



MY EUROPEAN FAVOURITES



by *Paul Almeida*

President
Azorcan Global



Day Trip From Amsterdam

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The Netherlands is a great place to visit either as a main destination or as a stopover for a couple of days. I have always enjoyed flying KLM and use them often for our many groups travelling throughout Europe. Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport is an east hub to fly into from North America, and I like the airport layout over other big and busy European airports. Amsterdam itself has many interesting places to visit and explore. The city is full of history, great architecture, canals, bridges, museums, great shopping, cyclists, interesting cafes, the Anne Frank House, the Heineken Brewery, and yes, the notorious red light district. Not many people venture outside the city during a stopover, but one of our favourite day trips is from Amsterdam. We always try to do it on a Wednesday, so we catch the Edam cheese market show.

Zaanse Schans

Our twenty minute early morning trip to Zaandam starts after a good breakfast at our centrally located hotel in Amsterdam. On the way, you can enjoy the beautiful Dutch countryside including dikes and plots of land reclaimed from the water, called polders. Starting in the late 16th century, the Zaandam and the Zaan river area were important wood milling regions during the "Dutch Golden Age" with thousands of saw windmills. In the 19th century, the area became a leader of the "Industrial Age" in the Netherlands.

Starting in 1961, the Zaanse Schans was turned into an open air museum with windmills and buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. Various wooden houses, barns, shops, warehouses and windmills were transported here starting in 1961. The buildings along with traditional farmsteads, paths, ditches and fields depict how village life was like during that prosperous time.

When we arrive at the Zaanse Schans parking lot, you will undoubtedly smell chocolate from the nearby cacao processing factories. Entrance to the Zaanse Schans is free, but some of the workshops and

windmills located throughout the grounds are museums and require an entrance fee. You can purchase a ticket to have access to all the museums.



De Huisman Windmill exterior & interior grinding spices. Clog machine at work and the final products.

One of the first buildings you will see on arrival is the Kooijman Souvenirs & Clogs Wooden Shoe Workshop. Here you can see a wooden clog machine demonstration. Afterwards, wander throughout the site checking out the bakery, fisherman's house, weavers house, clock house, merchant house, cheese house, pewter house, pancake house and see how vats and barrels are made at the cooperage. With a little breeze, you can see the sails of the windmills slowly turning while the inner workings churn away. The windmills saw wood or mill oil, flower, spices or pigments to dye cloth. Some windmills allow visitors to climb up to the deck via narrow stairs for a nice view of the river and the area.

The Zaans Museum, located by the parking area, opened in 1998, and contains clothing and artifacts from the area. At its Verkade Experience you can see original chocolate and biscuit factory machines from the early 20th century at work. The museum also has a café and shop.



Traditional houses that are now workshops and museums. Like the Catharina Hoeve Cheese House.

Edam

Another short 20 minute drive, and we reach Edam, which is famous for its cheese market that started in 1520. Edam cheese is round with a flattened top and bottom and is coated with a red paraffin wax which allowed it to age well and not spoil on long voyages. Its unique taste plus the lack of spoilage made it extremely attractive for exporting throughout the world. The market was closed in 1922 when cheese began to be made in factories rather than by local farms.

At the original market, farmers would bring their cheese using horse drawn cart or by boat. Once they arrived, the cheese carriers, who wore different colored hats depending on which cheese guild they belonged to, would load the product onto wooden barrows. Once the barrow was loaded, the carriers placed carry straps over their shoulders and walked the precious cargo to the cheese tasters. The tasters would drill a core

sample from the cheese and based on the exterior wax, smell, taste and other factors began to bargain the price with the seller using a series of shouts and hand claps. When the price was settled the cheese was taken to the weighing house to determine the final amount to be paid.

Every Wednesday in the summer from 10:30 to 12:30, the town re-enacts the hustle, and bustle of the market at the Jan van Nieuwenhuizen Square. The colorful market includes many family members, including children, wearing traditional costumes, dresses and clogs plus kiosks selling cheese. Throughout the performance, horse carts and boats arrive, cheese carriers scurry at a comical pace and bargain shouts and hand slaps can be heard. So visitors understand everything that is happening, there is a person on a microphone explaining the entire process. It's quite interesting and fun to witness.



The Edam cheese market square, unloading the boats, cheese carriers & girls in traditional costumes.

