

# THE NETHERLANDS

## Queen's 'Speech from the Throne' Outlines Plans for the Future

Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard (born January 31, 1938) has been queen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands since April 1980, when her mother, Queen Juliana, abdicated. As queen, Beatrix has more power than most other reigning monarchs in Europe.

While local government is handled by elected officials, the queen plays a key role in the country's international relations and serves as an official spokesperson for the country.

The queen gives the 'Speech from the Throne' every year in September in an event called 'Prinsjesdag', during which she speaks to parliament in the Ridderzaal at the Binnenhof in The Hague. The 'Speech from the Throne' sets out the government's plans for the coming year.

In last year's speech, the queen referred to the global financial crisis and its impact on the Netherlands. She said, "The times we are living in demand determination and a willingness to change. The global financial and economic crisis has hit countries hard, including the Netherlands. The consequences will be felt for a long time to come.... The government's ambition is to turn uncertainty into recovery. The changes required can strengthen the Netherlands economically and socially. We have much to offer our country and one another by standing together and holding fast to the tradition of freedom, responsible citizenship and active European and international engagement."

The queen pointed out that the government had submitted a 'Crisis and Recovery' bill aimed at accelerating procedures for infrastructure projects. She said, "This will lay the basis for greater economic dynamism and therefore more jobs."



## The Netherlands is the E.U. Master of Infrastructure and Transportation

The Netherlands has one of Europe's most open economies and registers the second-biggest export totals in the European Union.

## Prime Minister Confident About Economic Future



**Jan Pieter Balkenende**  
Prime Minister of the Netherlands

The Netherlands is the world's 16th largest economy in terms of GDP, its financial sector is ranked ninth worldwide, and it is one of the world's leading investors. Jan Pieter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, explains that the Netherlands is coping with the global economic crisis. He says, "In the current situation, we are investing in order to stimulate economic activity while trying to keep the deficit manageable. Our goal is to prepare the Dutch economy for the global recovery that will inevitably come. I am confident that the measures we have taken, combined with our openness and enterprising spirit, will ensure that we remain an important player in the global economy for years to come."

The Netherlands is also forging stronger ties with the United States. Last year the two countries celebrated their 400th year friendship that dates back to 1609 when Captain Henry Hudson landed a Dutch ship on what is now Manhattan. To mark this anniversary, the Netherlands presented New York City with a multi-purpose pavilion designed by Dutch architect Ben van Berkel.

The Netherlands is one of the biggest investors in the American economy and the United States is the top foreign investor in the Netherlands. Prime Minister Balkenende says, "Our countries have enjoyed very good relations for centuries and I have no doubt that will continue. We will not only invest in that relation, but also work together for sustainable recovery of the world's economy. In my meetings with President Obama, for instance during the G20-meetings in London and Pittsburgh, I was impressed by the active and important role he plays on this matter."



**Frans Timmermans**  
Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs

Frans Timmermans, Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of European Affairs, explains, "The Netherlands exports more in real terms than France, Italy or the United Kingdom, for example. This is because we are the European masters of infrastructure and transportation, and we also add value through our services."

The Netherlands is well prepared to cope with the current global economic downturn. "We have a lot going for us, and whenever trade takes off again, the Netherlands will be in a pretty good position," the minister says confidently.

For American investors, the Netherlands can serve as a bridge to mainland Europe. In addition to the country's high standard of living, English-speaking population, and an American style of doing business, the Netherlands "has strong historic, cultural and political ties to the United States," Mr. Timmermans points out. In September the Netherlands will unveil a pavilion in Manhattan's Battery Park that will be the country's gift to New York City.

Sectors doing well in the Netherlands even in the current climate include life sciences, agriculture, shipping and services; the financial sector is recovering from the crisis and Mr. Timmermans also sees excellent opportunities in high technology, the development of electric automobiles and sustainable energy initiatives. "We know that we need to invest now to be in a good starting position when things get better. That is very, very Dutch," he explains.



## In Times of Crisis, the Name of the Game is Efficiency

Frank Heemskerk, Minister of Foreign Trade and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, is working to strengthen the Netherlands' role as a gateway to Europe, the world's richest consumer market.



**Frank Heemskerk**  
Minister of Foreign  
Trade and Secretary  
of State for Economic  
Affairs

He says, "Even in this time of global crisis, we are trying to attract as much trade flow as possible through the Port of Rotterdam and Schiphol International Airport."

The Netherlands - ranked third in the world in competitiveness in a recent IBM report - will maintain its competitive edge as a trade hub, Mr. Heemskerk believes, thanks to its efficiency. "In times of crisis, the name of the game is efficiency, and the Port of Rotterdam is highly efficient," he points out. The port's dedicated lane for U.S. shipments helps make it the port of choice for U.S.-Europe trade.

Mr. Heemskerk cites three key factors that make the Netherlands a top choice for foreign investors: exceptional infrastructure, a very international business climate, and high quality of life.

Opportunities for U.S. investors in the Netherlands range from partnerships with innovative Dutch companies to investments in fast-growing sectors like food, flowers, chemicals, high tech systems and materials, financial services, and creative activities. The government continues to create new opportunities, for example through opening the postal and cable services markets.

Mr. Heemskerk concludes, "The Dutch are very good at public-private partnerships. Every project is a mix of businesses, research institutes, and several layers of government, and somehow we figure out how to come up with efficient solutions that can be implemented very quickly."

## Heineken

**"The Heineken brand originated in Amsterdam and conquered the world."**

Heineken, established in the Netherlands 145 years ago, has been known since its beginnings for its high quality.



**Jean-François van Boxmeer**  
Chairman of the  
Executive Board and  
CEO

Today, Heineken beer is sold in 172 countries in the world and accounts for around 20 percent of the company's sales, whereas local brands make up 80 percent. Jean-François van Boxmeer, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of Heineken N.V., explains, "The Heineken name has always been associated with Dutch quality. Over the years we have evolved from a one brand export company into one of the biggest brewers in the world today with 230 brands and 125 breweries in more than 70 countries."

Heineken operates its breweries around the world and has its international headquarters in Amsterdam. It remains proud of its Dutch roots. "The brand originated in Amsterdam and conquered the world," van Boxmeer says.

### Excellent business base

As for the Netherlands as a business base, van Boxmeer praises the country's excellent infrastructure, skilled human resources and support of global activities. "Rotterdam is the biggest port for shipping between the United States and Europe, and it is cheaper to ship from Rotterdam to Australia than from New Zealand to Australia because of the very good rates available here," he points out.

In the United States, Heineken promotes its famous namesake brand as well as Amstel Light and a range of Mexican brands owned by FEMSA which it markets and sells, but the cornerstone of its business in the United States is Heineken, the first beer to enter the market when Prohibition was lifted. Half of Heineken's production in the Netherlands is exported to the United States, where Heineken is the number two imported beer after Corona, and the United States accounts for 20 percent of Heineken brand's global sales volume in the International Premium Segment.

Heineken will continue to be marketed in the United States as a premium beer that can command premium prices. "We aim for quality, not volume," van Boxmeer says.

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# Northern Netherlands

## Drenthe: Intelligent Hub for Northern Europe

Drenthe is surviving the current economic crisis better than some other areas thanks to its diversified economy. Rob Bats, Vice Governor, points out that the province's key sectors are recreation and tourism along with innovative fields that include sensor technology, sustainable energies and water technology.



**Rob Bats**  
Vice Governor

He says, "Drenthe is especially known for the Astron/Lofar institute, a major astronomy center. We also have prestigious universities of applied sciences, including the university in Groningen, and Emmen is the main industrial center of the Northern Netherlands. Our agriculture sector is also strong."

