



# Grocery shopping in the Netherlands

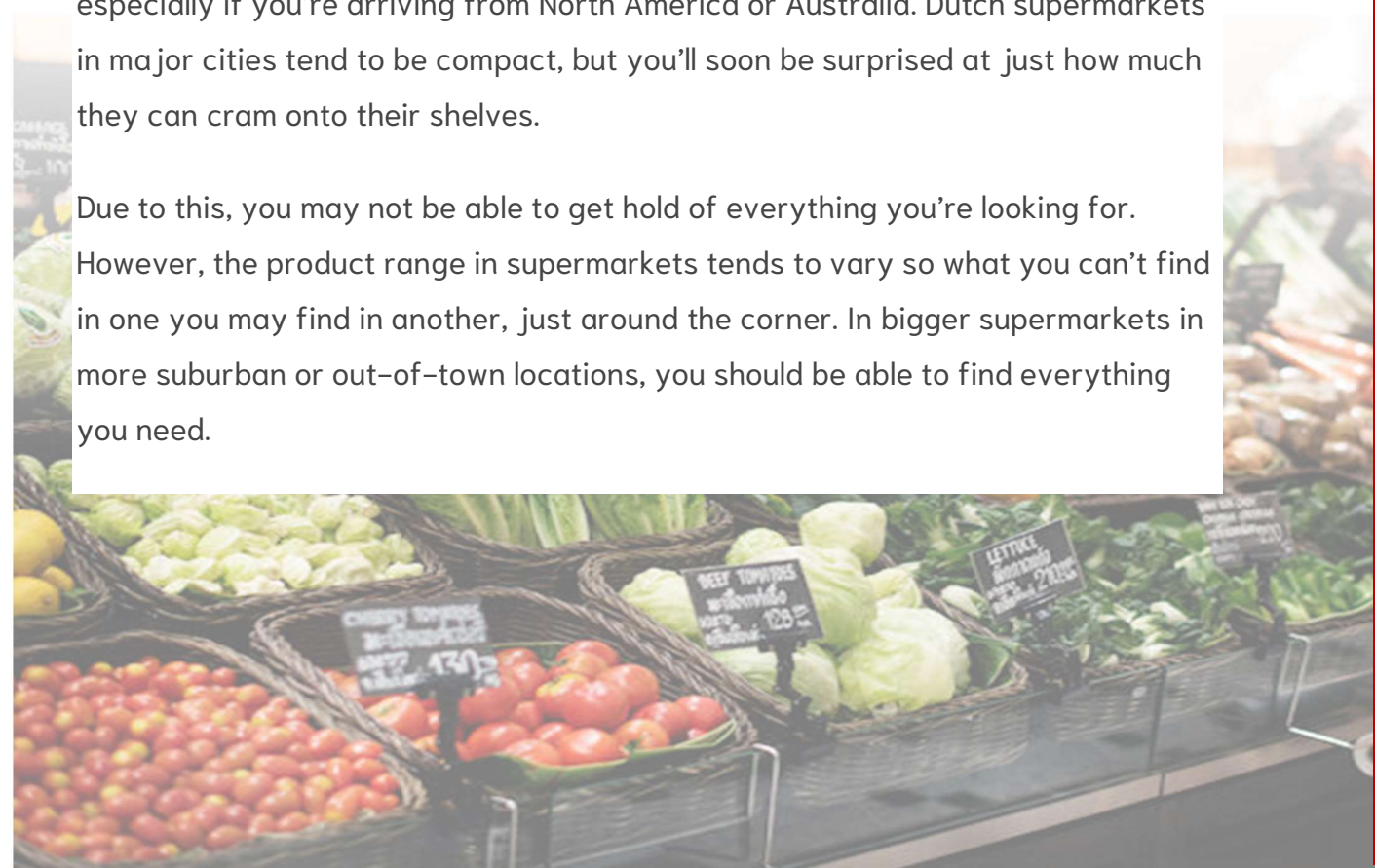
The local supermarket is probably one of the first places you visit when you first move to the Netherlands. When you step through the doors that very first time, you'll quickly realize that Dutch supermarkets might not be the same as they are back home. But don't let that stop you from going wild in the aisles.



