

The Netherlands

We're looking forward to you joining us and working with the **Werk & Ik** Team In The Netherlands. We provide members of our **team** to all sorts of jobs and roles with our clients. Life and "Werk" with Werk & Ik will be varied and although hard work will be fun and interesting too.

Whilst we're waiting for your paperwork to be completed, I thought I'd share a few light hearted facts about living over here

Here's a few things

1. Don't call it Holland

Calling the Netherlands 'Holland' is like calling the France 'Normandy'. It's slightly faster to say but it's also just plain wrong. Holland is a region that takes up about one third of the Netherlands, so if you say 'Holland' then you're ignoring the other two thirds of the country. What about poor Groningen? Utrecht? Limburg? We could go on (there are 12 regions in total). The one exception appears to be the Dutch football team, who are still sometimes known as Holland. Even the Dutch fans chant "Holland, Holland, Holland". We don't think anyone has the heart to tell them.



2. It's very Low

There's an old saying that goes "while God created the Earth, the Dutch created the Netherlands". What do you do when you want a bigger country? You push the sea back. The Netherlands is a fairly small place but it should be even smaller. For nearly one thousand years, the Dutch have been draining land and reclaiming it back from the sea. They use pumps and windmills to drain the water, and then build big barriers along the coast (known as 'dikes') to stop the sea from taking it back again. Over a quarter of the Netherlands should technically be underwater and only 50% of the country is more than a metre above sea level. They're playing a dangerous, watery game. If you're wondering, "Netherlands" literally means "lower countries".



3. There ain't no mountain high enough



The Dutch landscape is famously flat. The lowest point in the country is **22 feet** below sea level (Prince Alexander Polder) and the highest point is only **1000** feet above sea level (the Vaalserberg), while most of the space in between is just a big green pancake. Positives: you can see for miles and you don't have to cycle up any steep hills. Negatives: it makes everywhere really windy and you don't get to cycle down any steep hills.

4. They're bicycle crazy

Name a more iconic duo than the Netherlands and the bicycle. They've been getting along for years and now bicycles actually outnumber people over there (**22.5 million** bicycles vs **18 million** people). It's lovely but also a bit sinister. Loads of car-bike collisions in the 1970s caused uproar amongst the Dutch, so the response was to create a system where bicycles (or *fiets*) have priority. There's now a **35,000 km** network of bike paths across the country and car drivers just need to deal with it. On roads, on roundabouts, in the city and in the countryside: the bike is always right. If you want to go Dutch then be prepared to pedal your socks off.

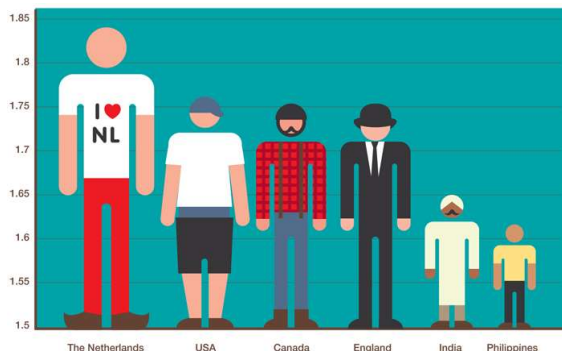


6. Their food is super healthy

All that cycling energy must be coming from somewhere. Back in 2014, Oxfam's 'Good Enough to Eat' Index ranked all the world's countries based on their diet (nutrition, health, affordability etc) and the Netherlands came first. In fact, **19** of the top **20** countries were in Europe, but nobody came close to the Dutch. For hearty grub and proper nosh, look no further than life in the Netherlands.



7. They are extremely tall



Here's more evidence that the Dutch are eating well. The people of the Netherlands have made up for living in such a low country by growing incredibly tall. Research from the journal *eLife* in 2016 showed Dutch men to be the tallest in the world, averaging a height of **183 cm**, or a little over **six foot**. We're not sure yet as to how the Dutch are going to make use of

this superpower, but it's very exciting for them. The potential of **8.5 million** tall men is enormous.

9. The Dutch really know their *Engels*

Try as hard as you like, but any attempt to speak to a Dutch person in Dutch will almost inevitably result in them replying to you in English. If they can tell that you're not a native, they won't waste any time letting you speak their language. This is really annoying for people who go to the Netherlands to practice their Dutch. According to the worldwide English Proficiency Index, the Netherlands has the highest proficiency of English as a second language than any other nation. However, it's not just down to the schools; none of the English or American cartoons are overdubbed on Dutch television, so kids have got to learn their *Engels* fairly quickly if they want to have a fun childhood.