Smoked Eels

Next, we will travel from Edam to the seaside fishing village of Volendam to visit a local smokehouse that was founded in 1856. Smoked eels at one time were an important staple food in the Netherlands but recently a drop in the eel population and the resulting price increase has made it a delicacy. Today, the 5th and 6th generations of the Smits' family keep their family's secret fish smoking process and traditions alive. The smoked eel is their specialty and during the eel fishing season the entire family is involved in the cutting, gouging, skinning, digging and filleting of the eels. The Paviljoen Smit-Bokkum offers private tours of the smokehouse to introduce people to the traditional eel fishing, processing and smoking activities. In addition to eel, they smoke salmon, dorado and sea bass using pine wood. The eel is delicious and at their restaurant you can try various local dishes. The location also has a shop and a small Palingsound (eel sound) Museum dedicated to Volendam's unique and famous pop music.



The Paviljoen Smit-Bokkum, our guide with smoked eels, smoked fish and a fish display in Volendam.

Volendam

Volendam, once a simple catholic fishing village, is now Holland's best-known seaside town and is visited by millions annually. The Volendam Catholic fishermen had their own typical costumes and dialect. The town's

boardwalk, once home to fishermen's wooden shacks, is now adorned with colorful wooden houses, tourist shops, cafes and restaurants. As you walk through the town and its shops, you will see locals wearing the traditional clothing. If you explore the village's narrow lanes in the old neighborhoods, you can still see some of the old fishermen's houses.

There used to be hundreds of vessels at one time when Volendam's fishing fleet had access to the North Sea, but after closing its access, the harbour contains only a few fishing vessels doing fresh water fishing on Markermeer lake. Nowadays, leisure boats and the ferries that go to the nearby island of Marken occupy the majority of the harbour space.

Some restaurants offer tasty local seafood dishes and cool drinks on patios overlooking the harbour. For a quick lunch, food stands and take away restaurants sell kibbeling (battered and fried fish nuggets), herring, shrimp and of course smoked eel.

A visit to the Volendams Museum provides an interesting look into the town's history, costumes, traditions and art. If you have time, you may consider taking the Volendam Marken Express boat to Marken.



Volendam's boardwalk with shops and restaurants. The harbour area with leisure and ferry boats.

Cheese Farm

On the way back to Amsterdam, and a short distance from Volendam, we will stop at the Henri Willig Jacob's Hoeve cheese farm. The staff wear traditional clothing, and they give a short introduction and demonstration of the cheese making process. The number of cow goat and sheep cheese varieties is quite overwhelming but very interesting to sample. Some flavours you might encounter include truffle, cumin, pesto, red chili pepper, coconut, pepper, rosemary and garlic. They are all for sale in various sizes along with other Dutch souvenirs and foods. You can also see the cows in their new stable especially designed for the organic farm's herd of Jerseys.



Henri Willig Jacob's Hoeve entrance, the cheese making demonstration & the many cheeses for sale.

It is only twenty minutes back to Amsterdam and as you enjoy the countryside you can decide on what great restaurant you will go to tonight. I think an authentic Indonesian “rijsttafel” or rice table would be a great way to end the day. The rice table was brought back to the Netherlands from the Dutch East Indies where it was created by the Dutch as a festive way to showcase their colony’s diverse and multi-ethnic Indonesian cuisine. The rice is accompanied by a multitude of small meat, vegetarian and condiment dishes that may include spring rolls, satay meat skewers, curries, fish, boiled eggs, spicy sauces, peanut sauces, vegetables, and fried bananas. It is great for sampling different tastes and for sharing. You can find Indonesian fast food and restaurants throughout Amsterdam, but a place like Tujuh Maret or Ron Gastrobar Indonesia offering a rice table is definitely something you should experience.

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Paul Almeida
President
azorcan.net

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TOURISM LINKS

[Netherlands Tourism](#)

[Amsterdam Tourism](#)

[Schiphol Airport](#)

[Zaanse Schans](#) -open air museum - see more links below

[Edam & Volendam Tourism](#)

