



2. WALKS

Major Sights Walk

Highlights: Dam Square, Beguine Court, and Flower Market. See Major Sights map on the next page. Approximate length of walk: one mile.

Our walk begins at the Stationsplein, the bustling square in front of Centraal Station. With Centraal Station to your back, cross the Open Haven Front (that's the body of water right in front of the Stationsplein). The street in front of you is Damrak.

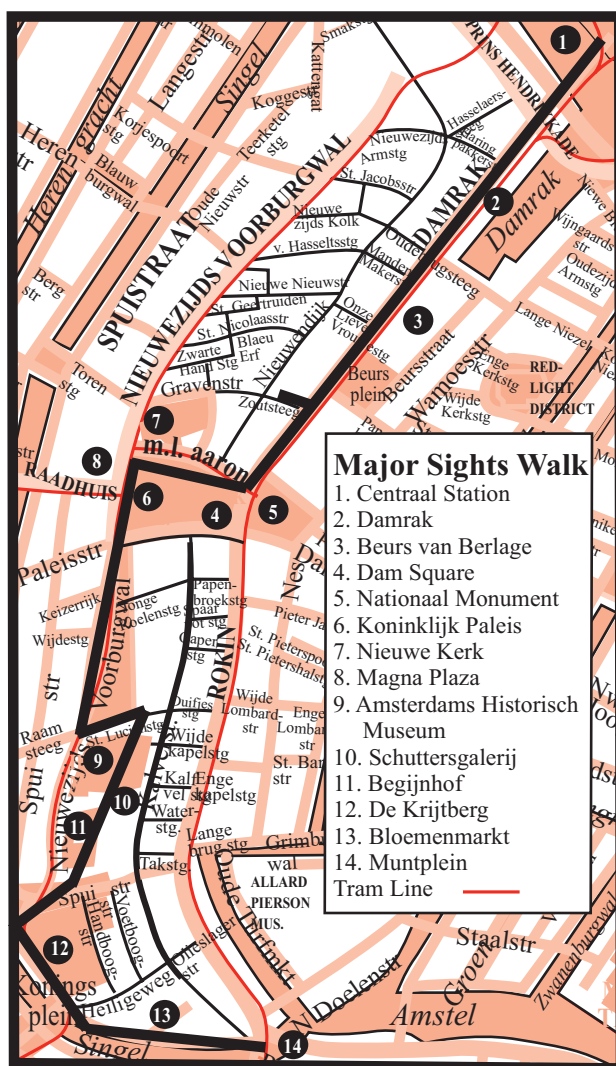
The first street that most travelers to Amsterdam explore is **Damrak**, the main street connecting Centraal Station and Dam Square. It's filled with fast-food outlets, and souvenir shops selling everything from wooden shoes to Dutch chocolate. It's probably Amsterdam's least attractive street.

Head down Damrak. You'll pass the Sex Museum on your

right (you can visit that on the "Naughty Walk") and the huge Beurs van Berlage (the former stock exchange) on your left. It's now used as a convention center and is home to the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra. Soon you'll reach a large square. You can't miss it.

DETOUR

Need a drink before you visit the major sights on this walk? Take a right off of Damrak onto Zoutsteeg. This little street is just before the **De Bijenkorf**, Amsterdam's best-known department store (on the left side of Damrak). At number 7 Zoutsteeg is **Helen van Troye**, the self-proclaimed smallest pub in Amsterdam. Have a drink at this friendly bar.



You're now at **Dam Square**. The 70-foot white obelisk here is the **National Monument** (Nationaal Monument). It was built in 1956 as a war memorial dedicated to those who endured World War II and the Nazi occupation. The urns at the back of the monument contain earth from each Dutch province and its former colonies: Indonesia, The Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean, and Suriname in South America.

The massive **Royal Palace** (Koninklijk Paleis) was built in the mid-1600s (closed Mondays except in July and August). Originally it served as City Hall, became a royal residence under the rule of Napoleon, and a royal palace of the House of Orange. The royal family doesn't live here anymore.

Head for the public entrance of the Royal Palace.

The marble-floored **Citizens Chamber** (Burgerzaal) runs the length of the second floor of the palace. You'll find mighty Atlas holding a globe and maps in the floor portraying Amsterdam as the center of the world.

As you face the Royal Palace, head to your right to the large church.

The **New Church** (Nieuwe Kerk) dates back to the early 1400s. Check out its stark interior as this former Catholic church lost most of its decorations and statues during the Iconoclasm of 1566 (when the Protestants destroyed the icons, statues and other decorations of Catholic churches). It now houses changing exhibits.

Now we are heading for a street with the long name of Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal (behind the Royal Palace and Dam Square). The opulent building at 182 used to be a post office. Now it's all about shopping.

The **Magna Plaza** was built in 1899 and now it houses over 40 stores on five stories. Go inside if you're in the mood to shop. Closed Sunday mornings.

Continue down Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal (to your right with the Magna Plaza to your back). Turn left onto Sint Luciënsteeg. At number 27 is one of three entrances to one of the best museums in Amsterdam, the Amsterdams Historisch Museum. Enter the courtyard. To your right is the museum entrance.

