



# Guide for the Dutch student life in Rotterdam



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Welcome! In this guide, we will give you some more information about living in the Netherlands, from how to use the public transport and housing in Rotterdam to more information about the Erasmus University. We have summed it all up in this content list below.

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# 1. The Netherlands

## General information about the country



The Netherlands is a small country with 17,4 million people. Most people live in the urban area called the Randstad (the area on the map lined in black). This area contains 4 big cities; the Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam.

A big part of the country is below sea level, as a result the Netherlands is known for its dykes. If you are interested in protecting the country from the rising sea level, you can check the 'Watersnood' museum in Ouwkerk in the province 'Zeeland' (about a national disaster in 1953, when the dikes broke) or bike over the 'afsluitdijk' (a dike between North Holland and Friesland, protecting Utrecht and Flevoland from the sea).

Officially, there are two national languages in the Netherlands; Dutch and Frysian. Frysian is spoken in the province Friesland and in part of Groningen. There are several dialects as well which can sometimes be hard to understand. Almost everyone in the Netherlands speaks English. If you are looking for a job while you are in Rotterdam, not speaking Dutch should not be a problem.

## Culture

There is always something to do in the Netherlands, whether you would like to go to festivals, do some sight-seeing, go to stand-up comedy or museums. In the section 'Rotterdam' there will be an overview on what you can do in the city itself.

There are also some national holidays which can be interesting for you:

- For Carnival, head to any big city in the South ('below the rivers'). It depends a bit on where you go how they celebrate it – in Breda it's more focussed on making nice costumes, if you go to Vlissingen you might see people who put a lampshade on their head and call it a hat.
- The 27<sup>th</sup> of April is Kingsday – the day we celebrate the Kings birthday. There are usually festivals / concerts on this day, as well as rummage sales.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> of May is the day the Dutch commemorate the sacrifice of the men and women who died during the second world war and other violent conflicts. On this day, there is a ceremony in Amsterdam and, at 8 o'clock, everyone in the country is silent for two minutes. You can follow the ceremony on national television.

- The 5<sup>th</sup> of May is the day the Dutch celebrate their liberation (Bevrijdingsdag) and the end of the second world war. This day is usually marked by festivals all over the country. In Wageningen, there is a military parade with veterans to celebrate the day, as well as a lot of concerts.

If you are looking for festivals, make sure to check these websites:

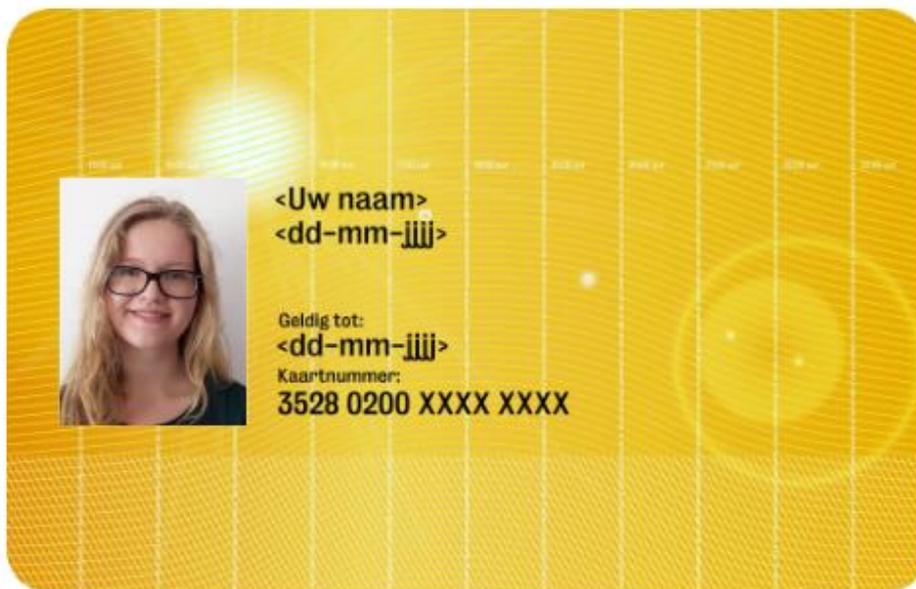
<https://festivalfans.nl/agenda/>

<https://partyflock.nl/>

### Public transport and bikes

In the Netherlands, you use the same card for busses, trains, metros and trams. It is called an 'OV-chipkaart' (OV = Openbaar Vervoer, which means public transport).

