Vlissingen Cycle Route

Exploring the Walcheren peninsula (south)

48 km

You cycle along the Walcheren canal to the historic town of Middelburg. From here the route takes you through the open polders to Oostkapelle. Via the upper-class seaside resort Domburg and Westkapelle - scene of heavy fighting during WWII - you return to Vlissingen. Along the coast there are sandy beaches where you can stop for a swim in summer.

This route can be combined with the Middelburg Cycle Route, giving you a 57 km-trip around the whole of Walcheren.

Distance: 49 km (3h15)

Alternatives: You can combine this route with our Middelburg Cycle Route for a 57 km-trip around the whole of Walcheren.

Starting point: Vlissingen train station
- Bicycle rental
- Car parking

Public transport to route: Train to Vlissingen train station

The route follows the numbered cycle network:
Start - 86 - 85 - 87 - 83 - 38 - *** (see page 5) - 55 - 3 - 54 - 21 - 23 - 22 - 20 - 16 - 14 - 10 - 40 - 42 - 44 - 80 - 81 - 88 - 86 - Finish

Start: leave the station at the south side to pick up the route at 86.

Finish: The route takes you back to Vlissingen train station.

***: follow the instructions given in the green text on page 5.
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Vlissingen

Vlissingen (also known in English as Flushing) lies on the Scheldt estuary. Thanks to its strategic location it was one of Holland’s main harbours for centuries. In the heyday of the Dutch Golden Age, the ships of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) set sail from Vlissingen to the Dutch colonies, bringing back all kinds of exotic goods. Many a war has been fought over Vlissingen. The port has been occupied by Spain, England, France and in WWII by Germany as it is the gateway to the major port of Antwerp. Today Vlissingen is a popular seaside resort. Allow time to explore the historic centre of Vlissingen.

Just before reaching the boulevard you’ll see signposts to the World Wind Organ. It’s worth a short detour. When the wind blows through the pipes - you might have noticed that it tends to be a bit breezy here! - they produce eerie tones. You also get a great view of the town and the large ships heading to Antwerp passing surprisingly close to the beach.

Gothic Town Hall of Middelburg

Middelburg

As the name says, Middelburg is a ‘burg’, a fortified town. Now there is little left of the city walls, but you can still see the star-shaped canal around the old town. Seafaring and trade have always provided the main livelihood of Middelburg. The grand 17th-century townhouses were built by merchants of the Dutch East India Company.
Like Rotterdam, the historic centre of Middelburg was destroyed by German bombing in May 1940. The badly damaged Gothic Town Hall and the Abbey complex - now home to the Zeeuws Museum - were restored again after the war and are well worth a visit. For opening hours and admission fees, go to http://www.zeeuwsmuseum.nl.

Westhove Castle
The medieval castle at Westhove may look like it once was the court of some noble lord, but actually it belonged to the Abbey and later to the Bishops of Middelburg who used it as their summer residence. It goes to show how powerful and wealthy the Catholic Church was back in those days! Through the centuries the castle has had many occupants and famous visitors, including members of the Dutch royal family.

At the end of the 19th century Westhove Castle was turned into a sanatorium for children from Vlissingen and Middelburg whose parents couldn’t afford a summer residence or a visit to a seaside resort. Westhove Castle is now a youth hostel. The grounds around the castle are open to the public. The orangery houses the nature and landscape museum Terra Maris. For opening hours and admission fees go to http://en.terramaris.nl/.

There is no easy cycle route through the centre of Middelburg as many of the shopping streets are for pedestrians only. To explore the centre, park your bike near the Town Hall. You’ll find the places of interest are not far apart and well signposted.

Route
Just before 57 turn left at Schroebrug, cross the main road and cross the bridge leading into the town centre. Straight on (Vlissingestraat), first left (Koestraat) and second right (cycle path). This takes you back to the canal you just crossed. Follow the canal to the right (Beenhouwerssingel and Molenberg).

Go left at Kromme Weede, crossing the bridge and continue straight on along Seisstraat, Seissingel and Sandbergdaan until you reach President Rooseveltdaan. Turn left (Walcherseweg). Continue straight on until you pick up the numbered cycle network at 55.

Westkapelle
From Westkapelle you have splendid views over the sea - not just in one, but in three directions! It all looks peaceful now, but the tank standing on top of the dyke is a reminder of the devastation that took place during WWII. It’s hard not to be moved by the messages left here by veterans and their families.

Domburg
Domburg is one of the oldest and most elite Dutch seaside resorts. In the past only the very rich could afford to come here. In the 17th and 18th century well-to-do merchants from Middelburg built their summer residences here. It wasn’t until the 1830s that sea-bathing became popular under the elite. Sea-bathing was considered to be greatly beneficial to the health. To preserve the modesty of the bathers, they entered the sea in bathing machines. It must have been quite a sight! Today sea-bathing is a lot simpler - showing off a bit of bare flesh doesn’t seem too big a concern...

At the beginning of the 20th century, Domburg became an important meeting place for Dutch artists. One of them was Piet Mondrian. His paintings of the church of Domburg (at number 24), the lighthouse of Westkapelle and the seaside landscape are now world famous.

On 4 September 1944 the Allies gained control over the port of Antwerp. They desperately needed to ship in new supplies through the Scheldt estuary. The German coastal batteries on Walcheren made this impossible. To weaken the position of the Germans, the
Allies used an old Dutch strategy: flooding. On 3 October British bombers blew up the dyke south of Westkapelle - and most of the village, unfortunately. The brackish lake you see as you leave Westkapelle was created by the inrushing flood. Large parts of Walcheren were flooded, forcing the Germans to retreat to higher ground. In November 1944 Allied troops landed at Westkapelle in amphibious vehicles.

To find out more about the history of Westkapelle, visit the Dyke and War Museum next to the monument. For opening hours and admission fees, go to: http://www.polderhuiswestkapelle.nl.