



WEEKEND IN...

Arty AMSTERDAM

Rose Dykins suggests ideas for a culture-themed break in the Dutch capital

Sauntering around Amsterdam on a sunny autumnal day is good for the soul. The whirring of bicycle wheels, the stretches of still canals lined with pretty houseboats and the warmth of the locals should make it one of the most relaxing and pleasant capitals you'll encounter.

Much is being done to shed the negative image of the red light district, which can mar visitors' views of the Dutch capital. The city council has invested millions of euros in buying out the owners of the notorious red-tinted-windowed brothels – its ambition to close half of these has been put into action, and there are plans for the same proportion of cannabis "coffee shops" to shut.

The intention is not to eliminate them but to counteract their overrepresentation to the rest of the world, which detracts

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attention from the many other ways that Amsterdam expresses its distinctive, liberal character.

"Amsterdam has always nurtured creativity and liberty, which gives it a special culture," says Rhiannon Pickles, an arts

public relations professional based in the city. "Artists have complete freedom to do what they want." If you're working in the city, consider extending your stay to immerse yourself in its rich artistic scene.

STEDELIJK MUSEUM

The futuristic new wing of this modern art and design gallery looks like a gigantic spaceship has landed on the vast, green Museumplein. It reopened in September following an eight-year renovation, and the new section somehow blends well with the whitewashed brick interiors of the original 19th-century building, now home to the permanent collection.

Exhibitions demonstrate how artists have evolved – follow

Malevich's journey from generic sketcher to pioneering abstract artist – and the impact of the world wars on art. Installation fans will love Yayoi Kusama's *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*, a vessel formed from plaster phallic shapes, with a pair of women's shoes left inside as if the wearer has jumped out, and Kienholz's *The Beanery*, a eerie reconstruction of his local bar, which you walk inside to find time standing still (see overleaf to watch a short film about it using the Blippar app).

Open Tues and Weds 11am-5pm, Thurs until 10pm, Fri-Sun 10am-6pm; entry €15.

10 Museumplein; stedelijk.nl ▶

Above: Stedelijk Museum



WHERE TO EAT

BRASSERIE HARKEMA

At this buzzing eatery on the theatre strip, waiters in white T-shirts take your order while runners in black T-shirts bring it to your table. The wildly varied menu includes classics with an international twist.

67 Nes; tel +31 20 428 2222; brasserieharkema.nl

ANNA

A minimalist high-end restaurant in the heart of the red light district. Truffle risotto served with sautéed veal cheek, poached egg and a foam of forest mushrooms is among the inventive, beautifully presented dishes.

111 Warmoesstraat; tel +31 20 428 1111; restaurantanna.nl

DE CULINAIRE WERKPLAATS

At this eatery opposite Westergasfabriek, you are asked to help yourself to wine and bring your dishes up to be cleaned. The experimental five-course menu changes every six weeks, and you pay what you think it was worth.

10 Fannius Scholtenstraat; tel +31 06 5464 6576; deculinairewerkplaats.nl

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL NOTTING HILL

Located close to Albert Cuyyp Market, the hotel opened in October last year. The 67 rooms feature dogtooth-check carpets and cartoons of the hotel's mascot, "Monsieur Notting Hill", of whom there is a bronze statue in the lobby.

26 Westeinde; hotelnottingham.nl

THE TOREN

The seductive indigo walls, velvet furniture and chandeliers in the softly-lit lobby set the tone of this canal-side hotel. Double spa baths, crocodile-skin walls and subtly glittering wallpaper are among the furnishings in the 37 rooms.

164 Keizersgracht; thetoren.nl

ANDAZ AMSTERDAM PRINSENGRACHT

October saw the opening of Europe's second Andaz property (the other is in London). The design is full of salutes to local culture, from the Delft-patterned lobby to the hand-painted sinks in the 122 rooms.

