

SAPIENS

TRAVEL DMC

Culture, Flavours and Lifestyle in perfect balance

THE NETHERLANDS · BELGIUM · LUXEMBOURG · ICELAND · SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

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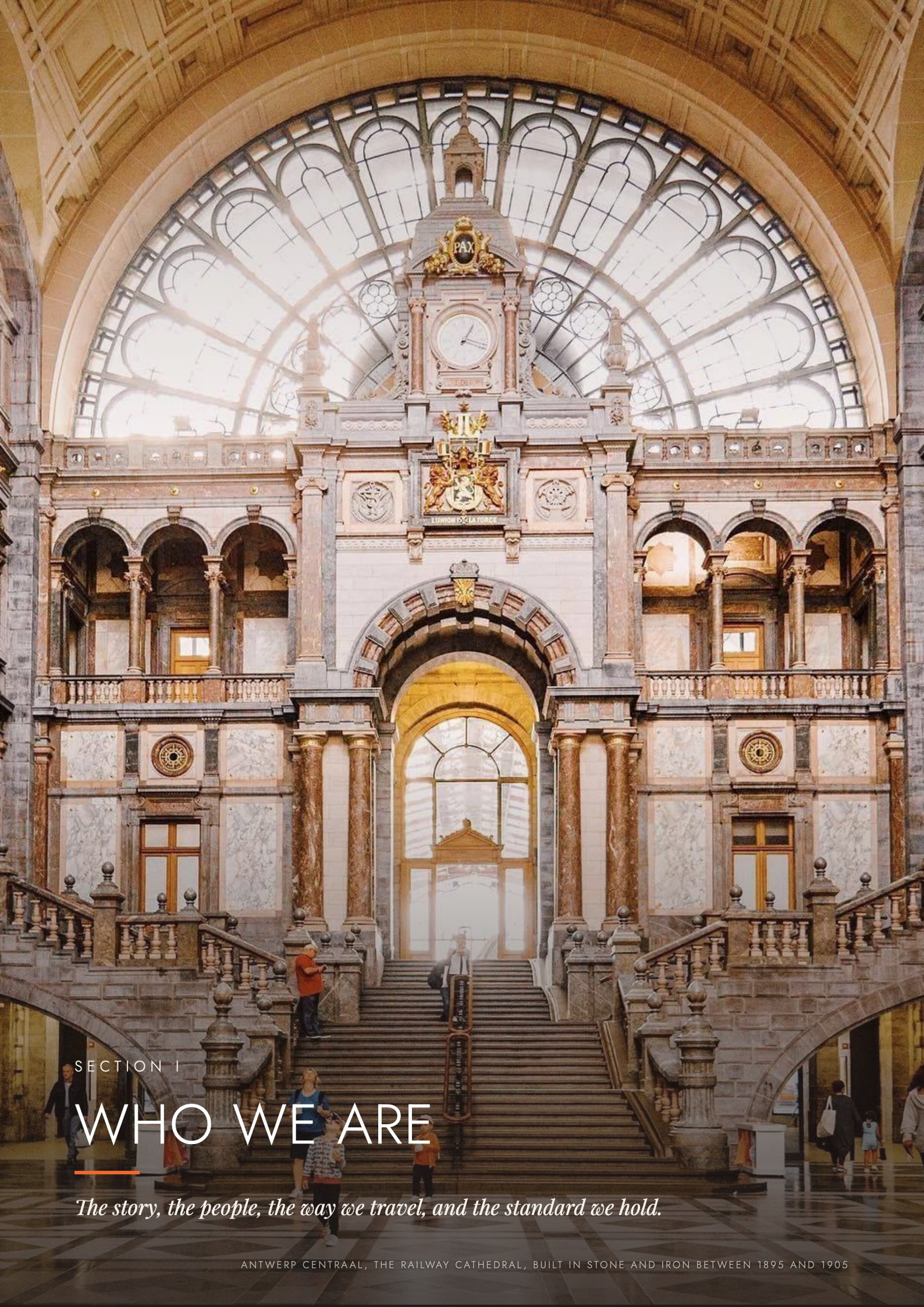
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SECTION I

WHO WE ARE

The story, the people, the way we travel, and the standard we hold.

ANTWERP CENTRAAL, THE RAILWAY CATHEDRAL, BUILT IN STONE AND IRON BETWEEN 1895 AND 1905

HUNTER-GATHERERS OF EXTRAORDINARY TRAVEL



Sapiens Travel DMC is a Virtuoso preferred B2B tour company. Founded in Amsterdam in 2018, we curate slow, meaningful journeys for FIT and luxury groups.

As Amsterdammers, we bring the city's spirit of openness, creativity and fun into everything we design. With privileged access and insider knowledge, we craft personality-driven itineraries guided by our pillars of culture, flavours and lifestyle, always favouring depth and connection.

WHAT WE DO

We connect people and cultures through thoughtfully curated journeys, transforming tourism into a force for cultural appreciation and preservation.

WHAT IS A HUNTER-GATHERER OF EXPERIENCES?

Twenty thousand years ago, Homo sapiens lived as hunter-gatherers, reading the land, gathering knowledge and carrying stories from one place to the next. On the walls of caves they painted what they saw and dreamed, in one of humanity's first acts of self-expression. This is where our name comes from.

That need still lives within us: to wander, to understand and to tell the story. We travel the way our ancestors did, curious and attentive, in search of meaning. We are curators, hosts and lifelong students of the destinations we represent.

We study a place until we understand its essence, then shape how it reveals itself, so a journey stays with the traveller long after. How you travel matters as much as where you go.

MISSION

To create culturally meaningful journeys that connect travellers, communities and destinations through carefully curated experiences, fostering cross-cultural understanding and contributing to the cultural sustainability of the places we represent.

VISION

To be recognised as the leading reference for cultural and lifestyle travel in the Benelux and the Nordic countries, combining knowledge, authenticity, innovation and excellence in every experience we create.

THE FOUNDERS

We are made by travel advisors, for travel advisors.



ERIK SADAO

Co-founder & Director of Experiences · sadao@sapiens-travel.com

A career in high-end travel in Brazil, 3 nominations for Most Innovative Advisor at the Virtuoso Awards, Winner of the Mauricio Leyton Spirit of Virtuoso Award, the author of seven travel books, and a consultant and writer for UNQUIET, a travel magazine published in Brazil.

FERNANDA MATSUOKA

Co-founder & Head of Operations · fernanda@sapiens-travel.com

20 years in high-end FIT travel across five-star hotels, cruise ships and luxury agencies, a Hotel Management degree and an MBA, and three things asked of every file: joy, beauty and precision.

HOW WE TRAVEL

01 · TRAVEL SLOWLY, AND WELL

Never more than ten guests per host, drives under two hours in comfortable, new cars and boats, skip-the-line access and gratuities included.

02 · WE CONNECT THE DOTS

We read the moment your clients are in and the destination just as closely. Everything we recommend, we explored ourselves.

03 · WE WELCOME EVERYONE

Founded in Amsterdam, we carry the city's spirit of liberty and tolerance, and we create journeys where every traveller feels genuinely welcome.

04 · WE KEEP YOUR TRUST

Every journey, and everything shared with us, remains entirely confidential. We never showcase client information.

05 · WE CARE FOR THE WORLD

Low-impact journeys guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, favouring walking, cycling and trains. A portion of our profits supports Inspirar-te and Youth Climate Leaders.

OUR VALUES

SERVE WITH CARE

Serving is our craft and our pleasure. We bring genuine hospitality and operational excellence to every stage of the journey.

KNOWLEDGE

We are driven by an ongoing pursuit of knowledge. We study, explore and share the stories of a place, revealing its true essence.

INNOVATION

We question how things are done, imagine new ways to present destinations and stories, and find the courage to act.

RESPECTFUL CONNECTIONS

We grow long-term relationships built on trust, transparency and collaboration, with clients, suppliers, communities and teams.

CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

We work for tourism that brings lasting benefit to the destination and its people, protecting the heritage of each place.

AUTONOMY

We gather excellent people and trust them to think, decide and act, choosing quality over quantity with real ownership.

WHY BOOK WITH US

Sapiens is made by travel advisors, for travel advisors, with Amsterdammer soul: artful, creative, smart, inclusive and fun. As former advisors, we understand both your clients' expectations and your need to build journeys that work for you and for them. Here's what sets us apart:

YOU WON'T MISS A BEAT

We personally explored every hotel, activity, restaurant and experience we recommend. We will tell you if the hotel of your choice is under renovation, or if an event or expo falls on the dates of travel.

WE STAND FOR CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our journeys honour traditions, history and local life. Our guides share stories with warmth and care, making culture engaging, respectful and sustainable for generations to come.

DESTINATION WISDOM, ON CALL

Questions on a file, a season or a property are an email or a call away, and our Sales Rep Biggeri+Universe supports you in your time zone.

EXCLUSIVE IN-HOUSE GUIDES: MEET OUR STORYKEEPERS

The first Sapiens gathered around a fire so someone could tell them what the day had taught: the one who remembered things, connected the dots and made the story worth passing on. That is the role we still hire for, and it is why we call our guides Storykeepers. We are the only DMC in the Netherlands and Belgium with in-house guides, trained by us to curate itineraries at a luxury level, foster genuine connections and avoid the tourist traps. Four things define them:

01 · CULTURE TRANSLATORS

Chosen for depth and for empathy, they sense the question a guest has yet to ask.

02 · A LIFETIME IN THEIR CITIES

Long enough to know the baker before the guidebook does, with insider access carried by local trust.

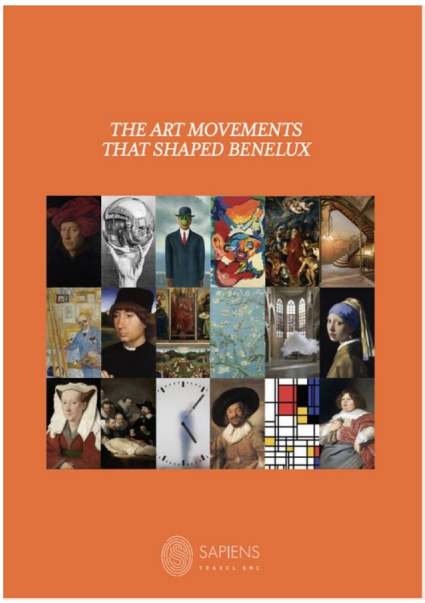
03 · A DIALOGUE, NOT A SCRIPT

Curiosity sets the pace; ideas flow naturally on tour and every guest feels part of the journey.

04 · ONE VOICE, YOUR CREDIT

The same team from arrival to departure, briefed on your clients, who come home with a story of their own. You get the credit.

Living stories. Shared beautifully.



OUR NEW GUIDE, FREE TO READ AND SHARE

The Art Movements That Shaped Benelux

Eleven movements across twenty cities, from Van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece of 1432 to the artists at work in the Netherlands and Belgium today. Each chapter reads in ten minutes and ends with the museums where it can be seen, ready to send to your clients before a trip. We are turning each movement into a journey, always with our Storykeepers.

READ THE GUIDE

OUR PARTNERS

Chosen the way we choose everything: for depth, trust and care.

These are the networks, collections and houses behind every file.

