



EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAYS SECTION

- A guide to inland cruising information for the Netherlands

By Machiel Lambooj (February 2020)

Please email any corrections or updates to eiws@theca.org.uk.

The following sources of information have proved to be the most useful in planning cruises in the inland waters of the Netherlands. Some comments are made on open waters used as access routes from the North Sea, since when travelling the inland waterways you may have to cross some of these waterways. However, on some of them specific rules apply and this is further set out below.

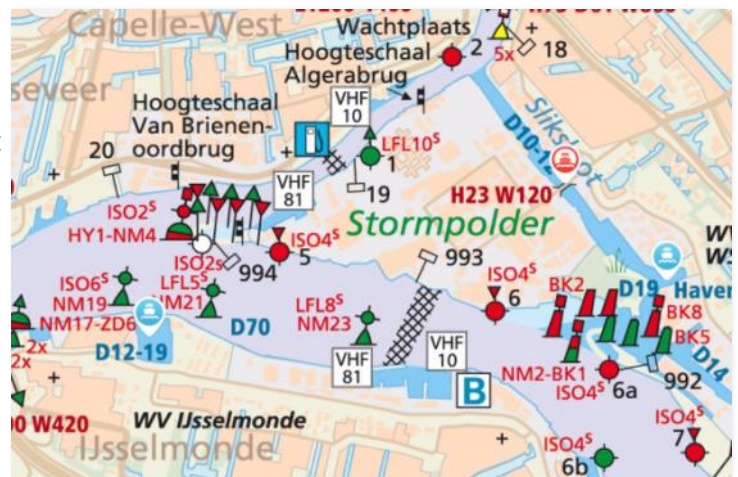


Machiel Lambooj

NAVIGATION

Waterkaarten Nederlands

A very useful [iPad, Android or Windows app](#), one of the most useful of all the available resources for the inland waterways. App language can be set to English. Also includes further information on the Waddensee and the Wadden Islands (the islands in the North). For the larger open waters, and particularly for the Waddensee, the navigation information is rudimentary and it is not recommended to navigate there on the basis of the **Waterkaarten Nederlands** alone, especially in more difficult conditions. Refer to the NV and Navionics charts or buy an official map.



Typical screenshot from Waterkaarten

Includes sailing details, locations and details of all marinas, navigation aids, service stops, bridge opening times and fuel/waste stops. Also identifies bridge numbers and kilometres along the waterways, plus advising where to change VHF frequencies. Available from Apple and Google app stores and for Windows through the website of the publisher ([waterkaarten.app](#)). The chart on the app can also be purchased in the form of detailed paper charts. Buying all available paper charts is however much more expensive than a one-year subscription to the app. Chart data is not updated regularly. Also includes alerts on blockages and delays if connectivity is available (but only in Dutch). It is also possible to obtain this information in English by going directly to the map on the [Fairway Information Services](#) website, selecting English and clicking on the relevant location on the map.

Note: The company producing the Waterkaarten Nederlands software announced at the end of January that in the course of 2020 a redesigned version will be issued, extending the coverage area of the app to the UK, Belgium, France and Germany. It will then also include an autorouting feature and routes can be saved in the cloud. This Information Sheet will be updated once the new version has been released.

Vaarkart

A useful [app](#) for inland waterways and similar to Waterkaarten. It can be used online, but you can also download the material for offline use (click on the right-hand menu icon and choose *download kaart*). Al-

so includes further information around the Waddenzee and the Wadden islands north of the Netherlands. However, this information is equally rudimentary and it is not recommended to navigate the Waddenzee on the basis of this chart, especially in difficult conditions. Refer to the NV and Navionics charts if you intend to navigate there or buy an official map. This app also shows the traffic signs along the waterways. The publisher of the app also publishes a series of printed charts, which are available for purchase in most chandleries and marina shops.

Riverguide recreant app

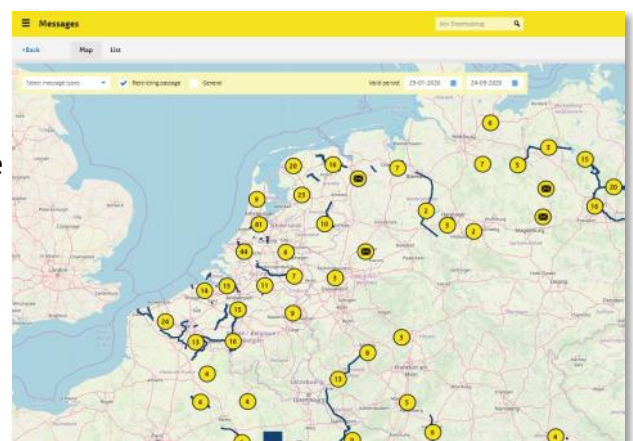
Government-supported app that allows route planning on the basis of current position and destination on inland waters. It takes account of the set dimensions of your vessel and shows the recommended route, with estimated timing, bridge opening hours, refuelling options along the route, VHF channels, marinas along the route, etc. During your trip it shows where you are on the route, the next turn/object and timing to the next object. It also includes blockage and delay information, which is provided directly by the relevant waterway authority. It is possible to send your position to water authorities, so that they can plan bridge/lock operations and convoy forming ahead of time. Available on Android and iOS. Currently only in Dutch and some features are still in the testing phase. Website: <https://riverguide.eu>. Requires an account that needs to be approved. There is also a version for commercial vessels. MMSI number required.

Dutch Wadden Islands berth availability (website)

These islands are beautiful to visit as a diversion from the inland waterways, but do not underestimate crossing the Waddenzee - travel across the Waddenzee needs to be properly planned. In the high season and on public holidays visitor berths may be very limited. On www.waddenhavens.nl you can see berth availability before you depart. It shows available berths by boat length category in the various harbours through a colour scheme (green: sufficient berths; orange: limited capacity; red: very limited or full). It is highly recommended to check this before departure. In Dutch only, but self-explanatory.

Fairway Information Services

A government website containing official information on (inland) notifications to shipping, bridges and locks; it also includes hydro and meteo information. On the home page you are presented with a map and the option to select English: <https://www.vaarweginformatie.nl>. Select the exact location that interests you and then the details. Occasionally some of the underlying details are in Dutch, especially if the information is provided by local authorities. However, the category of message is in English, so you will understand what it is about.



