



SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE NETHERLANDS STANDING MAST ROUTES (SMR)

by Machiel Lambooij (February 2026)



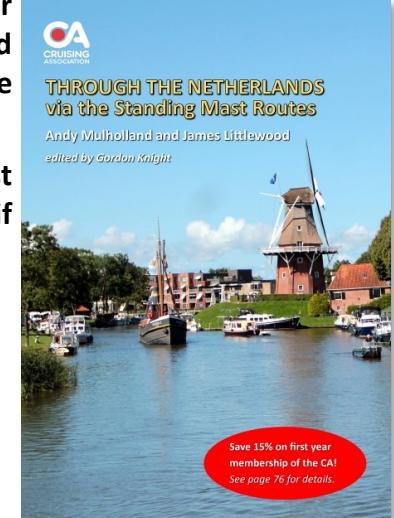
This guidance note provides details of the numerous sources for obtaining up to date information when embarking on the Standing Mast Routes in the Netherlands. As the risk of temporary or long-lasting delays on the routes (due to bridge closures, lock issues, etc) is fairly high, this note is regularly updated as new information becomes available. Please email any corrections or updates to the author at explorer@freedom.nl.

The Standing Mast Routes (SMR) allow sailing yachts and other high air draft vessels to travel through or cruise around several of the inland waterways of the Netherlands. In some translated publications in the Netherlands, they are referred to as the 'Fixed Mast Routes'.

This guidance note details the various sources for obtaining the latest information on the status of the SMR. Use the hyperlinks provided or (if using a printed version of this note) scan the QR codes.

Information on the route itself

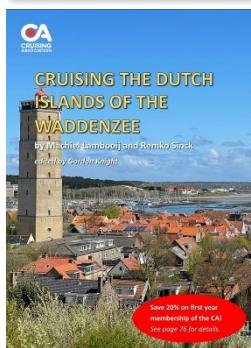
Through the Netherlands via the Standing Mast Routes – available as a free download for CA members (in PDF format) and also purchasable in a printed version. See: <https://shop.theca.org.uk/european-inland-waterways-guides/41-through-the-netherlands-via-the-standing-mast-routes-digital-pdf-version.html> or scan the QR code.



The CA's guide to the SMR



Varen doe je samen (co-operation between various maritime organisations on safe boating). For their free, downloadable brochures (including one on the Fixed Mast Route and a map), see: <https://www.varendoejesamen.nl/en> or scan the QR code.



Cruising the Dutch Islands of the Waddenze a further CA guide describing access to/exit from the northern part of the SMR (as an alternative to the Friesland/Groningen route). Available as a free download for CA members (in PDF format) and also purchasable in a printed version. See: <https://shop.theca.org.uk/european-inland-waterways-guides/98-cruising-the-dutch-islands-of-the-waddenze-digital-pdf-version.html> or scan the QR code.



Blockages and restrictions, incidents

The route is not managed by one authority. It is a collection of rivers, canals, lakes etc. managed by various authorities that have been joined together to form the SMR by various boating associations. Maintenance works - sometimes longer term - may be carried out (and these are often not coordinated) on bridges or locks along the route restricting or even completely closing off branches of the route for boats with a standing mast. There may not be alternative routes around it that are suitable for boats with a standing mast. You should check for planned blockages and restrictions before you decide to take the SMR. To avoid surprises and delays during your journey, it is also useful to check every day for incidents on your intended route.

Known issues for the 2026 season

The previous years saw many - mostly planned—blockages, due to refurbishment and complete rebuilding of bridges, closing off the Amsterdam branch and- during part of the season- also the Haarlem branch. There were also some significant blockages due to sudden failures of bridge mechanisms. Some for a couple of days, but others for an undetermined period (continuing), pending repair efforts. Mostly, unfortunately, these incidents were caused by a lack of proper maintenance over the last decade, due to budgetary constraints and lack of proper focus on maintenance.