You can request one via this link: <https://www.ov-chipkaart.nl/purchase-an-ov-chipkaart/apply-for-personal-ov-chipkaart.htm>. The card looks like this:



In order to request a card, you will need a passport photo (or any other photo showing your face, this will be printed on your card), and IDEAL (the Dutch version of PayPal, unfortunately you will most likely need a Dutch bank account to use this service). When requesting the card, you can opt in for 'automatic reloading' - every time the amount of money is not enough to be able to travel, it will automatically take a certain amount from your bank account and upload it to your card. If you do not want to use this service, you can upload money manually to the card at almost each train station and / or supermarket.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A DUTCH BANK ACCOUNT (and don't want one either), you can go to any NS-machine in a train station (or the service desk in a train station) and buy an anonymous OV-chipcard. You have to upload money to this yourself!

Public transport in the Netherlands is very well organised, there are very few delays (but when there are, people will complain about it and there is nothing the Dutch Railway company can do right – prepare for the complaining). It can be quite expensive, there are no student discounts for international students. You have the option to buy a zone ticket, which allows you free travel on a certain track. This can

still be quite expensive, so keep your OV-chipcard for longer journeys and use a bike when you can.

(When using public transport, you can use the website 9292.nl to plan your journey. They also have an app, and it works for trains, buses and trams).

If you want to get a bike, there are several options. You can buy a second-hand bike (there are several Facebook groups where people offer bikes, or you can check the website Marktplaats.nl (the Dutch version of eBay)). You can also choose to rent a bike, there are several companies who offer this service. For about 10 to 15 euros a month (depends a bit on what you are looking for, a simple bike or something more sophisticated) you will have a good functioning bike and, if it needs maintenance (for a flat tire, for example) you can call the company and they will take care of it. For renting a bike, these are some popular companies:

- <https://swapfiets.nl/>
- <https://student-bike.nl/>
- <https://www.studentfiets.nl/verhuur-van-fietsen-fietsverhuur/>

The NS (Dutch Railway company) also offers bike rentals, but this will cost you 3.85 euros per 24 hours. These bikes are used when you travel to another city and want to get around on a bike while there. The service is quite expensive to use on a day to day basis.

### Sightseeing spots throughout the country

- Keukenhof
- Volendam
- Madurodam (Den Haag)
- Amsterdam: Red Light District, Anne Frank Museum, etc
- Paleis het Loo (in Apeldoorn, used to be a royal palace, nowadays a museum about the monarchy)
- Hunnebedden
- Scheveningen
- Dutch Design Week (Eindhoven)
- Groningen
- Gelderse kastelen (castles in the province Gelderland)
- Westerbork
- Wadden islands (Texel is the biggest one, recommended when you need some rest and nature)

### How do I get to Rotterdam?

We recommend you take a train to Rotterdam. The NS (Dutch Railway company) is main provider of trains throughout the whole country. You can take the train from Schiphol airport to Rotterdam Centraal – the central station of Rotterdam for 13.20 euros (you can buy a ticket at the airport). If you choose to travel with the Intercity

Direct (ICD) you will have to pay an extra fee of 2.60 euros during peak hours and 1.56 euros in off-peak-hours. The Intercity Direct has extensive place to take suitcases with you.

Check everything on the website:

<https://www.ns.nl/en/travel-information/special-routes/intercity-direct.html>

If you are arriving at Rotterdam - the Hague airport or Eindhoven airport, you will first have to catch a bus to the train station before you can get to Rotterdam. You can buy a ticket from the bus driver. Once at the train station, you can buy a ticket to get to Rotterdam.

There are several train stations in Rotterdam, so make sure you check which one is the closest to your room. If you are travelling to Rotterdam Centraal, you can take all forms of public transport, which is called the RET (the tram, bus or metro in Rotterdam) to where you are staying. From other stations you could also take a form of public transport, but be aware that not all forms are necessarily available at every station. As said above, 9292.nl is a good journey planner for this.

## 2. Rotterdam: your city!

After information about the whole country, this part of the guide provides information about your city in particular: Rotterdam.

