gb/hotels/postillion-hotel-haren-groningen
Emmalaan 33
9752 KS Haren
+31 (0)50 534 7041
hotel.haren@postillionhotels.com
The Student Hotel Groningen

Centrally located in the artistic Ebbinghe Quarter, The Student Hotel Groningen is the perfect launchpad for adventures in this youthful, cultural city. Explore car-free Groningen centre by foot or bicycle. Local area highlights include the iconic Martini Tower, Groningen Museum and the English landscape park, Noorderplantsoen. The Student Hotel is a one-of-a-kind space that combines the energy and spontaneity of a university campus with the style and full-service amenities of a boutique hotel. In our super sleek communal spaces, everyone is welcome to kick back, relax, play a game of ping pong and soak up some of that groovy atmosphere.

www.thestudenthotel.com/groningen/
Boterdiep 9
9712 LH Groningen
+31 (0)50 206 9161
groningen@thestudenthotel.com
Groningse Schoolvereniging (GSV)

The GSV is a regional primary school with a Bilingual and an International Department. In our Bilingual Department we provide lessons in both English and Dutch, while in our International Department the children are taught in English. The GSV is a private, non-denominational school located in Groningen-South in the neighbourhood Helpman. The school currently has around 650 pupils, of which 120 pupils attend the International Department.

https://07wt01.mijnschool.nl/index.html
Sweelincklaan 4
9722 JV Groningen
+31 (0)50 527 0818
info@g-s-v.nl

International School Groningen

The International School Groningen serves the secondary school needs of the International Community in the north of the Netherlands. The International School Groningen educates young people to become responsible world citizens through creative, critical and meaningful contributions to society.

www.isgroningen.nl
Rijksstraatweg 24, 9752 AE Haren
+31 (0)50 534 0084
info@isgroningen.nl
Ziggurat Taaltrainingen

Ziggurat Language Training Center offers individualized instruction, scheduled group classes, and company courses. The intake interview, given to all prospective students, establishes what the student wants and needs from a language training, the preferred learning style, and the current language level. The teachers and managers at Ziggurat look for different ways to help students learn the language faster and will adapt a course in any way to make it even better. When you give your time and best efforts to language learning, Ziggurat works hard so you get the most out of that time.

www.ziggurattaaltrainingen.nl/taaltrainingen/dutch-language-course/
Atoomweg 2-C
9743 AK Groningen
+31 (0)50 720 0202
info@ziggurattaaltrainingen.nl

EDUCATION

Language Centre - University of Groningen

Successful communication requires language skills and intercultural understanding. At the Language Centre, you can improve both. Our international team combines innovative teaching with practical experience. Let us help you achieve your learning goals in a tailor-made course! Or join our fast-paced group lessons that will start you off in your target language from Day One. We also offer unique intercultural competence training courses that can help you attain your personal and professional goals. Entrust your prose to our professional and experienced translations and text correction service. Finally, our testing service can help you document your proficiency.

www.rug.nl/language-centre/
Oude Kijk in’t Jatstraat 26
Harmonie Complex
First floor, Building 1315, Room 129
9712 EK Groningen
+31 (0)50 363 5802
languagecentre@rug.nl
Europass

Europass helps individuals effectively highlight their abilities. It promotes the mobility of individuals throughout Europe by removing barriers to working, studying or training in Europe. Europass is free and enables people to present their competences, skills and qualifications in a clear way.

www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu
Kempkensberg 12
9722 TB Groningen
+31 (0)50 599 9161
info@europass.nl

Talent in Bedrijf

Talent in Bedrijf focuses on strengthening of the management, executive management and specialised functions in both public sector organisations and the business sector. One of our core activities is the finding and scouting of talent. We approach potential candidates and open conversations on behalf of organisations and companies. From our own expertise and experience we showcase a high professional level and we know to trace and place people in the context of the company or organisation.

www.talentinbedrijf.nl/en/
Officevilla “Hilghestede”
Verlengde Hereweg 174
9722 AM Groningen
+31 (0)50 260 0006
contact@talentinbedrijf.nl
FOUNDERS OF THE IWCN

The International Welcome Center North is a cooperation between the Gemeente Groningen, Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), University of Groningen, and Stichting Connect International.
SUPPORTERS OF THE IWCN

The IWCN offers services for the three northern provinces: Drenthe, Friesland, and Groningen. Currently, eleven municipalities in the three northern provinces are associated with the IWCN. The next several pages contain brief descriptions of the provinces and the municipalities within those provinces that utilize the services of the IWCN.
Province of Drenthe

Drenthe is a province located in the northeast of the Netherlands, with nearly 9,500 internationals living here.