Drenthe is forging closer ties with other economies in Northern Europe, including Germany, Poland, Sweden and the Baltic states. As Bats points out, "Companies that are interested in the North Connect Corridor could start in Drenthe." To strengthen its position as a hub for business activities in Northern Europe, Drenthe is upgrading its infrastructure; its airport is already the main air-transport center for the Northern Netherlands.

The province is well known for its tourism appeal and high quality of life, but it is focusing more on developing innovative technologies, including sensor technology applied to traffic management. "We are positioning ourselves as an intelligent, innovative province that is pleasant to live in and has excellent educational institutions," Bats says.

Many American companies have established operations in Drenthe, including ones whose activities are linked to the Astron/Lofar institute, and Bats says, "American investors are more than welcome in our province. We are especially looking for highly intelligent enterprises involved in our core sectors."

## Groningen Calls itself Energy Valley, And It's Not Just a Concept; It's a Reality

The Province of Groningen is building on its long history as a reliable base for business to attract additional foreign investment.



**Max van den Berg**  
Queen's Commissioner

Officially Queen's Commissioner but usually referred to by the more traditional term of 'governor', Max van den Berg explains, "This region has been a hub for the gas industry for 50 years, but now we are developing green energies and advanced knowledge in many other sectors."

The region offers state-of-the-art seaports, including at Elmshaven, as well as a strategic location, highly skilled workers, a business-friendly environment, advanced research and development centers, and well developed links to the rest of the European Union, the Baltic states, Northern Russia and Scandinavia. Foreign investors already present in Groningen range from Google to RWE.

Groningen is well known worldwide for its energy sector, which has been responsible for a number of innovations, including a technique for CO<sub>2</sub> separation. "We call ourselves Energy Valley, and it's not just a concept; it's a reality. More than 20,000 people work in the energy sector here," van den Berg points out.

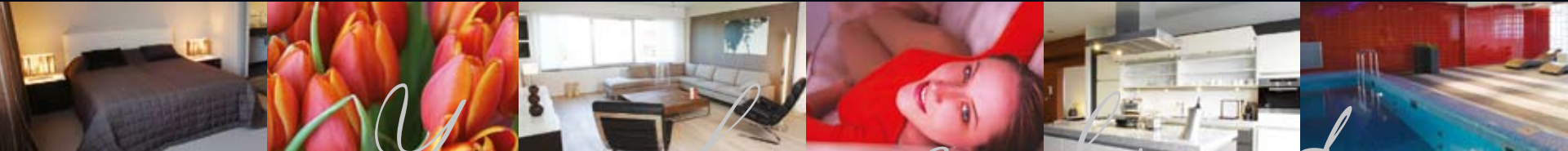
Advanced research concerning aging as well as in food technologies and chemicals are other specialties for Groningen, which has come a long way from the days when it had higher unemployment than the rest of the Netherlands.

Groningen also offers excellent quality of life, with high quality education and healthcare, no crowding or traffic jams, and a population that is becoming more international. Van den Berg concludes, "International businesses in many sectors have set up operations here, and we are developing even more investment incentives. We welcome investors from the United States."



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## BioMCN

**“What we bring to the table is a completely different business concept.”**

BioMCN launched the world’s largest commercial second-generation biofuel plant in July 2009, a major step forward for the innovative company.



**Rob Voncken**  
**CEO**

Rob Voncken, CEO, says, “Although we are still ramping up to reach full bio-methanol capacity, the project is well on track and market interest is high.”

The new plant will produce 200,000 tons per year of bio-methanol, a green alternative for all existing methanol markets. BioMCN is focusing on fuel applications for its bio-methanol, including bio-MTBE, DME, hydrogen, bio-diesel and gasoline blending.

BioMCN, founded in Farmsum, Netherlands in 2006, has converted an existing methanol plant to run on bio-synthesis gas made from crude glycerin, classed

a second-generation bio-fuel feedstock by the latest European Union Renewable Energy Directive. Second-generation bio-fuels, based on waste products, drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, do not compete with food production, and avoid loss of biodiversity while also reducing energy consumption. BioMCN is proving that such futuristic bio-fuels are already a reality.

Voncken explains that BioMCN developed a special technology for glycerin gasification in little over two years. He says, “With the help of our new majority shareholder, Waterland, we are planning to invest in a new 200,000-ton purification and gasification plant to be operational by the end of 2010, to reach total capacity of 400,000 tons.”

Outlining the challenges BioMCN has faced, Voncken says, “We are a privately financed company that does not belong to a major international group, operating in a new market with new technology. You really have to have a lot of vision and entrepreneurship to make this happen.”

BioMCN is open to working with international partners and customers, including in the United States. Voncken concludes, “In the next phase, we want to get involved in licensing or cooperating with companies that also want to step into bio-methanol. What we bring to the table is a completely different business concept, a new value proposition.”

Already lauded for their efforts and innovation in the biofuel industry, BioMCN has been awarded the Responsible Care Award by Cefic and received the Innovation Award from the World Refining Association.

## Groningen Seaports

**“We are exceeding our expectations.”**

Groningen Seaports ensures state-of-the-art shipping services. The company is the port authority of two seaports, the ports of Delfzijl and Eemshaven, and manages two inner harbors, Farmsumerhaven and Oosterhornhaven.



**Harm D. Post**  
**Managing Director**

Groningen Seaports provides full port services, from logistic support to high-quality industrial and business sites in both port areas.

Thanks to its ports’ strategic location, congestion-free infrastructure, up-to-date facilities, and advantageous prices, Groningen Seaports is the ideal logistics partner. Both its ports handle shipping of a wide variety of products that include the paper (produced in Sweden) on which the New York Times is printed.

Harm D. Post, Managing Director, leads the team that has established a strong reputation for handling products from the chemicals, energy, agriculture, and recycling sectors, among others. “We exceeded our expectations in 2008 and we exceeded them in 2009 as well,” he says proudly.

In addition, since they are among the few Greenfield locations in the Netherlands, the ports offer the space companies need. Post adds, “We also excel at just-in-time logistics, and our regional government streamlines business processes for investors. Finally, our ports are relatively cheap, with land available for around €120 per square meter whereas in Rotterdam it is around €450.”

### Future energy hub of the Netherlands

Groningen Seaports is very active in energy transport, particularly concerning liquid natural gas, and its ports’ energy-related activities are set to grow rapidly as the Netherlands increases its investments in energy projects, many of which are located in port areas. “Within three years, one third of the electricity used in the Netherlands will be produced in our ports,” Post says.

Groningen Seaports makes significant investments in training its personnel and is now looking into exporting its knowledge of port operations and management to developing countries. Five years from now, Post wants its ports to serve as Holland’s energy hub. He aims to expand port facilities while continuing to focus on serving companies. “Becoming successful is one thing and staying successful is another thing. We will stay successful by expanding our commercial activities,” he concludes.

## Friesland: Land of Milk and Water

Friesland has evolved over the last few years from an economy focused on agriculture to a knowledge-based economy that is particularly strong in water technology, environmental technologies (including new energies) and tourism, as well as knowledge-based agriculture.



**John Jorritsma**  
**Queen's Commissioner**

John Jorritsma, Queen’s Commissioner for Friesland, cites knowledge institute Wetsus as one of the key players in positioning Friesland as an international hub for water technology and notes that Friesland has been developing water technologies for the past decade.

Jorritsma recently traveled to New York to present Friesland’s attractions as a base for enterprises and investors involved in water technology and related new energy initiatives, including wind energy and cutting-edge ‘blue’ energy derived from water. “Our goal is to be energy-neutral by 2020,” he points out. Friesland has already made impressive progress toward this goal; Jorritsma cites the town of Leeuwarden where several homes are heated by energy derived from cattle excrement.

One of Friesland’s current water-technology projects concerns systems to purify ballast water in large tankers. Another is the renovation of the Afsluitdijk using sustainable energy and innovative dike management. Friesland is receiving funding from the federal government, the European Union and private investors for its innovative new projects.

