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WADDEN

Discover the power of the tides
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UNESCO WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE SITE

WORLD CLASS WADDEN NATURE

The Wadden Sea is the last of the authentic nature in the Netherlands. Weather, wind and water continuously create new landscapes of mud, marshes, dunes, gullies and sandy plains. This vast tidal area is essential to millions of birds and fish. It is also home to several large predators such as the common and grey seal. And you may even catch a glimpse of a harbour porpoise. And if you take the time to look very carefully you'll discover a whole new world right under your nose. Discovering, experiencing and re-searching are all rewarded at the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.

The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site boasts the title of 'most beautiful nature area' in the Netherlands. The Wadden Sea is one of the last remaining large tidal areas where the forces of nature are free to do as they please. It is different every time you visit it as water, sediment and sand move with the tides. Thanks to the many gullies, creeks and channels the mudflats and sandy plains are exposed, providing a resting place for seals and where birds can forage to their hearts' content. The seabed may seem barren but it is actually teeming with life.

WATER HERITAGE: DUTCH DELTA DESIGN

The Netherlands was formed by its relationship with the water and you'll find traces of this everywhere in the Wadden area. Terps and mounds, an intricate network of dikes, pumping stations, polders and the Afsluitdijk. The Wadden has a reputation to uphold when it comes to water management. The coast and the islands have largely been reclaimed from the sea. Often it fought back with devastating storm floods. But the Wadden area made peace with the sea. For the first time in history water is allowed more space; a sustainable answer to climate change.

AMELAND

Whether you come to Ameland for MadNes, the sustainable skate, surf and music festival, the Kunstmaand (Art month) or just for a weekend getaway, Ameland never disappoints. With four villages and two spectacular nature reserves, it is the perfect island no matter what the season. And if you want to know what the Netherlands will be like after the energy transition, then come to Ameland for a sneak preview. The island is at the forefront of the Wadden islands' ambition to provide all of their own water and electricity.

WORLD HERITAGE

Forests, dunes and marshes, Ameland serves up a buffet of nature. And that includes its flora and fauna. You may even catch a glimpse of a deer. A century ago one brave buck crossed over from the mainland. The islanders decided to bring a doe to the island and then nature took its course. Ameland has been both larger and smaller than it is now; shorter but much wider toward the south. The sea gives and takes. The northern side of the island, for example, is fed with sand from the North Sea, which is how the 'Green beach', where you can see many birds foraging, was formed.

WATER HERITAGE

The relationship between Amelanders and the sea has always been rather stormy. People have been living on the island since the 8th century. But it was far from a safe existence. The sea crashed in, sweeping away large portions of land and entire villages. Around 1800 there were only about three villages still remaining. The islanders connected these villages with a dike and land began to form again on the south side of the island. This in turn created the polders, the very first thing you'll see as your boat arrives.

SCHIERMONNIKOOG

Tranquillity meets activity on Schiermonnikoog. The entire island is a National Park, so no matter where you walk, bike, stand or lie, nature envelops you. Enjoy the vast marshes, endless beaches or intimate dunes. Home of the annual internationally-renowned Chamber Music Festival. Free your mind, listen to the birds sing and let the magical powers of the Wadden whisk you away on the smallest of the Dutch Wadden Islands.

WORLD HERITAGE

Schiermonnikoog's nature is constantly evolving. Its vast beaches were created by centuries of accretion and wind and sea continue to create so-called 'embryo dunes' where birds come to brood. New species are still discovered regularly in the wet dune valleys. The old pine forests were planted a hundred years ago to prevent sand drifts on the island. Carefully planned tree clearing will help them to gradually transform into a deciduous forest. Songbirds are particularly fond of these open areas.

WATER HERITAGE

Schiermonnikoog was separated from the Frisian mainland in St Lucia's flood on 13 and 14 December 1287. Since then the island has had a rather rocky relationship with the unpredictable water surrounding this narrow piece of land. It provided fertile soils and food but also destroyed entire villages. For a long time man attempted to reclaim the land from the sea. But the tides have turned. Man and sea are now working together to find a balance that will best benefit nature.