### History

As you will notice, Rotterdam looks very modern in comparison to other cities such as Amsterdam or Leiden. This has to do with the fact that it was bombed by the Germans during the Second World War in order to force the Dutch to surrender. The initial strategy of the Dutch during the Second World War was to stay independent, which was the way the Dutch survived the First World War, but unfortunately this strategy didn't work out the second time. On 14 May 1940, the historical city centre was wiped out by the bombs and accompanying fires within 13 minutes.

Although, thousands of people lost their houses and about 900 people died during this occurrence, the municipality of Rotterdam turned the negative into something positive and decided to rebuild the city in a more modern way. The reason for this was that, back then, it was already visible that the small, narrow streets the city existed of, were already getting a bit too crowded by the expense of traffic. To be prepared for the future, those were replaced by wider lanes and streets, as you can currently see in the city.

For those, who are interested in this history, you can still find some spots through the city, besides the Zadkine statue, which remind back to this historical period. For example, in the walls of the City Hall (which survived the bombing) you can still see bullet holes from the fighting during the War. Also, on the street, there are tiny red lights in the shape of a flame, which define the boundaries of the destroyed part, in Dutch called: de Brandgrens (see the map).



### Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR)

The EUR has all the buildings situated at 1 campus, so there is no stress to find out which metro you need to take to get to your building. At this link you could find the campus map, which you can download: [https://www.eur.nl/sites/corporate/files/2018-11/Campus%20map%20letters\\_0.pdf](https://www.eur.nl/sites/corporate/files/2018-11/Campus%20map%20letters_0.pdf)

There is also an overview of the letters corresponding with the buildings' names and the reason why the university chose this system:

<https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/en/2019/09/04/this-is-why-the-buildings-on-campus-have-these-letters/>

The EUR has a general introduction week, which is called the *Eurekaweek* to show Bachelor-students the entire student life in Rotterdam. Although Master-students can also join this week, there is also an *Eurekaweek* Master Introduction Day.

For more information, visit their website: <https://www.eur.nl/en/about-eur/events/eurekaweek>

Besides the introduction day, there is also the Heartbeat festival in September, organized by the EUR, to celebrate the beginning of the student year. <https://www.eur.nl/en/about-eur/events/heartbeat-festival>

In addition, there is a good offer of food places. There are very different options, from canteens in various buildings, to a campus café (Erasmus Paviljoen), to the Food Court, the famous student bar the Smitse and not to forget a Spar! Click here to see an overview of all the food and drink places: <https://www.eur.nl/en/campus/food-drinks>

Also, the EUR provides (social-)cultural events by the organization of SG Erasmus. This organization arranges several cultural events in the Erasmus Paviljoen, such as pub quizzes and an open air cinema, during spring and summer. See this website to check their calendar: <https://www.eur.nl/en/calendar-0>.

Besides this, there is also a new initiative of students opened last year: the Living Room in the Tinbergen Building on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, room 2 (H6-2). This is an initiative to give a central place at the Uni to come together with all sorts of students to foster inclusion and connections among all students.



<https://www.facebook.com/eurlivingroom/>

In addition, the campus has its own gym: the Erasmus Sports Building. This building provides a nice fitness room and several group lessons you could take, but unfortunately no sauna or swimming pool. Several subscriptions are possible, check here the prices and options they have: <https://erasmusport.nl/en/tarieven/>. Keep in mind that this are the prices for current student year, so they could change for 2020-2021.

The faculty Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (ESHCC), will take care of GLOBAL students. Their office, alongside the one for the Faculty association ACE, can be found on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the *Van der Goot Building*. The coordinator of International Students is Sabai Doodkorte. If you have any questions regarding your stay and studies in the Netherlands, you can contact her:

<https://www.eur.nl/en/eshcc/education/incoming-exchange/contact>.

### Student associations

In Rotterdam, there are a lot of student sport associations to become a member of, which you can all see here: <https://erasmusport.nl/en/verenigingen/>

A good thing to keep in mind: sometimes you don't have to buy a sports pass of the Erasmus Sports Building in order to become a member. If you are planning to join an association, please contact them in order to know if this applies also for your association in particular.

