**Gastronomic Tour**

**Amsterdam - Alkmaar - Texel - Edam - Volendam – La Valle del formaggio - The Cheese Valley**

Even if Holland is not particularly famous for its food and wine, there are some culinary pearls like cheeses (we all know Edam and Gouda cheeses, which in truth are the names of the cities where they are produced and not the names of the cheeses themselves), fish (famous raw or smoked herring), any kind of fried food, gin and craft beers. The real "Dutch" meal is a rustic dinner with vegetable soup, but over the years the country's gastronomy has become influenced by flavours from all over the world, so that today they can be considered "Dutch".

DAY 1 (preferably on Wednesday, Edams market day): EDAM - VOLENDAM - HENRI WILLING CHEESE FARM

Once a port city from which whalers sailed, Edam is today a real hidden gem of North Holland, with its old warehouses for goods, cobbled streets, hand-operated bridges and postcard channels. Very famous in the city is the Kaasmarkt, the cheese market held every Wednesday morning in July-August. To the side of the Kaasmart stands the Kaaswaag, the public weighbridge for cheeses, which today houses an exhibition dedicated to Edam's most important product.

Continuing south at only 2km we find Volendam, an ancient fishing town characterized by its ranks of wooden houses. Volendam houses a large cheese shop and museum, fish stalls and fries kiosks.

In the afternoon we move just 6km south to the Henri Willing Cheese Farm in Katwoude, where more than 50 varieties of cheeses are produced. In addition to the classic seasoned cow, goat and sheep's milk (also organic), the factory also offers a wide range of herbal cheeses based on unique recipes. Tastings and guided tours are possible.

Did you know? :

- In Volendam, the locals are often dressed in traditional clothes to go to church or on holidays

- The Henri Willing Cheese Farm is one of the largest in the country, it has other production points in the Netherlands and several shops in the main cities

DAY 2: AMSTERDAM

As for food, the capital obviously has a lot to offer. Not to be missed is the street food of the markets, like the raw / smoked herring near the Amsterdam flower market and the waffels of the Albert Cuyp market, in the south of the city.

Another place not to be missed for street food is the Frietboutique: cone fried potatoes, in the Oud Zuid district. For sweet lovers, we find the Ijsboutique, here you will taste an artisan ice cream produced with fresh fruits. The most famous chocolate shop is the "Ganache", next to Oude Kerk.

In the Amsterdam Zuidoost district, a little out of the center, we find the World of Food, a vast space where you can taste flavours from Indonesia, Africa, India. An interesting dish is the Indonesian rijsttafel (revised meal with many courses consisting of rice and different varieties of meat, fish and vegetables) and the roti of Suriname (single dish consisting of meat, vegetables and the "roti", a kind of pita) .

In Amsterdam there are many places where you can also taste typical cheeses.

As for the "drinks", in this area very famous and good are the craft beers, the gin and the typical liqueur the "jenever". In fact, the city does not only represent big brands such as Heineken, it also hosts many small niche breweries that combine traditional production methods and modern innovations. A stop deserves the Brouwerij’t IJ brewery which is located next to the Amsterdam windmill, the De Gooyer, at least from the outside. Other breweries worth a visit are Poesiat & Kater (Amsterdam Oost) and Brouweij Kleiburg (linked to the Kleiklooster monastery).

In addition to beer, also jenver is widely consumed in Holland: you can taste this juniper-flavored liqueur in the city's distilleries, among the most famous there is the Distilleerdererij't Nieuwe Diep, in the Amsterdam Oost district.

Did you know’

- The Dutch consume more than 14kg of cheese per year

- In Amsterdam there are very few typically "Dutch" restaurants, most offer a mix of different cuisines that influence each other, many are also Italian restaurants

- The jenver is the ancestor of gin. To date, its production is recognized and protected by the European Union, only spirits produced in Holland, Belgium and some areas of France and Germany can bear the name "jenver"

DAY 3: ALKMAAR AND TEXEL (possibly on Friday, Alkmaar market day)

A fashionable market is certainly Alkmaar cheese market. Every Friday morning from April to September it is possible to attend the sale of the forms of "kaas" (cheese) according to the ancient tradition. A fascinating sight that is worth the trip.

Continuing north and crossing the sea by ferry, you get to Texel, an island famous for its white sand, wildlife, nature reserves and above all for being full of sheep. Wool is very valuable and there are numerous dairies. Travelling around the island you will also find excellent local producers including fruit, chocolate, ice cream, beer and wine producers. Also famous is the lamb meat from the island of Texel, delicious thanks to the natural environment in which the lambs grow.

Did you know?

- in the 14th century, cheese was sold in Waagplein square, where the only weighbridge in the city was located

- about 2,200 cheeses, equivalent to 30,000 kilos, are lined up waiting for the buyers

- Wine is also produced on the island of Texel, an extremely rare production for Holland

DAY 4: ROTTERDAM

Rotterdam is an innovative and dynamic city from many points of view: architectural, economic and in recent years also culinary. Recently the progressive vision of the city has also contaminated a new generation of chefs and restaurateurs, able to satisfy the palates of the most severe food critics.

In the city there are the most varied clubs, from trendy cafes to gastro-pubs, from molecular cuisine to Michelin-starred restaurants. Particular attention is paid to km0 and the seasonality of the products.

The Katendrecht district is one of the liveliest gastronomic districts of the city, the nearby Deliplein square is the centrepiece of delights: it hosts French cuisine, seafood specialties and seasonal menus. West-Kruiskade is home to a range of Asian, Moroccan, Surinamese and Caribbean restaurants, reflecting Rotterdam's multiculturalism.

A must-see gastronomic stop is the Markthal, Rotterdam's covered market, in front of the forest of cubic houses, with its 100 stalls selling handicrafts and numerous restaurants.

To fully enjoy Rotterdam's gastronomy, it is worth attending the elegant cafes located in the art galleries, such as the Cafè De Witte Aap (inside the Witte de Withstraat gallery), and in theaters, such as the Bazaar ( adjacent to the Witte de With theater).

Did you know?

- In Rotterdam, the "RotterZwam" farm grows mushrooms by reusing the coffee grounds of the city's bars. it is not open to the public but it is possible to taste mushrooms in many places in the city.

DAY 5: VELUWE

With a large number of farms and growers of regional organic products, Veluwe is one of the most interesting culinary destinations in Holland. For the high density of agri-food companies, the area has been awarded the nickname "Valley of Food". Inside the area there are several restaurants where you can enjoy game meat all year round.

The Veluwe area is also the largest national reserve in Holland, here we find natural landscapes of woods and heaths and a rich variety of animal species. Recommended is a walk inside the De Hoge Veluwe National Park, where you can spot deer, wild boar, mouflons and roe deer.

The visit to the Kroller-Muller, a museum that has the second largest Van Gogh collection in the world, is a must.

Return.

*Did you know ?*

In the village of Vierohouten every year in October you can join the “De Wildaggen”, a weekend long culinary fair to celebrate the start of the game season.

- In the area of the Veluwe there are several Michelin-starred restaurants.