Springtime in Holland
Travel

Passports
Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to the Netherlands.

Visas
British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Dutch Embassy: 38 Hyde Park gate, London SW7 5DP. Tel: (0)20 7590 3200 or (09065) 508 916 (visa information line). Fax: (0)20 7581 348. Email: consular@netherlands-embassy.org.uk. Website: www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk. Open Mon-Fri 0900-1700; 0900-1200 (for visa and passport section).

Tickets
You will be issued with a return train ticket. Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by an asterisk in the class type section in the top right hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

Local train tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats
On the Eurostar legs of the journey you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket. There are no seat reservations between Brussels and The Hague, your tour manager will have a group ticket for this section of the journey.

Baggage
As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trollies are available at St Pancras and Brussels, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called thebaggageman, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:
http://www.thebaggageman.com

Labels
Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers
On arrival, transfer by coach to Delft (approx. 2 hours) and Hampshire Delft Centre Hotel.

Special Requests
If you haven’t already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.
Accommodation

Hampshire Delft Centre, Delft
The family-owned 3-star Delft Centre Hotel is in a great location - as its name suggests - in the heart of Delft across a canal behind the Nieuwe Kerk within a few minutes' walk of the main square and all the main sights. The hotel's public areas are stylish and modern and are themed around music – you might even find a pianist accompanying breakfast or dinner. Facilities here include bar, restaurant, waterfront terrace and comfortable bedrooms with private bath/shower, hairdryer, TV, telephone, safe, wi-fi and coffee/tea making facilities.

For more information visit their website http://www.hoteldelftcentre.nl/?lang=en

Food
There are few dishes that can be described as quintessentially Dutch, and those that do fall into this category are a far cry from the elaborate creations of French or Italian cuisine. Almost every large town, however, has a wide range of restaurants specialising in their own brands of international dishes. Indonesian cuisine, a result of the Dutch colonisation of the East Indies, with its use of spices and exotic ingredients, is particularly delicious.

A typical Dutch breakfast usually consists of several varieties of bread, thin slices of Dutch cheese, prepared meats and sausage, butter and hagelslag (chocolate sprinkles), or jam, often a boiled egg and a cup of coffee. For lunch, most common are Koffietafel (breads, various cold cuts, cheese and conserves with a side dish of omelette, cottage pie or salad and coffee) and broodjes (sandwiches), served in the ubiquitous sandwich bars – broodjeswinkels.

More substantial dishes are generally reserved by the Dutch themselves for the evening meal: erwtensoep (thick pea soup served with smoked sausage, cubes of bacon, pig's knuckle and brown or white bread), groentensoep (clear consommé with vegetables, vermicelli and meatballs), Stamppot (hearty, traditional mash-up of potatoes with endive, turnips or some other earthy vegetable, customarily accompanied by smoked sausage), klapstuk (an accompaniment of stewed lean beef) and boerenkool met rookworst (frost-crisped kale and potatoes served with smoked sausage).

Seafood dishes are often excellent, particularly in Amsterdam, and include gebakken zeetong (fried sole), lekkerbekjes (fried whiting), gerookte paling (smoked eel), royal imperial oysters, shrimps, mussels, and lobster. Lightly salted ‘green’ herring can be bought from street stalls (they are held by the tail and slipped down into the throat).

Favourite Dutch desserts include flessjes or pannekoeken (25 varieties of Dutch pancake), wafels met slagroom (waffles with whipped cream), Poffertje (small dough balls fried and dusted with sugar) and Stroopwafel (two thin layers of waffle filled with sweet sticky syrup – placed on top of a hot cup of tea or coffee, the caramel syrup melts deliciously).

Restaurants usually have table service. Bars and cafes generally have the same, though some are self-service. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, but it is customary to leave small change when paying a bill.

Drink
Dutch beer is excellent, with pilsener-style lagers the most popular. It is always served chilled, generally in small (slightly under half a pint) glasses. The most popular brand in Amsterdam is Amstel.

