

EXPLORE GRONINGEN CITY AND PROVINCE

GRONINGEN

—
off the
beaten
track

ROUTES! INCLUDING 3 BEAUTIFUL ROUTES!

3

UP TO
THE DYKE

launch into space here

REGIONAL
PRODUCE

producers in the countryside

RURAL
IDYLL

the Ommeland

35° 12' 56" N 6° 48' 34" E

GRONINGEN, A WELL-KEPT SECRET FOR MANY

The city and province of Groningen have so much to offer - from the boundless energy of museums, festivals and shops, to the peace and quiet of almshouses and gardens behind gates. This is where you can venture out on the seabed on foot, or enter the impregnable Bourtange fortress.

Let us take you on an exploratory expedition that includes places of interest, various routes and detours to take in city highlights and great places out of the centre. Visit beautiful villages near the city. All of these are places to find silence and tranquillity, let go of old ideas and allow new ones in. And let's not forget the Groningen special producers, who proudly create their merchandise with plenty of love for their land. Some places are a slightly longer bike ride away, but you might get lucky and have the wind at your back.



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KLOOSTER TER APEL

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Use this map to set out on your exploratory route through Groningen. Although it is impossible to capture Groningen in a hundred or so pages, this magazine deals extensively with most places of interest. You will undoubtedly agree there are so many interesting places, but we have added even more great destinations and highlights to the map. Combine some of them in a daytrip, create your very own routes and take in the beauty and individuality of Groningen.

PROVINCE GRONINGEN

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SO
DARK
YOU CAN
SEE
EVERYTHING
IN THE
NIGHT
SKY

53° 24' 25.4" N, 6° 11' 5 1.6" E

11 TIMES SPACE

Step into the Groningen space. It's close by, just look around. Behind a city gate, on a monastery bench, or with your feet in the clay of one of many extensive polders. This is where you can let go of old ideas and allow new ones in.

Walking

't Roegwold

One of the most frequently photographed places in Groningen is the Knuppelpad in 't Roegwold near Schildwolde. The wooden deck path through the rugged swamp forest takes you 750 metres into the area. - staatsbosbeheer.nl

Creativity

Kunsterf Warempel

Workshops and creative holidays at the Kunsterf Warempel space in Grootegast are sure to awaken your inner artist. - kunsterfwarempel.nl

Spa

Bad Nieuweschans

On a cold and bleak day, relax and enjoy the warmth of the Bad Nieuweschans thermal bath or saunas. - thermenbadnieuweschans.nl

Activities

Yoga on the flats

The boat trip to the flats and the yoga class bring you into contact with yourself and the elements. Who knows, you might even spot a few seals stretching out in the sun as well. - meergroningen.nl

Back in time

Klooster Ter Apel

For centuries, monks worked, prayed and lived with inspiration in the Ter Apel monastery – a large impressive red brick building surrounded by deciduous forests. This is still a magical place, and if only the walls could talk. Of 34 medieval monasteries and convents in Groningen, this was the last one to be established. Today, it's the only one left that can still be recognised as a monastery. - kloosterterapel.nl

Fresh air

Noordpolderzijl

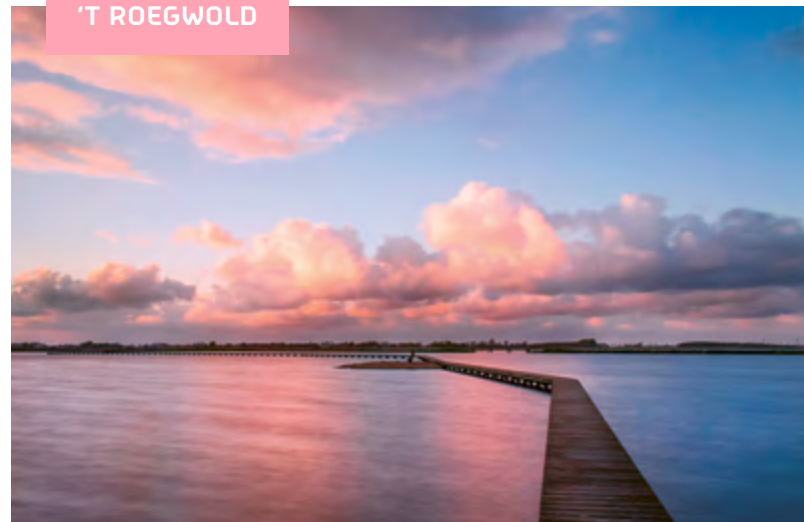
This is the perfect place for taking in some fresh North Sea air, during a brisk walk on the dyke, a ramble across the mud flats or a view of the shallows. Afterwards, stop at the striking 't Zielhoes pub for a drink at the outdoor café, or huddle around the warm round iron stove. - zielhoes.nl

Cycling

North-eastern polders

A large part of the province of Groningen used to be under water, or was flooded too often for it to be of much use. The solution of Groningen residents was to roll up their sleeves, reclaim the land and dyke it in. Take in the extensive horizon of the deceptively flat countryside during a bicycle ride through the north-eastern polders of Groningen. - visitgroningen.com/polders

'T ROEGWOLD



NOORDPOLDERZIJL



ALMSHOUSES



On the water

Whisper boat

Rent a whisper boat to enjoy the silence as you sail through the countryside. Hear those tiny birds in the reed and the murmuring water and enjoy the lovely Groningen countryside. - marenland.nl

Sleeping outdoors

During the evening

What could possibly beat sleeping in the countryside under the starry sky? Avond-uren is an accommodating yet adventurous initiative by experienced outdoor instructors. - avond-uren.nl

In the city

Almshouses

There was a time when almshouses in Groningen city provided housing to the poor, the widowed and the sick. Today, these quiet courtyards are homes of individuals who relish the peace and quiet of these city oases. Some courtyards are open to visitors that wish to enjoy a little quiet contemplation. Past residents may well have done the very same, under the very same trees! Courtyard tour guides are available at the Groningen Store. - groningenstore.nl

Darkness

Dark Sky Park

If you would like to experience true darkness, you really should check out the Lauwersmeer Dark Sky Park. Far away from any artificial sources of light, this is where it gets so dark at night that you see everything in the night sky. - visitgroningen.com/dark-sky



KLOOSTER TER APEL



AVOND-UREN



YOGA ON THE FLATS

THE EXPLORERS

Text: Chris Zwart

TOWNSPEOPLE ON THE HOGELAND

To many, rural Groningen may sound like an unknown and faraway place, but people who visit run a risk of being instantly smitten with the region and its villages. Whether they hail from the Randstad or the city of Groningen, many find themselves affected by its charm. Take Wilbert van de Kamp,

who has lost his heart to the Hogeland area, or Mayke Zandstra, who lives at the beautiful Enne Jans Heerd farm with her partner. What exactly is it that makes Groningen so very special, and what should you really see, taste and experience here? Wilbert and Mayke are happy to share their story.

THE HOGELAND IS A PLACE YOU SHOULD EXPLORE FOR YOURSELF

When Wilbert van de Kamp (31) gets the opportunity to live in the monumental house Oosterhouw in Leens for a year in 2016, he embraces it. He was fed up with the rush of life in Amsterdam. The Hogeland wasn't unknown territory for him, but thanks to Oosterhouw, he got to know it even better. And he fell in love with it.

'Oosterhouw is a special house. I welcomed about two thousand visitors to the activities I held at the historical residence in the year I lived there – all of them people who would otherwise never have come. Books and plays were written here, videos recorded and weddings held too. It was also the venue for the Zwarte Zielen Festival; a festival for those suffering from depression. Oosterhouw was the perfect location for this, because it is an old house. If the walls could talk, the tales they could tell. During the festival, there was a great atmosphere of high spirits, and the photos only show people smiling.'

SPACE FOR YOU TO CLEAR YOUR HEAD

'The Hogeland beats Tuscany in summer any time. The waving grain in the fields all around is just such a lovely sight. Even when it's busy with tourists, it doesn't feel crowded at all. The area literally provides space to let you clear your head and welcome new thoughts.'

THE BEGINNING OF THE NETHERLANDS

'The dyke near Kloosterburen features lovely salt marshes. You may not be aware of the fact that the entire Hogeland area was once sea.'



I sometimes take a group of people up the dyke with Ale Havenga of the Landgoud farm. He always asks them to look at the sea and describe where they are. People usually respond with something like: 'At the end of the Netherlands.' Ale will ask them to turn around, saying: 'No, look, this is actually the *beginning* of the Netherlands.'

AN AREA WITH MUCH TO OFFER

'I love to visit the WaddenMax farm in Hornhuizen, where they sell this amazingly good dairy produce. They also have a very small and cold pool where you can swim. Not many know about it, but feel free to ask them if you can take a dip in it. The Hornhuizen church tower – with a panoramic view of the entire Hogeland area and the sea – is highly recommended. Afterwards, enjoy some apple pie at Wongema next door. I often go to Lauwersoog, where Jan and Barbara of 't Ailand dole out freshly caught fish from the sea. The area has so much to offer.'

TOURIST WITHOUT A MAP

'The Hogeland is perfect to explore with friends and family. The fun part is that there is no map showing the highlights. Many places have remained undiscovered,

'CLIMB THE CHURCH TOWER OF HORNHUIZEN, FROM THERE YOU CAN SEE A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE ENTIRE HOGELAND AREA AND THE SEA'

which makes it just such a special place to visit. It also makes visitors likely to ask people where to go, as a result of which they find out much more. So feel free to walk up to a farmer for a chat; chances are you will get a guided tour. If you're lucky, maybe they'll invite you in for a meal.'

LOOKING INTO INFINITIVE DISTANCES

'As soon as I take my car and leave the city of Groningen, I catch myself thinking how much I love these infinite views. I guess you could say that I lost my heart to the Hogeland. It is the nicest area in the Netherlands. Our generation is looking for new experiences, which I think are easier to find in Ulrum than in Bali. I really do think so, and I would say: check it out.'

**UTTER SILENCE**

'I never really felt at home anywhere until I came to the Hogeland. I must have moved twenty times to find what I was looking for right here, all thanks to the people living here, the countryside, the calm, the expanse, the impressive skies, the old villages and churches, and the salt marshes. I took my youngest son to the dyke near Westernieland the other day. We didn't see a soul and everything was perfectly quiet. I just feel so rich to have this near where I live. This is the place where you can really wind down.'

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

'If you would like to know about one particular and special place in the Hogeland region, the Abelstok wooded area, just north of Mensingeweer, comes to mind. My first time there was on a summer evening, on my racing bicycle. It was about 9 pm and growing dark. Abelstok is a fairy-like wooded area with overgrown fruit trees and low branches, and people tend to just pass it without stopping. I felt like the proverbial Alice in Wonderland. The openness of the surrounding area gives it such a magical touch.'

NOTHING IS EVERYTHING

'If you are looking to explore a pure and untouched area in the Netherlands, you really should come to the Hogeland. This is the perfect place to clear your head and enjoy far horizons wherever you look. Sit down in a verge or bench and look all around you to absorb the beauty. Take some time to really appreciate the scene; rushing through it might make you think it isn't all that. This is actually true for some places where you will see nothing. But that really is just the secret of these places.'

**'I MUST HAVE MOVED
TWENTY TIMES TO FIND
WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR
RIGHT HERE, ALL THANKS TO
THE PEOPLE LIVING HERE.'**

STOP AND TAKE A BREATH IN A PURE AND UNTOUCHED REGION

In 2018, Mayke Zandstra (38) and her family ventured out to the Hogeland area to live and create a nature and cultural experiences venue. After she and her partner Gijs accidentally stumbled upon the historic Enne Jans Heerd farm, they decided to transform it into a base to share their enthusiasm about the Hogeland.

'You will find the Enne Jans Heerd on the old Maarhuizen artificial dwelling hill. Long ago it was part of two monasteries, and until the 1990s functioned as a mixed farm. I can honestly say that I had a slight anxiety attack when we received the keys. Taking care of this giant farm suddenly felt like an enormous responsibility. Our neighbour, who is the daughter of the former farmer, was kind enough to explain things to us. The people here welcomed us with open arms and made us feel right at home.'

A REGION FOR DEVOTEES

'The Hogeland is pure and open, a perfect area for devotees. When it rains, it rains hard, and when a storm comes, it comes loud and clear. In spring, the countryside literally explodes with life. The rich history of this area is evident everywhere, there are numerous charming villages, and the most beautiful one is, I think, Stitswerd. Stitswerd is located on a high artificial dwelling hill. If you walk out of the village and look back, you can see it sloping down. I sometimes catch myself thinking it's rather nice that this area is relatively unknown. On the other hand: people have no idea what they are missing out on.'



WALKING ON MUD- FLATS

Enjoy the fresh breeze, whiff up that healthy sea wind and empty your head: crossing the mud flats is an active way to relax. Brave salt marshes, silt fields, sandbars and ditches. At some points you will sink up to your knees in the silt, and then there are channels to wade through. It may require perseverance, but this is what makes crossing the mud flats so very special. Take in the area from all angles and enjoy beautiful panoramic views, silence, the lovely coastal surroundings, and seals. The village of Pieterburen is the perfect starting point for an unforgettable excursion of the seething Waddenzee.

ER GAAT NIETS BOVEN



N
W AROUND TRIP THROUGH GRONINGEN E
S

40KM



HOLWIERDE

A CHURCH TOUR

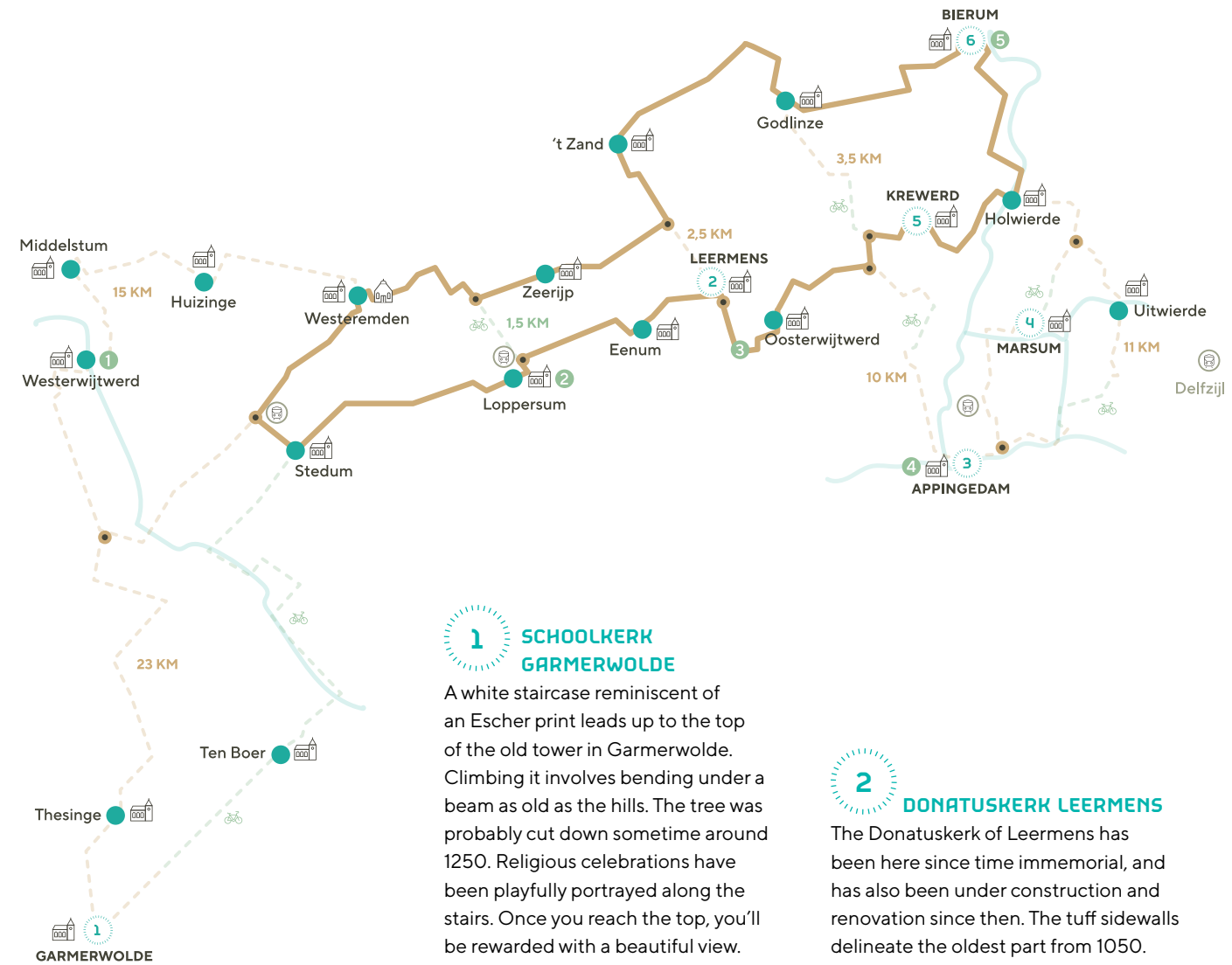


If you want to make sure you don't lose your way, download the route on visitgroningen.com/tour-churches.

