



Welcome Guide to the North

2022-2023



international welcome center north

The International Welcome Center North (IWCN) is a one-stop shop for international people living in, and companies located in, Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe.

We offer services in three areas: government formalities (residence permits and municipal registration); guidance (practical information and referrals to reliable service providers); and social activities (a chance to start building a social and/or business network during activities and events).

We also provide information to companies and organizations about formalities and practical matters concerning their international employees.

All of this happens at one location, and we are open Monday through Friday from 10:00 to 17:00.

Feel free to contact us by telephone, e-mail, or web chat! We are open by appointment only until further notice.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
FOCUS ON THE NORTH	8
Climate	8
Multilingualism.....	8
OFFICIAL MATTERS	10
Obtaining a Residence/ Work Permit.....	10
Registering with the Local Municipality and Obtaining a BSN	11
30% Tax Ruling	13
Benefits (<i>Toeslagen</i>)	16
Essential Tax Contact Information.....	18
SETTLING IN	
HOUSING	20
Location	21
Renting	21
Purchasing a House	23
Moving House.....	25
SETTING UP YOUR HOME	26
Gas and Electricity.....	26
Water Services.....	26
TV, Internet and Telephone.....	27
Laundry.....	27
Refuse Removal	28
CHILD MATTERS	30
Child Benefit	30
Childcare	30
Vaccinations.....	31
Family Assistance for General Matters	31
EDUCATION	33
International Schools in the North.....	34
Absence and Truancy.....	34
School Holidays.....	35
BANKING	36
Getting a Bank Account	37
Bank Cards	37
Bill Payments	38
Foreign Currency	39
Checks / Cheques / Cash	39

HEALTH MATTERS	40
General Practitioner or Family Doctor	40
After Hours and Emergency Healthcare	42
Pharmacy and Prescriptions.....	43
Mental Health.....	43
Home Care	44
Hospitals.....	44
Dentist	45
Eye Care.....	45
TRANSPORTATION	46
Public Transport	46
Cycling	48
Cars and Driving	59
Car Insurance	50
Drinking and Driving	51
Parking.....	53
Taxis.....	53
INSURANCE	54
Health Insurance	54
Vehicle Insurance.....	55
Other Types of Insurance.....	55
PETS	56
POSTAL SERVICES	58
FINDING A JOB	59
Orientation Year Highly-educated.....	60
Starting a Business via the Start-up Permit	61
Make it in the North- Careers in the North	62
SOCIAL & LEISURE	
MEET & GREET	68
MEETING PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN NETHERLANDS	70
Manners	72
CELEBRATIONS	73
EATING & DRINKING	75
The Dutch Kitchen.....	75
Eating	76
Drinking.....	77
LEISURE TIME & HOLIDAYS	78
School Holidays.....	78
National Holidays	79
LEISURE	80
Shopping	80
Festivals.....	81
Sports.....	82
ORGANIZATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS	83
Volunteering.....	83
RELIGION	83

WHAT TO DO IN THE PROVINCES	84
Groningen.....	84
Friesland.....	86
Drenthe.....	88
SERVICE PARTNERS.....	90
HOUSING AGENTS.....	91
RELOCATION SERVICES.....	94
HOME SERVICES	95
HEALTH & CHILD CARE.....	98
FINANCE & INSURANCE.....	99
LEGAL & PAYROLL.....	102
TAX CONSULTANTS.....	106
JOBS & CAREER SUPPORT.....	108
EDUCATION & TRANSLATIONS.....	110
FOUNDERS OF THE IWCN.....	113
SUPPORTERS OF THE IWCN.....	113
PROVINCES & MUNICIPALITIES.....	114
Province of Groningen.....	116
Province of Friesland.....	120
Province of Drenthe.....	124
Municipality of Assen.....	128
Municipality of Eemsdelta.....	129
Municipality of Emmen.....	130
Municipality of Groningen.....	131
Municipality of Heerenveen.....	132
Municipality of Het Hogeland.....	133
Municipality of Leeuwarden.....	134
Municipality of Midden-Groningen.....	135
Municipality of Noordenveld.....	136
Municipality of Smallingerland.....	137
Municipality of Sudwest Fryslan.....	138
Municipality of Veendam.....	139

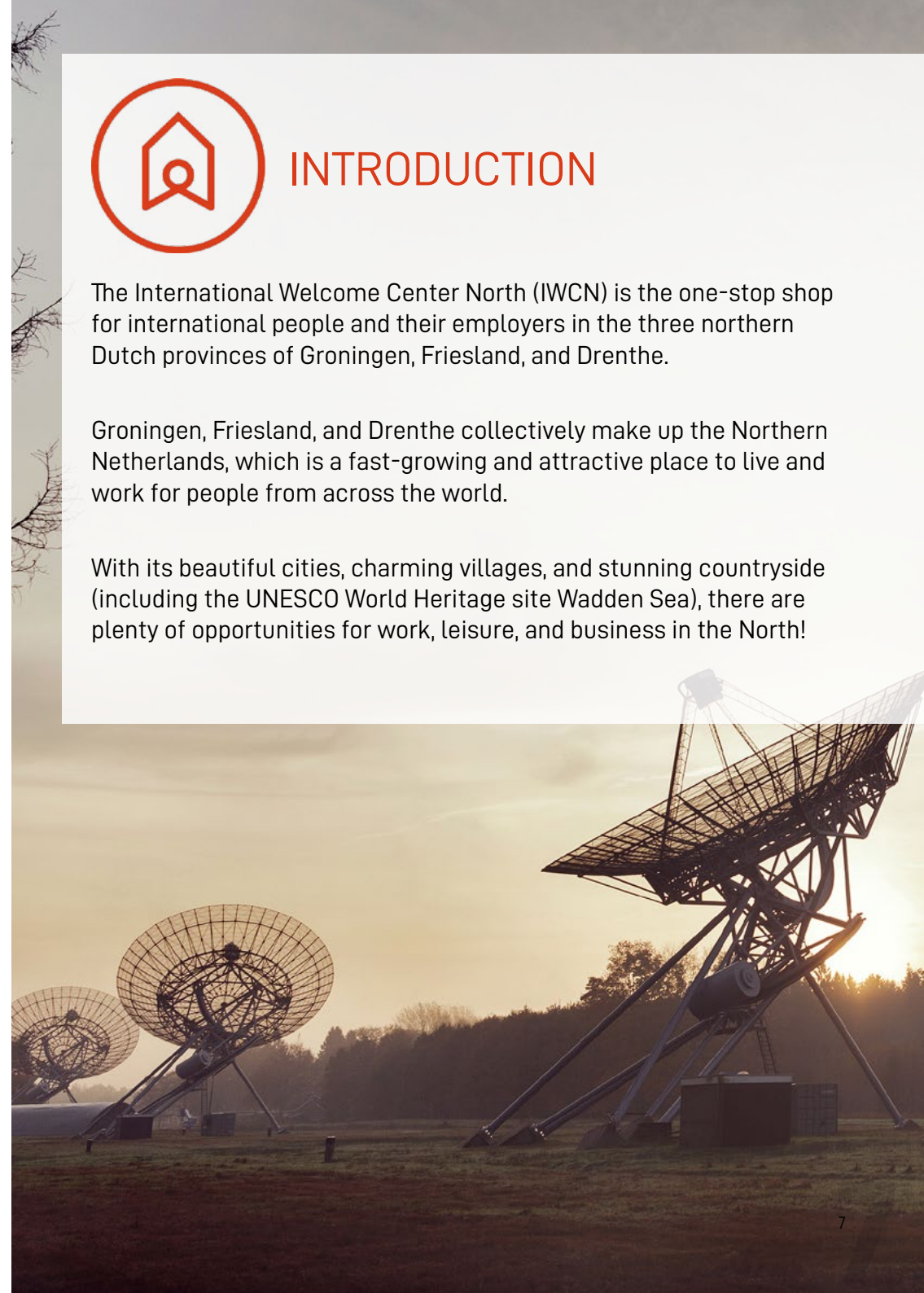


INTRODUCTION

The International Welcome Center North (IWCN) is the one-stop shop for international people and their employers in the three northern Dutch provinces of Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe.

Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe collectively make up the Northern Netherlands, which is a fast-growing and attractive place to live and work for people from across the world.

With its beautiful cities, charming villages, and stunning countryside (including the UNESCO World Heritage site Wadden Sea), there are plenty of opportunities for work, leisure, and business in the North!





FOCUS ON THE NORTH

The North is spread over one-fifth of the total area of the Netherlands, despite having only one-tenth of the population. It is formed by 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 1,741,932 (January 2022).

The North of the Netherlands is a stronghold in various sectors of the Dutch economy. These include agriculture and bio-based industries, chemical industries, the oil and gas industries; data centers, life sciences, offshore wind technology; and water technology. Research and development high-quality research and development is happening in a wide number of industries across the entire north.

According to the individual provincial statistics, there were approximately 61,890 non-Dutch people living in the Northern Netherlands in 2020, of which almost 31,557 live in Groningen, about 18,102 in Friesland, and a further 12,231 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 rare - temperatures may reach as low as -10°C.

Summer average highs are around the 22°C mark, but temperatures over 30°C or 35°C do occur. As with the rest of the Netherlands, the northern regions experience their fair share of rain, often unexpectedly and in short bursts, 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 towns close to cities, 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, though this trend is changing over time.

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 *Drents* (in Drenthe). The province of Friesland even has its own officially recognized language: Frisian

Regional Sources of News and Information

The Northern Times (www.northerntimes.nl) is the first and only English-language newspaper written and produced in the Northern Netherlands. It covers all of the biggest new stories and events in the North, and also has original pieces written by its team, as well as producing video and photo pieces. The Northern Times also provides a platform for international people to write about their experiences, in their own words.

Here and Now (www.hereandnow.nl) is an online platform and recommendation calendar that shows you all of the diverse cultural, networking and sport events in the North. There's a version of Here & Now for each of the provinces: Groningen, Leeuwarden-Friesland, and Drenthe. Events are given a 'language no problem' stamp, if they are suitable for non-Dutch speakers.

At Home in Groningen (www.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 accommodation in the region, as well as having a listings feature for available places.

