

A Tourist in The Netherlands

The Netherlands has a lot to offer tourists traveling the country. Activities range from museum hopping to taking boat rides in the Dutch canals and visiting hotspots such as coffee shops and the red-light district. These activities, I am sure, are mentioned in almost all the travel guides for The Netherlands. I, on the other hand, wish to provide a guide on the 'must see's' and 'must do's' related to the more cultural aspect of the Dutch in The Netherlands. The sites and activities mentioned in this article are what I consider to reflect the history and culture of a real Dutch.

Windmills: Kinderdijk

Since ancient times, man has harnessed the power of the wind to provide motive power for energy generation. Indeed, windmills originated from Europe, and The Netherlands contains the largest remains of this genius invention. In the past, in addition to grinding grains, windmills were used to keep large areas of land being flooded in The Netherlands due to its low sea-level. However, these old-fashioned windmills have been replaced by newer technology, leaving them available for tourists to explore. Located 15 kilometers east of Rotterdam is a village called 'Kinderdijk' in which windmills can be discovered. The 19 windmills that stand here were built around 1700, and are the largest concentration of old windmills in The Netherlands. Here, you can discover how windmills operate and enjoy a long walk along the river with windmills on its banks. Kinderdijk is reachable by public transport. However, if you've got an active group of friends that know how to read maps and brilliant weather, then biking to Kinderdijk is recommended. It only took us 3 hours to get there and back!



Delft Blue: Delft

Delftware or otherwise known as 'Delft Blue Pottery' is specialized pottery made in Delft, The Netherlands. Given its name, Delftware is famous worldwide for its blue and white color. This type of pottery originated from the Netherlands in the 16th century and includes objects of all descriptions such as plates, ornaments, tea pots and tiles. Dutch potters are extremely creative when it comes to patterns for their art. These delftwares are very interesting to look at especially if one is into arts and creativity. Delft is located just 20 minutes away by train from Rotterdam. This Dutch town has an amounting collection of delftware and museums depicting the history of this type of pottery can also be found. For shoppers, the authentic pieces are often expensive and very fragile. Hence, purchasing large pieces of delftware is not recommended if you wish to carry it in your luggage.



Cheese Market: Gouda

The Dutch have been making cheese since 400 A.D. Nowadays, The Netherlands is the largest exporter of cheese in the world. Having such a major role in the production of cheese, it is definitely worth it to visit the main place of production, which is 'Gouda'. Gouda is a small town located 20 minutes away by train from Rotterdam, and accounts for 50 percent of the country's cheese production. The traditional cheese market which opens at particular times is where farmers bring their cheese to have it weighed, tasted and priced. Cheese can also be purchased here. For cheese lovers, the Gouda Cheese Market would be an eye-opener. During

opening times, wheels of cheese are rolled into the market; and believe me when I say that they are huge!



Traditional Dutch: Volendam

Ever heard of traditional Dutch clothing? If not, I am sure we are all well aware of the wooden clogs and the funny hats that the ancient Dutch used to wear. Traditional Dutch attires can be found in the city called 'Volendam', which is located 30 minutes away from Amsterdam by bus. Here, individuals can dress up as a read 'Dutch'. For women, the upper part of the clothing consists of two layers: first layer dress with sleeves, usually a dark color; second outer layer with skirt or tunics that are worn over darker skirts. A pointy white head covering made of lace or stiff fabric is worn over the head. The men wore dark colored loose-fitting shirts with traditional double row of brass buttons in front, and loose-fitting knee or ankle length trousers accompanied by long socks. Masculine hats are usually traditional fishermen hats or flat caps. Lastly, both genders wear wooden clogs, which are hand carved and serve to make walking easier on marshy lands. If one is interested in dressing up as a Dutch, then Volendam is the place to be. Here, you can dress up as a Dutch and get your photo taken by professional photographers!

