



## Christmas in Holland

Art and architecture of the Golden Age

**21–27 December 2022 (MI 590)**

7 days • £3,370

(including one concert ticket)

Lecturer: Dr Sophie Oosterwijk

Focus on painting of the Golden Age – Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer and their contemporaries – displayed in newly refurbished art museums.

Also other artists, Van Gogh and Mondriaan particularly, and other arts seen and explained.

Unique streetscape – canals for thoroughfares, gabled brick mansions, ambitious town halls, Gothic churches, abundant trees.

Based throughout in a 5-star hotel in the lovely old city of Utrecht, with visits to Amsterdam, The Hague, Haarlem and Rotterdam.

Christmas Eve concert at the Concertgebouw.

The 17th century was the Golden Age in the history and the art of the provinces of Holland and Utrecht. 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, and is best appreciated in the excellent art galleries of their native country.

The visual context is equally beguiling – wonderfully preserved and picturesque towns and cities built up around canals and cobbled alleys, gabled merchants' mansions propping each other up as they settle lopsidedly into the waterlogged earth. In so many vistas little has changed for over 300 years.

Vincent Van Gogh is a presence on the tour, with the largest holdings of his works in his native Netherlands. From the 20th century, the great Dutch painter Piet Mondriaan also features.

The base for the tour is a five-star hotel which is installed in a group of 19th-century buildings around courtyards. Utrecht is an ideal base – a well-preserved historic centre, pretty and quiet, whose location means relatively short journeys to all places visited.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Utrecht.** Depart at c. 11.00am from London St Pancras by Eurostar for Rotterdam (no change of train required). Drive to Utrecht in time for a lecture before dinner. All six nights are spent here.



*Amsterdam, the fish market, copper engraving c. 1760.*

**Day 2: Utrecht.** Utrecht is one of the best-preserved of the historic cities in the Netherlands, with canals for thoroughfares and unbroken stretches of Golden Age houses – red brick, stone dressings, fancy gables. St Martin's Cathedral is the most French of the country's Gothic churches while the art museum shows paintings of the Utrecht School which are distinctive for the dominance of Italian influence. The Catherijneconvent is a fascinating museum of Christian art of all ages.

**Day 3: Haarlem.** Haarlem was the chief artistic centre in the northern Netherlands in the 16th century and home to the first of the great masters of the Golden Age, Frans Hals, whose finest works are in the museum.

**Day 4, Christmas Eve: Amsterdam.** Drive to Amsterdam for the Van Gogh Museum, the world's largest holding of the artist's works with over 200 paintings, many from brother Theo's collection. (An alternative – the neighbouring Stedelijk Museum of modern art.) Lunch, then an afternoon concert with Vox Luminis at the Concertgebouw, the world-famous concert hall.

**Day 5, Christmas Day: The Hague.** Though the seat of government, Den Haag was a relative backwater until only a few generations ago. A walk through some of the attractive old centre leads to the Mauritshuis, a princely lakeside residence with a smallish but superb collection of Golden Age paintings, boosted at the time of our visit by a loan from the New York Frick Collection to mark 200 years since the inauguration of the museum. The Kunstmuseum Den Haag (Gemeentemuseum) shows art from the later 19th century onwards including a large holding of Mondriaan.

**Day 6: Amsterdam.** Back to Amsterdam to visit to the brilliantly refurbished Rijksmuseum, principal gallery of the Netherlands. A tour concentrates on the paintings of Hals, Rembrandt and Vermeer, though other artists – Ruisdael, Van Goyen, de Hooch – are also studied. Some free time here; there is much else to see. Then a walk beside some of the finest canals to the Museum Van Loon, a mansion furnished as 300 years ago.

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continued

**Day 7: Rotterdam.** The Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam has a wonderful collection of Old Master paintings from Bosch and Bruegel to Rembrandt and Van Gogh, as well as contemporary and applied art. While the museum is closed until 2026, the full collection is displayed in the adjacent Boijmans Depot, an experiment in 'open storage' in a strikingly modern building. Lunch here before the afternoon train back to London, arriving c. 5.00pm.

### Lecturer

**Dr Sophie Oosterwijk.** Researcher and lecturer with degrees in Art History, Medieval Studies and English Literature. She is an expert on the Middle Ages, Netherlandish and Dutch art, with a special interest in portraiture, death and commemoration. She has taught at the universities of Leicester, Manchester and St Andrews, where she is an Honorary Research Fellow. She regularly lectures at Cambridge and the Royal Academy, and is Vice President of the Church Monuments Society. Her many publications include edited volumes on 14th-century sculpture and on the late-medieval Dance of Death.

### Practicalities

**Price, per person.** Two sharing: £3,370 or £3,200 without international travel. **Single occupancy:** £3,880 or £3,710 without international travel.

**Included:** international train travel (Eurostar, Standard Premier); hotel accommodation as described below; travel by private coach; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 5 dinners (wine or beer included); admission charges, concert ticket, tips, taxes; 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 in museums, and the tour would not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking. Average distance by coach per day: 57 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.