Language Course Options

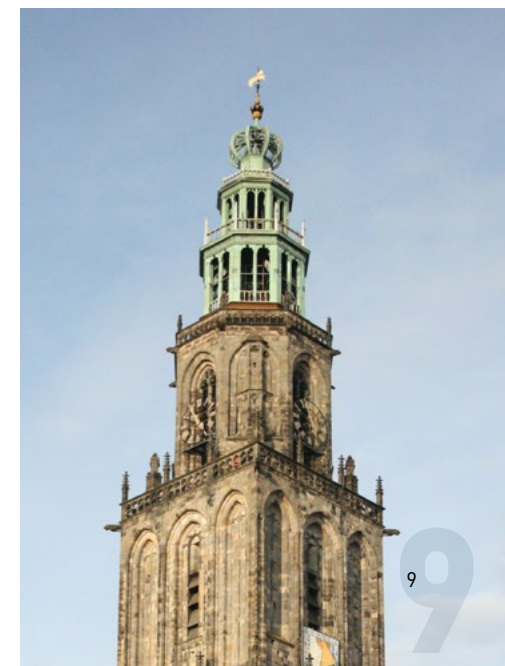
It is highly recommended that newcomers learn Dutch, even though Dutch people usually speak very good English. In the Northern Netherlands, you might have problems communicating with older people, and the locals in general will really appreciate it if you make an effort to speak Dutch. It will also help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

- Dagnall Talen Instituut (Assen)
- Eurolangues Taleninstituut (Leeuwarden)
- Flowently (National)
- University of Groningen Language Center (Groningen)
- Ziggurat Taaltrainingen (Groningen)

Groups on social media 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 the Dutch immigration services (IND); the type of work permit is dependent upon your visa and stated purpose for being in the Netherlands. Please 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, such as:

1. Opening a bank account
2. Obtaining health insurance (see page 52)
3. Getting a mobile phone or buying a car
4. Registering for social benefits (such as employment benefits or child benefits; see page 16)
5. Getting set up with HR at your place of employment in order to be paid
6. Filing your tax return (see page 11)

Documents you need to have to obtain your BSN include:

- Municipal registration form (please note: this is a different form for each municipality!)
- A legalized copy of your birth certificate
 - 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 on Abolishing the Requirement for Legalization for Foreign Public Documents
 - For those born in 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)
- Completed Marriage/Registered Partner form – plus copies of the IDs of both partners. (This is NOT required if both partners have an EU nationality or if the marriage took place more than 10 years ago.)
- If applicable, legalized AND translated copies of your
 - Adoption certificate
 - Divorce certificate

See the government "Netherlands Worldwide" website (netherlandsworldwide.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 an associated 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.



Belastingdienst

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 the most beneficial, because of the way the Dutch wage taxes and income taxes are calculated.
 - Taxes for wages and taxes for income is calculated through two 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 tax bracket. 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. www.belastingdienst.nl

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 May 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 May 1st, but for the M form, it is July 1st. If you are not able to file before May 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 www.business.gov.nl

For directions on filing your tax return digitally, see www.business.gov.nl

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 government ID, 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 certain 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% tax ruling 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, since January 1 2019, qualifying workers can use it for a maximum of five year.

Examples of extraterritorial costs are:

- Additional costs for maintenance because prices in the Netherlands are higher than those in the country you come from. Examples of these extra expenses include meals, gas, water and electricity.
- Costs for a trip taken to the Netherlands in order to get acquainted with the country (e.g. to look for a house or a school), possibly with your family
- The cost of applying for or converting official personal documents, such as residency permits, visas and driver's licenses.
- Cost of medical tests and vaccinations for the stay in the Netherlands.
- Double accommodation costs if you keep your residence in your home country (e.g. hotel costs).
- Additional (including initial) accommodation costs. If your employer provides you with free accommodation, a sum for that accommodation will be taxed as income. Allowances for furniture are not subject to this arrangement.



- Storage costs for your household effects that you do not move to the Netherlands.
- Cost of travel to your home country (e.g. for a family visit or a family reunion).
- Additional cost of having the income tax return filled in by an adviser if this is more expensive than having the return filled in by a comparable tax adviser in your home country. A threshold of €1,000 applies.
- Cost of a Dutch language course for you and the family members staying with you.
- Additional (non-business) costs of telephone calls to your home country.
- Cost of applying for a social security exemption, such as an A1 or E101 statement.

Examples of non-extraterritorial costs are:

- Secondment allowances, bonuses and comparable payments (foreign service premium, expat allowance, overseas allowance)
- Capital losses
- Purchase and sales costs of a home (reimbursement expenses purchase house, brokers fee)
- Compensation for higher tax rates in the country of employment (tax equalization)

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% ruling 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% ruling 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% ruling 2022", is in English and can be downloaded on the *Belastingdienst* website (www.belastingdienst.nl).

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.



Term

Since January 1 2019, the 30% ruling (also known as the 30% tax facility) for employees from abroad has a maximum term of five years. The term starts on the first working day. This term may be reduced. This happens in the following cases:

- Time already spent in the Netherlands in the last 25 years before the start date of the employment. The nature of the previous stay in the Netherlands- for example as a tourist or an employee – will determine if the validity period is reduced. The validity period of the 30% ruling will not be shortened if the employee:
 - Worked in the Netherlands for a total of 20 days per calendar year or less.
 - Stayed in the Netherlands as a tourist for a maximum of 6 weeks per calendar year.
 - Stayed in the Netherlands as a tourist for more than 6 weeks per calendar year but less than 3 consecutive months.
- Request not submitted within 4 months: The joint request for application of the ruling should be filed within 4 months after the start of the incoming employee's employment. If the request is made after this period, the term will be reduced.
- Employee's expertise is no longer scarce: The Tax and Customs Administration may ask the employer to demonstrate that his/her employee still fulfills the requirement of specific expertise. It is possible that the employee's expertise is no longer as scarce on the Dutch labor market as when he or she was hired or seconded from abroad. The employer can judge whether the incoming employee's expertise is still scarce on the Dutch labor market, or have this assessed by the Tax and Customs Administration. To this end, you can submit a request to the Tax and Customs Administration/Limburg/Department of International Affairs. If it appears that the employee no longer fulfills the condition of scarce, specific expertise, the tax ruling will end. If the employee still meets the conditions, the ruling will apply until the end of the term (with a maximum of five years).

Change of Withholding Agent for Employees from Abroad

If an employee changes jobs, the 30% ruling 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 www.belastingdienst.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, and consulting a professional tax firm is recommended in order to avoid having to pay back funds you may have received in error.

Health Insurance Benefit (*Zorgtoeslag*)

Some of the eligibility factors for 2022 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 € 31.998, if you live alone (amounts adjusted annually)
- if you have an 'benefit-partner*', your combined annual income does not exceed €40,944 (amounts adjusted annually)
- you have Dutch or EU 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 (www.zorgwijzer.nl/faq/students). If Dutch health insurance is not required, you are not eligible for the health care benefit. See the *Belastingdienst* for more on this information (www.belastingdienst.nl)

Rent Benefit (*Huurtoeslag*)

Some of the eligibility factors for 2022 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 or EU 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: (www.belastingdienst.nl)



Childcare Benefit (*Kinderopvangtoeslag*)

You should apply for the child care 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 2022 are (can vary from year to year):

- you (and your partner) work, study, or are enrolled in an integration course at a certified organization
- you receive *kinderbijslag* or you support your child to a large degree
- the child is registered at your address
- the daycare center or child minder is registered
- 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 (and your 'benefit-partner**') have Dutch or EU nationality or are in possession of a valid residence permit or work permit

Supplementary Child 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 2022 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 or EU 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: <https://www.svb.nl/en/child-benefit/extra-payment/child-budget>

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: belastingdienst.nl

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.belastingdienst.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 living without your own household goods requires patience, 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 high demand for rental properties and limited availability, rents are quite high. Some rentals are only available for locals who qualify for housing subsidies which give access to different living spaces from internationals, who are often looking to rent on a temporary basis.

Rent is typically payable on the first of the month, 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), which are 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, only if the renter has given an assignment to find a property) OR an administration fee

Additional costs 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 54 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 the rental contract 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 inform 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 (*overdrachtsbelasting*, 2% of the purchase price)
- Transfer contract (*leveringsakte*, 0.3% of the purchase price)
- Real estate agent fees, if applicable (*makelaarscourtage*, 0.5-2% of the purchase price)
- Mortgage advice fee, if applicable (*hypoteekadvies*, 1% of the mortgage or 1.2% of the purchase price)
- Mortgage contract (*hypoteekakte*, 0.15% of the purchase price)
- Valuation fee (*taxatierapport*, 0.2% of the purchase price)

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 IWCN website under **Service Partners, Home Services and Finance & Insurance**, or talk to your real estate agent or bank. Link to IWCN Service Partners: iwcn.nl/service-partners/all-service-partners/

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. You should check with the VvE about the financial status of the apartment 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

<i>gemeubileerd</i>	fully furnished
	The house may have everything from pots and pans to a dishwasher. It is recommended to ask for an inventory list.
<i>gestoffeerd</i>	partly or soft-furnished
	There will usually be flooring, window coverings, ceiling lights and/or major kitchen appliances.
<i>kaal or ongemeubileerd</i>	unfurnished or bare
	This means no flooring, window coverings, light fixtures, etc.
<i>de makelaar</i>	real estate agent
<i>te koop</i>	to buy
<i>te huur</i>	to rent
<i>beschikbaar</i>	available
<i>verkocht</i>	sold
<i>de vraagprijs</i>	the asking price
<i>de wijk</i>	neighborhood, district
<i>de buurt</i>	neighborhood, area
<i>het huis</i>	house
<i>het flatgebouw</i>	apartment house
<i>de flat/ het appartement</i>	apartment
<i>de eenkamer/ tweekamerflat</i>	a flat with 1/ 2 rooms
<i>de eengezinswoning</i>	a single-family home
<i>aantal slaapkamers</i>	quantity, number of rooms
<i>de tuin</i>	garden
<i>de verwarming</i>	heating
<i>de parkeerplaats</i>	parking lot
<i>de keuken</i>	kitchen
<i>de slaapkamer</i>	bedroom
<i>het toilet / de wc</i>	toilet
<i>de badkamer</i>	bathroom

de inventarislijst
de waarborgsom
de huurder
de verhuurder
de huurprijs
de huurperiode
minimale huurperiode
de ingangsdatum
de einddatum
de periode van
betaalperiode
prijsklasse
stofferings
kaart en streetview

the inventory list
deposit, guarantee
the tenant, the renter
the landlord/landlady
the rental price
rental period
minimum rental period
the effective date (for moving in)
end date, moving out date
a period from
paying period
price range
furniture
map and street view

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, or rent benefit.





