THE NETHERLANDS
INFORMATION SHEET

The Netherlands is nestled between Belgium and Germany. Much of the country has been reclaimed from the sea, creating a flat level country with many rivers and canals. It is most memorable for the tulips and windmills that dot the countryside. The Dutch are a warm and friendly people who welcome strangers to their shores.

The following is a general information sheet. It is as accurate as we can make it. However, things sometimes change unexpectedly. Please use this only as a guide.

Expectations
While group tours are one of the most enjoyable ways to travel, they do require a certain degree of flexibility and understanding on every individual’s part. We have carefully planned your itinerary and have done our best to provide you with information about what to expect. However, much of what makes travel interesting is the unexpected. Travel with an open mind and you will get the most and best out of your holiday. Please be assured that our mission is to create and provide you with the most enjoyable and memorable travel experience.

Currency
The unit of currency is the euro, available in various denominations. We recommend that you purchase 200 to 400 euros, depending on your spending habits. Major banks generally have an international division and can make this conversion for you. Many shops and restaurants in the cities and tourist resorts accept major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa and American Express) and offer the best exchange rates, but credit cards are less easy to use in the countryside. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services, which may be available; you should also advise your bank and credit card companies that you will be abroad, to avoid problems. Using a credit card also excludes some purchases from the VAT. Cash is often preferred but should not be carried in large quantities. Money can be changed at banks in all of the main tourist areas or exchange offices as well as most hotels and railroad stations. Banking hours are usually 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, on weekdays and closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

While on your trip, you will see temperatures forecast in Celsius. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by 9, then divide your answer by 5, and add 32.

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The standard current is 220 volts A.C. A transformer may also be necessary and can be purchased in many stores. Sockets generally have a plug for U.S. appliances, and you may need to bring a transformer. Major banks generally have an international division and can make this conversion for you. Many shops and restaurants in the cities and tourist resorts accept major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa and American Express) and offer the best exchange rates, but credit cards are less easy to use in the countryside. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services, which may be available; you should also advise your bank and credit card companies that you will be abroad, to avoid problems. Using a credit card also excludes some purchases from the VAT. Cash is often preferred but should not be carried in large quantities. Money can be changed at banks in all of the main tourist areas or exchange offices as well as most hotels and railroad stations. Banking hours are usually 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, on weekdays and closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

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The most popular lunch for the Dutch is sandwiches, served at broodjeswinkels. The evening meal is most substantial. The seafood dishes in Amsterdam are exceptional. Dessert dishes include pancakes, waffles and poffertje (fried dough). The local spirit is jenever (Dutch gin) and the local beer is superior. Bars open late, but stay open until the wee morning hours.

**Optional Side Trips**
At most destinations, optional side trips to nearby attractions are available. The tour host at your destination can help you arrange these trips during your free time. A few operators on these side trips will not take credit cards. You may want to carry more in traveler’s checks if you think that you may be interested in taking these trips. The prices on the excursions vary greatly depending on the length of the tour and the places visited.

**Safety and Health Services**
We recommend that you leave a copy of your itinerary with friends or family, in case of emergencies. In order to have a trouble-free holiday as a traveler, you should avoid flaunting jewelry, and wear your handbag securely strapped across your chest. Many stores (as well as Durgan Travel) also sell security wallets that are worn inside your clothing. They are large enough to hold your passport, money, etc., and offer a secure option if you prefer to carry them with you.

You should keep a record of your credit card and Traveler’s check numbers separate from your purse or wallet. It is also a good idea to carry a photocopy of the picture page of your passport and leave your passport (remember that you may need to have your passport with you to cash traveler’s checks), and any valuables locked in the hotel safe, unless you have a security wallet. Losing your passport can be very expensive and inconvenient. Avoid going off on your own, unless you are familiar with the area. Be alert for suspicious people or circumstances.

**There is no reciprocal health agreement with the U.S. and treatment is very expensive.** If you have health issues, be sure to check with your healthcare provider before leaving home to verify what procedures they want you to follow, should the need arise. Should an injury or accident occur, you will be responsible for any costs involved, medical and/or travel related. For this reason, we **strongly urge** you to take out some form of traveler’s insurance before your departure.

**Accommodations**
Hotel rooms abroad are most always smaller than those in the United States, and it is not unusual for one room to differ from the next. Hotel rooms in major cities tend to be smaller than hotel rooms throughout the rest of the country – but what you don’t get in spacious accommodations is more than compensated by the wealth of attractions surrounding you.

It is the custom for a twin room to be two single beds made up separately and placed side by side. A double room will usually have one double bed. A single room will have one twin-size bed. A triple is generally a twin room with a cot or small bed added. Also please be aware that single rooms are almost always smaller than twin rooms.

Unfortunately, we can only request room types and locations. Room assignments are made at the discretion of the hotel.

**Telephones**
To call the Netherlands from the U.S. dial 011 and the country code (31) followed by the city code and then the phone number. It is very expensive to call the United States from your hotel room. We suggest that you use a phone card from a public phone booth. Coins are often not accepted in public phones, but phone cards can be purchased at many newspaper stands and pharmacies. If you are using your own telephone credit card, you can secure the access codes to call the United States from your long distance telephone service provider. To call the U.S. from abroad, once you get a local line, dial your access code, followed by the area code and number. No need to dial 1.

**Transportation & Shopping**
Taxis are available from the hotel. Ask the front desk for help in summoning a taxi. Secure a fixed price from the driver before you depart. Public transportation is available in many cities.

Most shops open from 9:00 – 6:00 Monday through Friday. Shops close at 5:00 on Saturday. Shops are generally closed on Sunday.

The best buys in the Netherlands are Delft, diamonds, and crystal. Please remember that bulbs cannot be taken out of the country. For larger purchases, many countries impose a Value Added Tax (VAT). If the purchase is over a certain amount, you can get it partially refunded.

**Tipping**
Tipping is a way of life in Europe and generally expected; we hope the following information will be of assistance. **Gratuities to your tour director, driver, local guides, dining room staff, and chambermaids are not included in the tour price.** While the amount of these gratuities will depend upon your degree of satisfaction for services received, many of our clients have asked us for general tipping guidelines. For a good job, we suggest $3.00-$5.00 per person per day for your full time tour director and $3.00-$5.00 per person per day for your driver. For escorts on your transfer from the airport, $1.00 per person is suggested; for dining room staff, $.050 per person per meal; for chambermaids, $.050 per person per day; for local guides during tours, $.50 per person per day; for local guides on shore excursions, $1.00 per person.

**Custom Regulations**
Luggage may be examined upon entering and leaving countries. U.S. citizens can bring home up to $800 worth of foreign goods. Each member of the family is entitled to the same exemption and the exemption can be pooled. Included for travelers 21 and older are one liter of alcohol, 100 cigars (non-Cuban) and 200 cigarettes. You cannot bring back fresh fruit, meat, cheeses or plants.

**Language & Customs**
The official language is Dutch. English is spoken widely.

Rev. 12/05/13