More up to date information on the actual situation (in case of longer term blockages and their status, including reports on potential detours) is available under *SMR MAIN ENTRY* in the **CAptain's Mate app** (only available for logged in CA members—see below).

Known longer term disruptions for 2026

Route from Lemmer to Leeuwarden (Friesland): the bridge near Uitwellingerga failed and for safety reasons the bridge will not be operated for the foreseeable future. A temporary fixed bridge was installed in the fall of 2025. Plans to replace this by a new opening bridge are being worked on. This part of the SMR will therefore be unavailable for the whole of the 2026 season (and possibly longer). There is a deviation (but there is a depth restriction) through Sneek.

Night Convoy Route through Amsterdam: the Schinkelbrug over the A10 motorway around Amsterdam has a technical issue and is not opening at all since 1 May 2025. It is unclear how long this will take to resolve. If this bridge is not operating, the Night Convoy Route is not accessible for boats with a standing mast. You should use the SMR branche via Haarlem for the S-N passage (or v.v.). In earlier seasons, the Night Convoy route was not running every night during the whole season. At some point in time, the Night Convoy only ran from Thursday to Saturday, due to staff shortages. No announcement has been made yet on the availability for the 2026 season. Status page: <https://www.waternet.nl/en/service-and-contact/boating-in-amsterdam/standing-mast-route/>.

North Holland to Den Helder: the Coenbrug near Zaandam is since 1 December 2025 unable to operate due to technical issues. If this is not resolved in time for the new season, you can use the route over the Nauernasche Vaart (depth 2m) to circumvent this bridge.

Main SMR, Oranjesluizen (Noordzee Kanaal into the Markermeer/IJsselmeer area): due to staff shortages, the pleasure craft locks (the N locks with their specific pleasure craft waiting area) are, until further notice, not available anymore on a 24/7 basis. Please check the accurate operating hours when you plan your journey. They may vary during the season depending on staff availability. The locks should normally operate during daylight hours. Note that pleasure craft may normally not join commercial barges in the larger locks if the pleasure craft locks are not operating. You will have to return to Amsterdam or wait at the waiting pontoon (no land access and no facilities) in that case.

Bird island de Kreupel was temporarily closed in 2025 due to the pontoons having been damaged in a storm. It is expected that the harbour is available again in the course of 2026, but a clear date is not known at the time of writing of this guide.

Detour to Delft: this route is unavailable due to the Giessenbrug bridge not operating and not capable of being repaired. The last known government plans at the time of writing this edition are to replace this bridge by a **fixed** bridge in the course of 2027, in which case, the detour to Delft is no longer accessible for sailing yachts. Complaints have been filed against these plans by watersports organisations, so the plans may still change. In any case, this route is not available for yachts with standing mast until at least 2027.

These issues apply to boats with a standing mast. For motorboats, check the details; some of the blockages mentioned will not apply based on your lower air draught.

Disruptions also likely for future years

Expected blockages for the 2026/2027 period (due to planned maintenance): *Algerabrug* (Krimpen aan de IJssel) and the railway and road bridges near Dordrecht. Exact dates not yet known.

High temperature issues

High temperatures in the Summer months may lead to expansion of the steel of bridges. Cooling with water may help to some extent. Bridges especially prone to stop operating for this reason are (but this may also apply to other bridges, especially if the temperatures are very high):

- ◆ Some of the city bridges on the Amsterdam Night Convoy Route
- ◆ The bridge on the N205 road south of Haarlem (*Schouwbroekerbrug* – bridge 9 - except early in the morning before 10.00)
- ◆ The lifting bridges near Alphen aan de Rijn
- ◆ The bridges near Dordrecht (although cooling from a fireboat seems to help most of the time).

High temperatures are to be increasingly expected with global warming. Certain bridges will also not operate in high wind situation (BFT 6, 7 or more).

Check bridge and lock operations before you depart! <https://www.vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/geo/map> or look for a red triangle on your Waterkaarten app (provided it is connected to the internet).