Entrepreneurship in Drenthe

Drenthe is a dynamic province that invites investment and offers room for creative entrepreneurship. Issues such as education, investment, innovation and sustainability figure prominently on the agenda for Drenthe. Modern work opportunities are expanding with smart factories, the Health Hub (a cluster of medical technology companies) and Drenthe is a European Model region for Green Chemistry and Bio-based Economy.

Quality of Life

Who doesn't know that vacation-like feeling: wide-open doors with an expansive view over the landscape and enjoyment of the peace and quiet. Drenthe offers a pleasurable living environment with hardly any traffic jams and excellent cultural amenities. On the social side, the people are straightforward, neighborly, sympathetic and full of life. It is relatively inexpensive to live here. The houses in Drenthe are affordable and children can grow up in a safe living environment. Drenthe offers varied types of accommodations: historic buildings on canals, farmhouses with a views over the countryside or modern houses in bustling neighborhoods with all conveniences close by. The comforts of a city but without the hecticness of the Randstad and with good roads and public transport connections.
Discover Drenthe by bike or on foot
Cycling with five stars, that is what you can do in Drenthe! It is the province that radiates atmosphere. A varied landscape of woods, heath fields, vens and drifting sands (three national parks and two heritage sites). Walking enthusiasts can also enjoy their stay. You can meander through a sea of purple heather and later wander through old forest growths, and end up in a cozy Drents village square for a cup of coffee.

Drenthe: the largest economic playground of the Netherlands
For children, Drenthe is one big playground. Pure nature: romping in the loveliest spots, diving in swimming holes, clambering about in climbing forrests and endlessly abseiling. In the “schaapskooi”, kids can watch the lambs frolicking about. And to see more exotic animals, there is the WILDLANDS Adventure Zoo Emmen, where kids and adults can go on expeditions through jungles and savannahs. Do your children a favor and take them to Drenthe!
Drenthe is also known for the TT-circuit, where every year the largest national sporting event is held. During this event, motorcycle fans from all over the world come to Assen to experience the excitement of world class motorcycle racing.

History

Drenthe is known for the many megaliths scattered through the province. With 16 megaliths in the surrounding area, the village of Borger is the megalith capital. You can also visit the village of Orvelte which is filled with monumental farmhouses displaying how people in Drenthe used to live.

Visit Camp Westerbork Memorial Center, which tells the history of the Central Refugee Camp and the Transit Camp for the Jews (1939-1944), as well as the story of the camp from the end of the war until its demolition in 1970. Life in the camp is the focal point, with personal stories at the heart of the presentations.

For more information about Drenthe, visit the website: www.drenthe.nl
Province of Friesland

What has been claimed for centuries is true: Friesland is different. Discover the uniqueness of this province. Explore the specialties Friesland has to offer: on the water with the wind in your hair and the sun in the sky; sailing on the numerous Frisian lakes. Friesland has many lakes and canals. It is ideal for sailing, canoeing or other water sports. The region is ideally suited to explore by boat because it’s one of Europe’s largest areas of inland lakes. Other than magnificent waterways, Friesland also offers amazing events on and around the water. These events are very nice to visit even if you do not like water sports. It is a pleasant experience along the beautiful routes, which take you to typical villages and towns, where you can wander around and enjoy delicious culinary delights. Regarding culinary experiences, Leeuwarden was the “Capital of Taste 2015”.

