The Netherlands Bike & Boat: Holland’s Wadden Sea & Friesland Coast

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Discover Holland’s salty side … island-hopping in the Wadden Sea and skipping along the Frisian coastline. Hoist sails, relax on deck, or soak in the Jacuzzi – life onboard is what you make it. Our bike route takes you along stalwart dikes with sweeping views of farmlands, past dancing windmills, idyllic gardens and sparkling Dutch villages. Texel and Terschelling lure beachcombers to their wide sandy beaches, excellent bike paths, and unique island quirkiness. Life here revolves around the sea and all of its nautical icons, ships, lighthouses, sea birds and marine life. Sample the ocean’s bounty and Friesland’s warm hospitality and as you journey through this ancient seafaring realm.

Cultural Highlights

Sail aboard a romantic three-masted schooner
Stroll through the fascinating open-air Zuiderzeemuseum in Enkhuizen
Cycle through polder lands reclaimed from the sea
Explore the the quaint fishing villages of the Wadden Islands
Bike on excellent paths through unspoiled sand dunes and beaches
See the 19-mile long Afsluitdijk dam
Explore Europe's widest beaches in Terschelling
Take home some fun sayings in the Frisian language
Visit a unique museum of sailors and beachcombers
Taste smoked herring and learn how it's processed
Picnic on a family farm turned nature preserve
Sail the UNESCO-listed Wadden Sea
Lunch on oysters at a cooking workshop
Visit Texel Island's old windmill, lighthouse and cottages
Admire Hindloopen's colorful clothing and unique architecture
Leave the sailing to the crew or help sail your ship, the Mare Fan Fryslân
Visit an organic cheese farm for a tour and tasting

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through mainly rural areas. You will encounter traffic, especially in urban areas. Some of the bike paths are unpaved, and the terrain can lack shelter

from the wind. Weather permitting, Day 4 features a full-day sail to the island of Terschelling; no biking is possible on this day. Whether the ship sails or transfers by motor will depend on sea/wind conditions and timing. Our VBT van support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who would like assistance, with the exception of Day 5 on the island of Terschelling.

Tour Duration: 11 Days
Average Daily Mileage: 14 - 30
Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)
May 61º/46º, Jun 66º/52º, Jul 69º/55º, Aug 70º/55º, Sep 64º/51º
Average Rainfall (in.)
May 2.0, Jun 2.4, Jul 2.9, Aug 2.4, Sep 3.2

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Amsterdam

Depart from home for Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive in Amsterdam and transfer to Den Haag

Upon arrival at the Amsterdam airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill in a PIR form before leaving the customs area; VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. Please make certain your VBT luggage tags are affixed to your bag so your VBT representative can identify you. After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative holding a VBT sign. They arrange your transfer via taxi or minibus to our hotel in Den Haag (transfer time is approximately 35 minutes, depending on traffic).

Transfers are provided by Schiphol Taxi, who will be looking for you and carrying a VBT sign. You may be approached by other companies offering a transfer. Please use only Schiphol Taxi (telephone: +31 654 354 601 or +31 681 299 101). Transfers provided by any other company will be at your own expense.

If you cannot find the VBT representative, or have been delayed in customs because of lost luggage or another reason, please go to the airport's Red & White Meeting Point in the main arrival hall and wait there. You can also go to one of the yellow information desks in the main hall and ask if they will

telephone Schiphol Taxi (using the number above) on your behalf.

Hotel check-in time is 3:00 p.m., but the staff will do their best to get you to your room as soon as possible. After checking in, you have the rest of the day to relax or to begin your exploration of the city.

Later, try one of the city's wonderful restaurants for dinner on your own.

Hotel: Mercure Den Haag Central Hotel

DAY 3: Embark ship in Enkhuizen / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

VBT Air Package and Pre-Trip Extension guests: After breakfast, make sure your luggage is packed and ready to be transported to the ship. At 8:50 a.m., meet a VBT representative in the hotel lobby for a 9:00 a.m. departure for Enkhuizen (approx. 1 hour 20 minutes from Den Haag). Upon arrival, meet one of your VBT Trip Leaders, who will give you some information about Enkhuizen. Included is the very interesting Zuiderzeemuseum Enkhuizen, with an indoor exhibit about the history of the region and a 15-acre open-air museum that features historic buildings from the Zuiderzee region. The staff and volunteers here will demonstrate 19th-century handicrafts.

After lunch on your own, enjoy a walk through the old city center. Its numerous stately mansions, canals, churches, city walls and harbors reveal the 17th-century mercantile wealth of Enkhuizen. Meet again at 2:00 p.m. and embark ship.

Once on board, you'll be welcomed by the ship's crew and your second VBT Trip Leader. After time to settle in, join a safety briefing before a warm-up ride around Enkhuizen.