CAptain's Mate ('CM' - only for logged in CA members)

On CM you will find entries with SMR in the name. Log on to CM and search for SMR. Well known blockages and restrictions that affect travelling on the SMR for a longer period are usually reported here, with alternative routes if available. Members also report their experiences. If you find a blockage or restriction that has not yet been reported or one that has been resolved, please report it yourself.

Captain's Mate is available to members as an app in the Google Play and Apple App store and as a web resource (<https://www.theca.org.uk/ciapp>).



Filter

Icon	Description	Last updated
	Standing Mast Route (Staande Mast Route) (SMR)	28/03/2024, 30nm
	Cruquiusbrug / bridge (SMR; Haarlem branch)	07/03/2024, 29nm
	Schipholbrug - not operating from 1 October 2023 until April 2025 due to maintenance (SMR)	24/02/2024, 23nm
	Driebondsbrug (SMR route Groningen - Delfzijl) operating as normal since 21 February 2024	22/02/2024, 79nm
	Amsterdam - Standing Mast Route Night Convoy (SMR) - CLOSED FOR 2024	21/12/2023, 23nm

Left:
Example of entries in the CAptain's Mate app resulting from a search on 'SMR'.

Remember: you need to be logged in on the CA website as a member.

Similarly, longer term closures are also reported on the forum of the **European Inland Waterways Section** on the CA website (sometimes, if important, also copied to the forum of the Baltic Section and the North Sea Section). See: <https://www.theca.org.uk/forum/923> (only available for CA members who are logged in).

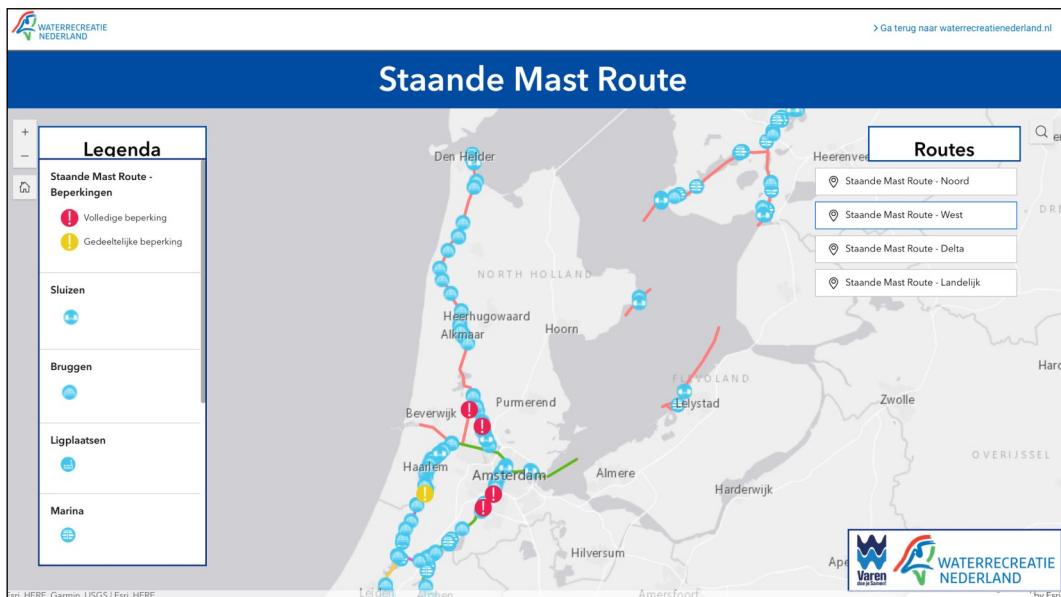
Short term incidents are not reported in CM or on the forums. Refer to the Fairway Information System (see below) for these.



Status map Waterrecreatie Nederland (in Dutch)

This viewer shows the various branches of the SMR (information in Dutch, but easily understandable). The colour coding of the routes only indicates the branch and does not refer to its availability. Look for the red and yellow circles with exclamation marks. These indicate blockages (red) and restrictions (yellow) - only longer term, not incidents. Click on a circle with exclamation mark and you will get the details (in Dutch; copy and paste into Google Translate or similar tool).

