

Dutch public transportation

Generally speaking, the Dutch public transportation network is clean, efficient, and relatively cheap. The local train network – operated by **NS** (*Nederlandse Spoorwegen*) – covers much of the country and you can move between cities cheaply. Other towns and villages are connected by bus links, while the northern islands have ferry access.



In larger cities, you'll find either a tram or a metro system (or both), while smaller cities and towns have bus networks connecting suburbs with central areas. These networks are operated locally. However, wherever you are in the Netherlands, you'll be able to use your *OV-chipkaart*, the national smart-card payment system for public transportation. Disabled travelers are generally well-catered for, and public transport stops and stations are usually near each other. This lets you seamlessly move between transport modes during your journey.

The OV-chipkaart



The first thing you need to know about public transportation in the Netherlands is the *OV-chipkaart*. The *OV-chipkaart* (OV stands for *openbaar vervoer*, or public transport) is the Dutch smart-card payment system that operates across the country on all public transport options. There are two types of *OV-chipkaart*: anonymous

and personal. Anonymous cards can be bought and topped up from machines and ticket offices at train and metro stations. Personal cards need to be purchased online, and you will need to provide a photo for the card. These cards can be topped up online or at a ticket machine. Alternatively, you can sign-up for automatic top-ups when your balance falls below a certain amount.

Cost

Journey costs are determined by the distance of your journey. When you check in, a boarding fare is debited from your card. This fare varies depending on the mode of transport. When you check out at your destination, you will be refunded this boarding fare, minus the charge for the kilometers you've traveled. However, if you fail to check out, you will have to pay the whole boarding fare, up to €20. For more information, visit the *OV-chipkaart* website.

If you're moving between transport modes/operators as part of the same journey, you'll need to check out and then check back in again.

Public transportation apps in the Netherlands

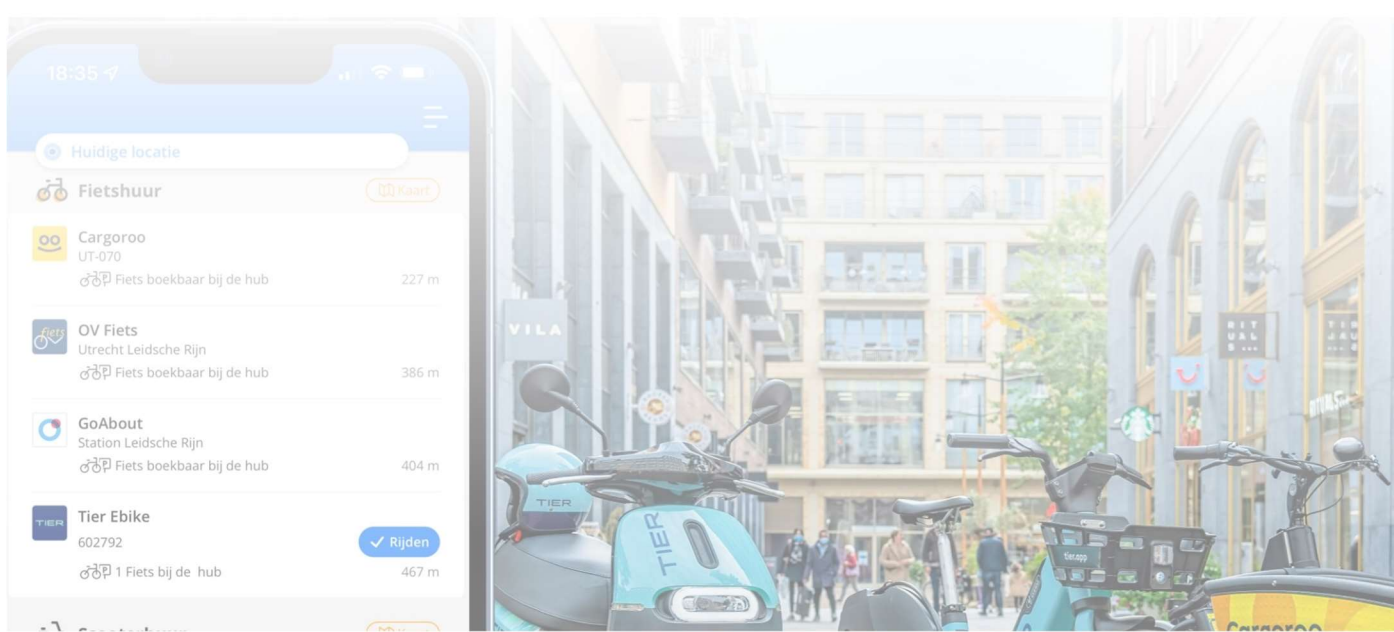
One of the best ways to plan a journey in a new country is by looking up your options online. The Netherlands has a wealth of public transport apps, including:

9292 – this app and website allows you to plan your journey in detail, with options for walking, cycling, trains, trams, and buses. It also allows you to check fares and order credit online.

NS – the national train app has an in-built journey planner to organize your train travel. It also keeps you up to date on delays and cancellations.

Omio – this website and app allow you to explore and book different train, bus, and air fare options, particularly handy if you're making a longer journey.

ov-chipkaart.nl (website only) – on the *OV-chipkaart* website you can order a personal transport card, check your balance, print travel declarations, and manage subscriptions.



Train travel in the Netherlands

When it comes to traveling long distances in the Netherlands, the train is by far the most popular form of public transport for the locals. This is largely thanks to the quality of the local network, which is one of the busiest in the world. Around 611,000 people currently travel by train each day, down from 1.3 million in 2019. Most of the country is within easy access from the rail network, although connections are generally more limited in the north of the country.



