

CITY GUIDE

Utrecht



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USEFUL INFORMATION

Overview

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a coastal country north of Belgium and west of Germany with a population of approximately 16 and half million people. The government is based on the constitution which was ratified in 1948. It is a Parliamentary Democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy. The current Monarch is King Willem Alexander. The country is divided into 12 provinces. The major cities are Amsterdam (the capital), Rotterdam (Europe's largest port), and The Hague (the seat of the government).

Area

Utrecht is developing from a medium-sized provincial city into a regional capital of European importance. The city's current expansion, more rapid than any in the city's long history, combines physical expansion with innovation, major economic opportunities and a new urban dynamism. As a medieval treasure and a leading academic, technological, and cultural centre, Utrecht is now a proactive player in the international community. With more than 360,000 inhabitants, Utrecht is the Netherlands' fourth city. Utrecht is the capital of the province of the same name which has 1.3 million inhabitants. Utrecht has a reputation as an independent-minded and lively city, which is gaining more and more recognition as a centre of knowledge and culture, both nationally and internationally. It is these qualities that the city aims to promote itself with, both today and in the future.

Climate

The climate in Utrecht is northern maritime. The average temperature in the summer months is around 71°F (22°C) and the average temperature in the winter is around 42°F (6°C).

Holidays

Public holidays in the Netherlands 2022:

Date	Dutch name	English translation
01 Jan	Nieuwjaarsdag	New Year's day
4 Apr	Eerste paasdag	First Easter day
4 Apr	Tweede paasdag	Second Eater day
27 Apr	Koningsdag	King's birthday
04 May	Dodenherdenking	Remembrance of the Dead of the war (no official public holiday)
05 May	Bevrijdingsdag	Liberation Day (only a public holiday every five years)
13 May	Hemelvaarstdag	Ascension Day
23 May	Eerste pinksterdag	Pentecost / Whit Sundsy
24 May	Tweede pinksterdag	Pentecost / Whit Monday
25 Dec	Eerste kerstdag	First Christmas day
26 Dec	Tweede kerstdag	Second Christmas Day



Time Zone

Utrecht is in the Central European Time (CET) zone used in most parts of the European Union which is 1 hour ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). It is important to note that time is on the 24-hour clock in the Netherlands. That means that 6pm will be called 18:00.

Population

There is no state religion in the Netherlands, and many Dutch do not affiliate with any type of religious institution; however, there are different places of worship throughout the Utrecht area. You should be able to find a place of worship for virtually any belief system you have. A good resource is always your Embassy office, as they usually have a list of services in your native language.

Voltage

Electricity in Netherlands is 220/230 Volts, 50 Hz. The Netherlands utilizes the standard continental European 2-pin plug.

Weights and Measurements

The Netherlands uses the metric system. The metric system is a decimal system of weights and measures in which the gram is the unit of weight, the meter is the unit of length, and the liter is the unit of volume.

Alarm number

Police, Ambulance, Fire: 112

Police

The police in the Netherlands are part of either one of the 25 regional police forces or National Police. Should you want any information about the police, you can visit www.politie.nl.



HOUSING

Area's

Utrecht is the capital and most populous city of the province of Utrecht. It is located in the eastern corner of the Randstad conurbation, and is the fourth largest city of the Netherlands. Utrecht is a relative small city. The nice parts of Utrecht are Wittevrouwen, Oudwijk, Lombok, Tuinwijk and Vogelenuurt.

IJsselstein

Twenty minutes down the motorway is the popular suburb of IJsselstein, complete with a car-free medieval city centre. There are fast train connections to Utrecht and Nieuwegein, and good cultural amenities. Nature lovers can enjoy the green heart of the Netherlands with bike trails through scenic countryside and along the river Lek.



Leidsche Rijn

Officially part of the city of Utrecht, Leidsche Rijn consists of the two small villages of Vleuten and Meern. The area is built in previous years and they are still building, which means the area is quite new. Lots of new facilities will be built. Please keep in mind that everything will be finished around 2025.

Nieuwegein

Lying situated 7 km south of Utrecht, Nieuwegein was a new town created in 1971 to cope with the expanding population of Utrecht. There are a variety of housing styles from classic Dutch brick homes to modern high-rises, and if you need to drive to work, easy access to nearby motorways (A2, A12 and A27). To the east is Houten, a fast-developing town, where some third of its population is under 20. Many houses are surrounded by parks, lakes and nature.

De Vechtstreek

This area is north west of Utrecht and close to the Loosdrechtse Plassen lakes. Popular with young families and retirees, Breukelen and Maarssen are connected to Utrecht by local rail and bus services. Older villages include Oud-Zuilen (built around a castle) and Maarssen-Dorp. Maarssenbroek contains newer housing estates with local amenities and services in place.