The province is famous for its speed skaters. When winters are cold enough to allow the freshwater canals to freeze hard, the province holds its traditional Elfstedentocht (Eleven cities tour), a 200-kilometer ice skating tour. However, it has been almost two decades since the winters have been cold enough for the canals to freeze enough to have this event.
Nature

The Dutch Wadden Sea Islands are the five pearls in the north of the Netherlands. You can literally leave everything behind you. Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog are easily accessible by boat. There, you can cycle endlessly through the dunes or walk along the beaches. The Wadden Sea is even on the Unesco World heritage list.

Did you know that Friesland has no fewer than four national parks? The Drents-Friese Wold National Park is best known for the Bald dunes, a unique sand dune area in the middle of the woods. At the Lauwersmeer National Park, you will experience the vastness, typical of the Frisian land. A plethora of cycling tracks and walking trails give you the opportunity to dive into nature.

The year 2018 is going to be exciting; Leeuwarden has been named European Capital of Culture 2018.
Industries

Not only for tourists but Friesland can also be a special destination for (international) entrepreneurs. Friesland is famous for several industries. With the many waterways in Friesland, it is not surprising that shipbuilding is one of the industries. Other extensive companies, such as the milk powder company Ausnutria Hyproca in Heerenveen, Philips and BD Kiestra in Drachten, and Wetsus (the European centre of excellence for sustainable water technology), are situated in Friesland.

Friesland has something for everyone. Relax while enjoying the serene nature and the inspiring scenery. Experience the comfortable and relaxed atmosphere of Friesland.

For more information about Friesland visit the website: www.friesland.nl
Province of Groningen

The Province of Groningen, with a population of almost 584,000 inhabitants, looks back upon a rich history that stretches back to the early medieval period and - as archaeological excavations have shown - even beyond. It is a dynamic, enterprising and innovating province with extensive space for nature and recreation.

Amidst the green expanses of the Province lies its economic heart: the city of Groningen, home to more than 200,000 inhabitants. Here, you find the city’s famous state university, several colleges of higher education, the university medical center, IBM, the headquarters of Gasunie and a large number of authorities and service providers. Moreover, with its main port of Eemshaven and the harbor area of Delfzijl, the Province of Groningen has a thriving economic growth potential at its disposal with Google as one of the largest companies situated at the Eemshaven. The chemistry park in Delfzijl, the energy valley and healthy ageing are all business areas that keep Groningen innovative.
G7 reasons for visiting Groningen

Number 1 is the city - the bustling cultural heart of the province with attention for art and architecture, design and the Hanseatic trade league. There are friendly cafés and restaurants, wonderful theatres and high-profile festivals. The city center has charming shopping streets, and historical buildings tell their own particular stories. As a lively university city, Groningen has the youngest average population in the Netherlands.

Number 2 are the Groninger estate houses (borgs). In former centuries, Groningen estate houses were the magnificent country seats of local nobility. They usually originated as stone houses; a simple defense work from the 14th or 15th century with thick walls where farmers could flee in times of danger. There are only 16 left out of the 100 borgs of earlier times.

Number 3 is Lauwersmeer National Park. The Lauwersmeer National Park is ideal for walking, cycling and sailing. The Park is officially declared Dark Sky Park, an area where visitors are welcome at night to experience the darkness and see the starry sky.
Number 4 is The Wadden Sea World Heritage that has been included in the Unesco World Heritage List. The location of the seal sanctuary in the village of Pieterburen is also the starting point for many hikers who come here for a walk across the mud flats at low tide.

Number 5 is Bourtange. Here, you can travel back into time through east Groningen where the Bourtange fortress has stood still in time and where the ancient cannon booms as it did in the year 1742.

Number 6 is Terps, which are artificial hillocks made by human hands. The Hoogeland open-air museum in Warffum shows a terpvillage in its original environment. Surrounded by fields, the original character of this village is enhanced by ancient church paths between the buildings.

Number 7 are the Churches. The countryside is characterized by old churches, who provide an image of the old days with their austere architecture and modest interiors. Some are internationally known.