NETWORKS & REPRESENTATION

BIGGERI+UNIVERSE

SALES REPRESENTATION · USA & MEXICO

ILTM CANNES

INTERNATIONAL LUXURY TRAVEL MARKET

VIRTUOSO PREFERRED

ON-SITE PREFERRED PARTNER · THE NETHERLANDS

THE HOTEL PARTNERS

DE DURGERDAM

VILLA PETRUSSE LUXEMBOURG

RELAIS & CHATEAUX

ROSEWOOD AMSTERDAM

PILLOWS HOTELS

JULIANA HOTEL · BRUSSELS

SOFITEL LUXEMBOURG LE GRAND DUCAL

OOSTWEGEL COLLECTION

DE TUILERIEËN BOUTIQUE HOTEL

HOTEL DE L'EUROPE AMSTERDAM

WALDORF ASTORIA AMSTERDAM

SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD

DESIGN HOTELS

SIRCLE COLLECTION

THE DYLAN AMSTERDAM

HOTEL THE GRAND AMSTERDAM

HOTEL AMIGO BRUSSELS A ROCCO FORTE HOTEL

CONSERVATORIUM AMSTERDAM

THE LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD

PULITZER AMSTERDAM

BOTANIC SANCTUARY ANTWERP

CORINTHIA GRAND HOTEL ASTORIA BRUSSELS

LE ROYAL HOTELS & RESORTS · LUXEMBOURG

WS HS

DUKES' HOTEL COLLECTION

ANANTARA GRAND HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY AMSTERDAM

MINOR HOTELS

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION

SAPPHIRE HOUSE ANTWERP



SECTION II

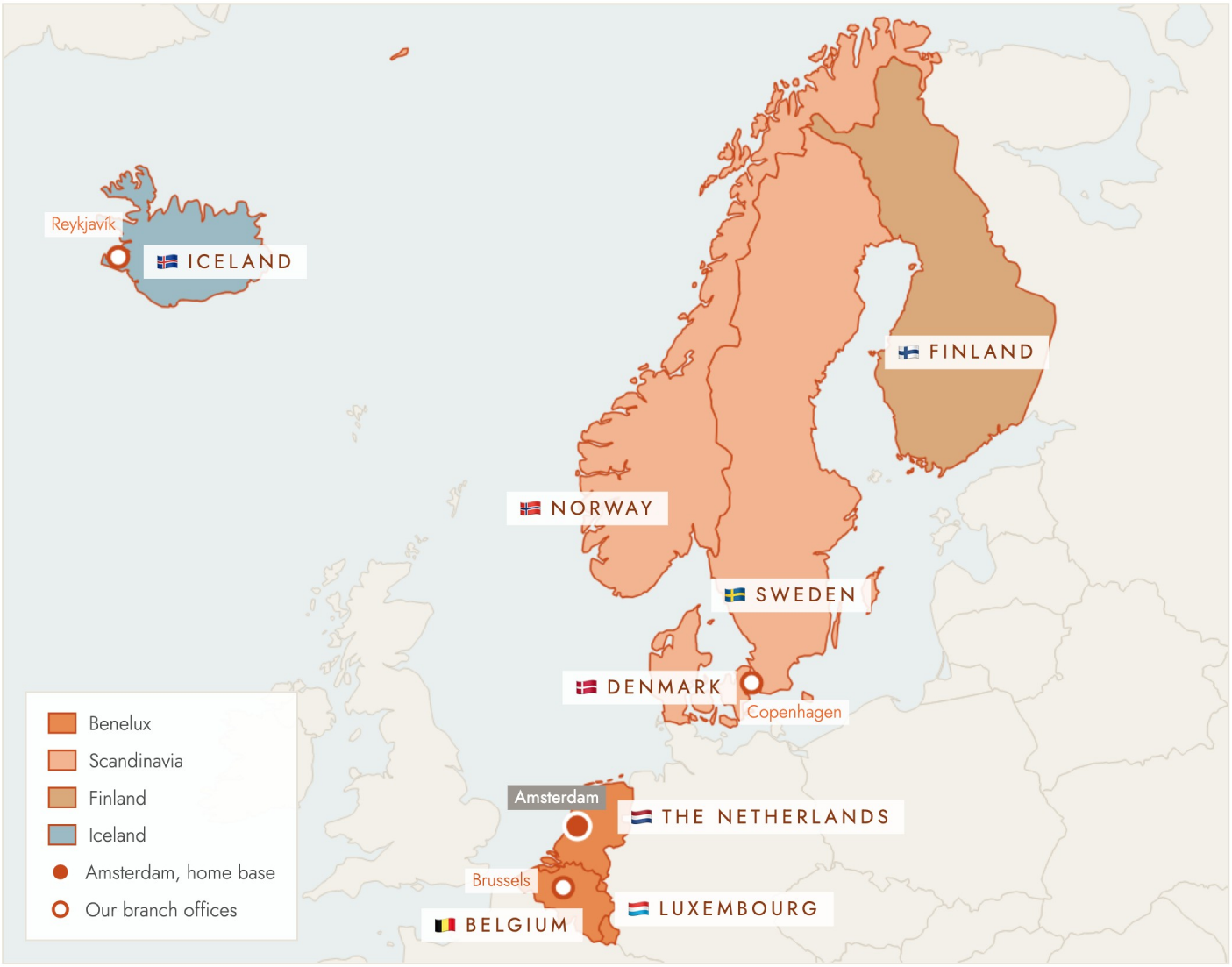
WHERE WE TAKE YOU

Four destinations, one team, and one short flight between the two halves.

FOUR DESTINATIONS, ONE JOURNEY

All private, curated from Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen and Reykjavík.

Each destination has its own chapter in this brochure, with its map, its seasons and its sample itineraries, and every journey can combine them: the Low Countries first, the North one short flight later.





THE NETHERLANDS

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BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG

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ICELAND

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SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

CHAPTER · PAGE 45

AMSTERDAM, GATEWAY TO THE NORTH

Schiphol flies direct to every Nordic capital and, in winter, to Lapland; since SAS joined KLM and Air France in SkyTeam, Amsterdam and Copenhagen work as one network. On the ground, Eurostar connects London, Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam on one line of rail, so the whole region moves city centre to city centre.



BY RAIL / BY CAR



CITY CENTRE TO CITY CENTRE

London to Amsterdam	4h by Eurostar
London to Brussels	2h15 by Eurostar
Paris to Brussels	1h30 by Eurostar
Lille to Brussels	35 min by Eurostar
Brussels to Antwerp	30 min by train · 45 min by car
Antwerp to Rotterdam	30 min by Eurostar · 1h by car
Rotterdam to Amsterdam	40 min by train · 1h by car
Brussels to Amsterdam	1h50 by train · 3h by car
Brussels to Luxembourg	3h by train · 2h15 by car
Amsterdam to Cologne	4h by train · 3h by car

Indicative times; schedules vary by season and operator.

OUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN BENELUX

One map for the Low Countries, where most journeys begin.

The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg fit inside three hundred kilometres. Orange marks the towns with hotels we work with, the rings the places we visit for the day, and almost all of it is within two hours of Amsterdam or Brussels, which is why the two halves travel so well as one itinerary.



DESTINATIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS, ONE BY ONE



AMSTERDAM

Our home and the gateway: the canal ring, the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh, and dinner on the water.



ZAANSE SCHANS, VOLENDAM, MARKEN & EDAM

The perfect place to unveil the Dutch countryside heritage.



KRÖLLER-MÜLLER & OTTERLO

Van Goghs in a sculpture park inside the Hoge Veluwe, reached by white bicycle through the woods.



THE HAGUE

The seat of government and the court city: the Mauritshuis, the Binnenhof, and the sea at Scheveningen.



LEIDEN, DELFT & THE BULB FIELDS

Rembrandt's birthplace and Vermeer's town, with the Keukenhof tulip fields at Lisse in flower between them each spring.



ROTTERDAM, KINDERDIJK & DORDRECHT

The rebuilt city of architecture, and nineteen drainage mills standing in a row half an hour away.



GOUDA

Cheese on the market square under the fifteenth-century town hall, and the stained glass of the Sint-Jan.



UTRECHT

Wharf cellars below the canal, the Dom tower, and Rietveld's Schröder House on the edge of town.



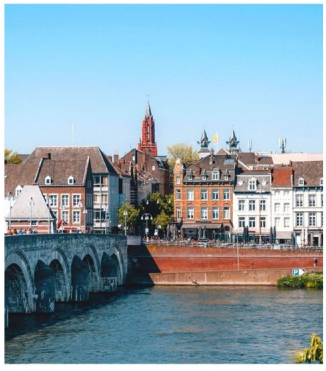
OVERIJSSEL: ZWOLLE, DEVENTER & HANSEATIC CITIES

The Hanseatic towns on the IJssel, and the village in the peat with no roads, only water.



ZEELAND

The delta in the southwest: dams and sea arms, oyster and mussel beds, dunes and quiet villages.



MAASTRICHT

One of the oldest cities in the country, Roman and Burgundian, with TEFAF in March and caves under the hill.



TEXEL

The largest of the Wadden islands: beaches and dunes, sheep and birdlife, and the red lighthouse at the north tip.

DESTINATIONS IN BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG



BRUSSELS

The capital and our second base: the Grand Place, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, and Horta's art nouveau houses.



BRUGES

A medieval trading city kept whole, with the Groeninge collection and Michelangelo's Madonna in the Church of Our Lady.



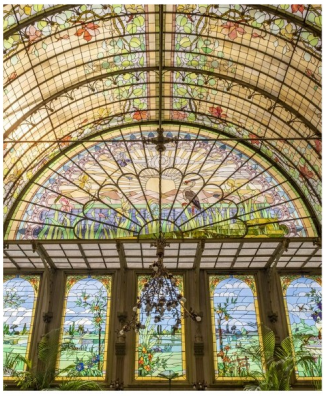
GHENT

The Ghent Altarpiece in Saint Bavo's, a castle in the middle of town, and long unhurried evenings along the Graslei.



ANTWERP

Rubens at home, the diamond quarter, the Plantin-Moretus press, and three decades of Belgian fashion.



MECHELEN

The old archbishop's city between Brussels and Antwerp, with Saint Rumbold's tower and the art nouveau winter garden of the Ursuline Institute just outside it.



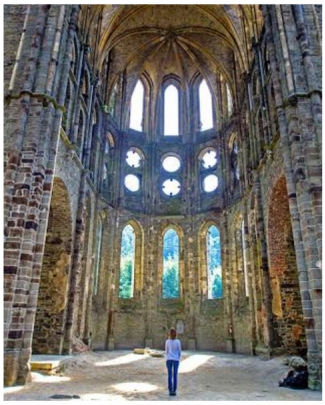
YPRES

The Menin Gate, the In Flanders Fields Museum and the cemeteries, with the Last Post sounded every evening since 1928.



WATERLOO

The 1815 battlefield half an hour south of Brussels, read from the top of the Lion's Mound above it.



VILLERS ABBEY

A ruined Cistercian abbey in the valley nearby, its twelfth-century church standing open to the sky.



DINANT & NAMUR

The Meuse valley: a citadel above the river, a collegiate church under the cliff, and the birthplace of Adolphe Sax.



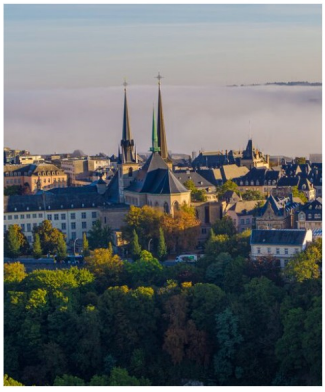
LIÈGE & SPA

The Walloon city on the Meuse, and the thermal town that gave its name to every spa that came after it.



BASTOGNE & THE ARDENNES

Forest and river valleys, and the town at the centre of the Battle of the Bulge, with its war museum and memorial.



LUXEMBOURG

A fortress capital on its rock, casemates cut into the stone below it, and the Moselle vineyards half an hour east.

OUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN ICELAND

The island, region by region.



REYKJAVÍK & AROUND

The base: every journey starts and ends here.

Reykjavík · the Blue Lagoon & Reykjanes · Þingvellir · Geysir & Gullfoss

THE WEST & THE HIGHLANDS

Snæfellsnes in a day; the highlands in summer only.

Snæfellsnes & Búðir · Húsafell · the Langjökull glacier · Kerlingarfjöll

THE SOUTH

The classic line of glaciers, black beaches and ice lagoons.

Hella · Sólheimajökull · the Katla ice cave · Reynisfjara & Vík · Skaftafell · Jökulsárlón & Diamond Beach

THE NORTH

The reward of a second visit, with far fewer travellers.

Akureyri · Mývatn · the Troll Peninsula

DESTINATIONS IN ICELAND, ONE BY ONE



REYKJAVÍK

The base for every journey: Hallgrímskirkja above the roofs, the Harpa on the harbour, and a dining scene far larger than the city.



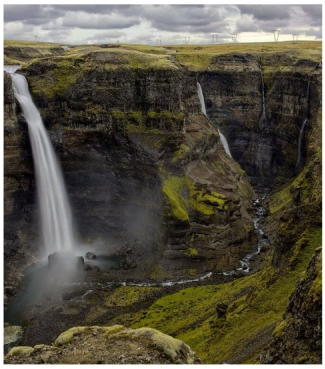
THE BLUE LAGOON & REYKJANES

Warm mineral water in a lava field twenty minutes from the airport, on the peninsula where the recent eruptions have been.



THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Þingvellir, where the plates pull apart and the parliament first met in 930, then Geysir and Gullfoss a short drive east.



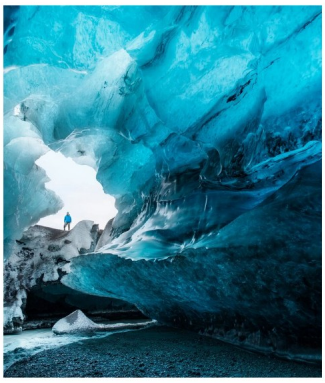
ÞJÓRSÁRDALUR

The valley of the Þjórsá below Hekla: the Gjáin gorge, the Háifoss falls, and the Viking-age farm at Stöng buried in 1104.



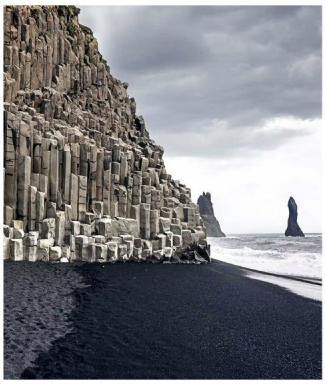
HELLA & THE SOUTH LOWLANDS

Farms and horses under the volcanoes, and a quiet base for the aurora between Reykjavík and the glaciers.



SÓLHEIMAJÖKULL & THE ICE CAVES

A glacier tongue reached on foot, and the caves under Katla that open fresh each winter.



REYNISFJARA & VÍK

Black sand, basalt columns and sea stacks, with the southernmost village on the island above the beach.



KERLINGARFJÖLL

Rhyolite peaks and steaming ground in the central highlands, on the Kjölur route, with a mountain lodge open through the summer.



JÖKULSÁRLÓN & DIAMOND BEACH

Icebergs breaking from the glacier into a lagoon, and the ones that wash back onto black sand across the road.



SNÆFELLSNES & BÚÐIR

The peninsula with a glacier at its tip, a black church alone on the lava, and a coastline most visitors miss.



HÚSAFELL & LANGJÖKULL

Lava caves and hot springs in the west, with a tunnel cut into the second largest glacier in the country.