Don't like supermarket shopping? There are plenty of other options for your groceries. These include local fresh food markets, online food shopping delivered straight to your door, and specialty shops. If you don't fancy cooking at all, you'll find a range of restaurants, cafes and snack bars in all major Dutch towns and cities.

The first thing you'll probably notice about Dutch supermarkets is their size, especially if you're arriving from North America or Australia. Dutch supermarkets in major cities tend to be compact, but you'll soon be surprised at just how much they can cram onto their shelves.

Due to this, you may not be able to get hold of everything you're looking for. However, the product range in supermarkets tends to vary so what you can't find in one you may find in another, just around the corner. In bigger supermarkets in more suburban or out-of-town locations, you should be able to find everything you need.





## Dutch supermarket chains

For a relatively small country, the Netherlands has plenty of supermarket chains to choose from. You'll likely find you have one or two to choose from in your neighbourhood. These can sometimes even be opposite to each other. Some of the main chains you'll find in Dutch neighbourhoods include:



**Albert Heijn:** The premium retailer is the largest Dutch chain with almost 1,000 stores and a product range focusing on quality. Pick up an AH Bonus card for discounts. Larger, hypermarket-type stores – called AH XL – can be found in suburban areas.



**Jumbo:** Albert Heijn's biggest competitor is slightly easier on the wallet. Generally found in more residential neighborhoods, Jumbo stores stock a decent selection of fresh and dried goods.



**Plus:** The third-largest supermarket chain in the Netherlands is a co-operative with over 200 stores. Largely found in the south of the country, particularly South-Holland and North-Brabant.



**Coop:** The aptly named Coop also started life as a cooperative. There are over 200 Coop stores in the Netherlands, mostly in residential neighbourhoods. Hypermarket-style Supercoop stores are also available.

Discount supermarket chains in the Netherlands







## Discount supermarket chains

You'll also find a number of discount supermarkets on Dutch streets. Many locals shop at both discount and high-end stores, ensuring their groceries are a mix of cheaper essentials and premium extras. Discount retailers in the Netherlands include the following:



**Lidl:** The German discount retailer is one of the biggest supermarket chains in the Netherlands. Most of their no-frills supermarkets also offer discounted non-food products and many also have in-store bakeries.



**Aldi:** Another German import, Aldi offers a range of basic food and household products. Like Lidl, Aldi stores are generally found in residential neighborhoods.



**Dirk:** Previously known as Dirk van den Broek, these well-stocked supermarkets rank among the cheapest Dutch supermarkets. Easy to spot, the storefronts are decorated with bright red Dirk flags.

You'll likely come across other supermarket chains in the Netherlands. These often change depending on your region and include **Vomar**, **Deen**, **Dekamarkt**, and **Hoogvliet**.

Generally speaking, Dutch supermarkets have fairly standardized hours. Most will open early in the morning (07:00 or 08:00) and close late in the evening (often at 22:00). Outside of these hours, you may still be able to find essentials at your local convenience store as some are open twenty-four hours.



## Tips for shopping in Holland

**There are no shopping bags:** Dutch people bring their own shopping bags from home. You should be able to buy bags at the checkout for a small fee – usually less than €0.50.

**You might not be able to pay with credit card:** Yes, you read that right. Some supermarkets – including most Albert Heijn stores – don't accept Visa or Mastercard credit cards. You'll need cash or a Dutch bank account, which will provide you with a Maestro or V-Pay card that can be used everywhere.

**You can't buy liquor:** You can buy wine and beer at Dutch supermarkets but for spirits, you'll need to go to a liquor store. These are often located nearby. Some supermarkets even have separate liquor stores inside.

**The prices might be rounded up:** The Netherlands has phased out the €0.01 and €0.02 coins, meaning prices are either rounded up or down at the register, often to the benefit of the store.

**Bottle returns:** When you buy certain drinks, you pay a small refundable deposit for the bottle that's included in the price. Most supermarkets have bottle returns that let you collect this deposit.

**Bag it up:** Don't expect any help packing your groceries at Dutch cash registers. You have to bag your own groceries in the Netherlands, and it pays to do it quickly.

**Get on your bike:** Many Dutch supermarkets don't have car parks – particularly in towns and cities – so most locals walk or cycle. You have to carry what you buy or equip your bike with panniers.

