

ELCKERLYC INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

# Welcoming Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION PACK  
FOR PARENTS



## FOREWARD

The Elckerlyc School has a new Welcoming Committee with a general purpose of providing assistance and ongoing support for new families on three levels: at the “inquiry” stage and/or before moving to The Netherlands, on the first day and on an ongoing basis until the new family has well and truly settled in!

This supplementary Information Pack has been put together to answer questions that are not specific to the school and as such are not covered in the School booklet. This pack covers questions relating to where you may want to live, what living in the area may be like, information about local towns where Elckerlyc families tend to live, after school activities, day trip ideas, general information about Holland and the Dutch and much, much more!

The Information Pack is written by a group of parents who have been in your position at some point in the past and who would have loved to have had ALL this useful info at hand when they were at decision making stage and or just arrived! As such it is not intended to be an administrative guide to arrival in The Netherlands, a tourist guide or an in depth guide to Dutch Customs and Culture, just a collection of what we feel would be useful for you.

Although the Welcoming Committee consists of just a small group of parents, we have been fortunate enough to be assisted by a considerable number of other equally committed parents who have written about their towns and/or specific subjects which they felt would be useful to new parents. These parents, and many others have also agreed to have their details available on our Family Helpline List (a list of parents ready to answer any questions you may have by E mail/phone).

We hope that this Information Pack helps you in some way and we appreciate any comments and/or suggestions you may have (you may point out errors also!). If you would like to get in touch with a family from our helpline list please mail [parents.welcome@gmail.com](mailto:parents.welcome@gmail.com)

Happy reading!

From the Welcoming Committee

### **Acknowledgements:**

*We are indebted to Letterland International Department in Almere who have allowed us to use a Welcome Pack which they produced some time ago, from which some of the “general Dutch” information in our pack was taken directly. This gave us an excellent starting point for our pack and enabled us to produce ours making regional and personal modifications only, thus allowing us to do so in a very short time scale. A BIG “THANK YOU” to Letterland!*

*We would also like to thank “Family Matters” Magazine who recently provided a list of Childcare Facilities in the Netherlands, from which part of the relevant section in this pack was taken – this saved us A LOT of research!*

# INDEX

FOREWARD.....	1
Acknowledgements .....	1
ABOUT THE NETHERLANDS .....	6
Some Basic Facts & Figures.....	6
Amsterdam .....	6
Den Haag (The Hague).....	6
Leiden.....	7
Other Neighbouring Towns (where Elckerlyc Families typically live) .....	7
Leiderdorp .....	7
Oegstgeest .....	8
Warmond .....	9
Voorschoten .....	9
Voorhout .....	10
Rijnsburg .....	10
Wassenaar.....	10
TRAVELING TO AND FROM SCHOOL AND PARKING .....	11
NATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND MAIN FESTIVITIES.....	11
NATIONAL HOLIDAYS .....	11
MAIN FESTIVITIES .....	11
TYPICAL DUTCH FESTIVITIES .....	12
Carnival – February .....	12
King’s Day: King’s Birthday: April 30 .....	12
Liberation Day: May 5 <sup>th</sup> .....	12
St. Maarten: Nov 11.....	12
Pakjesavond / Sinterklaas: December 5 and 6.....	12
Christmas Day & New Year’s Eve .....	13
Dutch Announcements .....	13
SPORTING EVENTS .....	13
DUTCH CUSTOMS AND BIRTHDAY TRADITIONS .....	14
DUTCH CUISINE .....	14
PEOPLE & CULTURE: GETTING TO KNOW THE DUTCH.....	15
TIPPING GUIDELINES IN HOLLAND .....	16
TRAFFIC SAFETY .....	16
Cars .....	16
Bicycles (fietsen) .....	17
Scooters (brummers/snoorfiets) .....	17
HEALTH IN HOLLAND.....	18
Huisarts (Family Doctor/General Practitioner - GP) .....	18
Emergencies outside office hours .....	18
Health specific to children .....	18
Consulatiebureau .....	18

School-Gezondheidszorg .....	18
Hospitals.....	18
Dentists .....	19
<b>GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Day Care / Nursery (also called “Kinderdagverblijf” or “Opvang”).....	19
After School Care (“naschoolse opvang”) .....	19
Childminders/Host Parents (“Gastouders”) .....	19
Play School (“Peuterspeelzaal”) .....	20
Playgroups (also known as parent/toddler groups) .....	20
<b>DAY CARE ESTABLISHMENTS IN AND AROUND LEIDEN.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LEIDEN .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LEIDERDORP .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>OEGSTGEEST .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>VOORSCHOTEN .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>WASSENAAR .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>USEFUL WEBSITES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>DUTCH NEWS IN ENGLISH .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>TRAFFIC INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>FINDING ACCOMODATION .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>USEFUL BOOKS &amp; MAGAZINES .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>SHOPPING .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>General Opening Hours .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A few tips for useful shops when you settle in at home and at school! .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Home .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>School.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Markets in and around Leiden .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Leiden.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Leiderdorp .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Voorhout .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Oegstgeest .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL PLAYGROUPS, AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES &amp; BIRTHDAY PARTY VENUE IDEAS .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>English Speaking Playgroups (parent-toddler) .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Voorschoten .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Leiden.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Voorhout .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Wassenaar.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>After school activities - offered in English .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Swimming.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Football.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Dancing .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Scouting .....</b>	<b>24</b>

Birthday location ideas .....	25
Indoor .....	25
Outdoor .....	25
TIPS FOR TRIPS .....	25
Local Dunes .....	25
Local Beaches .....	25
Local Lakes and/or Recreational areas .....	26
National Parks / City Parks / other “Netherlands Nature” & Educative) .....	26
Zoos/Aquariums/Bird Parks.....	26
Childrens Farms (Kinderboerderij) .....	27
Amusement / Family Parks .....	27
Miscellaneous.....	27
CONCLUSION .....	27

# ABOUT THE NETHERLANDS

## Some Basic Facts & Figures

16.9 million people live in Holland of which 688 thousand are foreign nationals (www.cbs.nl 2015). Holland has the tallest population in Europe. The average height of men aged 15-25 years is 182.35 cm, compared to an EU average of 177.51 cm. The average height of women is 170.56 cm, compared to an EU average of 165.57.

Tulips and 4 billion cut flowers (70% of the global total) and 500 million pot plants pass through Aalsmeer flower auction each year. There is even an underground railway that connects the auction to Schiphol airport.

Schiphol Airport handles more than 58,285 million (2015) passengers and a million tons of freight a year. 1550 foreign firms employ around 70,000 people in the Amsterdam region.

## About Amsterdam

There are around 834,713 people living in Amsterdam. They own 881,000 bikes of which 180,000 change hands illegally each year. 10,000 bikes a year are found in the canals.

The Amsterdam Bos is one of the largest city parks in Europe at 895 hectares. It was built in the 1930's in the depression to provide 5 years work for one thousand men. It is currently being extended with a 40-hectare marsh and wetland that will reach all the way to Schiphol airport.

Amsterdam out-literatures London! There is a bookshop for every 2,000 inhabitants.

Amsterdam's seaports handle 100 million tons of freight a year. A new passenger terminal opened in 1999 to help serve the 100+ cruise ships visiting each year. They also opened the world's first "warehouse at sea" – a 200-metre ship with cranes and storage for 25,000 tons of freight.

## About Den Haag (The Hague)

At the beginning of 2016 The Hague had 520,704 inhabitants. Since 1999, the number of Dutch-born residents of The Hague has declined by roughly 1% per year. Last year 47% of the population had a 'foreign ethnicity', meaning that they themselves or one of their parents were born outside of the Netherlands (www.denhaag.com Stadsenquete 2008).

As such The Hague is a city of international importance with many faces, home to many different cultures. Once little more than a country house near a pond, The Hague has developed into a city of international character and importance. The international reputation of The Hague continues to develop. The city centre still features the ancient buildings where its history was forged, with world-class, modern architecture sprouting like exotic flowers around, and the 'golden mile' of international organizations continues to expand in both reach and number. The International Criminal Court was established in The Hague in 2002, and the OPCW and many other organizations make their home here. With over one hundred nationalities living side by side, The Hague has embraced its heritage and strives to be deserving of the title 'International City of Peace and Justice'.

The Hague is easily accessible from Leiden by train, bus and car (though traffic to and from The Hague during rush hour can be quite heavy). If you are looking for purely expatriate activities, clubs, theatre and cinema (films for children) in English this is the place to come. The town center is separated into distinct

areas (Chinatown, restaurant area, shopping area, etc.) all easily navigable on foot.