This route takes in beautiful churches between Groningen city and Delfzijl. You will find the doors to many of these churches already open to visitors. And if not, you can simply borrow the key from the house next to it. Love the serenity of churches and their surroundings? Follow this route to see more churches and take in the beauty and wealth of the Netherlands.

While some may refer to them as beacons of silence, quiet and contemplation, others boast of their solid appearance or consider all churches combined to be one huge museum. Sometimes people refer to France or Tuscany to emphasise the beauty of Groningen churches. This is totally unnecessary, the churches of Groningen are simply special as themselves, with their own particular character.

Groningen churches generally have ancient roots, deriving their special character from the reddish brown Romanesque bricks that were fired using Groningen clay. While their towers are usually modest in height, they stand head and shoulders above the artificial dwelling hills. Their interiors, with old murals and beautiful vaults, are true hidden gems. Welcome to the churches of Groningen.



1 SCHOOLKERK GARMERWOLDE

A white staircase reminiscent of an Escher print leads up to the top of the old tower in Garmerswolde. Climbing it involves bending under a beam as old as the hills. The tree was probably cut down sometime around 1250. Religious celebrations have been playfully portrayed along the stairs. Once you reach the top, you'll be rewarded with a beautiful view. Behold the Schoolkerk; the latest and recently renovated acquisition of the Stichting Groningen Kerken. This late-Romanesque church from the 13th century includes a combination of modern and medieval architecture. Originally a cruciform church, its shape was lost after the nave was demolished in 1859. The contours of the nave have been made visible again, which shows that this must have been quite a large church, certainly when considering the modest size of this village. Inside the church are tableaux from the life of Christ. They were probably created by Jan van Aken (1380-1454), grandfather of Jeroen Bosch. After your visit, enjoy a drink at the visitors' centre.

2 DONATUSKERK LEERMENS

The Donatuskerk of Leermens has been here since time immemorial, and has also been under construction and renovation since then. The tuff sidewalls delineate the oldest part from 1050. When you enter the transept, you see the tuff is mixed with red Roman bricks. It is evident that in the 13th century these bricks were all the fashion. Inside, the 15th century paintings on the walls and ceilings immediately catch the eye. Look up: can you make out the symbols of the four Evangelists? And how about the Lamb of God in the vault? From the walls, St Donatus, St Sebastian, the Virgin and Child and St Ursula look down benevolently. Look closely to see the virgins hiding under Ursula's cloak. And who could that crowned figure next to Sebastian be? Maybe it's Emperor Diocletian. The 17th-century pulpit is the only remaining old piece of furniture; everything else was lost in a fire in 1957.

- Main route
 - - - Alternative route
 - - - Bicycle path
 - Featured spot
 - Also worth seeing
 - Turn to alternative route
 - S Station
- On-trade underway:
- 1 Huiskamercafé Westerwijdert
 - 2 Hotel Spoorzicht
 - 3 Visrestaurant De School
 - 4 Restaurant De Basiliek
 - 5 De Luingahof, Bierum

3

NICOLAIKERK APPINGEDAM

Many Groningen residents consider it a gaffe, but it is actually a fact that Appingedam is a Frisian city; the medieval centre of the Frisian district of Fivelingo. The Nicolaikerk clearly demonstrates Appingedam's wealth of those days. It originated as a small 13th-century church and in a fairly limited period of time developed into a large hall church. This resulted in its status of largest church of the Groningen Ommelanden and 'the Nicolaï' really deserves its place in the Top 100 of Dutch listed buildings. Inside are murals that resurfaced during a restoration. They show four crowned martyrs and the eponym of the church: St. Nicolaas of Myra. Want to sit down for a break? Appingedam has plenty of cafés and restaurants with a free view of the old city. Restaurant De Basiliek (*restaurantdebasiliek.nl*), which is located in the charming Nicolaas church, is very popular.

4

THE CHURCH OF MARSUM

A church without a village, how can this be? Where did the village go? This is a sad story really, because virtually the entire population of Marsum died during the siege of Delfzijl in 1814. A group of stubborn French soldiers refused to surrender because Colonel Maufroy would not believe that Napoleon had been beaten. Fortunately, the Romanesque church was saved, and stands as an icon on an artificial dwelling hill. Construction is assumed to have been initiated in the second half of the 12th century. Outside, on the apse – the half-round back of the church – you can see old monks and nuns on the roof; this is what the concave and convex tiles are called. Once inside, look up to see a blue-green attic. While it's pretty, it's not original. It is assumed that this church once had vaults. Similar to the simple benches, the attic was created around 1788 by Jan Ates van Holwierde, the carpenter who also built the pulpit a few years later. The tabernacle and piscina are medieval.



UITWIERDE

5

MARIAKERK KREWERD

This charming church is located on the artificial dwelling hill of Krewerd. It is such a beautiful sight that you could almost forget to enter it. And once you do, you will see the second oldest organ in the Netherlands, which is still in operation. Connoisseurs from far and wide come to see it. The church also has medieval paintings on display, such as the brick imitation and the plant motifs on the vaults. Another special item is the coat of arms filled with attributes used by construction workers: a trowel, a carpenter's square, a hammer and axe. No surprises there for a beautifully built church like this. There is a story to this late-Romanesque hall church about a widow Tiadeke, who had a seriously ill son. She lived in a Groningen estate house near Krewerd and promised to have a church built if her son recovered. After his recovery, Tiadeke failed to keep her promise. When her son died later without leaving any children, she still had the church built out of remorse. The Mariakerk is naturally included in Het Grootse Museum van Nederland: a collection of the most beautiful Dutch churches.

6

SEBASTIAANKERK BIERUM

If ever there was a robust church, it's the Sebastiaanskerk, with its huge buttress to support the tower. This is not the church's only special feature, by the way. Have you ever heard of a 'reduced westwork'? It's actually a church tower built into the church. Although it may seem perfectly normal, it really isn't, certainly not in these regions. Its exterior looks Romanesque, while the interior with domed vaults and brick imitation is late-Romanesque; in other words, this is a church in a transitional style. The large buttress was added much later. Subsidence must have been a serious consideration to justify this kind of colossus. Inside, be sure to look up at the image of Christ, St Catherine with the wheel, St Sebastian and the Virgin and Child. For years they were covered and invisible under a thick layer of chalk. Afterwards, take a well-deserved break under the apple trees of the De Luingahof tearoom and fruit and vegetable trade. Be sure to get your Fladderak Kouk cake at the Bakkerij Olinga cake champion (*bakkerij.olinga.nl*).

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Four Groningen churches are included in the Grootse Museum van Nederland: a collection of the most beautiful churches in the Netherlands. The Mariakerk of Krewerd is one, and these others are also certainly worth visiting:

Sint-Hippolytuskerk

Concordiaplein 1,
Middelstum

Adelskerk

Hoofdstraat 134,
Midwolde

Petruskerk

Hoofdstraat 74,
Pieterburen

The Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken website provides plenty of information about the ninety-plus churches the foundation owns. This is the perfect starting point for your continued explorations of the rich religious heritage of Groningen.
– groningerkerken.nl

TIP

Bring your bicycle by train to Stedum, Loppersum, Appingedam or Delfzijl to start your journey. Alternatively, hire an e-scooter such as at eglider.nl in Groningen city to make your very own customised route.



STEDUM



LOPPERSUM



WESTEREMDEN



MARSUM

THE COUNTRY AS A STAGE

Text: Chris Zwart

Besides the city, the province of Groningen is known for its tranquillity, views and contemplation that come with the countryside. But don't be deceived by appearances, because the Ommeland region has its own distinct buzz. Festivals such as Hongerige Wolf, Grasnapolsky and Terug naar het Begin celebrate the special character of the Groningen countryside and heritage.



FESTIVAL HONGERIGE WOLF IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER FESTIVAL. 'DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY AMONG FIELDS OF TOWERING GRAIN'

Every year, the Festival Hongerige Wolf celebrates the beauty of the Oldambt region. Visitors are not just drawn by one particular band or performance, but instead by the total experience. With the countryside as its breathtaking backdrop, immerse yourself in this combined village and festival event.

If you think that the Festival Hongerige Wolf is held on a typical festival site, you're mistaken: it takes over the entire village of Hongerige Wolf in the north-eastern tip of the Netherlands. Hongerige Wolf (Hungry Wolf): it is hard to find a prettier name. Artistic director Anna van Houwelingen attended the very first festival held in 2010 and was instantly and completely smitten. In conjunction with her team, she deals with the artistic approach, the programme and staging.

'It was really special and a bit makeshift, but in a fun way. Visitors would find themselves in people's living room watching a totally out-of-this-world film. Hongerige Wolf was unorthodox and different from the get-go. I had never been to a festival that transforms an entire village into festival grounds and where all of the villagers chip in.'

The Festival Hongerige Wolf would have never seen the light of day without the help and support of the approximately 70 villagers that got involved. Selecting the locations and deciding on the

programme is a shared task for the organisation and village residents. 'It is obvious that they love being involved, which has forged strong relationships and the involvement of locals.'

BIRDS SINGING IN THE AMBONEZENBOSJE

The village and countryside play the leading role in the woodland located festival programme and also function as its backdrop. The Ambonezenbosje – located just outside of the village and behind the polder dyke – is just one of many places to find special and interesting things.

'I think it is the best location and I have had some magical moments there. One of them was when I heard a girl playing her harp there and finding herself drowned out by the whistling of birds. And last year's festival featured a dance performance involving the audience being guided through the wood by a long rope. Everyone was dead silent, eyes wide open. Wonderful events like these, in the middle of the countryside, are typical of Hongerige Wolf.'

The extensive fields of yellow waving grain are an intrinsic element of Hongerige Wolf. They are the very backdrop of the festival, and at times actually become part of it. 'The last two times we set up our 'dance silo' on a concrete slab in the middle of a grain field.' Anna raises her hand above her head. 'People dancing in grain this tall; a wonderful view.'



Another special place is the polder dyke. A few years ago, an art installation was set up there; a sort of wooden half-circle for people to sit in and absorb the environment. 'Entirely sheltered and closed off from everything behind you, it had a beautiful view of the salt marshes. Like watching the end of the world really, just so pretty.'

BE AMAZED

Hongerige Wolf visitors come from the province as well as from the Amsterdam and Utrecht regions. The easily accessible character ensures a fun festival for everyone. 'We do schedule more complicated performances, but these are relatively short. I want people who do not normally go to the theatre to think: wow, what did I just watch?'

Almost every artistic discipline is found at Hongerige Wolf: visual art, rock and classical music, dance, theatre and literature. And then there

are the 'sensations'. 'Grain-grinding demonstrations are held at the mill, and local residents take visitors for a salt marsh walk or harrier excursion.' The festival also features an extensive children's programme. 'Hongerige Wolf really has something for everyone, including for those who simply wish to relax on a straw bale and look around.'

Don't make the mistake of thinking you will see famous artists at the festival. This simply does not suit the character or goal: 'People come to Hongerige Wolf for the complete experience. The power of this festival is in taking in things you have never seen before and that will leave you marvelling.'

A DIFFERENT WORLD

The festival celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2020, and the concept has remained unchanged over the years. Anna thinks that Hongerige Wolf should exceed the definition of

a festival, for visitors from large cities in particular. 'The festival introduces visitors to the area in a really fun way, taking them out of their busy lives and immersing themselves in this idyllic village: our focus exactly.'

And what exactly happens if they do this? 'Everyone who has the opportunity should really come to Hongerige Wolf once during their lifetime. They'll step into an entirely different world. It's just so relaxed and quiet, yet with so much going on, and you feel you're going out of normal time.'

'OUR GOAL IS FOR THE FESTIVAL TO INTRODUCE PEOPLE TO THE AREA'

FESTIVALS

Noorderzon, Eurosonic Noorderslag, Clash, Paradigm, Stadspark live: Groningen is a city of festivals. And plenty more is happening almost all year round, all over the province. Special concerts and festivals, each with a distinctive character and atmosphere, are held against the backdrop of entire villages and even the countryside.

Grasnapolsky

March

Grasnapolsky combines that sense of being barefoot on the grass with the warmth of an open fire. Explore everything and more in the former De Toekomst strawboard factory, from music and art to regional exhibitions. - grasnapolsky.nl

Terug naar het Begin

May

Plenty of good things take place in the relatively unknown churches in north-eastern Groningen. Enjoy enchanting music, endearing stories and interesting art projects. Follow your self-selected route to take in winding roads and old seawalls. Get ready to plug out and tune in. - terugnaarhetbegin.nl

Dag van het Wad

June

The Dag van het Wad always takes place in the last weekend of June. Explore the Wadden Sea: listen to stories by beachcombers, venture out onto the mud flats with a guide or sleep under the starry sky in the lee of the dyke. - dagvanhetwad.nl

Pura Vida

August

Once a year, the Noord Nederlands Orkest (NNO; North Netherlands symphony orchestra) plays the Pura Vida open-air concert, which is free for everyone to enjoy. - blauwestad.nl

Zomerjazzfietstour

August

Jazz in a barn or a church: every year in August, the Reitdiepdal is the backdrop of the Zomerjazzfietstour. No fewer than thirty concerts, divided over five routes, take place throughout the beautiful artificial dwelling hill area. - zjft.nl

Find more concerts and festivals in the city and province of Groningen at visitgroningen.com/whats-on.

A night scene of a canal with a fountain and a crowd of people. The canal is illuminated with warm yellow lights, and a fountain in the distance is lit with blue and white lights. A large crowd of people is gathered on the banks, looking towards the fountain. The scene is framed by trees and buildings in the background.

AN OLD CITY WITH A YOUNG HEART

53° 13' 27" N, 6° 33' 18" E

11 TIMES CITY

You can feel the energy when you look over the city from the Martinitoren, or as you walk through the old city streets. Groningen has so many undiscovered gems, lovely boutiques and small-scale high-quality restaurants. Turn down any street and open the door to an almshouse for some quiet and solitude. Enjoy a cold glass of beer at a local pub and learn more about the culture of Groningen.

Old Grey Martinitoren

Fire, lightning or collapse: the Martinitoren has stood firm, even in times of war. 97 metres high, Old Grey is still the highest building in the city. Climb up, and experience its tangible history and enjoy the wonderful view. Once back on solid ground, don't forget to check out the beautiful Martinikerk. - visitgroningen.com/martinitoren

Entertainment and music Vera

Vera is the ultimate centre and venue for Groningen pop music culture. This is where bands and artists such as U2, Nirvana and Nick Cave received a jump-start to global fame. When you enter, you cannot miss how the walls are completely covered with posters, newspapers and photos from the venue's rich musical history. - vera-groningen.nl

Chill in the greenery Noorderplantsoen

On sunny days, the banks of the ponds in the Noorderplantsoen park are crowded. Would these people be aware of the fact that wars were fought here, on the remnants of an old fortress? Or that, way before then, the hills in the area originated from an ice cap being pushed along? But then again: why think about this when you can spend some time chilling in the park?

Another world Prinsentuin

Close to the Martinitoren is the most tranquil venue of the city centre. Surrounded by the walls of the leafy and flowery Prinsentuin garden, it's easy to imagine yourself in an entirely different world. Wander through the pergolas, enjoy a cup of tea at the tearoom or read a book and forget all about the time.

Lively market Vismarkt

Market workers shout out their wares as cyclists wind around pedestrians. People buy their lunch in the former Korenbeurs corn exchange, or enjoy a snack of fried fish. This is where shops, restaurants and cafés invite you into their historic venues under the watchful eye of the Der Aa-Kerk. The Vismarkt is a hive of city activity, and has been for centuries.