Jorritsma invites American companies and investors to look into partnering with Friesland. He points out, “The United States can learn a lot from us about environmental technologies and wastewater treatments, and American investors can join in our projects and make profits. We are making Friesland a leader in new technologies.”



**Afsluitdijk**



# Wetsus

“We bring companies and universities together to develop technology for the marketplace.”

Wetsus, a dynamic non-profit research institute created in 2003 to develop new technologies for water treatment, operates a state-of-the-art lab that has become a hub for research efforts involving the business sector in partnership with universities.



**Cees J.N. Buisman**  
Scientific Director

Scientific Director Cees J.N. Buisman explains, “Companies decide what should be researched and universities carry out the research, working together in our lab here in Leeuwarden.”

Wetsus began as a two-person operation in 2004 and has now grown to become a major research institution. Buisman says, “I strongly believe that the world and therefore the market is calling for new water technology, so partners are joining up with us very quickly.”

Wetsus’ first project in 2004 involved four companies and two universities. Wetsus now works with over 70 companies and 13 research organizations, and continues to expand its partner network internationally. “We want to bring companies and universities closer together to develop technology for the marketplace,” Business Director Johannes Boonstra says. Buisman adds that the Wetsus approach is to work in small groups. “We have divided our research into small themes, involving a few universities and a few companies, in order to stimulate discussion and enhance collaboration,” he explains.

Some of the world’s top companies in the water field, including Dow, are already working with Wetsus. “We are getting the big names as well as the innovative SME’s behind us,” Boonstra explains.

Wetsus’ current major research challenge is to find new sources for fresh water. This includes developing ways to clean water properly so that it can be reused and the development of new desalination technologies. In these processes, the recovery of energy and elements, is regarded a prerequisite. “We are developing methods to combat these challenges,” Buisman says.

## Blue energy and desalination

A recent project for Wetsus involves ‘blue energy’ in which saltwater and fresh water are mixed to produce electricity in a special process developed in the Wetsus lab. “Through this process, we could theoretically provide 80 percent of the Global electricity needs without producing any CO<sub>2</sub>,” Buisman explains.

Another major effort for Wetsus is finding new desalination technologies to help combat the global water shortage. Wetsus has for instance developed a new process in which ion liquids are used to extract salt from saltwater. “We have to think completely different about water technology than we did in the past. We have a lot of projects underway that are designed to restore natural balance while also being cost-competitive,” Buisman says.

## Water technology hub



**Johannes Boonstra**  
Business Director

Boonstra would like to make Leeuwarden known worldwide as the water technology hub of Europe. “We want to geographically concentrate entrepreneurship, education, research, venture capital and talent around water technology here. The city is currently developing a high-tech water technology campus, in order to realize this ambition,” he says.

The next step for Wetsus is to further expand beyond the Netherlands, and the foundation has already signed contracts with seven foreign universities. In addition, “Wetsus continues to attract international companies interested in defining the research program and bringing these new technologies to the market, and we therefore of course welcome American partners. We need inspiration, entrepreneurship, and talent,” Boonstra concludes.

# INCAS<sup>3</sup>

“Combining academic and commercial perspectives is our holy grail.”

INCAS<sup>3</sup>, a dedicated research institute specializing in sensor technology, was set up in December 2008 and is already involved in its first project with a commercial application.



**John H.G. van Pol**  
Managing Director

John H.G. van Pol, Managing Director, explains that the Province of Drenthe, the Assen municipality, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Cooperative Body of the Provincial Governments of the Northern Netherlands have allocated €16 million to the new organization. “We could not be in better shape now,” he says.

Based in Assen, INCAS<sup>3</sup> develops high-quality knowledge in the field of sensors and sensor systems, in collaboration with industry and the scientific community, in order to achieve technological breakthroughs. Its mission is to translate demand from industry and society into scientifically interesting research projects.

INCAS<sup>3</sup> gears its research activities to market demands through working closely not only with the academic community but also with the business sector. Van Pol says, “We believe that there is huge knowledge in the academic environment that does not reach the economic domain, and huge demand from the economic domain which does not reach the academic environment. Bridging that gap is what we want to do, and we try to do that by implementing projects where both sides are on board and defining their own questions.”

## Bridging the gap between science and industry

INCAS<sup>3</sup> is involved in a number of cutting-edge projects. It is working with the University of Saskatchewan (Canada) to implement a sensor system for environmental monitoring in the northern part of Saskatchewan, and has signed a cooperation agreement with DySI, an Assen-based software-development company, to optimize software for use in intelligent sensor systems.

INCAS<sup>3</sup> has also signed an agreement with Medusa Explorations, a company specialized in complex soil surveys and detection of natural radiation, to develop intelligent sensors and sensor systems to map soil composition and structure. In addition, INCAS<sup>3</sup> is participating in a project with DACOM and PTC to develop soil-moisture sensors.

In a groundbreaking project, INCAS<sup>3</sup> is working with the Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research (Germany) to find ways to better detect particles when atomic nuclei collide. INCAS<sup>3</sup> has also signed an agreement with Slovenia’s Jozef Stefan Institute, a leading Slovenian research organization, to develop direction-sensitive antineutrino detector systems that can be used to monitor nuclear activity worldwide.

INCAS<sup>3</sup> currently has a staff of 16 people working on projects ranging from sound recognition and analyses to environmental monitoring and anti-neutrino measurements. Van Pol will expand his staff to 32 people in 2010.

Van Pol plans to establish more partnerships with academic institutions and companies locally, nationally, and internationally. He says, “Combining academic and commercial perspectives is our holy grail.” INCAS<sup>3</sup>’s competitive edge is that it is positioned to bridge the gap between scientific research and industrial applications.

Van Pol’s long-term goal for INCAS<sup>3</sup> is contract research activities. He adds, “People have forgotten that a lot of our luxury and wealth have arisen from research. I think the government’s decision to invest in academics and research is an excellent approach.”

# Sensor Universe

“We have revolutionary sensor systems which we are preparing to bring to the market.”

Many items people use every day to make their lives easier rely on sensors, yet sensor technology - which is poised to make revolutionary changes in our lives - is still in its infancy. Sensor Universe was established to give this exciting new technology a significant boost.



*Henk A. Koopmans  
CEO*

An initiative by the Municipality of Assen, the Province of Drenthe and ASTRON, Sensor Universe unites the business community, government agencies, universities, colleges and knowledge institutes in the field of sensors and sensor systems. Sensor Universe is playing an essential role in promoting a productive exchange of ideas and new forms of collaboration.

Sensor Universe is the driving force behind two national IIP programs: Sensor networking (with TU Twente) and Water & Sensors (with NWP and TTI Wetsus). One element of these programs involves steering in the field of sensor technology at the national level, with the participation of industry leaders like ASML, Philips, Centric, ESI, Van Holst Institute, Smart Surroundings, TNO, KWR (formerly KIWA Water Research), Paques, Siemens, Vitens, and Unilever. Sensor Systems also works with around 60 small and medium-sized companies and with leading technological institutes.

Henk A. Koopmans, Sensor Universe CEO, explains that one of the company’s biggest programs is TARGET, an innovative initiative that explores the use of sensors to emulate how humans approach data. The private sector has provided €16 million in financing for this €32 million project that promises to develop exciting new applications for sensor technology. Sensor Universe has many other innovative projects in the works. As Koopmans explains, “We have already developed other systems that we are waiting to bring to the market.”

## Forging links between companies and researchers

One of the company’s main tasks is to forge links between the private sector and researchers. Koopmans says, “We find clusters of companies that need help solving technological challenges, and we establish partnerships between them and researchers. Very often the projects resulting from this collaboration launch new companies that offer opportunities for investors.” Sensor Universe complements the work of INCAS<sup>3</sup>, the region’s research institute for sensor technology.