[Voldendam Marken Express](#) - ferry from Volendam harbour to Marken

FOOD & DRINK LINKS

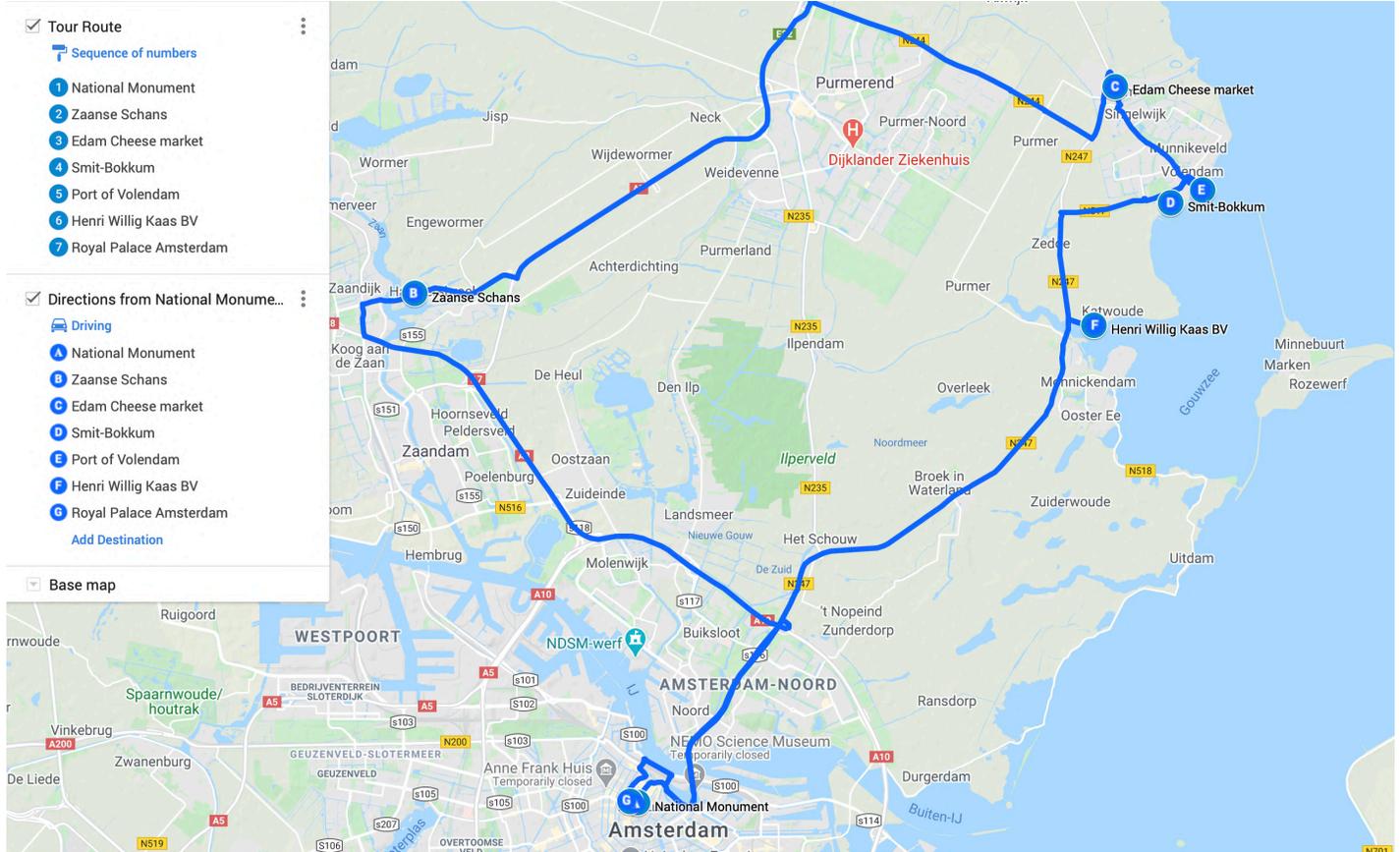
[Paviljoen Smit-Bokkum](#) - traditional eel and fish smokers