FORUM



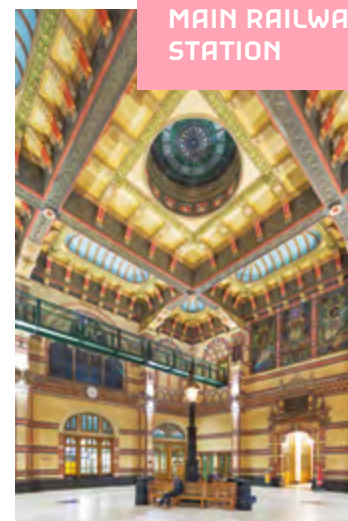
GRONINGER MUSEUM



DE GROENE STOEL



MAIN RAILWAY STATION



Meeting place

Forum Groningen

A meeting place in the heart of the city for those with an interest in our contemporary world and the possibilities of tomorrow, the distinctive Forum is a relatively new addition to Groningen city centre. It features Storyworld, film theatres, the Smartlab, a restaurant and cafés, the Groningen Store (VVV) the city library and the highest roof garden in Groningen. Oh, and a phenomenal view of course. - forum.nl

Breathtaking

Main railway station

The stately Groningen main railway station is the most beautiful one you will see in the Netherlands, so missing your train really isn't much of an issue.

Food and drink

De Groene Stoel

Have a well-deserved break from the hustle and bustle and enjoy dishes from all over the world. Besides using organic and regional ingredients The Groene Stoel also has a good story to go with their food. The Groene Stoel is a place where refugees can regain self-confidence. Integration at its best! - visitgroningen.com/groenestoeel

Grand warehouses

Hoge and Lage der A

Old warehouses by the canal tell the story of the industry of former days, when ships would enter and depart. Stroll along the quays with listed buildings where you can almost hear wheels rattling and horses stamping as they did long ago. It's like you have stepped right into a painting.

Shopping

Laif & Nuver

Check out the beautiful items and gifts in this brand-new shop. It's the perfect place to go for lifestyle items and gifts, home decoration items and unlimited inspiration. - laifenuver.nl

Versatility and guts

Groninger Museum

Established in 1994, the Groninger Museum's striking architecture has been a topic of discussion ever since. And let's be honest: its colourful exterior alone is reason enough to visit. These walls exude creative energy and its highly versatile collection and innovative exhibitions complete your experience. - groningermuseum.nl

MARTINITOREN



VERA



HOGE AND LAGE DER A



DISCOVER THE ENDLESS HORIZON OF THE GRONINGEN WADDEN

You don't have to go to an island to experience the beauty of the Wadden. From the Oldambt to Lauwersmeer National Park: Groningen's 100-kilometre long Wadden coast has a great deal to offer. Let your imagination run free in the vast beauty of the marshlands and polders or

take an invigorating walk on the seabed. Watch seals as they wait patiently on the sandbanks for fresh food to come rolling in with the tides or admire the thousands of migratory birds enjoying the smorgasbord at the edge of the Dollard. Discover the magic of the Wadden in Groningen.

Want to learn more about the Wadden area in Groningen?
Visit www.visitwadden.nl

WADDEN



GRAND CAFÉ

HOTEL

RESTAURANT NASSAU



WWW.PRINSENHOF.NL

+31 (0) 50 3176555 | MARTINIKERHOF 23 | HOTEL@PRINSENHOF.NL

THE OLDGREY MARTINI- TOREN

Fire, lightning or collapse: the Martinitoren has stood firm, even in times of war. 97 metres high, Old Grey is still the highest building in the city. Climb up, and experience its tangible history and enjoy the wonderful view. Once back on solid ground, don't forget to check out the beautiful Martinikerk

ER GAAT NIETS BOVEN



OFF THE
BEATEN
TRACK

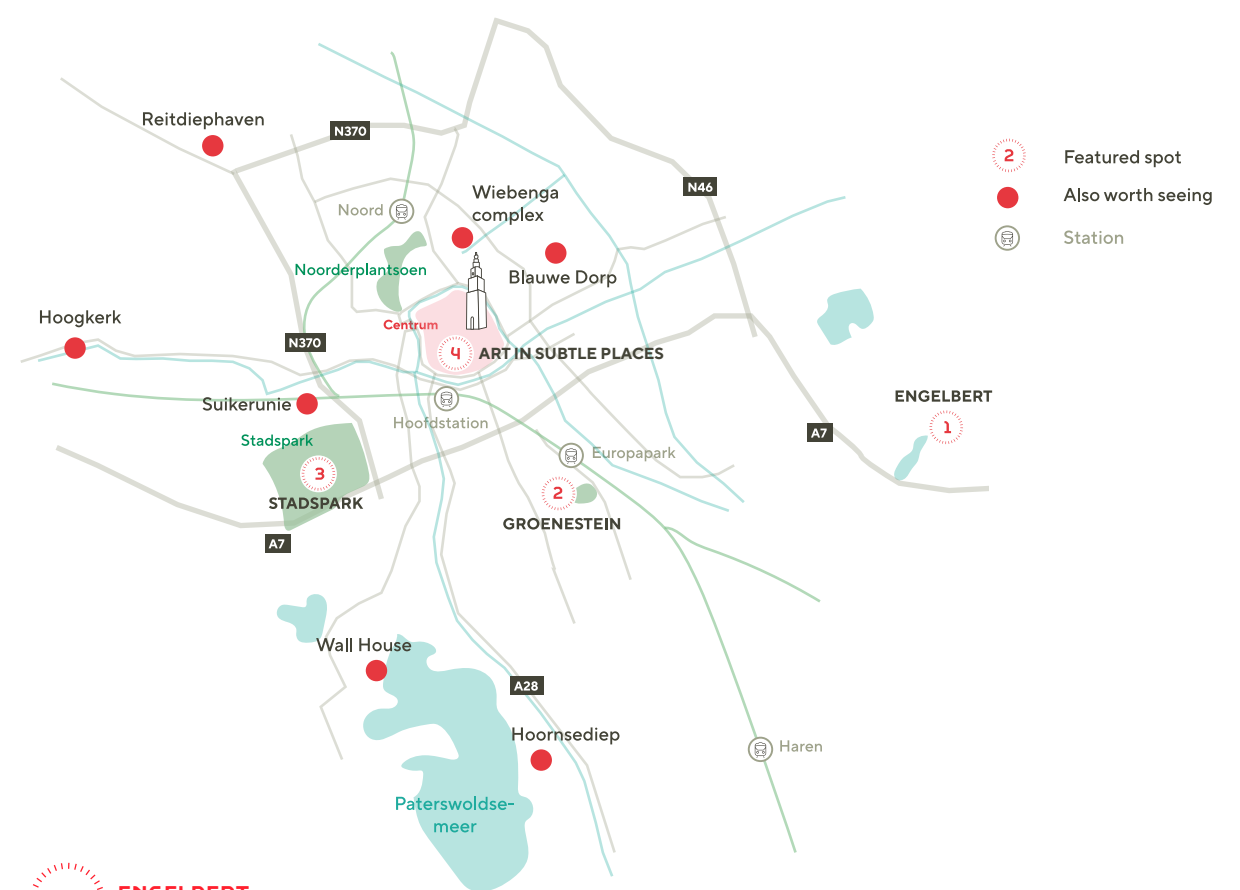
MAP OUT YOUR OWN ROUTE

IN AND AROUND THE CITY

The best way to explore a city is to simply start walking. Turn into that particular small street and look up, or down. And be sure to broaden your exploratory expedition beyond city centre limits to take in all of the surprises and special venues. We will naturally provide you with some tips you can use to create your own route.

Groningen carries one great risk, namely that people stick around the city centre. This is a pity if you consider the great places outside of the centre: a special building, a green oasis, a picturesque neighbourhood or a small-scale and high-quality restaurant. Walk around, or get those legs working on your bike to take in special venues. Enjoy a beer in a local pub and learn more about Groningen culture. And feel free to ask questions, because that friendly local next to you will certainly have some wonderful tips.

DE SUIKER



1 ENGELBERT NATURAL POOL

When the weather is nice, the Stadsstrand city beach is a lovely option for a refreshing dip. However, those with a soft spot for nostalgia had better opt for the Engelbert open-air swimming pool. Experienced swimmers dive from the five-metre high diving tower in a 1950s holiday environment. This is one of the few remaining perfect open-air swimming pools in the Netherlands, with a particular history: it would never have been realised without the Woldjesspoorlijn. This railway line went bankrupt after a very short period of time, but between 1929 and 1942 it connected Groningen and Delfzijl via Slochteren. Sand was required for the construction of the railway embankment, which was obtained from the natural pool. Engelbert still features a beautiful station from that era. This green environment is perfect for lovely bicycle rides, but beware: you might easily end up far, far beyond Slochteren. - natuurbadengelbert.nl

2 HELPMAN

In the Helpman and adjacent districts of Villabuurt and Coendersborg you will see one substantial house next to the other. Originally a village, Helpman was eventually swallowed up by the city. This is the place where, centuries ago, rich Groningen residents had their country houses built on the Hondrug ridge. A green oasis within a green oasis, the Landgoed Groenestein is of particular interest. Cycle or walk through the streets and imagine living here. Enjoy a meal at Bistro Basta (bistrobasta.com), famous Italian Contini (contini.nl) or Uit de Buurt (uitdebuurt.com) that serves dishes made from regional produce. If you think you have seen the leafiest district ever, you really should continue to Haren and Glimmen via Essen, via that lovely bridge across the railway. This is where racing cyclists come to train their calf muscles before heading out into the otherwise fairly flat countryside.





WALL HOUSE



HOORNESEDIJK

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Oosterpark en het Blauwe Dorp

There is absolutely no reason whatsoever for you to leave the city to be able to experience a Groningen village. Just venture out to the Blauwe Dorp in the Oosterparkwijk district, where you see the cutest 'house farms' in green. The Oosterpark district itself is dotted with Amsterdam School architectural jewels. Enjoy a meal at the Bie de Buuf restaurant (biedebuuf.nl) and savour the aroma of fresh coffee at the Microbranderij Koffiestation (koffiestation.nl).

De Suiker

What is to be transformed into a lively new district over the next few years currently functions as a place for experimentation. The former location of the Suikerfabriek sugar factory is brimming with initiatives, such as Podium EM2, the RebelRebel Hostel, De Wolkenfabriek restaurant and Paradigm: the best underground club in the Benelux. – suikerterrein.nl

Wall House

Utrecht has the Rietveldhuis, Fayette County has Fallingwater, and Groningen has the Wall House. It's quite surprising that you don't see crowds of tourists waiting here every day to visit it, because it is a really special house and an icon from the city's international architectural history by John Heijduk. – groningermuseum.nl

Hoogkerk

Even many Groningen residents are completely oblivious to the fact that Hoogkerk is a rough diamond. If you have a soft spot for the rough industrialism, be sure to come check the area out. The Halmbuurt is a charming factory district, the houses of which are part of the Strokartonfabriek De Halm: one large chunk of Groningen bricks. Close by is another comparable district: the Suikerbuurt, which is overlooked by the giant Suiker Unie factory behind it.

Reitdiep Haven

The Reitdiephaven harbour is one of the most frequently photographed places in Groningen. Do you like it? With its Scandinavian touch, it's certainly very colourful.

Hoornsedijk

Cycle through a delightfully green and leafy area along a small strip by the Hoornsemeer, where the Hoornse Diep – this is what Drentse Aa river is called here – meanders cheerfully beside you.

Wiebengacomplex

In 1923, the Wiebengacomplex in the Korrewegwijk was the most modern building in the Netherlands. The architectural style is referred to as the New Objectivity. Alas, it proved to be too modern, even for this city, and a few years following its completion it was hidden behind a row of houses. It is now a listed building and functions as an educational establishment.

3 STADSPARK

In 1907, Groningen received the best gift ever: a complete park! One of the benefactors was industrial magnate Jan Evert Scholten, who had made a fortune from sugar beets, potatoes and straw. Today the Stadspark still is one of Groningen's finest outdoor locations, where rich history meets the beautiful countryside. We'll let you in on a secret here: although the popular Noorderplantsoen near the city centre is lovely, the Stadspark has way more to offer. It's just so much quieter and larger. Sonsbeek in Arnhem; the Vondelpark in Amsterdam; the Hague Zuiderpark: they are all tiny compared to this 140-hectare gift to the city. So if you have children, be sure to take them to the petting zoo. Otherwise, there's room to walk, cycle and spend time at the waterside with lovely views of the English-styled park.

4 ART IN SUBTLE PLACES

Should you prefer to remain in the city, you really should take in some art. In Groningen, you will rarely see art on a pedestal, because it is considered part of the city. If you look around closely, you will see more and more works of art in subtle and not so subtle places. With its bronze door that never opens and a text bricked into a wall, the Folkingestraat is a good example. See six bronze frogs sitting in the street at the Hoge der A. And you will even find art under three bridges, so waiting for a bridge to close doesn't hurt at all. And then there are these beautiful structures that pop up all over the city, from the video bus stop by Rem Koolhaas and the Tschumipaviljoen to this distinctive urinal, also designed by Rem Koolhaas. Erwin Olaf was responsible for the photo on the round public lavatory. – kunstopstraat.nl



53° 14' 12.4" N, 7° 12' 24.6" E

WHERE LAND MEETS THE WADDEN



11 TIMES COUNTRYSIDE

Groningen was shaped by water, clay, sand and peat. This is where you sink knee-deep into the Waddenzee silt and where you can sail past sandbars covered with seals. Millions of migratory birds fill the air and Konik horses grace the pastures around the Lauwersmeer lake. And then there are the wooded areas and charming valleys of brooks and rivers such as the Ruiten Aa and the Drentse Aa. People, you say? Oh, you'll hardly see a soul here, so there is no need to worry about leaving the odd temporary footprint in a virgin piece of land.

A dream palace made of straw Hayema Heerd

Go natural and spend the night in a straw castle, in a canopy made of straw, in a covered wagon, or a straw igloo. Naturally, you can also choose to take your own tent or caravan. Enjoy breakfast at a picnic table with a view of the magnificent Groningen countryside. - hayemaheerd.nl

Fun with the children DoeZoo

If you think nature is boring, you've never been to DoeZoo. This is where a snake can curl up around your neck and you can pet a skunk! Hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste; all of your senses are awakened. - doezoo.nl

Rugged countryside Nationaal Park Lauwersmeer

The landscape of the Lauwersmeer can be summarised in one single word: exceptional – exceptional enough to have been proclaimed a National Park. The space and tranquillity provide plenty to take in, from special flowers and giant numbers of birds to fabulous panoramic views. - np-lauwersmeer.nl

Birdwatching De Onlanden

Near the city of Groningen is an unbroken scenic area about the size of 3,500 football pitches. With a little luck, this is where you can spot the most beautiful and special birds from the 26-metre high watchtower. Who knows, maybe you'll also see a roe deer, fox or otter! - natuurmonumenten.nl

Outside the dyke Kiekkaaste

The water breaks over the mud flats while birds pick for food near the Kiekkaaste at Nieuwe Statenzijl. This birdwatcher's hut – the only one in the Netherlands outside the dykes – has a beautiful view of the ever-changing seascape. - groningenlandschap.nl

Fun with the children Blotevoetenpad Opende

Is it an obstacle course, a footpath or both? Two things we know for sure: you must take your shoes and socks off and you won't stay clean. - staatsbosbeheer.nl

LAUWERSMEER



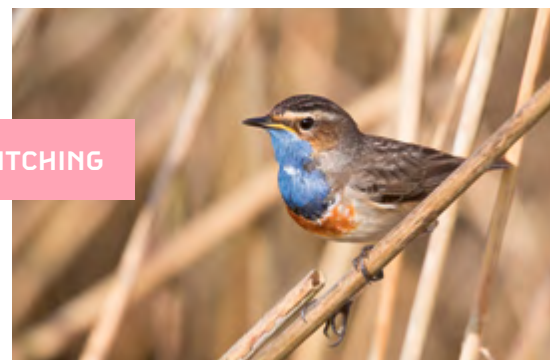
OLDAMBTMEER



CANOE RUITEN AA



BIRDWATCHING



BLOTEVOETENPAD OPENDE



MUDFLATS



BIRDWATCHING DE ONLANDEN



Plants & Flowers

Domies Toen

How many plant varieties do you think an area of just under one hectare can hold? In Domies Toen in Pieterburen, the count is at 950. A colourful and flowery example of a museum garden with winding paths, it constitutes the Groningen variant of an English landscape-style garden. The gentle humming of insects is the only sound you hear. - domiestoen.nl

Water

Oldambtmeer

Today, the wind creates blue waves where yellow grain once swayed, in an area perfect for walking, cycling and boat excursions. Hire a sloop, motorboat, sailing boat or canoe at the marina. - oldambtmeer.nl

Knee-deep in silt

Crossing the mudflats

Take a step forward with your right foot to find out your left foot is stuck in the mud. Your legs are black to the knees. Crossing the mudflats is a magnificent and unforgettable experience. - visitgroningen.com/mudflats

DOEZOO



WESTERWOLDE REGION DRENTH COUNTRYSIDE THAT ENDED UP IN GRONINGEN

Text: Wim Boetze & Peter de Kan

Westerwolde? Few widely-travelled people in the Netherlands would know where to find this Groningen region, let alone foreign tourists. All the more reason for scenery expert Wim Boetze and biologist and explorer Peter de Kan to join forces and plan an entire weekend to explore this area together.