Training skilled professionals in the field of sensor technology is another priority for Sensor Universe. As Koopmans points out, “The Hanze Institute of Technology (HIT) is a university for applied sensors and sensor systems. HIT educates students so that they can provide highly qualified human resources in the sensor sector, a growth engine for the northern Netherlands.”

Sensor Universe welcomes the chance to dialogue with established businesses working in the sensor-technology sector as well as with investors and entrepreneurs concerning opportunities and potential partners in the northern Netherlands. Over the coming decade Sensor Universe will develop a leading international economic cluster around sensor technology, focusing on intelligent sensor systems and ASM (Advanced Semiconductor Materials) technology.

Koopmans says, “The aim of Sensor Universe is to connect all interested parties, including those interested in the technological benefits as well as entrepreneurs and investors. We have defined niches in the field of sensor technology and that is what we are currently focusing on.”

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# Veenhuizen

## Bitter & Zoet - a sweet retreat

While in the Northern provinces, do not miss the newest place to cool your heels: the recently opened and newly renovated Bitter & Zoet. Literally translated Bitter & Sweet, the hotel officially opened March 20th, 2009.

Offering 15 boutique rooms, an organic gourmet restaurant, its own resident baker and chocolatier, and wellness center, it is a perfect sanctuary from the bustling metropolitan areas of Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

The property was originally constructed in the late 1800s and served Veenhuizen as the village hospital. Now consisting of five buildings, renovations have eloquently captured the peace and serenity of days past when patients entered these grounds for rest, relaxation, and rehabilitation. Today, it serves the same purpose with a modern edge. Glass walls interconnect the original buildings, bringing the outside in at every turn.

Transformed into a multi-functional facility, the former hospital building now holds four conference rooms, a spa blended beautifully with the outside influence of a surrounding forest, and a beauty salon with the full range of treatments. The attic, with its open beams and exposed brick, will serve as a classroom for wellness clinics, yoga, art classes, and a new focus on management clinics geared toward furthering the health and well-being of one’s employees. Additionally, culinary classes are offered on request by the in-house baker and chocolatier.

Guest accommodations are tucked away in three separate homes on the front of the property. In the 1800s, these served to house the pharmacy from which the hotel takes its name, a resident doctor, a pharmacist, and their assistants. With only two guest rooms per floor, it guarantees each a coveted corner locale. Wrapped with sweeping windows and graced with high ceilings, the rooms are a flood of natural light and pastoral views. It invites, envelopes, feeds, and rejuvenates you. Bitter & Zoet is a welcome retreat.

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[www.bitterenzoet.nl](http://www.bitterenzoet.nl)

## Spine Clinic Ipreburg Veenhuizen

The sixth building on this unique property has brought medicine home in the form of the newly established Spine Clinic Ipreburg Veenhuizen. Dr. Menno Ipreburg has worked for 33 years in orthopedic medicine and five years ago created the groundbreaking procedure, Transforaminal Endoscopic Surgery. He has operated on over 700 patients to date with great success, citing no serious complications and a reoperation rate of less than five percent.



The procedure is designed to treat lumbar disc hernias with a simple outpatient surgery. Patients, many who enter unable to walk, leave 1½ to 2 hours post-surgery unassisted. Most patients return home the very same day. This surgery, done under local anesthesia and sedation, is also much less invasive compared to traditional treatments, requiring an incision of only 8 mm. Dr. Ipreburg says, “Sometimes I have to fight my tears. It is such an emotional, life-changing experience for them.”

The good doctor now travels the world in his spare time, educating other orthopedic surgeons on how to perform his technique. At the time of the interview, over 200 surgeons were certified internationally in this procedure. Patients also travel ‘round the world to be treated personally by Dr. Ipreburg and his team. Based in the small village of Veenhuizen in the Northern Netherlands, his patients have come from such far reaches as Japan and Calgary. His clientele consists of world class athletes and Olympians, as well as those of a more delicate nature. His oldest patient was a remarkable 93-year-old at the time of her surgery.

For more information or a consultation go to [www.dutchspinecenter.co.uk](http://www.dutchspinecenter.co.uk)

# Randstad

## Noord-Holland Home to 800 U.S. Companies

Noord-Holland has developed a thriving economy which includes one of the largest ports in the European Union, one of the world’s busiest international airports, companies which produce 70 percent of the world’s seeds and €80 billion in exports of food products and flowers per year, among many other accomplishments.



*Jaap Bond  
Vice Governor*

Jaap Bond, Vice Governor of Noord-Holland, explains that his portfolio covers the region’s economic affairs, fisheries, agriculture and tourism activities. He says that Noord-Holland supports a knowledge-based economy in which research and development play a key role. “Our agriculture companies invest around 15 to 20 percent of their budgets in research and development per year,” he says. Noord-Holland has developed a cluster of seed companies to help stimulate continued growth in this important sector.

The region is also focusing on energy conservation, including building greenhouses heated by geothermal energy whose waste energy is being used to cool circuits in the world’s greenest data centre, according to the Vice Governor. Now Noord-Holland is positioning itself as a global media hub through its Dutch Media project which already has several U.S.-based companies as a partner. The project will be presented at the upcoming NAB Las Vegas this April.

Noord-Holland has strong links with the U.S. and 800 American companies are now operating there. Jaap Bond explains. “This region is an ideal business base, because we have exceptionally well developed infrastructure, low costs, a rich cultural life and excellent educational institutions. We welcome American investors, and when they come here, we will do everything we can to keep them here.”

## Amsterdam Leading the Way in Transition to a New Economy

Amsterdam, one of the world’s favorite cities, is surviving the global crisis well, according to Lodewijk Asscher, Deputy Mayor. He explains, “Our financial sector has been affected by the crisis but we have a very diverse economy that is performing well overall.”



*Lodewijk Asscher  
Deputy Mayor*

He views the current economic situation as a transitional one that will evolve into a new kind of global economy in which cities like Amsterdam will play a key role.

“The new economy in Amsterdam will have to combine the old focus on transportation and services with a new approach based on creativity and innovation. Amsterdam’s creative sector has been growing by five percent per year,” Asscher says. He adds that Amsterdam is very international not only in its population mix but also in its economy, which includes many foreign companies, almost half of which are American. Amsterdam recently streamlined the process for foreigners to obtain work permits.

Amsterdam’s government works closely with the private sector on innovative programs like sustainable transport systems and ‘smart work centres’ that allow people to work in or near their homes. Amsterdam remains a top tourism destination and continues to launch ambitious cultural projects, including a new film museum, a branch of Russia’s famed Hermitage museum, and a modernized museum of modern art. “Amsterdam offers exceptional quality of life,” Asscher points out. He adds, “My objective for the next few years is economic transition and providing greater educational opportunities so that we can continue to prosper in a sustainable way.”

## Zuid-Holland Coping Well with Global Crisis

Zuid-Holland (South Holland), with a population of 3.5 million, is a key driver of the Netherlands’ economy, accounting for 20 percent to 25 percent of its GDP and more than 20 percent of the country’s total employment.



*Asje Van Dijk  
Vice Governor*

The province has been coping well with the global economic downturn. “We are not as dependent on manufacturing as other provinces. We have many research and development organisations as well as three universities and several government organisations,” says Asje Van Dijk, Vice Governor of the province.

The province’s key sectors are research and development, chemicals and materials, health and life sciences, biotechnology (the province is ranked number four in Europe), pharmaceuticals, horticulture, electronics and water and delta technology. The city of Rotterdam is well known as one of the world’s biggest ports. The Hague is a city with great institutions on international right and is the fourth United Nations city in the world.

South Holland is a major target for foreign direct investment (FDI), accounting for one-third of the Netherlands’ total FDI. Many of these investors have set up operations in the province’s cutting edge science parks. Several companies are growing particularly rapidly, including Centocor (part



*Peace Palace, The Hague*

of the Johnson & Johnson group), which has grown from five employees 15 years ago as a start-up to 1,000 employees today.