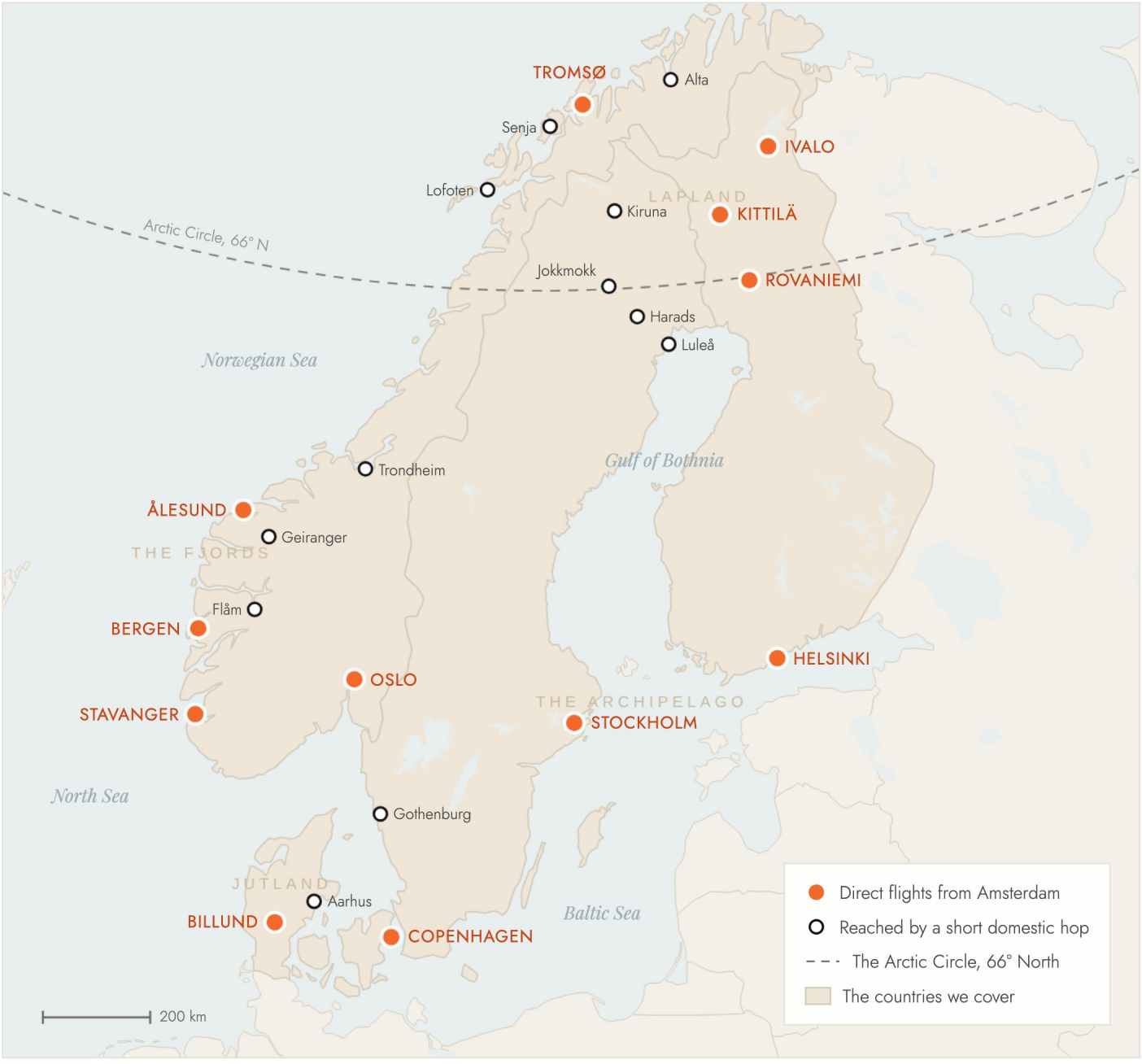
AKUREYRI, MÝVATN & THE NORTH

The northern capital on its fjord, the lake with its craters and steam, and whales off the Troll Peninsula in summer.

OUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

Every orange stop is one direct flight from Amsterdam.

The capitals and the fjords fly direct from Amsterdam; Lapland flies direct in winter and connects over Helsinki or Stockholm the rest of the year.



DENMARK

Copenhagen · Aarhus · Billund

NORWAY

Oslo · Bergen · Stavanger · Ålesund · Flåm & the Sognefjord · Geiranger · Tromsø · Senja · Lofoten · Alta

SWEDEN

Stockholm & the archipelago · Gothenburg
Swedish Lapland: Kiruna, Jokkmokk, Harads & Luleå

FINLAND

Helsinki
Finnish Lapland: Rovaniemi, Levi & Kittilä, Ivalo & Saariselkä

SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND, THE CITIES AND LAPLAND

The four capitals fly direct from Amsterdam and travel well two or three to a journey. Lapland is the winter half of the region, and a different country again in summer.

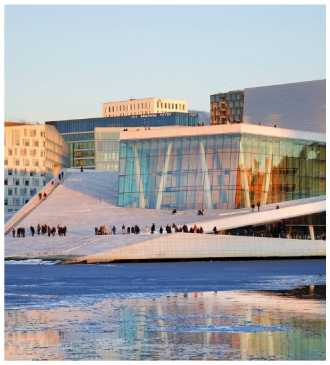
THE CITIES

Four capitals, each within two and a half hours of Amsterdam.



COPENHAGEN

Our Nordic base: Tivoli and the harbour baths, design in the old quarters, and the restaurants that made new Nordic cooking.



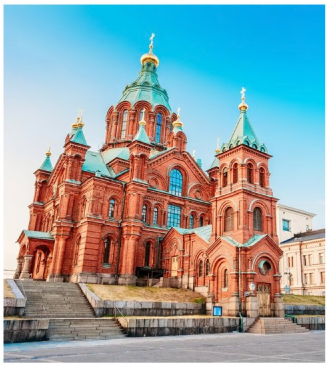
OSLO

The fjord city: the Munch museum and the opera house on the water, the Viking ships, and forest at the end of the metro line.



STOCKHOLM

A capital on fourteen islands, the Vasa raised whole from the harbour, and thirty thousand islands of archipelago beyond it.



HELSINKI

A city of Finnish design and saunas, with Suomenlinna across the water and the archipelago starting at the quay.

SWEDISH LAPLAND

The quiet side of the Arctic, and the design hotels that made it known.



KIRUNA

The mining town above the Arctic Circle, with the Icehotel rebuilt each winter at Jukkasjärvi beside it.



HARADS

The Treehotel in the pines above the Lule river, every room designed by a different Nordic architect.



LULEÅ

The way in on the Gulf of Bothnia, with the church town at Gammelstad and the ice road across the frozen sea.

FINNISH LAPLAND

The deepest winter in the region, reached direct from Amsterdam.



ROVANIEMI

The capital of Finnish Lapland on the Arctic Circle, rebuilt to an Aalto plan, with Santa Claus Village outside town.



LEVI & KITTILÄ

The fells of western Lapland: skiing, huskies and reindeer, reached by a direct flight from Amsterdam in winter.



IVALO & SAARISELKÄ

The furthest north of the Finnish airports, the way in to Inari and the Sámi heartland, with glass igloos and open fells half an hour away.

NORWAY, THE FJORDS SOUTH AND NORTH

The southern fjords are the classic week, reached from Bergen and Stavanger by rail and by boat. North of the Arctic Circle the coast opens into islands, and the light becomes the reason to travel.

THE SOUTHERN FJORDS

Bergen, the Sognefjord, and the coast north to the Storfjord.



BERGEN

Wooden warehouses on the Hanseatic wharf, the funicular up Fløyen, and the gateway to the western fjords.



VOSS

The valley town on the Bergen railway, with the gondola up Hanguren and the rivers that made it the home of Norwegian adventure.



FLÅM & THE SOGNEFJORD

The longest fjord in Norway, with the railway that drops down the valley from the mountain line at Myrdal.



STAVANGER & THE LYSEFJORD

The old white town beside the oil capital, with Preikestolen standing six hundred metres above the water.



ÅLESUND

An art nouveau town rebuilt in stone after the fire of 1904, spread across islands at the mouth of the Storfjord.



GEIRANGER & SKODJE

The fjord of the Seven Sisters at the head of the Storfjord, reached by the mountain road over Dalsnibba.

THE NORTH, BEYOND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

The islands and the Arctic towns above the Circle.



LOFOTEN

Peaks rising straight out of the sea, fishing villages in red cabins, and the midnight sun through June.



SENJA

The island south of Tromsø: wide beaches on one side, sharp ridges on the other, and few visitors on either.



TROMSØ & ALTA

The Arctic city with its cathedral and cable car, and the town of rock carvings and the northern lights observatory.



DESTINATIONS

THE NETHERLANDS

Canal cities, the light of the Golden Age, tulip fields in April. Everything sits within two hours of Amsterdam, our home.

THE WORKING WINDMILLS OF THE ZAANSE SCHANS, ON THE RIVER ZAAN NORTH OF AMSTERDAM

A COUNTRY MADE BY HAND

A quarter of the country lies below sea level, and the way it was kept dry shaped everything else.

Roughly a quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level, and much of it was once sea, lake or peat bog. Draining it was too large a job for any one landowner, so from the thirteenth century villages elected water boards to build the dykes together and taxed themselves to pay for them. That habit of settling things by negotiation, centuries before anyone called it democracy, produced a republic of trading cities rather than a kingdom, and for most of the seventeenth century that republic was the richest state in Europe.



The land that lies below sea level (26%).



FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE

Tolerance here was shaped by a harsh environment. With the sea on one side and the rivers on the other, nobody could keep their land dry alone, so from the earliest villages people of every rank and belief had to sit at the same table, agree on the dykes and share the cost. The real enemy was water, and a neighbour was a neighbour before anything else. That habit of cooperation made the region a haven of liberty at a time when most of Europe was burning heretics. The Union of Utrecht of 1579 guaranteed freedom of conscience; Calvinism became the public church, yet Catholics kept hidden chapels, Portuguese Jews built their synagogue in Amsterdam, Huguenots arrived by the thousand, and Descartes and Spinoza published here what they could not print elsewhere. Calvinist sobriety set a tone that still holds: wealth without display, everyone equal at the table, decisions reached by consensus. It is the root of the Dutch way of living, and of a quiet luxury that values access over show.

WHERE THE WEALTH CAME FROM

The Republic traded, and from the early 1600s it traded globally through the East India Company in Asia and the West India Company in the Atlantic. The Company sold its shares to the public in 1602, which made Amsterdam the first stock exchange, and the Exchange Bank of 1609 made it the money market of Europe. Grain, timber, spices and herring passed through its warehouses, and the paintings of the age were commissioned by merchants and guilds rather than by a court or a church. The same companies ran plantations and carried enslaved people; slavery in the Dutch colonies ended in 1863, and the state apologised for it in 2022.

Independence from Spain in 1581 | A kingdom since 1815 | Dutch and Frisian | Around 18.1m people | 12 provinces

THE NETHERLANDS, A TIMELINE

From the first elected water boards to the present kingdom, in four chapters.

THE LOW COUNTRY TAKES SHAPE

1200 – 1568

Villages drain the peat behind dykes and elect water boards to maintain them. The towns grow rich on North Sea trade, and the Low Countries pass by marriage to Burgundy and then to the Habsburgs of Spain.

THE REPUBLIC AND THE GOLDEN AGE

1568 – 1795

The northern provinces revolt against Spain and govern themselves as a republic, with no king and no single state church. It becomes the richest country in Europe and the easiest place in it to print a book: Descartes wrote here, Spinoza was born here, and Huguenots and Sephardic Jews were taken in.

FRENCH RULE, THEN KINGDOM

1795 – 1830

Revolutionary France takes the Republic and Napoleon makes his brother king of Holland. After Waterloo the Congress of Vienna joins the northern and southern Low Countries under one Dutch king.

THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

1830 – today

Belgium leaves and the country takes its present shape. Power moves from the king to parliament, and the sea is shut out for good.

1255 GOVERNING THE WATER
The count of Holland charters the Rijnland water board. Landowners elect the men who maintain the dykes and tax themselves to pay for it.

1287 THE SEA BREAKS IN
St Lucia's flood drowns the peat lands of the north and opens the Zuiderzee, the inland sea Amsterdam will trade across for six centuries.

1568 THE REVOLT BEGINS
William of Orange leads the northern provinces against Philip II. The war lasts eighty years, and in 1581 the provinces renounce the king.

1602 THE FIRST SHARES
The Dutch East India Company sells shares to the public and the Amsterdam exchange opens to trade them, the first stock market of the modern kind.

1621 THE ATLANTIC TRADE
The West India Company is founded. Dutch ships carry some 600,000 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic; slavery in the colonies ends in 1863.

1642 THE GOLDEN AGE
Rembrandt finishes The Night Watch and Vermeer works in Delft. The buyers are merchants and guilds, which is why so many paintings show ordinary rooms.

1795 THE REPUBLIC ENDS
French armies occupy the country. The East India Company, bankrupt after two centuries, is wound up four years later.

1815 ONE KINGDOM, NORTH AND SOUTH
William I takes both halves of the Low Countries as the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, with Luxembourg attached as a grand duchy.

1830 BELGIUM LEAVES
The southern provinces break away and the Netherlands keeps the borders it has today.

1848 PARLIAMENT TAKES OVER
Thorbecke's constitution moves power from the king to an elected parliament and makes ministers answerable for it.

1932 CLOSING THE ZUIDERZEE
The Afsluitdijk, 32 km long, turns the inland sea into the freshwater IJsselmeer. Flevoland is pumped dry between 1942 and 1968.

1940 OCCUPATION
Germany occupies the country for five years. Anne Frank hides on the Prinsengracht, now a museum, and the hunger winter of 1944 kills around 20,000 people.

1953 THE FLOOD, AND THE ANSWER TO IT
A North Sea surge breaks the dykes in Zeeland and drowns 1,836 people. The Delta Works, finished in 1997, close the southwestern estuaries.

2010 WORLD HERITAGE
Amsterdam's seventeenth-century canal ring joins the UNESCO list, the city plan the Golden Age paid for.

OUR SIGNATURE TOURS

The tours designed by our Storykeepers



01 FREEDOM & TOLERANCE IN AMSTERDAM

The introduction to the historic centre, and to the history that made the Netherlands a leader in tolerance and freedom: the clandestine church in the attic, the Begijnhof, the old Jewish quarter and the house on the Prinsengracht. You learn how four centuries of sheltering dissenters built both the fortune and the openness of the city. Out of respect for the privacy of the women who work there, the tour no longer enters the Red Light District.



02 KRÖLLER-MÜLLER MUSEUM

Van Goghs and a sculpture garden in the middle of the Hoge Veluwe, reached by white bicycle through the heath and the woods. During tulip season the day takes in the tulip fields of Flevoland, and in summer a visit to the farms to pick blueberries and strawberries.