It can get extremely quiet in Westerwolde, especially in winter. This was also the case when we set out in the last week of February. Those who travel around Drenthe, looking over the extensive Veenkoloniën peat district from the Hondsrug ridge, tend to turn around instantly and return home. That is a pity, because they will never know that there is even more romantic scenery right there waiting for them, if they stay the course for just another 30 kilometres by bike. Westerwolde, located in a leafy area that fringes the eastern border between Groningen and Germany, is definitely worth exploring.

If you're travelling from the north, the village of Blijham, located on the Westerwoldse Aa river, is your gate to Westerwolde. Opt for the quick route via the secondary road, or the scenic one – the former main road – which is longer and takes in villages and grand avenues of trees. We naturally take the old road which runs by the Aa, all the

way up to the village of Ter Apel. We enjoy looking at how the lines of the road and river constantly intertwine and affect one another. They thrust out, find each other and interweave. Meanwhile a film plays out before our eyes: avenues, boulevards, yards, farms and villages. We see beautiful old hamlets, such as Wessinghuizen, Ter Wupping, Smeerling, Ellingsinghuizen and Ter Borg. And then there are the old farms with an austere and historic architecture, framed by fairy-like heavy oaks and linden trees. Time seems to have stopped here.

Okay, so if you send a biologist and scenery expert out to explore, this undoubtedly involves a thorough study of the maps and a visit to the area. This will teach us how narrow the stream valley landscape is at some places, although much has improved in two decades. We examine large pieces of reclaimed land that border the river valley and which have transformed into new scenery. Great lengths of the canalised Ruiten Aa have been restored to their former original meandering course. The brook is fast-flowing again and the old farmlands are mainly owned by Staatsbosbeheer (Forestry Commission) and Natuurmonumenten (Society for the Preservation of Nature). To all of you hiking fans: you have come to the right place.

**'OLD FARMS WITH AN
AUSTERE AND HISTORIC
ARCHITECTURE, FRAMED BY
FAIRY-LIKE HEAVY OAKS AND
LINDEN TREES'**



A hill by the Aa near Sellingen features a support stand with a revolving stage frame. This work of art by Adriaan Nette was inspired by the interventions in the brook. On the edge of the framework is a text by Benedictine monk and architect Dom Hans van der Laan: 'Alsof de natuur wacht op het werk van onze handen om geheel compleet te zijn.' (As if nature is waiting for the work of our hands to complete it.) Over a period of fifteen years, the hill was provided with fifteen treads, each with a stanza of a well-known poet, together composing a flight of steps. The hill is popularly called the poets' hill. Artist Adriaan Nette refers to it as the 'Theater van de Natuur'.

While Drenthe countryside has received a more thorough polishing up because of the tourist industry, Westerwolde has retained a certain level of roughness. Many farms are inhabited by generations of old farming families, their yards adorned by a few large trees and the occasional rhododendron. Roads mainly come in the shape of sandy tracks with a bicycle path beside them, just like you would see in the Netherlands of the 1950s.

Hotels, cafés and restaurants in the larger villages serve meatball rolls and other meals. In winter, get your salad roll at the bakery in Sellingen. Some



venues celebrate the region with great exuberance, such as at the Gasterij Natuurlijk Smeerling (gasterij-natuurlijk-smeerling.nl). During our two-day winter stay, we went the Boschhuis in Ter Apel for a good menu and a delicious draught beer (hotelboschhuis.nl).

This region provides plenty of overnight accommodation, also in winter. Mainly small-scale and friendly, you will find a larger tourist accommodation venue at the Villapark Weddermeer. As soon as the tourist season ceases, this location permeates peace and

quiet, and the well-equipped villas are perfect for slowing down, or to finally make a start with the book you have wanted to read or write for ages. At night, enjoy the starry sky and milky way like you've never seen it before.

We decide instead to venture out off-site and book a room in the Bourtange fortress. This proves to be a splendid idea, if only for the sensation of walking through a well-maintained historic monument in the early evening, or to end the day with a gin in the friendly fortress café. Just

to say that Westerwolde is more than just meandering brooks with wadeable places and plenty of green banks.

We had planned to mention the fairy-like location in the Borg Wedde countryside, the beautiful Ruiten Aa Kanaal with eight sluices, and the monastery in the ancient wooded areas of Ter Apel. But then again, the Westerwolde countryside is about quiet and – how typical of Groningen – few words. It is simply best to explore these and other wonderful places all by yourself.

'ENJOY THE STARRY SKY AND MILKY WAY LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE.'

UNSPOILT WILDERNESS ON THE OLD SEABED

National Park Lauwersmeer is a special scenic area. This is where salt water turned to fresh. Featuring extraordinary flora and fauna, this is where wild Konik horses, birds – including predators – and a colourful plant growth all flourish. Take time to walk, cycle, sail or go out on a safari in a tuk-tuk. In a busy modern country, here is quiet, space and unspoilt wilderness.

ER GAAT NIETS BOVEN



UP TO THE DYKE

Text: Bram Esser • **Photography:** Peter de Kan

Fancy a breath of fresh air at the dyke? The down-to-earth village of Noordpolderzijl, with its charming old-fashioned pub, comes highly recommended. But naturally there are many lovely places to choose from. Bram Esser, author of the book *Kustverhalen*, and photographer Peter de Kan have explored the region. Instead of Noordpolderzijl, they opted for some less well-known places. Up to the dyke and into the Wadden Sea area!

PART 1: NIEUWE STATENZIJL **LAUNCH INTO SPACE HERE**

Picturesque is not a word to describe the bicycle ride from Winschoten to Nieuwe Statenzijl; at least, not in the traditional sense of the word. But it certainly has other perks. Cycling through this area on your own is a near spiritual experience. After all, whether you're cycling solo or in pairs; cycling is something you do for yourself. The journey through this vast space is sure to absorb you, leaving you feel small and insignificant.

The feeling is not constant. Instead, you are overcome by it every time you stop and pause. We set out on our bikes to the Dollard on a wintry day with hardly any wind. After dismounting our bicycles, the silence comes over us as we stand in the field. Powerful and overwhelming, the silence is all-embracing, not in the least because of the infinite views where nothing seems to move. A giant space covered in silence, resulting in an out-of-the-world sensation.

So this is what astronauts must feel when they float in space, looking down to earth, feeling the weight of silence. Tourist journeys into space are actually a reality: all you have to do is venture out to the north-eastern part of Groningen towards the dyke by bike or on foot.

The sounds of the land just may catch up with you: it rustles and whispers in your ears. As we are standing in the field near Drieborg, we hear a distinctive snapping sound, as if from bubbles. 'It's the water drawing off into the clay,' a passer-by with grey sideboards and a cap explains. He is walking his Pekinese and says he is highly interested in the history of the Oldambt region. For a minute there we are convinced he must be an Englishman, but he is from the city of Groningen and moved to Driebond after his retirement.

'We hardly ever receive visitors because relatives say we live in the back of beyond. It depends on your point of view of course; this is where the world is right at your feet.' We nod. Being star travellers, we hear him.

A bit further on, near the opening of the inner dyke, a knot is tied in eternity and time resumes its natural rhythm. This opening – referred to as cut-offs by engineers and as holes by laymen – functions as an assembly point where two polders meet. A building typical of the region is located on the dyke, and houses logs. These logs are used to slide into the slots of a dyke wall in the event of a breach.

We stop to inspect the lichen on the brick dyke wall: its presence indicates that the air is pure. On the other side is a bench to rest your feet, facing a scarecrow. Don't look at it for too long, or your eyes will trick you that it is actually moving.

While approaching the Dollard, farms become increasingly scarce and ever bigger. The barns of these giant former or current granaries are particularly large, making it look as if the farmhouse is somehow bulging out. This is actually true: farmers often lived in their barns and added a house to it once they had sufficient means.

After arriving at Nieuwe Statenzijl, we take the opportunity to follow the wooden deck path outside the dyke. The narrow path meanders through reedlands to the Kiekkaaste: a birdwatcher's hut in the middle of the salt marsh surrounded by a sea of reeds that seem to float above the grey waters of the Dollard. The yellow stems are reminiscent of the grain that will soon cover the fields on the other side of the dyke.

Don't forget to bring:
your swimwear for a refreshing dive on the go.

PART 2: BOKUM
**THE SALT
MARSHES BECKON**

On a rather windy day, we take a run-up to cross the sea dyke, where bare treetops outline the horizon. We start our excursion in Kloosterburen, a beautiful village which was once located near the coastline, with lovely red brick houses. Being a Catholic village, the locals celebrate Mardi Gras, and a woman tells us that, roughly forty years ago, their floats were not permitted in the Protestantse Kruisweg.

A substantial area of land has been added since the 19th century. As we pass the new and old Bokum farms owned by the Meijer family, we see that their yards feature a varied collection of piles of stones. You might say that farmers are known for making piles, and we observe such piles both in the farmyards themselves and on concrete slabs by the fields. We also notice earth and a mound of small new potatoes around a transformer kiosk and decide to consider them as mental preparation for conquering the pile of all piles: the dyke.

After crossing the inner dyke at Bokum, we take in the charming countryside behind it. It features a hint of light green on sea clay. Did you know that as much as sixty percent of the world's seed-potatoes is grown near the Groningen and Friesland coast? At the seawall is a small scenic area to the left, and we see a van approaching. Two men step out and start unloading fence parts. We are intrigued and ask them why they are here.

'We've come to collect some sheep that graze in this farmer's field.'
'How can you tell which sheep to collect?'
'Well, they are my sheep, so I should know.'
'Do you know the name of that little lake?'
'That's Feddema's pool, owned by the Forestry Commission.'
'Do you know anything about how a scenic area came about in this rather rational countryside? Is it a decoy?'
'I really wouldn't know, I'm not into these things.'

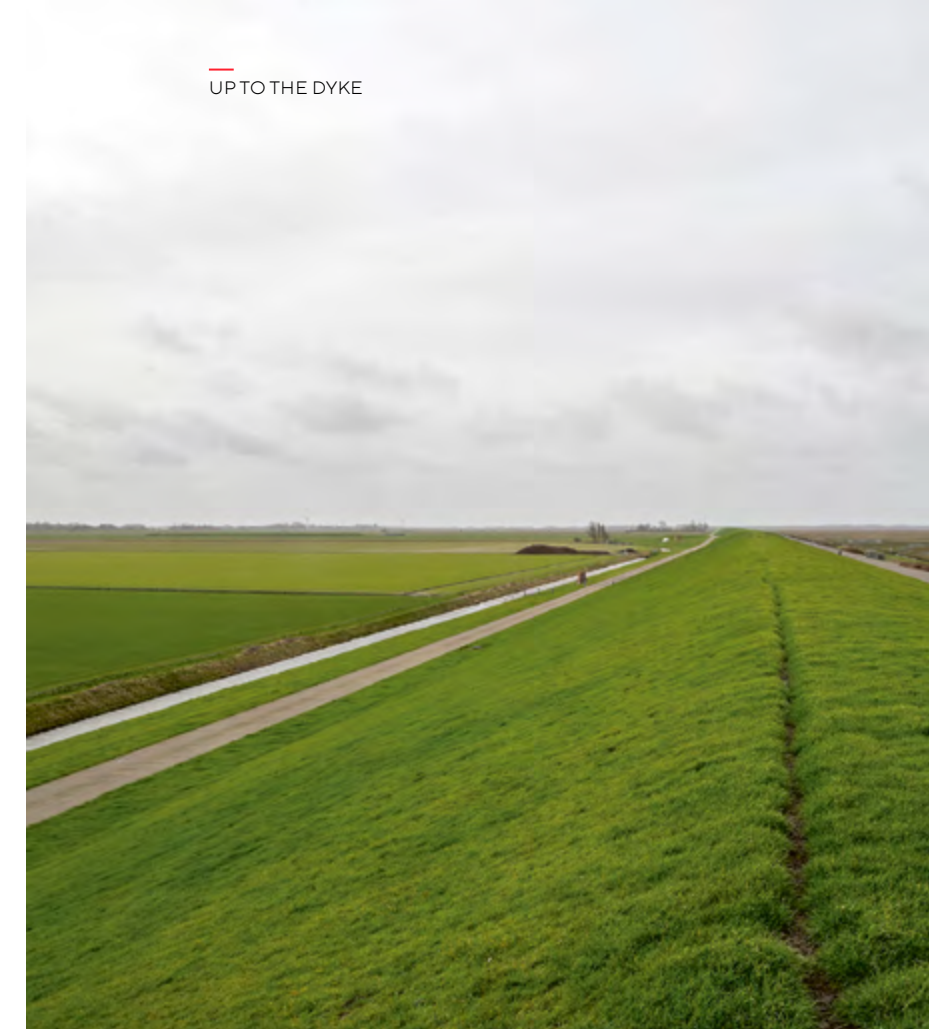


The man tells us that he does have sheep, but no land. Feddema's pool was dug in 1924 when, during the construction of the Julianapolder, the dyke proved to be insufficiently high. It had to be raised at the last moment using – you might have guessed – soil from the pool.

We take in the pool and the small swamp forest around it. And although the dyke may try to trick you into believing it has always been here, this is not the case, as Feddema's pool proves. The dyke is a hillock, and holes were dug elsewhere. As we climb the grass covered slope, we wonder about the giant clay pit this dyke originated from. The grass seamlessly changes into asphalt: engineer art pur sang. The wind is gaining in force and we eagerly look at the salt marsh.

After defying a cattle fence, we enter the area outside the dykes. Porous and unsteady, the salt marsh is the opposite of the dyke; these are places that require consideration. Can I cross here, or should I go that way? No worries: the countryside will let you know, or rather make you feel

GRONINGEN



UP TO THE DYKE

where to go! It has, however, thrown us off balance as we slither along to find solid ground below our feet.

Miniature tableaux appear as we focus on the ground. Straight crops – spartina grass and sea spurrey – and silt are all around, displaying a green icing of algae slime. Osier is piled up between a row of parallel posts, fenced off with coated iron wire. This is where silt and mud come together. Between 1930-1950, hundreds of unemployed people were put to work here for land reclamation. No matter what their working career had been, everyone was expected to put their shoulder to the wheel. Since then, our attitude towards the unemployed has become more humane, and the same goes for our attitude towards the environment. Its presence is both welcome and required; for humans also.

Small reed-covered islands seem to float on the water, enticing us to linger. But this area is tricky and merciless and literally grabs your feet to pull you in and make you one with nature. And while the Netherlands does not feature any hills, the Waddenzee can be a dangerous place.

Salt marshes involve considerable exercise and put our muscles to work. The absorbent silt of the salt marshes throws us off-balance and has certainly taught us a lesson in humility. Unsteady and insecure, this area is incomparable and everyone should see it to experience what it is like to live between land and water.

We return via the dyke and admire the beautiful yellow church tower of Hornhuizen. After enjoying a delicious cup of coffee, we take the bus to Winsum and from there, the train back to Groningen.

Don't forget to bring:
your sun hat, so your partner has something to run after.

OTHER PLACES TO GO UP TO THE DYKE

Groningen features various places that open up to the dyke. While some are known to people in the Netherlands, finding others may require more effort. They are worth it: you will find beautiful views of the salt marshes and some of the oldest natural landscapes of the Netherlands: the Wadden Sea.

PIETERBUREN



The village of Pieterburen – starting point of many mud flat hikes and famous for its seal sanctuary – is an easy gateway to the Wadden Sea area. There's also a lovely bicycle path between Pieterburen and the dyke. Although it is also accessible by car, the very best way to experience the area is by bike or on foot. From Pieterburen, head north and return via Westernieland.

PUNT VAN REIDE



This narrow finger of land is what remains of the once very wealthy Reiderland, where nature has now taken over. The journey there takes in the Fiemel Batterie: a remnant of the German Atlantikwall from World War II. The Punt van Reide is located east of Termunten and the tip is accessible only on foot or by bike.