Map with local notifications indicated

KNRM Helpt app

KNRM (volunteer SAR organisation similar to the RNLi) offers the KNRM help app also in English. Their SAR services are available on open inland waters and some major rivers as well as on the North Sea. It is useful if you intend to travel on the open waters of Zeeland, Markermeer, IJsselmeer and Waddenzee, especially if there is a risk of bad conditions (in which these inland waters may become dangerous). The app allows you to call for SAR assistance or assistance with non-emergency technical issues before they become an emergency. It also allows you to set your planned route and will automatically alert the KNRM (and

through them also the coastguard in some of these larger inland open waters) if you are overdue, based on your set voyage plans. The app tracks your exact location and sends that to the KNRM centre at intervals. Requires mobile connection and GPS access.

Waterplantmelder

In high season, transiting the IJmeer, Markermeer and the Randmeren (south and east of Flevoland) and also some coastal areas of the IJsselmeer can be tricky due to dense underwater vegetation, especially outside the buoyed lanes. The **Waterplantmelder app** (in Dutch, but self-explanatory) shows where the underwater vegetation is so dense that navigation is difficult. You can also report vegetation problems through this app. Website: www.waterplantmelder.nl (Android and iOS).

Varen doe je Samen

Very useful online site supporting downloads in English of a variety of documents covering communication, passing through bridges, rules of the road, safe boating, the 'Blue Sign', detailed maps of major junctions and the mast-up route. Website: <http://www.varendoejesamen.nl>.

CEVNI

The essential [European Code for Inland Waterways](#) and worth printing a copy of the [Codes and Symbols](#) section to understand the signs along the way which may be new to seafarers.

De Havengids

A free magazine guide available from marinas or chandleries, listing marinas in the south and north regions but sadly only in Dutch. Expect to find a copy as soon as you start to use marina moorings on entering the Netherlands. It is a commercial publication, so not always complete or objective and full of ads. Also available online at www.dehavengids.nl (still only in Dutch, but useful to find websites, telephone numbers and maps). **ANWB Wateralmanak 2** is clearly more complete and more accurate.

Blue Water app

A commercial app (available on Android and iOS) for finding berths and contacting marinas and some harbours. Berth booking (and, with some marinas, also online berth payment) is possible with a number of participating marinas. App also in English. Online payment with credit card possible through a payment service provider. Still building out so no complete coverage. Website: www.bluewaterapp.nl.

ANWB Wateralmanak 1 and 2

It is a mandatory requirement to carry an up-to-date copy of the Inland Police Regulations and some other regulations. **ANWB Wateralmanak 1** is a useful publication as it contains Inland Police Regulations, laws and regulations of the waterways - again in Dutch. It is unlikely that anyone will check unless you are involved in a serious accident through contravening the rules.

This Almanac usually appears every other year, unless there is an important change in the rules. **ANWB Wateralmanak 2** is not mandatory but has 1,000 marinas included and details on all waterways, bridges and locks. It is published each year. Both can be bought online from various suppliers in printed format. The marina, bridge and lock information from **ANWB Wateralmanak 2** is also fully included in the electronic **ANWB Waterkaart**. This does not apply to speed limits on waterways, which can only be found in the printed version. Both Almanacs also



cover Belgian regulations/waterways and marina information.

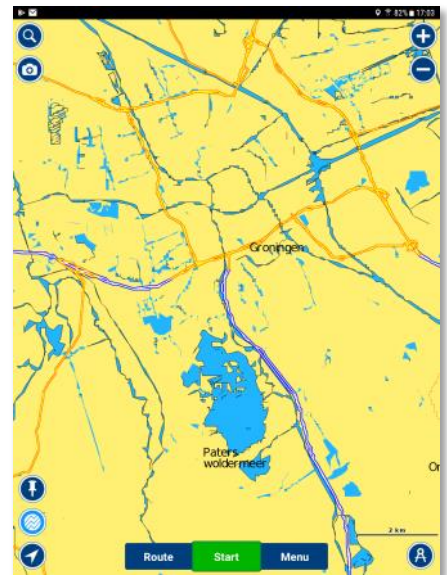
NV electronic charts

The German publisher NV publishes various charts on coastal and open inland waters in the Netherlands. This includes the waterways in Zeeland, the IJsselmeer/Markermeer and the Waddenzee. If you purchase a paper chart, you receive a one-year subscription to the charts on the NV app for Android/iOS/Windows/MacOS free of charge (using a code included with the paper chart) and updates thereto. You can also purchase the electronic charts only through the NV app. The charts are regularly updated based on notices to mariners and therefore are more reliable than the ANWB Water app. NV has announced that it will publish in March 2020 two charts on the inland waterways (North and South), also with an electronic version/app only. Subscriptions do not auto renew. The key difference with the ANWB Waterkaarten is that the NV charts are more reliable from a marine chart data perspective but contain almost no details on bridges (except air draught), locks and marinas, so are more useful for navigating open waterways. NV electronic charts also display basic AIS information on all other vessels in your surrounding area if you connect your device (e.g. by wifi) to a networked AIS source onboard. Website:

nvcharts.com.

Navionics Boating app

Navionics electronic chart apps for coastal and open inland waters are also available on the Netherlands. They are frequently updated and are equally as reliable as the NV charts. They also include recent user-shared depth information, but it is unclear how reliable that is. The charts also feature part of the inland waterways network, but these are generally not detailed enough to plan your journey. For the larger open waters within the country, this app is more reliable than the ANWB Waterkaarten. Routes made on the Navionics app can be synced (via wifi, if available) with Raymarine and Simrad/B&G plotters. Map materials can be purchased online from your device. Connectivity and GPS connection required. Website: <https://www.navionics.com/usa/apps/navionics-boating>.



Through the Netherlands by the Standing Mast Routes

A 48-page guide produced and regularly updated by the Cruising Association (CA). It provides detailed navigational information on 14 different routes by which yachts can transit the Netherlands. Written by CA members Andy Mulholland and James Littlewood and edited by Gordon Knight, the guide covers nearly 1,000kms of waterways from Vlissingen near the Belgian border to Delfzijl close to the border with Germany. Available in A4 size and printed in full colour throughout, the guide includes maps, distance tables, lock and bridge opening hours and colour photos to help skippers plan alternative routes. It is available directly from the CA's online shop at <https://www.theca.org.uk/catalog> as well as from the [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com) bookstore and is updated annually via reports from CA members actively cruising the inland waterways, several hundred of which are submitted each year.



