



5 minute guide: The Hague

About

The Hague — also known as Den Haag — is arguably the Netherlands' most refined city. It houses the Dutch Parliament, King's Office, high courts, mansions, boulevards, immaculate green gardens, a thriving cafe culture and nightlife scene — as well as the beach at Scheveningen. It's also just an hour away from the neon lights and bustle of Amsterdam by train.

Attractions

The main allure of The Hague is culture, with its pristine palaces and marvellous museums well worth a visit. Top picks are the palace museum of Mauritshuis, for impressive Dutch and Flemish art, and the Gemeentemuseum, which specialises in 19th to 21st century art. Escher fans will enjoy the extensive homage to him at Het Paleis Museum. The Hague hosts numerous music, art and literature festivals from May until September annually.

Buildings

The architecture of The Hague is mesmerising. The charm can be seen in the

blend from various influences throughout history, including gothic, classical and modern. Binnenhof, the inner court of parliament which has wings dating from the 13th, 17th and 18th centuries, showcases the gothic side and is a must to tour. Classical beauty can be seen in the main building of Mauritshuis, while The Hague City Hall is considered a modern masterpiece.

Shop

The centre of town has high street and high-end clothing shops, boutiques and brands covered. The boardwalk at Scheveningen offers kitsch beach souvenirs and homemade jewellery. The most interesting finds are at The Hague Market, which claims to be Europe's largest, home to over 500 stalls. Open four days a week, there's food, flowers, clothes, local produce and crafts to be found.

Eat

The Hague has a flourishing culinary scene, with relaxed Dutch cafe-style dishes such as pea soup, *bitterballen* (a meatball-style snack) and *stroomwafels*, to

upscale gastronomy. For a fun fine-dining experience, try Hoftramm, a converted tram-cum-restaurant where diners can savour delicious Dutch food while slowly touring the city. Het Haringhuisje on the promenade at Scheveningen offers the freshest herring in town.

Drink

By day, cafe culture means good coffee almost everywhere, and the chance to sample local fruit beers. By night, Het Plein square is abuzz with life and music, while Scheveningen is the cool hang-out for cocktails and *glühwein* in winter.

Views

The six major squares near Binnenhof, including De Plaats and Grote Markt, offer charming vistas. Het Lange Voorhout affords an exquisite ambience with linden trees, the Royal Palace and Hotel Des Indes, and flowers in spring. The best photograph of the city could perhaps be taken while gazing at the reflections of the Binnenhof and Mauritshuis while strolling around the Hofvijver.