LAUWERSOOG



The village of Lauwersoog is not just the ferry port for the island of Schiermonnikoog, it has much more to offer. Artworks are displayed on and around the dyke, and include a giant fishing net and an observation post, to a staircase in the dyke. Sample fresh fish and enjoy stunning views over the mud flats. Lauwersoog is also a great location for walking, hiking and cycling. Of all destinations by the dyke, this just might be the easiest to get to.

NIEUWSTAD



Although the Dutch word stad means town or city, there's no town or city in sight here, in any direction. But you will come across a double dyke: a high one beside the sea, and a lower one inland. This is where safety, countryside, agriculture and recreation all come together. The dyke overlooks the Stern bird breeding island. Nieuwstad is located north of Bierum and is accessible by bicycle, car or on foot.

NOORDKAAP



'De Hemelpoort' work of art marks Noordkaap – the northernmost tip of the Dutch mainland. This place has an unobstructed view of the water and the infinite skies above the Wadden Sea area. Noordkaap is located approximately 10 kilometres north of Uithuizermeeden, and it's easy enough to find from there as the routes by car, bicycle or on foot are clearly signposted.

TERMUNTERZIJL



Termunterzijl is the best place to enjoy fish, or at least many locals think so. Popular places include fish restaurants Landman and Vispaleis Westerhuis. Here, the dyke overlooks the river Eems. And don't miss out on the beautiful Boog van Ziel lock, with its wonderful options for cycling. Park your car near the dyke.

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GRONINGEN AROUND TRIP THROUGH

60KM



ALONG THE REITDIEP

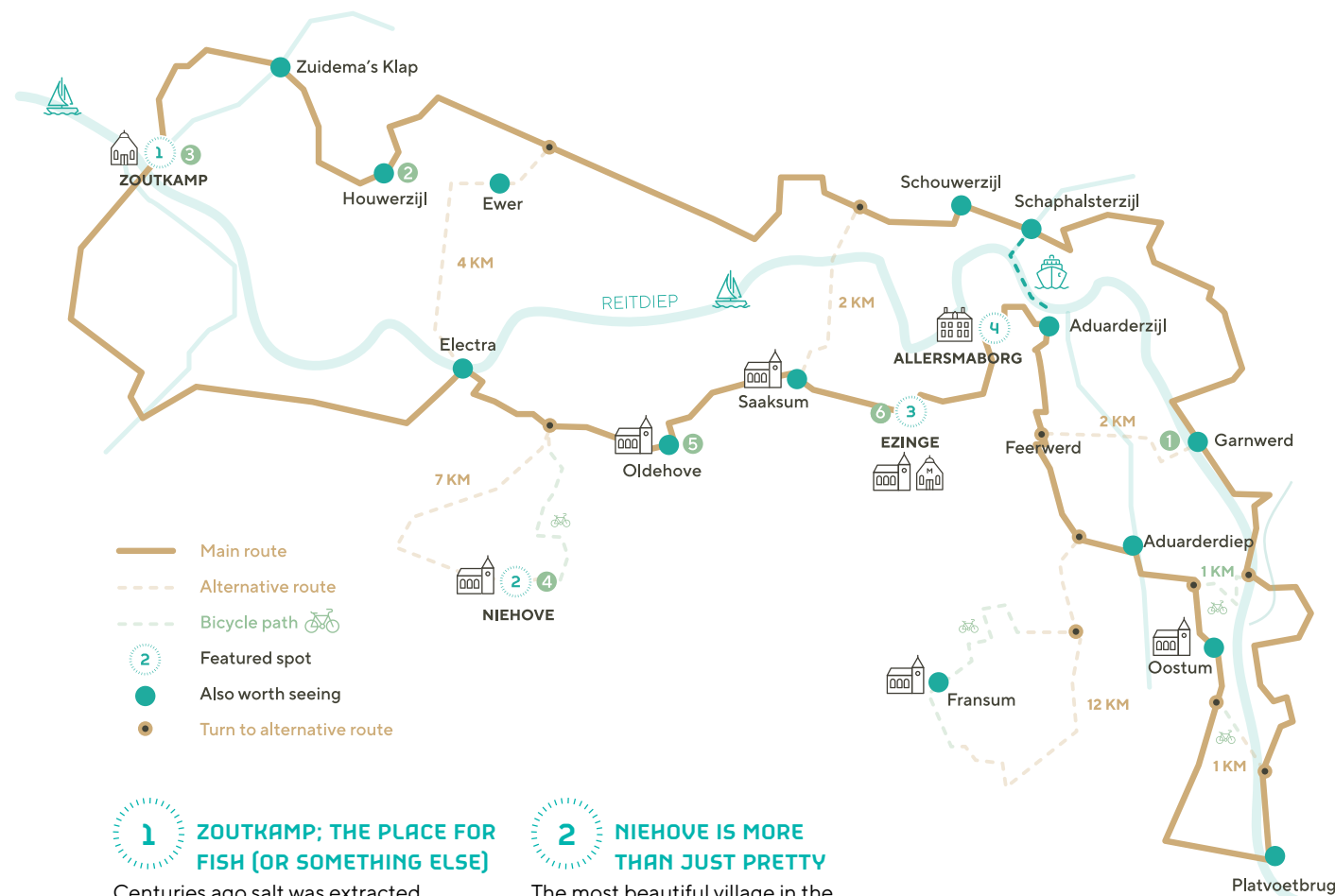


If you want to make sure you don't lose your way, download the route on visitgroningen.com/tour-reitdiep.

This 60-kilometre tour takes in the beautiful Reitdiep or Hunzedal valley. Enjoy charming villages, churches and views of the ancient artificial dwelling hill village. Some destinations on the route are really worth the detour. Feel free to shorten or extend your journey.

Would you call this a river, or a canal? Well, the Reitdiep is really a bit of both. To complicate matters even more, it actually constitutes the old Hunze, which in turn is the upper course of the Drentse Aa river. The first inhabitants settled in the Hunze valley a long time before the Common Era. The waterway later functioned as a main lifeline for the city for many years. Boats sailed out to sea from here and the Hunze was straightened to keep the lifeline navigable. The river was transformed into a canal, which is particularly prominent between the city and Garnwerd. Further to the north, you will find the Reitdiep meandering through the Groningen countryside as it used to.

REITDIEP



1 ZOUTKAMP; THE PLACE FOR FISH (OR SOMETHING ELSE)

Centuries ago salt was extracted near Zoutkamp – not from the sea, but instead from the salty peat outside the dyke. ‘Soltcampum’ (Salt camp) was first mentioned in 1418. For an extended period of time, this was a lively fishing village featuring a bulwark strategically located by the Lauwerszee. Whoever controlled Zoutkamp controlled the city of Groningen. It was a place of considerable importance during the Eighty Years’ War when the city was pro-Spanish for a while. Zoutkamp had a fishing port until 1960, when it was closed off from the Lauwerszee. It still exudes the atmosphere of an old-fashioned fishing village though, and it is a perfect place to enjoy some delicious fresh fish. You can also visit the Rijksbetonningsloods by the old inland harbour to learn more about Zoutkamp in the Visserijmuseum fishing museum (visserijmuseum.com).

2 NIEHOVE IS MORE THAN JUST PRETTY

The most beautiful village in the Netherlands – Niehove – is located in Groningen. Well, according to the Elsevier weekly, that is. And yes, Niehove is charming. From the church, the streets fan out in all directions like the spokes of a wheel. Around 800, the village was confined to an island as a result of repeated floods: Humsterland. It would take over six centuries and human intervention to reconnect Humsterland with the mainland. The monks of the Klooster van Aduard monastery cultivated the area. Until 1830, the 13th-century Niehove church was surrounded by a circular moat to ensure ghosts would remain at the churchyard. The villagers took water from the moat to use as drinking and fire extinguishing water. Have a look in the church and learn more about the village’s history. Conclude your visit with a cup of coffee at the Eisseshof (eisseshof.nl) pub, which also serves delicious organic Indonesian food.

On-trade underway:

- 1 Bij Hammingh Garnwerd
- 2 De Theefabriek Houwerzijk
- 3 De Oude Sluis Zoutkamp
- 4 De Eisseshof Niehove
- 5 't Kleine Oestertje Oldehove
- 6 Café de Brug Ezinge

ZOUTKAMP





EZINGE

ALSO WORTH SEEING

Garnwerd

Garnwerd is often referred to as Groningen's most beautiful village. As you walk down the Burgemeester Brouwerstraat, it's immediately evident that Niehove has a serious competitor. A drink or meal at the Café Hammingh is quite the experience (bijhammingh.nl), you feel like you've gone back in time to the year 1876.

The church of Fransum

Tourists gladly make a detour to take in Fransum, where they are likely to spend more time than intended. This artificial dwelling hill features a beautiful church with the oldest brick pulpit in the Netherlands. Be sure to follow the bicycle route through the pastures (kerkfransum.nl).

Feerwerd

Feerwerd is just another in this long list of beauties. This village features a 13th-century church in a 19th-century design. Just outside the village is the Korenmolen Joeswert (joeswert.nl) corn mill, which sells Groningen spelt flour.

De Waterwolf

The Waterwolf pumping station was large and modern at its time of completion in 1920. It is still one of the largest pumping stations in the Netherlands. Standing proudly, this wolf keeps watch over the water.

The Ewer labourer's cottages

Ewer does not comprise much more than four farms and five typical labourer's cottages. But then, it's all it needs, because we are sure you'll stop here.

Oostum

The Oostum artificial dwelling hill was a favourite subject of the artists of the De Ploeg collective, and we are quite sure you will love it as well.

Zuidema's Klap

Few bridges measure up to Zuidema's Klap. Its age is no mystery: the year 1879 is clearly visible on the cast iron ornament. The bridge is called Zuidema because of the obvious reason that the Zuidema family lived nearby. 'Klap' refers to 'lift bridge'.

Aduarderzijl

The Aduarderdiep was dug by the monks of Aduard. At Aduarderzijl it joins the Reitdiep. For years the lock has been important to control the water and this picturesque spot is still well worth a stop.



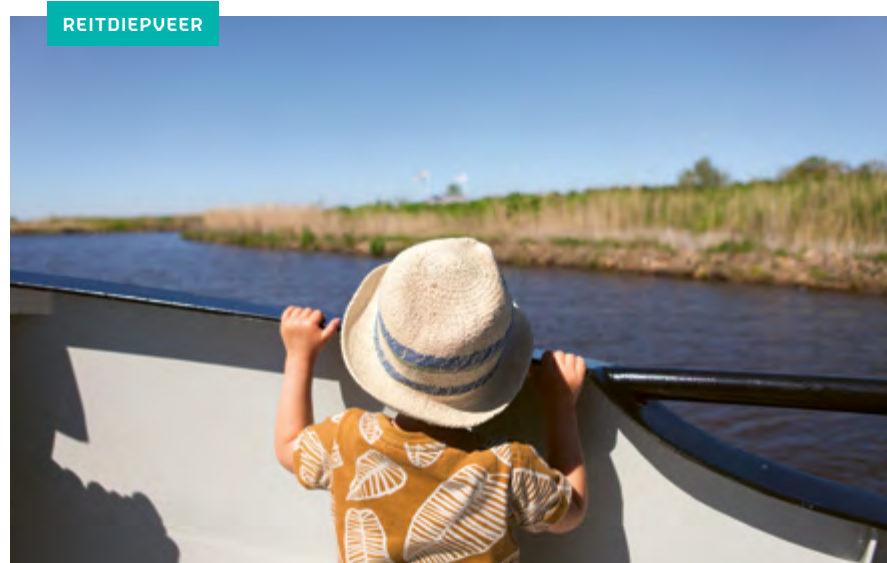
From 1 April until the final day of the autumn half-term holiday, the Reitdiepveer ferry takes hikers and cyclists from Schaphalsterzijl to Aduarderzijl and vice versa. Refer to reitdiepveer.nl for the timetable.

3 THE ICONIC EZINGE ARTIFICIAL DWELLING HILL

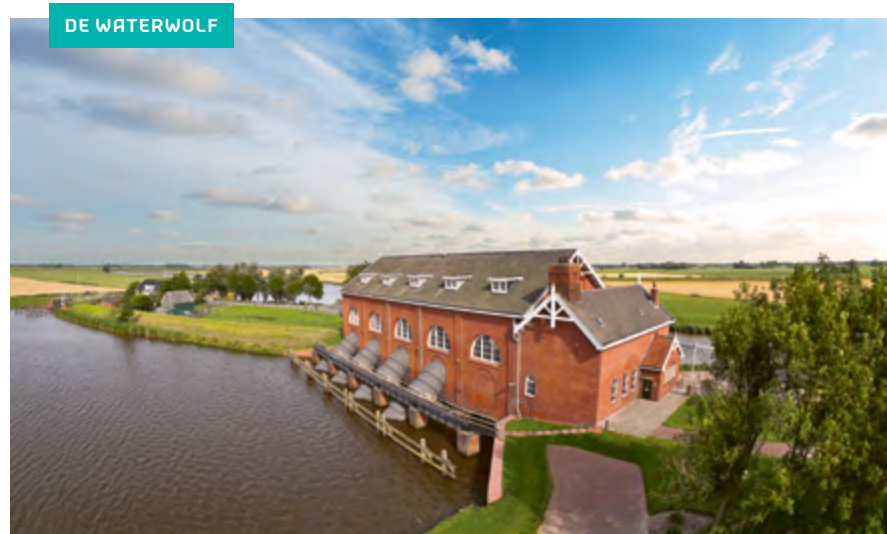
The word 'wierde' (artificial dwelling hill) evokes the name of the village of Ezinge for many. This may come as no surprise, because it actually is an icon. Archaeologist A.E. van Giffen found evidence that this area has been inhabited for centuries. If you take a closer look at this wierde; it looks as if someone took a bite from it. This is because before the war, many artificial dwelling hills were levelled to sell the fertile land. We now consider it to be a shame, but in those days people thought in terms of money. On the outskirts of the dwelling hill is a Romanesque hall church and a free-standing tower. It was not uncommon in Groningen to build free-standing towers. They had a strategic function in times of need, when the master would be at the estate house and the tower kept the villagers safe. The Museum Wierdenland in Ezinge is the proper place to learn more about artificial dwelling hills. If you would like a drink or something to eat, there is the nostalgic café-restaurant De Brug, a low-key venue. - wierdenland.nl

4 ALLERSMA: THE GRONINGEN ESTATE HOUSE OF DUURT

When entering from the village of Ezinge or Aduarderzijl, it's easy to miss the Allersmaborg. In 1489, one Duurt Allersma lived in this charming location with sheltering tree belts, an orchard and a moat with drawbridge. His assumed function was to guard the sluice at the Reitdiep. The back of the house is the oldest part. When visiting the estate house, there is no way you can miss the huge dovecote. Doves that land here must feel like royalty. This actually is a copy of the dovecote Duurt Elama - a descendant of the Duurt above - had built around 1650. Annie Vriezen, the last estate house resident, was the key figure of an artist colony that lived, worked and exhibited here. Famous artists loved to visit, which becomes perfectly clear when you stroll around the grounds, which cannot fail to inspire. If you decide to visit, take a walk around the moat or pick an apple from the orchard in autumn. - beijk.com/allersmaborg/



REITDIEPVEER



DE WATERWOLF



NIEHOVE

SPECIAL AND ANCIENT

53° 18' 33" N, 6° 26' 35" E

11 TIMES HERITAGE

Determined and wilful, Groningen residents have built dwelling hills on fertile salt marshes and even established an impregnable fortress in a marsh. This attitude is also recognised in robust churches, Groningen estate houses and creative architecture. This is how they controlled the land. Scoop by scoop, brick by brick.

