

**THE ZED  
KRANT!**

Amsterdam  
street paper

€4,-

how to

from *AMS*



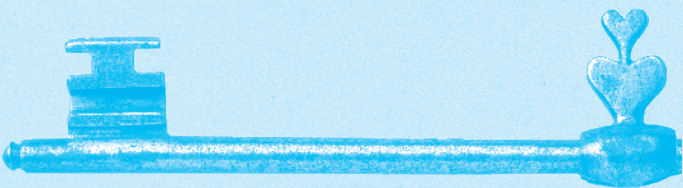
feel more

Amster-

dammer

to *ZED*

xxx your keys to the city xxx



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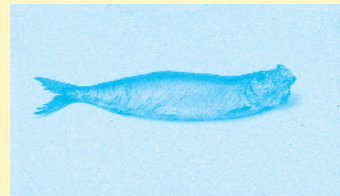
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# How to feel more Amsterdammer

When Teferi's asked if he knows his neighbours, he responds cheerfully: 'Yes, of course! I repair bikes for people from my street.'

We're at the Claverhuis community centre, where a diverse group of newcomers to Amsterdam is discussing interesting topics for the English-language edition of Z!

After all, who knows better than these new Amsterdammers themselves when they first felt at home in the city, or the best place to take someone when they first arrive in Amsterdam?

'The ferry,' says international student Aryan. 'It doesn't cost anything and you can see the city from the water.' Hidaya, who recently got her residence permit, laughs and says that she didn't dare go on the ferry for ages because she couldn't see anywhere to check in, and she was worried she'd get stopped. She now knows that all the ferries are free.

More and more newcomers arrive in Amsterdam who can't speak Dutch (yet). The vendors of our Amsterdam street newspaper, Z!, have also noticed this. People often ask them if they also sell an English-language newspaper. No, they say, we don't. Saying no to sales as an entrepreneur – that's bad business.

That's why we decided to create The Zed Krant. An English-language Z(ed)-krant for all newcomers. For undocumented people and for expats. For international students and refugees with settled status. A guide for everyone who wants to get to know the city, its people, and each other better: how to feel more Amsterdammer.

In this newspaper, you can read about where and how to learn Dutch and where to go to meet new people. But this newspaper also contains personal stories about what it means to be new in the city, about places where different cultures come together. About Amsterdam, through new eyes.

Happy reading!

KARIN STROO

*Thank you*

for buying this newspaper. If you bought it from one of our vendors on the street, they earned €2. Most of our vendors are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and our vendor community also includes people who face barriers to participating in society. They buy this newspaper for €2 and sell it for €4, keeping the difference as their own income. Most importantly, it gives them a way back into society.

xxx

# 'Anyone can *become* an Am\*dammer'

THE ZEDI AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

'We have an 'integration crisis,' declared national politicians after the November 2024 Maccabi riots. Yet Sofyan Mbarki, alderman for Economic Affairs, deputy mayor, and lead candidate for the Amsterdam PvdA, often hears the same refrain afterwards: 'Of course, this isn't about you.' In January 2026, the born-and-bred Amsterdammer published a book titled *Maar jij bent een goeie (But You're One of the Good Ones)*. It covers his political convictions, his resistance to the anything-but-unifying national politics, and what it means to be an Amsterdammer.

TEXT: BRECHTJE KEULEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY: DAPHNE LUCKER

## You grew up in Nieuw-West. How did that neighbourhood shape you?

'Seven of us shared a "spacious" 55-square-meter apartment. But the neighbourhood was green, with a big playground and a park nearby. For me, growing up in the city is inseparable from having space to play, to do sports, and to meet others. A neighbourhood like that doesn't just appear; it's the result of political choices. I only really became aware of that when I started teaching at Calvin College. The school building was neglected, the staff were neglected, the students were neglected... the inspector hadn't been by in years. All I could think was: *How is this possible?*'

## Did you find an answer?

'Yes. There was no regard for people who couldn't stand up for themselves and shout that they need help. This school wasn't the only place in Nieuw-West where you could see people falling behind. Inequality runs deep in our society. That's what really drove me into politics. If you don't fight inequality, the city as a whole will suffer. Every year, students graduate from schools like that without having received the education they deserve. Amsterdam is a wealthy city, but one in five children goes to school without breakfast. It's up to us to make sure they benefit, too.'

## How does the city make that happen?

'We make sure schools can offer breakfast, sometimes even lunch, so kids feel better and can learn better. If parents can't afford a sports club, we cover the membership fees. I'm committed to a city with places where everyone comes together: community centres, sports clubs, not just pilates and expensive coffee, but also the local baker and butcher. In Nieuw-West, everyone knows the homemade seven-saus from snackbar Van Vliet. Things like that bring people together. A neighbourhood without amenities isn't a nice place to live. I think the livability of existing neighbourhoods is just as important as building new homes. Of course, a roof over your head is crucial, but to live well in the city, you need places where everyone meets, from millionaires to people on welfare.'

## What did the debate about an alleged integration problem do to you?

'It's very painful for everyone who works hard and is a real part of society to be labelled an "integration problem" by national politicians. To be told, once again, that you don't belong. While we live in a city that has welcomed migrants for 750 years. This city was built by migrants! By Spinoza, but also by my father and by so many others.'

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## In your book, you write that you draw inspiration from Job Cohen's motto 'keeping things together.' How do you do that in a diverse city like Amsterdam?

'I actually think we do that quite well in Amsterdam. We've seen it time and again in recent years. When others try to drive us apart – as happened after the Maccabi riots – we stay connected. That's how it's always been. Look at Saïd and Lody, a youth worker and a rabbi, who have been fighting discrimination and division for fifteen years. That's Amsterdam. We know each other. We are diverse, and we are all Amsterdammers.'

## What is an Amsterdammer in your eyes?

'Amsterdammers are proud to be Amsterdammers. They have a big mouth, but their hearts are in the right place. They care about each other. They could perhaps express it differently sometimes, but they really look out for one another.'

## Can you become an Amsterdammer?

'Absolutely. To all newcomers, I say: join in from day one. The most important thing is to connect with other Amsterdammers. Join a club. Clubs bring everyone together, across social and economic divides. Go for coffee at one of the library's open hours. Go to the market, and you'll become part of the city. It's not about where you were born or raised, it's about who you are, what you do, and what you contribute. And we Amsterdammers need to help people who come here. Everyone wants to belong, and if we can help internationals become part of the city faster, it's better for everyone.'

xxx

**M** IS FOR **MOKUM**. An old affectionate nickname carrying affection without nostalgia. Used to refer to Amsterdam on a human level. Familiar faces, small encounters, and the sense the city still belongs to those inside it.



ALDERMAN SOFYAN MBARKI: 'AMSTERDAMMERS HAVE A BIG MOUTH, BUT THEIR HEARTS ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE'

HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

*'TO ALL NEWCOMERS, I SAY: JOIN IN FROM DAY ONE!'*

*from Too Good to Go. You can use their app to find local cafes, restaurants, bakeries, and shops with leftover food at a discount. Wereldhuis is a walk-in shelter for undocumented people. You*

# Amsterdam



THE ZEDI AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

TEXT: WISSE BEETS  
PHOTOGRAPHY: RAMON VAN FLYMEN

Michel spent years living rough on Zeedijk, doing 'terrible things' to feed his addiction. Now, he leads tours of the 'Amsterdam Underground,' sharing his story to prevent others following the same path.

'Ah, I have an assistant today,' Michel jokes, as I approach the Café Dwaze Zaken opposite Central Station, notebook in hand. His eyes twinkle at me from under the brim of his black hoodie, the cold making his words visible in clouds of vapour. This sunny winter day finds him leading a tour of the 'Amsterdam Underground,' an initiative by De Regenboog Groep, an organisation helping people experiencing debt, addiction, psychiatric problems, or homelessness. Michel cheerfully welcomes the fourteen people who are joining him today – most of the participants are Amsterdammers

themselves and have seen this part of the city a hundred times before. But never through the eyes of someone who has lived on the streets here, addicted and homeless. Never before, that is, through the eyes of Michel in his previous life.

The tour takes us along Zeedijk, through the narrow alleys of Amsterdam's Red Light District, and back down Warmoesstraat. We meet statues of the city's overlooked icons, such as Major Bosshardt, who stood up for addicts, homeless people, and sex workers, and Belle, a tribute to sex workers worldwide. But on an Amsterdam Underground tour, the focus is not buildings or statues, but personal stories. All guides have experienced addiction and homelessness themselves, and their experiences make each tour unique. How do you become homeless? And how do you find money, food, and drugs? What dangers lurk, and who still cares about you?

can get a cup of coffee and lunch and you can wash your clothes there. If you need support and

'I was a real bastard. I can't sugarcoat it. I did so much shit,' says Michel, getting straight to the point. 'I'm going to talk about it openly, but I want to make it clear that I'm not proud of it. By sharing my story, I mainly hope that people won't do the same thing. And that they understand a little bit how you can end up here. As he starts talking about his childhood, his eyes lose their playfulness – inevitable when telling a story like his.

Michel grew up in Amsterdam Zuid and Amstelveen. His parents' work was demanding; in addition to their jobs, they also ran a café. His grandmother looked after the children, but when she developed dementia, she was no longer able to do so. Another babysitter was arranged through the football club, 'but he was the type who couldn't keep his hands off small children.' There was no discussion of difficult topics, so talking about abuse was not an option. 'Our home was ruled with an iron fist. Blows were dealt; there was a lot of violence. Strange things happened throughout our family. It even went as far as murder. That had a big impact on me.'

