



Flevoland from coast to coast



Along the Randmeren

The province of Flevoland consists of two polders: the Noordoostpolder and the Flevopolder. The Flevopolder is the largest man-made island in the world. Where once the waves of the Zuiderzee splashed, an entirely new piece of land was constructed between 1942 and 1968. Since then tall dikes have protected a broad landscape of grasslands, fields and woods. Hop on your bike and explore Flevoland from coast to coast. And discover the surprises that this new land has in store for you.

Start in Zeewolde at the parking lot for the Harderhaven/restaurant De Proeverij Hardersluis. Bike onto the bicycle path and then turn left under the roundabout. At bicycle point (29) go to (23).

① The biggest man-made island in the world? That's in the Netherlands and it's called the Flevopolder. The island measures 970 km² and it was built in two phases between 1950 and 1968 (see insert). The engineers had a good reason to give the new polder the form of an island. The previously created Noordoostpolder (1942) was attached to the old mainland, and that caused problems: the old land dried out because groundwater flowed to the lower lying new polder. Such a problem could not be repeated on an island. A narrow strip of water, known as the **Randmeren**, separates the Flevopolder from the mainland. These lakes are now a wonderful recreation area for swimmers, surfers and sailors. The lake behind the tall dike is called Wolderwijd, a name that was invented by the writer Godfried Bomans (a member of the name committee of Zuidelijk Flevoland). The small islands in the Wolderwijd mostly function as nature reserves.

② The willow groves, grasslands and reed beds on the right of the dike belong to the **Harderbroek** nature reserve. This is a wet paradise for swamp birds like the reed bunting, the bluethroat, the reed warbler and the rare bittern – only a deep *whoemp* betrays its presence on quiet evenings. For a lovely panoramic view, stop at the Biezenburcht, a small but striking building at the side of the dike. Stairs lead to an observation platform; and in the afternoons, freshly brewed coffee is available. (*De Biezenburcht, Knardijk 40, 3898 LV Zeewolde, www.debiezenburcht.nl, Tue.-Sun. 12.00-19.00*)

Bicycle to (24) and (25).

③ The nearly 23-km long **Knardijk** cuts through the Flevopolder from coast to coast. For more than 10 years, this was the outer dike of Oostelijk Flevoland (right). After Zuidelijk Flevoland had been drained, the Knardijk functioned as a sleeper dike: in case of flooding, this dike had to keep the other half of the Flevopolder dry – and that's not an unnecessary luxury considering that the bottom of the polder is between 5 to 6 metres below sea level. At the two places where the Knardijk is crossed by a waterway, there are locks with sturdy floodgates

The reclamation of Flevoland

The province of Flevoland consists of several polders that were created in what was once the Zuiderzee. With the construction of the Afsluitdijk (1932), this inland sea was transformed into the IJsselmeer. Following this, the Noordoostpolder was reclaimed (1942). Then Oostelijk Flevoland (1950-1957) and Zuidelijk Flevoland (1959-1968) were surrounded by dikes and dredged. Together, these two areas form the Flevopolder.



that can be closed in case of emergency. The name Knardijk refers to the Knar, a sand ridge that was inhabited as early as the middle Stone Age (ca. 10,500 BC). In the course of the Middle Ages, the Zuiderzee covered the ridge, turning the Knar into a dangerous shallows for sailors.

Bicycle to ④⑥ and ④⑦.

④ The low dike at the Vogelweg is a remainder of the **Knarhaven**, a working harbour dating from the time when the polders were reclaimed. Materials needed to construct the 90-km long

ring dike around Oostelijk Flevoland were transported to several working harbours. That was an enormous undertaking: the soft underground had to be removed and the bottom hardened. Then two clay dams were built parallel to each other.

The space in between them was filled with sand, after which the dike was further strengthened with fascine mattresses made of wicker, basalt blocks, cement and asphalt. Once the entire ring dike had been closed, the polder could be pumped dry.

Bicycle to ④⑤.

⑤ Not everything in the new polder has been planned. The **willow reserve** to the left of the dike began spontaneously after reclamation. Millions of willow seeds from the wicker used to strengthen the dikes

landed on the wet mudflats. They grew into untamed woods where nature can take its course. Follow the walking trail to get a look at this willow wilderness.