Before you enter the museum,

notice the 47 wall plaques preserved from buildings throughout the city that were either demolished or renovated.

The **Amsterdam Historical Museum** (Amsterdams Historisch Museum), once a 17th-century orphanage, chronicles the history of Amsterdam from fishing village to modern metropolis. You'll find paintings (including Rembrandt's partly damaged and ghastly *Anatomy Lecture of Dr Jan Deijman*), maps, wearing apparel, jewelry, prints, porcelain, sculpture and archeological finds.

If you don't want to visit the museum (or if you have finished your visit to the museum), head to your left. In between the courtyard of the Amsterdam Historical Museum and the Begijnhof is our next sight.

The **Civic Guards Gallery** (Schuttersgalerij) is a glass-covered passageway filled with a group of huge early 1600s portraits of the city's civic guards who were initially responsible for the safety of the city, but later became fraternal groups.

At the end of the gallery, exit out onto Gedempte Begijnensloot. Walk a short while down this

narrow alley until you see the entrance to the courtyard on your right side. Enter the courtyard.

The **Beguine Court** (Begijnhof) is open daily until sunset. The courtyard of this 14th-century *hofje* (almshouse) is a peaceful getaway from the bustling city. Founded in 1346 by members of a lay Catholic sisterhood (the Beguines), it's still the home of elderly poor women. There's a statue of a Beguine, dressed in traditional habit, in the center. You can see the **English Reformed Church** (Engelse Kerk) dating back to the late 1300s, and the **Mother Superior's House** (number 26). The **Begijnhof Chapel** opposite the English Reformed Church houses a clandestine church (like Our Dear Lord of the Attic above).

Cornelia Arents was the mother superior of the Beguines and died in 1654. She was buried in the English Reformed Church against her wishes (she was a Roman Catholic and did not wish to be buried in a Protestant church). Arents is said to have announced that she would rather be buried in the gutter. According to legend, the morning after her burial, her coffin was found in the gutter

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next to the lawn outside the church. That's why you'll see a grave in the gutter. A wall plaque next to the lawn outside the church reads "Beguine Cornelia Arents was laid to rest in this gutter at her own request. May 2, 1654."

Look for number 34.

At number 34 in this courtyard is the **City's Oldest House** (Het Houten Huis). It dates back to about 1475.

After passing the oldest house, head through the arched doorway. Follow the stairs that lead to the square Spui.

The small **Spui** square is filled with bookshops, bars and cafés. **Café Hoppe**, a brown café (brown from all of the cigarette smoke that has darkened its walls) has been in business for over 300 years. The statue **Little Darling** (Het Lieverdje) here is of an urchin (the one with hands on hips). It's said to be a symbol of Amsterdam: Always full of life and a little mischievous. There's a book market here on Fridays and an art market on Sundays. A great place to stop at a café.

Take a right and walk straight to the pedestrian-only street

Heisteeg. Continue over the bridge Heiburg and then take a left at Singel. Our next sight is at number 446.

You can't miss the two steeples of this 1880s neo-Gothic church. The name **De Krijtberg** means "chalk church" since the church was built on the site of a home owned by a chalk merchant. Its real name is **St. Francis Xavier Church** (Franciscus Xaveriuskerk). Head inside to take a look at the statue of St. Francis Xavier to the left of the altar, the detailed wood carving of the Immaculate Conception near the pulpit, and the statue of St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, to the right of the altar.

Continue down the Singel. Our next sight is between Koningsplein and Muntplein.

Stalls selling cut flowers and bulbs are sold from "floating" anchored barges on the Singel Canal. The **Flower Market** (Bloemenmarkt), closed Sunday, is incredibly fragrant, and a great photo opportunity. If you buy bulbs to take back home, make sure they have a sticker on them saying that they are approved by Customs to bring into the country.

At the end of the Flower Market is Muntplein.

The **Mint Tower** (Munttoren) on the square **Muntplein** gets its name from the time when it

was used as a mint during the French occupation of the city in the 1600s. Its bells ring every 15 minutes. You can end your walk at one of the cafés here.



Naughty Walk

Highlights: Sex Museum, Red-Light District, and Hash Marijuana Hemp Museum. See Naughty Walk map on the next page. Approximate length of walk: one mile.

Our walk begins at the Stationsplein, the bustling square in front of Centraal Station. With Centraal Station to your back, cross the Open Haven Front (that's the body of water right in front of the Stationsplein). The street in front of you is Damrak. Walk down Damrak until you reach number 18 (on your right).

Eroticism from Greco-Roman times to today is featured at the **Sex Museum**. Everything from erotic art to ancient phallic symbols (read: dildos) to vintage porn films.