See: <https://waterrecreatiederland.nl/viewer-staande-mast-route> or scan the QR code.



You can click on the name of a route (right hand corner). You then get a zoomed in map, including bridges and locks. Click on such an object and you will get more information on the name of the object (locks, bridges, berths, marinas), often with a telephone number.

Waterkaarten app (previously called ANWB Waterkaart)



The very useful **Waterkaarten** app (subscription based) shows the status of objects (bridges/locks/waterways) with a separate red triangle if there is an issue. Click on the red triangle and you will get detailed information (often in English if you set the app language to English; if not, use Google Translate). The red triangle appears for blockages, restrictions and incidents (but only the next working day); the information is fed to **Waterkaarten** from the **Fairway Information System** (see below) but only if you have a working internet connection!

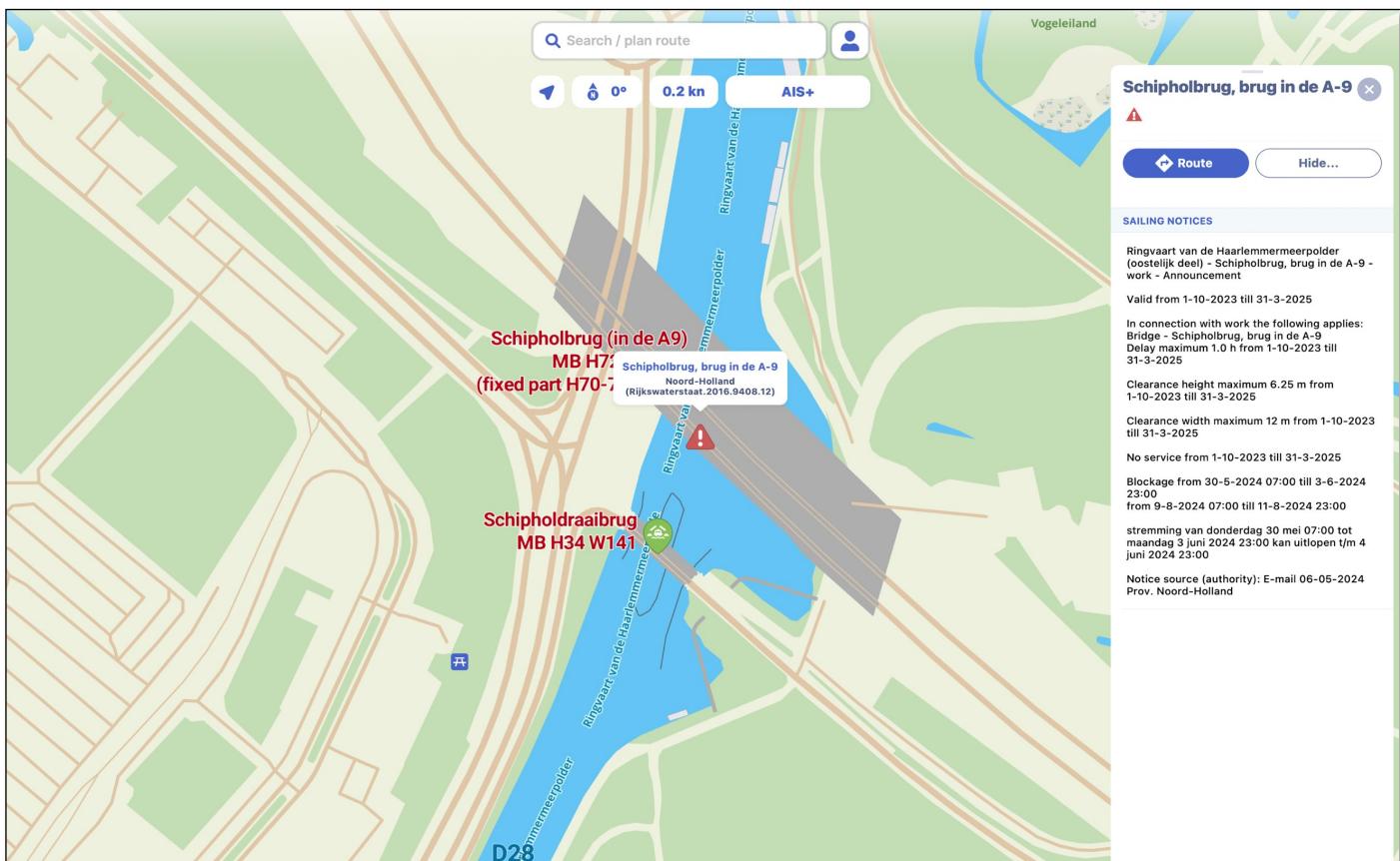
If you click on a bridge, lock or marina you will get more detailed general information on that object. The notices to mariners are not included in the regular object, you need to click on the separate triangle next to it.

