



ACADEMY
TRAVEL

TAILORED
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS

HIGH ART IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

BRUSSELS, BRUGES, DELFT, THE HAGUE,
HAARLEM & AMSTERDAM

OVERVIEW

Discover a Northern Renaissance of cultural brilliance, artistic innovation and unique regional identity in the Low Countries, from Brussels to Bruges, Delft, Haarlem and Amsterdam.

Explore the visual worlds and distinctive religious and political identities of the Low Countries on this 14-day tour, going beyond the clichés of windmills and wooden shoes with art historian Dr Sophie Oosterwijk. In outstanding and recently renovated museums of world-class art, including Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and Brussels' Museum of Fine Arts, understand how Northern masters from Van Eyck to Van der Weyden and Rubens to Rembrandt revolutionised Western painting, and admire their masterworks in museum, church and domestic settings.

Appreciate cityscapes that are largely unchanged since the glory days of the Flemish Renaissance and the Dutch Golden Age, from the iconic canals of Bruges and Amsterdam to Brussels and Antwerp's grand squares. Trace the Low Countries' reputation for innovation down to the modern age, surveying Horta's Art Nouveau architecture, Magritte's surrealist canvases and Vincent van Gogh's impact on contemporary art.



TOUR LEADER

Dr Sophie Oosterwijk is an art historian specialising in medieval, Flemish and Dutch art. She has taught at St Andrews and led cultural tours since 1994.

TOUR DATES

May 17-30, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$10,970 per person, twin share
\$2,080 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **15** in group.

Please note the smaller group size is due to the maximum group size allowed in museums and galleries.

ITINERARY

Brussels (3 nights), Bruges (3 nights),
The Hague (3 nights), Haarlem
(4 nights)

INCLUSIONS

13 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels. All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 5 dinners. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Start & Finish

The tour starts at 4.00pm on Friday 17 May, at The Renaissance Marriott Hotel, Brussels. The tour ends after breakfast on Thursday 30 May, at Grand Hotel Frans Hals, Haarlem.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Golden Age Art

Understand the artistic revolutions of the Dutch Golden Age at the Rijksmuseum and Mauritshuis, with works by Vermeer, Rembrandt and a host of equally magnificent masters.

Modern masters

Survey the Low Countries' reputation for modern excellence, with in-depth explorations of work by Van Gogh, Magritte and Art Nouveau pioneer Victor Horta.

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam

Discover Amsterdam's long reputation as a centre for radical thinking, innovative art and a relaxed lifestyle, in this World Heritage-listed city.

Medieval cityscape of Bruges

Enjoy the beautifully preserved and vibrant town of Bruges, with two nights in the historic centre and masterpieces by Jan van Eyck, Michelangelo and Memling.

Small towns and their gems

Admire small-town treasures, from the Van Eyck brothers' altarpiece in Ghent and the church treasures in Louvain to Vermeer's Delft and Frans Hals in Haarlem.

Friday 17 May

Arrive

We gather this afternoon at our hotel with tour leader Dr Sophie Oosterwijk. After time to introduce ourselves, we take a walking tour and visit the World-Heritage listed Grand Place, Brussels' historic centre, lined with palaces of the city's medieval guilds. Dinner this evening is at a local restaurant. Overnight Brussels (D)

Saturday 18 May

Brussels' Museum of Fine Arts

Flanders and Brabant were the economic heart of northern Europe in the Middle Ages and the centre of an artistic revolution in the 15th-17th centuries. After a talk in the hotel, we visit Belgium's Royal Museums of Fine Arts to explore its magnificent collection of Old Masters, including works by Van der Weyden, Bosch, Bruegel and Rubens. We then enjoy a welcome lunch in a restaurant inside one of Brussels' most striking Art Nouveau buildings. In the afternoon, there will be free time to visit the Magritte Museum (subject to opening), which holds the most comprehensive collection of this surrealist artist's his work. Evening at leisure. Overnight Brussels (B, L)

Sunday 19 May

Victor Horta and Leuven

Victor Horta was one of the leading lights of Art Nouveau architecture, and this morning we have a private guided visit of his house and studio. The building is innovative and delightfully playful in its use of materials, decorative motifs and division of spaces to facilitate a modern lifestyle. Travelling by coach to Leuven, a historic university town outside Brussels, we explore its beautiful Gothic church and its treasures. Returning to Brussels, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Brussels (B)

Monday 20 May

Ghent

Ghent was one of medieval Europe's largest cities and home to one of the 15th-century's most revolutionary artworks: the so-called *Ghent Altarpiece* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, housed in the Cathedral of St Bavo. Research undertaken during its

recent restoration has revealed much about one of the first surviving works to employ the luminous new technique of oil painting on panel used by the Van Eycks. After our visit, we tour the city and enjoy time for lunch. In the early afternoon we continue to Bruges, where dinner is in a local restaurant. Overnight Bruges (B, D)

Tuesday 21 May

Bruges

Bruges was a magnet for medieval European merchants, and towards the end of the 14th century it became part of the rising state of Burgundy and the centre of an artistic revolution by artists such as Jan van Eyck, Hans Memling and Gerard David. After a talk, we explore Bruges' historic cityscape, visiting the excellent Groeninge Museum which has some of Van Eyck's finest paintings – including the celebrated *Madonna of Cardinal van der Paele* – along with works by Memling, Bosch and Gerard David. Later, there will be a guided tour of St Salvator Cathedral and Treasury, followed by afternoon tea. Overnight Bruges (B)

