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DUTCHFIETS

Amsterdam is the world's prime bicycle city. You certainly will have to get used to the Amsterdam-style traffic, with bicycles densely packed everywhere, moving or in standstill, and not paying much attention to rules, traffic lights, or pedestrians. This determines much of the atmosphere in the small streets of the city centre, where you just hear the soft buzz of tires on the pavement. Many bicycles are old and rusty, and there are hardly any repair shops in Amsterdam, because the "fiets" is such a daily utensil that nobody pays any attention to its condition: as long as it moves it's OK.



Still the bicycle is subject of major innovations. In front of Schiphol Airport you may lend a wooden bicycle, to go to your nearby hotel. A latest trend came from a technical student collective who developed a plastic bicycle by crowdfunding called 'Dutchfiets'. After a few years of intensive use you can get your deposit money back when you bring it back for recycling.



But probably you just want to enjoy the landscape. Just next to the congress center you may rent a bicycle for just a few euros. It is practically the start of a beautiful tour through traditional Netherlands landscape, with lots of water, 17th

century farmhouses, windmills, and birds everywhere. Over the centuries the villages were built along the rivers. You will cycle over winding dikes with polder deep below. Notice that the water level of the river is higher than the polder grassland. If the water would not pumped out continually, the entire west of the Netherlands would flood and disappear into the sea. This has happened a number of times over the centuries, but thanks to impressive engineering works, with waterlocks and giant revolving doors against the sea the country is safe. The mighty constructions of the 17th century now add to the picturesque landscape. Along the way you will see tables with some fruit or vegetables, and a little money box for payment. And no shopkeeper. Nice to see that everybody is kind enough to pay. Later we will give you routes of some nice tours that start close to the congress center.