Note: you can take a free trial subscription for seven days. If you intend to transit the Netherlands within that period, then that is sufficient. Alternatively, you can take out a short term subscription or one for a full year.

This app is very useful in practice as it also contains details of marinas, operating hours of bridges, contact

information and it shows basic AIS targets (provided there is a live internet connection and you are at the correct zoom level for that). The app includes information that is also available in printed form in the **ANWB Wateralmanak 1 and 2** and satisfies the obligation to have the Dutch water and VHF regulations on board (in Dutch).

Example of the closure of the Schipholbrug during the 2024 season



Waterkaarten also provides charts and fairway information on Belgium, France, Germany and the UK. Only the information for the Netherlands and Belgium is extensive. For the other countries it is as yet basic. The plans are to improve this in the coming months.

See <https://waterkaarten.app/en> or scan the QR code.



Fairway Information System

There is a countrywide, free official **Fairway Information System** that contains all available information on waterways, water depths and bridges/locks. All notices to mariners on inland waterways are stored here. The system is available in English (**set the language to 'English' in the left upper corner of the screen**), but even then, some of the underlying details may be in Dutch (depending on whether the competent water authority translates it or not).

See: www.vaarweginformatie.nl for further details or scan the QR code.

Check this system for longer term blockages and restrictions, but also for incidents. Incidents are shown in this system **the next working day**. So during the day, you will not be able to find an incident, but you will find incidents of the day before and whether they are resolved (resolution is also reported only the next working day); if in doubt whether a reported incident was resolved in the meantime, you can phone the bridge/lock keeper.

The easiest access is through the map provided at: <https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/nts/map> or by scanning the QR code (**in the left upper corner click on 'English'**). The yellow circles with a figure in it show the number of available notices to



mariners in that area. If you zoom in you will get circles with an envelope depicted; click on that and you will get the details of the notice itself. Some notices may apply in one direction only.

Similarly, you can get details on bridges and locks at: <https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/geo/map?layers=BRIDGE> (again: switch to '**English**' in the left hand corner if not already active and choose the layer you wish to see). Click on an individual bridge and on more details and you get all the available details, including telephone numbers, operating hours, the name of the operating authority and increasingly also whether the bridge is in the open or closed position (live if you are connected to the internet). Note that bridge heights are given relative to the standard canal or river levels. If these deviate for whatever reason, you should take these deviations into account.



Water level information is available on the main commercial waterways.

Use link https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/hydro/water_level or scan QR code.



Depth information (maximum allowable draught) is also available (Map, Waterway, Maximum Dimension allowed).



Use link <https://tinyurl.com/566ydcmt> or scan QR code.

Click on the waterway you intend to use and on 'more details', and you will find the maximum allowable draught for that waterway.

≡ Maximum allowed dimensions

< Back

e.g. Erasmusbrug

Max. toeg. afmeting ViN(29948)

Identification

Common

Name	Max. toeg. afmeting ViN(29948)	Country code	-
Situated on route	Vaarwegen in de stad Groningen, Reitdiep en Lauwersmeer	Route code	006
Remarks	Zie: bijz. bep. vergunningen en max. toegestane afmetingen.		