The local spirit, Jenever (Dutch gin), flavoured with juniper berries and served chilled, is usually taken straight and knocked back in a single go, but it is sometimes drunk with cola or vermouth. It comes in many varieties depending on the spices used. Favoured brands are Bols, Bakma, Claeyn and De Kuiper. Other excellent Dutch liqueurs include Curaçao, Parfait d’Amour, Triple Sec (similar to Cointreau) and Dutch-made versions of crème de menthe, apricot brandy and anisette.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily
This lovely new tour places particular emphasis on its flowers and gardens at the time of year when they look their best. From sensational Keukenhof with its six million bulbs to botanic gardens in Leiden and Amsterdam and the charm of the Kinderdijk windmills, this tour is a scenic and historic delight.

Places of interest included in the tour:

**Aalsmeer Flower Market**
The flower auction held each weekday at the FloraHolland warehouse in Aalsmeer is the largest flower market in the world. Daily around 20 million flowers and decorative plants are traded here with well over 12 billion flowers traded annually in the six Flora Holland auctions in The Netherlands. This enormous central auction building in Aalsmeer has the largest footprint (518,000 m²) in the world while its floor space of 990,000 m² makes it the fourth largest building in the world. Inside, the building is a hive of activity. Endless numbers of small trains full of carts loaded with containers of flowers and plants are moved by electric-powered trucks or automated rails. It looks all chaotic with a highway system (and clearly a highway code to go with it) allowing the various wagons to be moved to where the schedules demand. Flowers arrive from around 10 pm and are cooled and sorted during the night. The auctions are early morning with bought flowers distributed immediately. By late afternoon, all the flowers will have moved out and the warehouse prepared for the next round. Visitors to the Aalsmeer flower auction may study the activity from two elevated walkways high above the busy warehouse.

**Delft**
It isn’t hard to see why Delft is one of the most popular attractions for visitor’s to the Netherlands – set on several beautiful tree-lined canals, the town is one of Holland’s most beautiful and is a charming base for our tour. Birthplace and home to Vermeer, the town was featured in the recent film, “Girl with a Pearl Earring” inspired by the painting of the same name. Famed for its distinctive blue and white ceramics and tiles, Delft has a gorgeous centre – a jumble of old tiled houses, narrow streets, and lovely little bridges, though it is the feeling of the place that holds most of the appeal. Highlights here include the 14th century Nieuwe Church, the Town Hall, the Oude Delft Canal, Prinsenhof and 13th century Oude Church and Hippolytusbuurt canal, where florists display their wares.

For more information about Delft: http://www.delft.nl/delften/

**Gouda**
A typical Dutch country town with delightful old buildings surrounded by quiet canals, Gouda is famed for its cheese, available in jonge (young), belegen (mature) and oude (old) versions. Although it is a fairly small town, Gouda’s Market square is the largest in the Netherlands, an echo of its days at the centre of the medieval cloth trade and is still host to a busy market. It is also a beautiful old town renowned for its Stadhuis which dates from 1450, the Stedelijk Museum housed in the 14th century St Catherine’s Hospital and the church of St Janskerk, which is home to some of the world’s best stained glass windows.

**Leiden**
Home to one of Europe’s most prestigious universities and the birth place of Rembrandt, Leiden is a vibrant and appealing city with a number of exceptional museums. Its beautiful and historic old town, crisscrossed by ancient canals and full of lovely antique buildings, is best explored on foot. The Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, located in the old cloth merchants’ hall, houses some 17th century Dutch paintings. Other highlights include the Rapenburg canal lined with fine houses, Van Oudheden Museum of Antiquities and the 17th century fish market.

For more information about Leiden: http://portal.leiden.nl/en/tourism_leisure
Amsterdam
One of Europe’s great cities and the capital of The Netherlands, Amsterdam started life as a small fishing village and became one of the world’s most important ports during the Dutch Golden Age. Wander the narrow atmospheric lanes and canals lined with 17th century merchant’s houses and visit some of the many cultural and historic sites, such as the intensely moving Anne Frank’s house, the Flower Market, the canals such as Herrengracht and Singel and the lovely houseboats, and Westerkerk Church..