From the age of twelve, Michel also started 'doing extreme things.' Between the occasional pause, the tour group seem to fill in for themselves what those things might have been. Michel continues: 'Yes, then you're sent to another school, a school where there are only other difficult children. It was the Middle School of Crime. Nothing but crooks. Nobody comes out of there unscathed.' Michel spent most of his time stoned, just like most of his classmates. At seventeen, after a huge argument with his father, he left home. Without a place of his own, he found refuge in the neighbourhood his tour takes us through today.

We walk towards one end of Zeedijk, past the hotel where jazz legend Chet Baker, high on heroin, fell out of

his window to his death in 1988. Looking at the plaque honouring him on the facade, Michel says: 'And that Chet Baker, he wasn't just any old nobody, was he? He was a brilliant musician. It wasn't just "lowlifes" who took heroin. It was a really trendy drug.' And Amsterdam, Zeedijk in particular, was the global centre of that hype.

Nowadays, Zeedijk is a pleasant, lively street, but Michel's photographs of it from when he was 17 tell a different story. The facades are still the same shape as in the photos, but that's where the comparison ends. The windows and doors of the houses, shops, and cafés in the photos are all boarded up. There is open dealing and drug use. People are lying in the gutter. The image is reminiscent of the most intense scenes from *The Wire*.

After leaving his parents' house, Michel got involved in crime. 'I was a courier, even though I didn't even have a driving licence. As a courier, you didn't know exactly what you were transporting, but anyway, it was drugs, weapons, money, that kind of thing. I just drove from A to B. And I was paid well for it. I slept in expensive hotels and spent a lot of money in the red light district. Tits and drugs, I can't sugarcoat it, that was all I cared about at the time.' He moved on from hash to LSD and heroin. But heroin turned out not to mix well with work. Michel found himself without work and therefore money, and his addiction was becoming increasingly expensive. 'After my first time, I was mentally addicted. At first, you can get by on 50 guilders a day. But then your body gets used to it. You need more and more to get high. Within a few weeks, I was also physically addicted. If you don't use, you become seriously ill. That piece of silver foil you smoke the drugs off of becomes fused to your hand. And you start doing the most terrible things to get money or drugs.' →

# underground

'IT WASN'T JUST "LOWLIFES" WHO TOOK HEROIN, IT WAS A REALLY TRENDY DRUG...'



AMSTERDAM UNDERGROUND GUIDE MICHEL: 'I WAS A REAL BASTARD!'

HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

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Michel reiterates his lack of pride in his actions: stealing watches and jeans from the Bijenkorf department store. Packets of cigarettes from the supermarket. He regrets the burglaries of cars and houses even more. At the time, he kept his 'junk bag' with a crowbar, screwdrivers, and knife in a locker at Central Station. From there, he made his rounds on the rooftops and along the rows of parked cars in this neighbourhood. 'You cause thousands of guilders worth of damage to steal something you can sell for 30. It's terrible.' He explains that everything revolves around drugs. 'You see people literally dy-



In some drop-in centers you can exchange a used syringe for a clean one to prevent the spread of hepatitis and AIDS.

'YOU SEE PEOPLE LITERALLY DYING AROUND YOU, BUT IT DOESN'T AFFECT YOU.'

THE ZEDI AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

ing around you, but it doesn't affect you. Those people have already been robbed before they're even dead.' In the red light district, he shows us a photo of a woman tidying herself up, bent over a car mirror. 'Fortunately, things are better organised now with sex workers. But in the past, many addicts ended up in illegal prostitution. Especially women, but also men. They would stand behind the station and get into someone's car. It's unimaginable; those women don't even have a place to freshen up afterwards. They get ten guilders, get high, and a few minutes later they have to get back to work. People will go to great

lengths to pay for their addiction.' Considering that Michel's stories are about the past, and that Zeedijk has become a fairly trendy street, you might start the tour with the impression that there are no longer any major problems with homelessness and addiction. However, in Amsterdam alone, there are currently between 11,000 and 17,000 homeless people, and they often struggle with addiction. But there are those who still care. We pass by Stichting Kruispost, a medical centre for those without health insurance, and we visit a drop-in centre run by the Regenboog Groep. There are several of these drop-in centres throughout the city. Volunteers and social workers offer homeless people a place to take a break from life on the streets: coffee, tea, second-hand clothing, and a shower. You can get help with rehabilitation, but they also provide room for safe use; you can exchange a used syringe for a clean one to prevent the spread of hepatitis and AIDS. 'Places like this are very important,' explains Michel, 'for safety, but also just to feel human again.' By the end of the tour, the importance of these centres is clear, even to those who have never experienced addiction or homelessness.

Back at the starting point, Michel hopes I don't have any further questions. He wants to visit a music shop in Amsterdam West before closing time, before heading to his rented flat in Amstelveen. Being offered this social housing thirty years ago felt like a sign that it was time for a new life. Thanks to a rehabilitation programme, he succeeded. 'And for the past 15 years, the justice system has finally been done with me.' Now he has a healthier addiction: 'messing around with analogue synthesisers.' It's not a cheap hobby, but thanks to his work for Amsterdam Underground and the Regenboog Groep, he can pay for it honestly.



information around drugs and alcohol, contact Jellinek. Check out what's happening at Buurt-

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# Teferi & Paulina



TEFERI COMES FROM ETHIOPIA. HE HAS BEEN LIVING HERE UNDOCUMENTED FOR 25 YEARS. PAULINA CAME TO AMSTERDAM SIX YEARS AGO AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FROM GERMANY.

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HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

# Paulina

'THE HOUSING MARKET WAS MUCH QUIETER THEN, THAT REALLY HELPED'

Paulina Albrecht (29) moved from Nuremberg to Amsterdam in 2020 to study Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam

TEXT: AUGUSTE KOOL  
PHOTOGRAPHY: JORIS VAN GENNIP

She arrived just before the Covid-19 pandemic and found an apartment in Zeeburg, overlooking the Entrepothaven. 'The housing market was much quieter then,' she says, 'that really helped.' Starting out in a new city during lockdown was strange, but it also shaped her sense of home. She had only met a few people in classes on campus before everything closed. 'Because we met just before lockdown, we bonded very quickly,' she says, 'we were suddenly each other's only social circle. Sometimes I miss it. Walking around without a single soul – it felt safer, especially being young in a new place.'

Over time, Amsterdam became the place where she built her own life. She had a job throughout her studies and now works there full-time. She feels lucky having such a stable income. 'Some friends had to move back home because they couldn't survive financially here.'

Finding a community was essential. Dutch classes helped, as did meeting people at the gym. She noticed that Dutch society could feel closed if you don't speak Dutch. 'People can be hesitant to really connect with internationals,' she says, 'Most of my friends felt it wasn't really needed to learn Dutch when you have a friend group with only internationals. But that also makes it harder meeting Dutch people.'

For Paulina, home exists in two places. 'Nuremberg is home in the sense of family,' she says, 'having dinner together, going on walks with the dog.' Amsterdam, however, is the home she created herself. 'Here I have my friends, my house, my park, my gym, my routines. This feels like my city.' Only one thing is missing: 'I can't just grab a coffee or a glass of wine with my mom whenever I want.'



TEFERI: 'AMSTERDAM IS MY HOMETOWN'

THE ZED: AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

10 11

# Teferi



Teferi Mekonen (53) lives with his wife in the Staatsliedenbuurt. Both are from Ethiopia. She has a Dutch passport; he does not.

Still, Amsterdam feels like home. 'The politicians can be bad,' he says, 'But the public is smart and friendly. You can decide to make it your home here.' He likes the Dutch reservedness. 'When you give them love, they give you love back. That's enough for me.'

Without legal papers, he cannot work or rent a home. 'I live in this city without money,' he says, 'my focus is only on papers. Without them, you cannot plan a future.'

Teferi follows the Ethiopian calendar and celebrated Christmas recently, on January 7th. 'We turn on Ethiopian television and watch how people celebrate back home,' he says. Every weekend, Ethiopians and Eritreans gather at Brouwerij 't IJ in the east of Amsterdam. 'If you see Black people there,' Teferi says, smiling, 'they're probably Eritrean or Ethiopian.' The brewery's offering tastes like tella, the popular Ethiopian beer.

Teferi came to Amsterdam from Ethiopia 25 years ago. His asylum request was rejected, but he stayed. Over the years, he moved frequently, often without a contract. 'I've lived in every corner of this city,' he says, 'Amsterdam is my hometown.'

He misses Addis Ababa – 'the people, the mountains, my life' – but safety comes first. 'I saved my life by leaving,' he says, 'life here is not easy. But even if the law doesn't welcome me, this city does.'

'People are called illegal or documented,' he says, 'because it's the system that needs those words.' The unfairness of living undocumented in the Netherlands is constant. Once, after cycling through a red light, he spent seven months in immigration detention. 'They couldn't fine me, because I had no ID. So, they locked me up,' he says.



PAULINA: 'HOME EXISTS IN TWO PLACES NOW'

huizen – they often organise activities. Volunteer in the city, for example at Serve the City. Buurt-

xxx  
xxx



IS FOR **UITWAAIEN**. The unofficial Dutch reset: going outside specifically to be blasted by wind until your thoughts reorganise themselves. No destination required, movement and fresh air count as productivity on their own.

**Olifantenpadjes**, Jan Dirk van der Burg  
Geldershoofd, Amsterdam: 38 meters of ground gained

**OLIFANTENPAADJES** (LITERALLY: ELEPHANT PATHS)  
ARE PATHS CARVED OUT OF THE LANDSCAPE BY PEOPLE  
TRYING TO TAKE THE SHORTEST ROUTE FROM A TO B.



# Gratis Neder- landse les

TEXT: KOEN VAN GIJZEL

Koen van Gijzel is the founder of Koentact (Dutch Language School in Amsterdam). He grew up with two Dutch parents and one language at home: Dutch. No second language, no international family.