03 HISTORIC BOAT TOUR THROUGH THE AMSTERDAM CANALS

Your guide meets your clients in the hotel lobby and walks them to a private saloon boat moored a few steps away. Saloon boats date from the Golden Age, when merchants used them to move goods through the city, and the ring they glide through is UNESCO listed. On board the talk covers how the canals were built and how the city still lives on the water, with Dutch bites served as you go: bitterballen, cheeses, oysters and herring, with champagne, Dutch wine or beer.



04 KEUKENHOF & A TULIP FARM

Keukenhof at its peak in the morning, then the afternoon on a section of a working bulb farm in the Bollenstreek opened privately for your clients. The grower walks the rows with them and talks through the season: the timing, the weather, the soil and the months of work that pass before the first petal opens. They cut their own flowers from the field and carry the bouquet away. The day also explains how tulip mania once priced a single bulb like a canal house.



05 DINNER CRUISE ON THE AMSTERDAM CANALS

A private salon boat for the evening, dinner served on board while the canal ring slides past at walking pace. The boats are classics from the twenties and thirties, polished wood and brass, with a skipper who knows every bridge by name.

OUR SIGNATURE TOURS

The tours designed by our Storykeepers, continued



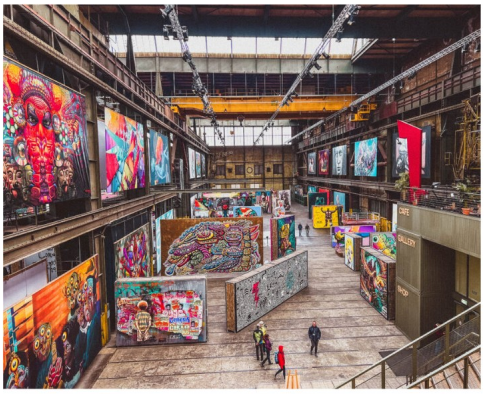
06 ARCHITECTURE IN ROTTERDAM

Art, architecture and the story of a city rebuilt after 1940: the Markthal, the Cube Houses, and visits to its iconic museums, the Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen and FENIX among them. You learn how the bombardment cleared the ground for the boldest architecture in the country. The harbour, still the largest in Europe, is read best from the water, and the city keeps building this way long after the rebuilding was done.



07 CASTLES, WINDMILLS & THE COUNTRYSIDE BY E-BIKE

An easy ride out of the capital on an e-bike, past country estates, working windmills and the polder villages the city was built from. Along the way you learn how mills, locks and polders keep the land dry, and how to read the water in every Dutch landscape. The bikes, the helmets and a support vehicle come with the guide, and the route shortens or lengthens to suit the group.



08 THE COOLEST NEIGHBOURHOODS OF AMSTERDAM BY BIKE

A private ride through the quarters most visitors miss: the Jordaan, De Pijp, and the warehouses and makers across the IJ in Noord. You cross the river by ferry, see where the city lives now, and learn how the old docklands turned into studios and breweries. Bikes are fitted at the hotel and the pace stays unhurried, with stops for coffee and for whatever the group wants to look at twice.



09 GOUDA & KINDERDIJK

Cheese on the market square under Gouda's fifteenth-century town hall and the stained glass of the Sint-Jan, then nineteen windmills in a row on the polder at Kinderdijk, with a miller's house open inside. You learn how a small town fed the Republic, and how the mills have kept the land dry since 1740. Both sit south of Amsterdam and pair naturally into one full day, with the drive between them running across the open polder.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

Half days spent doing, with the people who do it for a living.



01 ROYAL DELFT WORKSHOP

Paint your own piece at Royal Delft, the last of the seventeenth-century potteries still working in the town, with the painters at their benches beside you. You learn how the blue came to the Netherlands from Chinese porcelain and why Delft made it its own, and your work is fired and shipped home after. Two hours at the bench, suitable from about eight years old, with the factory and its museum included in the morning.



02 GRAFFITI WORKSHOP AT STRAAT MUSEUM

Spray a canvas of your own at STRAAT, the street art museum in a shipyard hall at NDSM, guided by a working artist. You learn the techniques behind the giant murals around you, from stencil to freehand, and the finished canvas travels home with you. Overalls and paint are provided, no experience is needed, and the ferry across the IJ to the shipyard is part of the morning.



03 ETCHING & PIGMENTS AT THE REMBRANDTHUIS

In Rembrandt's own house, see how he pulled his etchings and ground his pigments, then print one of your own. The demonstrations run in his original studio, where the painter worked for nearly twenty years, and the print you take home is pulled his way. The house was reconstructed from the inventory drawn up when he went bankrupt, so the rooms hold what he actually owned.



04 CHOCOLATE OR STROOPWAFEL WORKSHOP

The perfect half day with children and families: temper and mould your own bonbons with a chocolatier, or press stroopwafels on the iron and seal them with warm caramel syrup. You learn how Van Houten's cocoa press, invented in Amsterdam in 1828, made the modern chocolate bar possible, and everything you make is eaten or packed before the afternoon is out. Both run about two hours in a working kitchen in the centre, with aprons and everything else provided.



05 THEMED FOOD TOURS

Jenever tastings, street food tours, cheese and herring on the markets, and the Heineken Experience for the curious. You eat your way through the city with a guide who explains why the Dutch lunch on raw herring, where the cheese ages, and what a brown café is for. Three hours on foot with five or six stops, built around what your clients eat and what they would rather not.

THE DUTCH MUSEUMS WE LOVE, AND WHY



THE GREAT HOUSES OF AMSTERDAM

The collections every client asks for, and how we read them.

RIJKSMUSEUM

The national collection: Rembrandt's Night Watch, Vermeer's Milkmaid and eight centuries of Dutch art under one roof.

ANNE FRANK HOUSE

The secret annexe on the Prinsengracht, kept empty as her father asked. Entry sells out months ahead, so book in advance.

VAN GOGH MUSEUM

The largest Van Gogh collection in the world, hung in the order he painted it, from the Potato Eaters to the wheatfields. The letters to his brother Theo give the paintings their voice.

STEDELIJK MUSEUM

Modern and contemporary art and design, from Mondrian and De Stijl to the present, next door to the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh on the Museumplein.

THE GREAT HOUSES OF THE HAGUE

A royal city with a museum list to match, fifty minutes from Amsterdam.

MAURITSHUIS

A seventeenth-century palace holding the Girl with a Pearl Earring, Rembrandt's Anatomy Lesson and Fabritius's Goldfinch. Small enough to see whole in a morning, and the reason to give The Hague a night.

KUNSTMUSEUM DEN HAAG

Berlage's last building and the largest Mondrian collection in the world, Victory Boogie Woogie among it, with decorative arts and the finest fashion collection in the country.

ESCHER IN HET PALEIS

The former winter palace of Queen Emma given over to M.C. Escher's impossible worlds, a favourite with children and engineers alike.

PANORAMA MESDAG

A painting in the round of Scheveningen beach in 1881, 14 metres high, viewed from a dune in the middle of the room and inspired Van Gogh.

OUR HIDDEN GEMS

The museums we send people to, and the argument for the extra day.



VOORLINDEN

Modern art in the dunes at Wassenaar: Turrell's Skyspace, Erlich's Swimming Pool and gardens by Piet Oudolf, an hour from Amsterdam.



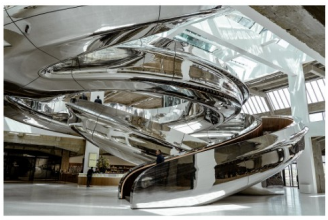
KRÖLLER-MÜLLER

The second-largest Van Gogh collection in the world, in the Hoge Veluwe park, with a sculpture garden reached on the park's white bicycles.



DEPOT BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN

The world's first art depot open to the public: a mirrored bowl in Rotterdam holding the whole Boijmans collection, the restoration studios in view and a rooftop forest.



FENIX

A museum of migration on the Rotterdam quay, in a warehouse crowned by the Tornado, a steel staircase climbing to a view over the Maas.

THE YEAR, SEASON BY SEASON

Spring and summer: what only these months bring.

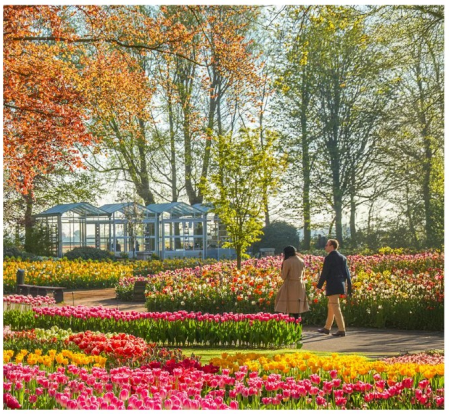
Our signature tours, the hands-on experiences and the museums run all year. These pages hold only what the calendar adds.

SPRING

MARCH TO MAY

The country in colour, and the light the painters came for.

The bulb fields turn in bands from late March, Keukenhof opens for eight weeks and the terraces fill on the first warm day. By May the evenings are long and the museums are at their quietest before summer. It is the busiest season for hotels in Amsterdam, so the spring journeys we build start early and the gardens are booked months ahead.



KEUKENHOF & THE BULB FIELDS

LATE MARCH TO MID MAY

Eight weeks of the gardens at Lisse, the fields in colour around them, and your own tulips cut at a farm.



TEFAF MAASTRICHT

MARCH

The world's leading art and antiques fair, ten days in Maastricht, bringing together 7,000 years of art under one place.



KING'S DAY

27 APRIL

The whole country in orange, the canals full of boats and the biggest street party of the year.

SUMMER

JUNE TO AUGUST

Long evenings, open water and the festival months.

The canals come alive, the beach clubs open at Scheveningen and Zandvoort and the farms around Amsterdam open for fruit picking. These are the high months for the cities, so we run the days at opening, take to the water in the afternoons and keep the evenings for the terraces. The light holds until ten.



AMSTERDAM PRIDE

FIRST SATURDAY OF AUGUST

The canal parade: eighty boats on the Prinsengracht and the city on every bridge.



THE CANAL FESTIVAL

AUGUST

Ten days of classical music played on and beside the water, from pontoons to courtyards.



FRUIT PICKING

JULY AND AUGUST

Cherries, berries and plums on the family farms half an hour from Amsterdam.



THE DAHLIA BLOSSOM

AUGUST TO EARLY OCTOBER

The second flowering of the Bollenstreek, when the fields turn colour again after the tulips.

THE YEAR, SEASON BY SEASON

Fall and winter: what only these months bring.

Our signature tours, the hands-on experiences and the museums run all year. These pages hold only what the calendar adds.

FALL

SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

The crowds thin, the light turns gold, the big exhibitions open.

September is the local secret: warm, quiet and bright, with the Veluwe turning copper by October and the oyster beds opening in Zeeland and on Texel. The museums bring out their autumn exhibitions, Limburg brings in the grapes, and the cities belong to the people who live in them again.



THE WINE HARVEST IN LIMBURG

SEPTEMBER

The southern hills bring in the grapes, with tastings at the vineyards around Maastricht.



DUTCH DESIGN WEEK

OCTOBER

Nine days in Eindhoven, the largest design event in Northern Europe, with the academies open.



OYSTER SEASON

SEPTEMBER TO APRIL

The months with an R: Zeeland and Texel oysters from the beds to the table, best eaten at Yerseke.

WINTER

DECEMBER TO FEBRUARY

Short days, lit canals and the warmest interiors in Europe.

The Light Festival floats on the canals from December, the Christmas markets fill Maastricht and the caves of Valkenburg, and when the frost holds the whole country takes to the ice. Hotels are at their best value and the great museums are nearly empty on a weekday morning.



AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL

DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Light art on the canals, seen at its best from a private salon boat after dark.



CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR

MID NOVEMBER TO 1 JANUARY

Sinterklaas on 5 December, the markets of Maastricht and the caves of Valkenburg, skating on the Museumplein, and fireworks over the IJ to see the year out.

BUILD THE JOURNEY

Three itineraries that build into one journey: four nights in Amsterdam, seven with The Hague, ten with Maastricht. The days run as one list, and on the seasonal day the four columns hold the choice per season.

AMSTERDAM — 4 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY		
Day 1	Amsterdam	Private transfer, Schiphol Airport to hotel (20 min)		
		YEAR ROUND Historic Boat Tour through the Amsterdam Canals (1h30)	FALL & WINTER Private Light Festival cruise (1h30), late November to mid January	
Day 2	Amsterdam	Private full day tour (6h): Freedom & Tolerance in Amsterdam, with the Rijksmuseum		
Day 3	Amsterdam	YEAR ROUND Otterlo Private full day tour (7h): the Kröller-Müller Museum & the Veluwe (1h15 each way)	SPRING Keukenhof Private full day tour (6h): Keukenhof & a Tulip Farm, from opening, late March to mid May	SUMMER Dutch Countryside Castles, Windmills & the Countryside by E-Bike (5h)
Day 4	Amsterdam	Day at leisure to explore Jordaan & Nine Streets Timed tickets arranged for Museums: Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum or Anne Frank House		
Day 5		Private transfer, hotel to Schiphol Airport (30 min), or continue to The Hague		