TERSCHELLING

From the boat you can see the only natural bay of the Netherlands. You'll arrive at the only port situated entirely in a nature reserve (Natura 2000). And you haven't even gone ashore yet. Terschelling offers beautiful nature and rich culture. But it's the combination of the two that really make it exceptional. There's the enormous bunker complex buried beneath the Hoge Duin, the shipwreck house on the Boschplaat and of course the local theatre festival Oerol.

WORLD HERITAGE

Stare out over the Groene Strand from the sand dunes with their amazing flora and fauna; clear your head on the dike with views of the marshes; take a bicycle ride on the 11km-long bicycle path next to the dike and follow the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site; enjoy the vastness of the Boschplaat or take an excursion on the bottom of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site during low tide. Nature's many forms will surround you on Terschelling.

WATER HERITAGE

Ice caps were melting, sea levels rising, storms carrying in sand. This is how Terschelling was created after the Ice Age: a chain of shores and dunes connected to the mainland. In 1287 the St Hubertus flood separated Terschelling from the rest of the Netherlands. Low and high tides created a rich feeding ground for the higher area of land behind the dunes. And as the agricultural value of the farmlands and pastures increased, so did the need for protection against the sea. The construction of dikes created the agricultural landscape of Terschelling.

TEXEL

The youngest and largest of the Dutch Wadden islands: Texel, island of polders and birds, where the dunes are a National Park and in the Golden Age merchant ships set out on their journey to the East.

WORLD HERITAGE

An array of varying landscapes, no artificial fertiliser. The secret behind Texel's exuberant rich flora. Both fresh water and salt-tolerant varieties splash the dunes, polders and marshes of the Wadden islands with colour. Admire the orchids as they begin to bloom in May. Modest species such as the very rare fen orchid and eggleaf twayblade, breathtaking beautiful harlequins or fabulously eye-catching bee orchids. In late summer the marshes are incredibly impressive when the hardy, pioneering halophytes colour them blood red. But a visit to Texel is worth it just for the birds

WATER HERITAGE

In the devastating All Saints' Flood in 1170 Texel was ripped loose from the mainland. In the 17th century the inhabitants were able to connect their island with Eijerland, once part of Vlieland, only to have it torn loose again in the 13th century. With plants that can hold onto the sand the Tesselaars broadened the beach and dunes until a sand dike to Eijerland could be built, turning the two islands into one.

The inhabitants created polders behind the dike. In the 17th century the Waal and Burg polders were the first land areas to be permanently reclaimed from the sea. The Eendracht, the Prins Hendrik polder en Het Noorden followed in the 19th century. Texel is still much the same today but the dynamics of the Wadden are forever changing.

VLIELAND

Ship's doctor, writer and poet J.J. Slauerhoff spent his youth here and it provided him with a lifetime of inspiration. Most visitors will recognise that 'yearning for Vlieland', that island of seclusion (silence and unspoiled nature) and safety (charming Oost-Vlieland). Just like that feeling of coming home when the De Richel ferry passes by and seeing sunbathing seals during low tide. The best way to experience the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site is from this island at low tide; you can see the gullies, mudflats, piers and countless numbers of wading birds.

WORLD HERITAGE

Vlieland is 39 km² and 38.6 km² of that is nature! So it's with good reason the island is called the 'pearl of the Wadden Sea'. 140 different species of birds come here to brood and tens of others use the island as a stopover to build up reserves for their continuing migration. And this is how Vlieland got its second nickname, 'Sahara of the North'. Indeed, the vast sand areas of Vliehors are reminiscent of the desert. Mudflats, sand, dunes, forests, heather fields and silence all make Vlieland a paradise for birds and nature lovers alike.

WATER HERITAGE

With a surface area of just 39 km² Vlieland is the smallest of the inhabited Wadden islands. With Oost-Vlieland it has a village, 39 national monuments, almost no cars, kilometres of beaches and unspoiled nature. Nature determines the pace of life and holds mass tourism at bay. But it also makes us curious about life on the island and how man created it. Learn more in Museum Tromp's Huys and De Noordwester Wadden centre.