The Hague has its own website available in many languages [www.denhaag.com](http://www.denhaag.com) which provides all necessary information for residents, tourists and business people alike.

## About Leiden

Leiden has 122,915 inhabitants. It is a lively University town, with a lot of different shops, bars, restaurants, theatres, museums and movies for everybody's taste. The university attracts a lot of foreign students, scientific staff and international business which gives Leiden a very international atmosphere, most people do speak English.

Leiden is between Den Haag, Amsterdam, Schiphol and Utrecht and has good railroad connections to these cities. In theory Leiden has good freeway connections but during morning- and evening traffic 'spits' it's often difficult to enter or leave Leiden by car. As Holland is so flat and everything is reasonably close by, the best transport is by bike, especially in Leiden town center. There is also good bus transport system.

Leiden town center tries to be pedestrian friendly. There are a few big parking lots around the old city center from where you can stroll in to the city. Leiden has got several festivals from which 'Leidens ontzet' is the biggest and most famous. As soon the weather permits (not raining!) Leiden has got a lot of sidewalk cafés. Leiden contains, beside the city center, several neighbourhoods, and is almost one with Leiderdorp, Oegstgeest and Voorschoten (see following pages for town by town description). The more recent neighbourhoods (not older than 30 years) are Waardeiland, Merenwijk, Stevenshof, Roompot and are popular with Elckerlyc parents as very child friendly.

Leiden has got a few parks, is only 10 kilometres from the coast (sea, beach, dunes, forest) and is in the green part of West Holland (polders, bollenvelden). There's a system of several maintained playgrounds via 'speeltuin verenigingen' (see page 25 for a small list).

Leiden is reasonably child safe, although it looks different when you see how everybody behaves in traffic! There are a lot of possibilities for international education, courses and workshops of all kind. Most people can speak English and are willing to.

Leiden has got 2 hospitals; one of them is the Leiden University Medical Centre (LUMC). Next door to the 'Diaconessen Hospital' is a family doctor, which is very handy for parking and close to the services of a hospital. There are lot of family doctors and dentists around in Leiden.

## About other neighbouring towns (where Elckerlyc Families typically live)

The majority of families live in one of the towns listed and described on the following pages. However, some other local towns that have a few Elckerlyc families as residents are Alphen aan der Rijn, Hazerswoude Rijndijk and Rijnsburg. Also, slightly further afield; Nieuwe Vennepe and Hoofdorp.

### Leiderdorp

Leiderdorp, in which the Elckerlyc school is situated, has 26,786 (2014) residents and is a small satellite town to the south-east of Leiden. It is (traffic permitting) a 10 minute drive or a 15 minute bicycle ride to the centre of Leiden from Leiderdorp, and so the facilities of the former are readily available. It is further divided into the Voorhof (in which Elckerlyc is situated) the Leyhof, Binnenhof, Buitenhof, De Schansen, Vogelwijk, Zijkwartier, Elisabethhof, Cuderzorg, Kerkwijk, Oranjewijk and Doeskwartier.

Leiderdorp is fortunate to be blessed with one of the area's few "indoor" shopping centers "Winkelhof" which also has the advantage of being within walking distance from the school. Parking is free. There is also a smaller shopping centre, (Sandhorst Winkel centrum). Leiderdorp also has one of the area's biggest shopping centers specializing in furniture and home furnishings called the "Woon meubelplein" within walking distance of the school.

The Leiderdorp Geementehuis (Town Hall) is adjacent to the Winkelhof . Information about the town's facilities can be found here. Also the following website (Dutch only): [www.leiderdorp.nl](http://www.leiderdorp.nl)

Leiderdorp is child friendly and has a lovely big wooded area called the "Park De Houtkamp" which is situated near the school. This is a large park with a children's play area and a "Dierenpark" (animal park). Children can enter the animal enclosure after 2:30pm. There is also an excellent indoor/outdoor restaurant near the animals.

There is also "De Bloemerd", a recreational area situated on the east side of Leiderdorp. A Football Club is situated here as are horse riding facilities and play areas for children. Other sporting facilities include local swimming pools "De Does" and the "Zijl", another swimming centre which is technically in Leiden but situated close to Engelendaal (Leiderdorp's main road).

Buses are the only form of public transport in Leiderdorp. Bus timetables can be found at the bus stops. Most buses travel via Leiden Centraal Bus and Train station. From here it is possible to catch the train to Amsterdam or The Hague (and other destinations). Leiderdorp is quite spread out and as such, even if you live in this town, this does not mean you will necessarily be able to come to school on foot, though cycling is a good solution.

## **Oegstgeest**

Oegstgeest is a quaint town neighbouring the city of Leiden. It covers an area of 7.75 km<sup>2</sup> and has 22,903 inhabitants (in 2014). 11 percent of that population being expatriates! Its charm is a blend of architectures dating back to the early 1900's to the newer estates of Poelgeest (2000) and Nieuw Rhijngest being established in 2006.

The Kempenaerstraat and the Lange Voort shopping areas offer a diversity of shopping possibilities fit to cater to more than an individual's daily needs.

Playgrounds are in abundance and there are numerous recreational activities offered in Oegstgeest (e.g. swimming, football and hockey). The Rijnlands Lyceum offers an International Secondary School possibility and is located in the town of Oegsteest.

### Website of interest

[www.oegstgeest.nl](http://www.oegstgeest.nl)

Provides council information in Dutch

Gemeentegids (click on digitale gemeentegids)

This is a guide to what official services are offered in Oegstgeest and where to find them. E.g. list of doctors, dentists, toddler playschools (SKO), real-estate agents (Makelaars) and sporting activities offered.

Oegstgeest allows quick access to the A44 (Den Haag - Amsterdam) and is approximately a 20-minute drive away from Elckerlyc International School depending on traffic.

## Warmond

Warmond is a village north of Leiden, next to the larger town of Oegstgeest. The municipality covers an area of 14.42 km<sup>2</sup> (5.57 mile<sup>2</sup>) of which 4.42 km<sup>2</sup> (1.71 mile<sup>2</sup>) is water! It has a population of around 5000 and is less populated by expatriates than the neighbouring Oegstgeest probably owing to slightly higher house prices and less rental options. Together with Sassenheim and Voorhout, it became part of the Teylingen municipality on January 1, 2006. Warmond is located in an area called the "Dune and Bulb Region" (Duin- en Bollenstreek). Warmond is quite touristy and has a very quaint cobbled high street with many shops, restaurants (including the Moerbeij which has a Michelin star!), and a supermarket Albert Heijn which is one of the few to open on a Sunday.

Parking in Warmond is difficult but it is a haven for bikes and boats! Every year in September there is a Boat festival and the biggest attraction of the town for visitors and residents is the Koudenhooft recreational area with "dog-free" grassy areas, ferry boat (small!!) enabling visitors to walk on the polders, a small beach with sectioned off swimming area, a play park and a café which miraculously opens when it knows people will be there!

Schooling and daycare is in Dutch only. The town has all the facilities that one needs.

Transport (to and from school & Leiden/The Hague) is possible by bus and the journey by car to Leiden is 10 min / school is 20 min.....on a good day!

## Voorschoten

Voorschoten is a town to the South West of Leiden with a population of approximately 24,978 (2014). The town has quite a large expatriate population mainly owing to the British School which has its senior section here. The town has all the facilities needed and is well located between Leiden and The Hague. The "old" centre of the town is typically Dutch and atmospheric (especially during the annual Horse Show held in August!).

The town has a train station (2 stops from Leiden), 3 supermarkets, a couple of banks, DIY shop, post office, chemists, clothes shops, cheese shop, 2 butchers, hairdressers, toy shops plus several restaurants if you like to eat out. The town also has several events in the year: The Weekend Of Voorschoten, Old Timers Day, Jazz weekends, plus antique markets, and geranium markets etc. It is also close to the A44 and A4 motorway, allowing good and easy access to Amsterdam/Den Haag etc. It is half an hour's drive or train journey to Schiphol airport, and approximately 40 min train journey to Amsterdam.

A selling point of the town is the large recreational area called "Vlietland" ([www.recreatiegebiedvlietland.nl](http://www.recreatiegebiedvlietland.nl)) where you can cycle, walk, go boating, swimming, laze on one of the small beaches and more! Basically a great place to come for the day.....unfortunately it is not just the local residents that know about it!

There are only a handful of Elckerlyc families that live in this town and although it is quite near to the school, "as the crow flies", the route to school is often congested and there are a few bridges that open (even during rush hour!) to allow boats to pass under which can add a whole ten minutes to your travel time. Travel time is thus between 25 and 45 minutes to school. Leiden is closer and is easy by bike and bus.