And yet, today he speaks seven languages. His favourite? Moroccan Arabic. He didn't learn it through paid courses. He learned it right here, in Amsterdam (and two months in Morocco). Continue reading to discover Koen's tips on learning a language for free.

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*Salam3likum!  
Goedendag allemaal!*

**My first tip: immersion.** I put my radio and TV on Moroccan Arabic channels. At first, I understood absolutely nothing, but it helped me get used to the sounds. No TV or radio? Go to the library or a community centre to find a computer with internet... there, you can also find books and relaxed people willing to chat.

**Second tip: follow your joy.** I love hip-hop. So I searched for Moroccan rap on YouTube and tried to find magazines and websites about it. I learned street language, humour and rhythm. You learn faster when you can enjoy the process.

**Third tip: go into the city to meet people.** I spent time in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, volunteered, and gave Dutch lessons to kids. If you're learning Dutch, step outside your English-speaking bubble and try to meet locals.

Instagram helps, too. Follow people who share a word a day. Or visit an Amsterdam Language Cafe at Koentact or at the library. It's free, and you'll meet Amsterdammers who also want to practice. At a language café, I met Abdel. We started doing 'intercambios': 30 minutes Dutch, 30 minutes Moroccan Arabic. With mint tea. Today, we're close friends.

And if you can, work in the language you're learning. I once worked in a tourist shop in Marrakesh. I sold more because I spoke the language a bit. (Tip from Moroccan salesmen: wear old shoes when shopping. New shoes? The price triples.)

Finally: write words down on cards. Dutch on one side and your native language on the other. Keep on repeating until you know them by heart.

And if you want to move from basic level to real independence? Email a language school. Ask if you can join for free or a discounted rate in exchange for helping out. Bold people learn faster.

Good luck. And remember: 'learning a new language is the best excuse to meet new people.'

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From Ams to Zed: your alphabetical guide to the city.

**A** IS FOR **ACHTEROP**. Find out about this one on the back cover!

**B** IS FOR **BITTERBALLEN**. Too hot to eat, impossible to resist, and mainly ordered to justify staying for another round. Everyone burns their mouth, everyone pretends they didn't, everyone fights over the last one.

**C** IS FOR **COFFEESHOP**. Not for cappuccino. The distinction seems obvious until visitors confidently order espresso next to someone buying pre-rolled relief. Locals barely notice anymore – categories here tend to blur politely.

**D** IS FOR **DIRECTNESS**. Conversation without detours. Opinions arrive early, feedback arrives unwrapped, and disagreement rarely signals conflict. It sounds blunt at first, until you realise clarity is simply valued more than performance. Efficiency simply beats politeness here.

**E** IS FOR **EVENTJES**. A tiny word doing enormous work. Adding even makes any request sound quick, harmless, and entirely reasonable, regardless of effort required. Linguistic soft power disguised as modesty.

**F** IS FOR **FIETSPAD**. Sacred red asphalt ecosystem governing daily life. Where cyclists move with authority, pedestrians learn humility and awareness through experience, and hesitation is the only real traffic violation.

**G** IS FOR **GEZELLIG**. Come hang with us on page 22?

**H** IS FOR **HARING**. Fresh herring cut into bite-sized pieces, topped with onions and/or pickles, eaten standing at a small street counter. Less ceremonial than outsiders expect, more of a quick seasonal ritual or hangover cure.

**I** IS FOR **INGEPLAND**. Amsterdam spontaneity runs through shared calendars. Social life organised weeks ahead with military precision. Spontaneity exists mainly as a theoretical concept discussed while checking calendars.

**J** IS FOR **JENEVER**. The original Dutch gin, served in a small glass filled so far to the brim you have to sip it from the bar without lifting it first. If the bottle runs out mid-pour, local tradition holds that you don't pay: this is called an Amsterdammertje.

**K** IS FOR **KONINGS DAG**. Bezet! More on page 30.

**L** IS FOR **LEKKER**. Nominally 'tasty', practically everything. Weather, people, plans, music, success; if it feels right, it's lekker. A linguistic shortcut replacing dozens of more precise words. The Swiss army knife of Dutch adjectives.

**M** IS FOR **MOKUM**. Find out on page 5.

**N** IS FOR **NOORD**. Across the water and perpetually described as 'up-and-coming,' despite having arrived years ago. Where space suddenly exists. Wider streets, experimental architecture, and residents who insist they're still 'just five minutes away,' regardless of actual travel time.

**O** IS FOR **OMAFIETS**. The heavy, upright grandma bike that weighs 20 kilos and somehow still outruns you. Pedal brakes only. Effectively immortal. Designed to survive decades of students, weather, and neglect, though mysteriously never immune to theft.

**P** IS FOR **PONTJE**. Part commute, part social equaliser. Suits, students, night-shift workers and tourists stand shoulder to shoulder on this free ferry, united briefly by wind and the shared act of doing nothing, turning daily commuters into temporary tourists.

**Q** IS FOR **QUEER**. Page 20 tells you more.

**R** IS FOR **REGENPAK**. The outfit that signals you've stopped fighting the weather and started adapting. Once you own proper rain gear, weather stops being an obstacle and becomes a pleasant background noise.

**S** IS FOR **STROOPWAFEL**. A caramel-syrup wafer with one correct use: balanced on a hot coffee cup, softening to perfection, while you're pretending moderation is still on the table.

**T** IS FOR **TIKKIE**. Precision friendship accounting. A € 0.65 payment request for bitterballen arrives without irony, confirming that fairness and hospitality comfortably coexist. The small digital reminder that friendship does not override financial precision.

**U** IS FOR **UITWAAIEN**. Take a shortcut to page 14 for some insight into this Dutch tradition.

**V** IS FOR **VRIJMIBO**. Friday afternoon drinks that begin responsibly and quietly reorganise weekend plans. Offices empty early, terraces fill instantly, and Monday becomes someone else's problem.

**W** IS FOR **WIND**. Breeze on over to page 37.

**X** IS FOR **XXX**. Medieval symbols of protection that visitors misinterpret and locals barely notice. The three St. Andrew's crosses are the city's official symbol, appearing on everything from flags to bollards. They commemorate Amsterdam's history as fishing town.

**Y** IS FOR **Y**. Not a bay, not quite a lake: mainly a windy reminder that water shapes everything in this city. The water divides the city psychologically more than geographically. Crossing it still feels like entering another chapter of the same place.

**Z** IS FOR **ZED-KRANT**. Jump to page 39. Or just read the whole thing!

*Buik saves food from waste by collecting it from restaurants, supermarkets, and greengrocers*

# Hidaya's Amsterdam

## Tip:

Ask for help. 'In Uganda, we're not used to asking for help. We are raised to find solutions. But in the Netherlands, there are solutions for certain things. Accept that the system works this way, and ask your community for help.'



**HIDAYA:** 'I NEVER EVEN KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO STAY IN A COUNTRY ILLEGALLY BEFORE I GOT HERE.'

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17

### Arrival in the Netherlands

'I arrived in the Netherlands in September 2017. After they checked my documents in the reception centre, they said, "You don't look like the photo in your passport." I had to return the next day for extra checks. My first interview was in November. My application was rejected, and when I appealed, I got another negative. They didn't believe my story. DT&V, the national departure service, told me, "If you don't go back to Uganda, we will come and take you by force." It was very scary. I called a friend and said, "I don't know what to do, I have nowhere to go." And she told me to go to Amsterdam. "There are organisations that can help you."

### To Amsterdam

'I wandered the streets for hours before I found refugee support organisation ASKV. They told me they could help with a new procedure, but they didn't offer shelter. They sent me to the Loket Ongedocumenteerden, the undocumented migrants desk. The man I spoke to called the IND, right in front of me, to check if I had indeed been rejected. My whole energy just dropped. They told me I would get 3,000 euros if I accepted voluntary return. It made me feel horrible. Like I didn't have any future here. But in the end, they gave me a place in the shelter called "bed, bath, and bread" – basically what we got there.

### Settling in the city

'Meanwhile, things were still very uncertain. When you wake up in the shelter in the morning, you're not waking up to anything. You're not going to work, not going to school, you basically wait until you can come back. During the week, I went to the Wereldhuis, a community centre. There's tea, lunch, sports and computer classes. Here I met undocumented people from all over the world. It made me feel like I wasn't alone. And I said to myself: now I know where to sleep at night, where to eat during the day, what's next? And I asked if I could work with them. But they said that undocumented people cannot work by law. So I was like, how am I going to survive if I cannot work? And they offered me some volunteer work, like cleaning and watering the plants, and I earned a little bit of money that way.

'But during the weekends, the Wereldhuis was closed. I didn't have anywhere to go. Since I wasn't allowed to stay in the shelter, I went to Amstel Station. There's free wifi and it's a little bit warmer inside. Every weekend I stayed there until 4pm, when I could go back to the shelter. One time, a lady came up to me and asked, "I see you here every week,

what do you do here?" We started talking, and she asked, "Would you want to have a cup of tea?" And I answered, "I would love to, but I don't have any money." And she said, "It's on me." Sabin, that's her name, asked how she could help me. I still find that question very difficult. I didn't need money, I needed something that could earn me money. A couple of weeks later she asked if I could pick up her son from school sometimes, and take him to swimming lessons. She gave me a public transport card and credited it for transport. She has helped me a lot and she stayed in my life from that time until today.'

### Activism

'One day I met Savannah Koolen, who was starting up a new organisation: Amsterdam City Rights. The organisation was both about supporting people without papers and about giving them a voice. I didn't know what I was getting into, but I knew that it would keep me busy. I think it was March 2018 when I made my first public appearance, to talk about the challenges of migrants and refugees.