Dimensions

	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Height (m)	Length (m)
Generic dimensions	6,6	2,4	-	50,0

Example: Maximum allowed dimensions around Groningen and Reitdiep

Frequently asked questions on the SMR

Q: The *hefbruggen* (lifting bridges) around Alphen a/d Rijn do not lift to the maximum air draft, so I cannot pass. How does that work?

A: To avoid too long delays for road traffic, these bridges lift normally to an *intermediate height by default*. Once the intermediate default opening is achieved, the bridge keepers are usually unwilling to open it further if you then complain, as this creates more delays for the road traffic; you will then have to await the next opening. If you need the maximum air draft, please say so explicitly when you request an opening by VHF radio or by calling up by telephone. In practice, the bridge keeper may recognise, upon your approach, that you need the maximum opening, but it is safer to specifically point out your air draft to him. If you travel in convoy with other pleasure craft or commercial barges, it is especially relevant to call up the bridge keeper and ask for an opening that meets your air draft, even if he has already confirmed that he is opening the bridge at the request of other ships, as he will probably lift the bridge only to the intermediate height. Similarly, do not start to approach the opening bridge if you have not confirmed to what height the bridge is opening. It may stop halfway up.

Q: What is the maximum air draft for the SMR?

A: The route has been designed for sailing boats with an air draft up to 30 metres. However, note that the

canal/river level may occasionally deviate from the standard level, and this may reduce the available height. If you are close to 30 metres, you should check actual water levels on stretches where there are lifting bridges ('hefbrug' in Dutch). In practice we have not heard of boats with an air draft up to 24 metres having issues.

Q: Where are there draught issues?

A: You can check the normal draught in the **Waterkaarten** app (shown in decimetres). These obviously assume standard water levels. You can check the maximum allowable dimensions (refer to fairway information systems above) for a waterway and for some waterways the actual water levels. You can also check user provided depth contours in apps like **Navionics**. In practice, (temporary) draught issues are sometimes reported in the Groningen-Lauwersmeer route, around the town of Zoutkamp. Also sometimes alongside moorings without jetties in Dokkum are reported as having a draught issue. Check **CAptain's Mate** and the forums for specific recent experiences.

Q: Do I need a vignette for passing through Amsterdam on the SMR?

A: Only if you transit Amsterdam through the Kostverlorenvaartgracht (the night convoy route). More information on the vignette can be found here: <https://www.theca.org.uk/sites/default/files/info/eiw-free-guides/Amsterdam%20vignette.pdf> (free download, also available for non-CA members). Alternatively, scan the QR code. You do not need a vignette if you transit Amsterdam over the Noordzeekanaal from Haarlem or IJmuiden to the Oranjesluizen (locks into the Markermeer) and vice versa.



Q: How does the night convoy work for transiting Amsterdam?

A: Check the general resources mentioned above. Particularly: search on **CAptain's Mate** for: 'Amsterdam - Standing Mast Route Night Convoy (SMR)'.

Q: The Night Convoy route is not available, or I do not want to transit by night. Is there an alternative?

