



Utrecht / Photo: M. Nota

THE NETHERLANDS / UTRECHT

Utrecht's ancient city-centre features many buildings and structures from its earliest origins onwards. It has been the religious centre of the Netherlands since the eighth century AD. Utrecht is host to the largest university of the Netherlands, as well as other institutes for higher education. Due to its central position within the country, it is an important transportation hub in the Netherlands. It has the second highest number of cultural events in the Netherlands, after Amsterdam.

FACTS

Population
299'000

Official Website
www.utrecht.nl

HISTORY

Although there is some evidence of earlier inhabitation in the region of Utrecht, dating back to the Stone Age (app. 2200 BC) and settling in the Bronze Age (app. 1800-800 BC), the founding date of the city is usually related to the construction of a Roman fortification (castellum), probably built in around 50 AD. The name of the Utrecht fortress originally was sim-

ply Traiectum denoting its location on the Rhine at a ford. Later the name was adorned with the prefix Ultra (on the far side) to distinguish it from other settlements (for example Mosa Trajectum Maastricht). Over time the two parts of the name merged and evolved into the current name (Utrecht). In 1579 the northern seven provinces of these Low Countries signed the Union of Utrecht, in which they decided to join forces against the Spanish rule. The Union of Utrecht is seen as the beginning of the Dutch Republic.

BASICS

Public Transport
To save some money on public transport, buy your blue 'strippenkaart' at any tobacco or bookshop. Also available at kiosks, located in the train station's main terminal.

Taxi
Utrechtse Taxi Centrale; Tel. +31 30 23 00 400; www.utc.nl

Trains
Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS); ww.ns.nl

Airport
Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam; www.schiphol.com

Hospitals
The major academical hospital,

University Medical Center Utrecht (UMCU), is located just outside the city's boundaries. Bus 11 and 12 take you there, get off at the last stop. In case of a minor injury call 0900 450 14 50 (0.10 € / min) to contact the Central General Practitioner's Post. It's located at Rubenslaan 190 and opened 24 hours a day. Bus 12 and 13 in direction of 'de Uithof' take you there, get off at 'Rubenslaan' stop.

Internet
Free WiFi internet at Coffee Company (Vismarkt). Hotspots can be found in the main station, Neude Square (Le Journal) and the several University faculty libraries within the city centre.

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INSIDERS

Food and Drinks

A must eat while in Utrecht is 'Broodje Mario' (Mario's bread), an Italian food stall that has been located on both sides of Old Canal for over several decades. There are also lots of take away sandwiches and juice bars.

Supermarket

Connected to Utrecht Central Station is a mall (Hoog Catharijne) in which you can find Albert Heyn, one of major supermarket chains in the Netherlands. Not the cheapest, but they do have about everything you please. They also have a Albert Heyn To Go, with less stuff and higher prices located in the main terminal of the train station.

Monuments

The Dom Tower (1) was built in the Middle Ages (1321-1382) and it shows the huge power and wealth of the Christian Church in Holland. It's the highest tower of Holland (112 m). The heaviest bell is an amazingly 8.227 kg! The bells are clinging every 15 min-

utes, so be aware!

Shopping

Stroll through the cozy streets of Utrecht, nice shops can be found along the Oude Gracht (Old Canal), Zadelstreet and Lijnmarkt.

Nightlife

'Tivoli' (2): Attend an Arctic Monkey - or Franz Ferdinand - alike concert at this cozy venue. Also, do not leave Utrecht without having visited 'Cafe Belgie' (over 20 beers on draft, 120 on bottle), 'Oude Pothuys' (daily live music combined with tasty food, special beers in an old brewery down by the Old Canal), 'ACU' (once a squatted building, still is an alternative hang out) and the 'Woolloomooloo' (old WWII bunker, turned into a club as part of the city's oldest fraternity).