Priced at £10 plus p&p, the guide includes a 25 per cent discount offer on first year's CA membership to

purchasers joining online during the year. Members then have access to the online edition of the guide, which contains hyperlinks to the CA's proprietary [CAptain's Mate app](#), enabling users to access the most up-to-date information on routes and mooring locations.

Staande Mast Route

Official guide to North Holland route - https://www.varendoejesamen.nl/storage/app/media/downloads/EN_staande-mast-route.pdf.

Inland Waterways of the Netherlands (Imray)

By Louise Busby and David Broad, this is the only other English guide to cruising in the Netherlands and provides good general background to places. However, though updated in 2016 most of the text is unaltered from some 10 years or more ago and perhaps should not be relied upon as a sole source for detailed information. As an example, the Standing Mast Route in Friesland now has a different route south of Leeuwarden.

Bookharbour

The handiest place in the UK to buy the official Dutch guide to the Standing Mast Route - <https://www.bookharbour.com/anwb-wateratlas-staande-mastroute>.

Supermarket opening hours (website)

Many supermarkets, especially in larger towns and in cities, are nowadays open from early in the morning till later in the evening and often also on Sundays. The smaller the town or the more religious the area, the more limited the opening hours. This website shows the supermarkets and their opening hours (you can search by town or on the basis of your GPS location): <https://www.openingstijden.nl/Supermarkten>. It is in Dutch only, but self-explanatory: note that *morgen weer open* means 'open again tomorrow', which implies that it is now closed. You can also filter on *nu open* (now open). Generally reliable information, except on public holidays.

Google Translate

Unless you speak Dutch, you'll definitely need to translate. The Google Translate app allows you to either translate direct from typed text or from a photo image – particularly useful to decipher text from the *Waterkaarten* from signs along the route. Also, see the **Glossary** at the end of this text. However, most Dutch over five speak excellent English!

USEFUL FACTS

VHF channels (*marifoonkanaal*)

Unlike coastal stations, distinct stretches of waterway - particularly major junctions and all bridges - have unique dedicated channels. Refer to the *Almanak* or *Waterkaarten* or other information sources to find the right channel and watch for boards announcing channel changes on major waterways, such as travelling through Amsterdam. A separate board below a VHF channel may give the name of the traffic centre, bridge or lock. This is the call sign of that structure. A sign just showing VHF on a white background with a red border means that you must communicate on the relevant VHF channel (usually channel 10) before proceeding. If you have radar or active AIS on board (even if switched off), you are required to have a VHF radio. If you have a VHF radio on board, you are required to keep watch on the relevant channel. Generally, it is advisable to keep your radio (or a second radio) on channel 10 while travelling on inland water-

ways with commercial vessels. If there are block channels (obligatory VHF channels; shown by a sign with a red border and a VHF channel and often with the name of the relevant sector or traffic centre) and you have a VHF radio on board, you are required to keep listening watch on this channel.

If you travel through or around the large commercial ports of Amsterdam or Rotterdam and through the Westerschelde, it is very important to keep watch on the relevant VHF channels, as there is usually a lot of (sometimes very large) commercial traffic around, going into or coming out of harbours. Refer to these websites with charts of the VHF sectors and communication procedures:

Amsterdam: <https://www.portofamsterdam.com/en/shipping/vhf-channels#meldpunt>

Rotterdam: <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/shipping/contact-the-harbourmaster/notifications/vts-services-and-vhf-communication-procedure-port>

Westerschelde: https://www.vts-scheldt.net/default.aspx?path=Content%202009/home_en&KL=en

All three sites mentioned above are also available in English. If the detailed URL shown above has changed, look for 'VHF sectors' in the search function on the home page.

Please note that generally the Traffic Centre operators stress that recreational vessels should only report their intentions if they perform potentially dangerous manoeuvres (like turning back, crossing or turning to port on busy commercial shipping lanes). In other words, do not announce your arrival and departure in every VHF sector (this is, however, different in the sea access lanes entering the country).

Communicating with commercial vessels/AIS

On inland waterways the ship-to-ship communication channel used between commercial vessels is channel 10, unless there is an obligatory block channel (sign with red border showing a VHF channel); this usually applies on waters with very busy commercial traffic. If you have two radios, leave one on channel 10 then you cannot miss a call. You may be called by a commercial vessel approaching you - especially if you are broadcasting active AIS (so the master knows you have a VHF radio on board) - if your intentions are unclear to the master. However inland barges, although they are required by law to respond to a call, on the contrary often ignore calls from recreational vessels.

Formally, the languages on the inland waters for VHF communications are Dutch and German, but in the case of pleasure crafts English is often accepted. If you intend to travel on the very busy major commercial waterways (Westerschelde, port areas of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and all major rivers), AIS is a very useful tool to have onboard, not only to see approaching traffic but particularly so that you are seen. In principle, all larger commercial vessels are required to have active and passive AIS onboard and must use it. Do not underestimate the intensity of commercial traffic (and their speed/waves) on the major waterways in the Netherlands.

As the Netherlands is a CEVNI jurisdiction, you are required to have ATIS installed and switched on in your VHF Radio. If you do not have ATIS on your main VHF radio, consider buying a portable marine VHF radio *in the Netherlands*. This will cost around €150 but (unlike a UK set) will then include channel 31, which is the standard marina channel. You can then programme your ATIS code in it and use it while in CEVNI countries. For further details see <https://www.theca.org.uk/system/files/VHF%20and%20ATIS.pdf>.

Speed limits on inland waterways

The maximum speed over ground on inland waterways is usually set by local regulations and shown on signs along the waterway. You can find them in **ANWB Wateralmanak 2** on a waterway-by-waterway basis. All speed limits indicated on signs in the inland waters are in kms/hr. On some waterways there are

differing speed limits per type of ship. Usually there is a general speed limit sign with a separate white board with black border below it indicating for which category this (usually lower) speed limit applies. This is often applicable to laden barges (indicated by a minimum tonnage) or to ships exceeding a certain length. Or it will show 'Sport' below a sign, then that speed limit applies to pleasure craft. Alternatively, it will say *motorboten, uitgezonderd sport* and then this applies to engine-driven ships excluding pleasure craft. In the Rotterdam area in some places a dynamic speed limit applies to large ships. This is shown by a speed limit sign with a white board saying *snelheid t.o.v. water* (speed relative to the water current). This speed limit applies only to large barges. This is not indicated under the sign but is included in the applicable regulations.