SETTING UP YOUR HOME

GAS AND ELECTRICITY

Electrical power in the Netherlands runs on a 50 Hertz(or cycle) frequency and a voltage of 220V. Non-European lamp plugs can be converted by replacing the power plug with a Dutch one. Non-European 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 use natural gas, electricity, or ground-source energy.

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

- PriceWise (in Dutch) - www.pricewise.nl
- Independer (in Dutch) - www.independer.nl/energie/intro.aspx

Another option in the three northern provinces is a local, sustainable initiative called *Van*

Ons Energie (www.energie.vanons.org)

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
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 some areas, it is still 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. Digital TV is generally available, 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:

Aanbiedercheck (in English) www.aanbiedercheck.nl/en/

Totaalwijzer (in Dutch) www.totaalwijzer.nl

PriceWise (in Dutch) www.pricewise.nl



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 depending on the color of the items being washed – white, black or colors

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

<i>was</i>	wash / laundry
<i>wasmachine</i>	washing machine
<i>voorwas</i>	pre-wash
<i>wasmiddel</i>	laundry detergent
<i>wasverzachter</i>	fabric softener
<i>katoen</i>	cotton
<i>synthetisch</i>	synthetic
<i>centrifugeren</i>	spin
<i>spoelen</i>	rinse
<i>kort programma</i>	short / express program
<i>kleur</i>	color
<i>wit / witte</i>	white
<i>zwart</i>	black



REFUSE REMOVAL

While it may seem a simple thing, disposing of rubbish in the Netherlands is quite different from many 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, such as:

- 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 in cities or in certain designated 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, or 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 close 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 differ by municipality, so it is important to check the rules where you live. 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 (GFT) 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	cardboard boxes
books	cardboard packaging
brochures	newspapers
gift wrap	paper bags
egg cartons	advertising
envelopes	phone books
office paper	magazines

These items should not be placed in the paper product bins:

greaseproof paper	milk cartons
wallpaper	envelopes with bubble wrap
carbon paper	plastic packaging
sandpaper	juice cartons
photos	stickers & adhesive labels
used kitchen paper	laminated paper
Take out pizza boxes	



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 2021):

- 0 to 5 years - €249.31
- 6 to 11 years - €302.74
- 12 to 17 years - €356.16

There are several ways to apply for the child benefit:

- via the SVB website using DigiD (www.svb.nl/en/child-benefit/how-to-claim-dutch-child-benefit/applying-for-child-benefit). Refer to page 16 of this guide for information about DigiD.
- via post: the nearest SVB office can be found by entering your postcode on the SVB website (www.svb.nl/en/) - English

To apply, or to find more information in English, visit the SVB website (www.svb.nl/en/).

*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 (www.svb.nl/en/child-benefit). - 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 1:3 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 home, 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 a certain amount of their daycare costs. English information can be found on the Tax Service ('Belastingdienst) website (www.belastingdienst.nl).

The Dutch tax website gives information about the process of applying for the childcare allowance to assist with the financial costs 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 (www.rivm.nl/en/national-immunisation-programme)

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 in a personal consultation on your family's situation.

Groningen:	<i>Wij Groningen</i> (Care and Welfare) www.wij.groningen.nl/gezondheid-en-welzijn (mostly Dutch)
Drenthe:	<i>Jeugdhulp Regio Drenthe</i> divides its responsibilities among the different areas in Drenthe and services will depend upon where you live. www.jeugdhulpregiodrenthe.nl (Dutch)
Friesland:	<i>Jeugdhulp Friesland</i> , assistance for families with children under 23 www.jeugdhulpfriesland.nl (in Dutch)

Activities

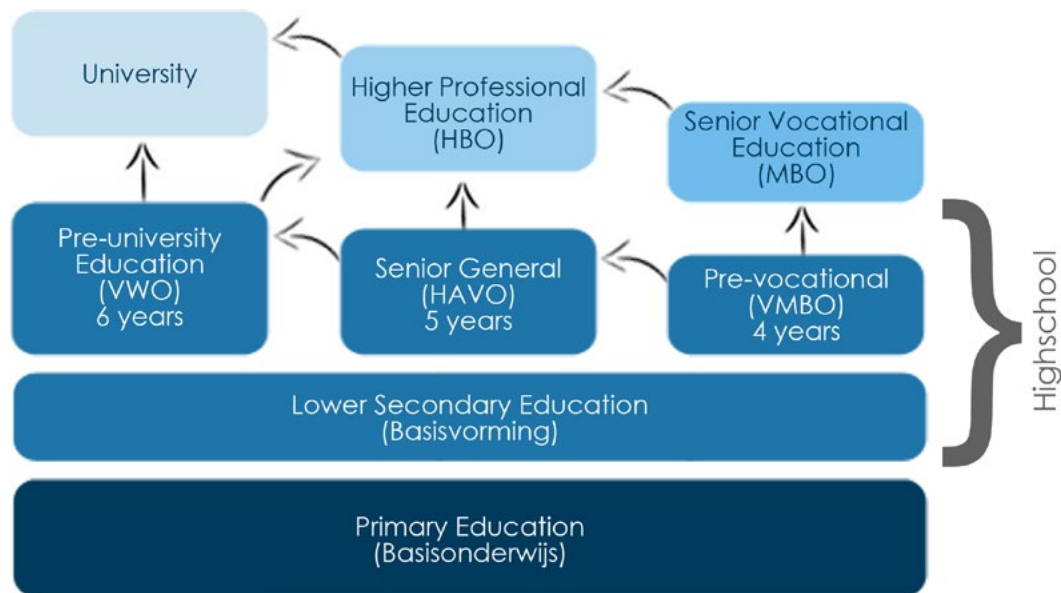
There are many activities for children in the Netherlands. The IWCN website has a number of links for various activity centers and day trips for children: (www.iwcn.nl/settling-in/child-matters/activities). It is not a comprehensive list but can act as a starting point. The majority of these websites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




EDUCATION

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

<i>kinderopvang</i>	daycare
<i>kinderopvangtoeslag</i>	childcare allowance
<i>peuterspeelzaal</i>	pre-school playgroups for children aged 2 to 4 years
<i>basisscholen</i>	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.
<i>groepen</i>	grade Primary school has eight grades, called groups.
<i>Cito Eindtoets</i>	Cito final primary education test
<i>Basisonderwijs</i>	Final year standardized test to determine what type of secondary education is best suited for a pupil.
<i>middelbare scholen</i>	secondary schools 3 types – VMBO, HAVO and VWO
<i>VMBO</i>	<i>Vorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs</i> pre-vocational secondary education lasting 4 years and qualifies students for MBO tertiary education
<i>HAVO</i>	<i>Hoger Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs</i> higher general secondary education taking 5 years and qualifies students for HBO higher education
<i>VWO</i>	<i>Vorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs</i> pre-university education lasting 6 years and qualifies students for university
<i>MBO</i>	middle level applied education Lasting 1 to 4 years and oriented towards vocational training
<i>HBO</i>	<i>Hoger Beroepsonderwijs</i> open to graduates of HAVO and VWO and oriented towards higher learning and professional training
<i>WVO</i>	<i>Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs</i> academic education, only available for graduated VWO students and oriented towards higher learning in the arts or sciences



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)

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*)

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., illness, 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.



€ 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 8 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.

ONLINE TRANSFER

Online bank transfers can be done by logging in to your internet banking account via your bank's website (often using an E-dentifier, above) or by using the banking app on your mobile phone.

Hardcopy (*acceptgiro kaart*)

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

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).



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 54 for more information on insurance.

For a good overview in English, check out the website of H4i: (h4i.nl)

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.

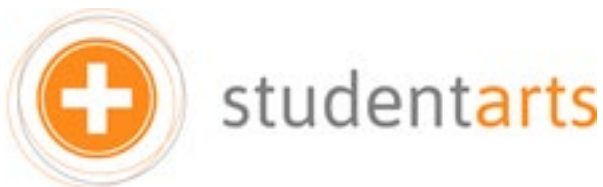
You do not have direct access to specialists and/or hospital care. The family doctor will refer you if you need specialist care. Nearly all specialists have consulting hours in hospitals at the out-patients clinic (*Polikliniek*). You can only be referred to a specialist by your general practitioner.

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.

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 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



PHARMACY AND PRESCRIPTIONS

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

- A pharmacy (*apothek*) will provide medicine by 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.

MENTAL HEALTH

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

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.

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.

P Ziekenhuis →

P Poliklinik →

**+ Spoedeisende
hulp** →



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.

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".



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 www.ov-chipkaart.nl.

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 add money to your balance as required and use to travel anywhere in the Netherlands, as long as there is enough credit to cover the entire distance of the route.

- 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 three 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. An automatic amount of €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: Check in when boarding

Check-in as follows:

- Hold the OV-chipkaart in front of the OV-chipkaart logo on the smart card reader
- You will hear a beep and see the green indicator light up
- If you check in at an access gate, the gate will open

If you are traveling with children and you are passing through access gates, each child will have to check in and pass through the gates individually. Make sure you do not hold the card in front of the reader twice because you will not only be checking in but also checking out. If an inspector checks the tickets and you are not checked in, you will be fined.

Your OV-chipkaart is checked when you checked 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 3: Check out when exiting

At your destination, you need to check out following the same procedure as you did to check in.

Bus Travel

A ticket can be purchased in the bus but it is preferred, and less expensive, to use an OV-chipkaart.

The ticket price or the amount of credit taken from the OV-chipkaart depends on the number of zones and distance through which you travel. 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) 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).

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.

Local train services between Groningen and Friesland are operated by Arriva, for more information, check their website: (www.arriva.nl/consumers.htm)



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: www.access-nl.org



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 15 years after the date of issue of the license. If the 15 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 might be able to exchange your license based on another agreement. For more information, see iwcn.nl/newcomers/settling-in/transport/drivers-license. If you can't exchange your license through any existing scheme, 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: 100 km/h (approximately 62 mph)

Automobile Clubs

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 must be placed 30 m behind your car)
- Car accident report form (the 'European Accident Statement', which can be found online)

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.



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.



PARKING

For some areas, parking is free of charge; in others, it is paid parking. In metered parking areas, 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. Many machines are digital and paperless, so you will need to enter your license plate

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.

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.