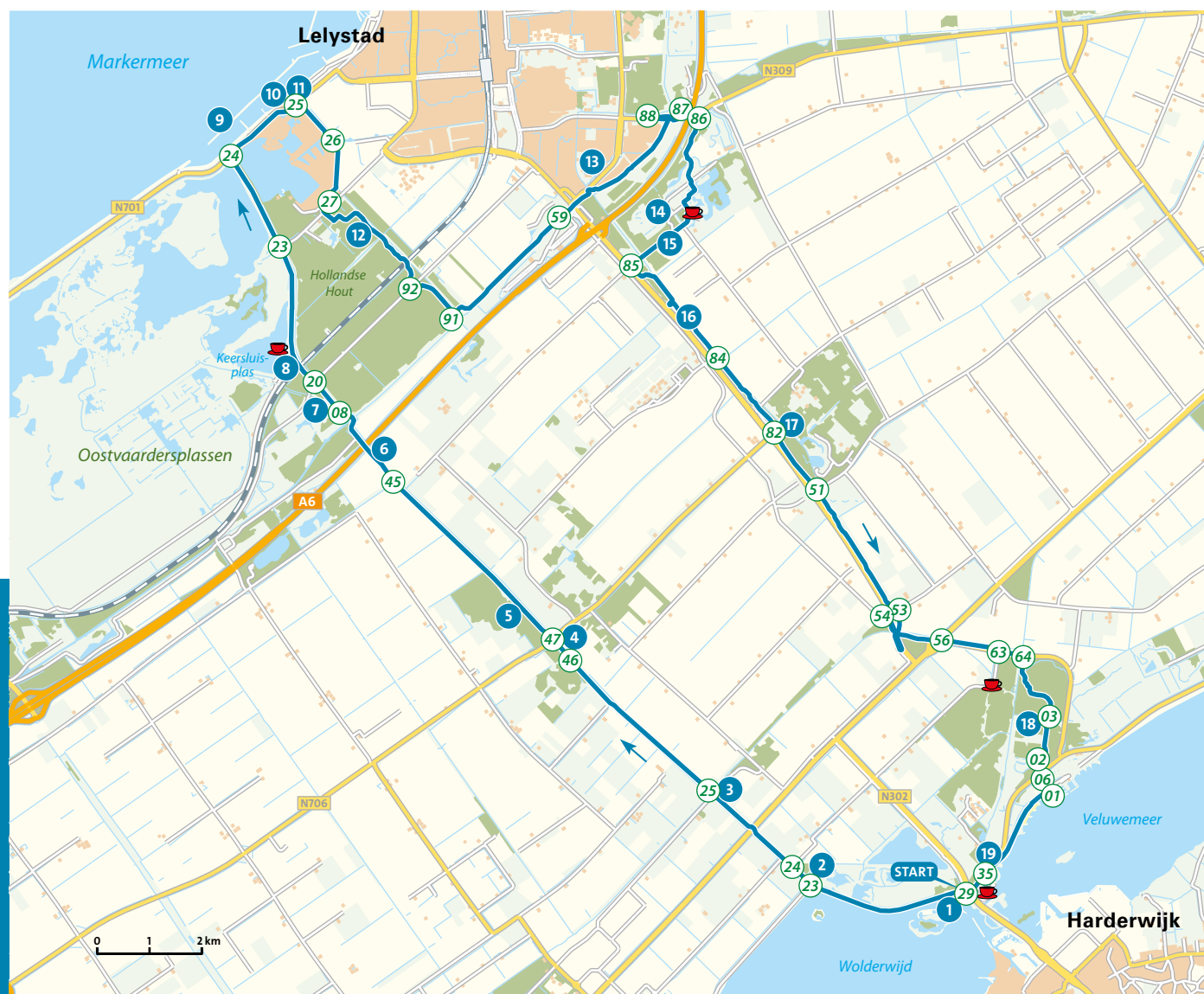
Bicycle to ⑧.

⑥ Even from a distance, the **Tong van Lucifer** is visible, a creation made by the artist Ruud van de Wint (1942–2006) in 1993. The work consists of a basked construction of steel wrapped in copper wire. The oxidation of the copper resulted in the characteristic green of the artwork. When deciding on a name, Van de Wint was inspired by the form: he thought that the creation resembled the tongue of Lucifer (the fallen angel who became the devil) as it provocingly points to heaven. He had hoped that the artwork would be struck and transformed by lightning, but this still hasn't happened.

Bicycle to ②⑦ and ②③.

⑦ The **Oostvaardersveld** functions as a sort of display window for the Oostvaardersplassen (see ⑧). The Oostvaardersplassen themselves are hardly accessible, but bicyclists and hikers are welcome in this nature preserve. Paths wind along ponds, reed beds, copses and birdwatchers' huts – a sort of miniature Oostvaardersplassen. With luck, passers-by can spot Konik horses, red deer and Heck cattle, which can all reach this area via a passageway in the railway dike. For the best views, turn left at bicycle point ②⑦ and continue on the Praamweg for a bit.

⑧ The **Buitencentrum Oostvaardersplassen** provides visitors with much more information about the Oostvaardersplassen, an unspoilt nature reserve that spontaneously came into existence after the creation of Zuidelijk Flevoland. This is what the Netherlands must have looked like a



Route

The bicycle route is 60 km long and thus especially suitable for e-bikes. You can use the numbered bicycle points to shorten the route if desired.