Do not miss visiting two exceptional museums. The Rijksmuseum, reopened after renovation in 2013, is one of the world’s finest art galleries with a large collection of Dutch works, particularly Rembrandts and several excellent Vermeers and a huge cache of sculptures and applied arts. The Rembrandt House Museum is based in the house where the artist lived and painted for 20 years before his eviction by creditors in 1659 and displays a number of his etchings.

Celebrate Vincent Van Gogh’s work at the Van Gogh Museum, that has some 100 of the post-impressionist artist’s works on display as well as letters to his brother Theo.

For more information about Amsterdam:
http://www.iamsterdam.com/
For more information about the Van Gogh Museum:
http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en

Keukenhof Gardens
The Keukenhof Gardens provide visitors with a feast for the senses! As 7 million flower bulbs bloom over 32 hectares, the park is awash with the sight and scent of blossoming flowers. See the flower shows, experience this year’s theme pavilion and delight in the statues dotted around the park. Take the kids on a treasure hunt or explore the playground, petting zoo or hedge maze.

The special theme for the Keukenhof in 2017 is ‘Dutch Design’. With groundwork laid by artists such as Mondrian and Rietveld, Dutch design – including fashion, interior and graphic design – is world-renowned and famous for its combination of minimalism, or even sobriety, and innovation. Look out for special flower presentations inspired by aspects of Dutch design, such as the Mondrian garden in primary colours, as well as exhibitions and events.

Kinderdijk
In 1997, the windmill complex of Kinderdijk was added to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage list because of its unique character. UNESCO considers the polder area with its dykes, boezems, mills and pumping stations to be proof of human inventiveness in reclaiming and protecting the land. The gorgeous windmills of Kinderdijk are part of a unique phenomenon. Nowhere else in the world can you find the complete history of water management at a single location. The windmills and pumping stations drain the excess water from the Alblasserwaard into the river Lek via the Elshout sluices. Subsequently, the river discharges the water into the sea.

Tour manager
Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.
The Basics

Climate – The weather in Delft at this time of year is likely to be similar to the UK. Evenings can be quite cool and there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Dutch.

Religion – Roman Catholic (30%), Dutch Reformed Church (11%), Other or non (42%).

National holidays – New Year’s day (01 Jan); Good Friday; Easter Monday; King’s Day; Liberation Day (05 May); Ascension day; Whit Monday; Christmas day (25 Dec); Boxing Day (26 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you’re eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it’s advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 230 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you’ll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Special purchases include Delft blue pottery, Gouda cheese and diamonds from Amsterdam.

Shops are open Mon 1100-1730, Tues-Fri 0930-1800 and Sat 0900-1700. In big cities, supermarkets are open from 0800-2000/2100. In large city centres, shops are open Sun 1200-1700. In many towns there is evening shopping till 2100 on Thursday or Friday.

Please note that some museums close on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a ‘universal’ one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.
Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist
Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.
Keep receipts for insurance claims.

Hospital
Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.
Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice
We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral rehydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.
Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection
Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Inoculations
You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.

Insurance
To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will NOT be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.
Please note that the EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country’s healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.
We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit: https://www.ehic.org.uk
Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:
00 44 20 7251 0045
Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:
00 44 20 7431 8201 or
00 44 7899 796542 or
00 44 7831 133079 or
00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate General Amsterdam
Koningslaan 44
1075 AE Amsterdam
Netherlands
+31 (0)20 676 4343

Open Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 0900-1230. Telephone enquiries Mon-Fri 0900-1300 and 1400-1630. Outside these hours a consular Emergency Service is in operation and can be contacted on +31 (0)20 676 43 43.

Travel Editions
3 Young’s Buildings, London EC1V 9DB
Tel: 020 7251 0045
Email: info@traveleditions.co.uk  www.traveleditions.co.uk

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