

# Water

With almost a third of the country below sea level, the Netherlands is proud of the riches of its waters, its maritime history and idyllic harbors. However, the Dutch haven't always had an easy relationship with the water. The challenges the country faced led to the development of unique and ambitious water management projects that earned global acclaim.



# NL

Netherlands



Wherever you visit in the Netherlands, you can experience the riches of the water. Boat tours run through the canals and rivers in many cities, and historic harbors give a fascinating insight into the Dutch Golden Age. Take part in sailing, rowing and many other wind and water sports around the country, including spots like Sneek in Friesland. Most importantly, take the time to admire the Netherlands' unique landscapes that have been shaped by the water over centuries.

### Windmills and pumping stations

There are few images more iconic to the Netherlands than landscapes dotted with windmills. The mills and pumping stations were built to prevent flooding as far back as the 17th century. The Zaanse Schans is one of the best places to admire more than 600 windmills which formed the world's first industrial area. The Kinderdijk windmills built around 1740 and the Woudagemaal pumping station have even been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status.

### Beautiful polder landscapes

The Netherlands has many polders and areas of reclaimed land, such as the Beemster and Schermer. The convergence of raw natural landscapes that are essentially man-made is an interesting demonstration of Dutch ingenuity. Being on the edge of land and water means that the Netherlands boasts fantastic water-rich landscapes in places where dikes broke through and land disappeared beneath the water.

Examples include National Park De Biesbosch with its pure rivers and creeks, water basins and willow woods. There is also National Park Wieden-Weerribben, a water-rich moor in which people live in idyllic villages on the water, such as Giethoorn.

### Large-scale engineering projects

The Afsluitdijk is a feat of Dutch engineering in which the IJsselmeer lake was closed off from the Zuiderzee, stretching for 32 kilometers and offering extraordinary views on both sides. Built between 1927 and 1933, it enabled an entirely new province, Flevoland, to be reclaimed from the water. The world's biggest storm surge barrier, the Delta Works, in Zeeland is an impressive structure of 62 sliding gates designed to prevent flooding. Eventually, these projects paved the way to the Netherlands owing a significant part of its landscapes, beauty and even economy to the sea