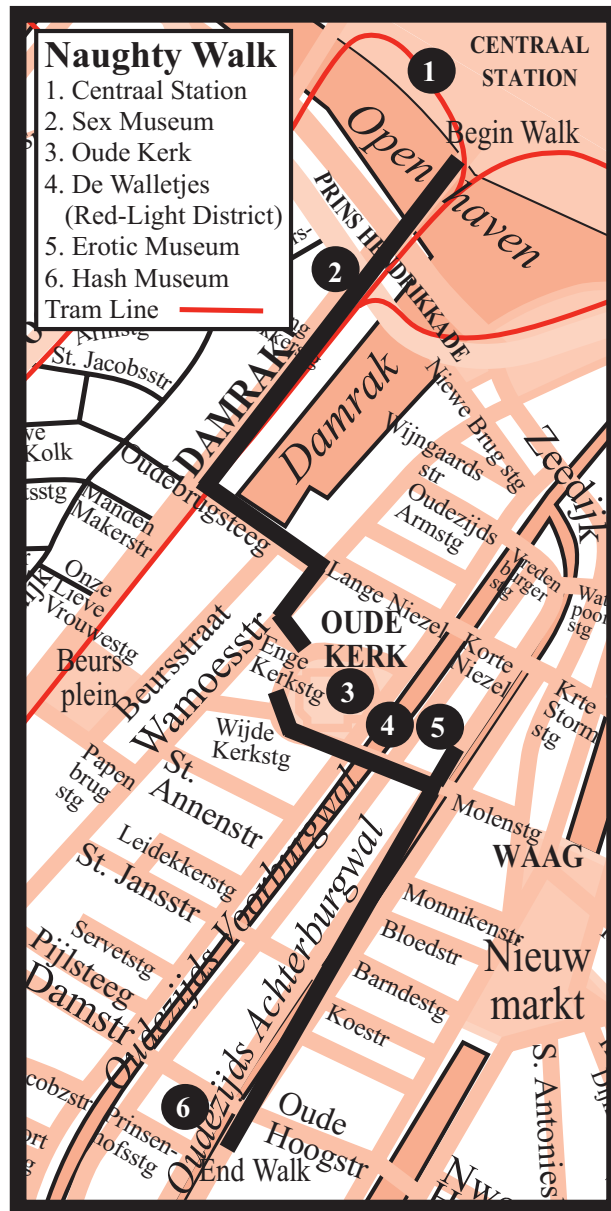
Continue down Damrak until you reach Oude Brugsteeg. It's

the first street to your left; head straight toward Warmoesstraat. It's the street where the large neon "Sex Shop" sign is. Take a right onto Warmoesstraat.

On Warmoesstraat you'll pass sex shops, porn stores, cafés selling marijuana (more about that later), gay leather bars, and pubs.

Walk down Warmoesstraat and take a left at Enge Kerksteeg. Walk down this street past the Prostitution Information Center (seriously!). You'll now see our next sight.

The **Old Church** (Oude Kerk) is indeed Amsterdam's oldest. Parts of it date back to the 13th century. Today this Gothic basilica is almost totally surrounded by the Red-Light District. It has a world-famous organ dating back to 1724 and a restored carillon.



The organ stands on marble pillars that were cleaned and restored in the late 1970s. It's said that you can see the restorer's face in the marble (to the left above floor level). Its beautiful stained-glass windows (depicting the death of the Virgin Mary), decorated pillars, 15th-century carved choir stalls and painted ceiling make this landmark a must for all visitors. There's a great view of the surrounding Red-Light District if you want to climb up the 16th-century bell tower.

DETOUR

An unknown artist has left bronze and iron artwork throughout the city over the past fifteen years. See if you can find the bronze woman's bust covered by a hand embedded in the bricks facing Oudekerksplein.

All around the Old Church is the Red-Light District.

The **Red-Light District** (De Wallerij) puts a new spin on window-shopping. The oldest profession, legal here since 1984, has its "headquarters" along the narrow streets of the

Red-Light District, where women wait in windows for their next customer. The storefront rooms have curtains which are closed when "business" is being conducted. You'll see lots of foreign businessmen and tourists milling around (many very drunk). Be careful at night, as the area is a prime pickpocket spot. By the way, don't even think about taking photos. Your camera will likely be confiscated.

After you circle around the Old Church, cross the Oudekerksbrug bridge over the canal to the street with the long name of Oudezijds Voorburgwal. Cross the canal. After you've crossed the bridge, head straight to the pedestrian-only Oudekennissteeg. If you turn left onto Oudezijds Achterburgwal, you'll see our next sight at number 54.

The **Erotic Museum** (closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays) shows you the history of S&M, porn, sex shows ... you get the picture. Lots of mannequins doing naughty things. It proudly displays erotic drawings by John Lennon.

If you're not interested in visiting the Erotic Museum, turn right from Oudekennissteeg onto Oudezijds Achterburgwal.

Stroll down this street with men looking for some action, others looking to smoke pot, tourists gawking at all of it, and neighborhood residents eating ice cream while pushing baby strollers, oblivious to it all.

As you're walking down the street, you'll pass **Casa Rosso** at 106 Oudezijds Achterburgwal, home to live sex shows. To your left (across from the club) is a fountain in the shape of a penis.

Our final stop is at number 148.

The **Hash Marijuana Hemp Museum** (Hash Marijuana Hemp Museum) shows you everything you ever wanted to know about cannabis, complete with grow room.