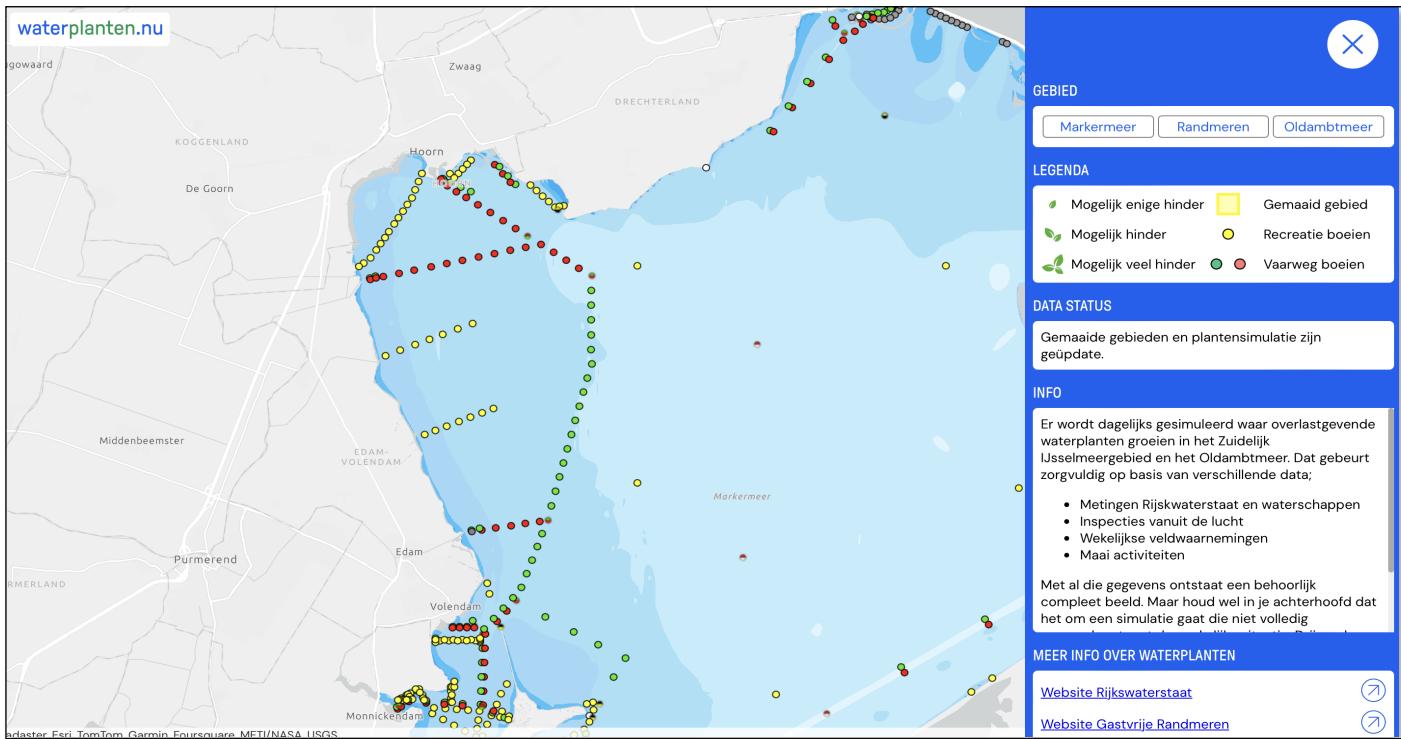
A: Yes, you can use the more westerly route through Haarlem. That is also a very pretty and convenient route. Haarlem is a beautiful, historic town and not to be missed (the transit fee payable for Haarlem is included in the berth fee for one night, so there is an incentive to stay at least one night). Upon arrival in Amsterdam over the Noordzeekanaal (from Haarlem or IJmuiden over the Noordzeekanaal) you can then find a berth in a marina in Amsterdam along the IJ and it is easy to visit Amsterdam from there on foot, by bike or by bus (there are various free ferries crossing the IJ near most marinas).

Q: Can I safely transit the Markermeer and IJsselmeer?

A: Yes, provided it is not bad weather. The Markermeer and IJsselmeer can be uncomfortable and even dangerous in bad weather. It used to be a sea before it was closed off by dykes. In bad weather (high winds/thunderstorms) it should still be considered a sea with rough and uncomfortable waves. The area is therefore under the supervision of the Dutch Coast Guard (VHF 16 for emergencies; call sign 'Den Helder Rescue') and the KNRM (volunteer rescue organisation like the RNLI) and qualifies as sea for boat licence rules. You need ICC Coastal rather than ICC Inland; ICC is only required if your boat has a hull length of 15 metres or more or is capable of a speed of 20 km/h or more). VHF 1 for hourly weather and navigational warnings (in Dutch). Check the weather forecast in a marine weather app (e.g. **Windfinder** or **Windy**) for 'Trintelhaven' (in the middle of the dyke that separates the Markermeer from the IJsselmeer) before you cast off to cross these waters. In acceptable weather, crossing should be fine and is very popular. There may be an issue with water plants, mainly in the Markermeer, that can block water intakes or entangle propellers. The buoyed channels should normally be fine, due to heavy traffic or because the channels are mowed frequently. Outside the buoyed channels there may be issues when temperatures rise (end of Spring/Summer/beginning of Autumn depending on the actual weather). Here you can check on the status of issues due to water plants: <https://waterplanten.nu> (shows Markermeer and the Randmeren – lakes S and E of the