'I enjoyed public speaking so much. It wasn't easy to speak up. People told me that I wouldn't get my papers if I talked ill about the IND. Even friends drifted away from me when I started to become more vocal. They were afraid, of course, but it was kind of hurting. On the other hand: I knew I wasn't doing anything wrong, and I noticed that I had impact, because people from the undocumented community started reaching out to me. I was always at different demonstrations, at the Week against Racism, the Feminist March, and just everywhere we could show that everybody should be included.' →

TEXT: BRECHTJE KEULEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY: EVA PLEVIER

For six years, the Ugandan *Hidaya* (42) lived undocumented in Amsterdam. Now that she finally has a residence permit, she shares how Amsterdam slowly became her city.

and sharing it with local residents. You can volunteer to either pick up or prepare food, and you can even join for dinner. Learn Dutch with a 'taalmaatje'. Don't be afraid to be assertive



Hidaya: 'I'm an electrical engineer, and I would love to work in that field again.'



**Shelter life**

'Meanwhile, I was still staying in the BBB-shelter. The food was horrible, and if you were late, there wasn't any food left. We didn't get any money, which was especially hard for us women. Can you imagine having to go to the men at the reception every month to ask for sanitary wear? It was super embarrassing. And then there were a lot of people who had difficulties sleeping at night. Even they would still have to be out by 8am. When the shelter system changed in 2020 and was called LVV after that, I saw a lot of improvements. We could stay during the day, we could decide what we wanted to cook and eat, we could sleep and wake up when we wanted to, and we had a little bit more personal space. The

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shelter also gave the opportunity to work on different perspectives for the future, rather than just focusing on return. 'I also worked on a second procedure for a long time. The second time has to be perfect and I didn't want to mess it up. And I actually had a lot: documents, proof of all my public speeches and demonstrations that I went to, and I could better express myself compared to the time of my first application. I was ready in 2020, but because of COVID, I had my first interview in 2022. Then the waiting started. By 2024, I finally got a message from the IND: I got my papers.'

*'I DO NOT LIKE THE HOUSE, I LOVE THE HOUSE!'*

**Being an Amsterdammer**

'I'm an electrical engineer, and I would love to work in that field again, but I have to go back to school for two more years. I honestly don't know how to do that. I still have to learn the language, because schools didn't accept me when I was still undocumented. I'm over 30, so I don't qualify for studiefinanciering [student finance, ed.]. It's annoying, also the fact that it took over a year and a lot of money to have my diploma accredited. But I've come a long way and I'm not giving up.

'The first day I felt at home in Amsterdam was at the beginning of 2019, when I was invited to the mayor's New Year's dinner. I felt like, I may not have my papers yet, but at least I'm doing something good for the city. But I also still feel like I belong to the undocumented community, because I've been there the longest. I've built a network of friends here, I know where to get any African food, and I have a home. When I got the key, I had to be there at 9.30am, and I was so afraid to be late that I set three different alarms. In the end I was one and a half hours early! When they showed me around, they asked, "Do you like the house?" and I said, "I do not like the house, I love the house!" It was in a bad state, but it didn't bother me. I had the key to my own house, my own space that I had longed for for such a long time.

'Now that I have my papers, I can travel. I visited many countries in Europe last summer and it was amazing after being trapped for six years. When I tried to pay by card in Paris, when I realised how dirty some cities are, or how hot it would be in Madrid, I realised that I have become used to Amsterdam. It made me feel like an Amsterdammer.'

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*Hidaya & Dede*



UGANDAN HIDAYA HAS BEEN IN THE NETHERLANDS SINCE 2017, AND WORKS FOR AMSTERDAM CITY RIGHTS. 'ACHTEROP' SITS MALAYSIAN DEDE, WHO CAME TO AMSTERDAM TO FIND A PLACE HE COULD BE HIMSELF

*when cycling. In Amsterdam, cyclists are at the top of the food chain. Read a local newspaper*

# A table for Everyone

Every Monday, the Havendiners Foundation hosts a dinner party for refugees and Amsterdam locals. Zed attended a special edition organised for refugees from the LGBTIQ+ community: 'Now we know who our queer neighbours are.'



TEXT: ANNA WABEKE  
PHOTOGRAPHY: DINGENA MOL

On the dance floor, a large circle has formed, and partygoers take turns confidently stepping into the spotlight. Loud applause erupts as a dancer in a short denim skirt drops to their knees and seemingly effortlessly slips into a split. The guests at 'het Havendiner' don't shy away from shaking their hips. The evening begins, like any good party, with a sense of nervous anticipation. Long rows of tables, neatly set with crisp white tablecloths, fill the spacious room in Rowing and Sailing Club De Amstel. A handful of employees from Dutch research organisation TNO await the guests. 'I was a bit nervous,' Glenn Elstgeest admits.

'What if we don't have anything to talk about?' Glenn is attending the dinner with a few of his colleagues on behalf of TNO, a donor to Havendiners. Their work has recently involved research related to people living in refugee centres, who are also the focus of this evening. Buses arrive carrying guests from different refugee centres. They slowly file in, scanning the room for seats. Glenn and his colleagues spread out amongst them. The conversations begin somewhat hesitantly, but as volunteers bring in plates of steaming hot food, the mood softens, people pass the plates around, and the room fills with chatter.



THE IDEA FOR HAVENDINERS WAS TWOFOLD: OFFER REFUGEES AN EVENING AWAY FROM THEIR WORRIES AND BRING THEM TOGETHER WITH AMSTERDAM LOCALS OVER A SHARED MEAL.

## Dinner with a purpose

The Havendiners started over ten years ago, when retired lawyer Marinus Pannevis began hosting a weekly dinner for refugees staying in a nearby emergency shelter. The idea was twofold: offer refugees an evening away from their worries and bring them together with Amsterdam locals over a shared meal. In this way, he hoped to foster understanding. 'Our visitors have said: "If everyone came to a dinner like this, the problem would be solved."' Vincent, who has been a volunteer at Havendiners for three years, echoes this sentiment. He explains that the main focus is to allow the refugees to enjoy themselves. 'At the same time, we hope to contribute a little bit to integration, by letting refugees and Amsterdammers meet each other.'

## A safe space for queer refugees

Tonight's dinner is a special edition, uniquely aimed at refugees from the LGBTIQ+ community. Members of this group face challenges in the centres they reside in, as being open about their sexuality can feel unsafe.

'We are very secretive and have to be careful. We are not free in there,' says Mayher who lives in a refugee centre. His best friend, Saheed, agrees, and adds: 'We don't flaunt our sexuality; we keep things low-key.' Saheed and Mayher met during Dutch classes and have been friends ever since.

Maria and Gema, two political activists from Nicaragua, also have to be careful whom they disclose their relationship to. 'We pretend we're sisters or friends when we meet people in our refugee centre building,' says Maria. This is



**IS FOR QUEER.** Amsterdam was one of the first cities in the world to legalise same-sex marriage, and it genuinely shows. In the bars, the culture, and in the unremarkable ordinariness of its most days. Most days. The city is more tolerant than most but less tolerant than it thinks, and it doesn't talk about that part enough.

their first Havendiner and they recognise a few faces from their building. 'It's such a relief to know who our queer neighbours are – now we won't have to be afraid of them.'

This feeling of relief resonates throughout the evening as guests let their guard down and enjoy the food, company, and music. Dede, stylishly dressed for the occasion, shares laughter over dessert with his flatmate. The two jokingly call themselves 'The Queens of Kabelweg,' referencing the refugee centre where they live. For Dede, staying positive is a daily act of resilience. 'Every day, I look in the mirror and say, "Ik ben lekker," which translates to "I am tasty," because it doesn't help to be sad all the time.' Having fled Malaysia to escape what he describes as 'shit religion' back home, Dede feels like he can be one hundred percent himself in the Netherlands. The Havendiners offer a great opportunity to have fun and relax.

## Connecting through music

In terms of creating joy, the night is a clear success. As the music plays and a deep bass reverberates through the hall, the guests shyly start clapping and shuffle towards the edges of the room, waiting for someone to break the ice. A man in a red jumper, who had been rather quiet during dinner, takes it upon himself to spur the crowd onto the dance floor. His energy proves contagious. Even Dede, previously hesitant, pulls his reluctant flatmate onto the floor as the party gets into full swing. The Dutch guests enjoy the evening, too. 'I found it incredibly warm and welcoming,' says Glenn. 'I spoke with many different people from diverse backgrounds and heard remarkable stories. I also discovered many similarities, that we are not so different after all!' The contrast with the nervous sense of anticipation at the beginning of the evening highlights just how special the night was.

The evening ends in a typically Dutch fashion: with a polonaise. As the first notes of Hoogste Tijd by Amsterdam folk singer André Hazes, ring out, Vincent gets up from his seat at the bar: 'Finally, a song I can dance to!' He grabs the shoulders of an unsuspecting guest. One by one, more people join in, until a winding chain snakes through the room. Arms wave in the air as voices rise in chorus: 'Ja, het is tijd, de hoogste tijd,' (Yes, it's time, high time). It's a classic end to any Dutch party; bars often play this song to signal that it's time to head home. When the music fades, coats are gathered and the guests step back onto the waiting buses. Meanwhile, Vincent and the other volunteers are already sweeping the floor. Next week, another dinner.

To find out what's happening in your neighbourhood (you might also find clubs and events to sign up for). Visit the Hortus Botanicus, sit on a bench, watch people. Work your mind and body:

# FEELING RIGHT AT HOME IN DEAR AMSTER- DAM

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY: DANNY DALUIO



**G** IS FOR GEZELLIG A nationally shared atmosphere rather than a definition: candles, conversation, proximity, or the feeling that staying longer is the correct decision. Everyone understands it; nobody translates it successfully.