There are plenty of places for you to smoke pot in the area (especially "branches" of Bulldog, said to be the oldest coffeeshop in the city). So if you're inclined to do that, head back to one of the coffeeshops. Or you can head to any number of cafés in the area that can serve you alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages.



Museum Walk

Highlights: Rijksmuseum, van Gogh Museum, and Film Museum. See Museum Walk map on the next page. Approximate length of walk: one mile.

Take Trams 2 or 5 to the Hobbemastraat/Rijksmuseum stop. This will drop you right in front of the Rijksmuseum. You can also simply walk and follow the signs to the Rijksmuseum.

The impressive **Rijksmuseum** (Royal Museum) is known for its rich decoration, impressive galleries, and lovely gardens. Even though it's under renovation until 2008, you can visit an exhibit "The Masterpieces" in the already completed Philips Wing of the museum. More than 400 highlights from the Golden Age are on display, including *The Night Watch*, Rembrandt's best-known painting.



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Even if you're not interested in visiting the museum, you can visit its gardens.

Behind the museum is an interesting garden that's often overlooked by visitors. Among the fountains and flowers is a display of the ruins of buildings, some dating back to the 17th century, from throughout the Netherlands. Admission to the garden is free.

DETOUR

Stretching from the back of the Rijksmuseum is the city's largest square, the **Museumplein**. You'll find lots of green grass, a children's playground, and a pond that's an ice-skating rink in the winter.

Head to Paulus Potterstraat.

At number 2 you can tour (for free) the **Coster Diamond Factory**.

Head down the street to the modern building at number 7.

While the Rijksmuseum features the art of many, the **van Gogh Museum** is mostly devoted to one artist: Vincent van Gogh. More than 200

paintings, nearly 600 drawings and sketches, and hundreds of van Gogh's letters are found here. From his early 1880s paintings to the works of his later years of torment, these works demonstrate not only the development of van Gogh's art, but also of his fascinating life. You may know his famous paintings *Sunflowers* and *Self-Portrait as an Artist*, both of which you will find here, but come to see his other works. In addition to van Gogh's art, the works of such notables as Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bernard and Monet are also on display, along with some of van Gogh's extensive collection of Japanese drawings. Don't miss it.

Next door at number 13 Paulus Potterstraat is a contemporary art museum housed in a neo-Renaissance building, the Stedelijk Museum (Municipal Museum). It's currently closed for renovation. Continue down Paulus Potterstraat until you reach Van Baerlestraat. Turn right onto Van Baerlestraat. Pass Jan Luijkenstraat, Peter Cornelisz Hooftstraat, and Vossiusstraat. Turn right onto Roemer Visscherstraat. Head to 20-30 Roemer Visscherstraat.

In less than a block, you can see seven private homes built

in 1894 in the architectural style of seven European countries. At 30 is an English cottage (now a hotel). Also at 30 is a Dutch Renaissance home. At 28 is a Russian cathedral with onion-shaped dome. At 26 is an Italian *palazzo*. At 24 is a pink-and-white striped Spanish villa. At 22 is a French *château*, and at 20 is a German Gothic-style home.

Now head back the way you came on Roemer Visscherstraat, cross Van Baerlestraat and head into the park Vondelpark.

This 120-acre park was named after Joost van den Vondel, known as the "Shakespeare of the Netherlands." In the sum-

mer, it's filled with locals enjoying this large green space near the city center.

Take a right and you'll see a 19th-century pavilion. It's home to our final sight.

The **Netherlands Film Museum** (Nederlands Filmmuseum) is a film museum, library, and a cinema with over 35,000 films. Private screening rooms are available to view videos. The cinema shows everything from silent films from the US to Dutch films. The museum is closed on Sundays and Mondays but the theater is open daily. You can end your walk here at the popular and trendy **Café Vertigo**.

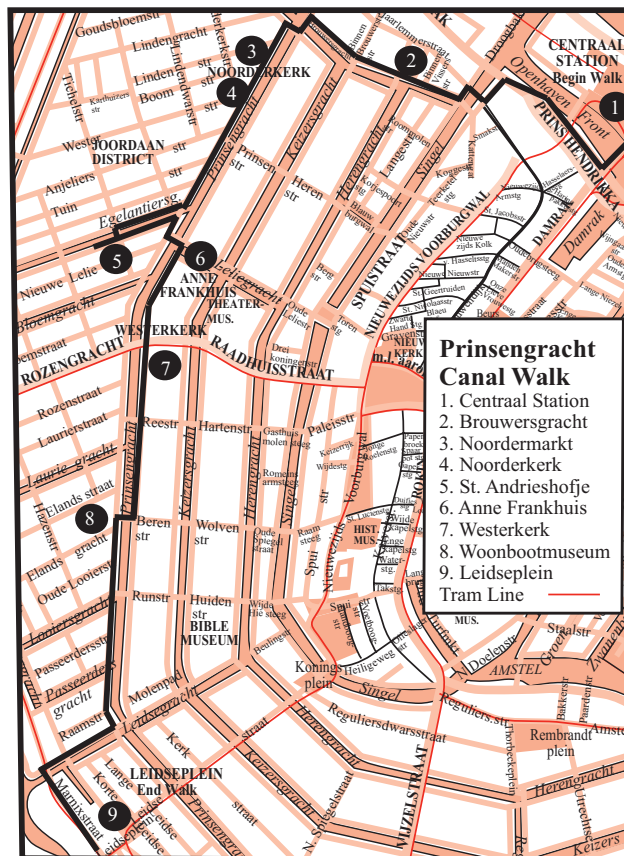


Prinsengracht Canal Walk

Highlights: North Church, West Church, Anne Frank House, and Leidseplein. See Prinsengracht Canal Walk on the next page. Approximate length of walk: two miles.

