Zaanse Schans Cycle Route

Traditional windmills, green wooden houses and industrial heritage

52 or 39 km

In Wormerveer 19th-century factories and warehouses are situated along the river Zaan. In Zaandam you can see how the traditional green houses have found their way into 21th-century architecture. The route takes you via Jisp and Fort Spijkerboor to the 17-century fishing village of De Rijp on the edge of the Schermerpolder and via Wormer back to Zaandam.

Distance: 52 km (3h30)
Shorter alternative: 39 km (2h30); at 59 don’t cross the river, but head straight towards 89.
Ferries:
At 89 you cross the Knollendammervaart with a self-service ferry - only to be used before sunset.
At 59 you cross the Noord-Hollands Kanaal on a ferry for cyclists and foot passengers.
Sailing times, see: www.voetveren.nl

Route without ferries: Route at 59 if the ferry doesn’t run.
Starting point: Zaandam train station
- Bicycle rental
- Car parking (see map)

Public transport to route: Train to Zaandam station

The route follows the numbered cycle network:

Start: To get to 70: leave station on the east side (direction town centre). Turn right at Rustenburg. Cross the water and turn first left (Hogendijk). Here you pick up the numbered cycle network towards 70.
Finish: To get back to Zaandam station: head towards 71. At bridge Leelstraat-Paltrookstraat you leave the numbered cycle network.
Continue straight on along the Westzijde until Vinkenstraat. Turn right. At the end of the Vinkenstraat turn left and then first right.

**Modern architecture in Zaandam**

At the beginning of the 21st century the area around Zaandam train station underwent a huge transformation: the Gedempte Gracht (‘Filled-in Canal’) was reinstated and new buildings appeared, inspired by the traditional green wooden houses - but on a larger scale. The Inntel Hotel next to the station is a good example of this so-called fusion architecture. The architect piled around 70 traditional Zaan houses on top of each other to form one large building. Among the green houses is one blue house - a reference to *The Blue House* which Claude Monet painted in Zaandam in 1871. You will pass the Blue House at Hogendijk no. 78.

**Windmills at the Zaanse Schans**

- De Bleeke Dood (The Pale Death): corn mill.
- De Bonte Hen (The Spotted Hen): oil mill.
- Het Klaverblad (The Cloverleaf): saw mill
- Het Jonge Schaap (The Young Sheep): saw mill.
- De Zoeker (The Seeker): oil mill.
- De Kat (The Cat): dye mill.
- De Gekroonde Poelenburg (The Crowned Poelenburg): saw mill
- De Huisman (The Houseman): mustard mill.
- De Gekroonde Poelenburg (The Crowned Poelenburg): saw mill
- De Ooijevaar (The Stork): oil mill.
- De Hadel: polder mill (wipmolen).
- De Windhond (The Greyhound): miniature mill (biksteenmolen).
- Het Zwarte Kalf (The Black Calf): polder mill (weidemolen).

*The Blue House in Zaandam by Claude Monet.* © Public domain
Zaanse Schans

Museum village Zaanse Schans on the banks of the River Zaan attracts tourists from all over the world. Its traditional green wooden houses and industrial windmills were relocated here to form a replica of a typical 17th and 18th-century Zaan village. Most of the windmills are open to the public from April to October. There are various museums where you can find out more about the Zaan region or see typical Dutch crafts such as the making of cheese and wooden shoes. To get a view of the windmills from the water, you can make a boat trip along the river.

Fort Spijkerboor

Hidden in the landscape lies Fort Spijkerboor, the largest fort of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. This defence line was built between 1881 and 1914 to protect the capital from enemy invasion. But how can such an unimpressive looking earthen mound keep the enemy at bay? All around Amsterdam a series of forts was constructed. In times of danger the land around the forts could be inundated, turning it into one big inaccessible swamp. With the introduction of airplanes that could fly over the inundated areas, the defence line became obsolete. Now the Defence Line of Amsterdam is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Fort Spijkerboor is open to the public. Dates are given on their website: www.fortspijkerboor.nl.

De Rijp

The village of De Rijp flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries thanks to the herring and whaling industry. De Rijp lost its direct connection with the Zuiderzee when the Beemsterpolder and Schermerpolder were drained in the early 1600s. This had a huge impact on the economy of the village. The beautifully restored 17th-century houses, Town Hall with Weigh House and the Grote Kerk are a reminder of better days. The church’s stained glass windows tell the history of the village.

Beemster and Schermerpolder

‘God created the world, but the Dutch created Holland’. Jan Adraanszoon Leeghwater from De Rijp was one of the engineers who played an important role in creating Holland. In the early 17th century he improved the drainage pumping mechanism for windmills. Thanks to his innovation 20,000 hectares of land could be reclaimed between 1608 and 1643, including the Schermerpolder. It took four years and as many as 52 windmills to pump the water out of the former lake. The windmills had to work in groups of three to pump the water up from one level to the next as the polder lies four metres below sea level.

Historical industrial wall

After crossing the bridge at Wormerveer, you get an impressive view of the 19th-century factories and warehouses along the River Zaan. Together they form an impressive wall. When the Noordzeekanaal was opened in 1876 ships with wood, rice and grain could access the Zaan region, turning it into an important industrial centre. Rice and grain husking were the main industries. Depending on the wind, today you can smell the cacao which is still processed here or the Verkade biscuit factory.

Enjoy your trip!

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