For more information (in Dutch) [www.voorschoten.nl](http://www.voorschoten.nl)

## **Voorhout**

Voorhout is a small town with a population of around 18,000 people. There are a few ex-pats here but are mainly Dutch residents. Voorhout is surrounded by bulb fields and looks spectacular in the spring. There is also a flower festival that passes through Voorhout every April. This attracts a lot of tourists and roads are closed most of the day. It is approximately 12 km from Elckerlyc school in Leiderdorp and by car, on a good day, you can be there in 20 minutes. On a bad day, it can take up to 45 minutes (this is rare). There are no direct links by bus, or train to Leiderdorp. It would mean, going into Leiden and catching a bus that drops you off 5 min from school.

There are good transport links in Voorhout. There is a train station and Voorhout is next to the A44 motorway, which takes you either in the direction of Amsterdam or to The Hague. Amsterdam is approx 33km and The Hague is approx 20km. Leiden is 7km. Trains run every 30 minutes into Leiden. Voorhout is also only 3km from the seaside resort of Noordwijk.

Although, not a vast amount of shops, there is everything you need. There are hairdressers, 3 supermarkets, post office, wine shops, clothes shops, banks, newsagents (which sell English books but no English newspapers), chemists, DIY shop, furniture shop, cheese shop, butchers and a few other shops. There are also restaurants, which serve good food and are very child friendly. There is also a pizza delivery shop. There is a large car park at the train station, which is free and you can also park in the supermarket car parks (although this is limited to 2 hours in some). There is plenty of street parking.

The rental market is comparative to the other areas around Voorhout, ie. Sassenheim, Leiden, Warmond etc. but buying a house in Voorhout, can be quite expensive. There are no run-down areas in Voorhout and the town is in a catchment area, where you pay that bit more for a house.

There are plenty of play areas for the children. There are several little parks amongst the estates and they tend to be very safe. There are often signs up that warn drivers that it is the childrens and cyclists right of way. As most of the residents in Voorhout are Dutch, most children tend to pick the language up very easily as they socialise with the Dutch children. There are Dutch primary and secondary schools in Voorhout but more information could be gained from the local gemeente.

## **Rijnsburg**

Rijnsburg is part of the municipality of Katwijk and is especially known for its flower distribution and auction centers. Rijnsburg covers an area of just over 6 square kilometers, with a population of approximately 15,000 inhabitants. It is located near both the A44 and the N206. Only minutes from the beaches of Katwijk and minutes from Leiden, Rijnsburg is very well located and is approximately 15-20 minutes to the school (depending upon traffic).

Rijnsburg is easily accessed by bus but lacks a train station. The housing market is growing in Rijnsburg, with a lot of new construction taking place in the area. The market is quite stable as the prices tend to be less than the surrounding areas of Oegstgeest and Wassenaar. Rentals are limited but there is a good chance that if you find one, it will be located on a canal as there are several in this small village.

There are plenty of places to play and parking is free throughout the village. There is a limited expat population, therefore, the vast majority of the children living in Rijnsburg speak Dutch and limited English. The village has plenty of shopping options, a few cafes, a nice library, and beautiful churches.

## **Wassenaar**

If you are in need of hearing your home language, you're sure to hear it in Wassenaar. Wassenaar is situated to the north of The Hague / Scheveningen and to the south west of Leiden. It is known as one of the most beautiful villages of the Dutch North Sea shore area and is home to a large expat community

from all parts of the world.

Wassenaar has approx. 26.000 inhabitants, 3.400 inhabitants have a different nationality than the Dutch. International day care in English is available as well as the American School of The Hague. Although Dutch, banks, shops and services are expat orientated and there is no problem getting along in English. In Wassenaar you will find shops with books and magazines in English and one of the local supermarkets holds British and American products.

The coastline of Wassenaar is over 8 kilometres long and covers an area over 60 square kilometre with lovely cafes and play areas for the children. For the adventurous types the "Duinrell" adventure park is just around the corner from the centre of the village or if preferred, take a bike through the dunes, wooded areas, estates and residences. The town has a green and rustic character and hardly has any industry.

Wassenaar has good access to the A44 (Den Haag - Amsterdam) and is 12km from the school however takes between 20 to 30 minutes to drive to school depending on traffic.

The website for Wassenaar also offers information in English, German and Spanish: [www.wassenaar.nl](http://www.wassenaar.nl)

## TRAVELING TO AND FROM SCHOOL AND PARKING!

Parking in and around the school can be difficult. The school is in a residential area. The school has copies of a map with the best/closest areas to park and these may be obtained from the office. We have also attached a copy at the back of this information pack. Plan to arrive at school at around 8.15 which gives you time to park sensibly and have time to walk calmly to school (plus your place should be that bit nearer!) The parking spaces outside the school, in the lay-by, are just for "dropping off", your car should not be left in this zone unattended (unless outside usual drop off/collect times). Needless to say it is imperative for the good of the school that we ALL make an effort to be respectful to the local residents by parking in designated parking spaces. Please do not park in the parking lot next to the school.

The nearest bus stop is about 100 meters away from the school (mainly useful for residents of Leiden/Leiderdorp)

As with many places in Holland, it is often quicker to come by bike to school as you can park just in front and can follow the cycle paths which are much shorter than the roads! Even with three children this is possible as Holland has many ways of equipping ones bike for extra passengers! [www.bakfiets.nl](http://www.bakfiets.nl), [www.followme-tandem.com](http://www.followme-tandem.com) and [www.aanhangfiets.nl](http://www.aanhangfiets.nl)

## NATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND MAIN FESTIVITIES

### NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

January 1	New Year's Day
March/April	Good Friday
March/April	Easter Sunday
March/April	Easter Monday
April 30	Koninginnedag (Queen's Day)
May	Hemelvaartsdag (Ascension Day)
May 5	Bevrijdingsdag (Liberation day)
May	Pinksteren
May	Pinkster Monday (Whit Monday)
October 3 Leiden) ****	Leiden Onzet (end of siege of
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26	Boxing Day (Tweede Kerstdag)

### MAIN FESTIVITIES February Beginning of Carnival

February	Valentine's Day
May	Mother's Day (1st Sunday after the 1st Monday after May 1st)
May 4	Dodenherdenking (Remembrance Day)
June	Father's Day
September	Prinsjesdag (Opening of parliament; third Tuesday of this month)
October 4	Dierendag (National Animal Day)
October	Halloween
November 11	St. Maarten
December 5	Pakjesavond
December 6	Sinterklaas (St. Nicolas' birthday)

\*\*\*\* - Applies only to Leiden

## TYPICAL DUTCH FESTIVITIES

### Carnival – February

Carnival: the Dutch either love or hate it. Those who live below the rivers (Noord Brabant and Limburg) love it and celebrate it with passion. Virtually all businesses close in a three-day celebration of life, spring, beer and friendship. Dutch carnival has the same origins as Carnival in Rio de Janeiro: the period of excess preceding the period of self deprivation of Lent, and is about as wild... People get dressed up and go from café to café, singing songs, participating in parades and consuming large quantities of beer. There is no need to be afraid of this being a local festivity at which strangers are not accepted: strangers are accepted, and it is a great way to meet some new people. Breda, Den Bosch and Maastricht are three major venues.

### King's Day: April 30

The Dutch are extremely fond of their Queen. Throughout history, the Dutch Royal family has been very popular and their birthdays have been celebrated with enthusiasm. As of 1898, Queen Wilhelmina's 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, the holiday has been officially referred to as (literally Queen's Day). Actually, April 30 is not Queen Beatrix' birthday, but her mother's, Princess Juliana. Queen's Beatrix' own birthday is in January, which is too cold a month for outdoor festivities. You can celebrate the Queen's Birthday either by visiting one of the two annually chosen towns or cities that the Queen visits on this day – and witness some true old fashioned entertainment – or you can visit some of the bigger cities. Amsterdam, in particular goes out on this day, with a *vrijmarkt*, a free market. People fill the streets in the centre of the city with stands run age 5 – 105, selling everything you can think of! The Vondelpark is reserved to mostly children who either sell toys etc. or perform songs or music. People from all over the world come to Amsterdam to enjoy the special atmosphere. Leiden and the surrounding towns have their own events (music, markets, etc.) on this day and/or on the 5<sup>th</sup> May (see below)

### Liberation Day: May 5th

On May 5 the Dutch celebrate the end of World War II. May 4, Remembrance Day 08.00 p.m., and May 5 (Liberation Day) have changed focus in the past years, as it is over 50 years ago that Holland was liberated from the German regime. These days, the celebrations focus on tolerance and anti-racism. On Liberation Day many street markets are held in the main cities, just as on King's Day.

