

Amsterdam

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Get off the beaten (cycle) track and explore this colourful capital like a local, writes Tamara Hinson



There's plenty to get excited about in Amsterdam's city centre, but some of the best bits can be found in its colourful and lively neighbourhoods.

With the introduction of the Eurostar route from London to Amsterdam last month, this Dutch delight is now easier to get to – you don't even have to step foot in an airport – so there's all the more reason to sell it to clients who've been before and want to see less-explored sides of the city.

To help entice them, here are our favourite neighbourhoods that are worth a second look.

▶ DE PLANTAGE

When the kamikaze cyclists and crowds of shoppers get too much, head to this neighbourhood, to the south of the city centre, for a moment of calm.

More spacious and green than Amsterdam's cobbled centre, De Plantage, with its leafy boulevards and squares, brings to mind grand cities such as Vienna and Paris.

The biggest attractions are the Artis Royal Zoo and Hortus Botanicus, one of the world's oldest botanical gardens. Don't miss the enormous collection of cacti and the butterfly greenhouse, where the insects will happily land on your head for the ultimate selfie.

When hunger hits, head to the beautiful orangery, built in 1875. If the sun's shining, grab a table on the outdoor terrace. Part of the former Jewish quarter falls within this neighbourhood, and two museums worth checking out are the Joods Historisch Museum (Jewish Historical Museum) and the Verzetsmuseum (Resistance Museum).

For something a little lighter, there's



LEFT:
Hortus
Botanicus



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Micropia, a museum dedicated to microbes. Head here to learn fascinating (and often stomach-churning) facts about the microbes surrounding us.

▶ AMSTERDAM NOORD

Even if you haven't set foot in Amsterdam Noord, you'll definitely have seen it. Exit Amsterdam's Centraal Station, glance across the water and there it is: a bustling wharf filled with some of the city's most futuristic buildings.

Hop on the free ferry (squeezing

alongside the bicycles, scooters and tiny Canta cars) for the five-minute ride across the water to what has become the city's most exciting up-and-coming district.

It will receive a further boost with the opening in July of the Noord-Zuidlijn (north-south) metro line. Several huge brands, including MTV Europe and Red Bull, have their headquarters here, lending it a hip and urban vibe.

One of the most striking buildings is the A'DAM Toren tower, a skyscraper topped with a revolving restaurant and a viewing platform. Look closely and you'll spot a bright red structure on the roof. Over The Edge, which opened this year, is Europe's highest swing; strap yourself in and you'll fly over Amsterdam, 100 metres above the ground. Afterwards, head to the observation deck, where there's a bar if you're in need of a stiff drink.

Amsterdam Noord is also a fantastic place to explore on two wheels. Hire a bike and check out the historic dykes at Nieuwendammerdijk, Schellingwouderdijk and Durgerdammerdijk, or head farther afield to some of the beautiful villages that are just outside the city centre, but still within Amsterdam Noord. Holysloot and Ransdorp date back to the 12th century and are easily accessible by bike.

▶ JORDAAN

Once a neglected working-class area, Jordaan is Amsterdam's foodie district, and growing numbers of restaurateurs are making a beeline for this historic neighbourhood.



Voyages SNCF offers Eurostar rail travel from London to Amsterdam from £35 one way or £105 return, via Brussels, in standard class. voyages-sncf.eu

Osprey Holidays has two nights' B&B at the Hotel Nadia from £310, departing July 4, including return Eurostar travel from London to Amsterdam. ospreyholidays.com

Jet2CityBreaks offers three nights' room-only at the five-star NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, from £479. The price includes flights from Leeds Bradford on August 13. jet2holidays.com/city-breaks



LEFT:
Brown cafe,
Jordaan

→ It's easily accessible; Jordaan was traditionally defined as the area in which you could hear the bells of the city centre Westerkerk church – a sound Anne Frank described in her diaries.