Our walk begins at the Stationsplein, the bustling square in front of Centraal Station. With Centraal Station to your back, cross the Open Haven

Front (that's the body of water right in front of the Stationsplein) until you reach the first street, Prins Hendrikkade. Turn right and continue down Prins Hendrikkade until you reach the Singel, the first canal. Take a left and then a right over the bridge (Haarlemmersluis). On the other side of the bridge, take a left and then a quick right (at the Doors [as in Jim Morrison] Coffeeshop).



The canal that you are now walking along is our first sight.

The tree-lined **Brewers Canal** (Brouwersgracht) is at the northern end of the Jordaan neighborhood. It offers incredibly beautiful views down the four main canals (Prinsengracht, Keizersgracht, Herengracht, and Singel) bordered by impressive buildings. Many think that this canal is the loveliest in the city.

As you walk along the Brouwersgracht, you'll cross the Herengracht (Gentlemen's canal) and the Keizersgracht (Emperor's canal). When you reach the Prinsengracht (Prince's canal), cross the bridge.

If you're in the mood to stop for a coffee or drink, you can check out one of Amsterdam's oldest brown cafés, **Café Papeneiland**, at no. 2. A brown café (*bruine kroeg*) gets its name from the brown tobacco stains on the walls.

After crossing the Prinsengracht canal, turn left, and you'll soon be at our next stop.

The **Northern Market** (Noordermarkt) at Westerstraat is home to a farmers' market on Saturdays. On Monday mornings and early afternoons there's a popular flea market. Loom-

ing over the square is the **North Church** (Noorderkerk), built in the early 17th century in the shape of a Greek cross. It's a premier site for classical concerts. There's a café (**Café Hegeraad**) at the corner of Noordermarkt and Boomstraat that's filled with locals where you might want to stop.

Continue down Prinsengracht.

The first canal to your right is **Egelantiersgracht**. It used to be a drainage ditch. In the 17th century, it was converted into a lovely canal. At number 12, the **Café 't Smalle** is a former distillery and has been open since 1786. There's a nice outdoor terrace along the water where you might want to take a break.

Continue down Egelantiersgracht and take a left over the first bridge (Hilletjesbrug) at Tweede Egelantiersdwarsstraat. Turn right onto Egelantiersgracht and head to number 107.

At 107-114 is **St. Andrieshofje**. Don't be afraid to open the door! Duck into the courtyard of this serene *hofje* (almshouse) dating back to the 1600s and reached through a passageway lined with attractive blue-and-white tiles. Sometimes the door is locked.

After taking in the peaceful courtyard, head back down Egelantiersgracht back to Prinsengracht. Continue down Prinsengracht and cross the canal to the other side at the bridge Leliesluis (that's the bridge where you'll see the restaurant De Prins).

Hungry? Stop in at **Pancake Bakery** at number 191 where you can eat this Dutch favorite with many interesting toppings.

At number 263 is the **Anne Frank House** (Anne Frankhuis), where the hiding place she so vividly described in her *Diary of Anne Frank* comes to life. Your visit will be poignant and memorable.

Nearby at numbers 279-281 is the **West Church** (Westerkerk). Hendrick de Keyser, a popular Dutch architect of the Golden Age, designed this Protestant church and the **North Church** (Noorderkerk) that you saw earlier on this walk. You can't miss its landmark tower, completed in 1631. Step inside and marvel at the ornate organ. Although it's believed that Rembrandt is buried here, only his son's grave is marked.

Further down Prinsengracht,

you'll pass the canal Lauriergracht. Cross over the canal (to your right) at Berenstraat. Opposite 296 Prinsengracht is our next sight.

The **Houseboat Museum** (Woonbootmuseum) lets you experience what life is like on one of the over 2,500 boats that Amsterdammers call home. Open Tuesday to Sunday from March to October, and open Friday to Sunday from November to February.

Continue down Prinsengracht past the canal Passeerdersgracht until you reach the canal Leidsegracht. Turn right on Leidsegracht and walk along the Leidsegracht canal. Turn left at Marnixstraat and walk until you reach the square Leidseplein.

At number 97 Leidsekade is the majestic **American Hotel** where you can pop into the glamorous **Café Americain**, complete with beautiful stained-glass windows and Art Deco interior. You'll feel like you stepped back in time.