*find a hobby, join a sports club or running group, take a language class or visit an expat café. Keeping active and meeting people makes everything else feel much easier. Cycling is the best*

## Luka



'I don't actually know when I first felt at home in Amsterdam. There were several moments. It helps if you come from [Amsterdam-] Noord, because when I lived there, Amsterdam was a lot smaller. If you haven't visited everywhere in the city, many parts of it don't feel like home. There were a few times when I made the city my own. Once was when I worked as a bicycle courier, because it's a lot easier to feel at home somewhere when you know where you are. Two: I lived in Purmerend for a little while, so I know how it is to be somewhere where you don't feel at home at all. Because I've moved a lot over the past couple of years, I know that I feel most at home in Amsterdam-West. And that's where I live now.'

## Benjamin



'I come from a backwater in the south of the country, a place where it's difficult to be yourself if you're different.

Amsterdam has something... everyone is welcome. It's a left-wing city and I think the feeling that you can be who you are in Amsterdam is really clear. I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not here, while in other cities that's less possible. It took a while before I ended up here. At first, I spent half the week at my parents', and the other half at my aunt and uncle's, then a short period in Zaandam, and now here, on my own, in Osdorp. Your own place that you can always go back to, where people know you and care about you, that's home.'

## Len



'I was born in Amsterdam, but we soon moved to Halfweg. We often used to go to [The Royal Theatre, ed.] Carré. We would drive as a family to the city and park by De Nederlandsche Bank. We would then eat out and afterwards walk along the Amstel. As a child, when I saw that magical theatre, and the glittering lights of the Magere Brug, I felt at home immediately. And I still do now. If I walk or cycle past, those memories come back to me, and a sort of nostalgic feeling. I've now been living in Amsterdam for four-and-a-half years, and it really is

my home. We've bought a house together in a great place. Before that, I lived in Haarlem for a long time, and I missed what's abundant here, and what suits me better: diversity.'

## Kimo



'I didn't want to live and grow old in Amsterdam; I found it too busy and intense, but now you couldn't get me out of this town. When I was still 18, I lived on Terschelling for a year. I came back and got a nice catering job and a few more friends, and when I was 19, I discovered Amsterdam's nightlife. Now I feel at home thanks to the variety in the city, the international shops and restaurants... I have really come to appreciate that I grew up among different cultures. The primary school I went to had the same number of white and Moroccan children, and the older I get, the more I see that I am so glad about it, because I'd hate it if I were narrow-minded.'

## Jacky



Jacky sits at the table in her house in Oost that she's just sold to go and live in Amsterdam-Noord. 'I felt at home the moment I stepped off the train in 1991 and walked to De Gaeper café on Staalstraat, where I'd arranged to meet my boyfriend at the time. From the bridge, you have a view of the Nieuwmarkt, where I saw the palace [De Waag, ed.], and I became totally woozy. Now, it's the people who make me feel at home. In Amsterdam, you walk into a café and within five minutes you click with someone and drink a beer together. And then "bye." And that "bye" really is "bye." "Bye forever."'



# Things you weren't planning to find



**De Buurtringloop** thrift store doesn't just offer bargains and a place to give old items a new life – shoppers can find inspiration, conversation, and even everyday surprises.

TEXT: STELLA VRIJMOED  
ILLUSTRATIONS: BRITTANY SNYDER



Rosa holds up a bright pink sports bag and admires herself in the mirror. It's Saturday afternoon, rush hour at De Buurtringloop thrift store on Insulindeweg. These days, it's always busy, especially since the recent move to a corner building opposite Muiderpoort station. 'Last time, I bought some kind of 80s pants here,' says Rosa, 'and a hand puppet of Mr. Owl for my little boy. Now, I actually needed a swim bag, so I'm checking if this one is nice. It's Nike, I think. I also bring things here.' She points to a black-and-white dress on the rack by the mirror. 'This used to be mine. It was already second hand, so now it's actually third hand.'



24 25

## A neighbourhood store

Rosa lives on the next street over, like most of the thrift store's visitors, though owner Sophie van IJken also has customers from Amsterdam West. 'They come all the way by tram, even though there are plenty of thrift stores there too,' she says. Before she opened the original store on Javastraat in 2021, 'I was already involved in everything with the word 'neighbourhood:' neighbourhood help, neighbourhood guide. I come from a family of collectors and have been into "thrifting" my whole life, so when I wanted to start something for myself, opening a thrift store was a simple choice. It's a place where everyone comes these days, not just people with a small budget.' At De Buurtringloop, people mainly donate and buy clothes, but CDs, DVDs, and even cassette tapes still sell surprisingly well. Local volunteers help with sorting, pricing, and working the register.

## A unique top

To the left of the entrance stands the 'favorites rack.' There hang specially selected treasures – the proceeds from which fund events in the store, like a pie-baking contest or a silent disco. Two friends in their twenties, Lila van der Vliet and Charlotte Lebbink, browse this rack, chatting loudly. 'Last time, I bought yoga pants and a scrunchie here,' says Lila, indicating a number of brightly coloured fabric hair ties. 'I'm never looking for anything specific, but I'm just addicted to thrift stores. Here, you can still find something new! I bought a polka-dot top here recently, and I love that I'm the only one who has it.' Charlotte, whose ears are full of gold earrings, adds: 'In other stores, you never find anything authentic anymore.' The friends also like to browse without buying anything. 'When I feel sad, I go thrifting,' says Charlotte. 'It makes me happy. Especially when I go alone. And I sew, so I look at how I can alter the clothes.' She excuses herself, apologising: 'But now I'm going to try on this skirt, because it might be gone soon. Oh, and I hadn't seen that earring rack over there yet!'

## Seeking a bargain

Along the large windows are several display cases with kitchenware: cutlery, bowls, glasses, appliances. On the wall hang postcards for 10 cents. One of the locked cases holds silver rings, several analogue cameras, and, on the bottom shelf, a projector. Brazilian Sony Miso is patiently waiting for Sophie to get it for him. 'My TV was broken, so I can really use this. I pass by here in the mornings and evenings when I'm going to work, but the store is always closed. I work a lot to earn money for my family in Brazil. But today I'm off, so I can finally come inside. The prices here are cheap!' The enterprising Mo Schulte and his friends are trying to make a clever deal. 'I haven't really found anything here lately, but I'm also pretty picky,' says the tall, blond teenager. 'I look for good quality to make a profit... I look for brand-name clothes or popular items. Last time, there was a nice Dolce & Gabbana leather jacket here, but when I came back an hour later to get it, it was already gone.' American-British couple Anne Marie Bogar and James Honke also come for the low prices. Specifically, for vinyl records, which, they say, are more expensive in other thrift stores. James has several French records in his hand. 'After my grandpa died, we got his record player and collection. He had a lot of French music because my grandma is French,' he says. 'So now we're expanding our collection even more.' The couple listens to them regularly. 'We put on a record every morning at breakfast,' says Anne Marie. 'We don't usually buy other things here, but I am specifically looking for ramekins – little dishes for crème brûlée. So I come here sometimes to see if they have any.'

## Inspiration

Meanwhile, new customers continue to flow in. Lin Sprenkeler is never looking for anything specific, but she almost always pops in as she passes by on the way home from the station. 'I think this is such a cute little store. I really buy everything here,' she laughs. 'Just yesterday, a book by Eva Jinek that was in



the display case, about her career. And I've also bought games here.' She looks at two tubes in her hand. 'Now, I found pink hair dye.' That element of surprise keeps the Greek Anastasios coming back. 'You find things you weren't planning to find. Sometimes I get inspiration here for my work as a filmmaker. I recently bought a book on anatomy, for example. And I mainly come here for toys for my little boy. I don't always bring him, because he gets too excited by all the stuff,' he laughs.

## More than just shopping

Visiting De Buurtringloop offers more than just the initial 'encounter' that owner Sophie had in mind. For example, just as Charlotte comes to the thrift store when she's sad, Anastasios comes to escape for a while and clear his head. 'A thrift store is different from a commercial store, where people quickly go in and out to get something,' he says. 'Here, everything moves slower.'

mode of transport! Open a local bank account immediately for daily transactions; some places don't accept foreign cards or credit cards. Healthcare: it is mandatory to take out Dutch health

# Aryan

TEXT: AUGUSTE KOOL  
PHOTOGRAPHY: JORIS VAN GENNIP



ARYAN: 'I'VE BEEN REALLY LUCKY WITH MY ROOMMATES'

26 27

**Aryan Mukherjee (19) is in his first year of a bachelor's degree in computer science at the Vrije Universiteit. He has lived on the Uilenstede student campus in Amstelveen since August 2025.**

His 17-square-metre room is neat, except for his desk. 'It's usually covered in electronics,' he says, 'that just means I'm using it right.' Every time his mother calls him, she comments on his room. 'She always asks why I don't have any flowers or plants,' Aryan laughs. 'It's a very utilitarian room.' He keeps his per-

sonal items stored away. 'I'm quite sentimental, so I keep photos safely in a box.'

Aryan's parents live in Munich for his father's job, though they are originally from India. 'Home would be either Munich or Hyderabad,' he says, 'that's where my parents and friends are.'

He came to Amsterdam for practical reasons. After completing the International Baccalaureate, he was not immediately eligible for German universities. 'I would have had to study maths and physics in German for a year,' he says, 'That didn't make sense when I wanted to study computer science in English.'

Luckily, studying in the Netherlands didn't disappoint. 'I've been really lucky with my roommates,' he says, 'we eat

together, play music, talk. It feels like an extended family. If you walk in at any moment, it smells incredible,' he says.