Dutch trains are operated by NS (*Nederlandse Spoorwegen*). Some regions have additional train companies operating their network (for example, Arriva Netherlands in the north, east, and south of the country). There are two types of NS trains to look out for: the Sprinter and the Intercity. Rather confusingly, the Sprinter is the slower of the two, stopping at all local stations. On the other hand, Intercity services only stop at major stations, ensuring a quicker and more comfortable journey. Most trains have toilets on board, although some older Sprinter trains don't, so you may want to use the toilets at your departure station. Trains in the Netherlands are almost always reliable and well-connected, but the railway occasionally faces issues. Services can be canceled due to strong winds, technical difficulties, and staff shortages. Because the network serves so many passengers and trains, a minor incident can have effects on large parts of the network. It's a good idea to download the NS app to keep an eye on disruptions and updates. If you or a travel companion require special assistance, contact NS ahead of time to ensure you receive the help and support you need. For more information on this, visit the NS's dedicated web pages.





Train tickets and costs in the Netherlands

Train tickets in the Netherlands are based on the distance and time you travel. While tickets are not especially cheap, prices are in line with other western European countries. The cost of your ticket is usually the same, no matter when you buy it, and you'll generally pay more to travel during rush hour (*de spits*: 06:30–09:00 and 16:00–18:30). There are two ways to pay for your train travel: either use your *OV-chipkaart* credit or buy a ticket. You can buy tickets online or at a ticket office or machine at the station.



Train timetables and maps

In the Randstad, standard train services run from around 05:00 until about midnight. Trains are regular, with some intercity routes having seven or eight journeys per hour. Many local routes often have three or four trips every hour. Night trains also depart once per hour between cities in the Randstad. In cities outside this region, and in more rural areas, you might find the service less regular. Check the NS Journey Planner to find the best route and timetables. Train stations and stops in the Netherlands

A great feature of most Dutch stations is the *OV-fiets*, a bike you can hire for a small daily charge. You need a personal *OV-chipkaart*, but the subscription costs €0.01 per year, and you can hire up to two bikes at a time. If you return your *OV-fiets* to another location, you'll need to pay an additional €10 fee.



Taking the bus in the Netherlands

As in many other countries, the bus is the most common form of public transportation in the Netherlands. So whether you're living in a rural area away from the rail network or traveling around towns or cities, it's likely that a bus will be your best bet. But that's not a problem, because Dutch bus services are generally pretty efficient.



The operators of Dutch bus networks vary across the country, but you'll be able to use your *OV-chipkaart* on all of them. Some buses run on more local routes, often stopping both in and outside urban areas. However, recent years have seen more direct intercity bus lines set up that connect popular regions. Many commuters use these and often find them quicker and more convenient than the train.

There are several different bus operators, such as GVB, Arriva, Connexxion, HTM, and RET. Some buses have WiFi and USB sockets so you can work on the go. Most of the time, you'll need to enter the bus through the front door and exit through the back door.

Bus tickets and costs in the Netherlands

When catching the bus, you can either buy a ticket from the driver or check in and out with your OV-chipkaart. Some providers also allow you to purchase tickets online. If you are caught without a ticket or forget to check out, you are likely to face a fine.





If you travel often, it's a good idea to buy a season ticket, which can save you money on your bus journeys. Check your local bus provider's website to find out what they offer. In addition, people over retirement age can travel for a discounted fee or for free in many cities, and some municipalities allow young children to ride the bus for free.

Bus timetables and maps in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, buses run from around 05:00 until just after midnight. In cities, buses are fairly regular, with departures every 10–15 minutes. However, rural buses generally have fewer facilities and depart less often. Amsterdam also has night buses, which run once per hour. You can check bus timetables and maps on your transport app or via the bus operator's website. In addition, many bus stops have schedules, and bus shelters often display route maps.

Bus stations and stops in the Netherlands

You'll usually find bus stations with multiple bus routes at the main stations in cities. Meanwhile, you can usually spot a Dutch bus stop by its bus shelter, a small sign denoting it as a bus stop, and, sometimes, a live departure board. It's a good idea to stand up and move to the bus stop sign as the bus approaches, as some drivers don't stop if they only see people sitting in the shelter.



Traveling by tram in the Netherlands

If you want to take in the beautiful Dutch streets while not actually walking or cycling, there are few things better than taking the tram. The four largest cities in the Netherlands each have their own tram system: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht. Of these, Amsterdam has the most extensive network, with 500 tram stops along 15 lines.



When it comes to public transportation in the Netherlands, trams are generally the quickest way to move through crowded city centers. However, they also double up as excellent ways to see the city. In fact, National Geographic hailed Amsterdam's Tram 2 as one of the world's best tram routes. Starting at Centraal Station, it showcases some of the city's best attractions, including the Royal Palace and Rijksmuseum.



Ferries in the Netherlands

Ferries might not be your first port of call when you think about public transportation, but in the Netherlands, your nearest one might be your best option. In Amsterdam, free ferries transport cyclists and pedestrians across the IJ. Services run all night and offer an unmistakably Amsterdam experience should you be looking for one.



However, these aren't the only ferries in the Netherlands. Along some rivers, you'll find pedestrian and cycle ferries making the crossing. Some are manned, while others you have to operate yourself. There are also ferries connecting the mainland to the northern islands, such as Texel. Check ahead to avoid disappointment, particularly if planning a cycling trip, as you may need to detour over the nearest bridge if the ferry isn't running.

Tips for traveling by ferry in the Netherlands

Before leaving dry land, read these top tips for ferry travel:

When boarding the IJ ferries in Amsterdam, always move to the front of the boat to allow others to board behind you. When you arrive, move away promptly to allow others to disembark safely.

Some river ferries only operate seasonally or on certain days. Do your research ahead of time so you don't get left stranded.