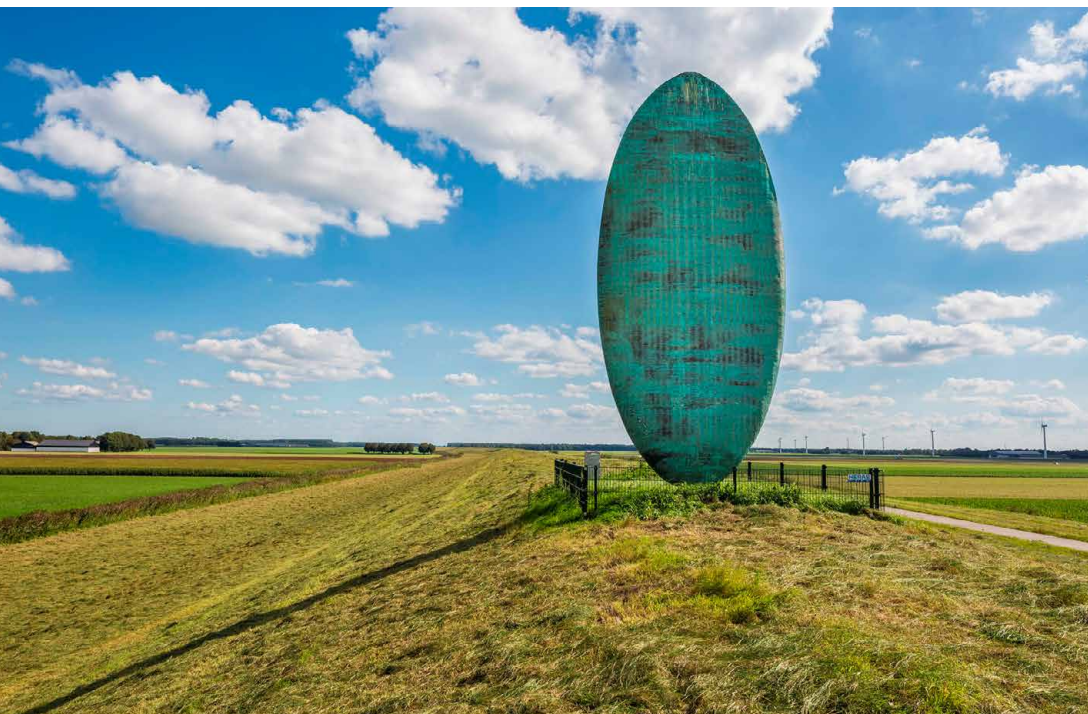
Starting point

Parking lot at restaurant De Proeverij Hardersluis Harderhaven 32
3898 LN Zeewolde
www.deproeverijhardersluis.nl
(next to the rotary in the N302)

few thousand years ago. Generally speaking, the nature reserve consists of a wet and a dry area. From the terrace of the visitors' centre and while enjoying a cup of coffee, you have a view of rippling waves and rustling reeds. To reach the dry area, follow the walking paths to some of the observation huts that face the endless grasslands, home to Heck cattle with their enormous horns and where mating red deer bucks fight for a hind in the autumn.

(Buitencentrum Oostvaardersplassen, Kitsweg 1, 8218 AA Lelystad, www.staatsbosbeheer.nl, usually Tue.-Sun. 10.00-16.00/17.00)

The Tong van Lucifer breaks the horizontal lines of the Flevopolder



Bicycle to ②④ and ②⑤.

⑨ The Knardijk ends at the **Markermeer**. Plans to reclaim this lake were never realized. However, since 2016 a smaller project has been underway: the Marker Wadden. Diagonally right, behind the horizon, five islands are being created. They are primarily intended for nature to take its course, but there will also be room for recreation on the main island.

⑩ The stone barracks to the left of bicycle point ②⑤ are the oldest houses of Oostelijk Flevoland. They were constructed on the **Werk-eiland Lelystad**, an island

built in 1950 in the middle of the IJsselmeer. This was the first step in creating Oostelijk Flevoland. The island was the site of storage sheds, a kitchen and wooden barracks for the workers and their families. In 1952 and 1953 the barracks were replaced by the stone houses that are still standing. From this work island – and from islands near Elburg and Harderwijk (the Harderhaven, the starting point for this route) – two thousand workers worked for six years on the ring dike.

⑪ On 13 September 1956, only a few hours after the ring dike had been completed, Queen Juliana set the

pumps at **Gemaal Wortman** in operation. Together with two other pumping stations, including Gemaal Lovink (see ①⑨), the new polder was reclaimed in nine months. It then took another few years before what had once been the ocean floor was suitable for use.

Bicycle to ②⑥ ②⑦ ⑨② and ⑨①.

⑫ The **Hollandse Hout** consists of a completely different landscape: no more endless fields and panoramic skies, but the protection of a thick woods. The first trees were planted in 1972 and 1973. These were fast growing trees such as poplars, willows and alders; more slowly growing trees such as oaks and beech were added later. And the woods are not yet finished: in recent years work has been done on a series of ponds with nature-friendly banks, known as the 'slenk'. This is intended to create more space for nature and recreation. Perhaps even the red deer will soon find their way to the woods.

Bicycle to ⑤⑨ ⑧⑧ and ⑧⑦.

⑬ To the left are the most outlying neighbourhoods of **Lelystad**, the capital of the province of Flevoland since 1986. Work on the city began in 1964 with the spraying of

immense amounts of sand; the first inhabitants arrived in September 1967. But people weren't enthusiastic. Connections for travel to the old land were poor and there was uncertainty about the construction of the Markerwaard. In addition, Lelystad was overshadowed by Almere in the 1980s. The turning point came in the 1990s when well-known architects were hired to give the city an identity of its own and to restructure the 'old' neighbourhoods. Lelystad now has about 77,000 inhabitants – still considerably fewer than the envisioned 100,000.

Bicycle to ⑧⑥ and ⑧⑤. NB: if in doubt in Natuurpark Lelystad, head to the exit and then cross the parking areas.

⑭ Flevoland is full of surprises. Like **Natuurpark Lelystad**, where animals such as moose, otters, beavers, the European bison, Przewalski horses and Pere David's deer live in large enclosed areas. Signs point the way to the various sorts of animals; you can also get a map in the visitor's centre (with a restaurant). Behind the visitors' centre, you can walk to the reconstruction of a prehistoric village dating from the Swifterbant culture and called the Swifterkamp (see insert).



Swifterbant culture

Although Flevoland is a young province, it has a very long history. Long before the Zuiderzee existed, this was a swampy area with ponds and elevated river dunes. Thousands of years ago, these dry areas were inhabited by hunters, fishermen and farmers. They belonged to what is now called the Swifterbant culture (5300-3400 BC). The name comes from the present village of Swifterbant, where utensils and a skeleton were found during excavations.

(Natuurpark Lelystad, www.flevo-landschap.nl, free admission daily; visitors' centre open daily from 12.00-16.00/17.00. Restaurant and bicycle rentals.)

15 They're everywhere in the Flevopolder: man-high poles topped with a red sailing ship. They mark the hundreds of shipwrecks that were found when the water was pumped away. One of these poles is to the left of the Meerkoetenweg. In the field behind the pole lies the **wreck of a water boat**, a fisherman's boat with a large hold in which live fish were stored. The wreck has been covered to prevent it from drying out.

Bicycle to 84 82 and 51.

16 The bicycle path winds its way through a narrow strip of woods, to the left of which is the **Larservaart**, one of the many canals and ditches that drain off excess water from the polder. The woods are filled with birds, amphibians and even beavers – this is an important ecological

connective zone between the woods of Lelystad and the Randmeren. The pond adjacent to the bicycle path near Lelystad Airport was built especially for beavers.

Bicycle to 53 54 56 63 64 and 3.

17 The **Larserbos** is now filled with holiday homes, sunbathing areas, beaches and walking paths, but the village of Larsen was originally planned here. Oostelijk Flevoland was supposed to have the same layout as the Noordoostpolder: one middle-sized core surrounded by smaller villages within bicycling distance. But once the polder was ready, the bicycle had been replaced by the car as the most important means of transportation so the village was no longer needed.

Bicycle to 2 6 1 35 and towards 29.

18 The **Harderbos** is young but it looks like a primeval woods: fallen trees lie everywhere, most of them covered with a thick layer of moss. Sometimes a Highland Cow appears, his wild appearance perfectly in keeping with the magical woods. This is also true of Pannenkoekenhuis Hans en Grietje at the edge of the woods: bicycle from 63 towards 57 to enjoy the magical atmosphere and to taste a pancake.

(Hans en Grietje, Sternweg 2A, 3898 LJ Zeewolde, www.hansengrietjezee.nl, Open daily from 10.00/11.00-20.00)

19 **Gemaal Lovink** is the ideal end of this route: it is the smallest of the three pumping stations that keep Oostelijk Flevoland dry. The earlier ocean floor behind the dike lies 5.2 metres below NAP. The lock De Blauwe Dromer next to the pumping station is for boaters, who can start their trip across the Flevopolder here.



Enjoying a pause at the Randmeren



More information?

For more information about recreation in Flevoland and the nature in Flevoland, go to www.visitflevoland.nl



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PROVINCIE FLEVOLAND