For more information visit: www.toerisme.groningen.nl or www.visitgroningen.nl
Municipality of Assen

Assen is a dynamic city, situated in the north of the province Drenthe. Assen is one of the fastest growing cities in the North and provides a pleasant living and working environment. About 535 international employees lived in the municipality of Assen in 2013.

Events

The city is internationally as well as nationally well-known due to annual events such as the TT and the Grand Prix motor races. This leads to a vast number of people visiting the city every year.

Culture and Museums

Culturally, Assen is famous for the 'Drents museum' and the 'Drents Archief', which are both situated in the old part of Assen. A walk around the old part of town will also show you the famous statue of Bartje, a famous children's book character.

Shopping

In addition to cultural aspects, Assen has a vibrant shopping area with an array of shops that are easily accessible and a market that occurs twice a week.

Nature

The combination of a lively city center and relaxing green scenery of forest within the city leads to great appreciation amongst the inhabitants of Assen and makes it a great place to live. The 'Asserbos', a 300-hectare forest, is characterized by historical monumental trees and meandering walking paths to enjoy Assen’s great nature. On the outskirts of the city, Assen is surrounded by nature, amongst which are the Drentsche Aa, het Deurzerdiep, het Balloërveld and the Pelinckbos.

For more information visit: https://english.assen.nl/
Municipality of Delfzijl

Delfzijl is a pleasant harbor city and municipality located in the northeast of the province of Groningen with just over 25,000 inhabitants. Delfzijl is the fifth largest seaport in the Netherlands and the largest port in the North East of the country. The city has a large industrial area, a busy port, a cozy beach and a few attractions to entertain visitors.

DelfSail

Once every five years, the city organizes the DelfSail festival, the second-largest sailing event in the Netherlands. It brings in a lively mix of ships, music and side events to town, and almost a million visitors make the trip north to admire the impressive collection of historic and modern ships of all sizes.

Things to See

There are thirteen monumental churches in the Delfzijl municipality. In the church of Krewerd, the oldest playable organ in Groningen can be seen. It dates back to 1531 and is one of the three oldest organs in the Netherlands. An organ booklet with a description of all organs in the municipality is available at the ‘VVV Top van Groningen’.

The mills in the municipality match the economic dynamics of Delfzijl. The mills Aeolus in Farnsum and Adam in Delfzijl are municipal property. The mill Ceres in Spijk is owned by Het Groninger Landschap. The mills are listed and attract thousands of visitors annually from the Netherlands and abroad. If the blue flag is hanging on the windmills, the windmills can be viewed free of charge.

Getting Around

The city center and the harbor area are small enough to explore on foot. If you have a bike, that can be convenient if you want to head to the surrounding hamlets or are up for a bike tour along the coast. If you want to rent one, you’ll have to inquire at the tourist office, as there are no regular bike rental companies in town.

For more information visit: https://www.delfzijl.nl/
Municipality of Eemsmond

Eemsmond is a municipality situated in the northeast of the province of Groningen. Eemsmond is famous for its nature and the Eemshaven (Eems harbor). A welcome number of 68 international employees lived in the municipality of Eemsmond in 2013.

Nature, Culture and Museums

Eemsmond is famous for the Waddenzee (Wadden Sea), an area that holds a natural beauty and is a World Heritage Site. The dikes along the sea offer a historical and picturesque view of the sea for visitors.

Menkemaborg is a museum in Uithuizen, a fully furnished mansion with gardens, moats and promenades; the ensemble conveys a striking impression of life at a Groningen 'borg' in the 18th century. It was originally a 14th-century, brickhouse, which was dramatically altered around 1700 but has since been barely changed. Audiotapes in several languages can be used by visitors in order to learn how the people lived in early days. Also offered in in an open-air museum ‘Het Hoogeland’ is a terp village, in its original location in the village of Warffum. Visitors can learn the visual history of the people of more than 100 years ago as well as the view of the land its early stages.

Eemshaven

One of the most remarkable places in the municipality is the Eemshaven. In recent years, the Eemshaven has developed into a bustling port where various Dutch and foreign companies have settled, including RWE Essent, Nuon, Bavaria and Google. Eemshaven is the ideal business location for many businesses.