You're now at the busy and touristy **Leidseplein** (Leidse Square). The huge **City Theater** (Stadsschouwburg) at number 26 dominates this square packed with bars and cafés (not to men-

tion the nearby **Holland Casino**). Sit down, take in the street performers, and enjoy the end of your walk.



Herengracht Canal Walk

Highlights: Theater Museum, Biblical Museum, Golden Bend, and Rembrandtplein. See Herengracht Canal Walk map on the next page. Approximate length of walk: two miles.

bridge (Haarlemmersluis). On the other side of the bridge, take a left and then a quick right (at the Doors [as in Jim Morrison] Coffeeshop). The canal that you are now walking along is our first sight.

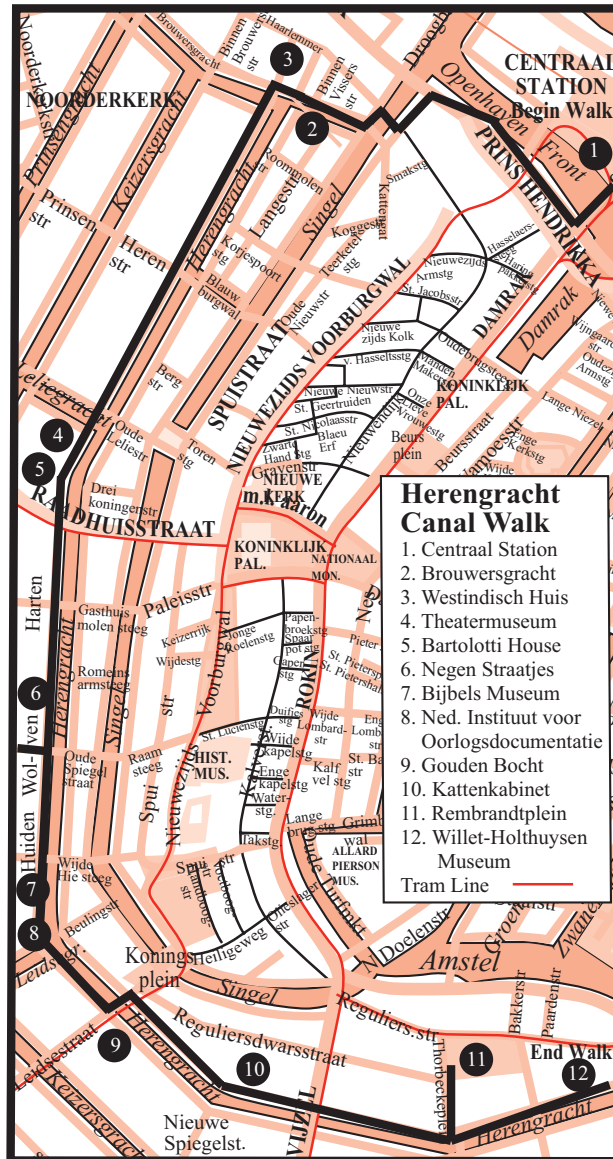
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As you pass the Victoria Hotel, notice the small structures surrounded by the rest of the building. It's said that the owners refused to sell their homes so the builder just decided to build around them

Continue down Prins Hendrikkade until you reach the Singel, the first canal. Take a left and then a right over the

The **Brewers Canal** (Brouwersgracht), lined with trees, is at the northern end of the Jordaan neighborhood. It offers incredibly beautiful views down the canal.

At Herengracht, you'll be at the square Herenmarkt. Turn right and pass the children's playground. This building is the **Westindisch Huis**, the former headquarters of the Dutch West Indies Company. If you want to step back in time, you can pop into its courtyard (at number 99). The sale of Manhattan occurred here, and the decision to transfer West Africans to the Caribbean as slaves was also made here. In the courtyard is a fountain and statue of Peter Stuyvesant, who became di-



rector of all Dutch possessions in North America (and governor of New York).

Retrace your steps to Brouwersgracht. You'll cross the canal and turn left onto Herengracht. Walk down the Herengracht. You'll walk a while before you reach our next sight.

Get ready to see some spectacular architecture. At number 168 (just after Leliegracht) is the **Theater Museum** (Theatermuseum), closed weekend mornings. These beautiful canal houses are home to a museum showcasing the performance arts, with everything from puppets to opera costumes to set designs. But if you ask me, the building and its period garden are the real stars.

Next door at 170-172, you can't miss the Dutch Renaissance façade and red brick gable of the **Bartolotti House**. You can walk through its richly decorated interior if you're visiting the Theatermuseum.

At number 262, look left across the canal at the house on the corner.

No, you didn't have too much to drink. The house is tipsy, not you. Homes here were

built on wood pilings that went down through soft soil to a firm layer of sand. Over the years, some of the pilings (and houses) have shifted.

DETOUR

At Wolvenstraat, turn right and visit one of the interesting shops here. This is one of the **Negen Straatjes** (Nine Streets) that are loaded with specialty shops, and are a nice break from the department and chain stores found in other shopping areas of the city. Check out the beautiful hand-embroidered white tablecloths found at **Laura Dols**, Tel. 020/624-9066, 6-7 Wolvenstraat, and the tassel shop (I'm not kidding), **H.J. van de Kerkhof**, Tel. 020/623-4666, 9-11 Wolvenstraat.

Our next stop is farther down Herengracht at number 366-368 at Huidenstraat.

The **Biblical Museum** (Bijbels Museum), appropriately closed on Sunday mornings) is housed in two 17th-century buildings. The museum is packed with archeological finds, religious objects, cen-

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turies-old models of historical religious sites, and artifacts from ancient Egypt and the Middle East.

Further down Herengracht at number 380, history buffs research the archives of the **Netherlands Institute for War Documentation** (Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie). Take in the fantastic castle-like exterior with sculptures of mythical figures.

Continue down Herengracht where the canal begins to bend at Leidsegracht. Turn left on the next bridge (at Leidsestraat) and cross the canal. Turn right onto Herengracht.

The bend in the canal is called the **Golden Bend** (Gouden Bocht). It was here where the bigwigs built their homes in the 17th and 18th centuries. They remain today for you take in all their beauty, especially number 475 in the over-the-top Louis XVI style.

If you're a cat lover, you can stop at number 497.

The **Cat Cabinet** (Kattenkabinet) is the only museum in the world to feature a collection of paintings and other art objects devoted solely to cats, from Egyp-

tian bronze statues to *Le Chat* by Picasso (closed Saturday and Sunday mornings).

As you continue down Herengracht, you'll pass Vijzelstraat. The next canal you cross is Reguliersgracht.

Stop on the bridge here with your back to the square Thorbeckeplein and look down the Reguliersgracht canal. From here, you can see quite a few of Amsterdam's 1,281 bridges!

Now head into Thorbeckeplein (the square that was to your back as you looked at the bridges) and then into Rembrandtplein.

A statue of Rembrandt was placed in this square, **Rembrandtplein**, in 1876. It used to be called "Botermarkt" after the butter market that was held here. Today, it's a lively place filled with outdoor cafés. One of them, with its balcony overlooking the square, is **De Kroon** at number 17. You'll know it when you see its waiters in long white aprons serving customers beneath crystal chandeliers. Why don't you take a break here?

This can be the end of your

walk or you can head back to Herengracht and continue down to number 605 near the Amstel River.

The **Willet-Holthuysen Museum** is a restored canal house dating back to 1687. There are a series of period rooms

loaded with tapestries, Delft china, portraits, and a lot of stuff that must take a long time to dust.

You can end your walk at the Amstel River, just down the Herengracht.



Keizersgracht Canal Walk

Highlights: House With the Heads, the Van Loon Museum, and the Skinny Bridge. See Keizersgracht Canal Walk on the next page. Approximate length of walk: two and a half miles.

Our walk begins at the Stationsplein, the bustling square in front of Centraal Station. With Centraal Station to your back, cross the Open Haven Front (that's the body of water right in front of the Stationsplein) until you reach the first street, Prins Hendrikkade. Turn right and continue down Prins Hendrikkade until you reach the Singel, the first canal. Take a left and then a right over the bridge (Haarlemmersluis). On the other side of the bridge, take a left and then a quick right (at the Doors [as in Jim Morrison] Coffeeshop).

The canal that you are now walking along is our first sight.

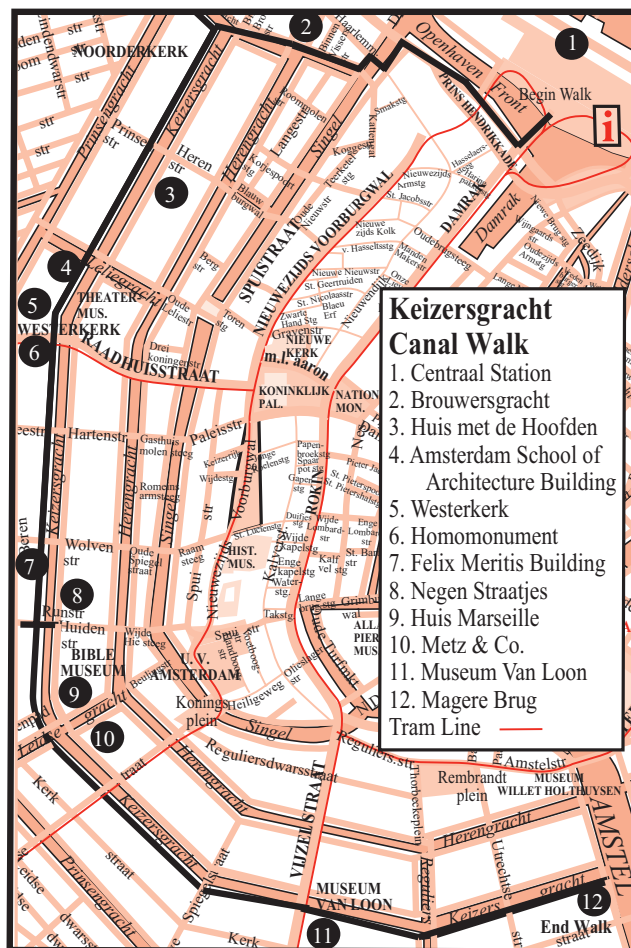
The **Brewers Canal** (Brouwersgracht), lined with trees, is at the northern end of the Jordaan neighborhood.

You'll cross the Herengracht (Gentlemen's canal) and then cross Keizersgracht. Turn left. Continue to number 82.

The **Galerie Binnen** displays changing exhibits of modern international designers.

Continue down Keizersgracht. After you cross Prinsenstraat, look to your left over the canal at number 123. It's the house with the heads on it.

The **House With the Heads** (Huis met de Hoofden) is a



grand mansion built in the 1620s. It obviously gets its name from the six heads featured on its elaborate exterior. They are said to represent the deities Apollo, Ceres, Mars, Minerva, Diana and Bacchus, but legend has it that they really represent burglars who had their heads chopped off by a maid! The building is not open to the public.

Further down Keizersgracht is our next sight at 174-176, at the corner of Leliegracht.

This building is an excellent example of the Amsterdam school of architecture. Its most recent tenant was the non-profit environmental group Greenpeace.

Continue down Keizersgracht until you reach the square Westermarkt.

At the corner of Keizersgracht and Raadhuisstraat and next to the **West Church** (Westerkerk) is a monument of three pink granite triangles, representing the pink triangles homosexuals were forced to wear during the Nazi occupation. The **Homosexual Monument** (Homomonument) remembers homosexuals who were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. There's an infor-

mation booth here for gay visitors to the city.

Next, take a look at number 268.

See that gold chain hanging from the front? Legend has it that the owner of the canal house couldn't find her gold chain and blamed the maid of stealing it. When the owner found it, the chain was hung on the gable as proof of the maid's innocence. Another version of the legend also involves the maid. She is said to have killed a burglar, and the owner gave her a gold chain in thanks. When she refused it (thinking it wasn't enough of a reward), the owner hung it to show his irritation with the maid. It's most likely that it was simply hung as decoration.

Next, take a look at number 324.

The **Felix Meritis Building** (open for events only) is an impressive neo-Classical building built in 1787, and was the home of a society of wealthy residents of Amsterdam called the Felix Meritis Society. The name means "happiness through merit." The society survives today, and is dedicated to con-

necting the world's cultures. Its opulent Shaffy Theater with excellent acoustics still hosts performances.

At number 384 is the courtyard of the popular Dylan Hotel (formerly Blakes), also home to an elegant restaurant.

DETOUR

If you take a right at Runstraat you'll be on one of the **Negen Straatjes** (Nine Streets) loaded with specialty shops and restaurants. At number 5 is **De Witte Tandem Winkel**, a shop with a huge selection of toothbrushes and toothpaste of every imaginable flavor. At number 13 is **Lust**, an inexpensive place for lunch with pasta dishes, salads, and stir-fry dishes.

Turn left at Runstraat and cross the canal to the other side. Turn right onto Keizersgracht.

At numbers 369-371, you'll see another excellent example of the Amsterdam school of architecture. Notice the striking stained-glass window that runs several stories on this 1938 building.

Continue down Keizersgracht until you reach number 401.

Street numbers weren't used until 1795. Before this, buildings were identified by wall plaques. They frequently identified not only the house, but featured the religion, occupation, or origin of the owner. The wall plaque at **Huis Marseille** is just such an example. The stone tablet on the façade (above and to the left of the door) has a plan of the city of Marseille, France, and dates back to 1665 when the canal house was built by a wealthy French merchant. The building is now occupied by the Foundation for Photography, which changes its interesting photography exhibits every three months.

Our next stop is at number 455 on the corner of Leidsegracht.

Metz & Co is Amsterdam's upscale department store. Lots of luxury household goods and designer clothes. Take the stairs or elevator to the 6th floor where between 9:30am and 5:45pm you'll get a free view of the city and can have a drink at the penthouse café. You'll really enjoy the view.

Continue down the Keizersgracht and cross the canal to your right

at Vijzelstraat. Turn left onto Keizersgracht. At number 672 is a favorite museum of many visitors to Amsterdam.

Continue down Keizersgracht until you reach the Amstel River. Make a right and you'll be facing our next sight.

The **Van Loon Museum**, an old canal house built in 1672, closed Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, lets you step back in time to the Dutch Golden Age. It was inhabited by the van Loon family from 1884 to 1945. The mansion contains furnishings and art, and has a lovely rose garden. There are also portraits of the families who called this their home over the ages.

Head down to the corner of Keizersgracht and Utrechtsestraat (at 61 Utrechtsestraat).

What's that delicious smell? Stop in for some great pastry at **Willem Van Eijk**, a wonderful Dutch bakery.

The not really so skinny **Skinny Bridge** (Magere Brug) is said to have been built in the 17th century by the Magere sisters who lived across the Amstel River from each other and were too lazy to walk far to visit. Others believe the bridge got its name from the word mager (which means skinny or narrow). Either way, it's a great photo opportunity. Built in the traditional Dutch drawbridge style, it's raised frequently to allow boats to pass. The bridge that's in place today was constructed in 1969. What a typical Dutch scene, and what a great way to end our walk.

