



THOMAS TRAVEL

Hello Friends! Another edition for Armchair Traveling for us to get into the spirit of exploring our wonderful & beautiful world that is waiting out there for us to return. Our topic today is the beautiful Dutch & Belgian Waterways!

The Dutch & Belgian Waterways

A complete network of canals flow through the landscape like an intricate net, past alluring tulip fields and cozy, picturesque destinations across the Netherlands and Belgium, lending this part of Europe its distinctive charm. Discover enchanting cities including the capital city of Amsterdam, the port city of Rotterdam, historic Arnhem, medieval Ghent as well as many more hidden gems. While there is no more exciting way of discovering these glorious waterways than from the comfort of a river cruise, let's get to know some of the stunning destinations speckled along this extraordinary river system until we can get our there and explore again! Next stop, a true wonderland of water, flowers and windmills.



Kinderdijk-

The Netherlands is famous for its iconic UNESCO World Heritage protected windmills, originating from the 11th century, of which roughly 1,000 still stand. Find the largest concentration of windmills near Kinderdijk!



Ghent-

Ghent simply overflows with its rich heritage of medieval buildings. See “Gravensteen,” built in the 12th century. Today, Gravensteen is one of the biggest and most popular moated castles in Europe.

Antwerp-

Famous for its diamond trade, Antwerp is also home to numerous cultural jewels. Among them, the Cathedral of Our Lady with its paintings by the famous Baroque artist Peter Paul Rubens, such as the Raising of the Cross. The Cathedral has 4 paintings done by Rubens.



Keukenhof Gardens-

Discover one of Europe’s largest garden displays, the Keukenhof Gardens, located near Amsterdam. This expansive 19th century park,



with its art, royal flair, sculptures, and creative diversity attracts over a million visitors each year. Round, oval, triangular and rectangular borders line the park’s driveways, making a cheerful ensemble of colors, shapes and scents. Alternating exhibits, know as parades, bloom in several pavilions. Did you know it’s home to seven million tulips, narcissi, and hyacinths?

Middleburg-

The Delta Works Project, located near Middleburg, is a storm surge barrier considered one of the premier engineering marvels of the world. It took almost 40 years to build the 10,500-mile engineering feat! The Delta Works, consisting of 13 sections, together form the largest flood protection system in the world and are definitely worth a visit. This imposing project, also referred to as one of the seven wonders of the world, illustrates how the Dutch deal with water. Furthermore, they lie in a gorgeous environment with wonderful beaches, beautiful nature and many culinary spots.



Rotterdam-

Rotterdam, the second largest city in the Dutch region and one of the largest ports in the world, is often called the “Gateway to Europe”. Rebuilt after World War II, this city has no shortage of modernity.

Amsterdam-

Founded as a small fishing village in the late 12th century, Amsterdam became one of the most important ports in the world during the Dutch Golden Age as a result of its innovative developments in trade. Amsterdam has since continued to remain the economic center of the Netherlands, where tradition persists hand in hand with innovation.





Today, the city has one of the largest historic centers in Europe, with about 7,500 registered historic buildings. The center consists of 90 islands, linked by 400 bridges. Fascinatingly, the street pattern remains largely unchanged since the 19th century. The city's intimate character is manifested in these narrow, bustling streets of the old town, where reminders of the glorious past –

gabled houses, noble brick facades clad with sandstone, impressive towers and churches, and the music of carillons and barrel organs – are always readily available.

Dutch Cheese-

While some may believe that France has a monopoly on European cheese, the Netherlands is one of the largest cheese exporters in Europe. In fact, the Netherlands was one of the top countries for cheese consumption per capita in 2014, with individuals eating an average of 42.7 pounds of cheese each year.



Historic Cheese Markets - A handful of Dutch cheese markets honor a fascinating tradition that all begins with farmers bringing their cheese to the market. The cheese wheels are stacked into barrows and carried ceremoniously into town by teams of porters wearing brightly colored straw hats. A lively bargaining ritual thus ensues involving hand-clapping and shouting between sellers and buyers, a tradition known locally as *handjeklap*. Only after the price is agreed upon are the wheels weighed on cheese scales and displayed for sale.

Seasonal cheese market traditions can still be observed in the Dutch towns of Alkmaar, famous for its 400-year-old market, and Edam, which features horse-drawn carriages and boats to transport the wheels to its 18th-century weigh house. The cities of Gouda, Hoorn and Woerden also have their own unique traditions. During AmaWaterways' *Tulip Time* cruises, you can visit the city of Gouda on an excursion from Rotterdam, during which you'll have a chance to see the historic Weigh House where cheese was once scaled

As Gouda as Gold- The Netherlands is renowned for its Gouda, a style of cheese that, when aged, has a crystallized texture and distinctive butterscotch flavor. Traditionally made from cow's milk and named for the city in South Holland where it was originally traded, Gouda has been produced since the end of the 12th century and accounts for half of all Dutch cheese production.

All of these fascinating and beautiful destinations can be visited on wonderful river cruise itineraries!