THE HAGUE — +3 NIGHTS · BUILDS THE JOURNEY TO SEVEN

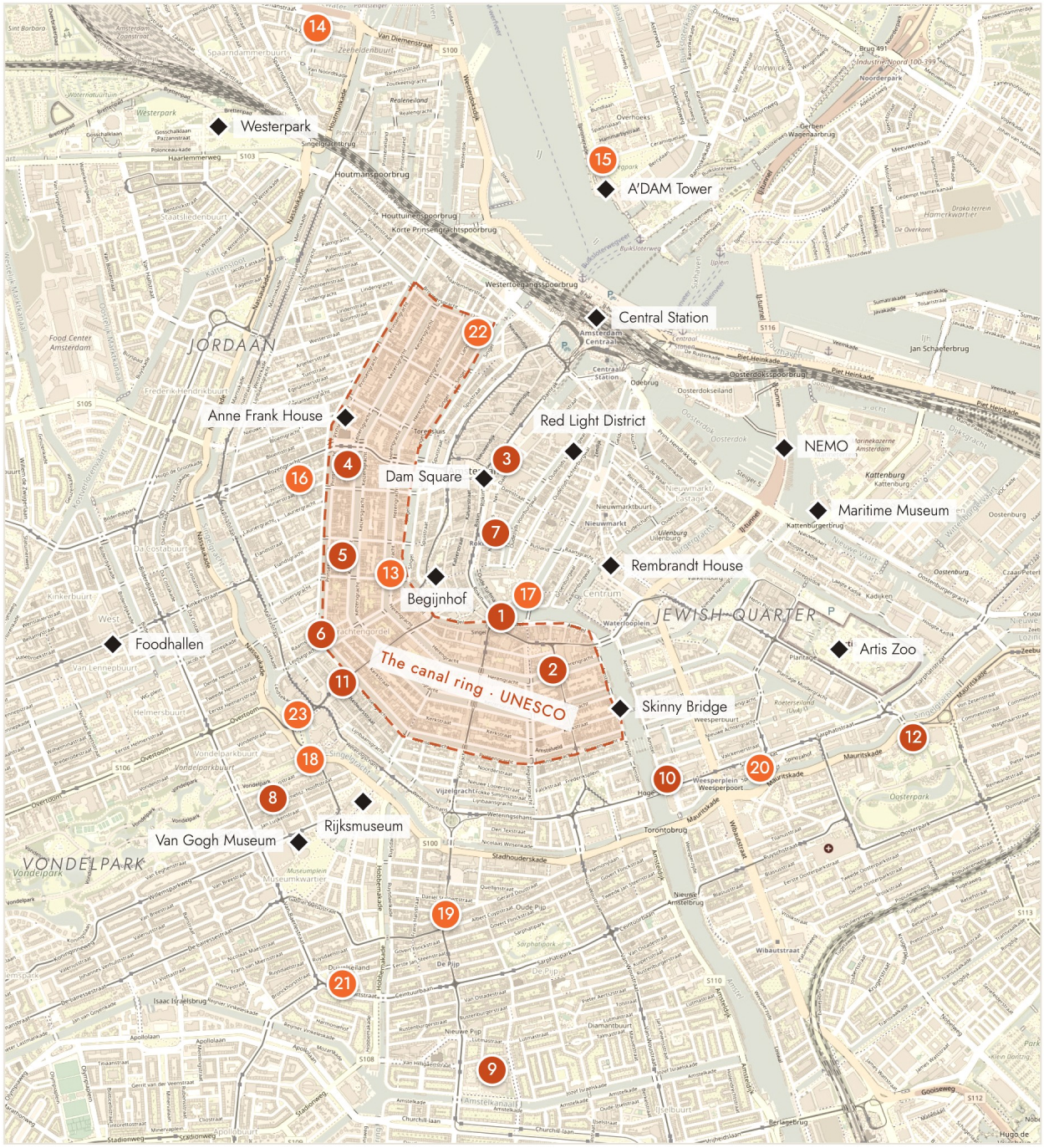
DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 5	The Hague	Private transfer, Amsterdam to The Hague (50 min) Private half day tour (4h): the Mauritshuis & the city centre
Day 6	The Hague	Private half day tour (4h): Delft & the Royal Delft workshop (20 min each way)
Day 7	The Hague	Private half day tour (5h): the windmills of Kinderdijk by water taxi (45 min each way)
Day 8		Private transfer, hotel to Schiphol Airport (50 min), or continue to Maastricht

MAASTRICHT — +3 NIGHTS · BUILDS THE JOURNEY TO TEN

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY	
Day 8	Maastricht	Private transfer, The Hague to Maastricht (2h15) Evening at leisure on the Vrijthof	
Day 9	Maastricht	Private half day tour (4h) with your Storykeeper: the old town & Boekhandel Dominicanen	
Day 10	Maastricht	YEAR ROUND Private half day tour (4h): the hills of South Limburg & a vineyard tasting	FALL & WINTER The Christmas markets in the caves of Valkenburg (25 min each way), mid November to end December
Day 11		Private transfer, hotel to Schiphol Airport (2h30) or Brussels Airport (2h)	

OUR FAVOURITE HOTELS IN AMSTERDAM

The canal ring and the quarters around it, with every partner house a short walk or a short ride from the water. The full selection, current openings and seasonal rates come with each quote.



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors

5-STAR & SUPERIOR

1. De L'Europe
2. Waldorf Astoria
3. Anantara Krasnapolsky
4. Pulitzer
5. The Dylan
6. Andaz Prinsengracht
7. Sofitel Legend The Grand
8. Conservatorium
9. Hotel Okura Amsterdam
10. InterContinental Amstel
11. Rosewood Amsterdam
12. Pillows Maurits at the Park

4-STAR & LIFESTYLE

13. The Hoxton
14. The July
15. Sir Adam
16. Mercier
17. Tivoli Doelen
18. Park Centraal
19. Sir Albert
20. Hyatt Regency
21. The College Hotel, Autograph
22. Renaissance Amsterdam
23. Amsterdam Marriott

◆ Sights & landmarks

▭ The canal ring, UNESCO



DESTINATIONS

BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG

Art cities thirty minutes apart, chocolate as a craft, and Europe's quiet capital on its fortress rock.

THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY IN BRUGES, WHOSE BRICK TOWER RISES 115 METRES OVER THE CITY

THE CROSSROADS OF EUROPE

Germanic and Latin Europe meet here, and the country is divided along the same line.

The frontier between Germanic and Latin Europe runs straight through Belgium, and the country is built on top of it: Dutch-speaking Flanders to the north, French-speaking Wallonia to the south, a bilingual Brussels in the middle. On flat ground with no natural border, where the trade routes between the North Sea, France and the Rhine all crossed, this was the meeting point of the continent and also its battlefield. For six centuries the country belonged to someone else, in turn to Burgundy, Spain, Austria, France and the Netherlands, and became a state of its own only in 1830.



THE LINE THROUGH THE MIDDLE

The language border is the old frontier between the Frankish north and the Romanised south, and it still runs across the country from west to east. Fixed by law in 1962, it decides the language of schools, courts and local government on either side. Flanders holds roughly six Belgians in ten, Wallonia three, and Brussels sits as a bilingual region inside Flemish territory, with a German-speaking community on the eastern edge.

WHERE THE WEALTH CAME FROM

Both halves took their turn. Medieval Flanders wove English wool into cloth, and Bruges and Ghent became bankers to kings, paying for Van Eyck, Memling and later Rubens. In the nineteenth century the coal and steel of Wallonia made Belgium the first country on the continent to industrialise, and that money, with the colonial profit that followed, built the boulevards, the museums and the Art Nouveau houses.

THE COUNTRY TODAY, IN FOUR PARTS

FLANDERS

DUTCH

The north and the coast: Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp and the medieval cloth cities.

BRUSSELS

FRENCH & DUTCH

A bilingual region inside Flanders, and the seat of the European Union and NATO.

WALLONIA

FRENCH

The south: the Meuse valley, the Ardennes, and the old industrial heartland.

LUXEMBOURG

LËTZEBUERGESCH, FRENCH, GERMAN

A grand duchy since 1815 and fully sovereign since 1890, now a financial capital.

Independent 1830 · Constitutional monarchy · Three official languages · Around 11.8m people · Luxembourg, around 670,000

BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG, A TIMELINE

Each ruler left something standing. The bar below runs at scale from 1384 to today.

BURGUNDIAN RULE

1384 – 1482

The dukes of Burgundy gather Flanders, Brabant and Holland into one state. Cloth makes Bruges and Ghent the richest cities north of the Alps, and their merchants spend the profit on painting.

HABSBURG RULE SPANISH, THEN AUSTRIAN

1482 – 1794

The Burgundian lands pass by marriage to the Habsburgs and are governed from Madrid, later from Vienna. The Protestant north revolts and leaves; the Catholic south stays, and becomes the battlefield of Europe's wars.

FRENCH RULE, THEN THE UNITED KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

1794 – 1830

Two short foreign regimes in under forty years. Revolutionary France annexes the country in 1794; after Napoleon's defeat the Congress of Vienna hands it to the Dutch king.

THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

1830 – today

The south breaks away and becomes a neutral kingdom. It industrialises before any other country on the continent, and coal, steel and colonial profit pay for the architecture visitors come to see.

1384 THE CLOTH CITIES TAKE THE LEAD

Philip the Bold inherits Flanders. Bruges runs the trade of northern Europe and opens what is counted as the first stock exchange.

1432 THE HEIGHT OF THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

Jan and Hubert van Eyck finish the Ghent Altarpiece in St Bavo's. Painted in oil instead of tempera, it holds detail and light no earlier work could, and Flemish painting leads Europe for a century.

1500 CHARLES V IS BORN IN GHENT

From Brussels he rules Spain, the Low Countries, Austria and the Spanish Americas, the largest empire in Europe, until he abdicates in 1555.

1648 THE NORTH LEAVES, THE SOUTH REMAINS

The Dutch Republic wins independence and closes the Scheldt, ending Antwerp's trade. In 1714 the south passes from Spain to Austria.

1815 THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

On 18 June, 15 km south of Brussels, Wellington's allied army and Blücher's Prussians defeat Napoleon. His rule ends, twenty-three years of French war end with it, and the Congress of Vienna redraws Europe.

1815 ONE KINGDOM, NORTH AND SOUTH

William I takes both halves of the Low Countries as one kingdom, with Luxembourg attached as a grand duchy.

1830 INDEPENDENCE

Belgium separates from the Netherlands and Leopold I is crowned in 1831. Luxembourg takes its own path and is fully sovereign from 1890.

1835 THE INDUSTRIAL HEAD START

Continental Europe's first steam railway runs Brussels to Mechelen. Coal and steel make Belgium the second industrial power in the world after Britain.

1885 THE CONGO

Leopold II takes the Congo as a personal possession. The Belgian state takes it over in 1908 and it becomes independent in 1960. Rubber and ivory profits paid for the Cinquantenaire arches and Tervuren, now the AfricaMuseum.

1893 ART NOUVEAU

Industrial fortunes rebuild the capital. Victor Horta's Hôtel Tassel is the first Art Nouveau house, and some five hundred follow in Brussels.

1914 & 1940 THE TWO WORLD WARS

Germany invades twice. The First World War front holds across Flanders for four years, marked at Ypres; in the Second, the last German offensive in the west turns around Bastogne in the Ardennes.

1958 THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

Expo 58 opens with the Atomium, and Brussels becomes the seat of the European institutions.

OUR SIGNATURE TOURS

The tours designed by our Storykeepers



01 BRUSSELS, CROSSROADS OF EUROPE

Born where the Germanic north meets the Latin west and fought over by Burgundians, Habsburgs, Spain and France, Brussels grew into the capital of Belgium and then of Europe itself. A full day from the medieval Grand Place to the scars of war and the European quarter. You learn how a small capital came to hold the institutions of a continent.



02 BRUSSELS THROUGH HISTORY, WAFFLES, FRIES & CHOCOLATE

How did Belgium become the land of chocolate, waffles and the humble fried potato? A privately guided walk through the heart of Brussels, from the Grand Place to the Manneken Pis, finds the answer in history, identity and a way of life, with a fritkot, a waffle off the iron and a praline on the way. You learn how each tradition was woven into the country.



03 ART NOUVEAU IN BRUSSELS

In 1893 Victor Horta completed the Hôtel Tassel and gave Brussels a new architectural language, with structure, furniture, mosaics, ironwork and light conceived as one composition drawn from plant forms. The movement became Art Nouveau, and this city was one of its birthplaces. The tour enters two of Horta's major interiors, both on the UNESCO World Heritage list.



04 BRUGES

Few cities hold the medieval age like Bruges. From the 13th to the 15th century it was one of the great trading hubs of Europe, where merchants dealt in cloth, wool and spices and the word bourse was born at the Van der Beurze inn. That wealth built the canals, guild houses and churches, and paid the Flemish Primitives. When the Zwin silted up and trade moved to Antwerp, the city fell quiet, and that stillness kept its heart intact.



05 GHENT

Less visited than Bruges and every bit as atmospheric, Ghent was among the largest and richest cities of northern Europe from the 13th to the 16th century, built on the cloth trade where the Scheldt meets the Lys, and the birthplace of Charles V. The day begins in St Bavo's before the Ghent Altarpiece of the Van Eyck brothers, completed in 1432, with your Storykeeper on its making, its turbulent past and its place in European art.

OUR SIGNATURE TOURS

The tours designed by our Storykeepers, continued



06 ANTWERP, RUBENS & THE FASHION DISTRICT

In the 16th century the port on the Scheldt made Antwerp the London or New York of its day, where merchants, bankers and artists from every corner of the world traded diamonds, spices and textiles, and the wealth paid for a golden age of art. The city gave us Rubens, whose canvases still hang in its churches. Eclipsed later by Amsterdam, it never lost its edge, and today it is one of Europe's busiest ports and a capital of diamonds and fashion.



07 YPRES & THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A rich cloth town in the Middle Ages, Ypres became one of the most devastated places of the First World War. For four years it stood at the heart of the Salient, where poison gas was first used at scale in 1915 and Passchendaele claimed hundreds of thousands in 1917. Rebuilt stone by stone, its Cloth Hall now holds the In Flanders Fields Museum. Each evening the Last Post sounds beneath the Menin Gate, with the names of 54,000 soldiers who have no known grave.



08 BASTOGNE & THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the forested Ardennes, Bastogne became the pivotal ground of the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last offensive in the West, in the bitter winter of 1944. Encircled and outnumbered, the 101st Airborne held the town, and General McAuliffe answered the demand to surrender with one word: Nuts. Relief came with Patton's Third Army. The star-shaped Mardasson Memorial honours the American fallen, and the Bastogne War Museum retraces the siege through the eyes of those who lived it.



09 LUXEMBOURG CITY

Founded in 963 by Count Siegfried on the Bock promontory above the Alzette and Pétrusse valleys, Luxembourg City earned the name Gibraltar of the North for its ramparts. The Bock Casemates, a labyrinth of tunnels cut into the rock, survive beneath the UNESCO-listed old town, the Grand Ducal Palace and the medieval squares. Outside the city, the American Cemetery at Hamm holds more than 5,000 soldiers, among them General Patton.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

Half days spent doing, with the people who do it for a living.



