

SINGAPORE

**SHOPPING
SPECIAL**
FALL'S 24
ESSENTIAL
BAGS & SHOES

ELLE
15
YEARS

EXCLUSIVE!

**GUEST BEAUTY EDITOR
CLARENCE LEE**

*Insider tips & tricks
from S'pore's top
makeup artist*

NO SWEAT
LIE DOWN
& LOSE
WEIGHT

**GET YOUR FALL
FASHION FIX**

MUST-HAVE PANTS,
LUXE GRUNGE,
SEXY PASTELS,
THE STATEMENT
NECKLACE

198+
KEY FINDS FOR
RIGHT NOW!

**PRETTY
VS PLAIN**
WHO DOES
HE PREFER?
(You'll be surprised!)

**MARIAH
CAREY'S
PURSUIT OF
HAPPINESS**

**FASHION
FORWARD**



8 887457 031908 >

SEPTEMBER 2008 \$5.50 (INCL GST)



high on amsterdam

Kristina Foster gets excited about bikes, *bitterballen* and basking in the Dutch *gezellig*.

Brrring, brrrring, brrring. A man in a tuxedo and a girl in a ballgown ring the bells of their bicycles as they pedal to their formal evening engagement, their conversations carrying on undisturbed. The girl's dress flutters about her ankles; the guy's cigarette smoke trails behind them.

Bikes might not be the first image that pops up in one's mind at the mention of Amsterdam but a visit to the city will change that. After all, bicycles outnumber people — 20 million bikes, 16 million humans — in the flat-as-a-pool-table country of Netherlands. Amsterdam is known for its progressive social policy and

cutting-edge architecture, but it's the bikes that give it the relaxed yet refined vibe. Amsterdam worships the bicycle. There are separate bike paths on nearly every street. There are even bike-specific traffic lights to prevent you from careening into traffic.

Inspired, I rented a shiny red roadster and within moments, I was zooming around the city, elbow-to-elbow with a pack of Dutch cyclists, feeling a bit like a five-year-old. I hadn't ridden a bike in a while, and I'd forgotten the thrill of coasting along with the wind in my face. Standing on the pedals and leaning over the handlebars, I weaved back

and forth down the streets of this romantic canal city sometimes called the "Venice of the North".

Founded in the late 12th century, Amsterdam, once a small fishing village, is now the capital and the largest city in The Netherlands. Its name literally means "Amstel dam", referring to the city's origin: A dam on the river Amstel.

It's been said that Amsterdam was built on herring and beer. The flourishing beer industry (Heineken, Amstel, anyone?) may have achieved global commercial success but the humble herring has remained, exclusively, an important part of Amsterdam life. To sample the young



The scenic city.



The charming Dutch windmill.



The cafe scene at lunch time.



When in Amsterdam, cycle as the locals do.

fish — “maatjesharing” in Dutch — you hold it by its tail and lower it into your mouth. If this doesn’t sound like your cup of tea, try the Indonesian and Surinamese food — such are the spoils of colonialism — they do so well here. But one Dutch delicacy not to be missed is *bitterballen*, deep-fried meatballs covered with golden batter. These fried-up balls of sunshine are the ultimate comfort food. The fun is in cracking open the breaded shell, then sucking out the creamy meat-lava inside — perfect with a cold lager.

Despite its beer-guzzling culture, the overriding vibe in Amsterdam is its cosiness. Every cafe has a cute

little cat in the corner licking its paws. Every canal house blooms with a window box of tulips. There’s a Dutch word for their tyranny of cuteness — *gezellig*, which defies any literal translation. The locals embrace the concept in all aspects of their lives and carve out cosy, delightful moments anywhere they can find them. They bring their families on candlelit, night-time boat rides through the canals. They have group picnics on the canal banks. They chat with their friends at outdoor cafes as the sun sets. Now, if **only** I could find a way to pack all **that *gezellig*** into my suitcase and **take it back home...**





The cosy 717.

high on amsterdam

WHERE TO STAY 717

This seven-suite private guest house is a well-kept secret. It's an immaculate canal house filled with flowers, authentic antique furniture and discreet white glove service. www.717hotel.nl