Besides sport associations, there is also a study association called ACE, which is only for the ESHCC faculty. This association organises many study and non-study related activities to unite students of this faculty. For example, they have a socialize drink every Wednesday in café Stalles on the Nieuwe Binnenweg, but they also organise the ACE Career Days and give you discount for study books! On top of that, they also organize a short and long trip and there are many committees you could join. If interested, check their website: <https://www.ifaace.nl/>.

## Culture

Besides the national holidays, Rotterdam has its own festivities, which you cannot miss! Most of these are free.

One example is the World Port Days in the beginning of September. Every year there are a lot of nautical activities, such as a diving demonstration in which the authorities show how to rescue someone out of the water and a show of the Royal Dutch Navy helicopters. Besides the demonstrations, port companies are having an 'open house', so you can see their business up close. On one of these days there will also be a beautiful firework show at 10.30 pm, so make sure you don't miss that! For more information, see their website: <https://wereldhavendagen.nl/>.

Another Rotterdam cultural experience is the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR). During this week in the end of January / beginning of February, you can watch around 500 movies of various lengths (short, middle-long and long) from more than 50 countries. To see the programme and to read more information about this, here is the official website: <https://iffr.com/en>

For those who love to run, the NN Marathon Rotterdam will take place on Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2020. This is an event where the whole city is involved with. The event is screened on national tv and people either watch it on tv or go supporting the runners on the track itself. Before the start of the marathon on the Coolsingel, the singer Lee Towers, traditionally, sings the song 'You'll never walk alone', which has a very special meaning to many inhabitants of Rotterdam (also called: 'Rotterdammers'). This is because it is the anthem of the most supported soccer club in the city: Feyenoord (for those, who are into soccer: it is also the anthem of Liverpool FC, but there it is not sung by Lee Towers but by a Liverpoolian band). Every runner, who knows the song, sings along and then the event starts. At the end, also traditionally, the last runner is accompanied by a bunch of police motors, which put their sirens on as a sign of support to get him or her over the finish line. Once there, a great welcome of the supporters and a personal congratulation of the mayor of Rotterdam awaits the runner and 'You'll never walk alone' will be played again. The event is really worth experiencing! Click here for more details: <https://www.nnmarathonrotterdam.org/>

As Rotterdam is a very multicultural city, we also have the 'Zomercarnaval' in July. At this two day during event, there is a Queen Election, Warming-Up, Street Parade, Mercado, Battle of the Drums and many more, all performed by Rotterdammers from anywhere in the world. For those who like Carnaval the tropical way, this is really a must!



Visit their website for more information: <https://www.zomercarnaval.org/>

Also, during New Years Eve, there is the National Firework show in Rotterdam from the Erasmus Bridge (Erasmusbrug in Dutch), which is really nice to watch. Exactly on midnight the fireworks start and you will see the countdown on the building 'the Rotterdam'. Two tips if you are planning to go there: go early if you want to see it from a spot near the Erasmus Bridge. From 7.30/8 pm people are going there to get a good spot and listen to some music the organisation provides, but if you think that's too early, just go along the 'Parkkade' to the 'Willemsbrug' (the other, red, bridge in the city) and go down the stairs, until you are the closest to the water you can get (if you are there, you will see what this means). You can still see the fireworks perfectly from there, just bring your own drinks and enjoy! Look at the website to see what the fireworks are looking like: <https://hetnationalevuurwerk.nl/>.

### Recommended highlights through the city

Of course, you know the classic highlights as the Euromast, the Koopgoot etc, but here are some inside tips about spots and activities you cannot miss during your stay in Rotterdam.

If you like to dance salsa, bachata or kizomba, please go to 'Strictly' at Stadshuisplein on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 pm. At that time, the café Coconuts organizes a dance event where you can practice these dances! When the weather is good in summer, the dancers even dance outside on the square next to the café. Really a must go, if you are a dancer!

Although it is a little bit expensive, try to go with the 'Watertaxi' at least once. The 'Watertaxi' is a tiny boat, which cruises on the river with a relatively high speed. You can cross the river by going from 'Wilhelminaplein' near Hotel New York to 'Leuvenhaven'. Not as public transport, but just for fun. If you don't like high speed boats, you can also have trips with 'Spido', the 'Waterbus' or the 'Splashtours bus'. Remind that these trips are more focussed on tourists, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun!