This evening, gather on board with the group for a welcome dinner.

Please note regarding Wi-Fi on board: Shipwide Wi-Fi/WLAN connection (free of charge) is available only in harbor. If stable Internet access is critical to you, VBT recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: Due to the limited Wi-Fi onboard, VBT also recommend downloading your VBT Maps & Routes Notes prior to arrival on the boat if you wish to use Ride with GPS on your smartphone. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. This option is in addition to VBT's traditional

printed maps and route notes available on tour.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 11 miles (17.5 km)

DAY 4: Cycle to Medemblik / Sail to Texel

After breakfast, disembark and cycle along the Ijsselmeer to Medemblik. The largest lake in Western Europe, Ijsselmeer is a shallow artificial lake, with an average depth of 16 to 19 feet (5 to 6 meters). It was created in 1932 when an inland sea, the Zuiderzee, was enclosed by completion of the 19-mile (32-km) Afsluitdijk, part of the Zuiderzee Works project designed to keep the waters of the North Sea at bay.

As you ride along the lake, enjoy lovely views of the famous Dutch polder landscapes, a tranquil and colorful canvas of dikes, agricultural fields and small rural settlements. Keep your eyes open for the birdlife in the meadows.

Upon arrival at Medemblik, you will have time to enjoy lunch and explore the small, picturesque inner town with its many houses from the 17th and 18th centuries. After lunch on your own, you will board the ship and, weather permitting, sail to Oudeschild on the Island of Texel, the largest of the Wadden Islands.

Dinner will be served on board this evening.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 17 miles (27.6 km)

DAY 5: Explore Texel Island

With its 12.4 miles (20 kilometers) of sandy beaches and countless miles of traffic-free bike paths, Texel Island is a paradise for cyclists and nature lovers—especially bird lovers, as many migrating birds flock to these shores.

After breakfast, a short walk takes you to the Kaap Skil Museum van Jutters and Zeelui (the Skil Cape Museum of Beachcombers and Sailors), uniquely built from recycled wood and other items. The proprietors open especially for VBT guests. During your visit, you will meet some of the locals and learn

about the local history. You will have time to wander the museum's grounds and visit a fisherman's cottage dating from 1930 and 1950. You can also visit the charming windmill.

The rest of your day is free. Texel Island has much to explore: seven pretty villages, several additional museums and the seal colony at Ecomare. If you wish, you can cycle to the bright red Eierland Lighthouse at the island's northern end where you'll find breathtaking vistas and, of course, the island's famous Texel sheep considered some of the tastiest lamb anywhere. VBT has a recommended route, but you are free to explore on your own. Notice the characteristic earthen garden walls, which once separated plots of land.

Afterward, enjoy dinner on the ship again this evening. The ship is again moored in Oudeschild on Texel overnight.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 24.5 miles (39km), plus other options

DAY 6: Sailing day to Terschelling

Spend the day (weather permitting) sailing to Terschelling, our second Wadden Island. If you wish, you can help the ship captain sail the Mare Fan Fryslân. Or you can simply sit back on deck or in the Jacuzzi and watch for seals and other marine and birdlife. Your route traces the southern coasts of the islands, maneuvering passages past sand and mud banks.

As you sail, you will learn a few words of the Frisian language from a native speaker and enjoy lunch on board.

Late in the afternoon, arrive at Terschelling, admiring its landmark 400-year old stone Brandaris lighthouse as you approach. You will moor in West Terschelling, the largest village on the island. Disembark to regain your land legs during a stroll, perhaps trying out your Frisian tongue while visiting the quaint shops, pubs or ordering dinner on your own in one of the local restaurants.

The ship remains moored in Terschelling overnight.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: Sailing day

DAY 7: Terschelling / Sail to Harlingen

A true cycling paradise, Terschelling is home to sweeping natural beauty, rich Frisian culture in four beautiful villages and the widest beaches in Europe. The island's bike paths stretch for more than 43 miles (70 km). The island is also known for its cranberries, cultivated here since 1840 when a barrel of cranberries washed ashore. The barrel, apparently lost from a ship that had it in its hold to help prevent scurvy, inspired locals to cultivate the fruit for their own sailors. Today, you can sample the tart berries in local specialties and baked goods.

For lunch, enjoy a special visit to the cooking workshop of Flang Cupido. A native Terschellinger, Flang provides an insight into the very locally sourced products used to prepare your lunch sandwiches.

The afternoon is free for you to continue exploring this lovely little island.

Weather permitting, you will later sail for the pretty mainland town of Harlingen. Dinner is included on board this evening. After dinner, you may wish to stroll along the canals, historic warehouses and mansions of this quaint port town.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: 19 or 34 miles (30.8 or 56.5 km)

DAY 8: Frisian horse stable hosted picnic / Makkum

Start the day with a reel through typical Dutch polder landscape, much of which lies below sea level. Admire the dike systems that keep this fertile agricultural area well drained. Modern wind turbines share the stunning landscape with traditional Dutch windmills.