[Henri Willig Jacob's Hoeve](#) - Dutch cheese farm

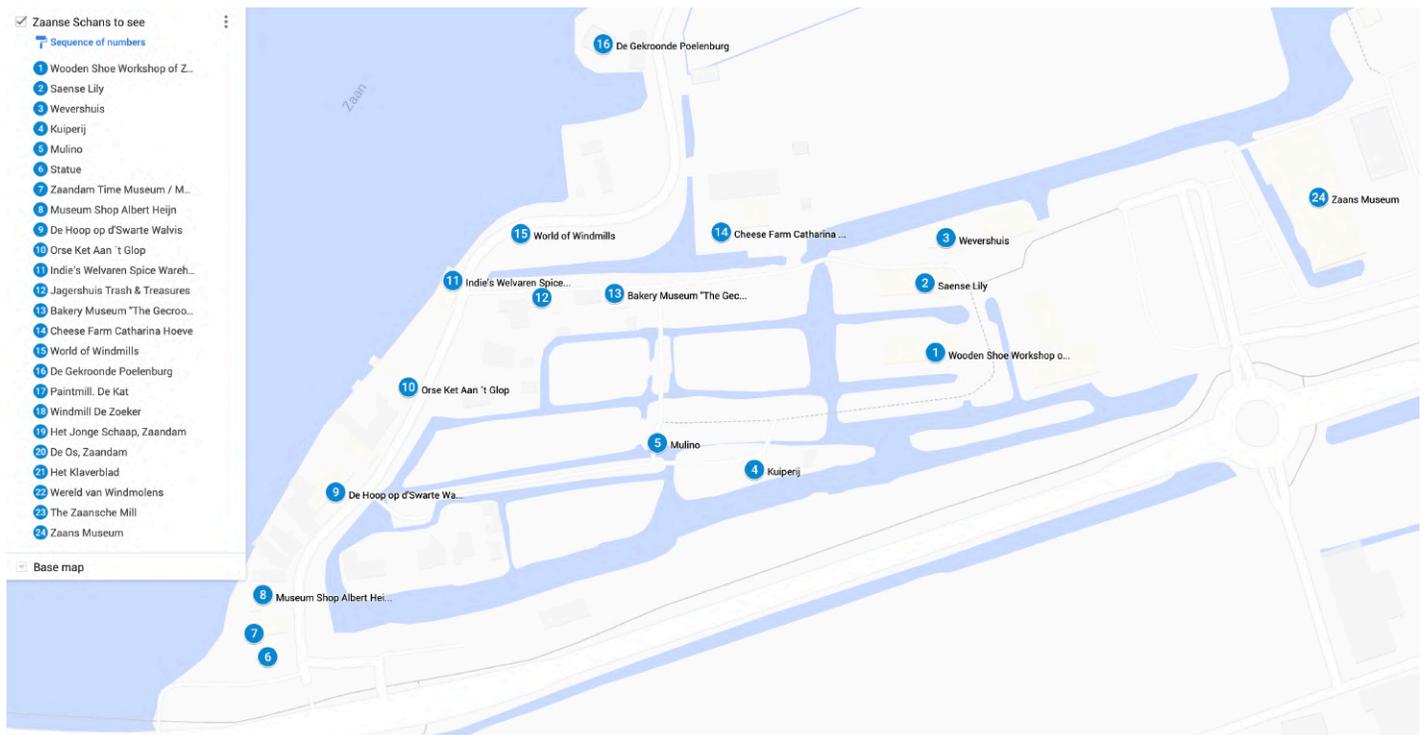
[Tujuh Maret](#) - Indonesian rice table restaurant in Amsterdam