For more information visit: https://www.eemsmond.nl/
Municipality of Emmen

Emmen, with almost 108,000 inhabitants, is a municipality situated in the southeast of the province of Drenthe. With an area of 350 square kilometers, Emmen is the fourth largest municipality in the Netherlands. About 2,000 international employees lived in the municipality of Emmen in 2016.

Nature

Emmen is well known as an open, green city, where you can enjoy walking and cycling in the several forests. In the south of Emmen is the international Naturepark Bargermeer, part of Veenland, which is the largest peat swamp in Central Europe and a unique bike and walking area as well.

Shopping

The center and the northern part of the city is the historical district. Walking through the characterful streets, you can discover quaint shops where business owners sell their local specialties. On the south part of the market, you can find the largest indoor shopping center of the north. And the weekly market on Friday is considered to be one of the best in the Netherlands. The open air flea markets, held on every Tuesday in July and August, are also famous.

Attractions

The most famous attraction in the municipality is Wildlands Adventure Zoo Emmen. The great combination of a large group of animals, nature and exciting exhibitions makes it a unique experience for the whole family. Another unique attraction is the Veenpark, a historical copy of Emmen dating from 1900. Emmen also boasts Geopark de Hondsrug, the first Geopark in the Netherlands. According to Trivago, Emmen is the most trending city in Europe in 2017.

For more information visit: https://gemeente.emmen.nl/english
Municipality of Groningen

For centuries, Groningen has been popular with both prospective and ex-students. Groningen has approximately 60,000 students in higher education and university out of a total population of 200,000, with around half under the age of 35. A remarkable 4,000 international employees of all ages live in the municipality of Groningen in 2017. Groningen is a sustainable city with a focus on healthy ageing, knowledge, innovation and energy.

Culture and Museums

The Groninger Museum is the most high profile museum in the Netherlands, due not only to its striking design by Italian architect Mendini, but also because of varying exhibitions, such as the David Bowie exhibit in 2016. Or check out the Noordelijk Scheepvaartmuseum (Nautical Museum), which shows the history of trade across Groningen waters or the Nederlands Stripmuseum (Dutch Comic Strip Museum). The stunning Groninger Forum will open in 2019 and promises to be another draw to the city.

Events

Since the Groningen World Exhibition in 1903, Groningen has remained a festival city, with festivals featuring sports, music, theatre, the International Film Festival Rotterdam in Groningen and Noorderlicht. Every August, the city hosts Noorderzon, which is highly regarded internationally as one of the top music/theatre/art festivals in the world.

Shopping

Recently, Groningen was rightfully chosen as the city with the best city center in the Netherlands. The selection of shops is enormous and incredibly varied. From large chain shops to small and charming ones, anything can be found in Groningen from books, clothing, shoes and accessories, to antiques and furniture.

Leisure

Groningen boasts a car-free city center and is world-famous as a cycling city. Groningen bursts at the seams with hip hotels, ethnic restaurants, coffee or dessert cafes and cocktail bars. With no specific closing time, pubs can be open all hours, which is unique.

For more information visit: https://gemeente.groningen.nl/english
Municipality of Heerenveen

With a population of 30,000, the city of Heerenveen is the main urban centre in a municipality which also contains 15 attractive villages. Heerenveen has plenty to offer in terms of shops, work, culture, sports and recreation. Some 420 international employees lived in the municipality of Heerenveen in 2013, and the number is increasing.

Sports

The football club, SC Heerenveen, plays in the Dutch premier league, known as the ‘Eredivisie’. In the last few years, SC Heerenveen has often qualified for the Europa League. A football match with 26,000 fanatical supporters in the Abe Lenstra Stadium is not to be missed! In addition, Heerenveen is home to the top international speed skating stadium -Thialf - known worldwide as the ice speed skating centre of the world. International speed skating events in Thialf are a unique experience with the enthusiastic spectators all dressed in orange and singing along with the brass bands.

Culture and Museums

Heerenveen is home to a regional theatre, the Posthuis, in a historic building. It has a local museum telling the story of Heerenveen and the region, and for artlovers, there is the award winning Museum Belvedère, which attracts some 50,000 vistors from near and far.