Still, Aryan misses Indian food. 'I've tried recreating my mother's cooking, but it doesn't hit the same.' Most days, he cooks something simple. 'Rice or pasta is my go-to. I buy four kilos of basmati rice every month.' He appreciates Amstelveen for its calm and proximity to the university, while Amsterdam feels 'beautiful, but very touristy.' Because of his one-year housing contract, home feels temporary. 'If I knew I could stay somewhere for the duration of my studies,' he says, 'I could really call it home.'

**S** IS FOR STROOPWAFEL. A caramel-syrup wafer with one correct use: balanced on a hot coffee cup, softening to perfection, while you're pretending moderation is still on the table.

# Fatima



FATIMA: 'I FEEL LIKE PEOPLE HERE ARE SOFT AND KIND'

**Fatima Zainelabdin (33) welcomes me into her apartment in De Nieuwe Meent, a non-profit housing cooperative where residents collectively own and manage their homes.**

Fatima fled the war in Sudan in June 2023. Since then, she has lived in several refugee centers across the Netherlands. It wasn't easy, especially considering the lack of privacy: 'You don't feel dignity in a place like that.' Building connections was difficult, and the constant uncertainty made it hard to feel settled.

Before the war, Fatima lived in Khartoum with her family and spent time at a farmhouse near the Nile. 'We drank tea, ate Sudanese zalabia, read poetry. Neighbours came in without knocking.' Her father, a military official, was detained by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group. 'He wasn't only my dad — he was my friend. I haven't heard from him in two years.'

In Amsterdam, Fatima is recreating 'home' in different ways. One is by reconnecting with Sudan. As Executive Director of the Sudanese Refugee Organization, she works with others who have fled the war. 'If you come from a war, finding people who understand is essential,' she says. She is also developing Hashab Wellbeing Enterprise, a Sudanese skincare brand based on tra-

ditional knowledge passed down from her grandmother. 'Through this,' she says, 'I want to show what Sudan has to offer.'

At the same time, Amsterdam provides space for something new. 'I feel like people here are soft and kind. It's easy to find a community here... Compared to all the other places I've lived, I feel most welcome here.' Having just received her Dutch residency permit, she hopes to stay in Amsterdam, though she has been assigned housing in Lisse.

*insurance within four months of arrival in the Netherlands. Sell your stuff on King's Day — or maybe even find a bargain! Try Amsterdam pickles, for example, gherkins, or wien op zuur.*

De Porceleyne Byl  
Rijksmuseum archive

# Street food

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## Discover some of the best places in Amsterdam for street food: from fish to falafel

TEXT: ANNA WABEKE  
PHOTOGRAPHY: KOOSJE KOOLBERGEN

### 1. Herring from Vishandel Tel

The best herring is also the fattiest, and this you'll find at Vishandel Tel. The tiny fish shop is tucked away in a side street of Nieuwmarkt, right in the heart of Amsterdam's Chinatown, where the family-run business has been based since the 1980s. Inside, whole fish lie neatly arranged on beds of ice, and staff in matching blue overalls and Crocs help their customers. It's just €1.75 for a herring served with finely chopped onion. You won't find traditional pickles as part of the deal here – the owners insist the acid would spoil the fish's freshness. Vishandel Tel supplies many restaurants across the city but also caters to walk-in customers. It's often busy, so visitors need to take a queue number before being served.

Vishandel Tel  
Kloveniersburgwal 13

### 2. Bakabana from De Smeltkroes

'Bakabana is to Javanese people what yoghurt is to the Dutch,' explains Marianna, owner of De Smeltkroes. 'You can eat it at any time of the day, as a snack, for lunch and especially as dessert.' Bakabana, a beloved Javanese treat, consists of ripe plantain dipped in a sweet batter and fried to a golden crisp. The best bakabana is found at De Smeltkroes in the Bijlmer, a spacious canteen-style eatery. This family-run business has been making bakabana the traditional Javanese way for decades. It all began when the owner's mother started a small catering service from her own kitchen in a nearby apartment building. These days, everyone in Bijlmer knows De Smeltkroes. What sets their bakabana apart is its signature vegan batter, which keeps the fritters slightly chewy and crispy. Paired with the house-made spicy peanut sauce this makes for a tasty sweet and salty dish.

De Smeltkroes  
Bijlmerdreef 1315

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1. Herring with onions from Tel
2. Saoto soup with saté and white rice from Smeltkroes
3. Falafel from Dr. Falafel

### 3. Falafel from Dr. Falafel

'I'm just a Dutch guy who makes falafel,' admits the owner of Dr. Falafel as he swiftly stuffs a pita with cucumbers and tahini sauce behind the counter. The tiny food stall on the corner of Nassaukade has a minimalist menu: one dish only, a falafel sandwich for eight euros, or half for €4.50. The only choice you have to make is how spicy you want it, which allows for stress-free ordering. This falafel stands out for its perfect balance between the soft, fluffy pita and the crunchy falafel balls, topped with a homemade tahini sauce. The balls used to be hand-rolled, but these days the owner relies on a special machine to keep up with demand. 'This guy just gets it,' says a regular customer, patiently waiting by the counter for his usual order. The secret lies in the simplicity. Dr. Falafel chose to master one thing and did it well, nothing fancy, just reliably good falafel.

Dr. Falafel  
Nassaukade 900

## The list

### Rudi's Original Stroopwafels

For the best stroopwafels, visit Rudi's at Albert Cuyp Market in De Pijp district. They sell old-fashioned handpressed waffles with caramel syrup.

Albert Cuypstraat 182

### Tigris en Eufrat

The best halloumi wraps in town.

Javastraat 20H

### Vlaams Friteshuis Vlemingckx

Go here for fries with traditional, slightly sour Flemish mayonnaise. Often busy, so be prepared to queue.

Voetboogstraat 33

### Wynand Fockink

Here you can taste a variety of jenever and liqueurs from Amsterdam the traditional way. They fill the small glasses to the brim so you can't pick up the glass and first have to bow down for your drink.

Pijlsteeg 31

### Dumplings Amsterdam

Great dumplings and Chinese pancakes from a small kiosk near Westerpark.

Nassauplein 60

### Broodje Daan

Well-made sandwiches for friendly prices.

Jan van Galenstraat 219

### Hapjeshoek

Surinamese dishes and sandwiches served from a small shop in the metro station.

Waterlooplein metro station

### Butchery Kaddour

Halal butcher with some of the best grilled sausage sandwiches.

Gentiaanstraat 13

### Omaira Eiland

They sell high quality, super crispy fried fish (kibbeling) which is well worth a try.

Jan van Schaffelaarsplantsoen

### Hoi Tin

Very affordable Cantonese bakery.

Zeedijk 122

### Effendy

Delicious vegetarian Turkish pizza.

Rozengracht 148

Get to know the neighbourhoods 'buiten de ring' (outside the ring road), such as Nieuw-West and Zuidooit. Wander through the Amsterdamse Bos. Do you need something? Or want to give

# On the house

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**K** IS FOR KONINGS DAG. The annual suspension of normal rules. Streets turn orange, strangers become vendors, and the entire city agrees that chaos counts as tradition for exactly one day.



**A Little Nest in the Park:** Flevopark is home to a squatted coffee bar, now run by volunteers. You can join fun activities like game afternoons, workshops, jam sessions, and more. Pay what you can afford.

Open daily, closed Tuesdays, 12.00-18.00, Flevopark 15

**Rescued Food:** Free meals made from surplus products from shops, restaurants, and markets collected at the end of the day. Volunteers cook delicious dishes, fight food waste, and bring neighbors together to eat.

Check [buurtbuik.nl](http://buurtbuik.nl) for locations

**OBA Central Library:** The central library hosts free exhibitions on the first floor. Don't miss the escalator ride to the top floor of this impressive building, where you'll find stunning city views.

Oosterdokskade 143

**Free Films:** A vibrant film scene thrives in (former) squats across the city. For a donation, you can catch obscure and unique arthouse films at places like Mollie Chaoot or Joe's Garage.

See [radar.squat.net](http://radar.squat.net) for all squat scene activities

**Silent Disco:** Every Wednesday evening, dance together under the ancient Muiderpoort. Headphones are available to borrow, and you can come and go as you please.

Every Wednesday, 20.30-22.30, Alexanderplein

**Clothing Swap:** The Clothing Loop is a neighbourhood clothes-swapping chain. You receive a bag, take what you need, donate what you no longer wear, and pass it to the next person. There are options for women's, men's, and children's clothing. Sustainable, free, and always a surprise.

Sign up at [clothingloop.org](http://clothingloop.org)

**City Archives:** A great activity for anyone interested in Amsterdam's history and present. Enjoy beautiful exhibitions, and don't miss the small cinema in the archive vault, showing films about Amsterdam.

De Bazel, Vijzelstraat 32

**Skating:** Exercising is more fun with others. Every Friday evening (8.15pm), skaters gather in Vondelpark for the Friday Night Skate: 20 kilometers through the city with music. Cancelled if the roads are wet.

[Fridaynightskate.com](http://Fridaynightskate.com)

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## BETWEEN WAITING AND BECOMING

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*An asylum seeker's early months in the Netherlands*



TEXT: OFIEBOR EMMANUEL CHIGOZIE  
ILLUSTRATION: ROSA SNIJDERS

When people hear the word 'asylum,' they often think of politics, border policy, or migration numbers. Few think about the silence that comes with it.

I arrived in the Netherlands not as a student or worker, but as someone asking for protection. In the early days, I quickly learned that asylum is not only a legal procedure – it is an emotional condition. You live in waiting.

Before coming here, I was a trained microbiologist in Nigeria. I had professional ambitions, a field of expertise, and a direction for my life. But safety is the foundation on which ambition stands. When safety becomes uncertain, everything else begins to collapse.