One focus for the province is to establish even more research programmes, for example in water technology. “We are very strong in water technology and even assisted the United States after Hurricane Katrina,” Van Dijk says.

South Holland is also known for its advanced horticulture technologies, including the use of geothermal energy to heat greenhouses; excess energy is sold for residential use. “We have turned energy from a cost into a money earner. That is innovation,” Van Dijk points out.



# AND

“We make maps in a very different way.”

In a market where Internet services providers and mobile telecommunications enterprises are competing for market share with their maps, AND Automotive Navigation Data has taken a creative approach by producing high-quality maps that offer clear choices for consumers.



**Maarten Oldenhof**  
**CEO**

AND is the leading provider of digital mapping data used for navigation and location-based services. Its maps are used in personal and ‘in-car’ navigation, Internet-based mapping, fleet management and more.

CEO Maarten Oldenhof explains, “To put it simply, we sell maps to our clients who can then decide what to do with them. Other providers offer maps that have limited uses and complicated cost structures. It is one price to view the map, another to use it for routing, and another for navigation. Also, other suppliers do not allow customers to build on those maps. We create maps that customers can update and customize as they wish.”

AND has already provided maps of western Europe to an anonymous American internet company and Oldenhof is targeting other major Internet and mobile services providers. He says, “I can explain to such companies that they need maps to remain competitive, and that there is room for a company like AND because we are small and flexible, and we make maps in a very different way.”

When online and mobile telecom service providers offer AND maps to their customers, the customers have more choices in how to use them. As Oldenhof puts it, “I tell our clients that they need to stop deciding what their customers like, and let customers decide what they need.”

In addition, AND can offer its clients the kinds of maps they need. Oldenhof explains, “Google built its map of the United States out of existing files, but Europe is more of a patchwork. That is why the American company bought ours.” Oldenhof is targeting the United States market since most of the world’s top players in Internet and mobile telecom services are based there.

Oldenhof has brought about a successful turnaround for AND, which formerly tried to provide a range of products but under his direction has focused on producing high-quality maps. “It is not rocket science to make a map but it is a lot of work. Now our company has established a reputation for producing excellent maps,” he says.

Oldenhof prefers to represent his company in person as much as possible and has earned a reputation for his correct predictions on the global map market. He would now like to attract American shareholders to AND, which is a listed company. He says, “We are a Dutch company with Dutch shareholders, but we see the future of our company as about 70 percent in the United States. So, it makes sense for us to have American shareholders. Our company offers excellent growth potential.”

In making its maps, AND combines available data bases and then adapts them with its own software. Explaining AND’s strategy, Oldenhof says, “As a small company, we could not compete with established players in an old-fashioned way but had to be more clever and more technologically advanced. We have learned to be innovative and flexible. Because of this, now we can not only compete with the big boys, but beat them.”

As for the future, Oldenhof believes that maps will become a more and more important part of people’s lives, and AND Automotive Navigation Data will be there to ensure that these maps are the highest possible quality. He says, “People will have maps on their mobile telephones and in their cars, and the portable navigation device will disappear. That leaves the door open for our company.”

[\*] Henry Hudson is not a native of Breukelen in Utrecht, but an English sea explorer who navigated under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company. He laid the foundation for Dutch colonization of the region. The Dutch honoured a well-known statesman from Utrecht (Johan van Oldebarnevelt) by naming parts of New York after the statesman’s birthplace and the place he had lived almost all his life: Amersfoort and Breukelen (known as Brooklyn).

# Utrecht: Leading Center for Innovation and Research

Utrecht, home of one of the world’s most prestigious universities (the University of Utrecht), excels in education and research in cutting-edge fields.



**R.C. Robbertsen**  
**Queen’s Commissioner**

Queen’s Commissioner R.C. Robbertsen explains, “Utrecht offers an excellent investment climate, not only because of our expertise in innovation and life sciences but also because of our high quality of life. Our key sectors are services, innovation, education and water management.”

Utrecht has had close ties with the United States for centuries. Parts of New York are named after municipalities in the province Utrecht (for example Brooklyn comes from Breukelen in Utrecht [\*]) and the province participated in the celebration of 400 years of trade between New York and the Netherlands. As Robbertsen points out, more than 300 American companies are now operating in Utrecht and the University of Utrecht has established many links with American institutions.

The province is also home to several leading research institutions and aims to position itself as a hub for life sciences, gaming and sustainability. To help achieve this goal, the government has launched a project to build a state-of-the-art science park that will serve as a global research and development center. Another innovative project is to build the first energy-neutral residential development in the Netherlands within the next five years.

Utrecht’s 29 municipalities work in close partnership with the provincial government to push forward the province’s ambitious developments. Utrecht welcomes international partnerships and investors, and Robbertsen concludes, “My main role as a government leader is to promote local, regional and international cooperation.”

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# Utrecht: City of Knowledge and Culture

The historic city of Utrecht is getting a major facelift to make it an even more attractive place to visit or live and work in.



**Aleid Wolfsen**  
**Mayor of Utrecht**

According to Aleid Wolfsen, Mayor, the city is reopening some of its canals and building a new town hall, a concert hall which will be Europe’s most modern concert facility, a residential area on the westside of the city, and a new train station (set for completion by 2012) which will be surrounded by a vast shopping mall. “We are in the midst of a 20-year plan to build a new city centre, and we are also building a science park. We are changing the city for the better,” he says.

The city is the home of a number of innovative companies, including ones in special fields. Many innovative companies are involved in information and communications technology, while life sciences also flourish in Utrecht and companies in this field often partner with the city’s university and hospital. Utrecht is also home to a prestigious school of veterinary medicine.

Centrally located Utrecht is already known for its international events of all kinds, from professional exhibitions to cultural activities; it has been designated the ‘Events City’ for the Netherlands. Concerning cultural events, the city organizes ‘Cultural Sundays’ with all types of cultural options. The mayor explains proudly, “Utrecht has the country’s best university, the best hospital, and is the historic centre for religion as well!”



# ASR

## “ASR Nederland is well prepared for privatization.”

ASR Nederland, with a 290-year history, is a leading Dutch insurer with a nearly 13 percent market share, making it the third-largest insurance company in the Netherlands. Until the end of 2008, ASR was part of the international bancassurance group Fortis, which was quoted on the stock exchange.



*Jos Baeten*  
*CEO*

As of October 2008, the Dutch state is the 100 percent shareholder, but only on a temporary basis. Consequently, ASR is preparing to return to a private ownership structure within the foreseeable future, once the global financial sector is stable again.

CEO Jos Baeten explains that after Fortis collapsed during the financial crisis, all of Fortis’s Dutch banking and insurance activities, including ASR, were acquired by the Dutch state. He points out, “The only reason the Dutch government took over Dutch insurance activities was to protect us against the negative impact of problems Fortis bank was facing in Belgium. However, ASR itself did not and does not need financial support from the state. We survived the credit crunch without any type of financial support. Now we are completely on our own, separate from Fortis.”

### Lessons learned

In fact, ASR is an example of a strong financial-sector company. As Baeten explains, “Within Fortis we were a company that concentrated mainly on creating value for our shareholders. Then the financial system collapsed and consumers started to turn their backs on the financial industry. ASR, like the financial sector as a whole, now finds itself faced with an entirely new economic reality as a result of the credit crunch and the recession, coupled with the sector’s harmed reputation and increasing supervision and regulations. Looking back, the financial industry is forced to admit that we did not pay enough attention to the undercurrent in society. Financial companies, now more than ever, have to make sure that the interests of all stakeholders are in balance: customers’, shareholders’, employees’ and society’s. Insurance companies have to be aware that they are part of society’s financial infrastructure. They facilitate individual consumers, companies and society in general to take risks by offering them opportunities to insure themselves. That is their unique position and that gives them a societal responsibility. Now more than ever, financial companies must build their customers’ trust to create value for their shareholders. Things will not go back to the way they were, and the entire industry will have to adjust to that. This requires a major shift in corporate culture.”