Access

Heerenveen is situated on the crossroads of the strategic north-south and east-west motorways A32 and A6/A7. Heerenveen has an intercity railway station on the line from Leeuwarden to Amsterdam. It is set in an attractive landscape with woods and lakes where you can walk, cycle and sail.

For more information visit: https://www.heerenveen.nl/
Municipality of Leeuwarden

Leeuwarden is a dynamic and vibrant capital city, located in the Northern part of the Netherlands in the prosperous, agricultural province of Friesland, with many lush meadows and open water. With 107,000 inhabitants, Leeuwarden was once a royal residence and has a beautiful historical centre, a wealth of listed buildings, fun shops and relaxing terraces and canals.

European Capital of Culture 2018

It comes as no surprise that Leeuwarden has been awarded the title of European Capital of Culture 2018. In the run-up to 2018, Leeuwarden is working to create a culturally vibrant climate to mobilise the city, region and people.

The city of Leeuwarden is the start and finish of the Frisian Eleven-city long distance skating tour (Elfstedentocht) with fascinating museums, over 1000 monuments, special boutiques and spectacular events. An extraordinary church tower, the ‘Oldenhove’, originated in 1529 and has its story of why it leans more than the tower of Pisa in Italy.

Another important feature as a center of trading in the north is the ‘Waag’, which was built in 1590. This is a historical building where products were weighed before being sold on the market.

Leeuwarden also hosts the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, the Water Campus for Research and Development of Water Technology, and the Dairy Campus, thus confirming it as the perfect location to hold the first International Precision Dairy Farming Conference.

Many historical figures originate from Leeuwarden, such as M.C Escher, Mata Hari, the ancestor of the current Dutch Royal family Princess Maria Louise, poets, novelists, romantic authors and more.

For more information visit:
https://www.mooileeuwarden.nl/en/pagina/praktische-informatie
Municipality of Midden-Groningen

Midden-Groningen is a versatile municipality with a strong industry sector. This municipality is situated in the middle of the province of Groningen, the main village is Hoogezand. Midden-Groningen has a wide range of housing options, as well as various shopping centres and sports and recreational facilities.

Working in Midden-Groningen

Over 18,000 people work in the municipality of Midden-Groningen, making it a major employment area in the province of Groningen. Several large high-tech industrial enterprises and a number of international companies are based here. The shipyards along the canal Winschoterdiep are real eye-catchers, and seeing the impressive ships that are built here being launched is a truly spectacular sight. All these enterprises are supported by an extensive network of suppliers and service providers.

Living in Midden-Groningen

Midden-Groningen has rural villages with centrally located shopping and sports facilities. In Hoogezand you can visit the cinema and the theater. At the beautiful lakes, such as Zuidlaardermeer and Schildmeer, it is possible to surf, sail, swim or fish. These are two beautiful regional lakes, bordering several nature reserves.

Do you prefer a city visit? No problem: Midden-Groningen is ideally located near the city of Groningen, which can be reached within twenty minutes by train or car. Midden-Groningen is also on the main route to Oldenburg and Bremen in Germany.

For more information visit: http://www.midden-groningen.nl/
Municipality of Noordenveld

The multi-faceted Top of Drenthe, located in the northern triangle between the cities of Drachten/Groningen/Assen and near the Frisian lakes, is the place for a wonderful vacation or day out. The beautiful brook and valley landscape is wide and water rich and can be found in the nature area De Onlanden. Cycling over meandering paths along streams and marshes transports you to another world.

How different is the wild moor of Fochteloërveen, with the typical Drentse “hunebedden” (monoliths) nearby. More liveliness can be found around the Leekstermeer, which is best to enjoy from the water. Or go mountain biking in the woods of Norg. Winding lanes, past Saxon farms and imposing estates, lead to characteristic village squares such as Norg and Roden. And afterwards, visit a museum, attraction or studio.

