

Leiden, key to discovery

The city of Leiden is located in the heart of the Randstad, cities like Den Haag and Amsterdam are only a stone's throw away. The city is about 20 minutes of distance from the international airport Schiphol in Amsterdam.

In Leiden, you will see the many canals, which define the city. A visit to Leiden is not complete without a walk on the cobblestones of the narrow alleys and a tour by boat along the canals. You will enjoy the historical façades and monuments. Leiden has twelve fantastic museums, all worth to visit and within walking distance of each other. The options are overwhelming: Dinosaur skeleton in the National Museum of Natural History Naturalis; paintings by the famous Leiden born painter Rembrandt in the Municipal Museum of Leiden Lakenhal; Wajang puppets from Indonesia in the National Museum of Ethnology; medical history from bloodletting to breast prosthesis in the Boerhaave Museum; an Egyptian tomb in the National Museum of Antiquities; treasures from Japan in the Siebold House, the authentic Mill Museum De Valk and the oldest Hortus botanicus in the country where the first tulips brought to the Netherlands were planted.

When walking through Leiden it's rich history still seems very much alive. This is where Rembrandt was born and developed his painting skills and where Clusius brought the first Dutch tulips into flower. Leiden's atmosphere is largely determined by the first university in Holland (1575), which has developed into a world-famous centre of science, while its many students contribute to the lively and convivial atmosphere in the city.

Leiden has a large number of shops in the historic city centre. Also, every Wednesday and Saturday a large general market is held along the banks of the Rhine, a market that has existed for over 900 years!

Leiden possesses more than 2700 monuments, many of which are open to visitors. These include almshouses, mills, churches and historic city gates. Many sights such as the University Academy building, Leiden Observatory, Citadel and Weighing House can be visited during a short walk or by bicycle. Other charming options are to discover Leiden by rowing boat or by enjoying a guided canal boat tour, available in many different languages.

To discover the heart of Leiden, you need to take your time and also enjoy the sights and sound by night. Leiden offers a wide selection of international cuisine in its many restaurants, brasseries and cafés.

In ancient times a thriving settlement grew upon the banks of the River Rhine. At the beginning of the 13th century the emerging city was granted municipal status by the count of Holland and the city of Leiden was born. Leiden gained renown in the 15th century when it became famous for its prosperous textile industry. During the eighty years war against the Spanish in the 16th century Leiden suffered terribly. On 3rd October 1574 it finally regained its freedom when it was liberated from the Spanish siege. To this day October 3rd is celebrated in Leiden with an abundant city festival. Prince William of Orange rewarded the people of Leiden for their heroic resistance by founding Leiden University, the oldest university in The Netherlands. Today Leiden is a vibrant university town and centre for knowledge with a rich cultural history. Leiden is not called 'key to discovery' for nothing.