The highlight of the day is a visit to the Friesian horse stable of Pieter and Tiety Okkema. Their passion of the Frisian horse will shine through as they give you around their stables, showing some of their competition horses, explaining about the breed and how they train the horses for both the saddle and carriage. Pieter is also a state-certified farrier. During the visit savor a picnic lunch in their cozy canteen.

After lunch you may either shuttle back to the ship or cycle to our next mooring site in Makkum.

Enjoy dinner in one of the local restaurants in Makkum this evening.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
Daily Options: 16 or 28 miles (26.8 or 45.9 km)

DAY 9: Cycle to Stavoren / Sail to Enkhuizen

Enjoy your last day of cycling on a seaside route that passes through two charming towns. Cycle out of Makkum, following the coast and marshlands through the sweeping polder landscape and prolific farmland.

Stop in the small town of Workum. Its Jopie Huisman Museum is dedicated to the work and life of this Frisian self-taught master painter. A short distance after Workum meet your tour leaders for a guided visit and tasting at a small organic cheese farm.

Continue to Hindeloopen, an enticing patchwork of old streets, canals and wooden bridges. Isolated from the Dutch mainland and influenced by trading partners from Denmark, Norway, Britain and beyond, the people of Hindeloopen developed a unique dialect and an eclectic style of dress and décor. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the shipping trade brought Hindeloopen great prosperity. Locals spent much of their wealth in Amsterdam on precious fabrics and furnishings supplied through the Dutch East India Company. Upon arrival, meet one of the locals in her home and experience the beautiful costumes from the Dutch Golden Age for yourself. Lunch is on your own today, perhaps at a Hindeloopen café.

Continuing along the IJsselmeer coast, you will soon reach Stavoren, the oldest town in Friesland. Your ship meets you here and takes you back to Enkhuizen.

Dine on the ship one last time this evening.

Hotel: Ship *Mare Fan Fryslân*
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 16 or 28 miles (26.2 or 46 km)

DAY 10: Depart Ship / Discover Amsterdam / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT Air Package guests and Post-Trip Extension guests: After breakfast, say goodbye to your ship crew and Trip Leaders, then transfer by motorcoach to our Amsterdam hotel. After checking in, enjoy free time for independent exploration. Please note that your room may not be ready at this time, in which case the hotel will store your luggage. Enjoy dinner on your own tonight in one of the city's many fine restaurants. VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations about what to see and do in Amsterdam.

Please note: Group departing on September 5, 2019 air package departure will be staying at The Haag instead of Amsterdam.

Hotel: Hotel Amsterdam Centre Canal District
Alternative Hotel: Hotel Corona, Den Haag (For the September 5th, 2019 air package departure only)
Please note: Mercure Hotel Amsterdam Centre Canal District is a cash free hotel so any extras must be paid by credit or debit card.
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11: Depart for home

After breakfast,* transfer to the airport for your flight home.** Be sure you are waiting at the designated time and transfer location.

*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the Front Desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

**VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your "Transfer Reminder." The transfer is prearranged by VBT and is prepaid. VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Ship Mare Fan Fryslan (Days: 3,4,5,6,7,8,9)

A beautiful and extravagant three-masted schooner with a capacity of 24 passengers, the Mare Fan Fryslân was built in 1960 as a freight ship and completely renovated in 2006. All 12 comfortable cabins offer 2 lower beds and private bathrooms with shower and toilet. The porthole window can be opened, and the cabins have air conditioning. Common areas include a salon that also serves as a restaurant and the wheelhouse bar with breathtaking views through a large, panoramic window. There is ample seating and a Jacuzzi on the upper deck. The ships sail can be operated either by hand or motor. Complimentary Wi-Fi/WLAN connection is available throughout the whole ship, but only while in the harbors. The ship moors each night.

Drinks of all types are available for purchase at the bar on board. It is not customary for guests to bring their own wine and liquor on board; your understanding is appreciated. Onboard meal menus are set, though the chef is happy to accommodate vegetarians and those on restricted diets for health reasons.

Please note: VBT has adopted a no-smoking policy on the ship, in the van during transfers and at meals.
Click here to view deck plans

Mercure Den Haag Central Hotel (Day: 2)

The gracious Mercure Hotel Den Haag Central is located in the vibrant heart of Den Haag. Each of the well-appointed, soundproof rooms offers cable TV and a work desk. You can fill your refrigerator with a selection of drinks and snacks from the M-Shop kiosk in the reception area. The restaurant MBiance at Mercure Central serves light international meals and snacks in a modern setting. Enjoy cocktails and a selection of wine from the Grands Vins Mercure menu at the casual and relaxed bar. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel.