

ALMSHOUSE TOURISM IN THE NETHERLANDS



The Dutch city of Leiden is famous for a variety of interesting things. Firstly, there is Rembrandt, arguably the world's most famous painter and Clusius, the man claimed to be the first to have planted the famous tulip on Dutch soil. These are, of course, personalities from the past yet Leiden is still a statement of their existence. Similarly, Leiden is full of museums, mostly thanks to the university. It is said that universities attract collections and collections are the start of museums. Perhaps this explains why there are 12 of them in Leiden with a large range of artifacts. Leiden is also famous for the so-called almshouses. Indeed, the city boasts 35 groups of them.

An almshouse is a small arrangement of apartments, usually totalling 12 or 13, centred around a central courtyard with a well-kept garden and a single gateway to the outside world. A part of their design was for people such as pilgrims to appreciate the single entrance and single exit system.

Originally, pilgrims came to almshouses in search of bread and meat. This was the period around the 1600's. Nowadays, these houses serve as tourist attractions more than anything else. Away from Leiden, there are 20 in the city of Haarlem. Others are dotted around the Dutch countryside, making them ideal targets for cycling tourists.

The Netherlands is the most cycle-friendly country in Europe. Indeed, it is possible to cycle across the whole country in around 6 hours. Along with windmills, a plethora of canals, riverboats, tulip plantations and cows, almshouses are added to the things cycling tourists look forward to seeing.

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