01 CHOCOLATE WORKSHOP WITH A MASTER CHOCOLATIER

BRUSSELS OR BRUGES · HALF DAY · WITH CHILDREN

Temper, mould and fill your own pralines beside a renowned chocolatier, in the country that invented the praline in 1912. You learn why Belgian chocolate is made the way it is, from the cocoa butter to the shell, and the box you fill goes home with you.



02 BEER TASTING

BRUSSELS OR AN ABBEY · HALF DAY

A guided tasting of Belgian beers, at a brewery in Brussels or at an abbey, with the brewer or the sommelier pouring. Trappist, abbey, lambic and gueuze, each in its own glass, with the cheese and the bread that go with them. You learn why Belgian beer is on the UNESCO list, and how to read a label.



03 STREET FOOD TOUR OF BRUSSELS

BRUSSELS · HALF DAY · ON FOOT

Frites from a fritkot, waffles from Liège and from Brussels, shrimp croquettes and a gueuze in a brown café, walked between the Sablon and the Marolles. You learn which waffle is which, and why the frites are fried twice.

ON THE CALENDAR

Belgium has no seasonal tours; these are the dates worth planning around.



TOMORROWLAND

LATE JULY

The largest electronic music festival in the world, two weekends at Boom between Brussels and Antwerp, sold out within the hour.



THE BELGIAN GRAND PRIX

LATE JULY OR AUGUST

Formula 1 at Spa-Francorchamps, the drivers' favourite circuit, in the forests of the Ardennes.



CHRISTMAS MARKETS

LATE NOVEMBER TO EARLY JANUARY

Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp and Luxembourg, with the Grand Place lit for the season and the Winter Wonders fair around it.

BUILD THE JOURNEY

One year-round journey of seven nights: three in Brussels, two in Ghent, two in Antwerp, moving city centre to city centre in under an hour, with two nights in Luxembourg as an extension. The days run as one list.

BRUSSELS — 3 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Brussels	Private transfer, Brussels Airport to hotel (20 min) Evening walk on the Grand Place with your Storykeeper (1h)
Day 2	Brussels	Private full day tour (6h): Brussels, Crossroads of Europe, from the Grand Place to the European quarter
Day 3		Private half day tour (4h): Art Nouveau in Brussels, Horta Museum & Maison Hannon Afternoon at leisure, timed tickets arranged for the Magritte Museum

GHENT — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 4	Ghent or Bruges	Private transfer, Brussels to Ghent (50 min) Private walking tour (3h): Ghent, the Altarpiece in St Bavo's & the Graslei at dusk
Day 5	Ghent or Bruges	Private full day tour (6h): Bruges, the canals, the Markt & a chocolate atelier

ANTWERP — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 6	Antwerp	Private transfer, Ghent to Antwerp (1h) Private walking tour (3h): Antwerp, the Grote Markt, the Cathedral of Our Lady & Plantin Moretus Museum
Day 7	Antwerp	Private half day tour (4h): KMSKA & the fashion district Evening at leisure in the old town
Day 8		Private transfer, hotel to Brussels Airport (45 min), or Amsterdam by rail (1h10) Or continue to Luxembourg, below

LUXEMBOURG — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 8	Luxembourg	Private transfer, Antwerp to Luxembourg City (3h), with stopover in Dinant or Namur on the way
Day 9	Luxembourg	Private half day tour: Luxembourg City, the Bock Casemates & the Grund
Day 10		Private transfer, hotel to Luxembourg Airport (15 min) Or continue to Paris by rail (2h10)

OUR FAVOURITE HOTELS IN BRUSSELS

The pentagon of the old town and the Avenue Louise, with the Grand Place a short walk from every house. The full selection, current openings and seasonal rates come with each quote.



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors

5-STAR & SUPERIOR

1. Hotel Amigo
2. Corinthia Grand Astoria
3. Steigenberger Wiltcher's
4. Faubourg 21
5. Pillows Grand Hotel

4-STAR & LIFESTYLE

6. NH Collection
7. The Dominican
8. Juliana
9. Le Louise, MGallery
10. The Hoxton

◆ Sights & landmarks

The Atomium sits 15 minutes north of this map. In Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp and Luxembourg we hold a partner house in each city centre, listed with each quote.



DESTINATIONS

ICELAND

An island still being made: lava, geysers, glaciers and black beaches, 3h25 from Amsterdam.

AN ISLAND STILL BEING MADE

Europe and America are pulling apart here, and the country sits on the seam.

Iceland sits on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, where the North American and Eurasian plates pull apart by about two centimetres a year. The island is that ridge above water: volcanoes along the seam, geothermal heat under the towns, glaciers on top. Nobody lived here before Norse settlers arrived in the 870s, so the whole human history of the country is eleven hundred years long, written down from the beginning, and still read in the language it was written in.



The Mid-Atlantic Ridge, where the plates pull apart.



A PARLIAMENT IN THE RIFT

The settlers brought no king. From 930 their chieftains met for two weeks each summer at Þingvellir, on the rift itself, to agree laws and settle cases, and the Althing that met there is the oldest parliament still sitting. In the year 1000 that same assembly chose Christianity rather than let the country split over it, and the republic was declared on the same ground in 1944.

HEAT, ICE AND FISH

The island runs on its own energy and its own sea. Around nine homes in ten are heated by geothermal water and nearly all the electricity is geothermal or hydro, which is why a swimming pool is a daily habit rather than a luxury. Fish paid for independence and still matters; tourism passed it after 2010 and is now the largest earner.

THE ISLAND TODAY, IN FOUR PARTS

REYKJAVÍK

TWO IN THREE ICELANDERS

The capital region holds about 240,000 of 390,000 people. Keflavík airport and the Reykjanes volcanoes are both within an hour.

THE SOUTH COAST

THE CLASSIC ROUTE

Waterfalls, black beaches and Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe, along one road to Jökulsárlón.

THE NORTH

AKUREYRI

Mývatn, the whale fjords and the quieter side of the island, with its own airport and its own winter season.

THE WESTFJORDS & EAST

THE FAR EDGES

The oldest rock and the fewest people: cliffs, fjords, and roads that close for part of the winter.

Settled from 874 | Republic since 1944 | Icelandic | Around 390,000 people | No armed forces

ICELAND, A TIMELINE

A free state, six centuries under foreign crowns, independence in stages, and the island we travel today.

THE SETTLEMENT AND THE FREE STATE

874 — 1262

Norse families from Norway and from the Norse settlements in Britain and Ireland take an empty island and govern it without a king, through local chieftains and one yearly assembly.

UNDER NORWAY, THEN DENMARK

1262 — 1874

Feuding chieftains accept the king of Norway, and the island passes with Norway to Denmark. Six centuries of foreign rule, a trade monopoly and volcanic disaster leave it among the poorest countries in Europe.

HOME RULE TO REPUBLIC

1874 — 1944

A national movement wins self-government back from Denmark in stages: a constitution, then home rule, then sovereignty, then a republic.

THE MODERN ISLAND

1944 — today

Fish first, then energy, then visitors. A country of under four hundred thousand people with no army, running on its own heat and water.

874 THE FIRST FARM
Ingólfur Arnarson settles at a bay he names Reykjavík, the smoky bay, after the geothermal steam rising from it.

930 THE ALTHING
The chieftains begin meeting each summer at Þingvellir, in the rift between the two plates, to make law and judge disputes. It is the oldest parliament still in existence.

1000 CHRISTIANITY BY DECISION
With the country close to splitting between the old gods and the new faith, the Althing asks one man to rule on it. He chooses Christianity, and no war follows.

1220s THE SAGAS ARE WRITTEN
Icelanders write down the family sagas and the Norse myths. Snorri Sturluson's Edda is the main source for almost everything known about Norse mythology.

1262 THE OLD COVENANT
The chieftains swear loyalty to the Norwegian crown in exchange for peace and regular shipping. The free state ends.

1602 THE DANISH MONOPOLY
Iceland may trade only with Danish merchants at prices Denmark sets. The monopoly lasts until 1787.

1783 THE LAKI ERUPTION
A fissure 27 km long erupts for eight months. A fifth of Icelanders die in the famine that follows, and the haze darkens summers across Europe.

1874 A CONSTITUTION
On the thousandth anniversary of the settlement, Denmark grants Iceland a constitution and control of its own finances.

1918 A SOVEREIGN STATE
After home rule in 1904, Iceland becomes a sovereign kingdom sharing the Danish king, with the union open to review after twenty-five years.

1944 THE REPUBLIC
With Denmark under German occupation, Icelanders vote to end the union and declare the republic at Þingvellir.

1958 THE COD WARS
Iceland extends its fishing limits in stages to 200 miles and faces down the Royal Navy three times. The last dispute ends in 1976.

1963 & 1973 NEW LAND, AND A TOWN SAVED
Surtsey rises out of the sea off the Westman Islands and is left untouched for science. Ten years later a fissure opens beside the town on Heimaey and the islanders save the harbour by pumping seawater onto the lava.

2008 THE BANKS FALL
All three Icelandic banks collapse within a week and the currency loses half its value. Fishing and tourism carry the recovery.

2010 EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL
Ash closes European airspace for six days, the largest shutdown of civil aviation since 1945.

2021 REYKJANES WAKES
After eight hundred quiet years, eruptions resume on the peninsula near Keflavík and have continued in episodes since.

ACTIVITIES, YEAR ROUND

All private, each explored by us first, with specialist guides where the ice or the sea asks for one.



BLUE LAGOON

Year round

Milky geothermal water in a black lava field, twenty minutes from the airport and forty from Reykjavík. The natural first afternoon after a morning flight, or the last one before heading home. The Retreat, the hotel and spa at the far end of the lagoon, takes a smaller number of guests and books out first.



HELICOPTER TOUR

Year round

Over craters, glaciers and geothermal valleys, with a landing on a summit or on the ice where the weather allows. Flights leave from Reykjavík city airport and run from thirty minutes to a full day with stops. The clearest way to read the island, and the fastest way into the highlands.



SILFRA SNORKELLING

Year round

A drysuit float through the Þingvellir fissure, in meltwater filtered through lava for decades, between the North American and Eurasian plates. Visibility runs to a hundred metres and the water holds at two degrees all year. Snorkelling asks for no experience; diving is open to certified divers.



LAVA TUBES

Year round

Raufarhólshellir, a tunnel the lava left behind an hour from the city, walked with lamps on a railed path past frozen falls and iron-coloured walls. An hour underground, warm clothing and sturdy shoes, and one of the few Icelandic sights the weather cannot cancel.



CAVE DINNER AT HELLA

Year round

The caves at Hella were cut into the soft sandstone long before the sagas were written, and nobody is certain by whom. A table is laid for your group inside one of them, lit by candles, with the chef cooking Icelandic produce at the back of the cave. Ninety minutes east of Reykjavík, on the way out to the south coast or back.



FRIÐHEIMAR GREENHOUSE

Year round

Friðheimar, on the Golden Circle at Reykholt, grows tomatoes all year under geothermal heat and light. Lunch is laid among the vines: tomato soup with bread baked on the spot, a bloody mary mixed at the greenhouse bar, and a horse show next door where the family puts its Icelandic horses through their paces. Booked well ahead, always.

ACTIVITIES, YEAR ROUND

The ice, the sand and the highlands, with the vehicle and the gear that each of them needs.



GLACIER HIKING

Year round

Crampons and a rope on Sólheimajökull or Vatnajökull, through crevasses and blue ice, at the group's pace. The gear comes from the guide and no experience is needed, though the walk out to the ice asks for a reasonable level of fitness. Half a day from the south coast road.



GLACIER SNOWMOBILE

Year round

Across Langjökull on your own machine, with a guide reading the ice ahead. Suits, helmets and boots are provided, and a driving licence is needed to take the controls. Two hours from Reykjavík, and often combined with the tunnel cut into the same glacier.



ATV DRIVE

Year round

Across the black sand of Sólheimasandur to the 1973 DC-3 wreck, whose crew all walked away. Two hours on the sand with the sea on one side and the glacier on the other, driving your own quad or riding as a passenger.



SUPER JEEP RIDE

Year round

A modified 4x4 on oversized tyres, into the highlands and across the rivers and snow where an ordinary car turns back. The way to Þórsmörk, Landmannalaugar and the crater country, and the only way in winter. A full day with a driver guide.



ICE CAVE

Year round

The Katla cave on the south coast opens all year and is reached by super jeep from Vík. The crystal caves under Vatnajökull form again every winter and are open from November to March, and no two seasons carve the same room. Helmets and crampons come with the guide.



HORSE RIDES

Year round

The Icelandic horse has a fifth gait, the tölt, bred nowhere else for a thousand years. A ride through the lava fields for any level, from an hour in the saddle to a full day, with helmets and overalls waiting at the stable.

ACTIVITIES BY SEASON

What the calendar decides.

FALL & WINTER

LATE SEPTEMBER TO EARLY APRIL



NORTHERN LIGHTS HUNT

Late September to early April

A private guide reads the forecast and drives to the clear sky, away from the lights of the city. Never guaranteed, which is why we give it more than one night.

SPRING & SUMMER

MAY TO OCTOBER



PUFFIN WATCHING

May to August

Iceland holds most of the world's Atlantic puffins. The Westman Islands have the largest colony, and the birds are ashore until early August.



WHALE WATCHING

June to August

The surest months on the water: humpbacks and minkes off Reykjavík and Húsavík, and the long summer days to find them in.



INSIDE THE VOLCANO

May to October

A lift down into the magma chamber of Þríhnúkagígur, emptied four thousand years ago, the only one of its kind open to visitors.



JÖKULSÁRLÓN LAGOON BY BOAT

May to October

Among the icebergs on the glacier lagoon by Zodiac or amphibious boat, with the ice calving from Vatnajökull behind.