[Ron Gastrobar Indonesia](#) - Indonesian rice table restaurant in Amsterdam

MAPS



Amsterdam Day trip - Google interactive map



Zaanse Schans - Google interactive map

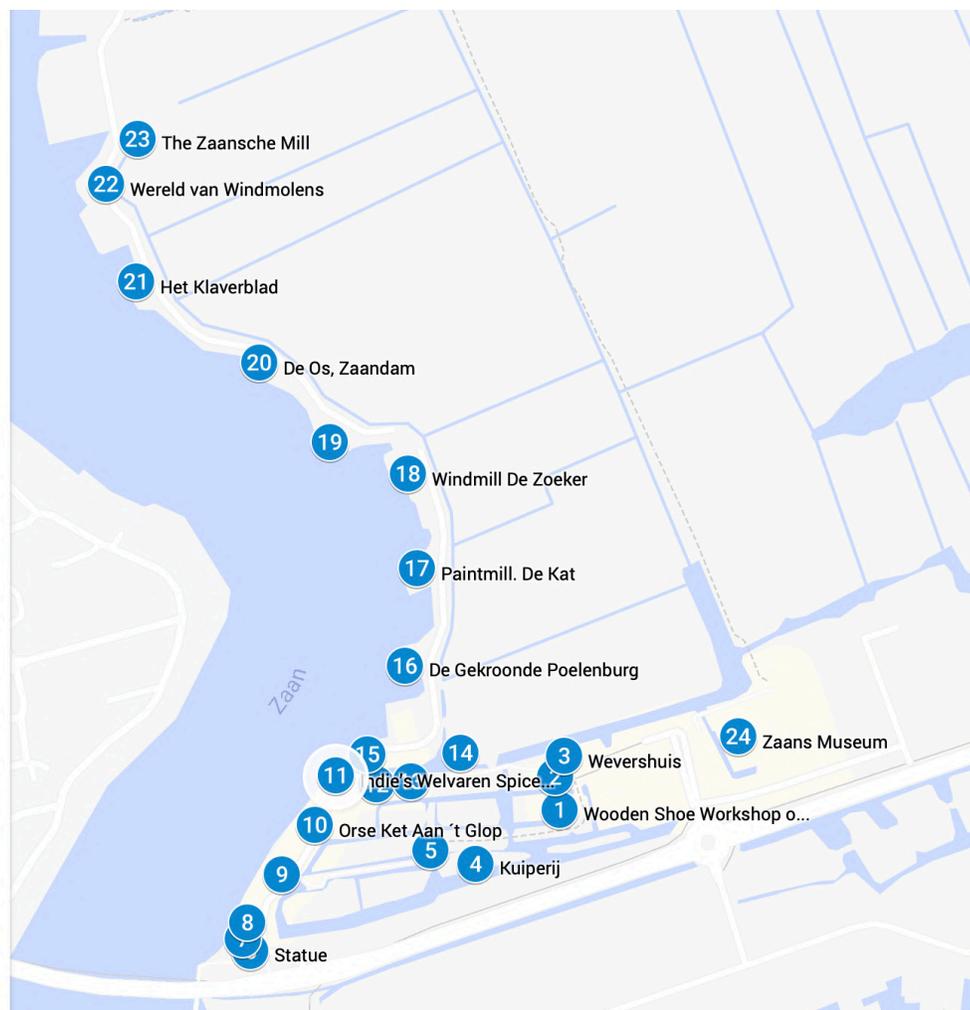
Zaanse Schans - some with links

(1) [Wooden Shoe Workshop](#) (2) [Saense Lily](#) - souvenir shop (3) [Wevershuis](#) - Weavers house
(4) [Kuiperij](#) - coopers house (5) [Mulino](#) - small windmill (6) [Statue](#) - winged statue
(7) [Zaandam Time Museum](#) - Dutch clock museum (8) [Museum Shop Albert Heijn](#) - interior of the first shop of the Dutch supermarket chain store (9) [De Hoop op d'Swarte Walvis](#) - restaurant
(10) [Orse Ket Aan 't Glop](#) - clog and souvenir shop (11) [De Huisman](#) - The Houseman spice windmill
(12) [Jagershuis Trash & Treasures](#) - antique shop (13) [Bakery Museum "The Gecroonde Duyvekater"](#)
(14) [Cheese Farm Catharina Hoeve](#) (15) [World of Windmills](#) (16) [De Gekroonde Poelenburg](#) - The Crowned Poelenburg saw windmill (17) [Paintmill De Kat](#) - The Cat dye windmill (18) [De Zoeker](#) - The Seeker oil windmill (19) [Het Jonge Schaaap](#) - sawmill (20) [De Os](#) - The Ox oil mill (21) [Het Klaverblad](#) - The Shamrock Leaf hollow post mill (22) [De Bonte Hen](#) - The Brightly Coloured Hen oil windmill
(23) [The Zaanse Mill](#) - windmill museum

Zaanse Schans to see

[Sequence of numbers](#)

- 1 Wooden Shoe Workshop of Z...
- 2 Saense Lily
- 3 Wevershuis
- 4 Kuiperij
- 5 Mulino
- 6 Statue
- 7 Zaandam Time Museum / M...
- 8 Museum Shop Albert Heijn
- 9 De Hoop op d'Swarte Walvis
- 10 Orse Ket Aan 't Glop
- 11 Indie's Welvaren Spice Wareh...
- 12 Jagershuis Trash & Treasures
- 13 Bakery Museum "The Gecroo...
- 14 Cheese Farm Catharina Hoeve
- 15 World of Windmills
- 16 De Gekroonde Poelenburg
- 17 Paintmill. De Kat
- 18 Windmill De Zoeker
- 19 Het Jonge Schaaap, Zaandam
- 20 De Os, Zaandam
- 21 Het Klaverblad
- 22 Wereld van Windmolens
- 23 The Zaanse Mill
- 24 Zaans Museum



Zaanse Schans - Google interactive map