After registration, I entered the Dublin stage of the process. For many Dutch citizens, this may sound technical. For an asylum seeker, it feels existential. It means the authorities must determine whether the Netherlands is responsible for handling your application or whether another European country should take over. During this period, you do not know where your future will unfold. You exist in uncertainty.

*Waiting is not passive. It affects how you breathe, how you sleep, how you think about tomorrow.*

In the reception centre, life moves slowly, but thoughts move fast. You count days without knowing what you are counting toward. You read meaning into every letter delivered. You check your phone more often than necessary. A simple envelope can represent hope or fear.

For me, as a queer asylum seeker, this period was especially difficult because the reasons I left Nigeria are deeply personal. Speaking openly about my identity during interviews required confronting memories I had spent years trying to survive. The asylum process asks for detail – timelines, explanations, consistency. It requires you to translate lived fear into structured testimony.

*There is something unsettling about having to demonstrate your vulnerability in order to deserve safety.*

At the same time, I became aware of how much I had taken independence for granted. In the Netherlands, during this early stage, I could not simply work in my field, rent a home freely, or make long-term plans. My future was paused. I was safe physically, but suspended socially and professionally. That suspension can quietly erode your confidence if you are not careful.

*Yet there is another side that deserves recognition.*

The Netherlands is known for its commitment to human rights, the rule of law, and equality. For someone seeking protection, those principles are not abstract. They are personal. Even within a complex system, there were moments that reminded me why I sought refuge here – respectful treatment during interviews, access to legal counsel, and the knowledge that my case would be assessed according to established legal standards rather than arbitrary power.

For many Dutch readers, the asylum system may appear slow or bureaucratic. From inside it, the slowness can feel

heavy – but fairness matters. The fact that decisions must be reasoned, that procedures are regulated, that appeals are possible – these are not small things for someone who comes from a context where protection is uncertain.

The Dublin stage teaches resilience in quiet ways. You learn to manage hope carefully. You prepare yourself mentally for different outcomes while still believing in the possibility of staying. You begin to understand that dignity is something you must guard internally, even when your external situation feels fragile.

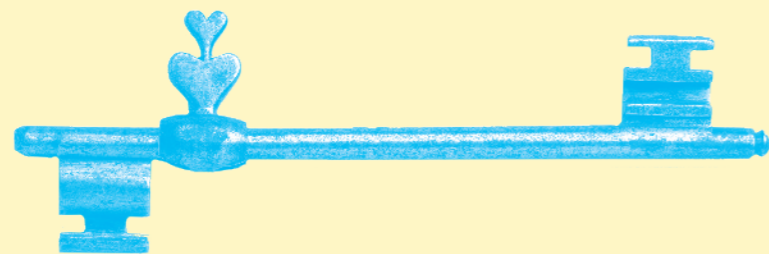
I do not see myself only as someone seeking protection. I see myself as someone who wants to contribute – to work, to develop professionally, and to integrate fully into Dutch society. Seeking asylum is not the end of ambition. It is a temporary interruption caused by the search for safety.

Behind every asylum file is a human being who had a life before arrival and hopes that did not disappear at the border. The early months in the Netherlands have taught me patience, humility, and a deeper appreciation for stability – something many people do not notice until it is uncertain.

For now, my status remains undecided. But one truth is already clear: safety is not merely the absence of violence. It is the ability to exist openly, to speak without hiding, and to imagine a future without constantly calculating risk.

That is what I am waiting for.

And that is what asylum truly means to me.



something away? Place an advert in Z!: [aanzetjes@z-krant.nl](mailto:aanzetjes@z-krant.nl). Markets, such as the Dappermarkt or the Ten Kate-market, are great places to spot Amsterdammers in the wild. Try out a

# Learning to belong, the Double Dutch way



Comedian Derek Mitchell on cultural friction, awkward linguistic moments, and why you shouldn't wait for approval to feel at home.

TEXT: SARAH FAIRMAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY: DAPHNE LUCKER

## Learning the language

Over coffee and haverkoek (oatmeal biscuits) in an Amsterdam café overlooking the roadworks in front of the Dutch National Opera & Ballet, comedian Derek Mitchell shares his stories of building a life in Amsterdam. His European tour, which begins in March 2026, turns the ups and downs of getting to know a new culture into 'an evening of offline fun.'

Derek came from the United States to Amsterdam at 19, 'sight unseen.' He credits his lack of expectations with helping him feel at home: 'I think people come here and are like, I have an Excel, I have a plan... I think it's good for integration purposes to keep your mind open.' Strategy had no place in his approach – he was 'just really open to meeting people, going to parties, and just talking to whoever.'

Everyone who moves to the Netherlands asks themselves the same thing – should I learn Dutch? For Derek, there was never any question – it was an integral step in getting to know the country he wanted to belong to. One of the places he began learning the language was working in a bar – 'it's really helpful to have a script that you can follow with people in social situations.'

Still, even Derek, who is now fluent in Dutch language and culture, went through that dreaded shared experience – trying to speak Dutch, only for the other person to switch to English. 'I remember those moments feeling like the most humiliating, sad moments.' Nowadays, he admits to doing the same, for efficiency, but he suggests not taking it personally. 'Dutch people are not setting out to make you feel bad. No, you're probably feeling bad because their way of existing just clashes in some way with yours.'

Derek's comedy helps newcomers explore Dutch culture, whether out of curiosity or necessity. His upcoming tour is 'about my life here and my relationship with a Dutch person... the everyday sort of communication barriers and breakdowns that are a part of that kind of life lived between influences, cultures, and traditions.' He has a 'lot of theories' about why these happen: 'it's not for a lack of wanting to connect,' he says. Not only can audiences learn about his theories and test them out, but the show also offers respite from the somewhat exhausting times we're living in.

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COMEDIAN DEREK MITCHELL WOULD LOVE TO BE FUNNY IN DUTCH ONE DAY.

## Amsterdam and its characters

The city of Amsterdam has informed not only Derek's current tour, but the characters who feature on his Instagram, @letsdoubledutch. 'It's an endlessly fruitful place to meet and see characters with really interesting backgrounds and life stories.' Although he sometimes experiences Amsterdam as 'a village,' it's home to an infinite supply of inspiration.

In contrast to Amsterdam's 'internationally facing' culture, it can be challenging to get to know the Netherlands outside the big cities. But Derek has been successful in exploring lesser-known places, through learning Dutch and asking his new friends to 'tell him everything.' However, his interest was sometimes met with confusion, as the Dutch tend to downplay their culture. 'That's a beautiful feature of Dutchness, I think, they really don't take their culture super seriously. To a fault.' Getting to know the Netherlands involves persistence, showing interest, and asking questions.

## Geen bevestiging zoeken (don't look for approval)

Derek suggests letting the feeling of belonging come from within, rather than waiting for acceptance. 'That's a trap that a lot of internationals here maybe fall into – this belief that it will come from approval. I also think it's a cultural sin in Dutch social life, bevestiging zoeken (seeking approval) is a really annoying quality.' Often, an international newcomer to the Netherlands wants to be told they've done well, when simply enjoying someone's company is far more effective.

In the early days, Derek focused on activities and staying positive. 'One of the things I did in the very beginning was a lot of amateur theatre... I met some of my earliest friends in the Netherlands that way, Dutch and non-Dutch, mostly British expats who were at that time in their sixties. And I was 19, just drinking beers with them.' As Derek says, if you find a hobby you enjoy and do it with other people who also enjoy it, you immediately have something to talk about. He also suggests avoiding negativity – when people talk badly about the Netherlands because they're lonely or lost. 'It's really beneficial to be like, no, I'm excited. I'm going to sink my teeth in... once you push through a little bit, your life will be so much better for having stuck with it.'

Despite having been here for over a decade, Derek still has plenty of ambitions. He'd 'love to be funny in Dutch one day,' and he's been working on a Ukrainian character as a tribute to the growing Ukrainian population in the Netherlands. He's taking it seriously – even learning the language. For now, though, a rare sunny February day makes being outside in the city hard to resist. After all, 'there's nothing, especially in the summertime in Amsterdam, like just hopping on your bike and going from one group of friends at one café to another.'

audio tour to get to know a new part of the city. Watch out! There's a difference between GVB and NS, so you'll need a different ticket for each. Visit the rooftop at Nemo for a beautiful free view

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# 'In the early years, I often felt like a stranger'

After leaving Suriname for the Netherlands with her young daughter, Vay Renfrum had to rebuild her life from scratch. Now, three decades later, she has found a place to call home.

TEXT: MARTIJN VAN DER DONK  
PHOTOGRAPHY: KOOSJE KOOLBERGEN

On a cold February day, Vay Renfrum, 60, is at De Ark, a former church in Amsterdam Noord, getting around on her mobility scooter. She is here every Wednesday afternoon for the Sociale Markt, a place where people with financial worries can meet and shop. Vay now feels at home in Netherlands and in her home on the Aakstraat. But it's been a long journey to get to this point.

'I feel the sadness and loneliness again when I think back to my first February day in the Netherlands, in 1998. There I was at Schiphol in my far too thin denim jacket. My three-year-old daughter and I were waiting for a cousin who would come and pick me up. A day before that I had said goodbye with a heavy heart to my other teenage daughter in Suriname who was going to live with my sister.'

Even her family's welcome in The Hague was chilly. They offered her and her daughter a roof over their heads, but Vay was mainly on her own. Although she spoke the language, in the beginning, she had to find many things out for herself.

## Independence

Many of Vay's friends and family emigrated to the Netherlands after Suriname's independence in 1975. 'For my family, there was no reason to leave. We were doing well. We lived in Moengo, a town in East Suriname. My father worked in a bauxite mine. Hard work, but his employer treated him well.'

Vay grew up in a family with 12 children. There was no time for lazing around. From a young age, she had to help out around the house. 'I was happy, though. I grew up in a close-knit community. Everyone knew each other - from school, swimming club, or the library.'