MIDNIGHT SUN

June to August

In June the sun barely sets. Dinner at eleven in full daylight, and a drive at midnight with the light low and gold.

TWO SEASONS, TWO JOURNEYS

Come for the midnight sun; return for the aurora.

Six nights in either season. Spring and summer run on the long days, from the whale grounds to the Westman Islands; fall and winter on the aurora, the ice caves and the geothermal waters.

SPRING & SUMMER — 6 NIGHTS · MAY TO SEPTEMBER

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Reykjavík	Private transfer, Keflavík Airport to Reykjavík (50 min) Whale watching by boat (4h)
Day 2	Reykjavík	Private half day city tour (3h): Hallgrímskirkja, the Alþingi & Harpa Inside the Volcano (5h): descent into the Þríhnúkagígur magma chamber
Day 3	South coast	Private full day tour (8h): Þingvellir, Geysir & Gullfoss Two nights at a manor farm under the Eyjafjöll mountains
Day 4	South coast	Private full day tour (8h): Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss, Dyrhólaey & Reynisfjara ATV ride over the black sands to the 1973 plane wreck
Day 5	Blue Lagoon	Ferry to Heimaey (35 min): the Eldfell volcano & the puffin cliffs Continue to the Blue Lagoon for the last two nights
Day 6	Blue Lagoon	Day at leisure in the lagoon & the spa Optional private helicopter tour over fire & ice (2h)
Day 7	Blue Lagoon	Private transfer, hotel to Keflavík Airport (20 min)

FALL & WINTER — 6 NIGHTS · OCTOBER TO MARCH

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Reykjavík	Private transfer, Keflavík Airport to Reykjavík (50 min) Evening at leisure in the old town
Day 2	Reykjavík	Private half day city tour (4h): Hallgrímskirkja, the Alþingi & Harpa Afternoon ritual at the Sky Lagoon & evening aurora hunt
Day 3	Golden Circle	Private full day tour (7h): Þingvellir, Brúarfoss & a greenhouse lunch at Friðheimar Two nights in a turf-roofed lodge with its own geothermal hot tub
Day 4	Golden Circle	Geysir & Gullfoss, and a snowmobile ride on the Langjökull glacier
Day 5	South coast	Private full day tour (9h): Seljalandsfoss & Skógafoss, a Katla ice cave by super jeep, Dyrhólaey & Reynisfjara
Day 6	Blue Lagoon	The Raufarhólshellir lava tube & the Reykjanes Geopark Last night at the lagoon, with a closing soak & dinner
Day 7	Blue Lagoon	Private transfer, hotel to Keflavík Airport (20 min)

Direct from Amsterdam in 3h25. Both journeys extend naturally with three or four nights in the Low Countries, with one team handling both halves.



DESTINATIONS

SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

Fjords carved by ice, capitals built on water, the aurora overhead, and design in daily life.

BORN OF VIKINGS AND SÁMI

One Norse root, a language from another family, and a people older than every border.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden share a Norse root and three languages close enough to follow one another. Finland does not: Finnish belongs to a different family altogether, nearer to Estonian and Hungarian than to anything Germanic. Across the top of all of them the Sámi have herded reindeer since long before any of the borders were drawn, and their land, Sápmi, still crosses four countries. The crowns traded the map between themselves for six hundred years, and the present borders are recent: Norway left its union with Sweden in 1905, Finland left Russia in 1917.



TWO PEOPLES, ONE NORTH

The Norse expanded outward by sea from the 790s. The Sámi were already in the north, following the reindeer across what is now four countries, and their languages are related to Finnish rather than to Norwegian or Swedish. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries tried to assimilate them by law and closed schools to their language. Since 1989 Norway, Sweden and Finland have each opened an elected Sámi parliament, and in Norway the right to herd reindeer is reserved to Sámi families.

WHY THE DESIGN LOOKS LIKE THAT

Long winters and little daylight produced a way of building around both: pale wood, large windows, low lamps. Alvar Aalto in Finland, Arne Jacobsen and Hans Wegner in Denmark and Bruno Mathsson in Sweden made it a world export after 1945, and the welfare states built in the same years spent the money on schools, libraries and town halls rather than on palaces, which is where you still go to see it.

THE REGION TODAY, IN FOUR PARTS

DENMARK

DANISH

The flattest and the southernmost: Copenhagen, the islands, and the bridge across to Sweden.

NORWAY

NORWEGIAN

The fjord coast, the oil that funds the world's largest sovereign fund, and the road north to the Arctic.

SWEDEN

SWEDISH

The largest of the three: Stockholm on its islands, the forests and lakes, and Swedish Lapland.

FINLAND

FINNISH & SWEDISH

Nordic but not Scandinavian: Helsinki, the lake district, and Finnish Lapland with Rovaniemi.

Four countries	Three Norse languages, one Finno-Ugric	Sápmi across all four	Around 27m people	Passport-free since 1952

SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND, A TIMELINE

A Norse expansion, centuries of unions between the crowns, the modern borders, and the Nordic model.

THE VIKING AGE

793 — 1066

Three centuries in which Norse ships raid, trade and settle from Ireland to the Caspian. The same voyages carry settlers to Iceland, Greenland and, around the year 1000, North America.

CROWNS, UNIONS AND THE HANSA

1100s — 1809

The three kingdoms take shape and spend six centuries uniting and splitting again, while German merchants of the Hanseatic League run the trade of the Baltic and the North Sea.

THE MODERN BORDERS

1814 — 1945

Napoleon's wars redraw the north, and over the following century the map reaches the shape it has today.

THE NORDIC MODEL

1945 — today

Four small countries build welfare states, open their borders to one another, and export design, music and food. Oil pays for one of them.

793 LINDISFARNE
A raid on the monastery off the English coast is the first recorded Viking attack, and the date Europe uses to open the Viking Age.

860s EAST AS WELL AS WEST
Norse traders open the river routes to Constantinople and Baghdad. Arab silver ends up buried on Swedish farms, and Gotland's hoards are the proof.

1030 THE NORTH TURNS CHRISTIAN
Olaf II dies at Stiklestad and is made a saint. The kingdoms become Christian, and the stave churches carry Norse carving on Christian roofs.

1360 BRUGES AND BERGEN
The Hanseatic League runs its two western offices at Bruges and Bergen. The Bryggen wharf in Bergen still stands and is a UNESCO site.

1397 THE KALMAR UNION
Denmark, Norway and Sweden come under one crown. Sweden leaves in 1523 under Gustav Vasa; Denmark keeps Norway for three more centuries.

1809 FINLAND CHANGES HANDS
After six hundred years as part of Sweden, Finland is taken by Russia and governed as an autonomous grand duchy.

1814 NORWAY WRITES A CONSTITUTION
Denmark cedes Norway to Sweden. Norwegians write their own constitution at Eidsvoll on 17 May, still the national day, before accepting the union.

1905 NORWAY LEAVES
The union with Sweden is dissolved peacefully by referendum, and Norway invites a Danish prince to be king.

1917 FINLAND STANDS ALONE
Finland declares independence during the Russian revolution. A civil war follows in 1918, and the Winter War with the Soviet Union in 1939.

1952 ONE PASSPORT AREA
The Nordic Council is founded. A common labour market and passport-free travel follow, decades before Schengen.

1950s DESIGN BUILT AROUND LIGHT
Aalto, Jacobsen, Wegner and Mathsson make Nordic design a world reference, for public buildings as much as for homes.

1969 NORWAY FINDS OIL
The Ekofisk field is found in the North Sea. The revenue goes into a sovereign fund, now the largest in the world.

1989 THE SÁMI PARLIAMENTS
Norway opens the first elected Sámi parliament. Sweden follows in 1993 and Finland in 1996.

2004 NEW NORDIC CUISINE
A manifesto signed in Copenhagen turns local and seasonal cooking into a movement, and the region's restaurants into a reason to travel.

2023 THE SECURITY MAP CHANGES
Finland joins NATO in 2023 and Sweden in 2024, ending two centuries of Swedish non-alignment.

LAPLAND IN WINTER, WHAT TO DO

Lapland runs on the winter: the aurora overhead, huskies in the forest and a sauna at the end of every day. Rovaniemi, Levi and Saariselkä in Finland, Kiruna and Harads in Sweden, Alta in Norway.



AURORA HUNTS

The forecast decides the evening. A private guide reads the cloud and the solar activity through the afternoon, then takes you where the sky is clearest, by snowmobile, by sleigh or on foot onto a frozen lake. A fire, hot drinks and a camera set for the long exposure. The lights are never guaranteed, which is the argument for three or four nights in the north.



HUSKY SLEDDING

Your own team and your own sled, a musher ahead and the frozen forest closing in on both sides. The short run takes two hours, the full day crosses lakes and stops at a wilderness hut for lunch. Time at the kennels before and after explains how the dogs are bred, fed and read, which is most of what makes the day.



REINDEER FARMS & SÁMI CULTURE

An afternoon with a herding family on their own land. The sleigh moves at reindeer pace, slow enough to hear the snow, and the fire is lit in the lavvu afterwards for coffee and bread. The conversation covers the herding year, the language, and what a border means to a family whose grazing crosses three countries.



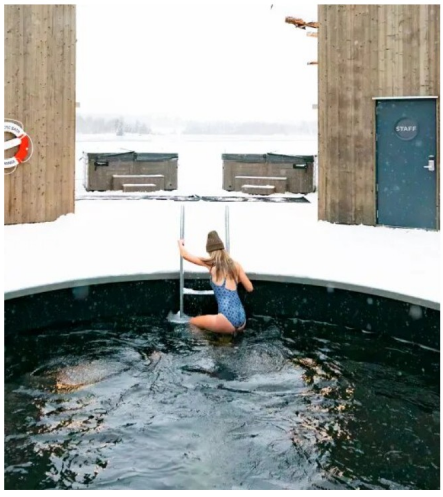
GLASS IGLOOS & DESIGN LODGES

The room is part of the itinerary here. Glass roofs over the bed for the aurora, lodges of some twenty cabins deep in the forest, the Arctic Bath floating on the Lule river at Harads and the treehouses a few kilometres upstream. Most ask a minimum of two or three nights, so the beds shape the route.



SANTA CLAUS VILLAGE

In Rovaniemi, on the Arctic Circle itself. The meeting is private and unhurried, the post office stamps the letters children send from every country all year, and the reindeer and the kennels are at the edge of the village. The hour families talk about for the rest of the journey.



SAUNA, THE NORDIC WAY

Wood-fired heat, birch whisks and a plunge through a hole cut in the ice, repeated until the cold stops registering. The sauna closes every day in Lapland. We arrange it privately, at the lodge or on a lake with nothing else in sight.

LAPLAND IN WINTER, WHAT TO DO

The long evenings, the quiet ways to cross the forest, and when each of them runs



ICE FISHING

An auger through a metre of ice, a short rod and a long wait that nobody minds. Lunch is cooked on the fire in the hut beside you. In the evening the table is laid in the forest under lanterns, the guide cooking over open flame: arctic char, reindeer and cloudberries, eaten where the day ended.



FLOATING ON ICE

A thermal suit that keeps you dry and warm, a hole opened in the frozen lake and nothing else. You float on your back in complete silence, looking up. It is stranger and better than it sounds, and it is the thing guests describe first when they are home.



SNOWMOBILE SAFARIS

Across frozen lakes and up onto the open fell, where the forest ends and the view runs for thirty kilometres. Driven in convoy with a guide, from two hours to a full day with lunch in a hut. A driving licence is needed to take the controls; passengers need none.



SNOWSHOES & CROSS-COUNTRY

The quiet alternative to the engine. Snowshoes need no lesson and go where the trail stops, through old forest and over the marsh. Cross-country runs on tracks the villages lay and light, from an easy loop to twenty kilometres, and both catch the blue hour at its best.



THE SAMPO ICEBREAKER

A working icebreaker out of Kemi, on the Gulf of Bothnia, that now carries passengers. The hull climbs onto the frozen sea and breaks it under its own weight, close enough to feel through the deck, and the day ends in the channel it has cut, floating in a thermal survival suit.



ICE HOTEL

Sorrisniva, above the Alta river in northern Norway, is built again from snow and river ice every winter and carved by a new set of artists. Guests spend one night in a thermal bag on a bed of ice and the rest in the warm lodge alongside. The ice bar and the ice chapel are open to visitors by day.

WHEN EACH ACTIVITY RUNS

- Aurora season: late September to early April, never guaranteed
- Snow season: mid December to early April, first snow in October
- Husky and reindeer safaris: December to early April
- Ice hotels and their art suites: mid December to early April
- The Sampo icebreaker: late December to April
- Polar night in the far north: early December to early January

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE QUOTING

Lapland journeys are quoted as one grand total. Most lodges ask a minimum stay of two to three nights, and five-star comfort is the exception this far north, so service level decides the hotel list.

Heights, ages and driving licences decide the activities. A winter itinerary is written twice, once on paper and once on the day, with our team watching the weather and the aurora forecast.

THE DARK NORTH AND THE SUNNY NORTH

Three four-night journeys, each built on two bases. Finnish Lapland flies direct from Amsterdam to Rovaniemi in winter, Bergen in 1h35 all year, Ålesund with one connection.