### Drie Oktober: October 3:

Marks the liberation of Leiden on 2 and 3 October 1574 from Spain. There is a huge carnival in Leiden, live music, and lots of food! Two meals can be eaten during this time: *hutspot*, which is mashed potatoes, carrots and onions. The second meal is *haring en witte brood*, which is herring and white bread.

### St. Maarten: November 11

The feast of St. Martin. It is not celebrated in all areas of the Netherlands but if it is children go door to door with a lantern singing Sint-Maarten songs and are given sweets or fruit.

### Pakjesavond / Sinterklaas: December 5 and 6

December 6<sup>th</sup> is St. Nicholas' birthday, when according to legend, this 4th-century Saint gave gifts of gold to 3 poor girls for their dowries, a tradition the Netherlands emulates. Through the centuries, Sinterklaas has been considered the patron saint of children, as well as traders. Consequently, on December 5<sup>th</sup>, the evening before his birthday, he brings them gifts that are surreptitiously dropped off in a sack on the

doorstep of each household. During the evening, families exchange gifts, normally hidden somewhere or in something as a “surprise”, and traditionally drink hot chocolate and eat banketstaaf, a pastry made of marzipan and almond paste.

Not only a holiday for children, grown-ups also like to participate in the fun by means of a gift (sometimes serious, often silly) with an accompanying poem to make fun of each other. Bear in mind that the Dutch love to tease .....the more they make fun of you, the more they like you!

The Dutch celebrate the arrival of Sinterklaas in the Netherlands on the 3 weekend in November. He arrives in a Dutch city with his steamboat and dozens of helpers, called Zwarte Pieten. One week later (normally on a Sunday), Sinterklaas arrives in the Amsterdam port and his entrance in the city is celebrated with a big parade throughout the centre.

We are really lucky here at the Elckerlyc as Sintaklaas visits us every year (often by bike rather than horse!) and he is welcomed by a chorus of song..in return his team of Zwarte Pieten distribute “pepernoten” and sweets and sometimes even climb on the roof!

### **Christmas Day & New Year’s Eve**

Christmas Day itself is normally reserved for religious observances, family get-togethers and dinner parties. Likewise, the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve signals that it’s time to pay a quick visit to your neighbours with good wishes for the coming year. A lot of people buy fireworks to start the New Year with a BANG!! New Year’s Day is a quiet continuation of the same.

### **Dutch Announcements!**

If you see strange things hanging in windows do not be surprised. The Dutch traditionally advertise certain family events. For example: when students finish High School they receive their diploma and celebrate. Parents let the neighbours know their child has passed by flying the Dutch flag and dangling the child’s school bag out of the window. If there is no flag or bag, it’s not good news! You may even see an enormous stork sitting in someone’s garden who has just delivered a new born baby, of course!

## **SPORTING EVENTS**

Holland is an excellent country for biking, it has an expended bike path system (the new knooppunt system is very user friendly and you do not even need to take a map along with you). These paths are also perfect for skeelering or roller- skating. Walking trails are also in abundance. The number of waterways, lakes and canals ensure the popularity of all kinds of water sports: sailing, motor-boating, canoeing, rowing, windsurfing, swimming and -in winter when it’s freezing- skating.

Sports are very important in Holland, especially soccer. Every major city has its own team: Ajax (Amsterdam), PSV (Eindhoven) and Feyenoord (Rotterdam) have gained international fame. Dutch society virtually shuts down during World Cup events, while the population literally paint themselves and their surroundings orange (the colour of the Royal House) when The Netherlands are playing. All towns have an extensive array of sports clubs and sporting activities on offer.

Another favourite sport is skating. During a cold winter, all Dutch people will go crazy. That is because during a really cold winter, everyone looks forward to the Elfstedentocht; that is, if it takes place. The Elfstedentocht, an 11-city marathon on ice, covers a course of almost 200 kilometres. From town to town huge numbers of spectators brave the cold to cheer the thousands of skaters. Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, has always been the start and finish. For the 11-city marathon to actually happen, the ice needs to be at least 15 centimetres thick, covering virtually the whole route! From 1909 this has only happened 15 times. The last Elfstedentocht took place in 1997.

Most years the small canals/waterways/lakes freeze at some point creating a magical atmosphere wherever you go. It really feels like everyone is out on the ice walking, sliding, skating, playing football, even attempting to cycle!

## DUTCH CUSTOMS AND BIRTHDAY TRADITIONS

Even when it is nobody's birthday, you are still confronted with birthdays every day! Most Dutch people display a birthday calendar in the bathroom, so as not to forget anyone's birthday.

Remembering someone's birthday is very much appreciated, so do send a card or call! The invitation to a birthday party is usually for 'coffee'; later on drinks are served. When visiting a Dutch friend at home, it is customary to take a bunch of flowers (quite inexpensive in Holland) or some candy. A bottle of wine is also appreciated. It is not a custom to open the bottle right away (as they do in some countries)

In general the Dutch do not feel comfortable with people dropping in unannounced, not even on a birthday! Shortly after arrival you will also notice that the Dutch congratulate not just the Birthday boy/girl but also all members of the family, friends, neighbours – basically anyone who happens to be in the room! This is very different to many other countries cultures so do not be taken aback or embark on lengthy explanations when your new neighbour kisses you and says “gefeliciteerd” even when it just your child's birthday.

Birthdays are a big event at school and in other childcare establishments and the lovely tradition of “tracteren” (taking a small gift for all your fellow classmates/playmates or a cake to share amongst colleagues) is strictly adhered to and it is often the actual wrapping that is more important than the gift itself. In Holland, on a child's birthday they really are “King/Queen for a day”!

## DUTCH CUISINE

Appelgebak	Dutch apple pie.
Appelmoes	Apple puree. No children's meal is complete without apple mash on the side!
Drop or dropjes Liquorice.	The Dutch love liquorice and it comes in all shapes, sizes and flavours.
Erwtensoepp	Thick pea soup with lumps of ham and vegetable.
Haring	Raw herring served with raw onions.
Hutspot	Mashed potato with onions, carrots, meat and gravy. Eaten usually in winter.
Kaassoufflé	Fried pancake filled with creamy cheese.
Kroket	Potato and meat (origin unknown) croquette, which can be spread on bread.
Oliebollen	oval shaped doughnuts with raisons served warm with powdered sugar (December). Truly scrumptious!
Stamppot	Mashed potato with cooked vegetables, meat or fruit.
Steak tartaartje	Raw minced meat. Again, can be used as a sandwich filler.
Uitsmijter	Usually a cheese and ham open sandwich with semi-fried eggs on top.

## PEOPLE & CULTURE: GETTING TO KNOW THE DUTCH

Dutch culture may be totally different from your own, so it may be wise to read something about Dutch culture before you arrive in The Netherlands. The experience of cultural differences can be strange, but also enriching. Here is a small account of what to expect.

### Introducing yourself

One of the first things that you will notice is that people do not always introduce themselves very well. On the other hand, it is generally appreciated if you take the initiative to introduce yourself. This may be different when you meet someone who is older or in some way senior to yourself. In this case, it is polite to wait until the other approaches you.

### The three times kissing ritual

When you meet a person whom you do not know that well, you can just shake hands, and next time a simple 'goeiedag' or 'hallo' will do. But for good friends and family, there is the kissing-ritual. Ladies first give each other three kisses on the cheek (right-left-right). Then the men follow, kissing a lady three times on the cheek and shaking hands with the men. The same ritual starts all over again when you leave. However, beware that not everyone likes to be kissed. When in doubt, don't!

### Talking and social space

The Dutch have a very direct manner of speaking, especially when expressing their opinions. Also, they tend to talk with very short pauses, so that you hardly have time to interrupt. This can sound very rude when you are not used to it. You will also notice that Dutch people have a tendency to stand rather close to each other when standing in line. When this makes you feel uncomfortable, just keep in mind that many Dutch people don't appreciate this either. On the other hand, their personal social space is much wider and less intimate. Dutch people are rather reserved at first about their private life. But, once you get to know them better and they do discuss their personal lives, there are not many non-discussable subjects.

### Phone calls

In the Netherlands it is considered rude not to say your name when answering the phone, or when making a phone call.

