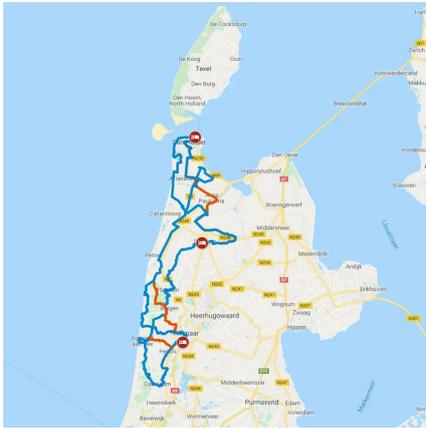


Tulip paradise in North Holland

5 days, € 544



Introduction



Traditionally, tourists flock to see the tulip fields south of Amsterdam, but those north of the capital are just as pretty and colourful. Are you planning a tranquil cycling holiday in the tulip season, between the beginning of April and mid-May? This journey leads you right through the heart of the northern bulb flower district with the Hortus Bulborum as an added bonus. Furthermore, the holiday showcases the fantastic natural beauty of the North Sea coast: Discover the highest and widest coastal dunes in the country, boasting a range of habitats from wind-blown sand ridges to open dune grasslands; and from scrub to woods.

In the other months the 7 day (Top of North Holland) and 8 day (North Holland Tour) trip is a good alternative.

Day to Day

Day 1 **Arrival in the Town of Alkmaar**

This cycling holiday starts in cheese town Alkmaar. From the beginning of April to the end of September, tourists flock to see the traditional Friday morning cheese market. In addition, as of 2020, an evening cheese market will be held on Tuesdays in July and August. Waagplein is the market square where the cheeses were traditionally weighed, sampled and sold. The Weighing Hall is now home to a cheese museum. Both the old and the young have a good time learning about the craft of making Dutch cheese. Alkmaar has over a thousand monumental buildings. The many "hofjes" (group of almshouses centered around a courtyard), the characteristic inner-city canals and numerous cafes all combine to stir up thoughts of times past. You could visit the Accijnstoren from 1622 which used to serve as a tax office; the Great (or St. Laurence) Church; or the gorgeous Gothic Town Hall dating to 1520, with a slender tower topped by a delicate openwork spire. Finally, good news for fans of The Beatles: Alkmaar is home to the Beatles Museum that exhibits all kinds of Fab Four memorabilia.



Day 2 **Alkmaar - Schagen**

61 km

After a hearty breakfast, set off for leafy Heiloo. Just south of the village, you will pass a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Our Lady for Distress. Soon after, you will reach the colourful Hortus Bulborum in Limmen. This fabulous garden provides a historical overview of tulips through the ages, the oldest cultivars dating back to the 16th century. It boasts over 4500 different cultivars of spring bulb flowers. Next, mount your bikes and get ready to see your first flowering bulb fields! Bulbs grow best in "geest" soil. In the Netherlands this can be found where our forefathers excavated the inner-most rows of coastal dunes until nearly ground water level and then covered the sandy soil with clay and organic matter brought in from elsewhere. That is why bulb flower fields often lie directly next to higher dunes, shielded from storms but close enough to the sea to get a lot of rain. Incidentally, most of the bulb flowers you see in the fields are not cultivated for the flowers, but for the bulbs, which are exported all over the world.

Next, cycle through the dunes to seaside resort Egmond aan Zee and go for a walk on the beach. Subsequently pedal up the coast towards the highest and widest dunes in the country. At the foot of those dunes, you will find the popular villages of Bergen and Schoorl. Continuing north, the landscape will change markedly as you enter the polders. You will cycle atop a dike called Westfriese Omringdijk (126 km long), once intended to protect the isle of West-Friesland from the menacing Zuiderzee. De Zijpe is a polder which was created at the end of the 16th century by draining a sea arm with the help of 22 polder windmills. Ten of them still stand and can be visited when the sails are turning. End the day in the village of Schagen where you will spend the night at a fantastic hotel. Shortcut: By skipping Heiloo, Limmen and Egmond aan Zee the route is shortened to 40 km.

Day 3 **Schagen - Den Helder**

56 km

A wonderful day awaits. In the heart of the northern bulb flower district, the largest adjoining area of tulipfields in the country, feast your eyes on a sea of colours. Your first port of call is picturesque Kolhorn where you will try to grasp the fact that until 1844 this former harbour and fishing village used to stand on the shore of the Zuiderzee i.e. all the land east of the village has been reclaimed from the sea. On the Westfriese Omring dike, visit two old barns that house local history museums. Next, follow the dike to the village of Keins and a simple chapel dedicated to the Holy Mary. At the adjacent water well, see if you can tune into the very special energy said to be present at this site. Subsequently relish a winding route past breathtaking bulb flower fields around Oudesluis, 't Zand and Breezand. After reaching the coast at De Kooy, bird spotters should cross Balgzand-kanaal to have a break at the bird watching screen. It overlooks Balgzand Polder, an industrial area where a sludge deposit has been transformed into a bird rock. Five-meter high sheer walls rise out of the water providing nesting places, safe from foxes and other predators. A unique breeding site and a sight to behold. At high tide, large groups of waders can be seen from up close. Short cut: Either skip Kolhorn or cycle a straight route north past Oudesluis and Anna Paulowna to the coast (45 km).