The absolute maximum speed in the whole country is 20 kms/hr, unless the waterway is specifically included in a list of waterways where no speed limit applies. This applies to the large rivers (but not everywhere: in the area around harbours, towns and local ferries the 20 kms/hr or lower local speed limit applies) and open waters (but often outside the buoyed shipping lanes) like the IJsselmeer, Waddenzee, Oosterschelde en Westerschelde and some larger lakes. The sign indicating the start of the no speed limit area is the blue speedboat sign. No speed limit applies to water ski areas.

On the ANWB Waterkaart the no speed limit areas and the water ski areas are indicated in two shades of dark pink (except for the large open waters). If you are travelling on waterways where no speed limit applies, be aware of speed boats approaching you from behind and passing you closely. Especially around campsites in the summer season, speed boat operators are often unaware of the substantial effect they have when passing closely to smaller vessels. Also, commercial traffic on the major waterways will travel at higher speeds than the average recreational vessel. Be alert for traffic approaching from behind and keep strictly to the starboard side of the water on all busy commercial waterways.

Fog or otherwise limited visibility

If there is fog, or otherwise visibility is limited and it is unsafe to proceed, you are required to find the first mooring spot available and remain there until visibility has cleared. Limited visibility is not defined by law, but in practice low visibility is considered to be less than 1,000 metres, depending on circumstances, and in all cases if less than 200 metres. It is not permitted to proceed on the major (commercial) waterways without using radar in conditions of limited visibility. You need a recognised radar installation and a certified radar operator. Currently yacht radars are *not* recognised, so you may not continue your journey on yacht radar if radar is mandated - equally if you are not a certified radar operator. This may change in the coming years (yacht radars may then be recognised but you still need a certified operator on board).

On all other waterways you are allowed to continue only if it is safe to do. Traffic centres, police and *Rijks-waterstaat* vessels may instruct you to moor if they deem it to be unsafe to continue (these authorities usually regard visibility below 400 metres as unsafe). You *have* to follow these instructions.

The inland waterway radar rules are not applicable on the Westerschelde (which is considered 'sea' for these purposes) and Eem/Dollard but are applicable to the Waddenzee (which is considered inland water for these purposes).

Air pollution measures

In some areas regulations may restrict traffic to electrically-powered yachts and tenders, specifically with-

in historic towns. This is currently being discussed in Amsterdam. However, this should not apply to traffic passing through town on major through routes. But you may be unable to explore the canals in your out-board powered dinghy (unless electric).

Amsterdam Ordnance Datum (*Normaal Amsterdams Peil*(NAP))

A vertical chart datum used across the Netherlands. – click [here](#) for details.

Bridge and lock opening times

These vary from waterway to waterway, with main-line barge routes open 24 hours a day, but routes through Friesland work variable hours depending on specific summer months and shut for a lunch hour at noon (although during the high season recently the trend is to abolish lunchtime closing). Bridge masters tend to ignore boats that (sensibly) hang back to wait and if remotely operated you should call the local VHF channel and clearly announce which bridge you want to pass (the name is usually posted on the bridge or you can find it in the ANWB Waterkaart/Wateralmanak). Do not be surprised if you do not receive a reply. The signal may suddenly change to red/green. Often, they have seen you



Waiting for a bridge (@James Littlewood)

coming via a camera surveillance system. Calling is nevertheless advisable if nothing happens upon your approach. On some longer waterways with several centrally-operated bridges, you call at the first bridge. Then, magically, the next bridges will open for you as long as you keep to the speed limit. If you decide to stop halfway, you should inform the operator.

Increasingly, bridge (and smaller) locks are operated from a central location. The operator may have to tend to several things at the same time, so do not be surprised if it takes some time before you receive a reaction. Some (local) bridges are also operated on an automatic basis, triggered by a call to a telephone number that is posted on or near the bridge. Your call will be answered by an automatic system that will acknowledge (in Dutch) that your request has been received. Then the opening process should start. If there is a snag you have a problem, as it is often difficult to reach an operator. Usually these bridges are operated by a local municipality or the province. Look (search through Google) for a telephone number of the relevant *gemeente* or the *provincie* and try to get someone on the phone who is responsible. Outside official business hours, there is nothing to do but wait for a local who has perhaps the 'secret' telephone number of the operator.

In the regions, public transport buses often have priority. If you request a bridge opening, you may see a white or red sign switching on with *Bus in aantocht* or *Lijnbus* (public transport bus approaching). This means that the bridge master has noted your request, but you have to await the passage of the bus before the bridge is opened. On smaller waterways there are also sometimes self-service (smaller) bridges and locks. Ensure you understand the instructions before you press any button.

Railway bridges usually operate on a very tight schedule, given the intense use of the railway system in The Netherlands, and often open only once or twice an hour. You always need to report in time for the next opening (one minute too late means no opening). Usually there is an intercom just before the bridge, or a sign with a telephone number; sometimes there is a VHF channel. The bridgemaster is usually an em-

ployee of the railway company, sitting somewhere else. Trains have absolute priority. If a train is delayed, your bridge opening may be skipped and you will have to await the next one.

In North Holland a convoy system is being tested, whereby commercial and recreational vessels are grouped in a convoy and are expected to clear the bridges as a group. Once you join a convoy, all bridges open when the convoy approaches. The convoys are planned on the basis of AIS information and/or the **Riverguide app** information (see above) on approaching vessels. This is called the *blauwe golf* (blue wave) system (like the green wave for traffic lights on roads).

Payment for locks and bridges and transit fees for towns

All central government (*Rijkswaterstaat*) operated, most regional government (*provincie*) and municipal (*gemeente*) run facilities operate free of charge. Smaller municipalities on waterways with little commercial traffic may still charge *bruggeld* (bridges) or *sluisgeld* (locks), particularly in Friesland. The bridge/lock master will, when you pass him, usually lower a Dutch wooden clog (no joke!) on a rope, in which you are supposed to place the required charge in the form of coins (no change given!). In some places, particularly with locks, the lock master will appear with a 'PIN machine' expecting a payment by card (or contactless: Apple Pay may also work here).



