Enkhuizen Cycle Route

This route takes you on a tour of the ‘Historic triangle’ - the Zuiderzee towns of Hoorn, Medemblik and Enkhuizen which were all major trading centres during the Dutch Golden Age. Highlight of the route is the Museum Steam Tram Hoorn-Medemblik which takes both passengers and bikes. Bikes are also allowed on the boat from Medemblik to Enkhuizen, so you can choose which sections you want to cycle, making this an ideal route for families. You can also do this route as a 2 or 3-day mini tour.

From Hoorn you cycle through the polders of West Friesland - one of Holland’s bulb producing regions - to Medemblik, the region’s oldest town. If you get your timings right you’ll be able see the steam tram between the villages of Midwoud and Opperdoes. For more steam power you can visit the Dutch Steam Engine Museum in Medemblik. From here the route takes you along the former Zuiderzee dyke to the VOC towns of Enkhuizen and Hoorn, both seeped with history and well worth exploring.

Distance: 79 km (5h20)

Shorter alternative: The route can be divided into 3 sections that can be spread out over 2 or 3 days. You can also shorten the route by taking the steam tram and/or boat.
- Hoorn - Medemblik (28 km)
- Medemblik - Enkhuizen (24 km)
- Enkhuizen - Hoorn (27 km)

Museum Steam Tram & boat: Limited service, mostly during holidays & high season. For info & timetable, go to: www.museumstoomtram.nl/en

Starting point: Hoorn train station

Public transport to route:
- Bicycle rental
- Car parking

The route follows the numbered cycle network:

Start: Leave the station on the south side (direction town centre). Turn left (Stationsweg, Spoorsingel) and left again under the railway line (Koepoortsweg). Here you pick up the signs to 64.

Finish: At 59 follow signs towards 60. Turn right at Noorderveemarkt and then left (Stationsweg). You’ll see the station straight ahead.

Cycling along the dyke between Wijdenes and Schellinkhout
Enkhuizen Cycle Route

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Enkhuizen Cycle Route

Museum Steam Tram Hoorn-Medemblik

The Museum Steam Tram Hoorn-Medemblik allows you to experience one of the most popular means of public transport in Holland a century ago: the tram. In 1882 there were already thirty tram companies, more than half of which used steam power. This number rapidly increased in the following years. At its peak in the 1920s, Holland had an impressive 3000 km of tram lines! The tram was a cheaper alternative to the train, as trains were faster and heavier and therefore needed more expensive infrastructure. After WWII the car became the preferred mode of transport and most tram lines were shut down.

The Steam Tram Hoorn-Medemblik, which opened in 1887, is one of the few lines that have been restored to its former glory. In the museum at Hoorn station you can see different types of locomotives and carriages and other tram memorabilia from all over Holland. If you want, you can put your bike on the tram and do the section from Hoorn to Medemblik in historical style. The tram only offers a limited service, so check out beforehand whether it runs. For the timetable and prices, go to: www.museumstoomtram.nl/en.

 Zuiderzee

Cycling along the IJsselmeer on a fine summer day, it’s hard to imagine that less than a century ago these tamed waters were still a raging sea, the Zuiderzee. Actually, the Zuiderzee didn’t start off as a sea, but as a sweet water lake, known in Roman times as Aelmere. In the 13th century a series of devastating floods washed away part of the dunes along the Dutch west coast, connecting the lake to the

Steam tram near Midwoud

Lighthouse De Ven
open sea. This had a huge impact on the region. It gave fresh opportunities for the fishing industry and opened up new trade routes. Thanks to the Zuiderzee, the Hanze towns in the east of Holland flourished and the ships of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sailed off from Amsterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Medemblik to discover new continents and bring back all kinds of exotic goods. These were the years of the Dutch Golden Age, a period of prosperity and cultural bloom during the 17th century.

Over the years the Zuiderzee gradually became silted up and large ships could no longer reach the major harbours. It’s strange to think that Dutch engineers could build canals and reclaim huge areas of land, but they hadn’t yet mastered something seemingly as simple as dredging. So rather than making the Zuiderzee accessible for large ships, new trade routes were created, leaving the residents of Hoorn, Medemblik and Enkhuizen to find new sources of income.

**Zuiderzee Works**

While the Zuiderzee brought great wealth to the region, regular flooding continued to be a huge threat. In the 1890s engineer Cornelis Lely started to make plans to close off the Zuiderzee with a large dam and turn parts of it into polders. It wasn’t until after the devastating flood of 1916 that his plans were finally approved by the government. In 1932 the 32-km long Afsluitdijk was completed, turning the Zuiderzee back into a sweet water lake, the IJsselmeer. There have been no more floods since 1932. But closing off the Zuiderzee did have a life-changing impact on the fishing communities that depended on the sea.

**Medemblik**

Medemblik is the oldest town in the region. The many 17th and 18th-century buildings in the picturesque centre take you back to the town’s heyday as an international trading port. Already in the Middle Ages Medemblik was an important centre. Radboud Castle - which is strategically located on the east bank of the harbour, surrounded by water on three sides - dates back to the 13th century. It’s one of several castles built by Floris V, Count of Holland and Zeeland, to control the West Frisians, but the only one that has survived. The castle is open to the public. For opening hours and admission fees, go to: www.kasteelradboud.nl/index.php?page=openingstijden (in Dutch).

Just outside Medemblik you pass the impressive steam pumping station “Vier Noorder Koggen”. Until 1869 a series of 24 windmills was used to keep the polder dry. But when there was no wind, the polders would still fill up with water, so a more reliable source of energy was needed. Steam proved to be so effective that by 1907 the windmills were no longer necessary. In 1975 the steam pumping station was replaced by a modern electric one.

Vier Noorder Koggen is now home to the Dutch Steam Engine Museum. The museum has a collection of 30 steam engines, which are regularly demonstrated. The steam pumping station itself is still in working order and on special occasions you can see it in action. For opening hours and admission fees, go to the museum’s website: www.stoommachinemuseum.nl/bezoekers-informatie (in Dutch).

**Enkhuizen**

In the 17th century Enkhuizen was the third most important town in Holland, after Amsterdam and Haarlem. The town boasted the
largest herring fleet in the country. The harbour would have been pretty crowded with as many as 500 fishing boats! Thanks to the income generated by the herring industry, Enkhuizen could afford to buy a share in the Dutch East India Company (VOC), then a huge company with almost governmental powers. The VOC had the right to wage war, establish colonies, negotiate treaties and it was even allowed to strike its own coins. The VOC had an international monopoly in the spice trade, which brought even greater wealth to Enkhuizen.

The route takes you through the narrow streets of Enkhuizen where you’ll see many 17th-century merchant’s houses with typical Dutch gables, the old harbour and the famous Drommedaris city gate. You also get a glimpse of the Zuiderzee Museum, which brings to life the traditional fishing culture around the Zuiderzee that was lost with the closure of the Afsluitdijk. The museum village is home to 130 historic buildings. Many of them are original buildings that were under threat of demolition, some are replicas. For opening hours and admission fees, go to: www.zuiderzeemuseum.nl/en/10/home.

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Zuiderzee Museum in Enkhuizen

Hoorn

Visiting the Ancient Harbour in Hoorn with its Main Tower, posh merchant’s houses and maybe even a tall ship, it’s easy to imagine how 17th-century explorers embarked from here on a voyage into the unknown. In his search for new trade routes, Willem Corneliszoon Schouten sailed around the southernmost tip of South America, which he named Kaap Hoorn (Cape Horn) in honour of his home town.

After 1650 Hoorn lost its position as major sea harbour and instead became one of the most important market towns in the region. Local dairy farmers brought their produce into town to be sold at the cheese market held at the central square the Rode Steen (Red Stone). After unloading their wagons the farmers went into the pub and the cheese bearers took over.

The Hoorn cheese market is less well known than the one in Alkmaar, but here you can also see how a traditional cheese market used to work - from the opening of the market to the completion of a deal. Demonstrations are held on Thursdays from mid June to the beginning of September. For information, go to www.cheesemarkethoorn.com/UK.

Before you set out, make sure you downloaded the most recent, up-to-date version of this route directly from our website: www.holland-cycling.com/where-to-go/day-trips.

To keep our routes accurate and up-to-date we need your help. If you find any inaccuracies in this route or find that things have changed, please let us know at info@holland-cycling.com.

Enjoy your trip!

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