### Customer protection

European financial-sector firms have responsibilities that are different from those of American firms, Baeten believes. He says, “European companies must focus more on customer protection than United States companies have to do. I believe consumer protection in Europe is higher on regulators’ agendas than in the United States. Our social-security system -- healthcare, pensions, disability support

-- illustrates this. Combining public and private interests -- competition within a social framework of regulation and supervision -- has been proven to be successful in the Netherlands. Concerning private insurance, the view here in the Netherlands is that most consumers of financial products do not have the necessary power and financial skills to face a sales-driven business without protection. That is what drives our legislation and the supervisors. This says a lot about how the European financial system operates.”



### Transparency: a key issue

To ensure that consumers are protected and properly informed, ASR is launching new products with a focus on transparency. Baeten explains, “New legislation in the Netherlands demands more transparency in insurance products, for example concerning costs and the way IFA and brokers are remunerated for their role in distribution. So, we are making sure all our products are fully transparent. We are also working to make sure that customers understand the products they are buying, which is not always the case. For example, we adjust all our correspondence to a more understandable level by testing all our communications with consumer panels. The receiver of information has to be the norm, and not the messenger.”

### Keeping costs down

Overall, ASR’s strategy focuses on three key concepts: consumer service, financial stability, and efficiency. Controlling costs is now a priority for all Dutch insurance companies, a shift in a market where costs have traditionally been high. Baeten says, “One of our aims is to significantly lower our cost ratios. More transparency of costs to the customer stimulates competition. We think that reconsidering our traditional business model fundamentally opens new perspectives, for instance by modernizing straight-through processing in our relationship with brokers and also consumers. We have launched a cost-cutting program totaling € 100 million, which is aimed at reducing our costs by around 14 percent by mid 2010. Furthermore, ASR Nederland has taken measures to improve its balance-sheet positions and reduce its balance-sheet risks. ASR has also reduced its risks related to interest rates and share-price volatility, which are already very limited.”

### New future separate from a bank

ASR is building a new future in which it will no longer be part of a bank. As Baeten points out, “The credit crunch has strengthened us in our conviction that a bank and an insurance company are two different animals which should not be put in the same cage. Bancassurance companies are not stronger than sole banks and sole insurance companies. Investors should choose the best bank and the best insurance company. A combination will not yield superior returns just because the activities are combined in one entity.”

ASR is also looking forward to strong growth, in spite of the fact that the Dutch insurance market is one of the most mature in Europe and perhaps globally, with a relatively high per capita average premium. Baeten says confidently, “ASR still sees opportunities to grow. As part of its preparation for privatization, ASR is concentrating even more on customer service and on its reputation among investors. We want to win customers and to reach potential investors. We have the fundamentals in place. We are a company with a long history, well developed expertise, and a strong track record in growing the business. We are keen on building a long-term relationship with all our stakeholders. I have confidence in the upcoming privatization. ASR is well prepared for the future.”

### Facts and Figures

#### ASR Nederland

- History goes back to 1720
- Third-largest insurer in the Netherlands in terms of market share
- Operates nationwide
- All-round range of products, for private individuals and for companies
- Distribution mainly through independent intermediaries
- Workforce of 4,540 full-time employees
- Gross Written Premium: € 5.758 billion (at year-end 2008)
- Invested capital: € 31 billion (at year-end 2008)
- Largest private landowner in the Netherlands

#### Dutch Insurance market (2008):

- Number of insurance companies: 447 non-life insurers; 69 life insurers.
- The top six insurers have a combined market share of 76 percent.
- Premium income (exclusive healthcare insurance): non-life insurance € 12.6 billion; life insurance: € 26.7 billion
- The average Dutch household spends € 3,852 on insurance (including healthcare), which accounts for 12.6 percent of the household’s disposable income.

ASR Nederland is one of the largest insurers in the Netherlands (the Dutch insurance market is the 8th insurance market in the world). Through our brands we offer a wide array of financial products in the fields of non-life, life and income

insurance, collective and individual pension plans, care insurance, travel/recreational insurance and funeral insurance. We are also active as an investor with an assets management portfolio of about 30 billion EURO.



## North Brabant: Building for the Future

North Brabant has a diversified economy based on agriculture, high-tech activities (in the eastern part of the province) and logistics in the western area, which is strategically located between the major ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp.



**Johanna Rika  
Hermanna (Hanja)  
Maij-Weggen**  
*former Queen's  
Commissioner*

Johanna Rika Hermanna (Hanja) Maij-Weggen, former Queen's Commissioner, explains that the province is home to many foreign companies in such sectors as logistics, high technologies, food and nutrition. "Our high-tech sector is our leading sector and is also among the top five in Europe," she points out.

North Brabant has two universities (in Eindhoven and Tilburg) and a large international population. "The high-tech community in Eindhoven is about 60 percent non-Dutch, with people from all over Europe, India, China and the United States," Maij-Weggen says.

To cope with the effects of the global economic downturn, the province is encouraging high-tech workers to remain in the province by finding work for them at local universities and offering assistance for home purchases, among other initiatives. The province has made major investments in economic recovery programs.

For foreign investors, North Brabant offers an international atmosphere, a strategic location, cutting-edge infrastructure and skilled workers. It is also in the running to become an official cultural capital of Europe in 2018.

Looking to the future, North Brabant is investing in renewable energy and in making houses, businesses and the transportation system more energy-neutral. Maij-Weggen explains, "We are particularly focusing on electric cars, building a system where they can be charged. We see the current crisis as an opportunity to build for the future."

## Zeeland: Diversified Economy and Strong Ties to United States

The province of Zeeland has developed a diversified economy dominated by the chemicals, energy, metals, logistics and tourism sectors. Queen's Commissioner Karla Peijs explains that Zeeland has an ideal location linking the Netherlands to Belgium and that the province's infrastructure is particularly well developed. "One of Zeeland's strengths is its extensive network of inland waterways on which companies can ship their products," she says.



**Karla Peijs**  
*Queen's Commissioner*

Zeeland's chemicals sector includes Dow Chemicals, which established its largest plant outside the United States in Zeeland. The province's energy sector is particularly strong; Zeeland has its own nuclear power plant and will soon open a hydrogen-powered plant to produce electricity. Zeeland also has well developed biomass and wind-energy operations, as well as the fourth-largest solar energy company in the Netherlands.

Another specialty is water management, essential in a province whose name means 'sea land'. Zeeland partners with New Orleans concerning water-management procedures. The province is also developing innovative methods to raise fish. Its tourism sector is strong thanks to Zeeland's beautiful beaches and renowned restaurants.

New initiatives include a 'maintenance valley' project to focus on aircraft and ship maintenance and the Delta Experience Center, which focuses on water management. Zeeland has close ties to the United States and has established the Roosevelt Study Center honouring Theodore, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, whose ancestors lived in the province. It attracts American and European scholars who come to study the histories of the United States and Zeeland. "Our two countries have 400 years of history together," Peijs points out.

## Flevoland: Young Province Focuses on Innovation

Flevoland is a tribute to Dutch innovation. The young province, which will celebrate its 25th birthday next year, was created by draining seawater from an area near Amsterdam to provide room for the city's economic growth.



**Leen Verbeek**  
*Queen's Commissioner*

Leen Verbeek, Queen's Commissioner, points out, "Flevoland was created to handle Amsterdam's population overflow, but now it is competing with Amsterdam as it becomes more significant on its own. Everything here is new, so it is easier to be innovative and to attract innovative companies. We are on the front line, experimenting a lot."