Paying brug geld the traditional way

In a limited number of towns, recreational vessels have to pay a transit fee. Usually there are automatic payment machines or you can pay online in advance. Sometimes this is combined with the payment of lock fees or mooring fees. Examples are Haarlem and Lemmer.

Bridge and lock signals

The normal system of two 'traffic lights' is used to announce bridge or lock readiness. Two red indicates a closed period or out of service; a single red that the bridge or lock is being operated (and, if opening, priority is given to the other side); a red and a green that it is preparing to open, and a single green indicates permission to proceed. Dutch cruisers often do not wait for the green light, but start through bridges on red and green! This is allowed if the yellow light (traffic in both directions is allowed) or the two yellow lights (your side may proceed; the other side may not proceed) on the bridge is on.

It is technically not allowed if the yellow light(s) on the bridge are off. Many bridges, however, are not yet equipped to deal with this change in the rules some years ago. Nevertheless, bridgemasters often encourage passage for recreational vessels with the red/green light still showing, as it reduces the time the bridge is open. However, you might encounter one who doesn't! It is also at your own risk if no yellow light is showing. If the bridgemaster waves you through or tells you to do so verbally or on VHF, this is an official instruction you have to follow. In locks you should ensure you only move on the green light as there can be underwater features that need to be completely dropped or there may still be a (smaller) vessel leaving the lock that you cannot see.

Inland locks – Dutch style

Many inland locks, though large, fill surprisingly gently, but the mooring points are often very widely spread to suit barges. Dutch cruisers and yachts usually only moor with a single midships line (Dutch boats

are usually built with a midships cleat for this specific purpose). This is fast, easy and safer than struggling to shuttle backwards and forwards to get bow and stern lines fastened.

The official rule is that the first vessel arriving at the waiting area - there may be separate waiting areas for professional vessels and pleasure craft (*sport*) - is the first to enter and to leave. However, generally the lockmaster will let commercial vessels enter before recreational vessels. Only enter the lock when they have docked and switched off their screws. Depending on the circumstances, you can ask the master of a commercial vessel whether he agrees that you can leave the lock first. Sometimes, they are very happy for you to do so. In the lock, keep your VHF on the lock channel.

Locks usually don't allow entry for a period before their official closing time. Typically, you need to be there 30 mins before the official closing time. With some busy locks, there is a specific, obligatory access channel (a sign with a red border and the word 'Sport' with an arrow indicating the obligatory direction of travel) and a separate waiting area for recreational vessels with its own traffic light (single red or green light). Recreational vessels must wait there and can enter the lock only if their traffic light shows green (even if the lock lights show green earlier). This allows the lock master to permit commercial traffic to pass the waiting recreational vessels and only then grant permission for these vessels to enter. In case of busy recreational traffic, the lock master may allow commercial traffic via the VHF radio to enter the lock even when the red light is still showing, to prevent yachts from entering before the commercial traffic.

All ships in a lock are supposed to switch off their engines once safely moored. In any case, their screws may not turn. Barges may disregard this rule. If you are having problems with their wash, you can kindly ask them to stop their engines or you may report it to the lock master. However, this will not make you the most popular neighbour in the lock!

Barges navigating with blue boards

In places where the channel is shallower than normal - for example the outside of bends - a barge may choose to navigate on the 'wrong side' and expect a yacht or motorboat to pass starboard to starboard. This applies particularly to the river IJssel, but may also happen on other rivers and canals (e.g. when a barge wants to moor on the 'wrong' side of the waterway). This intention is signalled by the presence of a Blue Board on the starboard side of the wheelhouse with a blinking white light in the middle.



A barge 'blue boarding'

Try to comply with this request if at all possible. However, it remains a request. The barge master is obliged to leave enough room for your vessel. The way to handle this is to consider whether there is sufficient time for you to move to the 'wrong' side and whether you are comfortable doing so (check also what is happening behind you!). If so, then as soon as you can comply, move clearly to the wrong side so that the approaching barge will understand that you are agreeing to his request. If not, then clearly move to the utmost starboard side of the waterway (except in the case of mooring on the 'wrong' side; then stop your approach and let the barge moor).

If you have active AIS, barge masters may call you on VHF before you see them, announce their intentions and ask whether there are further recreational vessels (without AIS) near you 'around the bend'. On these waterways, it is especially important to keep a constant watch on VHF channel 10 or the block channel (if applicable).

Rules and regulations

Third party liability insurance

There is no legal requirement for recreational vessels in The Netherlands to carry third party liability insurance. However, some marinas demand proof of such insurance if leasing you a seasonal berth.

Licence requirements to operate certain vessels

Licence requirements to operate certain larger vessels (> 15m) or vessels capable of speeds of 20 kms/hr or more (including dinghies) apply in The Netherlands in accordance with CEVNI rules. If this applies to your vessel, you need at least an ICC Inland Waters licence (or equivalent). Please note the IJmeer, Markermeer/IJsselmeer, Oosterschelde and Westerschelde, Eems/Dollard and Waddenzee require ICC **Coastal** (or equivalent). This is because these open waters are considered potentially dangerous, i.e. these are not considered inland waters for licence purposes. Although for the water police regulations Westerschelde and Eems/Dollard are considered 'sea', the other waterways mentioned remain 'inland waters' for the rules on the water.

Fishing

In the whole of the country you need a *vispas* (fishing licence) to fish on inland waters. You need to become a member of a fishing association to acquire a *vispas*.

Swimming

It is not allowed to swim around (or jump from) bridges and locks and in commercial harbours. Swimming is allowed in lakes and natural rivers. In most waterways (or shipping channels) where there is heavy commercial traffic, swimming may be prohibited by regulation or if it is in any case unsafe to do so. Some marinas/harbours explicitly prohibit swimming for safety reasons. This is then signposted on the pontoons.

Fines

Law enforcement officers on the water do not usually hunt actively for infringements, although they sometimes undertake enforcement activities specifically focused on pleasure craft. If they see something that is not allowed, they may issue a verbal warning only, especially if it is clear that you are a visitor and not aware of a specific rule (and it is advisable to then be polite to them!).