WADDENKUST FRIESLAND

From the Afsluitdijk the Wadden coast stretches out from Friesland in a gentle curve to the Lauwersmeer lake area. Man created this land behind the dikes with its old fishing villages and a few simple harbours as gateways to the islands. You'll find salt-tolerant nature outside the dikes and a whole lot more on offer inside the dikes: wide open landscapes, horizon, mound villages with medieval churches, darkness and glorious silence. Here was once seabed. Villages well-known from the Elfsteden (Eleven cities) such as Workum, Harlingen, Franeker, Leeuwarden and Dokkum are also located here. Wayward and free. A Wadden land of excess you simply must see to believe.

WORLD HERITAGE

Discover Friesland's Wadden coast. Almost everyone has heard of the Wadden islands and the boat trips to reach them. But there is so much more. Cross over the dike absolutely anywhere and you'll experience the breathtaking wonders of the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site. You can see it from Makkum, the Afsluitdijk to Harlingen and from Zwarte Haan to Holwerd and Paesens-Moddergat. Visit the unique nature reserves outside the dikes with vast marshlands, summer polders, salt-tolerant grasslands and former mudflats.

WATER HERITAGE

From the ancient mound landscapes and the earliest dikes such as the Pingjumer Gulden Halsband to the more recent Afsluitdijk, Kweldercentrum Noarderleech and the Lauwersmeer lake area. You will discover traces of the relationship between man and the sea everywhere in the Wadden area. The inhabitants learned how to cope with the water better and better. They built dams and dikes, began draining, and using sluices to create dry land and polders. Living below sea level? It's only the rest of the world that finds this strange.

WADDENKUST GRONINGEN

From the endless horizons in the Oldambt to the nature in Lauwersmeer Lake National Park; there's a lot to see, do and experience on the Wadden coast of Groningen. The Waddenland with its ancient mound landscape that together with man and sea gave form to the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Eems-Dollard is an example of a new economic landscape in perfect balance with world-class nature. And of course the dynamic landscape of the Wadden Sea itself. Take a Kiek op 'd Diek (peek on the dike).

WORLD HERITAGE

Experience the dynamics of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site along the Groninger coast. Discover the surprising beauty of the marshes and the polders. Walk on the seabed when the Wadden runs dry and the seals wait on the sand banks for the tide to bring in new food. Watch in amazement as thousands of migrating birds enjoy a snack on the Wad and along the edges of the Dollard. Taste the surf and turf.

WATER HERITAGE

Behind the Wadden Sea dike ancient cultivated landscapes such as the Reitdiep area can be found where once the meandering Hunze connected the city of Groningen to the sea. Back then the tides still had a big influence on the surrounding lands. The many mounds also remind us of the times when the Wadden Sea regularly submerged the land during high tide. Reclaiming the land along the Eems-Dollard continued well into the 20th century. This is how the Graanrepubliek (grane republic) originated, the land of endless horizons.

WADDENKUST NOORD-HOLLAND

From the Afsluitdijk near Den Oever the Wadden coast stretches from North Holland via Stroe, Hippolytushoef and the Amstelmeer to Den Helder. Here behind the dikes you'll find a little authentic 'bit of Holland' with wide polder landscapes filled with historic villages, agriculture and endless nature. And with options galore to walk, bike, canoe or simply be. An area created by water and adjacent to the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site; with fresh fish every day in the marinas: Den Helder or Den Oever.

WORLD HERITAGE

Water and nature lovers will find themselves spoiled for choice when visiting the Wadden coast of North Holland. You can spend days lazing about the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Amstelmeer, IJsselmeer and the inland waterways. Bird watching from the new Waddenbelevingspunt (experience point) in Den Oever. Take a water safari with the Wadvisersgilde or an excursion to the Balgzand, the natural mudflat between Den Helder and Wieringen. Depart from De Helderse Vallei visitors centre and meander through the very diverse nature on offer in the Mariëndal nature reserve.

WATER HERITAGE

The water heritage is palpable all along the coast of North Holland. In the marina city of Den Helder the people live side by side with the water. Den Oever is the personification of man's battle against the water. And there in between is the island of Wieringen. The Afsluitdijk was built starting at this reclaimed 'Wadden island' and between 1924-1930 island life came to an end. Wieringen remains intriguing. Experience the rolling greenery, wooden banks, historical farms, quaint villages and meandering roads. The sea and history are always close by.