10. Honesty is the best policy

They might speak a lot of English, but the Dutch don't behave like the English. The Dutch are honest, blunt and direct – and they're proud of it. If you're Dutch and you've got something on your mind, you say it. You never need to worry about what people secretly think about you because they will have told you already. It's a beautifully transparent and slightly painful system. If you're used to English manners, a day of Dutch directness will well and truly bowl you over.

11. They have great sayings

While you don't need to learn any Dutch to get by in the Netherlands, the language comes with some wonderful phrases. Learn a few of these and you'll be dispensing wisdom to your Dutch friends in no time. If something unfortunate happens to you or a pal, just say '*helaas pindakaas*' ('too bad, peanut butter'), which means 'no worries', of course. You could also try telling them '*de molen gaat niet om met wind die voorbij is*' ('the windmill doesn't care for the wind that's gone past). If someone reveals a secret to you, loudly shout '*nu komt de aap uit de mouw*' ('now the monkey comes out of the sleeve')! You might need to '*met de deur in huis vallen*' ('to fall with the door into the house'), which is what you say when you're about to be blunt with someone. That phrase will come in fairly handy in the Netherlands.

13. Orange fever is everywhere

It was Frank Sinatra who said "orange is the happiest colour". If that's true, then you're sure to feel happy in the Netherlands, because the Dutch just love the colour orange. It all started a long time ago in the 17th century when William of Orange took the throne, and everyone realised what a wonderful, jazzy colour orange was. Today, the



Dutch only need to slightest excuse to turn their whole country into a dazzling explosion of bright orange. International sport events (especially football matches) are a popular time for *oranje* to appear, along with Koningsdag, the annual holiday that celebrates the king's birthday. You probably haven't realised, but we're all part of this *oranjekoorts* ('orange fever'). If it wasn't for *oranjekoorts*, we'd all be eating purple and yellow carrots. The Dutch developed the orange carrot in the 17th century by adding more beta carotene (a natural orange pigment), and then grew so many that everyone basically forgot about the other types of carrot.

15. Marijuana isn't actually legal

Despite what everyone tells you, marijuana is not technically legal in the Netherlands. However, the laws surrounding weed are fairly hazy, and a small amount of it is "tolerated". If the Dutch police catch you with marijuana, you're very unlikely to get in trouble if it's less than **five grams**. The 'coffee shops' of



Amsterdam are technically illegal, but they also get *given* trade permits by the authorities. Doesn't sound very illegal, does it? Coffee shops can store up to **500 grams** of the green stuff at any time, but if they exceed this amount they'll be in trouble. We're surprised the Dutch haven't started growing bright orange marijuana.

17. National dish? Raw fish!



If you're ever feeling hungover, give this traditional Dutch remedy a try. Raw herring and raw onions wrapped up in bread is the national dish of the Netherlands, and it used to be the go-to meal for Dutch people after a big night. To prepare *broodje haring*, you cut off the head and the gills of the herring but leave the tail *on*. Then you cure it with salt, leave it for a day and it's ready. If

you're feeling so hungover that you can't be bothered to chew, *broodje haring* is so soft that you can practically slurp it down without using your teeth. Delicious *and* practical. You'll find street carts in every Dutch city selling *broodje haring*. If you can't see any then just follow the beautiful smell.

18. They love their *koffie*

If you think the UK consumes a lot of coffee, you should take a look at the Netherlands. The Dutch absolutely gulp it down. In 2017, the International Coffee Organisation found the Netherlands to be the fifth biggest coffee drinkers in the world, necking **8.4kg** per capita per year. The UK weren't even close to the top 20, consuming just **2.8kg**. Not that it's a competition or anything.





19. Adults eat sprinkles for breakfast



There's a child in all of us. The Netherlands have a thing called *hagelslag* and it's enormously popular. In the morning, fully grown men and women eat hundreds & thousands for breakfast. They spread some butter on their toast and then chuck loads of colourful sprinkles all over it. '*Hagelslag*' literally translates into 'hailstorm'. Sweet, sugary hail. You can get about 20 different flavours of *hagelslag*, including chocolate, forest fruits and gingerbread. There's also a very special type of *hagelslag* called '*mujsjes*' ('mice'), which is used to celebrate the birth of a baby. *Muisjes* is basically aniseed sprinkles, coloured pink if it's a baby girl and blue if it's a baby boy. Overjoyed parents sit around and chomp on these sugar-coated pellets while they chat about how

happy they are. The Dutch consume about **14 million kilos** of *hagelslag* each year, which is about the same as one hundred blue whales. And yes, of course they've made orange *mujsjes*.