Hanging Kitchens Appingedam

Just two places in the province of Groningen had real medieval city rights: Groningen city and Appingedam. The medieval wealth of Appingedam is still visible everywhere. Just look at the ornate Nicolaïkerk church, or the hanging kitchens suspended above the Damsterdiep, similar to bay windows. – visitgroningen.com/appingedam

Swimming 1950s style De Papiermolen

In the 1950s, Groningen presented a brand-new open-air swimming pool: De Papiermolen. One of the finest samples of open-air pools in the Netherlands, its beautiful original mural has recently been restored to its full splendour. Immerse yourself in days long gone – without those woolly swimming trunks people wore back then. – sport050.nl

Bread and beer De Graanrepubliek

So where to go and enjoy the flavours of that rich Groningen grain history? Put your taste buds to work in the former Stoomlocomotiefloods in Bad Nieuweschans, a listed building where you can now enjoy fresh and delicious Groningen bread, beer and much more. – graanrepubliek.nl

Ancient artificial Dwelling hill villages

Only those who have never visited Groningen might think it's as flat as a pancake, but once you venture out into the countryside, you see villages built on hillocks, referred to as artificial dwelling hills. The centres of these villages often feature a robust medieval church, and together they just might be the most typical feature of the province of Groningen. – visitgroningen.com/mound-villages

A view of the mudflats Hornhuizen church

The Hornhuizen church is open to everyone, and if you enter, be sure to climb the tower. It has a beautiful view of the Groningen countryside, the mudflats and the island of Schiermonnikoog in the distance. Take a really close look on the way up to see the 'graffiti' by French soldiers who were billeted in Hornhuizen in 1810. – kerkhornhuizen.nl

E-bike bicycle route In the tracks of De Ploeg

Replicas of well-known De Ploeg paintings have been set up in the countryside at twenty-five locations. Each one was placed at a certain location for a particular reason: because it was created there, or because the location inspired the artist. Take in these replicas during an e-bike or bicycle ride through the province. – groningermuseum.nl

BOURTANGE



Architecture

Amsterdam School

Elegant, and featuring beautiful brick details made from Groningen clay, Groningen has so many Amsterdam School houses and buildings that it could be referred to as the Groningen School instead. Entire districts in the city of Groningen were built in this style, such as the Korrewegbuurt, the Oosterpark and the Oranjebuurt. Oud-West Delfzijl is just another wonderful example of an Amsterdam School district. – staatingroningen.nl

Back in time

Iwema Steenhuis

Once a general picture in the province, today the Iwema Steenhuis is the last remaining of 200 estate houses. The 't Steenhuis Molen- en Bakkerij-museum is established in the barn behind it, and the garden proudly presents a royal red beech – the thickest tree in the province. In the orchard you'll find old apple and pear varieties. A very idyllic countryside scene indeed. – groningerlandschap.nl

Impregnable fortress

Bourtange

The banks, canals and red drawbridges of the Bourtagne fortress are open to welcome visitors to the thrilling year of 1742. William of Orange ordered the fortress to be constructed on a strategic location: a high sand ridge in the middle of the Boertangermoeras swamp. During the Eighty Years' War, this is what kept pro-Spanish troops at bay. In 1672, Bourtagne also proved too strong for the bishop of Münster to conquer. Today you can just walk into the impregnable Groningen fortress that has been restored to its former glory. – bourtange.nl

Sailing through history

Noordelijk Scheepvaartmuseum

If you are into nautical history, you really should visit the two historic buildings at the Brugstraat – the 14th century Gothic house and the 15th century Canterhuis – that form the lovely backdrop of the Noordelijk Scheepvaartmuseum collection. Take in the history of the shipbuilding industry and shipping of the north of the Netherlands from the Middle Ages until today. – noordelijkscheepvaartmuseum.nl

Farmhouses

Oldambt region

Would you call this a farm or a palace? Well, maybe both suit the description. One of the best examples being the Hermans farm in Midwolde, the Oldambt region is dotted with these gentleman farmers' houses. Other fine examples are found on the Hogeland. The yellow grain brought enormous wealth, especially in the 19th century. – visitgroningen.com/farmhouses

OLDAMBT



APPINGEDAM



AMSTERDAM SCHOOL



DE PAPIERMOLEN

SCHEEPPVAARTMUSEUM



RURAL IDYLL

In 2019, Niehove was declared the most beautiful village in the Netherlands. Did it deserve the title? Niehove certainly is charming. On the other hand, several other Groningen villages could easily give Niehove a run for its money. Take a leisurely trip by car through the Groningen Ommeland and see these picturesque villages for yourself.

MIDWOLDE

If you are planning a visit to the Landgoed Nienoord rural estate near Leek, be sure to take the scenic route there, via the lovely village of Midwolde. The name Midwolde roughly translates as 'in the centre of the forest'. The forest disappeared long ago, but before then this boggy and thickly-grown area was impenetrable. If you are touring by bicycle, turn at the church and take the driveway to Nienoord. This is the way the noble Van Ewsum and Von Inn- und Knyphausen families would travel to 'their' Adelskerk, a very distinctive 12th-century church. It is part of the Grootste Museum van Nederland: a collection of the most beautiful churches in the Netherlands. This is where you can see the impressive monument created by Rombout Verhulst between 1665 and 1669 by order of the young widow Anna van Ewsum. She herself was also immortalised in the sculpture, resting beside her deceased husband.

NOORDLAREN

When heading for the rural and charming village of Noordlaren, you could easily imagine that the city of Groningen is on the border with the green and wooded province of Drenthe. This area is home to many relics of the past, including the 13th-century Bartholomeüskerk church and the even older megalith just outside of the village. Around Noordlaren is the beautiful Hondsrug ridge countryside, with plenty of options for lovely bicycle rides and walking tours. If you are into excitement and suspense, head out for the Noordlaarderbos when dusk falls. This is where you find a medieval gallows between trees. Start your bike ride in the city: head for Haren, then cycle to Onnen and return via Glimmen and Appelbergen: a charming wooded area that takes in the Pieterpad. Stop for a drink or something to eat at the Blankehoeve (blankehoeve.nl), the De Lanteern (delanteern.nl) or the Hondsrug Natuurvriendenhuis on the outskirts of the Noordlaarderbos.



MIDWOLDE

GRONINGEN

RURAL IDYLL



TERMUNTEN



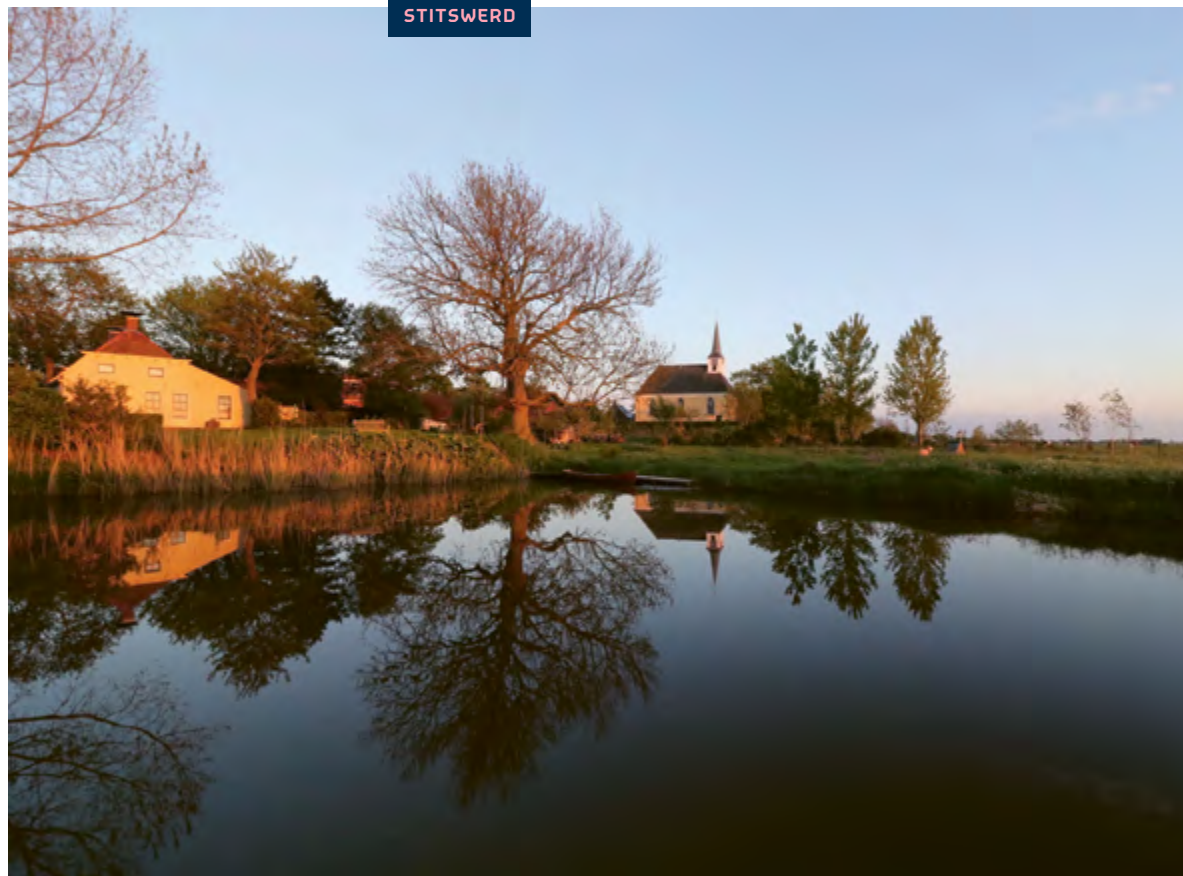
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STITSWERD

Should anyone ever wish to shoot an English Miss Marple-styled detective series in Groningen, the village of Stitswerd would be the perfect backdrop. This charming and ancient artificial dwelling hill is beautifully located in the bend of an old road between Onderdendam and Usquert. Idyllic is the word that springs to mind, which you will appreciate once you venture into one of the narrow streets. Stitswerd has been praised for its beauty since the 19th century, and the travelling teacher Jan Gerrit Rijkens referred to it as 'an English garden'. The village was also highly popular among Groningen De Ploeg artists. Planning a visit to Stitswerd? Drive or cycle via Bethlehem and Rottum to the Helwerd artificial dwelling hill, where in the 8th-century missionary Liudger cured bard Bernlef from blindness. True or false? Whatever the answer, this artificial dwelling hill is a magical place anyway.

ONDERDENDAM

If you own a small boat or canoe, be sure to take it to Onderdendam (marenland.nl) and explore this delightful town from the water. Even if you remain on land and travel by bike or on foot, with its Korenmolen Hunsingo corn mill and darling church from 1840, this village is sure to appeal to everyone. Another distinctive town landmark is the old cantonal court, which appears to be nonchalantly suspended above the Winsumerdiep. The corn mill has wonderful options for meals and overnight accommodation. Get those bicycle wheels turning and map out a route that takes in the Stadsweg, the Jaagpad and the Onderdendamsterweg, all old roads for you to explore, and enjoy every inch of the countryside. When you are ready for some well-deserved rest, take the tow path along the Rasquerdermaar three kilometres north of the village; turn left from Onderdendam following a sharp bend in the Onderdendamsterweg.

**ALSO WORTH SEEING****Bellingwolde**

Take in one beautiful house after another at the Hoofdweg in Bellingwolde, where villas alternate with farmhouses. Don't drive too far: you'll be in Germany before you know it.

Westeremden

This artificial dwelling hill is as pretty as a picture. On top of it is a beautiful church and a medieval parsonage farm rebuilt by artist Henk Helmantel.

Feerwerd

With its pretty narrow streets, Feerwerd features an abundance of greenery and a special church. This is almost village idyll overload.

Spijk

It is as if someone has drawn a circle using a pair of compasses: the Spijk artificial dwelling hill is both perfect and ancient. The church is right in the middle, surrounded by a moat.

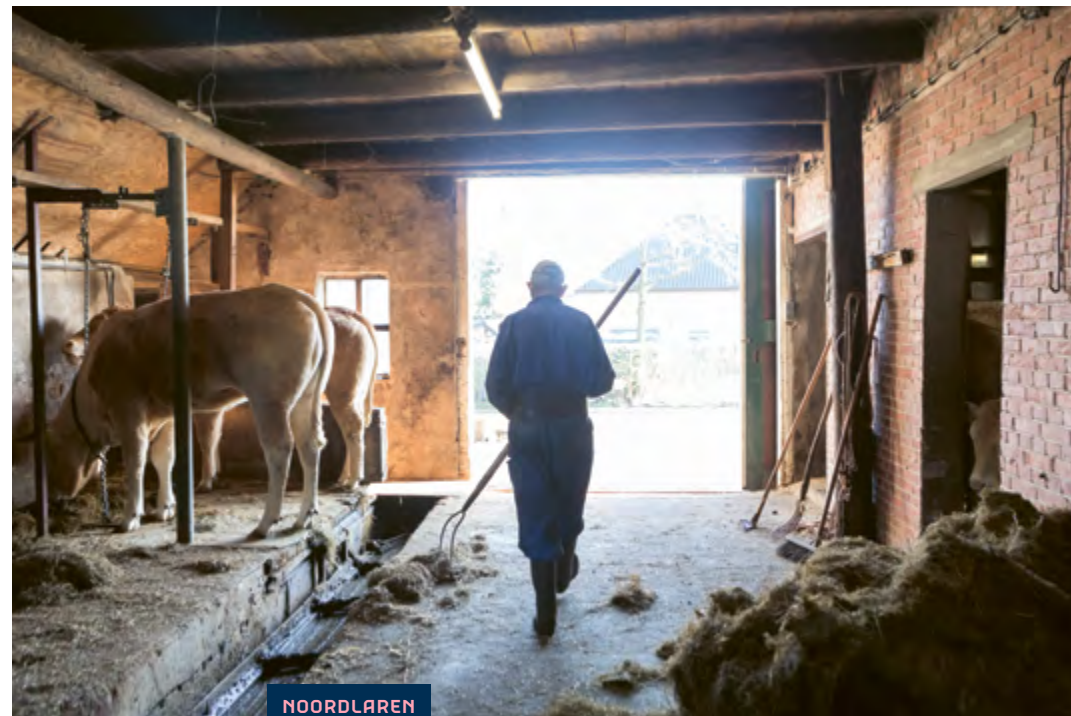
Termunten

The church alone is definitely worth visiting the picturesque village of Termunten. Would you believe that this church used to be much larger than today?

Smeerling

A few farms, some sturdy trees and the charming Ruiten Aa countryside: what more could you possibly want in this picture?

If you are up for even more exploring, refer to the map in this magazine for other lovely villages to check out.



NOORDLAREN

WESTEREMDEN



DANCE AROUND OLD MACHINES

After a thorough renovation with due respect for its characteristic look and feel, the former De Toekomst strawboard factory is reminiscent of the grain republic of the past. The retained steam boilers, millstones and drive wheels fill the building with unadulterated allure. It now functions as an event venue featuring foodtruck festivals, special fairs and the Gransnapolsky music festival. Full of atmosphere and a little bit rough around the edges; this suits Groningen to a T.

ER GAAT NIETS BOVEN



N
W AROUND TRIP THROUGH GRONINGEN E
S

55KM



THROUGH THE VEEN KOLONIËN

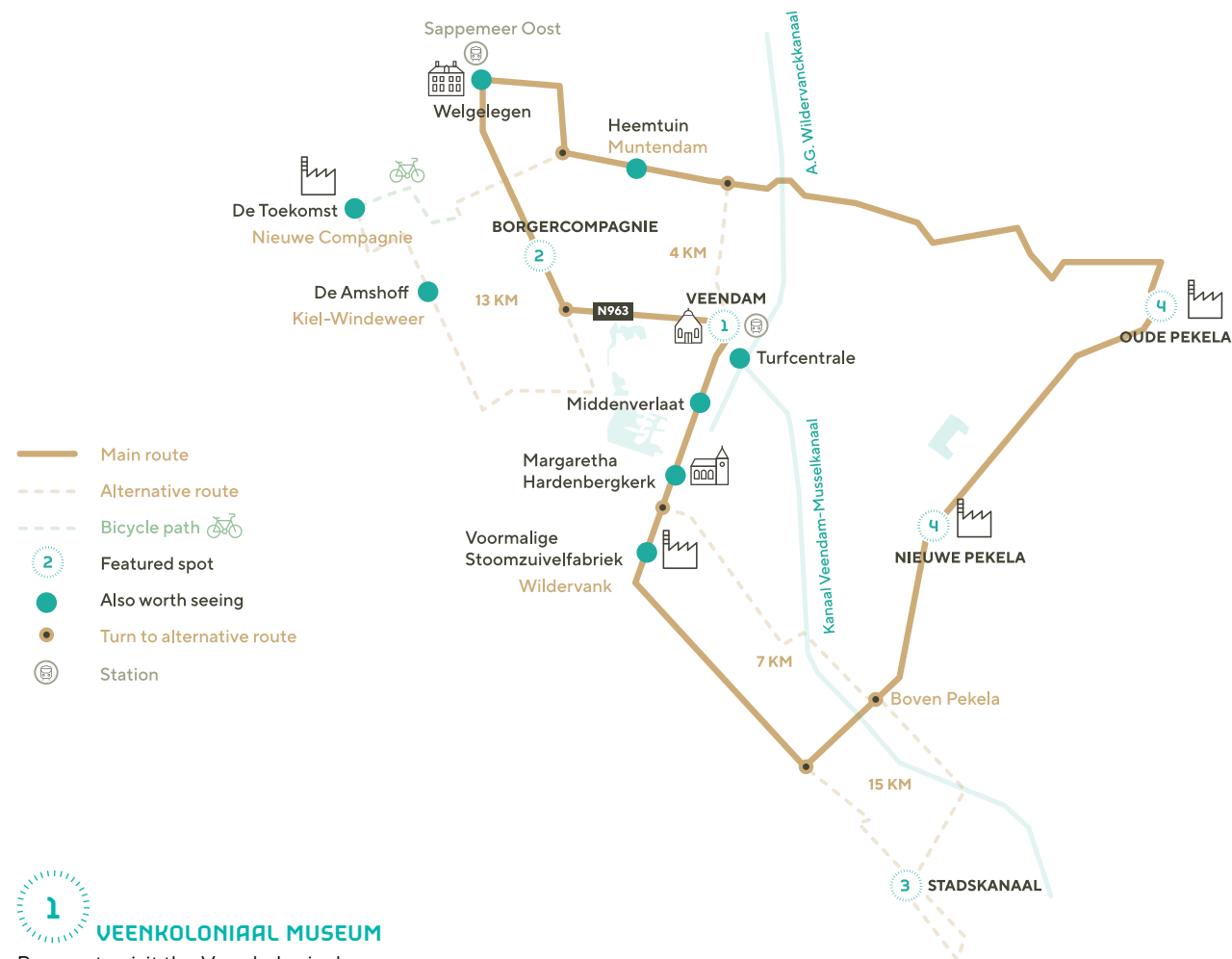


If you want to make sure you don't lose your way, download the route on visitgroningen.com/route-veenkolonien.