Flevoland area - but these have limited access for higher air draft boats due to fixed bridges). This is based on reports and aerial reconnaissance/mowing activity. Especially around Hoorn there are frequent issues.



Click on the 'hamburger' menu for the explanation: the more green leaves are visible in an area, the bigger the water plants issue there. A yellow area means the plants have been mowed recently.

For more information on the Markermeer and IJsselmeer, check the entries for these waterways in **CAptain's Mate** (CA-members only).

Q: I am coming directly from the UK to the SMR. What are the most convenient ports of entry?

A: For immigration purposes they are called 'border crossing points': the most practical border crossing points for pleasure craft are Vlissingen, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, IJmuiden, Amsterdam (but IJmuiden is easier), Den Helder or Harlingen. Refer here for the procedure and the opening hours of the border crossing points:

<https://english.marechaussee.nl/topics/reporting-requirements-for-commercial-and-recreational-vessels>. Here you can also download the crew and passenger manifests that you need to e-mail before arriving. **Tip:** do this at home before you depart to your boat and fill the form out and store it for sending later.

In summary: you do not have to go to an immigration office, but you announce your arrival at least 24 hours in advance (or when you depart to the Netherlands if shorter) and call the immigration authorities (*see * below*) once you have arrived; they will wait for you on the quay based on your pre-announcement or they will visit you by car or boat after you have called to check you in. You are also required to announce your departure to any non-Schengen destination (e.g. the UK) from the Netherlands in a similar manner for checking out. The European Entry/Exit system is expected to be fully operational in the new boating season. Border patrols visiting you on your boat as described above, should have portable equipment with them to take biometric data (fingerprints and picture) when you are checking in or out.

Note: Eemshaven, Hoek van Holland (Hook of Holland) and Moerdijk do not allow pleasure craft to enter their commercial harbours, so although these are mentioned as ports of entry they are off limits to pleasure craft and therefore not useable as ports of entry.

If your last harbour before entering the Netherlands was in a Schengen country (e.g. France, Belgium,



Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark), there is no need to pre-announce your arrival and call immigration; the same applies if you depart from the Netherlands to such a country. Make sure you have some documentation of your last Schengen harbour (passport stamp, marina receipt). The coast guard uses radar and AIS receivers to determine pleasure craft tracks and select boats for a visit on open water.



There is no need to report to customs if you come directly from an EU country or if you are coming from the UK, have nothing to declare (boat is brought into the EU for not more than 18 months or EU VAT is paid on the boat, and all goods onboard are under the allowances).

See the [Dutch customs website \(in English\)](#) for details.

Incorrect links/QR-codes and suggestions

Links/QR codes were accurate at the date of publication. Please report any additional suggestions or non-working links to explorer@freedom.nl. Links should work from the pdf version. Use the QR codes if you have printed this document: focus the camera (or a QR code app) of your mobile phone or tablet on the QR code and click on the link shown on your screen (only works if you are connected to the internet).



All information is provided for practical purposes and in good faith. Its use is at your own risk. It is your own responsibility to check this information with official sources before you rely on it. Note that this note may be updated during the season. The latest version will be available from the CA's website, **CAptain's Mate** or the CA Forums

*Koninklijke Marechaussee (Royal Marechaussee) and for Rotterdam: Zeehavenpolitie (sea harbour police)