



Art in the Netherlands

A spectrum of the finest

16–22 June 2026 (MM 990)

7 days

Lecturer: Desmond Shawe-Taylor

14–20 October 2026 (MM 202)

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A study of Dutch art in some of the finest museums of the Netherlands.

Features the great masters Rembrandt, Vermeer & Van Gogh as well as other major figures.

Also architecture and design from medieval to modern, and several highly picturesque historic town centres.

The seventeenth century was a remarkable period in the history and art history of the northern Netherlands. (Much of this activity was concentrated in Holland, though that was but one of seven provinces which constituted the United Provinces, now the Kingdom of the Netherlands.) This was the time of Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer and innumerable other great masters.

The Dutch School is of universal appeal, with its mix of realism, painterliness and potency, though it is best appreciated in the excellent art galleries of their native country – and against the background of the well preserved and wonderfully picturesque towns and cities. With their canals, cobbled alleys and gabled mansions, many have changed little in 300 years.

There is also focus on Vincent Van Gogh, the bulk of whose output is in the Netherlands. Painters of the Hague School of the nineteenth century have a presence, as do pioneers of modernism in painting and architecture, the architects Van der Velde and Gerrit Rietveld for example, and the abstract painter Piet Mondriaan. More recent art and architecture also features.

The base for the tour is a five-star hotel in Utrecht, whose central location means relatively short journeys to all places visited.

Itinerary

Day 1: Utrecht. Take the late-morning Eurostar from London St Pancras to Rotterdam, then continue by coach to Utrecht, where all six nights are spent.



The Five Syndics, engraving c. 1886 after Rembrandt.

Day 2: Amsterdam. With its rings of canals lined with merchants' mansions, Amsterdam is one of the loveliest capitals in the world. Our visit to the brilliantly refurbished Rijksmuseum concentrates on the major works in its unrivalled collection of 17th-century paintings, Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* and four Vermeers among them. The house where Rembrandt lived and worked for nearly 20 years is well restored and has a display of prints.

Day 3: Utrecht. One of the best-preserved historic cities in the Netherlands, Utrecht features canals flanked by unbroken stretches of 17th-century houses. The excellent art museum has a major collection of paintings of the 17th-century Utrecht School. See also the Rietveld House (1924), a landmark of 20th-century architecture.

Day 4: Otterlo. Located in gardens and surrounded by an extensive heath, the beautiful Kröller-Müller Museum has one of the great collection of works by Van Gogh as well as an eclectic holding of paintings, furniture and sculpture. A leisurely visit here allows time to explore the 75-acre park with its outdoor sculptures.

Day 5: The Hague. The Mauritshuis in Den Haag contains a superb collection of paintings

including masterpieces by Rembrandt and Vermeer. Exhibited in the Kunstmuseum are 19th-century Hague School paintings, the realist milieu from which Van Gogh emerged, and works by the pioneer abstractionist Mondriaan. Visit also the illusionistic Mesdag panorama and the centre of the city, seat of the court and parliament.

Day 6: Amsterdam. Return to Amsterdam for a second visit to the Rijksmuseum. The Van Gogh Museum houses the biggest holding (over 200) of the artist's works, largely from his brother Theo's collection.

Day 7: Leiden. The Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden reopened in 2019 after radical refurbishment. Originally built as the guildhall for cloth merchants, it houses works by Rembrandt. Drive to Rotterdam and take the Eurostar direct to London St Pancras arriving in the afternoon.

Participants combining the tour with the Rhine Piano Festival, 22–29 June 2026, take a transfer to Amsterdam for some free time before boarding the ship.

We sometimes change the visits on this itinerary to take advantage of temporary exhibitions.

Art in the Netherlands
continued

Lecturer

Desmond Shawe-Taylor. Distinguished art historian and museum administrator whose posts have included Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures and Director of Dulwich Picture Gallery. He studied English Literature at Oxford and took an MA in History of Art at the Courtauld Institute. He has written extensively on English eighteenth-century portraiture and other subjects, and curated a series of exhibitions at the Queen's Gallery in Edinburgh and London, dealing with Dutch and Flemish 17th-century art.

Practicalities

Included: hotel accommodation; travel by private coach; breakfasts and 4 dinners with wine, water and coffee; admission to museums and galleries; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. The Grand Hotel Karel V, Utrecht (karelv.nl): 5-star hotel converted from a 19th-century hospital in a quiet location within the city walls. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking and standing around, and the tour would not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 70 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.