If you like beers, there are some good beer cafés to try.

- Locus Publicus on 'Oostplein' (near the Uni)
- Proeflokaal Reijngoud on the 'Witte de Withstraat'
- Boudewijn on the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg' (especially Belgian beers)
- Kaapse Brouwers – this is a local brewery, surrounded by food stalls. You can sit outside near the water, definitely a nice place to hang out!

Also, a good place to go during spring and summer is 'Biergarten', which is near the Central Station. In the garden of club Annabel, you could get 0,5 liter beers for a good price and there are several cool places to sit.

In addition, there are some spots in Rotterdam, which are still old and historic and therefore a funny contrast with the modernity of Rotterdam. There is one in the city centre: the 'Oude Binnenweg.' This is a little shopping street, where you also can find cafés and restaurants. Another one is 'Historisch Delfshaven' (Historical Delfshaven). This is a bit further away from the centre, but if you take the metro or walk to the end of the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg', you will get there quickly. This small area is a bit like Leiden and the other old historic cities the Netherlands have.

### Different areas in Rotterdam

The city has a lot to offer: the largest port in Europe, an impressive skyline and a good rapid transit system, remarkable architecture, a wealth of arts and culture and a wide range of festivals - plus restaurants and shops in abundance. Rotterdam offers all kinds of 'hidden gems' - although occasionally, it will take you some time to uncover them. The more you explore and get to know Rotterdam, the more the city will reward you.

Every year, Rotterdam's world-renowned museums Boijmans van Beuningen, Maritiem museum Rotterdam, NAI and Kunsthal draw many thousands of visitors. Rotterdam's numerous small-scale institutions and galleries make the city a fertile breeding ground for interesting cultural initiatives. More and more of them can be found in North Rotterdam. Check out [www.culturelekaartrotterdam.nl/](http://www.culturelekaartrotterdam.nl/) to get a good idea of what's going on.

Do you like the theatre? Then why not pay a visit to Luxor or Rotterdamse Schouwburg. In February, the city is overrun with thousands of Dutch and foreign film aficionados during International Film Festival Rotterdam. Would you like to do some art or photography of your own? Check out the programme of courses offered by *Stichting Kunstzinnige Vorming Rotterdam* (SKVR).

You can find fun and interesting pubs throughout the city. Most student cafés are found on Oostzeedijk, Meent, Witte de Withstraat, Binnenweg and along Oude Haven. Prefer to dance? Then look for a bar with a dance floor, like Beurs, - located right behind Stadhuisplein - or technoclubs like Perron. Of course, Rotterdam also offers enough trendy hotspots for live music performances: Bird near Hofbogen, for example, or Rotown on Nieuwe Binnenweg.

Different areas of Rotterdam:

### 1. Rotterdam West

Delfshaven is an exciting place to rent a room! It's a multicultural neighbourhood with a wonderful historical atmosphere. Here, you can find eateries with food from all corners of the earth, and the district is located directly on the old harbour basins along the Maas. Delfshaven is known for its tremendous variety of cultures and sights: from stately townhouses to exotic streets with small Moroccan restaurants and Turkish bakeries.

### 2. Rotterdam Noord

A welcoming part of town. Numerous educational institutions are only a short bike away. A good place to check out is De Hofbogen. This former Dutch Railways overpass has been converted into a centre for dozens of unique enterprises. From a neighbourhood coffee shop to an architect's office, and from a bakery to a furniture shop. And you can also find some great addresses to eat out, or go dancing. The well-known Vroesenpark really comes alive in the summer, and Proveniersstraat is increasingly developing into a new entertainment area, with nice wine bars, restaurants and welcoming lunchrooms. The yellow Luchtsingel pedestrian overpass and public area links North Rotterdam with the city centre.

### 3. Kralingen-Crooswijk

This is the biggest student area, filled with houses owned by the biggest student organizations. The Oostzeedijk is lined with a whole range of student cafés. There's a public swimming pool, Kralingse Bos (Rotterdam's largest urban park) and a number of supermarkets - the busiest of which is the Albert Heijn on Oudedijk.

### 4. Prins Alexander

Rotterdam Prins Alexander is located to the east of the city centre. The district offers a number of shopping centres as well as its own local sports facilities and nightlife. The housing prices in this part of town are significantly lower, since it is further away from the city centre. However, it is still close to the university.