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 (www.iwcn.nl/settling-in/transport/importing-a-motor-vehicle).





INSURANCE

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, or if you are a foreign student or a posted worker, see the IWCN site. (iwcn.nl/residents/settling-in/health-matters/exemptions-dutch-medical-insurance)

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 medically necessary 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.independ.nl, in Dutch, can help compare different health insurers and policies. In addition, the Healthcare 4 Internationals website (h4i.nl) has extensive information about the healthcare system in the Netherlands. They have also produced a brochure, available at h4i.nl/brochure-hcnl.

Here are the most important insurance terms:

<i>basispakket</i>	basic insurance package Includes general medical care, most prescription medicine, hospital stays, pregnancy care, medical equipment, and ambulance transportation.
<i>naturapolis</i>	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.
<i>restitutiepolis</i>	refund policy You choose the caregiver, pay the bills directly, and apply for reimbursement from the insurer. The insurer decides how much to reimburse.
<i>aanvullende verzekering</i>	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 (*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

<i>aansprakelijkheidverzekering</i>	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.
<i>opstalverzekering</i>	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.
<i>inboedelverzekering</i>	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.
<i>rechtsbijstandverzekering</i>	Legal fees insurance In the case of litigation, legal fees insurance covers legal fees and provides legal support when needed.
<i>reisverzekering</i>	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.



PETS

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.

For more information, see iwcn.nl/newcomers/settling-in/pets/bringing-pets-to-the-netherlands

Pets in the Netherlands

<i>hondenuitlaatservice / hondenwandelaar</i>	Dog walking service In 2017, the price varied from €7 to €10 per walk.
<i>honden losloopgebied</i>	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 <i>losloopterrein</i> and a picture of a dog.
<i>hondenpoep</i>	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.
<i>hondenbelasting</i>	Dog taxes Many municipalities require dogs to be registered with them. Check with your municipality (<i>gemeente</i>) for further information.
<i>Nederlandse Databank voor Gezelschapsdieren</i>	Dutch Pet Database It is important to register your pet's microchip number at ndg.nl .
<i>dierenarts / dierenkliniek</i>	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.
<i>hondenpension / hondenhotel / hondenopvang</i>	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.
<i>Katten oppas</i>	Cat sitters You can have cat sitters come to your home

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





POSTAL SERVICES



FINDING A JOB

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 (www.postnl.nl/tarieven).

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 its sender or destroyed.

Useful Words

<i>brief</i>	letter
<i>pakket</i>	parcel
<i>bestemming</i>	destination
<i>gewicht</i>	weight
<i>aangetekend</i>	registered
<i>brievenbus</i>	post box
<i>postzegel</i>	postage stamp
<i>postzegelverkooppunt</i>	postage stamp selling point
<i>postkantoor</i>	post office
<i>pakketpunt</i>	package point

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 "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 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

2022, this reduced salary is € 2,543 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: <https://ind.nl/en>. Additional information can also be found at the Holland Alumni website: www.nlalumni.nl/orientationyear.

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 (www.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 several facilitators recognized by the RVO in the Northern Netherlands:

- Indietopia, Launch Cafe, Venture Lab North; Campus Groningen, and Groninger Seaports (Groningen)
- Inqubator, Leeuwarden (Friesland)

A list of other RVO-accredited facilitators is available here: english.rvo.nl/information/startup-information/find-facilitator.

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 €1,273.71 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 cost (in 2022) is €349.



MAKE IT IN THE NORTH - CAREERS IN THE NORTH

The motivation behind Make it in the North is twofold: all of the project partners, members, and ambassadors want to make sure that the Northern Netherlands continues to be a great place to live and work and all of them would like to share the North's current and future successes with more people.

We are very proud of our region, and are equally happy that more and more people choose to join us here each year, whether as students at one of our exceptional universities, or as an employee at one of the thousands of innovative companies that are based in Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe.

But, we want more. More companies with international staff, companies and institutions that think more internationally, and more international people! The Netherlands is one of the most export-led nations in the world, and much of the Dutch economy is skills-based, so more people, from a greater range of backgrounds, can only be a good thing.

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).

Job Portal

Make it in the North has a free job portal for non-Dutch speaking jobs across Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe. With new jobs being posted every day, and posts from some of the biggest companies in the Netherlands, it's a great place to see who's hiring! www.makeitinthnorth.nl/jobs

Career Events

Make it in the North also runs a regular series of on and off-line career events! Often themed around a particular sector, the events are organised with a network of collaborators and feature interesting panel discussions, full job markets (with positions available on the day), 'company speed-dating'; and much more. www.makeitinthnorth.nl/events

**MAKE IT
IN THE NORTH**

A platform in English with everything you need to supercharge your professional life in the Northern Netherlands.



WWW.MAKEITINTHORTH.NL

**MAKE IT
IN THE NORTH**

**MORE THAN
JUST A JOB
PLATFORM.**

**CLAIM
YOUR SPOT.
SPOT ON**

NEWS AND EVENTS IN THE NORTH

The Northern Times

The Northern Times is the first and only English-language news platform in the North. From translated daily news, the most important local and national updates, to features, editorials and in-depth long reads about the North, The Northern Times is a great news resource for Internationals and Dutch people alike in the North!

www.northerntimes.nl

Facebook [The Northern Times](#)

Instagram [@northerntimes.nl](#)

NORTHERNTIMES.NL

NEWS IN ENGLISH

FROM GRONINGEN, DRENTHE AND FRIESLAND

64

The image shows a dark blue banner with the Northern Times logo (a stylized 'NT') in the top right corner. Below the logo, the text 'NORTHERNTIMES.NL' is written in white. Underneath, 'NEWS IN ENGLISH' is written in large, bold, white letters. At the bottom, 'FROM GRONINGEN, DRENTHE AND FRIESLAND' is written in white. A small smartphone icon is visible in the bottom right corner of the banner.

FEATURED

FREE
Make it in The North: Career Coaching
Mondays and Tuesdays every other week

Happy Feelings Festival
Sat 6th August

Paradigm Festival 2022
Sat 13th August

the Groninger Museum Night
Sat 10th September

THIS WEEK >

Storyworld
Weekly

Taalcafé (woensdag)
Weekly

Internationale lunch
Weekly

Mindful Student Group
Weekly

Here and Now

Here and Now is the cultural platform for the Northern Netherlands, and lists all events across Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe. In addition to upcoming events, museum exhibits, concerts, cultural arts performance and other fun gatherings, Here and Now also developed the 'language no problem' logo, which is used across the North to indicate events that do not require speaking Dutch to attend, meaning that they are accessible for all internationals.

Here and Now in Groningen: groningen.hereandnow.nl

Here and Now in Friesland: friesland.hereandnow.nl

Here and Now in Drenthe: drenthe.hereandnow.nl

Make it in The North: Career Coaching

When: Weekly, every two weeks from Mon 1st August 09:00 - Sat 6th August 23:59

Where: [Online](#) (Open in Google Maps)

Details: Do you have a career that you have been eyeing, but don't know how to get there? Or do you feel like you are holding yourself back in job interviews? Maybe you're in between doing a PhD or entering a professional career? Then t... (Read more)

Price: Free

[Website](#) [Add to Google Calendar](#) [Add to My List](#)

FREE CAREER COACHING
ONE STEP CLOSER TO YOUR DREAM JOB

BOOK A TIMESLOT FOR MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS EVERY OTHER WEEK

SHARE THIS EVENT

Storyworld

When: Weekly from Tue 26th July 10:00 - 18:00

Where: [Forum Groningen](#) (Open in Google Maps)

Details: Storyworld is the newest museum of comics, animation and games in the Netherlands, but it's also the coolest and the most fun. It unlocks the secrets of great storytellers, showcasing the methods used in Dutch and international co... (Read more)

Price: €9.50

[Buy tickets](#) [Website](#) [Add to Google Calendar](#)

[Add to My List](#)



SHARE THIS EVENT

NOTES

A large, empty rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for taking notes.





SOCIAL & LEISURE





MEET & GREET

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, partners, spouses or family members of the employees are not usually included in company get-togethers.



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 groups for internationals, such as Connect International, InterNations or an international student group; they have events and get-togethers on a regular basis and are present in all three northern provinces.
- Enroll in language courses (see the Education section in www.iwcn.nl).
- Participate in language meet up groups (Humanitas, Gezellig Nederlands, Las Lenguas, etc).
- Join a public speaking club (Toastmasters,).
- 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, like My
- Local Friend for Dutch language support, neighborhood Welcome Walks, FietsFriend cycling workshops and outings, and other cool cultural events. Visit their website (www.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
 - Expats in Drenthe
 - 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).
- Meet-up groups
- 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).
- Ask your neighbors if there is a WhatsApp group for your area, and ask to be added to it
- Attend concerts and musical performances by local acts and ask about joining or volunteering.
- Go to one of the many international pub quizzes at 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. Every Dutch person has an appointment planner (agenda), either a physical book or an online version, so don't be surprised when someone consults their when you suggest organizing any kind of get-together to plan the date, even if it's weeks in advance. In general, they are unlikely to drop by uninvited or and it is not expected (or appropriate) for you to show up to someone's house uninvited, either. 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 kwalijk*



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 woman 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*).



EATING & DRINKING

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, or a living-together contract (*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.

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. Travelling further inland, traditional staples are typically hearty, nutritious foods 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.

Dúmkes, 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 and tastes of anise seeds, and it 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 Alcoholic Drinks

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. Additionally, it also produces a range of non-alcoholic flavouring syrups.

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 is to pay for the meal, they 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. *Erwtensoeep* 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.



LEISURE TIME & HOLIDAYS

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 *bouwwak*, or building vacation. This may mean limited supplies as well as postponed building projects and construction activities.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

The Netherlands 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.