FINNISH LAPLAND — 4 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Lapland	Direct flight, Amsterdam to Rovaniemi (3h25) & private transfer to the lodge (30 min) Checking in to a glass igloo or design hotel
Day 2	Lapland	Husky safari through the forest (3h) Evening aurora hunt with a private guide (3h)
Day 3	Lapland	Private visit to a reindeer farm (4h), Sámi culture shared first hand
Day 4	Lapland	Sauna & a slow day in the snow Families add Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, on the Arctic Circle (2h)
Day 5		Private transfer, lodge to airport (30 min)

SUNNY FJORDS, BERGEN & VOSS — 4 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Bergen	Direct flight, Amsterdam to Bergen (1h35) & private transfer to the hotel (25 min) Evening on the Bryggen wharf with your Storykeeper (2h)
Day 2	Bergen	Private full day (6h): the Hanseatic quarter, the fish market, Troldhaugen & the Fløibanen
Day 3	Voss	Scenic transfer over the Hardangerfjord to Voss (4h with stops) Two nights between the fjord and the mountain
Day 4	Voss	Private full day (8h): the Flåm railway & a private cruise on the Nærøyfjord
Day 5		Private transfer, Voss to Bergen Airport (1h45), home via Amsterdam

SUNNY FJORDS, SKODJE & ÅLESUND — 4 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Skodje	Flight, Amsterdam to Ålesund with one connection, & private transfer to Skodje (30 min) Two nights in the hills above the Storfjord
Day 2	Skodje	Private full day (9h): the Geirangerfjord by boat & the eagle road viewpoints
Day 3	Ålesund	Private transfer to Ålesund (30 min) Afternoon in the Art Nouveau town, the Jugendstil centre & the Aksla steps
Day 4	Ålesund	Private full day (7h): the islands of Giske and Godøy, the Alnes lighthouse & the outer coast
Day 5		Private transfer, hotel to Ålesund Airport (20 min), home via Oslo or Copenhagen

THE NORDIC CAPITALS, IN BLOCKS

Four city blocks, east to west: Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen. Any city lifts out, and the days renumber; two nights in each and three in Copenhagen builds the full journey of nine.

HELSINKI — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 1	Helsinki	Direct flight, Amsterdam to Helsinki (2h20) Private transfer to hotel (30 min)
Day 2	Helsinki	Private day tour of the Helsinki city centre (4h): Temppeliaukio Church, Uspenski Cathedral, Oodi library & a wood-fired sauna
Day 3		Flight to Stockholm (1h)

STOCKHOLM — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 3	Stockholm	Private transfer & afternoon in Gamla Stan with your Storykeeper (3h)
Day 4	Stockholm	Private full day tour (6h): the Vasa Museum, Djurgården & the archipelago by boat
Day 5		Speed train, Stockholm to Oslo (5h20), city centre to city centre

OSLO — 2 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 5	Oslo	Private transfer & the new harbour promenade with your Storykeeper (2h)
Day 6	Oslo	Private full day tour (6h): the Munch Museum, the Opera House & the Vigeland Park
Day 7		Flight to Copenhagen (1h10)

COPENHAGEN — 3 NIGHTS

DAY	DESTINATION	ACTIVITY
Day 7	Copenhagen	Private transfer & evening in Nyhavn with your Storykeeper (2h)
Day 8	Copenhagen	Private full day tour (6h): the palaces, Rosenborg & new Nordic dining
Day 9	Copenhagen	Private day north (6h): the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art & Kronborg, Hamlet's castle at Helsingør
Day 10		Private transfer, hotel to Copenhagen Airport (20 min)

OUR FAVOURITE HOTELS IN COPENHAGEN

The old centre between Tivoli and the harbour, with Kongens Nytorv, Nyhavn and the royal quarter a short walk from every house. The full selection, current openings and seasonal rates come with each quote.



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors

5-STAR & SUPERIOR

1. Hotel d'Angleterre
2. Nimb Hotel
3. Hotel Sanders
4. Villa Copenhagen
5. 1 Hotel Copenhagen

4-STAR & LIFESTYLE

6. Admiral Hotel
7. NH Copenhagen Grand Joanne
8. Park Lane Copenhagen (Hellerup)

◆ Sights & landmarks

Park Lane Copenhagen sits in Hellerup, on Øregård Park, fifteen minutes north of this map. Further out, Kokkedal Slot in Hørsholm is listed with each quote.



SECTION IV

SAPIENS CURATED GROUPS

The art of travelling together.

WHAT ARE THE SAPIENS CURATED GROUPS

Itineraries that blend the ease of a tailor-made trip with the richness of travelling together



Our groups are small departures led by a Storykeeper, a local culture translator who has lived in the destination for years. Private collections, working cellars and places that rarely open their doors are part of every journey, and the logistics stay behind the scenes, making for an authentic and rewarding way to explore this corner of the world in good company, while we do the heavy lifting.

WHAT MAKES OUR GROUPS SPECIAL

01 GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Netherlands departures are confirmed with two travellers, Iceland departures with six. No minimum has to be reached first, so a seat sold is a seat that travels.

02 THE IDEAL SIZE

Groups average ten travellers, never more than fourteen. Small enough for the places the public rarely visits, large enough for the table to feel like a dinner among friends.

03 WE TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING

We select the hotels and arrange check-ins, transfers, luggage and tickets in advance, and our own team handles them on the ground. While your clients travel, you have no administration to manage.

04 THE STORYKEEPERS

Our in-house guides, each with a field of their own: art, history, food or design. They work with cultural sustainability in mind, so the local traditions they share carry on after the group has left.

2027 DEPARTURES

Six journeys, from the first tulips to the aurora, every seat sold through advisors.



TEFAF

9 NIGHTS · ONE DEPARTURE

10 to 19 March 2027

Maastricht · Antwerp · Amsterdam · Keukenhof

The art fair year in one journey: TEFAF in Maastricht, the galleries of Antwerp and the first tulips of the season.



DUTCH SPRING: TULIPS & VAN GOGH

7 NIGHTS · THREE DEPARTURES

03 to 10 April
10 to 17 April
17 to 24 April 2027

Amsterdam · Keukenhof · Gouda · Otterlo

The bloom at Keukenhof and a private tulip farm, with Van Gogh at the museum and in the forest at the Kröller-Müller.



DUTCH COUNTRYSIDE & DUTCH ICONS

8 NIGHTS · THREE DEPARTURES

22 to 30 May
30 May to 07 June
12 to 20 June 2027

Amsterdam · Zwolle · The Hague

The icons and the quiet country behind them: canals and windmills, the Hanseatic towns and the Mauritshuis.



DUTCH ART MOVEMENTS

7 NIGHTS · THREE DEPARTURES

22 to 29 May
12 to 19 June
26 June to 03 July 2027

Amsterdam · The Hague · Rotterdam · Otterlo

From the Golden Age to De Stijl and the Rotterdam skyline, a journey through five centuries of Dutch art.



LOW COUNTRIES & FLANDERS

10 NIGHTS · THREE DEPARTURES

01 to 11 July
08 to 18 July
10 to 20 September 2027

Brussels · Ghent · The Hague · Amsterdam

The full sweep of the Low Countries: the Ghent Altarpiece, the Grand Place, the Mauritshuis and the canal ring.



AURORA IN ICELAND

6 NIGHTS · THREE DEPARTURES

31 October to 06 November
07 to 13 November
14 to 20 November 2027

Reykjavík · Golden Circle · Vík · Blue Lagoon

The dark-season journey: aurora hunts from a turf-roofed lodge, a Katla ice cave and the Blue Lagoon at the close.



SECTION V

WORKING WITH SAPIENS

How we quote, how we operate, and what we promise along the way.

HOW WE WORK

The practical frame behind every file, from the first request to the commission payment.

01 · YOUR REQUEST

Send it to operations@sapiens-travel.com. Tell us whether you need NETT or commissionable rates and at what percentage, and whether you want a price breakdown. We usually reply with a proposal within 1 business day.

The more the first mail carries, travel dates, number of travellers and their ages, hotel category or the hotels you already hold, and any occasion being marked, the faster the proposal comes back.

02 · PRIVATE, LUXURY, B2B

We work through travel advisors and tour operators only, exclusively private or semi-private services, in the luxury and ultra luxury range, for FIT files and for groups alike.

Private Day Trips and Transfers are arranged in Mercedes S-Class (02 persons), Mercedes V-Class (05 persons) or Sprinter (15 persons).

03 · HOTELS, YOUR WAY

If you belong to a consortium, you are free to book the hotels yourself. That said, we hold contracts with most of the four and five star properties and extend our amenities on Virtuoso and LHW properties. It will be a pleasure to book the hotels on your behalf. We personally know them and visited them before recommending them to your clients. Iceland and Lapland are the exception, where the lodges and the services are quoted together.

04 · HOW OUR TOURS WORK

Every tour runs private and is led by one of our in-house Storykeepers, who shapes the day around your clients; where the trip allows, the same guide stays from the first day to the last. The meeting point is always the hotel lobby.

The description gives the shape of the day, and the guide rewrites it on the morning itself, adding a treasure hunt for children or building a food tour around what a family can and cannot eat.

05 · SCOPE OF A FILE

Two services minimum per itinerary, and they have to go beyond tickets; Virtuoso agencies are the exception. Every quote comes as one grand total, broken down as you ask: line by line in the Netherlands and Belgium, hotels and services in Iceland and Lapland.

06 · PAYMENT AND CURRENCY

A deposit of 20% confirms the itinerary; the balance falls due 60 days before arrival, or in full at booking when departure is within 80 days. Dutch bank transfer or credit card, no card fee, euros only.

07 · COMMISSIONS

Paid within one month of your clients' departure, by wire transfer against your invoice. The percentage is the one you state at the request stage.

08 · IN DESTINATION

One day before arrival we open a WhatsApp group with your clients and our operations team, with daily recaps, and stay on it for the whole stay. After departure you receive a report on how the trip went.

09 · YOUR BRAND SHINES

Everything the client sees is white label: itineraries on Axus under your agency name, a meet and greet carrying your logo, gifts presented on your behalf. We stay behind you unless you ask us to step forward.

10 · IN YOUR TIME ZONE

In the United States and Mexico our representative Biggeri+Universe answers in your working hours. Everywhere else the operations desk runs on Amsterdam time.

11 · ICELAND AND THE WINTER NORTH

Weather writes the day: our team watches the forecast, reroutes around it and tells your clients before they ask. The aurora season runs late September to early April, and no night is ever guaranteed.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

We want absolute clarity on the terms that frame every journey. The quote for each file is the binding document; these terms apply to it. Curated Groups follow the conditions stated in the Groups 2027 brochure.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sapiens Travel B.V.
Herengracht 280, 1016 BX Amsterdam, the Netherlands
operations@sapiens-travel.com
+31 6 86 40 27 63
Chamber of Commerce (KVK) 75444704
Dutch VAT: NL002514237B03.

1. BOOKING AND CONFIRMATION, INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL

- All bookings are contingent upon availability and confirmation by Sapiens Travel DMC, so that your preferred dates and accommodations are secured.
- To formalise the reservation, a non-refundable deposit of 20% of the total tour cost is required. This amount may depend on the trip and is stated by email and in the proposal where it differs. The final payment is due 60 days before the tour begins.
- Specific companies and organisations may be entitled to different payment arrangements, agreed through a direct contract between both parties.

2. VIRTUOSO AMENITIES

Virtuoso bookings in the Netherlands are entitled to the following benefits:

- Complimentary one-way transfer in Amsterdam between the airport (or train station) and the hotel, based on a minimum of three full-day tours.
- Complimentary round-trip transfers in Amsterdam between the airport (or train station) and the hotel, based on a minimum of five full-day tours.
- A personalised welcome gift, offered on behalf of the travel agency.

Private transfers are provided in a Mercedes S-Class (2 guests) or Mercedes V-Class (2 to 5 guests). One transfer per booking. New bookings only, subject to availability and change, and not combinable with other offers.

3. PAYMENT METHODS

- Wire transfer to the bank account of Sapiens Travel in the Netherlands; details are provided on request.
- Debit or credit card.
- Boleto, for Brazilian clients.

4. CANCELLATION, PRIVATE SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATION

We understand that unforeseen circumstances may arise. The 20% deposit is non-refundable. For the rest of the trip:

- More than 30 days before the start: full refund, except for the deposit.
- 15 to 30 days: 50% refund of the trip.
- 0 to 15 days: non-refundable, as arrangements and reservations have been made on your behalf.

At certain times of the year, in peak season or around special events, stricter cancellation conditions may apply. We strongly urge you to secure travel insurance at the time of booking, which in most cases covers, under certain circumstances, loss of deposit and cancellation fees.



TERMS & CONDITIONS, CONTINUED

5. CANCELLATION, PERSONALISED SERVICES

Certain bespoke arrangements fall outside our general cancellation conditions: concert or event tickets, private venue closures or buy-outs, special décor and flowers, customised gifts, and any service requiring a non-refundable advance payment to our partners.

- Full prepayment: 100% is due at the time of booking and is non-refundable and non-changeable once confirmed, including date, time or name changes.
- Supplier-driven changes: if a supplier cancels or significantly alters the service, any refund, credit or alternative follows the supplier's own terms and is passed on net of irrecoverable costs and bank or administration fees.
- Combined bookings: when a trip includes both general and personalised services, only the general services follow our standard cancellation policy; the personalised services remain fully non-refundable. Comprehensive travel insurance is strongly recommended.

6. ITINERARY CHANGES

- We strive to provide the best possible travel experience. Unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, such as adverse weather, strikes or other unforeseeable events, may require last-minute changes to the itinerary, even after confirmation or during the trip.
- These adjustments are made to protect the logistics of the journey and to keep the experience seamless. Travellers are always promptly informed when a change or adjustment has to be proposed.
- Clients are equally entitled to request adjustments after an itinerary is confirmed. Requests must be made in writing and are arranged subject to availability.
- Where a requested change brings additional costs, whether a new service, a rate difference or a supplier cancellation fee, they are passed on in full and payable before the change is confirmed.

7. HEALTH AND TRAVEL INSURANCE

- To safeguard your investment and well-being, we strongly recommend that all clients obtain comprehensive travel insurance.
- Sapiens Travel DMC cannot be held responsible for any loss, injury or damage to persons or property during the tour, which is why adequate coverage matters.

8. CLIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Clients are responsible for obtaining all necessary travel documents, including passports and visas, well in advance of the tour start date.
- Special requests, dietary restrictions and preferences must be communicated to Sapiens Travel DMC at the time of booking.

SAPIENS
TRAVEL DMC

Send us your request

operations@sapiens-travel.com

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WWW.SAPIENS-TRAVEL.COM

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Instagram @sapiens_travel

In the USA and Mexico, represented by Biggeri+Universe