'Because of the Civil War [1986-1992, ed.], we were forced to flee to Paramaribo. The capital took some getting used to. Life there was much more impersonal.'

## Pregnant

In Paramaribo, Vay had a daughter whom she had to take care of largely by herself, as her husband died in an accident. Thirteen years later, she unexpectedly became pregnant again. 'The father and I split up before the birth. Then I began thinking about my daughters' futures. The level of healthcare and education has gone downhill over the years. I wanted to give them both a better place to grow up.'

## Stranger

In the Netherlands, permanent status wasn't easy to come by. 'I was so happy when I could pick up my passport. For the first time, I had the feeling that I belonged. In the early years, I often felt like a stranger. When it froze, I would sneak off to the park to practise walking on ice. I didn't want people in my neighbourhood to see that I wasn't from here.'

'I had to get used to a lot of things. Here, you have to sign a contract for everything: for energy, health insurance, television. Everything costs money here. In Suriname you don't have to have a subscription for TV. And your health insurance is organised via your employer.'

'I was happy when I found a job in home care. I earned money and got to know the Netherlands better at the same time. The people I helped told me stories about what it was like growing up in the second world war. I found it very interesting. Unfortunately, I had to stop doing this work after 17 years due to physical complaints.'

## Finding her way around

Fortunately, Vay had gradually built up a rich social network outside of work. 'I went to the Maranathakerk every week in Amsterdam. I got to know people who helped me find my way around in Dutch society. Here in Amsterdam Noord I've become a member of walking, swimming, and diabetes clubs. As a newcomer, you should definitely spend time with other people, otherwise you get lonely.'

After the interview, Vay is going to do some more shopping at the Sociale Markt. 'I'll never get used to the weather. I'm looking forward to spring and summer. Then the doors of my home will open and friends and neighbours can just come on in. Eating, drinking, and chatting together. Beautiful! It makes me feel for a moment like I'm back in Moengo again.'

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VAY: 'I WANTED TO GIVE MY DAUGHTERS A BETTER PLACE TO GROW UP'

*over the city. Nobody prepares you for Amsterdam. Accept that it has so many strange things.*



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- 1. Japanese knotweed by W. Carter
- 2. Egyptian goose
- 3. Rose-ringed parakeet by Eva Plevier
- 4. Crayfish
- 5. Orange-black butterfly by Rabe19
- 6. Magnolia by Ohara Koson

THE ZED! AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

# INVASIVE SPECIES & OTHERS

From time to time, a new species enters our country: a brightly coloured flower, a butterfly that until recently only fluttered in warmer regions, or a bird.

TEXT: BRECHTJE KEULEN

The pheasant, for example, has been here since the Middle Ages. The magnolia, with its lavish white or pink blooms, arrived in the Netherlands in the 17th century. The map butterfly, an orange-and-black insect, appeared in the 1950s. We call them 'non-native species.'

Sometimes, these non-natives feel so at home that they take over. They push out native species, threaten biodiversity, damage the landscape, and can even pose a risk to safety. The Japanese knotweed, for instance, burrows through foundations, quay walls, and road surfaces. The American signal crayfish digs into banks and dikes and devours the eggs and larvae of other aquatic animals.

The Egyptian goose, with its stunning plumage, is aggressive toward other nesting birds and damages crops. The bright green rose-ringed parakeet deafens Amsterdam residents with its squawking.

We call these newcomers 'invasive species.' Risk assessments and control plans are being developed because biodiversity, safety, and health are precious to us. But think about this: almost all of these species arrived here with humans, coming back from their travels all over the world. Can we really decide which animals, insects, and plants belong in our city, and which don't?



6

HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

**W** IS FOR WIND. A permanent headwind in every direction. It is not a meteorological phenomenon, it is personal. Less a weather condition than a shared psychological experience every cyclist reluctantly accepts.

*At the public library you'll always have a dry place to sit and read the newspaper for free. On a certain day, people are cycling naked through the city. This is Amsterdam. Organize your own*

# Canal-do attitude

Flow smoothly into city life with our insider tips to navigating life, language, and local culture as an Amsterdam newcomer.

TEXT: KEITH J FERNANDEZ  
PHOTOGRAPHY: INTERVIEWEES  
AND KEITH J FERNANDEZ

As a newcomer to Amsterdam, or anywhere else in the Netherlands, you'll often be asked if you 'feel at home' yet, or as the Dutch say, 'Voel je je thuis?'

But settling in anywhere is no small feat. Everything works differently, locals aren't always accommodating of newcomers, and each place has its own language. The Dutch capital offers its own trials, from unpredictable weather to the daunting inburgeringsproces (civic integration), so putting down roots takes time.

**Don't expect to settle in right away**

'I'd say, give yourself a year. That's how long it took me before I truly felt like an Amsterdammer,' says Viviana Cordero, a Costa Rican communications professional who moved here with her husband just after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

Between rainy visits to the gemeente (municipality) and the bank, between adjusting to work, the commute, to life, to cyclists, the 41-year-old says the first year just flies by. 'You're still finding out who you are in this city, and so expecting the country to welcome you with open arms is unfair. You've got to give a little of yourself first.'

**Take time to understand the culture**

Like any big city, Amsterdam sees people come and go, so natives are slow to welcome you into their homes, Cordero says. 'But once you break the ice, by learning about the culture and integrating, you'll slowly make close friends.' Michael Borokowski, 39, a Polish national selling the Z-Krant, suggests starting at the Rijksmuseum. 'I always recommend it to anyone who moves here or visits,' he says. Entry for adults costs 25 euros, but its gardens are freely accessible.

The Rijks sits on Museumplein, a lively square with events all year round, Borokowski says. There's frisbee on Sundays, ice-skating in the winter, and frequent fairs and markets.

**Anything for introverts?**

Read, Cordero suggests. There's no shortage of English-language books available in Amsterdam, and bookworms (boekenwurmen) will enjoy the American Book Center, a friendly independent bookstore on the Spui.

**Expect direct comments about everything**

The Dutch are famously direct, as Ben Coates points out in *Why the Dutch are different*. Say something thoughtless in a meeting and someone will point it out, Coates told the BBC.

That stems from the belief that everything can and should be discussed (bespreekbaarheid). Internationals may experience this low-context communication style as rudeness, particularly if they're used to more implicit ways.

'At first, I was like, "boom!" like a blow to the gut. Where I come from, we're more diplomatic, we consider people's feelings. If I don't like something, [it] doesn't mean it's wrong,' says Joseph Ajero, a 35-year-old from Nigeria who sells the Z-Krant and has been here a year. 'The more I stay here, the more I understand this is part of the culture, so I still have to adjust to that.'

Take the middle path by being upfront about personal preferences: 'Sometimes, it's good to say what you want.'

**Stick to brightly lit areas for safety**

Some residents avoid city parks after midnight, a 2025 survey by AT5 found, although Amsterdam consistently ranks among the world's safest cities. 'Don't go out on your own late at night – whether you're a woman or a man,' says Wu Yuyu, 29, who moved to Amsterdam from China in 2019 to study

financial management. If you do, stick to well-lit areas, Redditors advise.

Stay alert to pickpockets, particularly in tourist hotspots. Gemeente Amsterdam tracks social safety across neighbourhoods on its website.

**There's no getting around learning Dutch**

Improve your situational awareness – and job prospects – by learning Dutch, Wu says. 'Sometimes my boyfriend gives me a Dutch lesson; I teach him my language in exchange,' she laughs.

The US State Department ranks Dutch among the easiest languages for English speakers. You'll need it if you're considering the intimidating inburgeringsexamen.

For those who don't have a Dutch partner, there are several free resources. Adrian Detmen, 44, a Z-Krant salesman from Poland, turns to social media, and says he's learnt a lot from Youtube. Start with simpler videos like public broadcaster NOS' youth channel (Het Jeugdjournaal), or even pop songs.

The public library, the Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA), has two dozen locations where you can read periodicals at no cost. It also hosts a free Dutch language café (taalcafé), as does the Koentact language school.

Language brings context and the ability to read tax papers, says Shashikant Kejriwal, 42. The leadership trainer moved here from New Delhi, India. 'Without the language one can feel like living next to the beach without knowing how to swim, and miss a whole world,' he says.

Although Amsterdammers will switch to English on hearing your accent, he recommends persevering – whether in a brown café or on the school run. 'Tell people you want to learn and they will help you,' Kejriwal says. With language practice and an expanding kennissenkring, you could soon be feeling gezellig – and right at home.



**IS FOR ZED-KRANT.** The street paper connecting stories, opportunities, and the people who keep the city human. The independent street paper in your hands right now, sold by vendors getting back on their feet. You already bought it, which means you already get it.



Viviana



Michael



Joseph



Shashikant

## Colophon

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neighbourhood party on the street or in the garden if you happen to have one. Invite a few neighbours, arrange drinks and food, and please: play some music!

# Giovanni & Derek

**A**

IS FOR **ACHTEROP** Riding astride or side-saddle on the back of someone's bike: equal parts trust, exercise and traffic hazard. Knees angled outward, bag on your head, you learn quickly that in Amsterdam balance is less about skill than confidence.



THE ZED! AMSTERDAM STREET PAPER

HOW TO FEEL MORE AMSTERDAMMER

**GIOVANNI** OFTEN SELLS Z! AT THE AH ON CRUQUIUS-EILAND. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM ITALY AND HAS BEEN LIVING IN THE NETHERLANDS FOR 3 YEARS. 'ACHTEROP': US COMEDIAN **DEREK MITCHELL**, WHO MOVED TO AMSTERDAM WHEN HE WAS 19.

xxx through the eyes of the city xxx