Wednesday 22 May

Gruuthuse & Memling Museums

We depart on foot this morning, first stopping at the Basilica of the Holy Blood, traditionally believed to harbour a vial with the blood of Christ that is said to have been brought back from the Second Crusade in 1150. We then make our way to the nearby Gruuthuse Museum, housed in one of the few remaining 15th-century city palaces, where we take a guided tour of the extensive collection. Our next stop – and a highlight of the day – is the Church of Our Lady, containing the only statue by Michelangelo to go north of the Alps in the artist's own lifetime. After a break for lunch, we then visit the Memling Museum in the medieval St John's Hospital, home to an impressive collection of works by the Flemish Hans Memling. Following this visit, the rest of the afternoon and evening are at leisure. Overnight Bruges (B)

Thursday 23 May

Antwerp

Today we travel to Antwerp, Europe's largest port and richest city in the 16th century following the decline of Bruges. The vibrance of the city is reflected in the guildhalls of Grote Markt, whose architecture influenced a young Gaudí, and also in altarpieces by Rubens displayed in the magnificent cathedral. Our tour of the city also includes a visit of the Museum of Fine Arts housing a collection of paintings, sculptures and drawings from the 14th

to the 20th centuries. In the afternoon, we visit the Mayer van den Bergh Museum before we continue on to The Hague, our base for the next three nights. Dinner is in a local restaurant. Overnight The Hague (B, D)

Friday 24 May

The Hague

We spend the day exploring The Hague, a city whose fascinating history is inseparable from the House of Orange and is today the seat of the International Court of Justice. The great prize of our visit, however, is the extraordinary collection in the Mauritshuis, including Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *View of Delft*, Fabricius' *The Goldfinch*, and many excellent portraits by Rembrandt and others. After a guided visit of the gallery, we break for lunch and then visit the *Panorama Mesdag* – an extraordinary 120m-long painting depicting the Dutch coastline at Schevningen. In the afternoon, we visit the Kunstmuseum (formerly Gemeentemuseum), which features modern art and design, notably by De Stijl and Mondriaan. The evening is at leisure. Overnight The Hague (B)

Saturday 25 May

Delft

Today we visit Delft, which was a prosperous town in the 17th century and best known among English speakers as the hometown of Vermeer. This morning we explore the Nieuwe Kerk, where most of the members of the House of Orange are buried, and the new Vermeer Centre. After a break for a leisurely lunch, we visit Hofwijck, the 17th-century estate of the poet, composer and secretary of state, Constantijn Huygens. After returning to our hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight The Hague (B)

Sunday 26 May

Leiden and Haarlem

This morning we depart The Hague, stopping to visit Leiden, a beautiful university town with a rich history as a centre of printing and textiles. We explore the history and architecture of the town and visit the recently renovated Lakenhal Museum. In the afternoon, we continue to Haarlem. After checking in, there will be a talk in the hotel followed by dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Haarlem (B, D)

Monday 27 May

The Rijksmuseum & Van Gogh

The Dutch Republic emerged from the religious conflict that reshaped Europe and ushered in its

HOTELS

Brussels, Renaissance Marriott

(3 nights)

www.marriott.com

Bruges, Grand Hotel Casselbergh

(3 nights)

www.grandhotelcasselbergh.be

The Hague, Mövenpick Hotel

(3 nights)

www.movenpick.accor.com

Haarlem, Grand Hotel Frans Hals

(4 nights)

www.amrathotelhaarlem.nl

WEATHER

May is a beautiful time to travel in the Low Countries. The long northern days give us plenty of opportunity to enjoy the historic town centres well into the evening. It is likely to rain on some days, so a lightweight waterproof jacket is advisable. Daytime temperatures will usually reach the low twenties, with night-time average minimums in the mid-teens.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. You should be able to:

- comfortably participate in up to five hours of physical activity per day, including walking at an easy to regular pace, with only short breaks
- keep up with the group at all times
- negotiate paths and streets in historic towns, which are often uneven and unstable
- negotiate stairs and bridges
- stand for one to two hours in galleries and museums at a time
- get on and off a coach, train, ferry or boat with steep stairs unassisted
- use a combined shower/bath (please note that we cannot guarantee walk-in shower facilities)

own distinctively modern forms of art. Today we travel into Amsterdam to explore the art and culture of the Netherlands, starting at the Rijksmuseum. This most extensive collection of Dutch art includes Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* and Vermeer's *Milkmaid*. After our guided visit, we make our way to the nearby Van Gogh Museum. Vincent van Gogh was one of the modern world's most prolific artists, although recognition of his work only came after his untimely death in 1890. Overnight Haarlem (B)

Tuesday 28 May

Rembrandt

This morning we return to Amsterdam and stroll along the city's Amsterdam's World Heritage-listed canal belt, its series of timed locks and sluices a new model of rational town planning for a burgeoning city. This afternoon we visit Rembrandt's House to explore the life, times and style of the master and to see how art was made and sold to wealthy upper and middle-class patrons. Overnight Haarlem (B)

Wednesday 29 May

Haarlem

Haarlem is one of the gems of the Netherlands with its quiet streets of boutiques and cafes. The city is brimming with history: brutally sacked by Spanish troops in 1573, its rebuilding became a symbol of independence. This morning we explore the history of Haarlem on a walking tour, including visits to its historic almshouses and the Cathedral of St Bavo. We then visit the superb museum devoted to Frans Hals, one of the most endearing portraitists of the Golden Age, followed by lunch in a nearby restaurant. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner with matching wines at Ratatouille, a Michelin-Starred restaurant with a marvelous riverfront canal setting. Overnight Haarlem (B, L, D)

Thursday 30 May

Departure

The tour ends this morning after breakfast. Please consult your individual travel documents for your ongoing journey. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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