### Social Visits Appointments

Amongst students it may be normal to drop by unannounced, Dutch people in general do not like unexpected visits. Beware that they may want time to prepare themselves for the occasion. When you want to visit them at home, it may be a good idea not drop by just like that, but to call first. You will notice that Dutch people, including students, use their "agendas" (diaries) quite a lot. In general it is not necessary to re-confirm appointments. Moreover, as long as you haven't cancelled, Dutch people will assume that the appointment still stands, even if it was made long ago. So, they will expect your visit at the time and date agreed.

### Wait to be served

When you visit them at their homes, it is polite to wait to be served. After the first serving, they will probably encourage you to help yourself, and then it is OK to do so, but it may not be appreciated if you are too forward. Even most of the time at parties like birthdays, it is customary that the host serves the guests. So, when Dutch people visit you, do not forget to offer a second round of drinks, because they may not help themselves.

## Gifts

When you come for a visit at someone's house it is appreciated if you bring a gift, e.g. wine, flowers or chocolates. This is also appreciated on other occasions such as parties and birthdays. Gifts are generally small and not lavish, except for family or good friends. The receiver opens the gift immediately.

## Gezellig& Gezelligheid

A typical Dutch word indicating a warm atmosphere is the word "gezellig". Translating the Dutch words gezellig en gezelligheid could be done with the words 'cosy' and 'cosiness'. But the meaning is more intense than the word 'cosy' rd refers to a warm and amicable atmosphere in which everybody is cheerful and happy.

## The Consensus "Poldermodel"

Dutch people like to agree with each other. They dislike radical standpoints and usually try to see the other person's position. They are always looking for a solution which pleases everyone. Likewise, a consensus model called the Poldermodel characterises Dutch politics. This is the Dutch system in which the employers, the unions and the government sit around the table to come to labour agreements.

This consensus model has characterised Dutch society for many centuries. The origin of this is their struggle against water, which goes back to the Middle Ages. The time in which farmers, noble men, cities and other citizens had to co-operate in order to build dykes in the fight against water. The only way to do this was to work together whatever rank and wealth.

# TIPPING GUIDELINES IN HOLLAND

Tipping is not necessary in Holland, but in a café or pub rounding up the bill or leaving some change is appreciated. Tipping guidelines are different than the North American standard of 15%. If you are just having coffee or a beer, round up. If the service wasn't good ... don't tip. Waiters don't live by their tips here. ☺

The Dutch government requires that all taxes and service charges be included in the published prices of hotels, restaurants, cafes, discos, nightclubs, beauty/barbershops, and sightseeing companies. Even taxi fare includes taxes and a standard 15% tip. To be absolutely sure in a restaurant, for example, that tax and service are included, look for the words 'inclusief BTW en service' (BTW is the abbreviation for the Dutch words that mean value-added tax) or ask. The Dutch are so accustomed to having these charges included that many restaurants have stopped spelling it out. A service charge is also generally included in taxi fares, but it is usual to round the total up to the nearest Euro plus 10% for extra good service. Porters, doormen and room service in Amsterdam hotels will expect a small tip for their services.

**SUMMARY:** To tip as the Dutch do, leave any small change up to the next euro in a cafe or snack bar; in a restaurant, leave up to the next 5 euro or more if you think the service was particularly good... If service wasn't good, don't tip at all!

# TRAFFIC SAFETY

## Cars

In the Netherlands, children shorter than 1.35 meter must be in a child seat with the seat belt. On the market, three different seat types can be found, according to the weight and/or age of the child. Babies up

to 12 months and/or 0 to 13kg require a baby car seat (sometimes called groep 0+) . Toddlers (peuters) between 9 months and 3.5 years and/or 9 to 18kg require the next size (groep 1). This is an upright car seat that is attached to the car using the car's seatbelt; the seat has its own restraints for the child.

Children (kleuters +) between 3.5 and 12 years and/or 15 to 36kg require the next size child seat (groups 2 and 3). This is another upright car seat, but you use the car's seatbelt to secure your child. It has special slots for the seatbelt to go through, so the seatbelt does not go across your child's neck. You can also use a booster seat, BUT you must make sure that the seatbelt does not cross your child's neck, but goes across their shoulders (you can buy specific clips for this). Take note, the website says that clips can only be used for children heavier than 36kg, and that the lower part of the seatbelt must rest across your child's hips and not their tummy. Please see their website [www.kinderzitjes.nl](http://www.kinderzitjes.nl) for further information. It is in Dutch, but does have pictures that will also be helpful. (March 2006 newsletter)

Children taller than 1.35 meters do not need a child seat of any kind, but the rules for positioning of seatbelt (as above) still apply. You can go to shops like Halfords and Prenatal for advice.

If you have an airbag in the front passenger side of car: it is forbidden to put a baby car seat there, unless you have the option of turning the air bag off. For children under 12, it is strongly advised that they also do not sit at the front. The impact of the airbag on young children has been known to cause some harm in certain circumstances. If there is nowhere else for your child to sit, and you cannot disable the air-bag function, then it is recommended that you move that car seat as far back as possible from the dashboard.

## **Bicycles (fietsen)**

It is not obligatory to wear a helmet on a bike and the majority of cyclists don't however it is strongly recommended particularly for children. There are strict rules relating to lights on bikes and for those cycling without lights or inefficient lighting there is a potential €20 fine. Lights must be white or yellow at the front and red at the back. They must be visible (not covered by bags, clothes, etc.) pointing forwards and not flashing. It is recommended to have extra lighting on clothing. You should also have reflectors at the front, the back and surrounding the wheels (white stripe on the tyres). Lights should be used when visibility is poor not JUST when it is dark. You should always cycle on the "fietspad" (cycle path) sometimes separate, sometimes in red along the road. And needless to say get yourself a good strong lock with which you can lock your bike to something fixed and solid in addition to using the integrated bike lock that encircles the wheel. Bike theft in The Netherlands is rife!

## **Scooters (brummers/snoorfiets)**

Scooters are in two categories: smaller ones known as "snoorfiets" which must go on the "fietspad" (cycle path) and are limited to a maximum speed of 25 km/h. It is not necessary, though it is recommended, to wear a helmet. This speed is not always respected and care should be taken when cycling with children even when on a separate cycle path for this reason. The larger type "bromfietsen" (brummers) are generally not allowed on the cycle paths. A helmet is necessary on a brummer at all times. The max speed is 45km/h (occasionally a blue sign indicates that even "brummers" should ride on the "fietspad" and in this case the max speed is 30 km/h!)

## HEALTH IN HOLLAND

### Huisarts (Family Doctor/General Practitioner - GP)

If you feel unwell, you should consult the Huisarts. A huisarts is a doctor you choose and register with and to whom you go first when you are ill. You visit your GP first with all questions and complaints you may have regarding physical and mental health and sickness. You are required to be registered with a GP. If they have a large number of people on their books they may not accept you as a patient. You must just keep trying different practices until you find one! The great majority of medical and hospital staff speak English, so language is usually not a problem. The GP will provide medical advice and prescribe medication as necessary. He/she also plays a proactive role in deciding whether it is necessary to visit a specialist or not. To see a specialist you must get a referral from your GP in order to gain access and also in some cases to ensure the refund of expenses. Some hospitals have special agreements for expatriates (set up in an attempt to facilitate direct access to specialists, something which is common in many other countries and which can lead to frustration in The Netherlands and among expatriates). At present these are: The International Health Centre in Scheveningen (multi-lingual) and the EXPAT paediatric clinic at Bronovo in The Hague.

### Emergencies outside office hours

If you need to see a doctor outside office hours, phone your GP. On the answering machine you will hear options of who you can call. Since January 2007, emergency care outside the working hours is combined with the emergency help (first aid) of Alrijne Ziekenhuis (Rijnland Hospital) in Leiderdorp and LUMC in Leiden, collectively called: spoedposten Zuid Holland Noord (emergency posts of South Holland North). The telephone number of the latter is: 0900 513 8039, or you can visit [www.shrnet.nl](http://www.shrnet.nl).

### Health specific to children

The consultatiebureau (<4) and the schoolgezondheidszorg (4 – 19) together form the jeugdgezondheidszorg (Childrens Healthcare).

Consultatiebureau: This is responsible for providing routine healthcare and checking the development of your child from birth until she/he starts primary school at the age of 4. When you have registered with the Gemeente (Town Hall/City hall) in the town where you are living, you will automatically be contacted by them. You will also be requested to provide information regarding your child's previous vaccinations.

School-Gezondheidszorg: From the age of 4 to 19, checking the development of your child becomes the responsibility of the school gezondheidszorg. From the first visit, a book will be given to you containing information on health and development. This book will also contain appointment details at the clinic along with weight and measurements at each visit. There's room for you to make a note of when your baby has reached certain milestones in his/her development. This book is also available in English and is called Het Groeiboek or Growth Book (information may be found in [www.groeigids.nl](http://www.groeigids.nl))

Contact your local gemeente for Health care facilities in your town.