THE DYLAN

With Anouska Hempel-designed interiors, this slick hotel boasts a concierge that can get you on the VIP list of the town's top clubs so that you can skip the long queues. www.dylanamsterdam.com

SOFITEL THE GRAND AMSTERDAM

Recently re-styled by renowned French designer Sybille de Margerie, this luxury hotel is a must-see. Steeped in history, this hotel was a convent in the 15th century, a royal inn in the 16th century, home of Dutch Admiralty in Holland's "Golden Age", and a city hall. The wedding of Queen Beatrix in 1966 was held here. These days, during the summer, you're likely to see a local celebrity sweeping by in a white wedding gown on her way to the beautiful 300-year-old nuptial chamber within the hotel. Book a suite with a canal view and a stand-alone bathtub. www.thegrand.nl



The hallway at 717.



Bicycles for guests at The Dylan.



Chic design at The Dylan.

WHERE TO SHOP

DE 9 STRAATJES (THE NINE STREETS)

One of the city's most delightful shopping areas, picturesque streets straddle the 17th century canals, from the Singel to the Prinsengracht. Spend a fabulous day wandering from one end to the next, exploring the designer boutiques, art galleries, jewellers and gift shops. There are plenty of great bars, cafes and restaurants to refresh you along the way. www.de9straatjes.com

BLUE BLOOD

A favourite among Amsterdam's beautiful people, the brand Blue Blood is a collaboration between two dashing Dutchmen, Jason Denham and Steve te Pas. Devotees love their attention to detail, amazing fabrics and vintage skills combined with innovative techniques. Be sure to pick up a pair of the bias-cut jeans that flatter your legs and derriere. www.bluebloodbrand.com

SPRMRKT

SPRMRKT is more than a concept fashion store. The art, accessories and unique brand offerings here promise to stimulate and inspire. www.sprmrkt.nl



Sofitel The Grand Amsterdam.



Top and bottom: Runway looks from Blue Blood.



Lairese Apotheek.



Nemo Science Museum.



The Anne Frank House.



The buzz at Odeon.



Stylish offerings at SPENMARKT.

LAIRESSE APOTHEEK

This is one pharmacy that you should not wait to get sick to visit. Located in the city's museum quarter, it boasts one-of-a-kind architecture. The shelves glow green, while the floor is printed with photographs of ginkgo leaves. The outward-facing drawers contain over-the-counter products, while the inward-facing drawers house the prescription medications. It's an instantly healing interior. www.delairesseapothek.nl

NOT TO BE MISSED

ANNE FRANK HOUSE

Read *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* on the plane ride into Amsterdam. Beyond the obvious horror of the situation, she was forced to live through puberty, adolescence, and first love, all while locked in a stale, huddled cluster of rooms with her parents and her sister. Even after reading the diary and visiting the annex, it's still unimaginable that eight people were trapped in this drab little rabbit-hole for more than two years. This moving museum is a tribute to the brave during a dark period of the city's history. www.annefrank.org

RIJKSMUSEUM

The great Dutch artist Rembrandt lived in Amsterdam most of his life

and put into his greatest pictures the faces of Amsterdam's Burghers, surgeons and soldiers. Newly renovated, Rijksmuseum has the largest collection of Rembrandt paintings in the world. It houses over 2,000 paintings, sculptures and drawings. www.rijksmuseum.nl

NEMO SCIENCE MUSEUM

The Nemo building, designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano, looks like a magnificent modern green ship rising out of the harbour. In addition to the awesome architecture, this museum makes science accessible to children and adults. You might learn a thing or two. www.e-nemo.nl

ODEON

Situated in the heart of Amsterdam's canal belt, the Odeon is a club with rich cultural heritage. The building was originally constructed in 1663 as a beer brewery, and was rebuilt in the 1830s as Amsterdam's first real concert hall. It has been completely transformed into a cosmopolitan centre for entertainment. Spread over three floors, you'll find: The Green Room and The Red Room for private dinners; The Gold Room, a chic restaurant with a DJ after 10pm; and the large Concert Hall, Odeon's nightclub and cultural event space. www.odeontheater.nl

HOW TO GET THERE

KLM flies to Amsterdam directly daily from Singapore. In the new Boeing 777-300ER, you can use the personal entertainment units to SMS or e-mail while still in the air. Search for good deals at www.klm.com.