Finding a property

Finding a place to live in Utrecht can be a challenge. However, with research and the right advice, you can find your perfect home in a popular market. When searching for accommodation, there are three possibilities: public housing, private rentals and buying properties.

In the Netherlands there are 3 types of furnishing in residences / apartments:

1. Unfurnished ('bare'):

There are no carpets, curtains, light fixtures, etc., though there probably will be a fitted kitchen. Built-in appliances such as a cooker and possibly a fridge or dishwasher may be present. If you view an unfurnished property before the current tenants vacate, you may be able to purchase the floor for example from this tenant. If this is not possible it means you have to buy and install everything yourself. Please take this into consideration when determining your housing budget.

2. Semi-furnished:

The fittings will include everything in the 'bare' category, and in addition there will be floor coverings and window coverings.

3. Furnished:

Completely furnished - generally including furniture, appliances, cutlery, crockery, bed linen, etc.

Properties in the Netherlands in general always contain a fitted kitchen and bathroom.

Deposit

When renting accommodation, it is typical that landlords require a deposit from the tenant. The standard amount is usually one- or two-months' rent, but in some cases may be higher. A rental deposit is intended to cover the repairs of any damage caused to the residence over the prescribed rental period. It cannot be used to reclaim any other money still owed by the tenant (such as unpaid rent or outstanding utility bills) unless both landlord and tenant have agreed this in advance in writing.

Rent is generally paid one month in advance and paid by standing order from your bank account. In general you will also have to pay an amount in addition to the rent which is for community costs and utilities.

UTILITIES

Electricity and Gas

If you're renting a property in the Netherlands, your lease agreement should indicate if additional charges, such as utility bills, are included in your monthly payments.

The Dutch energy market is privatized, this enabling you to choose or change your supplier. Gas and electricity are both supplied by the same provider. Regulatory authorities ensure fair practices and tariffs.

Products, tariffs, and services may vary from company to company.

Types of energy:

(1) Green energy

Most suppliers offer green energy (groene stroom), which is produced from environmentally friendly sources such as wind, sun, organic matter, or waterpower. Green energy is available from some suppliers at no extra cost; others charge a higher rate.

(2) Grey power

Grey power (such as nuclear energy or energy made from exhaustible sources such as gas and coal) is not environmentally friendly.

Each month you pay a deposit amount. These amounts are advance payments on your annual statement.

Once a year you receive a bill for your energy consumption during that year. This is called annual settlement. Energy costs can be charged.

Water

There are two elements of water payments: a consumption charge based on actual water usage (which is estimated if you don't have a meter) and a municipal tax for services (sewage, maintenance, etc.).



Garbage Disposal

In Utrecht it is normal practice to separate your household waste in order to utilize the growing array of recycling options and work towards greener environmental solutions. Within this section you can learn more about the recycling options, as well as specific information relating to the household refuse in the city district in which you live.

Household refuse

Household refuse is general rubbish that is neither chemical nor dangerous but cannot be recycled. The municipality collects the majority of Utrecht's household waste and transports it to modern incinerators, which in turn generate power or heat water that is used by local households or businesses.

Some city districts require you to put household refuse out on the street in (designated) rubbish bags on the day it is to be collected. Others ask you to deposit household waste in the dark green or grey containers on the street. These have underground capacity and are collected by the municipality on a regular basis. For street collections, be sure to allow easy access to your refuse when putting it outside to make it easier for the collection services to remove your rubbish.

Waste collection points

Utrecht has several special waste collection points (afvalpunten). These are stations where you can deposit your bulky waste, construction and demolition waste, chemical waste, unwanted electronic/electrical goods, plastic, paper, glass for free. You can also take recyclable goods, products and furniture that will be reused by students or those less fortunate. The waste collection points are open six days per week (Mon-Sat 08:00-17:00).

Bulky waste

Typically, bulky waste includes materials or items too large for the household waste, such as electrical goods, appliances, furniture and garden cuttings. Many city districts organize a bulky waste collection on fixed days each week, in which case it is appropriate to deposit your bulky waste at the nearest street location on the evening or morning before collection. Citizens who deposit waste on the street outside of this

this time are likely to face a hefty fine. If you cannot wait until the appropriate collection day, it is possible to pre-arrange a personal collection (sometimes at a cost). Otherwise, bulky waste can be taken to the waste collection points.

Recycling

Before throwing something away, please consider whether items such as clothing, appliances or furniture can be given a second life at one of your local 2nd hand stores (kringloopwinkel). There are a number of licensed 2nd hand stores throughout the city (and neighboring towns) and many of them will collect bulkier items if you arrange an appointment. You can find a list of these stores here. Also keep in mind that if you are purchasing new electrical goods or appliances, shops in the Netherlands can receive and recycle your old product – either at time of purchase or delivery. For further information you should check with the individual shop.