587 Prinsengracht; amsterdam.prinsengracht.andaz.com



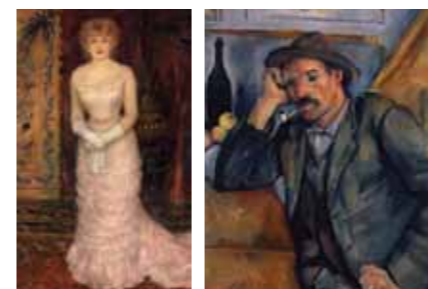
HERMITAGE MUSEUM

Upon entering the courtyard of the Hermitage, the bustle of the surrounding Jewish quarter melts away. Until January 13, the prestigious museum presents "Impressionism: Sensation and Inspiration", with works from St Petersburg's State Hermitage. It's brilliantly curated, and deepens your understanding of how Impressionist paintings may have been received in the 19th century. Presented alongside meticulous Realist works by Roybet, Scheffer and Laurens, you see how the vivid splodges and loose brushstrokes of Monet, Renoir and Pissarro may have been perceived as "unfinished" and radical.

While the Van Gogh Museum across town is being renovated, 75 of its paintings and sketches are also on show here.

Open daily 9am-5pm; entry €17.50. 51 Amstel; hermitage.nl

Clockwise from top left: Rijksmuseum; Vermeer's *The Kitchen Maid*; Rijksmuseum; Westergasfabriek; Cézanne's *Smoker* and Renoir's *Portrait of the Actress Jeanne Samary*; Hermitage Museum; W139



RIJKSMUSEUM

Another significant renovation for the city's art scene is that of the Rijksmuseum, to be completed in April. In the meantime, the grand Museumplein building has one exhibition, "The Masterpieces", focusing on the Dutch "Golden Age" of the 17th century.

Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* is on show, along with the extravagant dollhouses of Petronella Dunois. One replicates her family home, with even the wall murals and silver kitchen utensils reproduced to the same specification.

Open daily 9am-6pm; entry €14. 1 Jan Luijkenstraat; rijksmuseum.nl

OLD CHURCH AND W139

In September, the annual AIR8 Independent Art Fair was held in the 14th-century Old

Church in the red light district. The beautiful building merits a visit on its own, but as an exhibition space it provides an atmospheric setting, with a surprisingly contemporary feel. It hosts exhibitions throughout the year.

Parallel is Warmoesstraat, home to W139, a non-profit institution where artists collaborate. It began as a squat in 1979 and is now an inviting workspace that welcomes visitors to watch art in action. When I dropped in, artists were working on 90 posters to be hung around the city, while Edwin Deen's *Liquid Rainbow* – a garden sprinkler filled with coloured paint – was firing at the walls.

Old Church open Mon-Sat 11am-5pm, Sun from 1pm, oudekerk.nl; W139 open Mon-Sun 12pm-6pm, w139.nl

WESTERGASFABRIEK

A 15-minute tram ride from Leidseplein brings you to this former red-brick gasworks factory, now a "culture park". Exhibitions take place regularly and there are lots of hipster restaurants and bars. There's a definite bohemian feel to the place, enhanced by the creative start-up businesses and artists-in-residence set up here.

In September, it hosted the inaugural Unseen festival, which showcased photography from more than 50 galleries in the extensive exhibition space, including the cylindrical former cooling tower. November welcomes the Sieraad Art Fair for jewellery design, and in January it is the host venue for Amsterdam fashion week.

27 Polonceaukade; westergasfabriek.nl visitholland.com

ADVERTISING FEATURE

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The Netherlands are only a few hours from the UK when you travel by high-speed train. It's the hassle-free way to go – you'll avoid lengthy check-ins or queues for security and you travel from city centre to city centre. Jump on a Eurostar train from central London and you'll be in Paris in two hours 15 minutes or Brussels in as little as two hours. Regular high-speed Thalys services then connect Paris and Brussels

with Amsterdam and Rotterdam – it takes as little as one hour 53 minutes to reach Amsterdam from Brussels, while Rotterdam is only one hour ten minutes from Brussels.

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- "The collection enriched: from Bosch to Goya to Magritte", Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (until April 1): €10 (save €2.50)
- "Vincent", Van Gogh Museum at the Hermitage Amsterdam: pick up a free doll.
- You can also enjoy 25 per cent off the price of a Rotterdam Welcome Card.

Book rail tickets at raileurope.co.uk or at Rail Europe's travel centre at 193 Piccadilly, London. Book early (three months ahead) for the cheapest fares.

SCAN ME

Watch a short film about Ed Kienholz's *The Beanery* art installation

For Blippar download details see page 4