### 5. City centre

Everything you need to live, study, work or relax is in walking distance. The nightlife in Rotterdam Central District is edgy, adventurous and versatile. Go dancing at the Annabel pop venue and nightclub, grab a beer and bratwurst at the ever-popular Biergarten, or sip a stylish cocktail in the exclusive rooftop Suicide Club: the options are infinitely varied. The base of the building houses unusual cafés and restaurants, as well as Urban Guides, a company that provides inspiring architectural tours of the city. There is a lush vegetable garden on the roof, the Dakakker; lunch is served here several days a week made from ingredients from the building's own rich harvest. The Witte de Withkwartier is the vibrant heart of the Rotterdam art scene and is known for its dynamic nightlife. Sometimes referred to as Rotterdam's 'Axis of Art', the Witte de Withstraat runs from Museumpark to the Maritime Museum and is lined in various

cultural institutions. Browse the art on display at TENT or Witte de With, or immerse yourself in avant-garde film and music in WORM. Old Masters, modern art,

contemporary design and whale skeletons: the museums surrounding Museumpark offer something to suit everyone's cultural preferences.

#### 6. Feijenoord – Kop van Zuid

Kop van Zuid, a lively district that is home to the Nieuwe Luxor theater, Hotel New York and Rotterdam's Cruise terminal. It's a truly characteristic corner of Rotterdam where there's always something going on. Kop van Zuid has become one of Rotterdam's most trendy neighbourhoods thanks to a recent urban renewal project at Katendrecht. You can pay a visit to the Deliplein, with all sorts of new and surprising restaurants, or pick up super-fresh produce and products at the FenixFoodFactory. And thanks to the new Rijnhavenbrug, you can reach the nearby Wilhelminapier in a matter of minutes.

#### 7. Rotterdam-Zuid

The Afrikaanderwijk, Vreewijk, Bloemhof and Hillesluis areas each have their own unique charm. Explore the south side by metro or bicycle, because make no mistake: Rotterdam Zuid is sprawling and extensive. The Zuiderpark is a wonderful place for an afternoon stroll, picnic, sports and barbecue. It has forests, meadows and fields, swamps, a fantastic playground, even a small beach. A gorgeous nature reserve is tucked away under the Van Brienoordbrug, too, home to beautiful trees, plants, butterflies and birds. The former wharf of the Rotterdam Drydock Company (abbreviated in Dutch as RDM) now houses enterprise, education and research. Cultural events are often hosted at Heijplaat, too; exhibitions are regularly displayed in the Submarine Wharf. Take the Aqualiner for a beautiful boat trip on the Maas, or take a cycle or walking tour of the port of Rotterdam.

#### 8. Blijdorp

Blijdorp is a quiet residential neighbourhood with one major attraction: the Rotterdam Zoo. Diergaarde Blijdorp is one of the oldest zoos in the Netherlands and among the loveliest animal parks in Europe. It is situated right next to the central station, which makes it an easy commute to the city centre.

### Nightlife

Rotterdam's nightlife has quite a reputation. In the 80s and 90s, people came from far and wide for the Rotterdam dance scene. Today, the focus is wider, and all trends are well represented. The most unique clubs – Perron, Annabel, Toffler, Now&Wow – can be found in interesting and unexpected locations throughout the city. And for those looking for a drink, you will find plenty of pubs, cocktail bars and tasting rooms on and around Witte de Withstraat. Hip and happening dance clubs and classic pubs, sunny terraces versus intimate concert venues. Head up to Op het Dak (means on the roof) and enjoy a glass of natural wine, a local beer or a gin and tonic with a view of the Rotterdam skyline and the Nieuwe Maas River at nhow's rooftop bar. Looking for the underground scene? Here in Rotterdam, it's literally underground: Toffler is a house and techno club situated in a former metro tunnel.

### Harbour, beach & nature

Rotterdam is known for its spectacular harbour, but with Hoek of Holland it also has a beautiful beach where you can experience a lot of things. And ... Rotterdam is also one of the greenest cities in the Netherlands with parks such as the Kralingse Bos, Vroesenpark and The Park at the Euromast. The harbour's highlights include the Spido and the Waterbus, and actively explore the green of Rotterdam.