However, please note that if they decide to issue a fine, fines for infringements on the water are stiff. Not carrying a required licence, ignoring limited visibility rules, sailing a boat under the influence, substantially exceeding speed limits and not having ATIS on VHF radios may carry fines which easily amount to hundreds of Euros. Visitors will usually have to pay these fines on the spot. You may be checked by - and fines can be issued by - the water police, by *Handhaving* (local authority employees with law enforcement duties) or *Rijkswaterstaat* (national water authority: they have yellow painted vessels).

Where to moor

There are plenty of moorings available throughout the country:

- ◆ Commercial marinas
- ◆ Association-owned and operated marinas managed by volunteers - usually recognisable by **WSV**, **WV** (watersports club) or **ZV** (sailing club) before their name
- ◆ Municipal harbours, often in the prettier towns and cities
- ◆ Moorings along canals managed by municipalities or water boards
- ◆ Moorings and buoys in lakes and nature parks managed by volunteer organisations or provinces

No ad-hoc bankside moorings!

It is both a social and, in some cases, an official crime to drive mooring stakes into the bankside of canals and canalised rivers, due to the resulting damage to the bank. Remember the majority of the Netherlands is low-lying and depends on the flood protection of the banks. You should generally assume mooring is prohibited unless it is specifically allowed. There are plenty of mooring spots with reinforced banks and mooring rings or bollards. Do not moor where there are signs such as *privé ligplaats* (private mooring) or *niet afmeren* (no mooring), even if there are facilities for mooring.

Facilities and fees

Most of these moorings (except the moorings along canals or in or around lakes/marina parks) have facilities (refer to the **Water Almanak 2** for an overview per location) and you will have to pay for an overnight stay. In some historic town harbours, you may have to pay after a certain time. Prices vary across the country, but for a 11m yacht fees should normally be between €10 (really cheap, minimal facilities) to €35 (inner city, lot of facilities) per night. Sometimes the cost of shore power is included; mostly they are coin- or card-operated. If they are card-operated, there is a machine in the harbour to buy a card or recharge a card you already have. There is a generic *jachthavenkaart* that works in more than one marina/harbour, but usually you cannot use the amount charged on the card in another harbour, i.e. you have to recharge for each harbour. If there is a card-operated system, it often also acts as an access card.

Mooring along canals is sometimes free of charge (but then there is a restriction on the number of nights, e.g. 3 x 24 hours); sometimes you have to pay a fee. Either there is then a machine for buying a ticket (to be displayed on the bank side of your boat) or someone will come around (usually between 17.00 and 19.00) to collect the fee. This also applies to municipal inner-city harbours.

Shore power

Almost all harbours and marinas have shore power facilities, either through payment by coins, a card system (to be loaded with value at a machine), the AAN/UIT app, or free of charge. Note that the more recent facilities usually have 16A fuses. Red outlets for larger yachts are often not present. Older facilities may have 10A or even only 6A fuses. In some historic harbours, the outlets are 'hidden' in cabinets in the quay. So if you do not see the usual blue outlets, do not assume there is no shore power available, but look more closely! If the place is very busy, power outlets may still be available further away from your mooring, so ensure that you have plenty of cable (the author carries 15m and 20m cables on board; this usually works fine).

Water

If there is shore power, there should be water. In some places there is only a central water point and you need to go there with your yacht to get water. There is almost never one water point for each berth, so you need longer hoses. Usually two hoses of 20m should be sufficient. Most connections are based on the Gardena garden system but there are two varieties, so you are advised to carry a selection of sizes.

Shower/toilet facilities/washing machines

These vary substantially by location, both in quantity and in quality/cleanliness. Consult the **Water Almanak 2**. Sometimes usage is included; in other locations you will have to pay for the use of showers and washing machines (normally coin-operated).

Toilet waste/pump out facilities

It is prohibited on the inland waters of The Netherlands to deposit toilet waste in the waterways, except

for urine. This is to improve swim water quality. In theory, pump out facilities should be available in larger marinas and municipal harbours. In practice, however, you will find that the facilities are often broken or not reachable. Although illegal, many Dutch boaters therefore discharge while underway on water with current and away from recreational swimming waters. Discharging while in harbour or in (or near) recreational swimming water is seen as anti-social behaviour. If you have a holding tank and find a working pump out facility, use it. There is draft legislation requiring toilet discharge outlets to be sealed. This is expected to take effect not earlier than 2021 and it is as yet unclear how this will work in practice. Approved Marine Sanitation Devices may be installed to clean the waste before discharge. However, these are not yet on the market. Once available, it will probably be cheaper and easier to build them into existing vessels than to install a holding tank.

Reserving a mooring in the busy season

The busy season is usually in the spring and summer school holidays and around public holidays. The holidays vary by region and by year. Reserving a visitor mooring is in many places not possible. A first come, first served system usually applies. Exceptions may be made if you have a larger than usual vessel or if you can convince the harbour master that you are really coming in. If you need to cancel your reservation, please do so. It is not only polite, but by not doing so you reduce the chance that the harbour master will take reservations from others in the future.

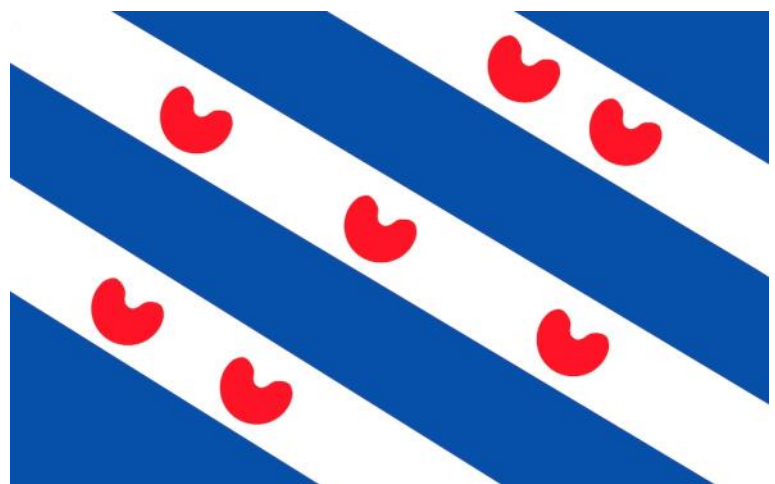
Motorboats/sailing yachts

For some inexplicable reason, there is more animosity between motorboat and sailing yacht crews than in other European countries. Do not be surprised if a skipper or crew member of the 'other type' does not wave back. Also in marinas/harbours, there is sadly less mixing between crew members of the different types.

