

BY GLENN KAUFMANN

DUTCH TR

Spend a day or three in the quaint towns around Amsterdam before



GLENN KAUFMANN PHOTOGRAPHY

EATS

Checking out the big city.



Visions of the Netherlands often run to windmills, wooden shoes and wild times in

Amsterdam. While those things do exist, the Netherlands can be so much more.

There is something genuinely special about visiting the small towns scattered around the Dutch countryside. While there is a shared easy-going nature and common nationality, each village feels different. It's as if each town offers a particular piece of the national painting, separate splashes of color that nest together like the brush strokes of a Van Gogh.

COUNTRYSIDE DAYTRIPPING

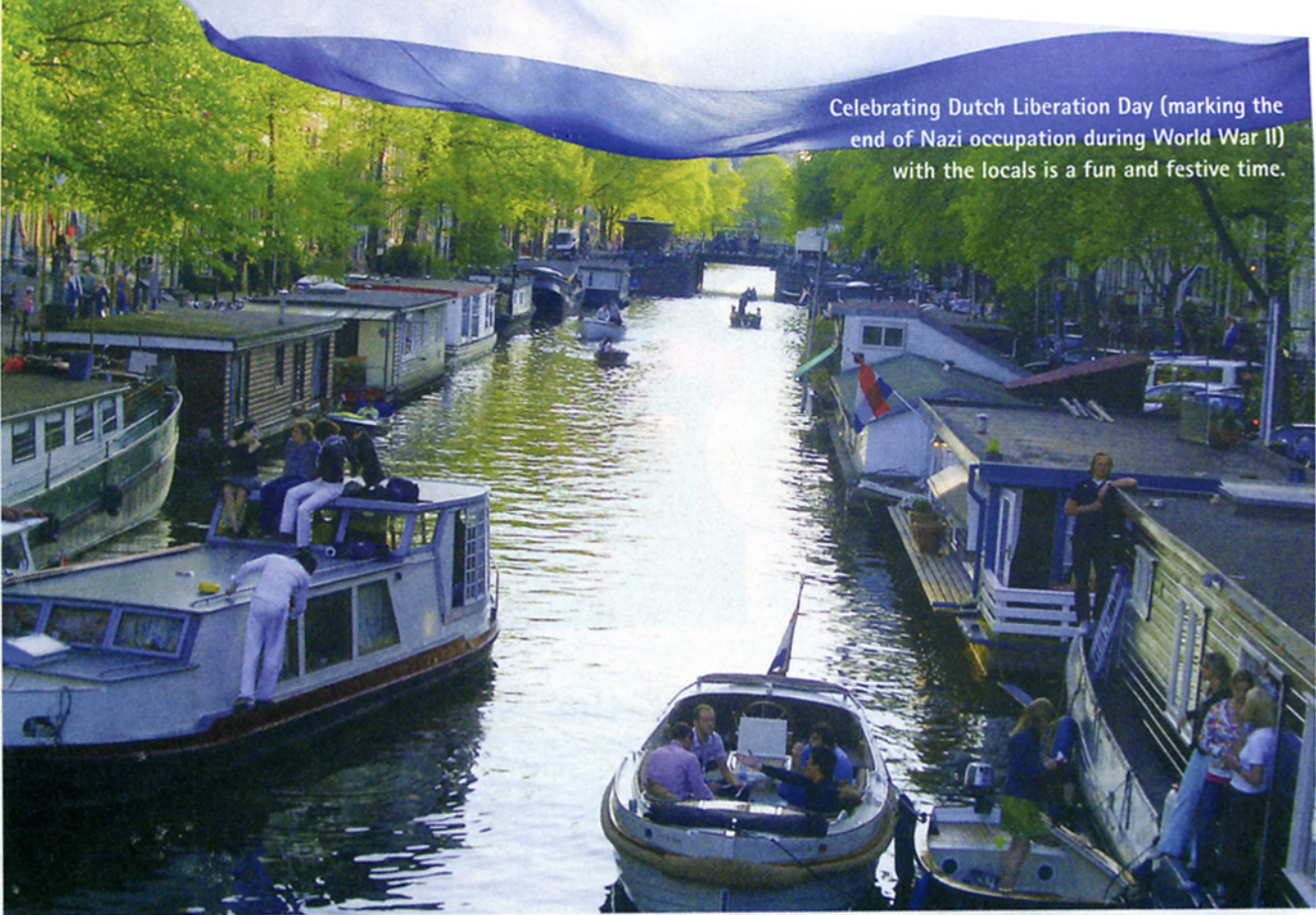
Edam: Known the world over for its cheese, the quiet town of Edam is a short bus ride from Amsterdam and offers visitors not only its namesake cheese, but also pleasant strolls through quiet neighborhoods and outdoor seating at canalside cafes and bakeries. In July and August, the Kaasmarkten Edam (Edam Cheese Market) is in full swing. Here, cheeses arrive by canal boat and horse-drawn cart. Traders in traditional costume use long-established methods to test, weigh and bargain for the cheeses.