Appropriately, Flevoland focuses on innovative sectors, including the production of agricultural products (such as certain flowers) that involve complex processes. It is also strong in research and development in biotechnology and new energies. Flevoland obtains 56 percent of its energy from sustainable sources (with the exclusion of transport) and hopes to increase this to 60 percent within four years. "We have developed the next generation of windmills," Verbeek says.

The new materials and composites sectors are also very strong, as is the new field of geomatics; one of Flevoland's companies made an accurate projection about the Katrina disaster years



*City of Almere*

before it occurred. "A lot of companies in these fields are small but very exciting because of their potential," Verbeek explains. Large manufacturing enterprises also operate in Flevoland, including Mitsubishi.

Flevoland is building a new airport that will be connected with Schiphol in a €5.5 billion infrastructure project. It is also involved in a European project on water management. Flevoland is clearly positioned for strong growth.



# Limburg: New Focus on Sophisticated Products Made From High-Tech Materials

The province of Limburg was one of the first regions of the Netherlands to develop industrial activities. Léon Frissen explains that in the 1970s and 1980s, Limburg transformed its economy from one based on coal to one focusing on chemicals and agri-business.



Léon Frissen  
Queen's Commissioner

Today, Limburg is transforming itself again by concentrating on life sciences, value-added agriculture and refined chemicals. “Our economy has evolved from one based on coal to one based on sophisticated products made with very high-tech materials,” he says.

Limburg has a thriving manufacturing sector that includes auto manufacturing. “We think manufacturing is very important because we need primary industries to keep knowledge workers in our country,” Frissen says. Logistics and horticulture are other successful sectors, and Limburg’s tourism industry is performing well thanks to the province’s high quality of life, highly rated restaurants and many green areas.

Limburg is also known for its five universities in the Euregion where around 80,000 students are currently enrolled, and it emphasizes cooperation between universities and the private sector. The province is very international, located next to Germany and Belgium, and this strategic location



Panorama of Maastricht

along with Limburg’s business-friendly government has attracted investors from all over the world, including the United States.

Frissen is very positive about Limburg’s future. He concludes, “In Limburg we work on a very accelerated agenda to make good things better.”

# Gelderland: Knowledge-Based Economy Between Rotterdam and Rhine

Gelderland has built a strong economy that features productive cooperation between research-oriented universities and private enterprises. Leading sectors are food production and processing, life sciences, and new technologies.



Clemens G.A. Cornielje  
Queen's Commissioner

Clemens G.A. Cornielje, Queen’s Commissioner, points out, “We have clusters of research activities and enterprises in specific fields; we call these ‘health valley’, ‘food valley’ and ‘technology valley’. These are the three sectors in which we excel.”

Gelderland is the largest province in the Netherlands and enjoys a particularly strategic location between the Rotterdam/Amsterdam area and Germany’s Rhine region. “We have exceptionally good East-West infrastructure here, including highways, special rail links from Rotterdam, and around 175 miles of navigable rivers,” Cornielje explains.

The province is also part of western Europe’s largest forested natural areas, one reason for its successful tourism sector, and is home to a number of innovative companies, including Arcadis, which is involved in building dikes in New Orleans, and multinationals like Heinz and Unilever. Gelderland is also strong in manufacturing and has a number of knowledge-based institutions.

To help attract investors, Gelderland has set up several business parks served by logistics hubs. The province offers a large pool of highly skilled workers and is especially eager to welcome innovative companies. The provincial government is currently involved in information and communications technology projects, efforts to provide employment opportunities in rural areas, energy



Gelderse Poort

sustainability, projects to create more parks in Gelderland’s cities, major infrastructure projects, and projects to provide financing for innovative companies. “We finance companies that can make a difference,” Cornielje concludes.

# Ministry of Agriculture Focuses on Innovation and Sustainability

The Netherlands is the world's second-biggest exporter of agriculture products, quite an accomplishment for such a small country. Agricultural exports of horticulture products, fruits and vegetables, and meat make up 70 percent of the country's total exports.



*J.P. Hoogeveen  
Director-General  
of the Ministry of  
Agriculture*

J.P. Hoogeveen, Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, says, "Delegations come from all over the world, including China, to see how such a small country has become such a major exporter of agricultural products. They copy our technology and processing methods but they cannot copy our entrepreneurship. We are very strong in giving added value."

Hoogeveen says that this success is based on the 'golden triangle' of research and development cooperation among agricultural enterprises, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the University of Wageningen. "Our greenhouse sector has made major investments in energy-friendly greenhouses and we have developed a greenhouse that not only produces its own energy but sells energy for residential use," he adds.

The Ministry of Agriculture is currently involved in projects to ensure more humane treatment of animals raised for meat, more efficient methods of catching fish, and more sustainable production of commodities. The ministry works with a number of international organizations, including the United States Department of Agriculture, and is heavily involved in round-table discussions on palm oil as well as New Zealand's initiative to establish a global alliance for research and development on climate change. The ministry is also involved in European efforts to phase out outdated agricultural subsidies.

Hoogeveen concludes, "Our ministry's two key issues are innovation and sustainability."

# The Ministry of Transports wants to Keep The Country Safe in an Innovative way

Tineke Huizinga, Vice Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, has a number of projects in the works, including one to reduce pollution in canals and in public transport, but a key initiative is the Delta Act.




*Tineke Huizinga  
Vice Minister of  
Transport, Public  
Works and Water  
Management*

She says, "The Delta Act focuses on making the Netherlands safe from the consequences of climate change. We are looking 100 years ahead, a long-term perspective which is very rare for a politician!" The project is examining rising water levels, water safety, soil with higher salt levels, and possible droughts.

The Delta project is of particular importance for the Netherlands since around two-thirds of the country's GDP is produced in areas below sea level. The project is being supported by the Delta Fund, to which the government will contribute around €1 million per year starting in 2020.

The Delta project will take energy sustainability and environmental impact into account, and will focus on the development of new methods and technologies that can be marketed abroad. "We want to keep the country safe in an innovative way," Ms. Huizinga explains.

One important element in the Delta project is the future of the 20 mile long afsluitdijk. This causeway was built 75 years ago, damming off the Zuiderzee, a salt water inlet of the North Sea. The dike needs renovation, and Ms. Huizinga aims for this project to serve as a benchmark for the Delta initiative. She wants the dike not only to be improved but also to be made more useful. "We always want to look at the whole picture: water safety, environment, pollution control, the economy, and sustainable energy," she says.



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# Business & Leisure

## Sofitel Amsterdam The Grand

### “The Legend”

Born out of two convents in the 15th century, it was later converted into a prestigious boarding house for Princes & Lords. Queen Beatrix was wed as a princess to Claus von Amsberg in 1966 in its Council Chamber when it stood as the Town Hall for 180 years, before emerging as Sofitel Amsterdam The Grand as it stands today.



**Robert-Jan Woltering**  
General Manager

Here, it is known simply as ‘The Grand’. Ask for it by only that name, and out of the half dozen hotels in Amsterdam that hold ‘The Grand’ within their title, you will be politely escorted into the grandiose courtyard of The Grand. A doorman immaculate in top hat and tailcoat will guide you through its revolving doors into a lobby full of marble and light. You have come home; and you have arrived.

The pleasure and history of this monument is unmatched. Today, there are classified fourteen five-star hotels in Amsterdam. The Grand is everyone’s competition. Undergoing a 40 million euro renovation, it intimidates the hotel industry in this city, and yet welcomes every guest as if it is your own.



The service unparalleled: ask the Les Clefs d’Or Concierge “Can you...?” and the reply will be simply “Of course”. And they can. From private candlelit catered encounters on a historic canal boat, to in-room massages, to lavish weddings any day of the week. Ask and ye shall receive.

But let us start at the beginning; at the birth of The Grand. In the early 1400s, these buildings stood as the convents of St. Katherine’s and St. Cecily’s. Convents and monasteries dominated the city in this time, and were easily identifiable by their enclosed courtyards, secluded gardens, and extreme privacy. These features are preserved and coveted still in The Grand today.

The Reformation of 1578 saw the convents converted into a prestigious hotel for ‘Princen en Groote Heeren’ (Princes and Gentlemen of Standing). Then, it was known only as Princenhof (Court of Princes). It was during this era that it served as temporary residence for William the Silent (1581) and French Queen Maria de Medici in 1632.

Today it stands as an icon for service and luxury. Flanked on two sides by canals, it surrounds you with serenity and pure luxury in the heart of Amsterdam. Renovations are slated to be complete in April 2010, and The Grand will offer 178 rooms including 53 suites, the interiors designed by French architect Sybille de Margerie.

The gourmet restaurant, led by French chef Aurélien Poirot, will open out upon the newly redesigned sunken garden within the inner courtyard. In November 2009 it was host to Stars, Food, & Art featuring no less than twelve Michelin Star chefs. During Sail 2010, it will also be host to the exclusive Captain’s Dinner.

Rounded out in services by seventeen conference rooms, a fitness area, a heated indoor pool, and steam and sauna rooms, The Grand is a perfect retreat from the bustling centre of Amsterdam. Adding to its acclaim, it holds titles in World’s Best Hotels by Luxury Travel Magazine, Tablet Hotels Selection Award, Award of Excellence by Wine Spectator, Best Champagne Menu by Sterrenwijn Champagne, and was selected by Fodor’s Choice, all in 2008.

When in Amsterdam, follow in the footsteps of many notables before you; visit The Grand and experience for yourself their driving motto in practice: ‘Life is Magnifique’.



# Htel

“Our guests feel at home at Htel Serviced Apartments.”

Htel Serviced Apartments are the perfect choice for business visitors seeking accommodation with exceptional facilities and services. Htel has two suite-only properties, in Amstelveen and in Amsterdam, both within easy access of Schiphol Airport, top business centers, and Amsterdam’s key attractions, including the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh museum.



Lucas Drewes  
Director

Htel’s suites feature the style and services of a luxury hotel along with an atmosphere guaranteed to make guests feel comfortable. Corporate clients seeking staff accommodations are attracted by Htel’s cost savings and convenience, while guests appreciate having luxury hotel services in an apartment that feels like a home. Htel does not offer any restaurants, but their guests are pampered with their own in-suite kitchen, shopping service and welcome/breakfast packages. All services to make an extended stay as easy as possible.

## Taking the suite concept to the next level

In its new Amsterdam property, Htel has taken the executive apartment concept to the next level. As Lucas Drewes, Director, points out, “We transformed 60 apartments to a very high standard, with extra space and exceptional touches and furnishings that you will never find in hotels.”

Htel Serviced Apartments has apartments from 45 sq m up to 150 sq m as well as a wealth of facilities and services, including a gym, sauna and swimming pool, a floor specifically for female guests, home offices, shopping services, massage services, and the 360°



Sky Lounge (a penthouse lounge) that is open to residents or can be rented for events. The average stay at Htel Serviced Apartments is approximately three months, but many guests stay for a week while others stay even longer. Drewes concludes, “you can truly call it: ‘Your home abroad’.”

# Amsterdam Marriott Hotel

Ronnie Maier, General Manager of the Amsterdam Marriott Hotel, has been driving the multi-million euro renovation which has transformed the face of the hotel over the last year. Located in the coveted Leidseplein, the Amsterdam Marriott puts you in the centre of activity. The hotel staff will treat you like an old friend, and yet provide the comfort one expects from a five-star Marriott. Maier runs the Amsterdam Marriott like a family business, imparting a warm welcome that is typically lacking in the major chains.

Quoy restaurant is also exactly what one would expect from a five-star dining experience, with USDA certified Creekstone Farms Natural Black Angus Beef cooked to perfection and 70 percent of their ingredients derived locally. Maier states, “Our location and our personal approach are what set us apart. Come, experience the Amsterdam Marriott Hotel for yourself.”

# Eden Amsterdam American Hotel

The Eden Amsterdam American Hotel is ideally located in the heart of the city at one of the most popular squares: Leidseplein. From here you can easily access the city’s attractions while you reside amongst the hustle and bustle of Amsterdam. Treat yourself to brunch in Café Americain, one of the most well-known in the city, or sit back in Bar Americain and have an award-winning bartender mix you a special invention of the house. Relax beside the gallery of pop art photography that hangs throughout the hotel, or walk down to Rembrandt Square and enjoy exquisite French cuisine in Flo brasserie. Eden Amsterdam American Hotel is truly an escape in the middle of it all. Live the Eden motto: ‘Love, city, life’.

# Grand Hotel Amrath Amsterdam

This hidden gem only opened as a hotel in 2007, but the building itself betrays the youth of the hotel as one of the most recent additions to Amsterdam’s five-star listings. Originally, the building was constructed in the 1910s and ‘20s, to be used as one of the first multinational headquarters of six shipping companies, highlighting the emphasis the Dutch have always put on international trade.

Today, the gothic architecture surrounds you with intricate details of its colourful past, topped with soaring stained glass ceilings illustrating the globe and constellations used for celestial navigation. Marcel Bosman, General Manager, will soon open the rooftop patio in preparation for the hotel’s first starlit New Year’s Eve celebration. Bosman invites all who visit Amsterdam for business or leisure, ‘Come and experience a world of luxury and art’.

# Memphis Hotel

For a good selection within the four-star category for travellers on a tighter budget, the Memphis Hotel in the fashionable centre of Amsterdam, just south of Museumplein. This updated and modern hotel recently underwent extensive renovations on the lobby, conference area, restaurant, lounge, and all guest rooms.

The Memphis is geared toward the corporate traveller, with hotel-wide wireless internet, breakfast to go, expedited check in and check out, and expanding conference facilities. Considering that many corporations are no longer authorizing stays in five-star hotels, Operations Manager Rein Scheidegger is aiming to cater to the five-star corporate travellers without the five-star ranking or price. “We aim to put our service on the same level as that of a five-star, and there’s no reason that we can’t achieve this. We consider the five-star hotels in Amsterdam to be our competition,” Scheidegger confidently states.



# Lloyd Hotel

“Our hotel has a very good atmosphere for thinking outside the box.”

Lloyd Hotel is a focal point in Amsterdam’s up-and-coming harbor area, which is being redeveloped as a trendy residential and cultural center. The hotel, located in an historic building, was created with the input of a number of local artists and designers, and reflects Amsterdam’s long history as well as its vibrant modern culture.



Otto Nan  
Managing Director

Otto Nan, Managing Director, says, “We try to cater to the creative industry. For example, we have a soundproof room where bands can practice before a concert, and a room with very large tables because architects had asked for this.” To help attract creative types and visitors interested in culture, the hotel regularly organizes cultural events, like a recent show of Japanese art. Nan adds, “We are the hotel where people can stay as well as learn about Amsterdam’s cultural offerings. We reinvent ourselves all the time to serve people with a special interest in culture.”

The hotel offers accommodations at a wide range of prices in a unique ‘one to five stars’ system: inexpensive one-star rooms up to ultra-luxurious five-star suites are all in the same hotel. The hotel’s special style is another key draw; as Nan explains, “Our hotel has a very good atmosphere for thinking outside the box.”

Lloyd Hotel aims to open another property in Amsterdam geared to fashion. Nan says, “We are going to work with the Amsterdam Fashion Institute and a group of young fashion designers are going to design the hotel’s interior.” Lloyd Hotel eventually plans to open similar



properties in other countries with the help of local artists and designers so that each property strongly reflects its location. “We are currently looking for partners and investors,” Nan points out. To potential travelers to Amsterdam, he adds, “Come stay at Lloyd Hotel. It is the gateway to Holland’s culture.”

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