On the larger open waters, sailing boats expect to always get right of way when sailing, even if this is contrary to the rules and regulations (e.g. if another yacht is following the buoyed channel). Many skippers of smaller sailing yachts have heard about the priority rule for yachts under sail but have not learned the other rules. Bear in mind that most skippers (motor and sail) of smaller boats are not in possession of an ICC, so beware!

Local courtesy flags

Many Dutch boaters will fly the local province courtesy flag, especially in Friesland - in this case often together with the flag of the Marrekrite (www.marrekrite.frl). This is a local organisation that maintains an extensive network of free public moorings and buoys in Friesland along canals, rivers and in lakes (by buying the flag you show support to their work). Flying these flags is much appreciated. To a lesser extent, flying a local courtesy flag applies also to the province of Zeeland. In other provinces locals may do so, but not often visitors. You can purchase these flags in marina shops or chandleries.



Friesland province flag

Payment methods

Euro coins

It is worth making an effort to hoard the 50 cent and €1 coins from any change you receive as these are widely required to pay for electricity, showers and even a few bridge and lock passages (*brug geld*).

Debit cards

Dutch society is moving quickly to a cashless society. Almost everyone pays with **debit** cards, practically everywhere (debit cards are also called *PIN* cards). *Pinnen* is now a Dutch verb which means 'pay by debit card'. You will find e.g. a *PIN-kassa* (cashless checkout point) not only in shops but also harbourmaster's offices that show an *Alleen Pinnen* (you can only pay cashless) or *Pinnen ja graag* (cashless preferred) sign.



ATMs

ATMs of individual banks are slowly being phased out and being replaced by ATMs inside supermarkets (only available during opening hours) or by the new yellow generic *geldmaat*. The number of ATMs is likely to be reduced substantially over the coming years. Expect withdrawals to be often limited to €250 a day. Currently (January 2020), ATM's are not available between 23.00 and 07.00 to prevent these machines being raided with explosives by criminals.

Contactless payments

Contactless payment is also seriously on the increase. If you see the sign for contactless payment you can usually pay with any Maestro, Visa, or Mastercard that has a similar sign on it (and an NFC chip in it). You can also pay with Apple Pay (on your phone or your watch) and similar smart payment systems of other brands.

Credit card payments

The Dutch tend to make less use of credit cards than other nationalities. Many more upscale restaurants do take Visa and MasterCard. Supermarkets rarely take credit cards. Albert Heijn states on its website that only some of its supermarkets in Amsterdam do. Jumbo states that increasingly the use of credit cards is being rolled out in their shops across the whole of the country. Also shops where you buy more expensive goods or frequented by tourists will usually accept credit cards. American Express and Diners Club credit cards are generally not accepted except by establishments offering the highest class of luxury goods and services.

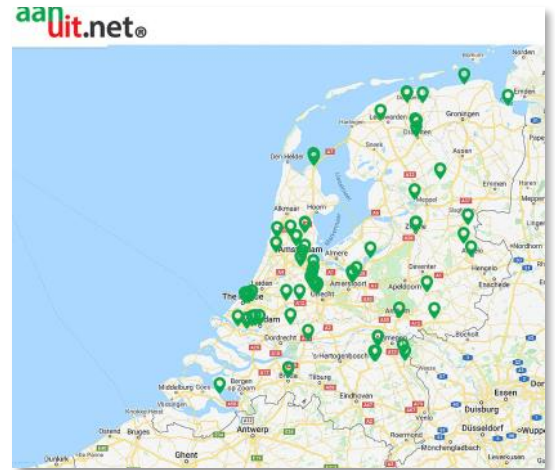
Cash or card?

Busy refuelling stations at larger marinas also tend to operate more and more on a cards-only basis (especially after hours). This should always work with a Maestro or Visa-based debit card.

As you can't always predict when you have to pay cash (e.g. if your debit card does not permit usage abroad), it is prudent to carry enough in reserve to pay for marina stays, restaurants and even refuelling bills, since amounts as high as €500 may only be settled in cash at PIN-less refuelling stations in some smaller marinas.

Payment for moorings/facilities by AanUit app

AanUit.net Town moorings, *gemeente ligplaats*, are increasingly using the AanUit app, found in Google and Apple app stores, to collect payment for mooring, electricity and water. Familiarisation with the process in advance from the main site [here](#) is recommended, as is downloading the app to your mobile 'phone and setting it up in English with your credit card ready to make payments. When using the app for berthing and switching on electricity and water, look carefully at the number of the berth or the electricity/water extension you intend to use. There may be a delay before the electricity/water starts running. Do not forget to switch the session off when leaving.



The Aan/Uit map-based app

Online payments

If you need to pay online on a Netherlands website or within an app, the usual payment method is 'Ideal'. This requires a Dutch bank account and is therefore unsuitable for visitors. Sometimes payment by credit card or PayPal is also possible. If you have a PayPal account, it is worth ensuring that you have the log in details with you. Online payments may be relevant for pre-booking tickets for museums, events, etc., but also within the blue water app mentioned above for booking and payment of visitor berths.

Getting around by public transport

In the larger cities there is usually a very good public transport system, although access to this depends very much on the location of the marina/harbour. In smaller places, you have to rely on a regional bus service which runs less frequently. Local and regional buses usually all go to a railway station where you board a regional or intercity train. Planning your journey should be easy if you use this website:

<https://9292.nl/en> or the corresponding app. Both are in English. If not in English when opening, look for the language button EN on the website and the settings button in the app (left upper corner), *algemene instellingen* → *taal* → *engels*. Then press the *klaar* button in the right hand corner and exit/restart the app. You do not need an account unless you want to save your journeys for re-use. This service also shows you on a map how to go from your current location to the bus stop or the train station.