The prison village of Veenhuizen, unlike in olden times, invites one to visit and wander through this village of paupers and vagrants from the Koloniën van de Maatschappij van Weldadigheid. The monumental buildings bear silent witness to a unique history. The koloniën van weldadigheid is listed on the provisional list of UNESCO world heritage sites.

On our site, www.kopvandrenthe.nl, you can find good temporary accommodation possibilities.

For more information visit: https://www.gemeentenoordenveld.nl/
Municipality of Smallingerland

Smallingerland is found in the east of the province of Friesland, and its capital is Drachten. Drachten is the second largest town in Friesland. It has a fine reputation for its diversity and provides a pleasant living and working environment. If you enjoy the theatre, movies or public events, Drachten is the right place for you.

Town Centre
In the town centre and nearby areas you will find a surprising variety of shops, delightful cafes with pleasant terraces. A market is held at this square every Thursday afternoon and Saturday. Free Wi-Fi is available in the town centre.

Things To Do
Drachten organises many cultural events during the year, Simmerdeis and the Easter fair for example. The Naturij is the largest children’s farm in the north. With a playground, an indoor playhall, a traffic yard and of course many animals. Theatre De Lawei provides a large variety of shows and concerts from all over the world.

Surrounding Area
Drachten is located centrally between De Alde Feanen National Park, an area called Drents-Friese Wold with woods, heaths and drift sands and the Frisian lakes. The country estates of Beetsterzwaag are also within easy reach.

History
Drachten was originally a peat-land village colony. For transporting the peat people depended on the water and used ‘skûtsjes’ (Frisian flat-bottomed cargo boats). Many of the skûtsjes still being sailed were built in Drachten. One shipyard still exists.

For more information visit: https://www.smallingerland.nl/
Municipality of Ten Boer

Ten Boer is a small municipality situated in the beautiful countryside north of the city Groningen. Ten Boer is the main village in the municipality, surrounded by eight rustic villages. In 2013, 36 international employees lived in the municipality of Ten Boer with a growing trend for more.

Walking and Cycling

Ten Boer is only seven kilometres away from the ring of Groningen. Because it is situated so close to Groningen, most people use the bike as the main form of transport. However, the public transport system is also wonderful. You can go within 20 min by bus to the Central Station in Groningen. Ten Boer is a calm and safe municipality where children can play outside and even at a young age walk and bike to school. For recreational time, the Ten Boersterbos provides a nice scenery to walk and cycle.

Facilities

Ten Boer provides plenty of facilities such schools, shops, churches, healthcare facilities, gyms and several other sport facilities.

Attractions and Sport

If you are seeking more activities, the churches host concerts on a regular basis on Sundays. Furthermore, Ten Boer has a nice swimming pool, an inline speed skating track and a multifunctional gym.

For more information visit: https://www.tenboer.nl/
Municipality of Veendam

Veendam is a municipality with the convenience of a city and the peace and quiet of a town. Living in Veendam means living in green, watery and spaciously set up neighbourhoods. It is for this reason Veendam is also known as Park City Veendam.

Residents of Veendam can make use of many sporting facilities such as the subtropical swimming pool Tropiqua.

At the west side of Veendam lies the spacious recreation area Borgerswold. This park like landscape is perfect for hiking and cycling enthusiasts. The area consists of many facilities for all ages. For example: a water-ski cableway, a climbing park, a camping site for mobile homes, a horse riding centre and a beautiful 18 holes golf course. Kids can enjoy themselves at the playground, the petting zoo and the beaches. Those who love water and sports will be very happy at Borgerswold!

The municipality of Veendam was known for its peat. This is still visible in the cultural assets Veendam has to offer, such as the Veenkoloniaal Museum (Colonial Peat Museum) in the centre. Next to this museum lies Culture and Congress Centre van Beresteyn. This is the cultural and vibrant heart of Veendam. You can enjoy theatrical performances, music lessons, film or visit the library or café. You can also find an wide range of shops and restaurants. Veendam has many terraces where you can enjoy your drink or meal.

Veendam has eight primary schools and two high schools. The city of Groningen is within easy reach by public transportation.

For more information visit: https://www.veendam.nl/