Tip: book an extra night in Den Helder, then you can visit Texel. The ferry crossing from Den Helder to Texel takes about twenty minutes. Texel is the largest of our five Wadden Islands, places of outstanding natural beauty. You'll have a great time touring this island by bike, enjoying villages, countryside, dunes, beaches etc. There are many bike routes to choose from on Texel. Be sure to visit De Slufter, a beautiful nature reserve created by wind and sea.



Day 4 Den Helder - Alkmaar

63 km

Den Helder is a town and naval base at the northernmost tip of mainland North Holland province. MarineMuseum recounts the history of the Dutch Royal Navy. After a relaxing overnight stay and delicious breakfast at your hotel, mount your bikes for a last cycling day down the North Sea coast. Once again, savour the colours as the tulip fields take center stage, situated snugly behind the dunes, a natural protective barrier against stormy seas. At the village of Petten, however, a sea wall had to be built where the dunes had been washed away – find out more at the Information Center. Later on, enter the dunes of Schoorl for a wonderful bike ride past high dune tops, dense woods and fields of heather. In recent years, pioneering dune management in De Kerf has welcomed sea water into the dune valleys. This has led to a rapid increase in biodiversity. Eventually, you will arrive at the beach. Relax, sit in the sand and take in the sea view. Further along the coast, you will come to Bergen aan Zee. At this seaside resort, treat yourself to a bite to eat and a well-earned drink. The Zee Aquarium can be visited to see 300 types of North Sea fish up close. When you arrive back at your hotel in Alkmaar, put your feet up and look back on a colourful holiday. Short cut: Skip Bergen aan Zee (58 km).

Day 5 Return Home

After three full days of cycling, plenty of fresh air and much rejoicing in the beauty of the various landscapes, we believe you will sleep well. In the morning, relax and take your time over the excellent buffet breakfast. After that, your cycling holiday comes to an end.

Prices, Data, Booking

Starting dates:

Daily from April 1 till mid-May

Price pp		€
Double room, breakfast		539.00
Single room, breakfast		819.00
Extra night double room, breakfast only		80.00
Upgrades pp/night		€
Grand Hotel Beatrix, Huisduinen		12.50
Rental bike		€
Child bike		44.00
Hybrid		52.00
E-bike		108.00
Extra services		€
Bike Breakdown pass	€ 4.00 x 4	16.00
Child seat	€ 5.00 x 4	20.00
Bike theft insurance	€ 3.00 x 4	12.00
E-bike theft insurance	€ 6.00 x 4	24.00
Extra luggage	€ 5.00 x 4	20.00
Tag-along bike	€ 6.00 x 4	24.00
Child trailer	€ 17.50 x 4	70.00
Bike helmet	per piece	10.00
SGR	per piece	5.00

Starting point:

Alkmaar



Accommodation

The hotels and the B&B on this trip have been carefully selected for their location, atmosphere and/or unique services. All rooms are en-suite. A list of the accommodation we work with appears below. If a certain accommodation is unable to confirm due to lack of availability, we will try to request a comparable alternative if possible. When selecting the accommodation, we try to take into account as much as possible a safe and closed bicycle shed. However, we cannot do this with all of them guarantee and this partly depends on the number of bicycles of other guests.



Hotel Alkmaar ** (Alkmaar)**

www.hotelalkmaar.nl



Hotel Marktzicht ** (Schagen)**

www.hotelmarktstad.nl



Hotel Lands End * (Den Helder)**

www.landsend.nl



Practical Info



4 Nights included



3/4 Star Hotels



Breakfast included



Detailed roadbooks with maps and tourist information



The possibility of renting our bikes



7-days week service hotline



Luggage transport to your next hotel



Alkmaar CS



Parking possibilities at the hotel



GPS-tracks available



Any ferry crossings are not included

Arrival info



Nearest Airport is Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS)



The train from Schiphol to Alkmaar departs 2 times per hour. Travel time is about 50 minutes. A single ticket costs approx €10- per person excl. bicycle.

For timetables and tickets, go to www.ns.nl/en . For bus details, how to reach the hotel, check: www.9292.nl/en.