Paper, cardboard, and glass

Some of the most common recyclables in Utrecht are paper and glass. There are around 3,000 glass containers and 3,000 paper containers, ensuring you never need walk too far to recycle. Old paper and old glass are always transformed into new products.

Textiles and clothing

Old clothing, towels, cuddly toys and shoes can often be reused or recycled. There are bins for textiles and clothing around Utrecht. The style and color of these bins varies by city district but are commonly marked as 'Textiel'. All clothes and textiles should be clean, usable and must be deposited within closed refuse bags. Pairs of shoes should be tied and packaged together. Such textile bins should not be used for items such as carpeting or other bulky fabrics.

Minor chemical waste

Items such as used alkaline batteries, energy saving light bulbs, rechargeable batteries, oils or old paint are harmful to the environment and should never be discarded within your household refuse. They can safely be disposed of at the waste collection points or taken to the Chemokar, a special truck that parks at designated points around the city (search for your nearest collection point on this map). A growing number of supermarkets, hardware stores and other shops also have bins for depositing the likes of light bulbs and batteries. Old medicine can be returned to your local chemist.

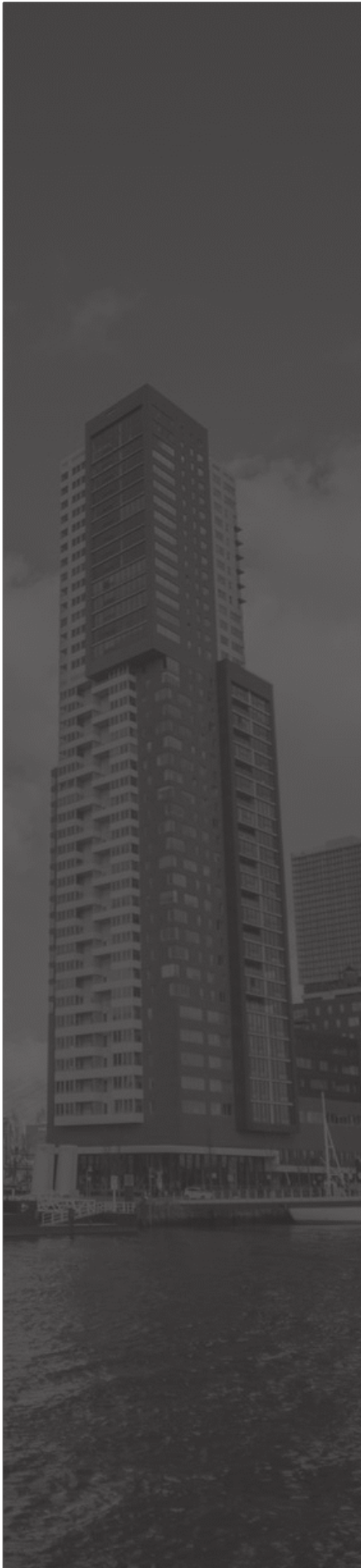
Cooking oils

Cooking oils used for baking or frying should never be poured down sinks or drains as they can be dangerous to both the environment and to the city's waste and sewer infrastructure. What's more, such products can now be recycled and used as biofuels. Pour your used oils back into a bottle and take them to a local location with a yellow recycling bin (view a list of locations), to a Chemokar collection point (search for your nearest point on this map), or at the waste collection points.

Asbestos

If asbestos is discovered or suspected during a demolition or building renovation project, work must halt immediately. Such material should not be transported to a waste collection point or deposited in city bins. Special rules apply and the situation should be handled only by professionals.





Refuse collection by district

Refuse collection varies between district and different rules even apply within neighborhoods of some districts. Check on your district to read more about refuse collection where you live.

COMMUNICATION

Post office

The mail service in the Netherlands is operated by Post NL, www.postnl.nl. Post NL has small Post shops, located in other shops, such as bookstores, tobacco shops and supermarkets. For locating a Post office, please refer to the website of PostNL.

Postal boxes in the Netherlands are painted red or orange. Please note that the right hole on the box is for the local Utrecht mail, the left one for all other mail (Dutch: overige postcodes). The post is collected every day at 6 PM, except for Saturday.

Telephone

KPN is the main supplier for landlines, while other providers offer phone connection via cable networks. Often the easiest way to connect a landline is to visit a KPN winkel (shop) with appropriate identification and they can set it up, while some cable networks allow you to sign up online. There are many additional services such as discounts for favorite numbers, or combination deals with internet and TV. To call friends and family at no cost internationally, you should use Skype or Google Talk.

Internet

Connectivity in the Netherlands is among the highest and fastest in Europe. Cable is the most popular form of internet access with 41% of total subscriptions, followed by various forms of DSL and Fiber to the home.