This expedition takes in the special history of the Veenkoloniën (peat district), with its straight canals that cut right through the countryside, infinite ribbon villages with beautiful farms and rich industrial heritage. The route is about 55 kilometres long and can easily be shortened or extended.

Not everyone immediately falls in love when they see the Veenkoloniën on their first visit to the region. This part of Groningen tends to draw a particular type of visitor. But if you give the Veenkoloniën some time, you are sure to become fond of it. For centuries, high moorland lay thick in this area. In the Middle Ages, people started cutting it for fuel: peat or turf. Later on, in the 19th century, the Veenkoloniën developed into the home of Groningen coastal trade and agribusiness. By then, turf huts had long become a thing of the past in this highly industrious area.

THE PEKELA VILLAGES



1 VEENKOLONIAAL MUSEUM

Be sure to visit the Veenkoloniaal Museum and immerse yourself in the history of peat extraction, the canals, inland shipping, the rich agricultural industry and shipbuilding; in short, everything that contributed to the area's importance. The museum is established in the former Rijks Hogere Burger School, designed in Dutch Classicism by government architect J.A. Vrijman. Take time to explore the environment on foot to see the beautiful villas in various architectural styles, from Amsterdam School to Jugendstil. The Julianapark is another (green) treasure, as is the Hertenkamp deerpark around the corner from the museum. They all demonstrate the particular style of Veendam. – veenkoloniaalmuseum.nl

2 BORGERCOMPAGNIE

In Borgercompagnie, you can follow the straight road for kilometres on end without a trace of boredom or monotony. The ribbon village's canal is fringed with leafy trees and features impressive Oldambt farms. The history of this village takes you back to 1647, when Groningen city reinforced its grip on the Veenkoloniën. Nine citizens were granted permission to cut the peat. They decided to unite in a company, hence the name of the village: borger (citizen's) compagnie (company). In 1655, one of these citizens had a country house built: the Welgelegen peat country estate. Need a rest from cycling? Visit the French country estate garden.

VEENKOLONIAAL MUSEUM





WILDERVANK



MUSEUMSPOORLIJN STAR

ALSO ON THE ROUTE

Margaretha Hardenbergkerk, Wildervank

On a warm summer's day, Margaretha Hardenberg – wife of rich peat extractor Adriaan Wildervanck – fell asleep on the moors. When she woke up, she saw a viper had coiled around her arm. She promised to build a church if it didn't bite her. The viper didn't bite, and the first stone was laid on 24 September 1659.

Middenverlaat, Wildervank

Peat cutting is simply impossible without locks, because the water level must be high enough for peat barges to pass. The Middenverlaat in Wildervank ensured this. You will find the Verlaathuis by the lock which was constructed in the 17th century. Formerly the lock master's house, today this is where you go for some excellent food. – [brasseriewildervanck.nl](#).

Voormalige Aardappelmeelfabriek De Toekomst, Nieuwe Compagnie

Don't be confused with the other Toekomst Strokarton-fabriek (a strawboard factory) near Scheemda. Instead, potatoes played the leading part in this Toekomst factory, where urban explorers drool over the remnants of past glory. Today, jumble sales are held in this raw and unpolished building where time has literally and figuratively stopped.

Heemtuin, Muntendam

The Heemtuin may come as a welcome pause along the route. It also has amenities like as the nature playground and the Mammoetpad: an exciting route filled with obstacles both on and beside the water. In spring and summer, the Heemtuin explodes with wild flowers, herbs and plants. – [heemtuinmuntendam.nl](#)

Turfcentrale, Veendam

In 1901, a power station was built in Veendam. And what would one use as fuel for such a plant? Exactly, peat! Today this is a hotbed for art and a few artists actually have their studios here. Both the inside and outside of the Turfcentrale building exude character and inspiration. – [turfcentraleveendam.nl](#)

De Amshoff, Kiel-Windeweer

The city of Groningen must have considered that the peat district deserved a house of worship when, in 1755, it had a church and parsonage built in Kiel Windeweer. It has since been transformed into the Amshoff restaurant which also provides overnight accommodation and options for conferences. It's a popular venue for weddings, which will come as no surprise once you have been here. – [de-amshoff.nl](#)

3

MUSEUMSPOORLIJN STAR

Feel steam blow around your head as you depart. See the extensive countryside pass before your eyes from the historic railway carriage. This is STAR: the longest museum railway line in the Netherlands. It starts in Stadskanaal and ends in Veendam – or the other way around. Experience old steam trains and diesel trains being operated on this railway line; a purely nostalgic experience. Board in Stadskanaal, Bareveld, Wildervank or Veendam. But hold on: there's still more to see at the Rijtuigloods of Station Stadskanaal, which features old locomotives and all kinds of information about the railway line. And now that you are in Stadskanaal, you should really take the opportunity to visit the Parkwijk near the station. It features charming working-class houses from the 1930s, which were rightfully declared as listed buildings. – [stadskanaalrail.nl](#)

4

THE PEKELA VILLAGES

Pekel is a Dutch word for salt, and Pekela simply refers to the Pekel A: a brackish river in the bogland that for centuries was governed by the Dollard tides. In the 17th century, peat extraction boomed in this area and Groningen city purchased almost all of the land around the Pekel A. Two centuries later, after all of the peat had been cut, the area started to flourish. Shipping, trade and agrarian industry reigned supreme. The Pekela ribbon is testimony to this rich history, embodied by the raw Strokartonfabriek Free & Co strawboard factory and the mighty De Volharding farm shed. Villa Elsa, which was built in 1902, shows that some people made a fortune here. Wouldn't you just love to live here? And we'd almost forget the captain's house and Houtzagerij Nooitgedacht sawmill that are reminiscent of the once flourishing shipping and wood industry.



HEEMTUIN



TURFCENTRALE

TIP

Bring your bicycle with you by train to Sappemeer Oost or Veendam to start your journey. Alternatively, hire an e-scooter at [eglider.nl](#) in Groningen city to make your very own customised route.

HOME-GROWN AND HOMEMADE

53° 16' 10.9" N, 6° 6' 34.7" E

11 TIMES REGIONAL PRODUCTS

Not all delicacies come from exotic places. Groningen residents are very creative when it comes to what the sea and land provide: spicy mustard, bitter ale, salty glasswort, slightly acidic wine and sweet rolls made from regional grain and sugar. Try one of Groningen's classics, such as the *eierbal*, the Groningen take on the Scotch egg that was created during a harsh economic climate. Pure and devoid of unnecessary fuss.

Fun with the children

De Mikkelfhorst

At the ecological De Mikkelfhorst care farm, children love the large playground and pet goats in the petting zoo. Feel free to pick some flowers, too! If you think you are too old for the slide, watch how wood is split, or buy some delicious cheese in the farm shop. - mikkelfhorst.nl

Taste Groningen

Regional markets

Buy your fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat, bread, eggs, ready-made delicacies and much, much more at one of the Groningen regional markets. Everything is straight from the land and freshly prepared. Regional markets are held in Leek, Leens, Middelstum and the city of Groningen. - streekproductenmarkten-groningen.nl

Straight from the sea to your plate

Sushi from the Wadden

All this fish, oysters and glasswort... Why wait for all these delicacies from the Waddenzee World Heritage site to be in the shops, if they are right there for you to harvest? Set out on an excursion and collect your very own meal. It doesn't come any fresher than this. - wadvistochten.nl

Groningen gifts

Groningen Store (VVV)

Should you by any chance feel somewhat overwhelmed by all that Groningen has to offer, no worries. The Groningen Store in the Forum Groningen is the starting point of your exploratory expedition of the city and province. In addition, this is where you buy delicious regional products. - groningenstore.nl

Regional and sustainable

Gasterij Natuurlijk Smeering

Enjoy a delicious lunch on a former Saxon farm in the beautiful village of Smeering. They also serve coffee, tea and cake. De Gasterij swears by sustainable regional produce. From pastry to rolls, everything is homemade. - gasterij-natuurlijk-smeering.nl

Takeaway

Eierbal

It resembles a giant type of croquette at first sight, but inside its crispy coating is a layer of ragout and a whole egg. Whether you want to try all of the culinary surprises Groningen presents, or simply feel like a late night snack: the *eierbal* (Dutch Scotch egg) is something you must try at least once in your life. Local connoisseurs go to Cafeteria Koning, Restaria Zuid or Friet van Piet. - visitgroningen.com/eierbal



REGIONAL MARKETS



GRONINGEN STORE



OP EWSUM



DOGGERLAND



SUSHI FROM THE WADDEN



Pure tastes

Piloersemaborg

Just fifteen minutes by car from the city of Groningen is the only remaining estate farm in the Netherlands, Piloersemaborg. Enjoy the pure flavours top chef Dick Soek creates using fresh regional ingredients before spending the night on the premises. - piloersema.nl

Spicy mustard

Abrahams Mostermakerij

Such a tiny village, yet so much activity: Eenrum is full of entrepreneurs and trades, the highlight of which is Abrahams Mostermakerij. This is where you find a restaurant, mustard museum, mustard shop and mustard factory, all under one single roof. Take a look in this factory where mustard is produced using traditional methods. Afterwards, a lovely bowl of mustard soup at the outdoor café will taste even better. - visitgroningen.com/abrahams-mostermakerij

From private gardens

Op Ewsum

At Op Ewsum, soup is made using fresh vegetables from the private garden. Everything here is homemade and the kitchen garden is filled with special and forgotten vegetable varieties. Walking, eating, spending the night: all of these and more are possible here. - opewsum.nl

Apple surplus

Doggerland Cider

Doggerland has found the perfect use for surplus apples: they turn them into delicious traditional Groningen cider. Everyone is welcome to donate apples and receive some cider in return. If you don't have any apples and would love to try it, simply buy Doggerland from the shop. - doggerlandcider.com

Culinary bicycle route

Met Mest en Vork

The 'Met mest en Vork' bicycle route takes in all kinds of culinary hotspots over a 40-kilometre course. Enjoy coffee at the Landgoed Verhildersum country estate or tea in the Theefabriek, and buy cheese, cookies and mustard along the way. All regionally produced of course. - visitgroningen.com/gourmet-route



REGIONAL
PRODUCE;
PRODUCERS
IN THE
COUNTRYSIDE

FOOD PRODUCTION BY THE WADDEN SEA DYKE

Hero Havenga de Poel's Landgoud family farm is clearly visible from the dyke. When asked, Hero indicates that he does not really consider himself a farmer. 'I rather think of myself as a food producer, or, better yet: a victualler.' The difference being that Landgoud process everything themselves, so they really are at the cradle of their products. From their currant wine to spelt pasta and from honey to mustard, everything grown and produced here is organic, fair and with plenty of love for the land.



This area, perfect for connoisseurs, is a mere twenty-five kilometres from the lively city of Groningen. Each and every road and artificial dwelling hill you see here has its very own and personal story, and the area becomes increasingly charming as you learn to read the scenery. 'Humans have followed the relief for centuries,' says Hero. 'And although it may seem flat, it actually is not, and you can feel this when walking out over the farmlands. Everything here was once created by the sea. You will notice the location of an old dyke where the land undulates, if ever so slightly.'

LOVE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Hero really loves the Groningen countryside, where each season has its very own special charm. In spring, when the land awakens from its winter sleep, the spelt sown in autumn starts a rapid growth spurt, leaving the land light green. Summer – the best time of the year – is the season of hard labour. Autumn is the proverbial evening of the day and the time to harvest. Winter symbolises night: a rest period for the land but also a busy time in the granary. 'We dry and store our grain, which requires considerable attention. Everything that is not grain must be removed and the grain crates must be turned on a regular basis. It is also the time to deal with the first deliveries.'

Hero is not in the least hesitant to share his love for Groningen. 'We have outlined a trail across our land to welcome everyone who would like to explore. Information boards provide information about the area and the crops. A small hut is located near the old dyke for a break and to take in the view and the silence. This countryside really is an unforgettable sight.'

IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Originating from a time when people and nature were in much closer harmony, this land has evidently been used for farming for ages. 'Nature has provided us with land and taken some of it away now and then,' says Hero. Near the farm is another silent witness: a deep pool, which originated after the 1717 Christmas Flood, when dykes burst and the water reached as far as Groningen city.

Things are entirely different today, with the seawall at about a kilometre from the farm. High and stern-looking, it will certainly keep any wave at bay. The dyke stands for control instead of collaboration between humans and nature. 'I sometimes

dream about throwing up a new dyke in the salt marsh; not a high one, but just to create that little relief in the countryside like there used to be. Just to make new land along with nature.'

PRODUCTS FROM GRONINGEN SOIL

Many arable farmers are world market producers and deliver their products in bulk, usually through corporations. Landgoud consciously refrains from this. 'We trade and sell most of our products ourselves, which is highly unusual in Dutch farming. We focus on collaboration, preferably regional of course.' Landgoud delivers straw to the Waddenmax dairy farm a few kilometres away, and receives it back in the form of crop manure. Did you know that, also thanks to Landgoud, the Marne Mosterd and Abrahams Mostermakerij companies have recently started making the real Groningen mustard again? It's made using mustard seed from Groningen soil, instead of seed from abroad as you see with other famous mustard brands.





Hero has his very own Landgoud Blanka wine produced using their home-grown white currants, and the Toscana ice-cream parlour in Groningen city sells ice cream made using their juice. 'It has a sweet taste with a fresh, sourish aftertaste,' says Hero. And then there is the pasta made from spelt and emmer wheat, mustard flower honey, 'spelt risotto' and flower ground by the local miller. Hero usually delivers products to shops and restaurants using the company's electric delivery bicycle.

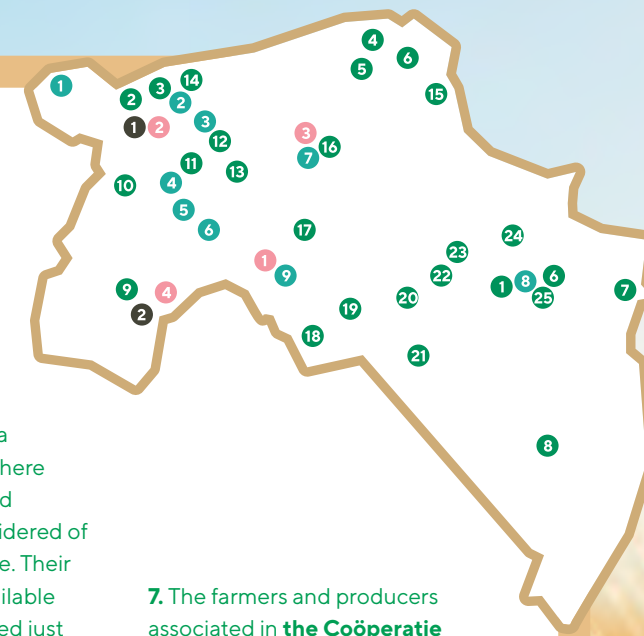
SUNSET ON THE SALT MARSH

So what places come highly recommended when visiting the Landgoud area? Hero is all but hesitant: the Dijksterweg into the direction of Hornhuizen, and the salt marsh in particular. 'You really should go there during sunrise or sunset. Simply step into some old boots or shoes and set out to take in the view, of the countryside with all its flora, and see it change by the minute. Look at the horizon, and the rising and falling water. Also note the grass, which is totally different from the English rye-grass you see all around. And when you're standing on the dyke, be sure to look out over the sea, and see the islands of Schiermonnikoog and Rottumerplaat. Turn around and consider that this area once looked just like it.'