Keukenhof Gardens: The colorful round cup of the tulip is an enduring symbol of the Netherlands. During the brief annual tulip bloom, there's no better place to see the flowers' seemingly endless variety of colors and sizes than the Keukenhof Gardens in Lisse. Each year, Keukenhof gardeners hand-plant seven million bulbs, making this the largest bulb flower park in the world. Because it's open only during the height of the bloom in spring, the garden is a gift of nature not to be missed.

Kröller-Müller Museum and De Hoge Veluwe National Park: More than just another park, De Hoge Veluwe National Park in Otterlo is a peaceful retreat with a remarkable collection of art at its core.

Upon arrival, visitors should consider borrowing a free bike and pedaling through the forested green space to the Kröller-Müller Museum near the center of the park. Many visitors enjoy picnicking on the museum grounds among the sculptures found there. Inside the museum is one of the largest and most compre-

The beautiful Keukenhof Gardens feature more than 2,000 tulip varieties and hundreds of other spring flower varieties.



Celebrating Dutch Liberation Day (marking the end of Nazi occupation during World War II) with the locals is a fun and festive time.

hensive collections of Vincent Van Gogh's work, as well as works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet and Piet Mondrian.

Apeldoorn: Roughly 15 miles from Otterlo, the town of Apeldoorn offers an expansive outdoor dining and shopping plaza, several quaint vest-pocket parks, and primates on the loose. The Apenheul primate park lets visitors view and interact with nearly 30 species of chimps, monkeys and apes. After securing valuables in "monkey-proof" bags and walking through double gates, visitors are free to wander the expansive grounds, crossing paths with all manner of running, crawling and climbing creatures.

Enkhuizen and the Zuiderzee Museum: The North Sea village of Enkhuizen offers visitors a glimpse at the

A canalside Edam cheese shop displays selections of its popular export.

modern face of Dutch seaside living, but the Zuiderzee Museum provides a detailed look at the history and development of maritime culture and practices, including efforts at conservation and green initiatives.

The outdoor museum park allows visitors to step inside the work and living spaces of a traditional North Sea fishing village. The streets are lined with shops, houses, and racks for drying and smoking fish. There are games for children, museum

guides in traditional costumes, a windmill and captivating views of the North Sea.

AROUND AMSTERDAM

As a major trading center as far back as the 1700s, Amsterdam has amassed a surprising collection of cultures, art and artifacts. The result is an open-air city of outdoor markets, must-see museums and food from around the world, making it a convenient base for daytrips into the countryside.

Just off the Museumplein (a large open-air park near the center of the city), tourists will find two of Amsterdam's best art museums. The Van Gogh Museum houses an incredibly detailed collection that goes a long way toward demystifying the enigmatic master. In the Netherlands' premier museum, the Rijksmuseum, Rembrandt's classic *Night Watch* is on view, along with a staggering collection of Dutch masterworks from the Golden Age and a host of other jaw-dropping surprises.



The World War II refuge of Anne Frank is a memorial to the indomitable human spirit. The upper floors of the Anne Frank House are the actual quarters where she penned her famous diary while hiding from the Nazis. Even today, the building and what it stands for are, for many, as holy and sacred as any church or temple. The power of this place is palpable.

After the Dutch East India Company imported an incredible diversity of cuisines from around the globe, traditional Dutch fare is hard to come by in Amsterdam restaurants. However, the Like-A-Local service in Amsterdam (as well as many other European cities) pairs tourists with local hosts who will cook a meal in their own homes. This is a unique way to meet and make friends with people from the city, and it provides an opportunity to sample local cooking in a way that's not readily available.

To see as much of the Netherlands as possible, visitors should put themselves on a train or bus for a short period to visit the small villages that lie around the Dutch countryside. They're easy to reach and all have a slightly different flavor. Daytripping in the Netherlands is easy, and a bit like taking a vacation within a vacation. When tourists are ready for a more bustling affair, they can stay "home" to explore the city.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

The I Amsterdam Card is a combination museum pass, public transit pass and local guidebook package sold by the Amsterdam tourist office (available at the Amsterdam Central Train Station) and offered in several durations to match most lengths of stay. This is a great way to handle Amsterdam transportation needs and many museum tickets at one time. Details are available at www.iamsterdam.com.

For more trip-planning materials and travel assistance, visit AAA.com/travel.

H&A

Glenn Kaufmann is a freelance writer and photographer based in Bloomington, Ind.

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