Internet service is provided by many suppliers. You will need to check with your landlord or letting agent to see if broadband or cable services is available in the property that you are considering. Consider to bundle your television, phone and internet as there are discounts to take advantage of by doing so.

TRANSPORTATION

Public transport

The inner city of Utrecht is best reached by public transport. You simply take the tram, bus, (train) taxi or rent a bicycle at the station. City buses are entering the centre from all directions. From the area of Nieuwegein and IJsselstein, trams run frequently. An extensive network of city buses ensures that every district is easily accessible.

In The Netherlands the public transport chip card (OV-chipkaart) is used for travel on trams, buses and metros. The OV-chipkaart is the size of a bank card and contains an invisible chip. The OV-chipkaart can be loaded with credit in Euros with which you can travel anywhere within The Netherlands, or with a travel product such as a single or season ticket. For more information please visit the website www.ovchipkaart.nl, Qbuzz, and 9292.nl.

Train travel opportunities in the Netherlands are plentiful. The trains go between Dutch cities and to many cities in other countries, including high speed service to Brussels and Paris. Their website is www.ns.nl, with an English option, where you can plan your journey and find out everything you need to know about fares.

Taxis are available in Utrecht at many taxi ranks located throughout the city. The tariff is a fixed charge plus a mileage charge, but do note that taxis are expensive compared to other European cities.

Driving License

Once you are a resident of the Netherlands (registered in the municipality database) you cannot drive a car registered in another country. You must also have a valid license recognized by Dutch law, be at least 18, and have third party insurance.

Driving licenses are required for all drivers. If you are the holder of a license from an EU country, Iceland, Lichtenstein or Norway, you have 10 or 15 years from the date of issue of your license before you need to get a Dutch license. If you are from a country outside of the EU, then your procedures may involve simply transferring your license or you may have to take the written and/or driving test. For a lot of information on licenses and driving rules, go to www.rijbewijs.nl, which has an English option.

You drive on the right. Unless otherwise marked, the speed limits are 50 km/hr in the city, 80 km/hr on other roads and 100, 120, or 130 km/hr on motorways. Traffic is an issue (www.trafficnet.nl) and so is parking, for which you generally need a permit. There are various options for paying for parking: by cash or via your mobile phone. See www.parkmobiel.nl, www.park-line.nl or ww.yellowbrick.nl.

Many Dutch drivers are members of motoring organization ANWB (www.anwb.nl), which can provide breakdown cover (wegenwacht) at home or abroad. There are park and ride (P+R) schemes in most cities and the car-sharing scheme Green Wheels is a popular option (www.greenwheels.nl).

Here are a few tips to remember when driving in The Netherlands: - Drive on the right side of the road;

- Most cars, including rental cars, are manual transmissions, not automatic transmissions, unless you request one;
- Seat belts must be worn by the driver and all passengers;
- Motorists who are caught driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are severely penalized in the Netherlands;
- You are obligated to stop and help if you are the first person on the scene of an accident;
- You should never pass on the right;

- You must carry a red reflective triangle and a safety jacket with reflectors (that must be used in case of a breakdown) and a first aid kit in your car;
- Mobile phones may only be used if they are hands free;
- Children below four years must travel in approved car seats;
- Always carry your driver's license, proof of insurance and vehicle registration certificate with you. If you will be driving in another EU country, you should get a green card from your insurance.



FUN FACTS

Arriving in a country where you don't speak the language can be quite hard. We summed up the basics for you.

Goedemorgen	Goedemiddag	Goedeavond
Good morning	Good afternoon	Good evening
Hello	Yes	No
Hallo	Ja	Nee
Pardon	Hoe gaat het?	Het gaat goed
Excuse me	How are you?	I'm fine

The Dutch language contains the letter 'G'. Pronouncing this letter mostly requires a lot of practice for non-native Dutch speakers.

Fun facts about a city and country will help you get to know it better. We have collected the most surprising facts about Utrecht and the Netherlands.

- > There are more bicycles in the Netherlands than people. The country contains 22 bicycles with the population of 17 million people. The most common crime in Amsterdam is stealing bikes, so be careful with your bike in the capital.
- > Utrecht Central is the largest station in the Netherlands.
- > In 1808, Utrecht was the capital of the Netherlands for six months .
- > The only Dutch pope (Adrianus VI) came from Utrecht.
- > Dutch people are the tallest people in the world.
- > The Netherlands is the top English-Speaking country.
- > The Netherlands' highest point is 322,7 metres above sea level (Vaalserberg) and the lowest 6,76 metres below sea level (Prince Alexander Polder).
- > The Netherlands is one of the happiest countries in the world.
- > Raw herring with onions is a popular meal, just like chocolate sprinkles on bread, bitterballen or 'stroopwafels'.
- > Every city in the Netherlands has its own opening hours for shopping on Sundays.