### Hospitals

There are three main hospitals in the area. The Alrijne Ziekenhuis (hospital) is visible from Elckerlyc across the roundabout on Persant Snoepweg. There are Huisarts (General Practitioner) surgeries within and just behind the hospital, and most medical specialities are also available. The LUMC (Leiden University Medical Centre) is situated behind Leiden Centraal Railway Station. The Diaconessen Huis on the border of Leiden and Oegstgeest. All three hospitals have an A&E (accident and emergency department).

## Dentists

A dental practitioner can be found by looking in the Telefoongids (Yellow Pages) under “Tandarts”. As with the Huisarts you might have to ring around before you find one who will accept you as a patient.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN

### Day Care / Nursery (also called “Kinderdagverblijf” or “Opvang”)

Kinderdagverblijf or Opvang as it is sometimes called is day care for children from 6 weeks to 4 years old. Day care means the children are cared for in a nursery atmosphere where they eat, drink, rest, play and have nappy changes and are supervised by group leaders who have taken a 2-year professional child care course. Day care does not normally include any educational programme other than potty training. Children maybe in vertical groups i.e. 0-2 years or 3-4 years old or in horizontal groups i.e. 0-4 years old. Dutch law limits the number in every kinderdagverblijf, and requires one group leader on duty per 5 children. Normally groups are 10 to 12 children and 2/3 group leaders. Kinderdagverblijf/Opvang times tend to be from 07.30am to 18.00pm, with one snack morning and afternoon and one lunch meal i.e. a sandwich (hot meals are not normally provided). Kinderdagverblijf/opvangs can be either owned privately or run by SKON (an organization Holland wide that regulates opvangs). Please see page 19 for Day care Services by town.

Day care is either paid for by parents or subsidised by an employer and some day care centres specialize in both or one of these groups. Working parents who privately pay for day care can claim back some of this cost as tax relief, but only if both parents are working.

Privately owned opvang can set their own pricing, however, most conform to the Dutch legal regulations and pricing is similar countrywide. The table below will give you an indication of pricing. Please note that many opvang require a parent to purchase a minimum of 1 1/2 day's day care.

### After School Care (“naschoolse opvang”)

This is provided by some care centres, but is often an independent day care facility. Care is provided after school hours until 6.00 p.m. in most sites. After School Care is open and available during the yearly school holidays (but prices may be higher than during school periods).

### Childminders/Host Parents (“Gastouders”)

These are private persons who offer day care or after school care in their own homes for up to 4 children as well as their own children, (more than 4 children means an opvang license is required). Under Dutch law Gastouders are affiliated with a Gastouder Bureau and have been validated as not having a criminal record, and parents can claim tax relief for such care. Gastouders can set themselves up without belonging to any organisation however parents must then realise that there is neither police check nor tax relief available. There is normally an organisation in each area which manages Gastouders locally. Telephone your Gemeentehuis for their number and name.

## Play School (“Peuterspeelzaal”)

This is a pre-school type environment for children from 2,5 – 4 years old. The emphasis is on play not education although children will learn through educative games and crafts. The day after the child turns 4 they start school.

Day care services in Holland do not meet the demand and unfortunately long waiting lists of up to one year or more greet the parents phoning for a place. A phone call to one of the local town SKO's will put provide you with details and places and put you on a waiting list. This is worth doing even before you know exactly where you are living although they do prefer to know your address in advance! Depending on which town you live in day care service may have a wait list.

## Playgroups (also known as parent/toddler groups)

(see page 24) A playgroup (the English term) is not a form of childcare (it has been mentioned in this section in order to stress this!). A “playgroup” is usually on a once a week basis in the morning for approximately two hours and is a place where a parent takes his/her child to play amongst other children of the same age (usually 0 – 4). It is an excellent means of meeting people (for kids and parents) who are in a similar situation but is not a form of childcare as a parent must be with the child at all times. There is usually a small fee of 3€ to 4€. Playgroups often organise social events outside “playgroup” hours.

## DAY CARE ESTABLISHMENTS IN AND AROUND LEIDEN

Please note that the following list is not exhaustive. In many towns there is one organisation (“SKO – Stichting Kinder Opvang” for example in Oegstgeest) which manages places in crèche/peuterspeelzaal for the whole town with regard to the state run facilities.

### LEIDEN

Teddy Kids Palace, daycare  
Address: Herenstraat 64, Leiden  
More Info: [www.teddykids.nl](http://www.teddykids.nl)

BSO 't Kasteel Roomburg  
Address: Van Vollenhovenkade  
20, 2313 GG LEIDEN  
More Info: [www.tkasteel.nl](http://www.tkasteel.nl)

BSO Basisbende Bakboord  
Address: Oppenheimstraat 8a,  
2313 JE LEIDEN  
More Info: [www.smallsteps.info](http://www.smallsteps.info)

KDV Peuterpalet  
Address: Oppenheimstraat 4-b,  
2313 JE LEIDEN  
More Info: [www.smallsteps.info](http://www.smallsteps.info)

KDV Flowerkids Madelief  
Address: Hoge Rijndijk 13, 2313  
KE LEIDEN  
More Info: [www.flowerkids.nl](http://www.flowerkids.nl)

KDV en BSO Konijn  
Address: Drie Octoberstraat 27,  
2313 ZM LEIDEN  
More Info: [www.smallsteps.info](http://www.smallsteps.info)

KDV Joepie, Turkoislaan  
Address: Turkoislaan 131,  
2332 RK LEIDEN  
More Info: call 071 -5730861  
[www.tomtiedom.nl](http://www.tomtiedom.nl)

### LEIDERDORP

VSO Haantje de Vroegste  
Address: Hoofdstraat 84, 2351 AM LEIDERDORP  
More Info: [www.kinderopvang-leiderdorp.nl](http://www.kinderopvang-leiderdorp.nl)

## OEGSTGEEST

SKO buitenschoolse opvang de Vogels  
Address: Jac. P. Thijsselaan 69, 2341 PM  
OEGSTGEEST  
www.sko-oegstgeest.nl

KDV Kindergarden Oegstgeest  
Address: Rhijngeesterstraatweg 40, 2341 BV  
OEGSTGEEST  
www.kindergarden.nl

SKO kindercentrum De Kindertuin  
Address: Jac. P. Thijsselaan 84-d, 2341 PD  
OEGSTGEEST  
www.sko-oegstgeest.nl

Gastouderbureau De Kinderkoffer  
Address: Lavendelhof I, 2343 CW OEGSTGEEST  
www.sko-oegstgeest.nl

## VOORSCHOTEN

KDV & BSO De Sterrenboom, day- and after-school care  
Address: van Beethovenlaan 10-b, 2253 BE  
VOORSCHOTEN  
www.kindex.nl

KDV & BSO De Hummelhof, day- and after- school care  
Address: Johan Willem Frisolaan 16, 2252 HG  
VOORSCHOTEN  
www.kindex.nl

KDVBSO Bibeledon, day- and after-school care  
Address: Aletta Jacobsplantsoen 101, 2253 RP  
VOORSCHOTEN  
www.kindex.nl

## WASSENAAR

TASID, The Activity Shop International Daycare (also preschool and after-school care)  
Address: Hallekensstraat 28a, Wassenaar 070 5146738  
www.tasid.nl

The Clown Club, daycare  
Address: Johan de Wittstraat 33, Wassenaar  
www.theclownclub.com

## USEFUL WEBSITES

www.homeinleiden.nl	JUST ONLINE for everything about living in and around the Leiden area. It includes many of the subjects covered in this pack, some in more detail. Highly recommended!
www.leiden.nl	Useful information about the city of Leiden
www.access.nl-org	Is a not-for-profit organization supporting the Expat community in the Netherlands. You can phone them for any subject and someone will try and help you.
www.xpat.nl	A very useful website giving good advice and information about living in The Netherlands
www.passionateparenting.nl	Organising workshops and seminars on a variety of subjects relating to raising children in general and also specific to expatriate life (Raising Bilingual Children, Nomad Families, etc.)
www.visitholland.nl	English edition of the Dutch VVV site.
www.goudengids.nl	The Dutch yellow pages.
www.kinderen.startpagina.nl	Kids guide in English.
www.britsoc.nl	News and information prepared by the British Society of Amsterdam

<a href="http://www.startpagina.nl">www.startpagina.nl</a>	Has an A-Z index to link you to everything. For instance: train timetables, yellow pages, and certain shops. It is in Dutch, but most of the things you will probably be able to understand.
<a href="http://www.sportfondsen.nl">www.sportfondsen.nl</a>	Gives you details of all swimming pools in the Netherlands together with facility details.
<a href="http://www.gifwijzer.nl">www.gifwijzer.nl</a> <a href="http://www.gifgevaar.nl">www.gifgevaar.nl</a>	Information relating to poison symbols on packaging, what to do in case of emergency etc. Poison/poisoning (gif/vergiftiging)
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk">www.bbc.co.uk</a>	Lots of fun and educational things to do for children.
<a href="http://www.vanstockum.nl">www.vanstockum.nl</a>	Online bookshop with English books
<a href="http://www.bol.com">www.bol.com</a>	The biggest online shop in the Netherlands with English books and much more.
<a href="http://www.museumkaart.nl">www.museumkaart.nl</a>	The museum card is a 35Euros pass which allow you to visit many museums in the Netherlands for free within 1 year.

## DUTCH NEWS IN ENGLISH

<a href="http://www.expatica.com/netherlands/">www.expatica.com/netherlands/</a>	Has information on just about everything
<a href="http://www.dnd.nl">www.dnd.nl</a>	Dutch news digest
<a href="http://www.dutchnews.nl">www.dutchnews.nl</a>	Dutch news (in English)
<a href="http://www.nu.nl">www.nu.nl</a>	Dutch news in Dutch (very good website for the people who are learning Dutch)

## TRAFFIC INFORMATION

<a href="http://www.anwb.nl">www.anwb.nl</a>	Traffic information
<a href="http://www.reiziger.connexion.nl/web/show">www.reiziger.connexion.nl/web/show</a>	Public transport information
<a href="http://www.knmi.nl">www.knmi.nl</a>	Weather information
<a href="http://www.weer.nl">www.weer.nl</a>	Weather information
<a href="http://www.ns.nl">www.ns.nl</a>	Train information. Often a good idea to apply for the discount (korting) Card (on site in English) as it gives you travel after 9.00 a.m on weekdays and all day weekends and national holidays for up to five people with a 40% discount. The cost of the card is often re-imbursed within a few trips.
<a href="http://www.9292.nl">www.9292.nl</a>	Complete route planner for public transport from “door to door” – in Dutch and English. Gives you all the options from A to B and cost.

## FINDING ACCOMODATION

<a href="http://www.funda.nl">www.funda.nl</a>
<a href="http://www.sublet.com">www.sublet.com</a>
<a href="http://www.pararius.nl">www.pararius.nl</a>
<a href="http://www.vijfsterrenleiden.nl">www.vijfsterrenleiden.nl</a>
<a href="http://www.expatriates.com">www.expatriates.com</a>
<a href="http://www.justlanded.com">www.justlanded.com</a>
<a href="http://www.directwonen.nl">www.directwonen.nl</a>

## USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Leiden area code 071 Free number 0800 Premium rate 0900 Emergency number for police, ambulance or fire 112 Dutch speaking clock 0900 8002 Local operator 0800 0101 International operator 0800 0410 Mobile phones will always start with 06 National directory enquiries 0900 8008 International directory enquiries 0900 8418 Postal information phone line 0800 0417 Central Medical service in Leiden area (Doctor available from 5 p.m to 8 a.m during the week and the whole week-end).

0900-5138039 (always call before you go) for more info: [www.shrnet.nl](http://www.shrnet.nl) Doktersdienst (Doctor available from 5 p.m to 8 a.m during the week and the whole week-end and national holidays). Only for : Hillegrim, Katwijk, Lisse, Noordwijk, Noordwijkerhout, Oegstgeest, Rijnsburg, Voorhout, Sassenheim, Valkenburg,

Warmond

0252-240212 (always call before you go) for more info: [www.dddb.nl](http://www.dddb.nl)

## USEFUL BOOKS & MAGAZINES

Kidsgids What to do with the kids in the Netherlands. This book is no longer published but copies may be left on some shelves! Here's Holland Very useful book with a lots of info about the Netherlands and what to visit and what to do.

The book is written with "residents" of Holland in mind as opposed to "tourists" Family Matters A brand new magazine for parents living in The Netherlands in English All ANWB maps & guides The ANWB (Dutch Motoring Organisation) often has shops next to the VVV (Dutch Tourist Offices) in towns selling outdoor clothes and an enormous selection of guides and maps for walking, biking, sailing and general travel brochures. They also provide a breakdown service and as a member you are entitled to a discount on your shop purchases

## SHOPPING

### General Opening Hours

Monday 12.00 - 18.00

Tuesday 09.00 - 18.00

Wednesday 09.00 - 18.00

Thursday 09.00 - 18.00 (late night, koopavond, till 21.00 Leiden)

Friday 09.00 - 18.00

Saturday 09.00 - 17.00

Sunday (12.00 -17.00 where open)

Most towns, even the smaller ones have one night in the week when they are open late. To check late night and Sunday opening hours [www.koopzondagen.net](http://www.koopzondagen.net)

Most supermarkets are open around 8.30 and close around 20.00

### A few tips for useful shops when you settle in at home and at school!

#### Home

[www.ikea.nl](http://www.ikea.nl)

There is a debate as to whether Haarlem or Delft is nearer! It depends heavily on traffic but one thing is certain the Delft Ikea is bigger and brighter!

[www.praxis.nl](http://www.praxis.nl) or [www.gamma.nl](http://www.gamma.nl) (look under "bouwmarkten" for opening times and stores)

[www.karwei.nl](http://www.karwei.nl)

These are the most common DIY/Hardware stores in the area

#### School

Gym Shoes: usually white, navy or black and often available before the beginning of term in Van Haren and Nelson shoe shops or year long in Piet Kerkhof [www.pietkerkhof.nl](http://www.pietkerkhof.nl)

Lunch Boxes/Drink Containers/Small school rucksacks: can be found before term time and throughout the year, albeit less of a selection, in Blokker, Intertoys and Bart Smit (toy shop)

This list is not exhaustive.

## Markets in and around Leiden

### Leiden

City-centre	Wednesday and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Merenwijk	Friday 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Stevenshof	Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Zuid/west	Tuesday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Leiderdorp	The market is on Thursdays from 8.00 a.m to 2.00 p.m in the Sandhorst area
Voorhout	A small market is held in the car park at the train station on Tuesdays and Fridays (Fridays tend to have the slightly larger market).
Oegstgeest	A market is held in the town every Tuesday from 9.00 a.m to 4.00 p.m on the large car park at the Lange Voort, Winkelcentrum.

## INTERNATIONAL PLAYGROUPS, AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES & BIRTHDAY PARTY VENUE IDEAS

### English Speaking Playgroups (parent-toddler)

Voorschoten	Tuesday 9:30 - 11:30 (Church hall of Moeder Gods church, Baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oeylaan 18)
Leiden	Wednesday 9:30 - 11:30 (Vogelwijk Speeltuin, Nachtegaallaan 25) <a href="http://www.vogelwijk.nl">www.vogelwijk.nl</a>
Voorhout	Wednesday 9:30 - 11:30 ("First Friends" De Spelwey, Breughelhof 8) <a href="http://www.firstfriendsvoorhout.blogspot.com">www.firstfriendsvoorhout.blogspot.com</a>
Wassenaar	Thursday 9:30 - 11:30 (Deylercentrum, Hofcampweg 3),

### After school activities - offered in English

Swimming.	All local swimming pools offer lessons.
Football	TOTAL FOOTBALL. Football for children with a qualified coach in Leiden. Currently on Friday afternoons at the Roodenburg football ground. Age: 4 onwards. Email: <a href="mailto:dpalmer@xs4all.nl">dpalmer@xs4all.nl</a> ABF, International Sports Club: Deylerweg 155, Wassenaar : Volunteer organisation ran on the weekends. Offers Football, baseball and basketball. Age 4 onwards. <a href="http://www.abfsport.nl">www.abfsport.nl</a>
Dancing	Dancers Studio Kerkstraat 75, Wassenaar. Email: <a href="mailto:wassenaardancersstudio@live.nl">wassenaardancersstudio@live.nl</a> / Tel: 0705115050
Scouting	Involves outside activities for girls and boys from ages 5 onwards. Scouting Netherland <a href="http://www.scouting.nl">www.scouting.nl</a> or <a href="http://www.scoutingnet.nl">www.scoutingnet.nl</a> Tel: 033-4960911

For more information please look at the website : <http://hollandsouth.angloinfo.com/af/323/holland-south-playgroups-and-after-school-activities.html> After school activities and courses in Dutch are also available at : [www.bplusc.nl](http://www.bplusc.nl)

Please note that we are also able to provide information on the following subjects by simple request to [parents.welcome@gmail.com](mailto:parents.welcome@gmail.com): Art, Dance schools, Language courses, Music Lessons, Orchestras and Choirs, Religious Institutions, Special needs, Sports and Theatre

## Birthday location ideas

Indoor Bubbeljungle : [www.bubbeljungle.nl](http://www.bubbeljungle.nl)  
Piraateiland : [www.piraateiland.nl](http://www.piraateiland.nl)  
Naturalis museum : [www.naturalis.nl](http://www.naturalis.nl)  
Bowling : [www.sportcity.nl](http://www.sportcity.nl)  
The Little gym: [www.thelittlegym-eu.com](http://www.thelittlegym-eu.com)  
Tikibad : [www.duinrell.nl](http://www.duinrell.nl)  
Sealife : [www.sealife.nl](http://www.sealife.nl)

### Outdoor

Leiden - Vogelwijk - outside park with a small hall to hire [www.vogelwijk.nl](http://www.vogelwijk.nl)  
Leiden - Speelchans - Park to hire - [natalie.maarten@tiscali.nl](mailto:natalie.maarten@tiscali.nl)  
Sassenheim - Speeltuin Bijdorp - Park to hire with a small hall- [info@bijdorp.org](mailto:info@bijdorp.org)  
Leiden (Merenwijk) – outside park with a small hall to hire [www.merendroom.nl](http://www.merendroom.nl)

For more information regarding park hire please refer to [www.peutern.nl](http://www.peutern.nl) or [www.homeinleiden.nl](http://www.homeinleiden.nl)

## TIPS FOR TRIPS

The Netherlands is just one big giant playground for kids and adults alike! It is impossible to list all of the activities, day-out ideas, national parks, zoos, etc. etc. We are therefore just giving you a taster of the ones that we, as Elckerlyc Parents, have tried and tested.....for more information check websites or visit local Tourist Offices (VVV)!

### Local Dunes

Walking, cycling, horse riding in the dunes around Noordwijk/Katwijk and Wassenaar followed by a picnic on the beach!

[www.staatsbosbeheer.nl](http://www.staatsbosbeheer.nl) A collection of 45 maps covering “natural areas” in The Netherlands. Number 22 is “Hollands Duin” and is for this area. Each map has walking trails (with distances and colour coded), cycle paths and bridal ways. Also indicates children’s play areas, picnic spots cafés and restaurants. Maps can be bought in VVV’s (Tourist Offices).

[www.wlb.amsterdam.nl](http://www.wlb.amsterdam.nl) private dune area where a small fee is charged to enter. Guided tours are possible on foot or by horse and cart! It is the largest dune area of The Netherlands and is approximately a half an hour drive from Leiden.

### Local Beaches

Most popular for Leiden residents are Noordwijk, Katwijk, Wassenaar, Noordwijkerhout and further afield Scheveningen & Kijkduin. All have numerous cafe/toilet facilities “on the beach” as well as restaurants on the promenade. Parking can be problematic and/or expensive. Going by bus or bike is best!

## Local Lakes and/or Recreational areas

Also for walking, cycling, boating, (sometimes swimming – check water quality information at the waterfront on arrival) or just chilling out with the kids in good weather:

[www.recreatiegebiedVlietland.nl](http://www.recreatiegebiedVlietland.nl) in Voorschoten

Koudenhorn Recreational area in Warmond

Klinckenbergerplatz Lake/Park in Oegstgeest

Valkenburgsemeer in Valkenburg (also Steam Train and Train Museum – [www.smalspoormuseum.nl](http://www.smalspoormuseum.nl) )

Waterspeeltuin, Kanaalweg, Leiden

## National Parks / City Parks / other “Netherlands Nature” & Educative)

[www.biesbosch.org](http://www.biesbosch.org) National Park De Biesbosch - near Rotterdam

[www.hogeveluwe.nl](http://www.hogeveluwe.nl) National Park De Hoge Veluwe – near Arnhem

[www.npdeweerrribben.nl](http://www.npdeweerrribben.nl) near the « must visit » village of Giethoorn (The Venice of the North)

[www.npz.nl](http://www.npz.nl) National Park Zuid-Kennemerland – near Zaandvoort/Haarlem

[www.vondelpark.nl](http://www.vondelpark.nl) – Amsterdam centre [www.amsterdamsebos.nl](http://www.amsterdamsebos.nl) – Amsterdam outskirts (near Amstelveen)

[www.neeltjehans.nl](http://www.neeltjehans.nl) in Zeeland. Delta works expo and associated child orientated activities.

[www.keukenhof.com](http://www.keukenhof.com) in Lisse. The infamous flower gardens March to May

[www.zaanseschans.nl](http://www.zaanseschans.nl) near Zaandam. Open air working museum – windmills, cheesemaking, clog making, etc.

[www.kinderdijk.nl](http://www.kinderdijk.nl) near Rotterdam. The biggest concentration of protected windmills in the country. They are all working and some can be visited on Saturdays in July.

Nice parks in The Hague are Clingendael (Japanese Garden and Borderij), Haagse Bos, De Nieuwe Scheveningse Bosjes, Scheveningse Bos, Zuiderpark (swimming pool, miniature train and more!)

## Zoos/Aquariums/Bird Parks

[www.artis.nl](http://www.artis.nl) - Amsterdam [www.apenheul.nl](http://www.apenheul.nl) – in Apeldoorn (monkeys!)

[www.diergaardeblijdorp.nl](http://www.diergaardeblijdorp.nl) – Rotterdam

[www.burgerszoo.nl](http://www.burgerszoo.nl) – in Arnhem

[www.dierenparkamersfoort.nl](http://www.dierenparkamersfoort.nl) – in Amersfoort

[www.beeksebergen.nl](http://www.beeksebergen.nl) – in Hivarenbeek

[www.dolfinarium.nl](http://www.dolfinarium.nl) – in Harderwijk (dolphins!)

[www.sealife.nl](http://www.sealife.nl) – in Scheveningen, Den Haag

[www.avifauna.nl](http://www.avifauna.nl) – in Alphen aan den Rijn near Leiden (possible to go there by boat from the centre of Leiden)

## Childrens Farms (Kinderboerderij)

Even in the middle of a block of apartments if there is a bit of grass there is either a playground or an area full of goats sheep and ducks or both! Here are a few of the most popular in and around Leiden.

[www.hetgeertje.nl](http://www.hetgeertje.nl) – in Zouterwoude. Lovely old fashioned farm where you can feed the baby goats. Very popular! Kinderborderij Wassenaar

Kinderborderij – in the Merenwijk area of Leiden

Kinderborderij – in the “De Houtkamp” park in Leiderdorp

De Leidse Hout – Deer/Peacocks and lovely thatched tea room with terrace and playground (border of Leiden Oegstgeest behind the Diaconessenhuis Hospital)

## Amusement / Family Parks

[www.efteling.com](http://www.efteling.com) The Netherland’s answer to Disneyland, near Tilburg [www.duinrell.nl](http://www.duinrell.nl) in Wassenaar, includes an excellent swimming pool complex “Tikibad” [www.drievliet.nl](http://www.drievliet.nl) in The Hague

[www.plaswijckpark.nl](http://www.plaswijckpark.nl) in Rotterdam [www.linneaoushof.nl](http://www.linneaoushof.nl) about a 30 minute drive from Leiden (for the younger ones ideal from 2 to 12 as all rides are mechanical, quiet and many even require “parent-pedal” power!) School trips often come here.

## Miscellaneous

[www.madurodam.nl](http://www.madurodam.nl) in The Hague – The Netherlands in miniature!

[www.archeon.nl](http://www.archeon.nl) in Alphen aan den Rijn. A historical theme park.

[www.naturalis.nl](http://www.naturalis.nl) in Leiden. National museum of national history (dinosaur models and fossils!)

[www.molenmuseumdevalk.nl](http://www.molenmuseumdevalk.nl) in Leiden. The big windmill in Leiden which can be visited daily.

[www.e-nemo.nl](http://www.e-nemo.nl) in Amsterdam. Science and Technology Museum in a boat shaped building with a terrace and fantastic view of the city!

[www.spaceexpo.nl](http://www.spaceexpo.nl) Permanent Space Exhibition in Noordwijk

## CONCLUSION

We hope that some of this information has been useful to you and look forward to meeting you one day at school!?

Parking area