It's filled with hofjes (greenery-filled courtyards originally built by charitable Amsterdammers for widows) and wonderfully wonky buildings, and the area hasn't (yet) fallen victim to over-gentrification. Walk past one of Jordaan's many 'brown cafes', so-called because of their simple, wood-panelled interiors, and you're likely to hear rousing renditions of songs such as *Geef mij maar Amsterdam* (*Amsterdam is the place for me*).

They're great places to sample local cuisine – typical dishes include bitterballen, washed down with steins of dark ale. But you'll find a huge range of cuisines here, including Indonesian and Surinamese. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians worked in Suriname when it was a Dutch colony, and when the Dutch returned, they brought back a love of both cuisines.

Head to Surinamese deli Swieti Sranang for some spicy pom (casserole), to canal-side Cafe Papeneiland for the best apple pie in town (they've been making it since the 17th century) and to Cafe De Prins for delicious poffertjes – tiny, puffy pancakes served with butter and sugar.



At Cafe Blond, the walls are covered with handmade plates adorned with humorous quotations

DE PIJP

De Pijp (otherwise known as Amsterdam's Latin Quarter) is the city's hippest neighbourhood. Like Amsterdam Noord, it's set to become even more popular with the opening of the Noord-Zuidlijn metro line. It's got the feel of an urban village, and has been popular with creative types since the 1960s.

One of the biggest draws is the Albert Cuypmarkt street market, where you'll find 260 stalls selling everything from handmade chocolate to clothes and fresh flowers. The market, which dates back to 1905, opens daily apart from Sundays.

It's just a stone's throw from Sarphatipark, one of the city's prettiest parks.

Another De Pijp highlight is Cafe Blond, where the walls are covered with handmade plates adorned with humorous quotations – there's even crockery on the walls of the loo. Pick

up your own piece of bespoke tableware at the cafe shop.

De Pijp is also where you'll find The Butcher. This fantastic burger restaurant (disguised as a butcher's) is an Amsterdam institution. The best bit? The speakeasy, tucked away at the rear. Work out the password and you'll get access to Amsterdam's coolest cocktail bar.

For some more mainstream alcohol-fuelled fun, head to the Heineken Experience. You'll be able to wander through the brewery, create your own bottle of beer and find out about the brand's past through a high-tech 4D experience.

MUSEUM QUARTER

The leafy, park-filled Museum Quarter is home to the city's most famous museums, including the Van Gogh Museum, Rijksmuseum and Moco Museum, a modern-art hub with a packed calendar of exhibitions (two of the most recent were dedicated to Dali and Banksy).

But there's also some fantastic shopping here. P.C. Hoofstraat is one of Amsterdam's most popular shopping streets, home to top high-street brands. Nearby Van Baerlestraat has a great selection of high-end local labels, while Jacob Obrechtstraat has some stylish independent boutiques. **tw**

Where to stay

AMSTERDAM



SAVE

The Citizen M Amsterdam City is a five-minute walk from the Amsterdam Zuid station. The 215 rooms are capsule-style, but it's an incredibly stylish and high-tech hotel. Guests check themselves in on a computer in the lobby and the beautiful public areas are filled with colourful art. Doubles from £76. citizen.com/destinations/amsterdam



SPEND

The Sir Adam Hotel, in Amsterdam Noord, is one of the city's coolest crash pads. The hotel takes up the first eight floors of one of its tallest buildings and the lobby is home to The Butcher Social Club, where you can chow down on diner-inspired cuisine while testing your skills on vintage arcade games. Doubles from £163. siradamhotel.com



SPLURGE

The beautiful city-centre Pulitzer Hotel reopened following a major refurbishment in 2016. The hotel is made up of 25 'Golden Age' canal houses and the bedrooms have been designed to reflect the building they're in. Expect lots of quirky extras, such as bicycle repair kits in bedrooms. Doubles from £215. pulitzeramsterdam.com



ABOVE: Albert Cuypmarkt street market

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