Landgoud products are available for sale and can be sampled at various venues in Groningen. The Piloersemaborg restaurant in Den Ham and Onder de Linden in Aduard use the grain to bake their bread, and the Herberg Restaurant Molenrij and Abrahams Mosterdmakerij in Eenrum also use Landgoud products. Landgoud pastas, spelt risotto and Blanka wine are available at Fluitekruid in Winsum, the Groningen Store in Groningen city and some other places. Landgoud does not run a farm shop. Go to landgoud.nl for an overview.



Groningen features a large number of special producers based in the countryside, some with a special story; see below. Refer to the map for more tasty tips, from farm shops and regional markets to restaurants that use Groningen products.



1. Alambik distillery produces Eau de Vie, Dutch gin, fresh fruit liqueurs, and other exclusive drinks. Owner Zarko – originally from Serbia and now from Midwolda – is the driving force behind it all. – alambik.nl

2. The Waddenmax biodynamic dairy farm owned by the Tilburg family produces cheese, butter, curd cheese, yoghurt and much more. Products are available in the Hornhuizen farm shop and other places. – waddenmax.nl

3. Horaholm in Hornhuizen grows winter carrots, potatoes, gluten-free oats, yellow mustard and much, much more. Buy their organic potatoes and carrots at the farm. – horaholm.nl

4. Waddenvarkens is a small-scale pig farm where animal-friendliness and sustainability are considered of paramount importance. Their free-range meat is available at the farm shop located just north of Uithuizermeeden. – waddenvarkens.nl

5. The Eemstuin near Uithuizermeeden grows biodynamic vegetables. Their fresh seasonal produce is sold in their shop and other locations. – eemstuin.nl

6. De Zelfmakerij regional farm in Finsterwolde produces a variety of regional products which are sold in their shop, along with products by other local producers. They recently took up distilling their own Genever, or gin. – zelfmakerij.nl

7. The farmers and producers associated in **the Coöperatie de Graanrepubliek** focus on promoting the cultivation and processing of grain. Pasta Nobile, for instance, produces exclusive pastas and baker Bakker Wiebrand makes delicious leaven bread. – graanrepubliek.nl

8. The Landleven organic farm produces farmhouse cheese, curd cheese, cream and ice cream under the name of Westerwolds Goud. The Landwinkel in Onstwedde also sells regional products from other producers in the area. – westerwoldsgoud.nl



Producers in the Countryside

- 9. De Buurackers
- 10. Oudenbosch
- 11. Korenmolen Joeswertje
- 12. Kaasboerderij Kleidracht
- 13. Onstaheerd
- 14. Landgoud
- 15. De Luingahof
- 16. Eikemaheert

- 17. Het Geweide Hof
- 18. Groentekwekerij Noordlaren
- 19. Mulder Pot
- 20. De Keukentuin
- 21. Doornbosch
- 22. Meinardi
- 23. Arkema
- 24. Landwinkel Oldiek
- 25. Park van Pomona



Restaurants

- 1. 't Ailand
- 2. Herberg Restaurant Molenrij
- 3. Abraham's Mosterdmakerij & Rest.
- 4. 't Kleine Oestertje
- 5. Piloersemaborg
- 6. Herberg Onder de Linden
- 7. Huiskamercafé Westerwijtwerd
- 8. Hermans Dijkstra
- 9. Uit de Buurt



Regional markets

- 1. Ommelander Markt
- 2. Streekmarkt Verhildersum
- 3. Streekmarkt Ewsum
- 4. Streekmarkt Nienoord



Bakeries

- 1. Bakkerij Peters
- 2. Bakkerij van Esch

Opening hours of the shops and farm shops may vary, and regional markets are held periodically. For dates and opening hours, be sure to check their websites or go to visitgroningen.com.

PURE, FAIR & SUSTAINABLE



Look beyond what you see or venture out across the dyke, and you will find that there is just so much to explore in the city and province of Groningen. If you would like help in selecting the tips and tops, go to the VVV Groningen Store in the Forum Groningen; the starting point for your expedition of Groningen. This is where you find information about the city and environs, guided tours, a visit to the Martinatoren, group excursions and VVV gift vouchers. They also have fun, delicious and sustainable products available, all from the hands of Groningen producers and inventors. This is also a place for inspiration outside opening hours.



Soap7 is a small soap factory in Haren that produces natural soaps according to traditional methods. Handmade from pure ingredients.



Groning is pure and fair honey directly obtained from Groningen bee-keepers.



Van Hulley creates beautiful and special boxer shorts from textile that have an entire - second - life ahead of them. Made with courage and love by trainees in the sewing workshop.



Dutch Harvest Hemp Tea is grown on Groningen soil and has a mild, light, fresh and sweet taste with an exciting tingle. Discover - or rediscover - the sustainable and healthy power of hemp!



City Cups. Who would not love these cups with their distinctive elements of typical Groningen buildings? The series of porcelain cups was designed in Groningen and features details of the Martinatoren, Groninger Museum, the Korenbeurs and other buildings.



The **Brouwerij Martinus** brewery produces speciality beers in a beautiful industrial building at the Kosterstang. Take a tour and learn all about the process of brewing beer.



Moj Limonade is made from 100% fruit, natural mineral water, carbonic acid and a touch of cane sugar. Nothing more, nothing less. Moj non-alcoholic drinks are pure, simple and delicious.



Pack of cards. The world-famous pack of cards in a Groningen look, featuring - naturally - real Groningen icons, from the Martinatoren to local singer and poet Ede Staal and ancient artificial dwelling hill villages. You could almost show your cards right away!



NIEUWE MARKT 1 - WWW.GRONINGENSTORE.NL

DISCOVER THE BORGEN

While the rest of the Netherlands has fortresses and castles, Groningen is the place where you find *borgen* – estate houses. They are scattered around the province and ready for you to explore. So get on your bike or in your car to check out these chateaux of the north. If you think you can explore all sixteen in a single day, think again. Simply select a few to take in the splendour of the olden days.

Over two hundred *borgen* and estate houses, homes of Groningen aristocracy, once dotted the province. These estate houses date from the 13th century, when they were built on the lands belonging to rich farmers. Set up as places of refuge or defence, over time they lost their strategic function and were converted into stately country houses with beautiful gardens. This is when nobility started living in *borgen* instead of farms. Outside were the stables and barns: the treasuries.

By the late 18th century, only a few *borgen* were left. Peerage had experienced barely any new increase and gentleman farmers had started buying the buildings and grounds up to obtain the rights that came with them. The buildings themselves remained empty. Others were bought by non-noble Groningen regents. While the occasional *borg* found a new function as a country seat, others were demolished or converted into farms.

The last *borg* to be demolished was the Dijksterhuis near Pieterburen (1903). By that time, the 16 remaining ones had been declared listed buildings. Fortunately they were not the buildings in the worst condition. Today, they are the showpieces of the province of Groningen. Many of them are open to the public, and some even provide overnight accommodation. The gardens and surrounding rural estates are wonderful places to visit. As soon as you enter, it feels as if the residents of old could return from a lovely outing any second.



GRONINGEN

DISCOVER THE BORGEN

FRAEYLEMABORG



FRAEYLEMABORG

FRAEYLEMABORG

If you are coming to visit the Fraeylemaborg, don't simply enter the building, but instead walk to the far back of the garden, where you will see a bus. It's one of the estate's follies: funny and distinctive buildings that do not serve any practical purpose. This country estate, with its romantic English-styled garden, is a lovely place for a walk. With numerous little vistas, beautiful trees and hillocks, you can spot the odd part of the older Baroque garden. While the house itself originates from the Middle Ages, its current design dates from 1781. The Louis XVI-style halls and white plasterwork you see were all the fashion in those days. The old coach house now functions as a museum shop with various exhibition spaces. Conclude your visit with a drink and a bite to eat in the treasury.
- fraeylemaborg.nl

MENKEMABORG

So if you would like to know how Groningen nobility lived and breathed in the 17th and 18th century, be sure to go to the Menkemaborg in Uithuizen. Its interior has not been changed at all since those days. Originally an estate house built in the 14th century, over time it developed into its current Baroque splendour. It features beautiful gardens which have basically remained unchanged since the 18th century. The garden had more than just an aesthetic function: after all, the nobility had to eat as well. Behind the treasury – the former farm next to the country house – is another kitchen garden, and you'll find various fruit varieties in the orchard. Drinks and meals are served in the Restaurant 't Schathoes. In July, the rose tunnel flowers abundantly and fragrantly and the maze is a lovely place to get lost in. – menkemaborg.nl



MENKEMABORG



BURCHT WEDDE

BURCHT WEDDE – WEDDERBORG

As you approach the Wedderborg, it is immediately obvious that this must have been a 'real' castle. It endured the occasional war, and in the 15th and 16th century had a circular wall with high defence towers. For centuries, the Wedderborg served as the seat for the Lords of Westerwolde. In 1619, it came into the ownership of the city of Groningen, which in 1829 planned to demolish it. Fortunately these plans never came to pass, and notary Arnold Hendrik Koning bought and renovated the castle. The Koning family owned it until 1955. Today it functions as special holiday accommodation for children and young people. Adults are welcome to stay in one of two stylish heritage guest rooms. Enjoy a lovely stroll in one of the beautiful gardens. – burchtwedde.nl



NIENOORD



BORG VERHILDERSUM

NIENOORD

Nienoord is really the outsider in this list. This is not originally an estate house, but instead a peat estate which was founded in 1525 by Wigbold van Ewsum. He used it as a base to cultivate the surrounding peat moors. The house suffered great hardships due to weather conditions, strong winds and war. In 1846 nobleman Ferdinand Folef van Inn- und Knyphausen set fire to the upper floor – it's uncertain if this was deliberate. A few years later, the orangery and coach house met the same fate, and it was rumoured that this too must have been the work of the mad squire. Since 1958, the Nationaal Rijtuigmuseum has been established in the country house. The garden features the Schelpengrot: a cottage, the interior of which is entirely covered with a shell mosaic. The country estate also includes a deerpark, a swimming pool and the Familiepark Landgoed Nienoord. Perfect for children! – landgoednienoord.nl

BORG VERHILDERSUM

A walk through the Baroque style garden of Landgoed Verhildersum takes in various buildings, such as a coach house, the treasury and a labourer's cottage. In spring, the garden transforms into a beautiful sea of flowers. Go to the museum farm and see how Groningen aristocracy used to live in conjunction with the farmers and farm workers. Old crop varieties are grown on the Verhildersum fields. It's just one of the ways in which the estate house keeps attention for historical varieties alive. A regional market is held on the country house grounds every first Saturday of each month, where the past and present meet. With its beautiful 19th-century decoration, this estate is more than worth a visit. – verhildersum.nl



EWSUM

THE OTHER BORGEN

Allersmaborg

Allersmaweg 64, Ezinge
- allersmaborg.nl

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Breedenborg

Breede 1, Warffum
- www.breedenborg.nl

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Coendersborg

Oudeweg 15, Nuis
- groningerlandschap.nl

Ekenstein

Alberdaweg 70, Appingedam
- ekenstein.com

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Ennemaborg

Hoofdweg 96, Midwolda
- groningerlandschap.nl

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Borg Ewsum

Oosterburen 1, Middelstum
- groningerlandschap.nl

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Iwema Steenhuis

Het Pad 15, Niebert
- groningerlandschap.nl

Piloersema

Sietse Veldstraweg 25,
Den Ham
- piloersema.nl

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Rensumaborg

Rensumalaan 3,
Uithuizermeeden

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Rusthoven

Rijksweg 39, Wirdum

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Veenborg Welgelegen

De Vosholen 60, Sappemeer
- borgwelgelegen.nl



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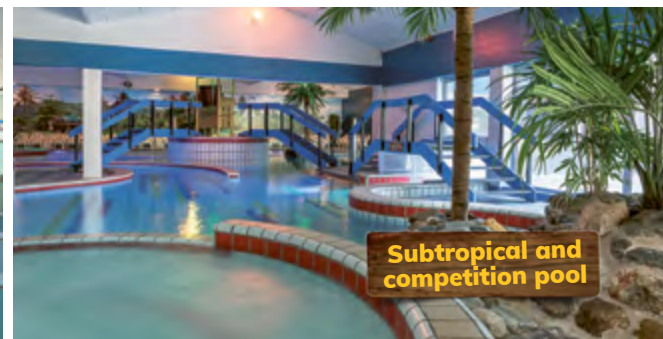
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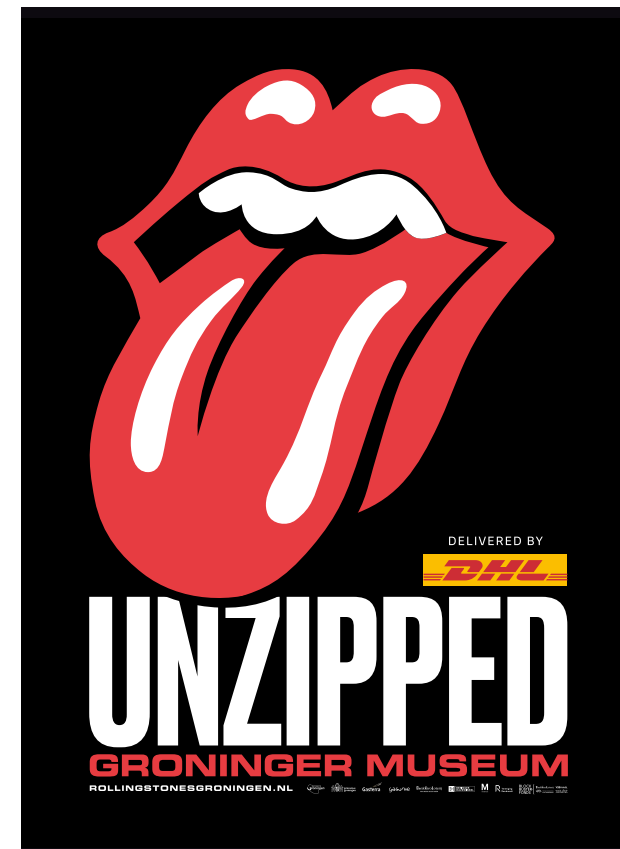


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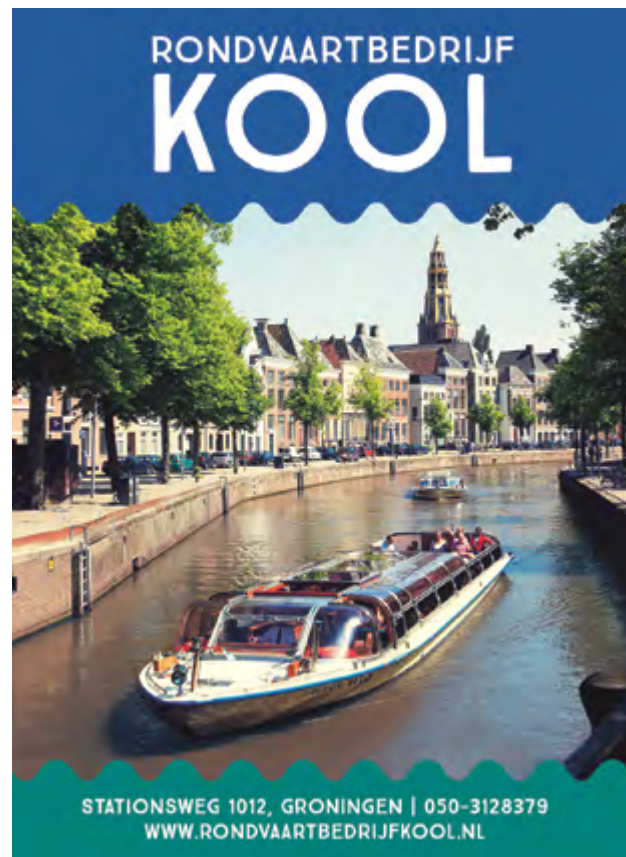


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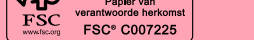
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