For frequent travel on buses, trains, trams and metro you generally have to use an **OV-chipkaart** prepaid card for ticket purchases (see ov-chipkaart.nl). A post-paid version is nowadays also available but requires a Dutch bank account with direct debit authorisation. For incidental trips you can sometimes buy a disposable OV-chipkaart. If you intend to travel more often, buy a prepaid OV-chipkaart (they exist in a personalised version - although this will be difficult to obtain for visitors - and an anonymous version). You always have to log in with your OV-chipkaart before entering the bus or train and always have to log off when leaving the bus or train. When you change transport company during your journey you have to log off and log on when changing. Train and metro stations may have automatic gates that only open with your OV-chipkaart. If there are no gates, there usually is a log on/log off pole (one for each company operating there - use the correct one!).



The OV-chipkaart prepaid card

KEY WORDS GLOSSARY

An understanding of a few key words is essential to avoid confusion and delays when navigating the Dutch waterways. See below for a glossary of the main words you will most likely encounter.

DUTCH	ENGLISH
Aanleggen verboden	Mooring prohibited
Afvalwater (usually on pumping out facility)	Black water
Alleen met toestemming (e.g. below mooring sign) ...	Only with permission of ... (name authority)
Alleen sport (usually below a sign)	Only applicable to pleasure craft
Alstublieft (a.u.b. / Alsjeblieft)	Please (abbreviation/informal)
Bakboord	Port
BB (on Dutch water maps)	Moveable bridge
Bediening (with VHF channel or telephone number and official name of bridge/lock)	Call this channel/number for bridge/lock to be operated and mention name
Behalve sport (or m.u.v. sport)	Except for recreational vessels (may be under any sign, then this sign does not apply to recreational vessels)
Bezet (or red sign)	Taken, occupied, reserved
Bezoekers Aanmeren	Visitors' moorings or a reporting pontoon
Breedte	Width
Brug geld	Bridge toll fee
Brug, bruggen, brug geld	Bridge, bridges, bridge toll
Brugbouw (below a sign showing limited height)	Bridge being built or bridge maintenance leading to a reduced air draught
Dank u wel (dank je)	Thank you (thanks)
Diepgang	Draught
Diepte, diep, ondiep	Depth, deep, shallow
Doodlopend, niet invaren	Dead end, do not enter
Doorvaarthoogte (or vrije doorvaarthoogte)	Headroom, air draught
Duikers in het water	Divers in the water
Fiets, fietsbrug	Bicycle, cycle bridge
Geen fietsen op de steiger	No bicycles on the pontoon
Geen Ligplaats	No mooring
Geen overnachting	You cannot stay overnight
Gemeente	Municipal (e.g. moorings)
Generator uitschakelen	Switch off your generator (usually when close to houses)
Gereserveerd (sign near a mooring)	Reserved mooring
Gesloten	Closed

DUTCH	ENGLISH
<i>Gestremd</i>	Temporarily closed (e.g. for maintenance)
<i>Handhaving</i>	Local authority employees with law enforcement duties
<i>Havendienst</i>	Harbour service
<i>Havenmeester, havenkantoor</i>	Harbour master, harbour office
<i>Hefbrug</i>	Lifting bridge
<i>Hier alleen pinnen</i>	Pay by debit card only
<i>Hier melden</i>	Report here
<i>Kabelveer</i>	Cable ferry (usually in the larger rivers with current)
<i>Langzaam varen woonboten (often with a 'no wake' sign)</i>	Slow down: house boats (i.e. no wakes please)
<i>Lengte</i>	Length
<i>Let op: werkzaamheden (usually on temporary yellow signs)</i>	Attention: works ahead
<i>Liggeld/havengeld</i>	Mooring fee/harbour fee
<i>Marifoonkanaal</i>	VHF channel
<i>Meer</i>	Lake
<i>Meldsteiger</i>	Reporting pontoon for visitors
<i>Motorschepen, uitgezonderd sport (usually below a sign)</i>	Engine-driven ships, excluding pleasure craft. This sign does then not apply to pleasure craft
<i>Niet fietsen</i>	Do not ride a bicycle (usually on the pontoon)
<i>Oliehoudend (afvalwater) (usually on a pumping out facility)</i>	Waste water containing oil (bilge water)
<i>Passanten welkom/Geen passanten</i>	Visitors welcome/no visitors
<i>Passantenhaven</i>	Marina welcoming visitors
<i>Pinnen</i>	Pay by debit card
<i>Pinnen, ja graag</i>	Payment by debit card encouraged (even for smaller amounts) but not obligatory
<i>Pont (or veerpont)</i>	Ferry
<i>Privé ligplaats</i>	Private mooring
<i>Rijkswaterstaat</i>	National waterways authority (traffic regulator and law enforcement)
<i>Rondvaartboten</i>	Small cruise ships for canals etc.
<i>Rustig varen</i>	Please navigate slowly
<i>Schilderwerken</i>	Painting works (usually on a bridge, be careful).
<i>Sluis, sluizen</i>	Lock, locks
<i>Snelheid t.o.v. water</i>	Speed relative to the water current

DUTCH	ENGLISH
Spoorbrug	Railway bridge
Sport	Recreational vessels - under a sign: this sign only applies to recreational vessels; at a waiting pontoon: waiting pontoon for recreational vessels
Stadshaven or Gemeentehaven	Municipal harbour (as opposed to a commercial marina)
Stremming	Temporarily closed (usually for maintenance or building works)
Stuurboord	Starboard
Toegestaan	Permitted
Tot ziens/doei	Goodbye/See you (informal)
Uitgang, ingang, toegang	Exit, entrance, access
Uitgezonderd met toestemming ... (e.g. below no mooring sign)	Not applicable with permission from ... (name authority)
Uitgezonderd sport (usually below a sign)	Not applicable to pleasure craft
Vast deel (usually below a sign)	Only applicable to the fixed part of the bridge
Verboden	Forbidden
Vrij (or green sign)	Free (available for use)
Vrijhouden	Keep free (reserved)
Vuil water (usually on a pumping out facility)	Black water
Wachtplaats	Waiting areas outside bridges or locks: note there are often separate areas for commercial traffic and recreational (<i>sport</i>)
Watersportwinkel (you can Google this to find a list of outlets near you)	Chandlery
Werkzaamheden	Works in progress (usually below another sign)