<i>voorjaarsvakantie</i>	Spring Break	February	1 week
<i>zomervakantie</i>	Summer Holiday	July/August	6 weeks
<i>herfstvakantie</i>	Autumn Break	October	1 week
<i>kerstvakantie</i>	Winter Vacation	December	2 weeks



NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

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

<i>Goede Vrijdag</i>	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.
<i>Pasen</i>	Easter	There are Easter egg hunts, egg-painting, and shops are full of chocolate eggs and decorations. Two official holidays, Sunday and Monday.
<i>Hemelvaartsdag</i>	Ascension Day	Always on a Thursday, this day is the 40th day of Easter.
<i>Pinksteren</i>	Whitsunday	The celebration of the Pentecost, seven weeks after Easter. Two official holidays, Sunday and Monday.
<i>Koningsdag</i>	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.
<i>Dodenherdenking</i>	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.
<i>Bevrijdingsdag</i>	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.
<i>Prinsjesdag</i>	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.
<i>Sint Maarten</i>	Saint Maarten's Day	November 11th Children go trick or treating with lanterns at doors and sing special songs for treats, similar to Halloween.
<i>Sinterklaas</i>	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 <i>Sinterklaas'</i> 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 <i>surprise</i> .
<i>Kerstmis</i>	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 <i>Sinterklaas</i> will people put up their Christmas tree. On the 6th of January they will take the tree down.
<i>Oudejaarsavond</i>	New Year's Eve	December 31st Many people celebrate this evening at home with family and close friends. Traditionally you can buy <i>oliebollen</i> (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!



LEISURE

While the northern region of the Netherlands is considered rural by Dutch standards and is not very well known to tourists, each of the three northern provinces has its own identity and distinctive cities. Groningen, the largest city in the north, is a lively university city with a

famed modern art museum and rich historic heritage. Friesland's capital, Leeuwarden, was the European Capital of Culture for 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, some municipalities impose 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). Many municipalities allow shops to be open every Sunday.



FESTIVALS

Every month of the year there is a festival in at least one of the three Northern provinces. Upcoming festivals are publicized in newspapers, outdoor advertising, flyers, and local pubs and bars 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)

<https://www.noorderlicht.com/en>

Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival, international arts fest (August)

www.noorderzon.nl/en

Friesland

IFKS Skûtsjesilen, sailing competition (July-September)

www.ifks.frl

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

The northern countryside offers everything from forests and meadows to lovely lakes and canals, walking and biking are popular activities. Other popular sports activities in the Netherlands include *voetbal* (soccer), field hockey, volleyball, running, fitness, swimming, *skeeleren* (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. Nearly one in four Dutch people living here are registered to one of the 26,000 sports clubs, and one in four people over the age of 15 plays at least one on a weekly basis. 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.



ORGANIZATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS

In several cities and villages in the northern region of the Netherlands, there are village associations (*dorpsverenigingen*) or neighborhood centers (*buurcentrums*) 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 your time and effort for an organization or cause is an admirable way of assimilating into a community. In the Netherlands, there are lots of opportunities to volunteer, but information about where and how is often only available by word of mouth. Being able to speak at least a little bit of Dutch is also common, but it's rarely a requirement. All in all, volunteering is a good way to meet people, practice the language, get to know an organization, and contribute to the community.

Links to various organizations that seek volunteers can be found on the [IWCN website](#).



RELIGION

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.



WHAT TO DO IN THE PROVINCES

GRONINGEN

This province is known more for the countryside north and east of the city of Groningen. Small towns, fishing communities, historic villas (*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 *zeehondencentrum* (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 Bad 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 (*meer* means lake) at Leek at the Leekstermeer or Paterswolde at the Paterswoldsemeer.
- 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.



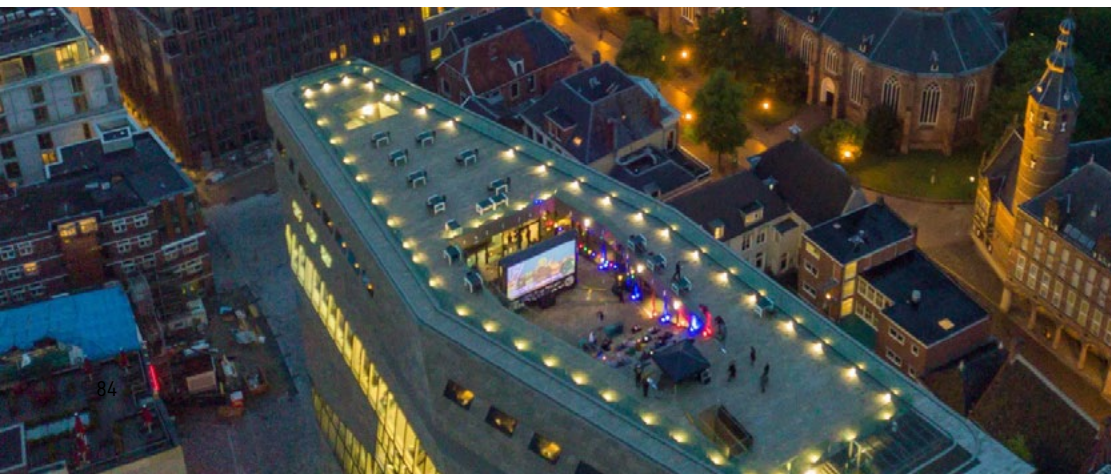
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www.visitgroningen.com/en/home



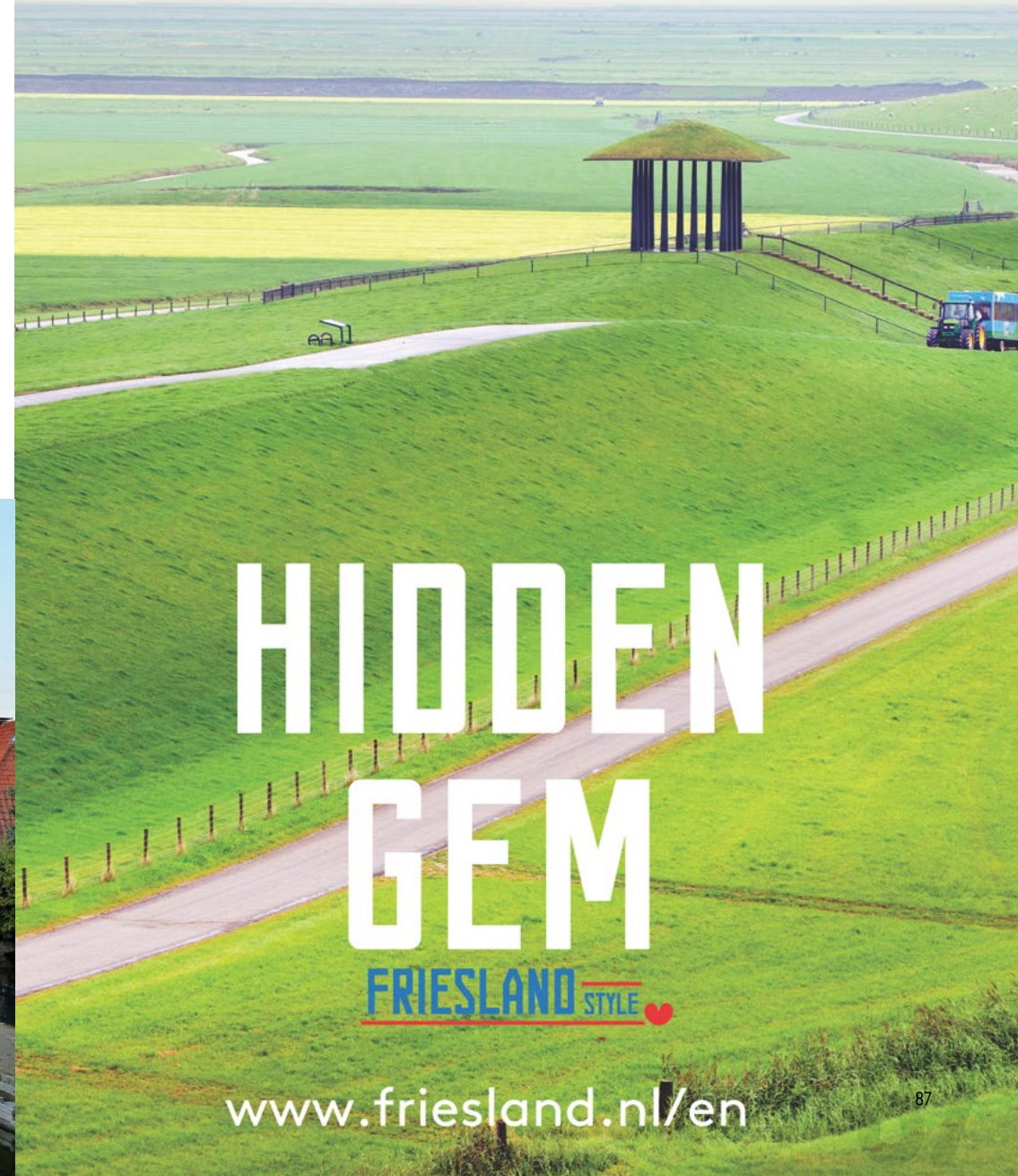
FRIESLAND

- 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 *Ús Heit* (Our Father) is brewed, as well as the distillery of the only Frisian whisky *Frysk Hynder* (Frisian Horse).
- Leeuwarden – Home of the excellent Fries(focused on Frisian culture) Museum and capital city 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 body of water 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.



HIDDEN
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FRIESLAND STYLE 

www.friesland.nl/en





Welcome in Drenthe

www.visitdrenthe.com

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 is the SIVO dansfestival, which 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. However, due to the Coronavirus, the festival has not been held for several years, but the next edition is scheduled to take place in 2023.



Drenthe



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 Agents, Relocation Services, Home Services; Health & Childcare, Finance & Insurance, Legal & Payroll; Tax Consultants, Jobs & Career Support, Education; and Travel & Leisure.



HOUSING AGENTS

AnderZ Makelaar

AnderZ Makelaar 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 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 for a nice cup of coffee to get acquainted.

www.anderzmakelaar.nl
Paterswoldseweg 17

9726 BA Groningen
+31 (0)50 204 1292
info@anderzmakelaar.nl



iQ Makelaars

iQ Makelaars Groningen is located in the center of Groningen. We are specialized in helping expats and internationals to buy a new home in Groningen.

Through our extensive local network in Groningen we can find the best deals for our clients. Together we have over 20 years of experience and we would be glad to be of service to you. We have offices in more than 20 cities in The Netherlands, so we can assist you when moving from one city to another.

www.expathomesholland.com
Westersingel 3
9718 CA Groningen
+31(0)50-7601777
Groningen@iQMakelaars.nl





HOUSING AGENTS

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

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Van der Meulen Makelaars

Van der Meulen Makelaars is a major rental agent in Groningen: specializing in renting out furnished accommodation in Groningen. Their wide range of properties consists of houses and apartments, with or without garden, for both temporary or indefinite stays in and around Groningen. If requested, they can arrange a rental price including utilities, cleaning, and/or other services.

www.vandermeulenmakelaars.nl/en/

Verlengde Hereweg 14
9722AB Groningen
+31 (0) 50 318 8989
info@vandermeulenmakelaars.nl



HOUSING AGENTS

Expat Housing Network

For expats, by expats – your go-to team for expat housing.

At Expat Housing Network, we believe that everyone deserves to feel at home in Groningen. We know first-hand what it's like to navigate the housing market as an international. We've been there ourselves and we're here to ensure that you have the best experience possible.

With our team of knowledgeable and experienced Expat Buying Specialists, we'll help you successfully secure your dream home in Groningen. With our fixed, transparent, and honest pricing, and our highly-rated client experience, our team will ensure you feel confident and supported throughout your homeownership journey.

Rafaela Kremer, buying agent for Groningen, can be contacted by email or phone on business days from 9:00 to 18:00 hrs.

www.expathousingnetwork.nl

Jacob van Lennepstraat 10h
1053 HG Amsterdam
+31 (0) 6 2122 6643
rafaela@ehn.works





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Expatriate Management Group

What's in a name? The Expatriate Management Group is a dynamic corporate group of recognized legal experts in the Netherlands. We deliver specialized services in the main professional aspects of expatriate 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.expatriatemanagementgroup.com

Herengracht 168
1016BP Amsterdam
+31 (0)20 707 0551
info@expatriatemanagementgroup.com



Packimpex Netherlands B.V.

Founded in 1977, Packimpex employs over 150 people and has thirteen offices across Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, UK and The Netherlands. As one of the market leaders in Europe, the company tailors innovative and sustainable relocation solutions to the needs of international companies and transferees. Packimpex offers a full range of destination services, temporary living services, corporate apartment management, visa and immigration services, and the coordination of household goods moves.

www.packimpex.nl

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1118 BJ Schiphol
+31 6 28816150
dimitri.pennings@packimpex.com



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Expatriate 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 Expatriates encounter when buying a property in The Netherlands. We are specialized in expatriate 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 will gladly give you guidance on financial planning issues.

www.fvbdeboer.nl

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



Rental Law Consultancy Frently

Rental Law Consultancy Frently is a Groningen-based legal advice bureau that specialised in housing law. It was founded by Denise Zonnebeld, following several issues with her housing whilst a student, and continues to provide advice and representation for those struggling with the complexities of the Northern Dutch housing market. One of the main services provided by Frently is its rental price checker, which helps tenants calculate the maximum price their home can be rented at, and then have the rent reduced and claim the money back through the Dutch legal system. After hundreds of successful cases, Frently is the go-to place in the North for housing law advice, and representation.

www.frently.nl

+31 (0)50 321 0002
info@frently.nl





HOME SERVICES

Expat Mortgages

The #1 company for financing your home abroad.

Expat Mortgages is a team of independent mortgage brokers for expats who want to buy a property in The Netherlands. The company already exists for more than 12 years and they have provided mortgage advice to thousands of people from different nationalities. They only work with expats and this has allowed them to become specialists in what they do, and make people feel at home.

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Groningen@123wonen.nl



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Lebara is a telecommunication company, providing prepaid and postpaid services by using KPN's reliable 4G network.

Lebara was founded in the UK in 2001 by three migrants with one purpose: being able to call home at affordable rates. No matter how far away from home you are. And these three definitely didn't let themselves be stopped by the UK telecom market's pesky rules that they ran into. They wanted to give people freedom. And they succeeded in doing so. Lebara now offers everyone the same affordable Sim Only and Prepaid-bundles.

www.ypat.lebarashop.nl

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1114 AA, Amsterdam-Duivendrecht
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LEBARA



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Karmelita-Coaching

Alice Karmelita (CPC, ELI-MP) is a double-certified, professional coach, former international HR specialist, an expat. Alice is specialized in coaching clients going through stressful transitions in career, business, and relocating. Driven by a mission of helping people make conscious choices in life and career and gain satisfaction thriving in a cross-cultural environment. If you are going through a change in your life and career, work with Alice to:

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www.linkedin.com/in/alice-karmelita-coach

Whatsapp: +31 612862221

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+31 (0) 20 343 4002

expat.clients@nl.abnamro.com



Domus Aegis BV

Domus Aegis BV is an active project funding consultancy, and is led by Onno van der Kuip, LLM, who himself has over 25 years experience in the field of funding. Their approach is characterised by considering each grant, subsidy, and funding plan as its own complex and legal matter. Domus Aegis guide start-ups, scale-ups and established companies from the beginning to the end of a funding process.

The consultancy has significant experience within the fields of business investments, expansion, funding for research & development; the sustainable energy and bio-based economy sectors, and the smart industry and Internet of Things sectors.

www.domusaegis.nl

Bedrijvenpark Leeksterhout

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makes you feel at home



FINANCE & INSURANCE

HLB Nannen Accountants en Adviseurs

The accountants and consultants 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.nl/pagina/english

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9728 BM Groningen
+31 (0) 50 5266533
groningen@hnb-nannen.nl





LEGAL & PAYROLL

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www.domusaegis.nl

Bedrijvenpark Leeksterhout
Kamerlingh-Onnesstraat 14
9351 VD Leek
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info@domusaegis.nl



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www.expatsmanagementgroup.com

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LEGAL & PAYROLL

Holland Employment Experts

Holland Employment Experts is a fully recognized sponsor within the Dutch Immigration Department (IND). We can apply for, transfer and administer: Expatriate entry/ Working and residence permits/Allowing you and your contract(s) to legally live and work in the Netherlands.

Following this process, Holland Employment Experts becomes the legal Dutch employer. We are therefore responsible for issuing employment contracts, the 30% ruling application, payment of income taxes and net salaries. Our dedicated Highly Skilled Migrant unit is ready and willing to take on this responsibility so you can focus on the exciting challenges ahead.

At Holland Employment Experts, we make sure our clients and employees can fully concentrate on their work. Administrative and legal matters? No worries. We can arrange all that.

www.hollandemploymentexperts.com

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+31 (0)513 845491
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LEGAL & PAYROLL

Rental Law Consultancy Frently

Rental Law Consultancy Frently is a Groningen-based legal advice bureau that specialised in housing law. It was founded by Denise Zonnebeld, following several issues with her housing whilst a student, and continues to provide advice and representation for those struggling with the complexities of the Northern Dutch housing market. One of the main services provided by Frently is its rental price checker, which helps tenants calculate the maximum price their home can be rented at, and then have the rent reduced and claim the money back through the Dutch legal system. After hundreds of successful cases, Frently is the go-to place in the North for housing law advice, and representation.

www.frently.nl

+31 (0)50 321 0002
info@frently.nl



HLB Nannen Accountants en Adviseurs

The accountants and consultants 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.nl/pagina/english

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LEGAL & PAYROLL

Pallas Attorneys-at-Law

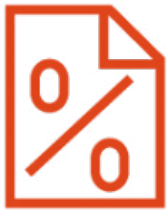
Pallas Attorneys-at-Law is an independent boutique (international) employment law firm. Our services focus on employment law and employee participation law. Pallas' Attorneys are experienced in handling a wide range of employment law cases, both nationally and internationally. Within these areas of expertise, Pallas Attorneys-at-Law is dedicated to providing advice and assistance to, as well as representing, employers, employees (expats), directors, and works councils.

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Karmelita-Coaching

Alice Karmelita (CPC, ELI-MP) is a double-certified, professional coach, former international HR specialist, an expat. Alice is specialized in coaching clients going through stressful transitions in career, business, and relocating. Driven by a mission of helping people make conscious choices in life and career and gain satisfaction thriving in a cross-cultural environment. If you are going through a change in your life and career, work with Alice to:

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EDUCATION & TRANSLATIONS

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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.

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9712 EK Groningen
+31 (0)50 363 5802
languagecentre@rug.nl



EDUCATION & TRANSLATIONS

Groningse Schoolvereniging

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.

www.g-s-v.nl/english/index.html
Sweelincklaan 4
9722 JV Groningen
+31 (0) 50 527 08 18
info@g-s-v.nl



Groningse Schoolvereniging
regionale tweetalige basisschool met internationale & hoogbegaafden afdeling

International School Groningen

The International School Groningen aims to provide a top quality individualised education through internationally recognised curricula to young people between the age of 11 and 18. The school stimulates academic success, supporting its students to become lifelong learners, building on the skills and qualities of the International Baccalaureate programmes.

www.isgroningen.nl
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EDUCATION & TRANSLATIONS

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In 1988 we started as a translation company for Scandinavian languages and over time we gained enormous amounts of knowledge and experience. Now, 31 years later, we help many businesses and institutes with their international communication in almost any language and specialisation; using the latest technology of course. We also provide certified translations, apostilles and authentication. Our team of skilled in-house translators and linguists will be pleased to assist!

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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



PROVINCES & MUNICIPALITIES

The IWCN offers services for the three northern provinces: Drenthe, Friesland, and Groningen.

The next pages contain brief descriptions of the provinces and the municipalities within those provinces that utilize the services of the IWCN.



Groningen

Delfzijl

Groningen

Leeuwarden

Friesland

Heerenveen

Assen

Drenthe

Emmen

IJsselmeer

PROVINCE OF GRONINGEN

The province of Groningen has a population of more than 586,000 inhabitants, and is 2.960 km. in size. The province has 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 innovative province with ample space for nature and recreation. Within the province lies its economic heart: the city of Groningen, home to more than 230,000 inhabitants. Groningen is not only a good place to work, but also a lovely area in which to live and relax.



Vibrant, authentic and unspoiled.

Beautiful nature, wonderful culture, an exciting night life and a rich history.

This is Groningen: a city bursting with energy and young talent. Here you will find a pioneering spirit and the most cutting-edge knowledge and research, that focuses on the challenges of the 21st century. A city of countless bicycles, and bustling outdoor cafés. Though an historic university city, Groningen is the youngest city in the Netherlands with an average age of 36. The city radiates creative energy, wherever you go.

The city is surrounded by countryside, which you can explore using the network of bike paths. From ancient fields and pastures, where time seems to have stood still, to pretty villages and beautiful bodies of water. From the city, it's not far to the woods, moors, lakes and the World Heritage site of the Wadden Sea. It's the perfect place to spend your spare time.

Groningen, space to create the future

Groningen has five key industries: energy, digital, circular economy, health and the agriculture sector. When the expertise of these five key industries is combined, new ideas are born, new applications for knowledge are found, and new opportunities arise for companies to shape the future. You'll find an investment climate that is unique in the world, especially in combination with the continual supply of new talent, the 'just do it' mentality of Groningers and our fantastic connections with the rest of the world. Put all of Groningen's assets together, and you have an ecosystem that offers immense possibilities.

Welcome!

Despite most of the province being below sea level, wet feet never discouraged the first residents of Groningen. They built dwelling hills on the fertile salt marshes and an impregnable fortress on the plains. Their pioneering spirit took shape in robust churches, magnificent estate houses and creative architecture. Here, we conquered the land scoop by scoop and brick by brick. Our cultural heritage reflects our temperament. In Groningen, we do it our way and we welcome everyone with open arms who comes here to seek and build tomorrow's solutions. Welcome to Groningen!

Want to know more? Go to www.groningen.nl/en and get inspired!

PROVINCE OF FRIESLAND

What has been claimed for centuries is true: Friesland is different. Come and see what makes this province for yourself. Explore the specialties Friesland has to offer: on the water, with the wind in your hair and the sun in the sky, on one of the numerous Frisian lakes. Friesland is ideal for sailing, canoeing and other water sports. The region is perfectly suited to explore by boat because it's one of Europe's largest areas of inland lakes. In addition to its magnificent waterways, Friesland has plenty of amazing events on and around the water which are a fun experience for all, even if you're not particularly into water sports. Travelling along the waterways is a tranquil experience, which takes you to characteristic villages and towns that invite you to stroll through, explore the local culture and sample typical Frisian culinary treats. Both the capital of Leeuwarden and the province as a whole were European Capital of Culture for 2018.

Because of all that water, the province is famous for its speed skaters. When winters are cold enough for the canals to freeze over, the traditional *Elfstedentocht* (Eleven cities tour) is held, 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 five hidden gems in the north of the Netherlands. Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog are easily accessible by boat from various points in the North. On the islands, you can cycle endlessly through the dunes or walk along the beaches, and make sure to visit some of the villages! 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 can experience the vastness, typical of the Frisian land. A plethora of cycling tracks and walking trails give you the opportunity to dive into nature.

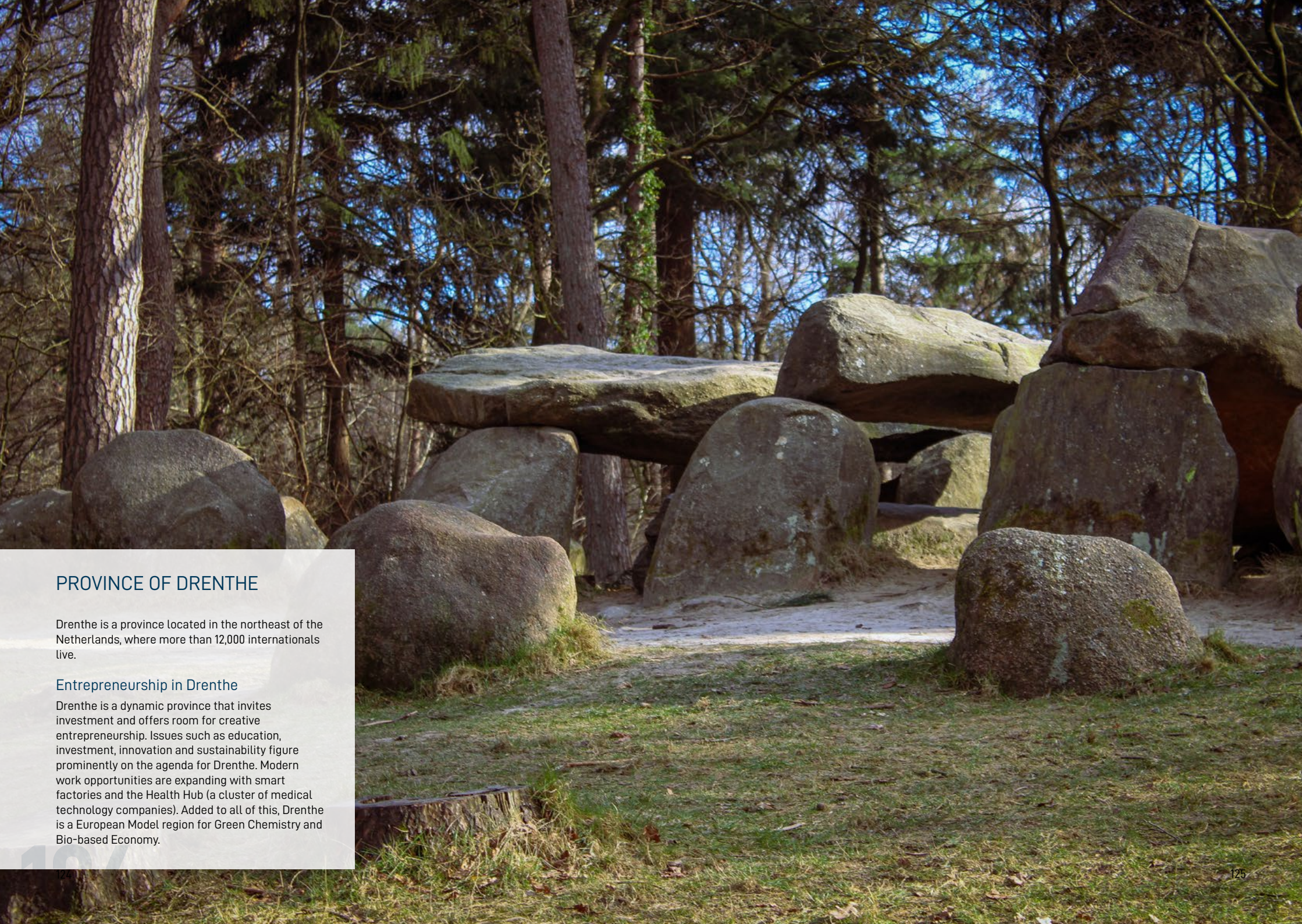


Industries

Friesland is not only for tourists. It can also be a special destination for (international) entrepreneurs. With the many waterways in Friesland, it is not surprising that shipbuilding is one of the biggest 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, and experience the atmosphere of Friesland.

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



PROVINCE OF DRENTHE

Drenthe is a province located in the northeast of the Netherlands, where more than 12,000 internationals live.

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 and the Health Hub (a cluster of medical technology companies). Added to all of this, Drenthe is a European Model region for Green Chemistry and Bio-based Economy.



Photo: Province of Drenthe

Quality of Life

Get that vacation-like feeling every morning: wide-open doors with an expansive view over the landscape and plenty of peace and quiet. Drenthe offers a pleasant living environment, with hardly any traffic jams and excellent cultural amenities. On the social side, the people are straightforward, neighborly and full of life. It is relatively inexpensive to live here: houses in Drenthe are affordable and children can grow up in a safe living environment with easy access to the countryside.

Drenthe offers varied types of accommodation: historic buildings on canals, farmhouses with views over the countryside, and modern houses in bustling neighborhoods, with all the daily amenities close by. Living in the province means the comforts of a city and good roads with great public transport without the hustle and bustle of the Randstad.

Discover Drenthe by bike or on foot

With five-star cycling, nature, and walking, Drenthe is the province for discovering the outdoors. You can enjoy the beautifully varied landscape of woods, heath fields, fens and drifting sands (including three national parks and two heritage sites). The landscape is also dotted with pre-historic megaliths, and you can meander through a sea of purple heather, or wander through ancient forests, and end up in a cozy Drents village square for a cup of coffee, all in the same day.

Drenthe: the largest playground in the Netherlands

For children, Drenthe is one big playground. From running through the fields, diving in swimming holes and clambering about in forests, Drenthe is pure nature. With its many *schaapskooien* (sheep folds), kids can watch the lambs frolicking about - and to see more exotic animals, there is the WILDLANDS Adventure Zoo Emmen, where children and adults alike 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.

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, and people from around the world come to see and study them. 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 during the occupation of the Netherlands (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.

Experience Frederiksoord, the oldest Colony of Benevolence. The colonies were established in 1818 by Johannes van den Bosch as part of an ambitious plan to combat poverty in the Netherlands by setting up agricultural colonies. Discover the traces of the old colony on foot, by bike or by car.

The Drents Museum -established in 1854 as a simple showcase filled with objects- has evolved throughout the years into a showpiece museum. It is considered one of the top archaeological museums in the Netherlands, with exhibitions attractive to both children and adults.

For more information about Drenthe, visit the website: www.visitdrenthe.com.

MUNICIPALITY OF ASSEN

Assen is a dynamic city, situated in the north of the province of Drenthe. Assen is one of the fastest growing cities in the North and provides excellent living and working conditions in a lush green environment. Many international employees enjoy living and working in the Municipality of Assen.

Events

The city is internationally as well as nationally well-known due to annual events such as the TT motorcycle race, and DTM racing championship. 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 children's book character and icon for many Dutch people.

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 (in Dutch) visit: www.assen.nl

MUNICIPALITY OF EEMSDDELTA

The municipality of Eemsdelta came into existence in 2021, when the municipalities of Appingedam, Delfzijl, and Loppersum merged together. The new municipality includes the port city of Delfzijl, the historic Appingedam, and a number of other pretty villages and towns in the north of the Province of Groningen.

Delfzijl

The city of Delfzijl lies on the coast, and has a compact city center featuring a 19th-century windmill. A new city beach was opened in 2021, complete with a new promenade. Once every five years, the city of Delfzijl 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.

Appingedam

The city of Appingedam is one of the Netherlands' hidden gems. Up until the 16th century, it rivalled the city of Groningen for economic power, before being defeated in a huge military battle. Now, the city is defined by a large number of beautiful historic buildings (including the UNESCO listed Hanging Kitchens), museums, restaurants; and shops.

Loppersum

Loppersum was founded in the Middle Ages, and its Petrus en Pauluskerk is a monumental historic church; one of the largest village churches in the Netherlands. The village also has a natural spring-fed swimming pool opened in 1933, called the Zoutwaterbad. The center of the village is filled with beautiful old buildings, including the Hotel Spoorzicht, Villa Bellevue, and the windmill De Stormvogel from 1849.

Getting Around

Delfzijl, Appingedam, and Loppersum lie on the train line north of the city of Groningen, and can be reached quickly via Groningen central station.

For more information visit: www.eemsdelta.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 nearby forests. In the south of Emmen is the international Naturepark Bargemeer, part of Veenland, which is the largest peat swamp in Central Europe. It is a biking and walking area as well, with unique scenery.

Shopping

The center and the northern part of the city is the historical district. Walking through the characteristic 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 in 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 wide variety 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 was the most trending city in Europe in 2017.

For more information visit: www.gemeente.emmen.nl

MUNICIPALITY OF GRONINGEN

For centuries, Groningen has been popular with both prospective and ex-students. Groningen has over 60,000 students in university and higher education, of which almost 10,000 are international students. On a total of 231,000, around half of all the people living in Groningen are under the age of 35. Besides the many students from abroad, a remarkable 4,000 international employees of all ages live in the municipality of Groningen. Groningen aims to be a liveable, 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 Northern Netherlands, due not only to its striking design by Italian architect Mendini, but also because of exhibitions, such as the "David Bowie Is". Or check out the Noordelijk Scheepvaartmuseum (Nautical Museum), which shows the history of trade across Groningen waters. The stunning Groninger Forum is a cultural hub, complete with library, exhibition space, rooftop bar and restaurant; and boutique cinema. Various smaller museums and art galleries dot the winding city streets, with new exhibitions nearly a weekly occurrence.

Events

Groningen is internationally renowned as 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. In February, stages pop up around the city for Eurosonic, Europe's biggest showcase festival for music.

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. Several streets have been awarded the title 'the loveliest in the Netherlands' at various points in recent years.

Leisure

Groningen boasts a car-free city center and is world-famous as a cycling city. Groningen bursts at the seams with hip hotels, restaurants serving food from around the world, 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: www.gemeente.groningen.nl/en

MUNICIPALITY OF HEERENVEEN

With a population of 30,000, the city of Heerenveen is the main urban centre in a municipality that also contains 15 attractive villages. Heerenveen has plenty to offer in terms of shops, work, culture, sports and recreation. As of 2020, roughly one in ten residents of Heerenveen has an international background.

Sports

The city's 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, especially when it is against local rivals FC Groningen!

Notably, Heerenveen is also home to one of the best ice speed skating centres in the world: Thialf. 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, and it is the training facility for many Dutch Olympic medalists.

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 Belvédère, which attracts some 50,000 visitors 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: www.heerenveen.nl/

MUNICIPALITY OF HET HOGELAND

Het Hogeland is a municipality situated in the north of the province of Groningen. Het Hogeland is famous for its nature and the Eemshaven (Eems harbor).

Nature, Culture and Museums

Het Hogeland is famous for the Waddenzee (Wadden Sea), a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a uniquely beautiful area. The dikes along the sea provide visitors with spectacular sweeping views of the coast.

The Menkemaborg museum in Uithuizen is a fully furnished mansion with gardens, moats and promenades, where you can travel through time and experience life at a Groningen borg in the 18th century. The massive home was built in the 14th-century, and has changed very little since 1700. Audio tours in several languages are available for visitors to learn how the people lived in early days.

You can also find Het Hoogeland open air museum in the village of Warffum. The museum is a so-called terp village, an earthen settlement built hundreds of years ago to protect the villagers from flood waters.

In Het Hogeland, there are a number of beautiful walking and biking routes through the wide-open landscape.

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/Vattenfall, Bavaria and Google. Eemshaven is the ideal business location for many businesses. Eemshaven is the electricity port of the Netherlands, and the site where the transatlantic cable comes ashore.

For more information visit: www.HetHogeland.nl/.

MUNICIPALITY OF LEEUWARDEN

Leeuwarden is a dynamic and vibrant capital city, located in the Northern part of the Netherlands in the prosperous, cultural province of Friesland. A city celebrated for its down to earth mentality, but also a city where they still dream BIG. Leeuwarden was once a royal residence and has a beautiful historical centre, a wealth of listed buildings, diverse shops and relaxing terraces and canals.

Knowledge and innovation

The Knowledge Campus, Water Campus, Dairy Campus, Energy Campus and Campus Fryslân together contribute to a strong innovation ecosystem. In Leeuwarden, a new generation of innovative and environmentally conscious global citizens are working on improving our planet and tackling societal issues. And they have fun doing so! Did you know the happiest people in The Netherlands live in Friesland?

European Capital of Culture

In addition to the lively knowledge environment, Leeuwarden is also the cultural heart of the North. In 2018, Leeuwarden-Fryslân was the European Capital of Culture. For a whole year, culture was celebrated in Friesland as if it were part of our being. Culture is used in Friesland as a driver for change, social as well as environmental change. And that hasn't stopped. The legacy of 2018 project will fill the streets with theater, art, and performances through to 2028!

Historic City Centre

The city centre of Leeuwarden breathes history. Its rich and varied past is best exhibited in its' fascinating museums, over 1,000 monuments, special boutiques and spectacular events. One of the main attractions is an extraordinary church tower called the 'Oldehove', which originated in 1529 and leans in a similar way to the tower of Pisa in Italy. Many world-famous historical figures originate from Leeuwarden, such as M.C Escher, Mata Hari, the ancestor of the current Dutch Royal family Princess Maria Louise. The city has also produced poets, novelists and romantic authors throughout its history.

In Leeuwarden they dare to dream, dare to act and dare to be different. Instead of solely in the summer, they rebranded November as the festival month. In 2021, Leeuwarden hosted the annual Roze Zaterdag (Pink Saturday) pride event, celebrating freedom, diversity and love. Leeuwarden's agenda is always full of cultural events to enjoy!

For more information, visit the website:
www.visitleeuwarden.com and www.leeuwarden.nl

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, and the main village is Hoogeveen. 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 Hoogeveen 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: 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, Noordenveld is the place for a wonderful vacation or day out. The beautiful brook and valley landscape is wide with plenty of water, and can be best enjoyed in the nature area, De Onlanden. Cycling over paths along streams and marshes transports you to another world.

The wild moor of Fochteloërveen, with two typical Drentse hunebedden (monoliths), is also nearby. More liveliness can be found around the Leekstermeer, which you have to experience from the water. Or you can go mountain biking in the woods of Norg. Winding lanes, past Saxon farms and imposing estates, lead to characteristic village squares like Roden. And afterwards, visit a museum, attraction or historical estate, Mensinge.

The prison village of Veenhuizen, unlike in olden times, is now open to visit and wander through this former village of paupers and vagrants from the Colonies of Benevolence. The monumental buildings bear silent witness to a unique history at this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Beyond the recreational sector and agricultural industry throughout the municipality, the main economic activities are in Roden, the main village of Noordenveld. You will find the Vrijetijdsboulevard in Roden, with the largest outdoor and camping store of the North of the Netherlands and other leisure-oriented stores. Roden has also strong representation in the knowledge intensive sector, namely medical technology and measurement and control technology. A great example of innovation in Roden is the Health Hub, where companies and educational institutions - from vocational education to universities - work together on innovations in medical technology.

Visit www.kopvandrenthe.nl for great holiday accommodation options and more tourism information.

For more information visit: www.gemeentenordenveld.nl

MUNICIPALITY OF SMALLINGERLAND

Smallingerland lays 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 on 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, such as Simmerdeis and the Easter fair. The Naturij is the largest children's farm in the north, with a playground, an indoor soft play hall, a mini traffic track for kids, 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 and an area called Drents-Friese Wold, with woods, heathlands, drifting sands and the Frisian lakes. The country estates of the 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: www.smallingerland.nl

MUNICIPALITY OF SÚDWEST-FRYSLÂN

The municipality of Súdwest-Fryslân is located in the province of Friesland, and at just over 840 km², it is the largest municipality by physical area in the Netherlands. The municipality was formed in 2011 by a series of mergers with other municipalities also coming under the new municipality in 2014, and 2018. In total, the population of the municipality is around 84,000 people, spread across the many charming Frisian cities, rustic villages, large areas of natural beauty; and a significant amount of inland water.

The largest city in the municipality is Sneek (population around 30,000), one of the Eleven Frisian cities, and known for its beautiful gothic Waterpoort. Its Martinikerk is also historic, having been completed in 1498. Sneek is now known as being one of the centers for water sports in the Netherlands, with 13 marinas and more than 130 water sports companies and providers. Sneek was also the location of the first ever C&A store, a brand that now has around 2,000 stores worldwide.

Other important cities within Súdwest-Fryslân include Bolsward, which has a population of around 10,000 people and is also one of the Eleven Cities of Friesland. Accordingly, in some years, the Elfstedentocht ice skating race passes right through the center of Bolsward. Hindeloopen, IJst, Stavoren and Workum are also part of the historic Eleven Frisian cities, and therefore also on the Elfstedentocht route. Hindeloopen is particularly interesting: though it only has a population of around 800 people, it has full city rights and was founded in 1225.

A trip through the Eleven Cities is an excellent way to get to see the variety of landscape in Friesland. Following Leeuwarden-Friesland's star turn as European Capital of Culture in 2018, large numbers of the cities and villages are now filled with public art, and many have a large calendar of events.

Within the municipality there is an uncommonly high number of exceptionally beautiful villages, many either on the coast of the IJsselmeer or the other various bodies of water that dot the land. One of the best-visited of these is Makkum, located on the IJsselmeer and exceptionally popular during the summer months, so much so that it is often referred to as the 'Dutch Malibu'.

For more information visit: www.sudwestfryslan.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 being surrounded by green space, plenty of water and spacious neighborhoods, which is why Veendam is also known as Park City Veendam. Residents of Veendam can make use of many sporting facilities such as the subtropical swimming pool Tropiqa and stadium De Langeleegte. The stadium, once the home ground of the former professional football club SC Veendam, is being rebuilt into an innovative accommodation where sports and education meet.

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, such as a water ski cableway, a climbing park, a camping site for mobile homes, a horse riding center and a beautiful 18-hole golf course. Kids can enjoy themselves at the playground, the petting zoo and the beaches. Those who love water and sports will have a great time at Borgerswold!

The municipality of Veendam was historically 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 center. Next to this museum lies Culture and Congress Centre van Beresteyn. This is the cultural heart of Veendam. You can enjoy theatre performances, music lessons, film screenings or visit the library or café. You can also find a wide range of shops and restaurants in the center. Veendam has many terraces where you can enjoy your drink or meal. Veendam has eight primary schools and a high school. The city of Groningen is within easy reach by public transportation.

For more information visit: www.veendam.nl



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