

YOUR GUIDE TO FRIESLAND

Offering a mix of traditional towns, farmland, national parks, and idyllic waterways, Friesland is a place to get active, reconnect with nature, and sample a slice of authentic Dutch life.

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With so much to see and do, we've rounded up our five favourite adventures to get you started... but dive into the rest of our guide and you'll discover: there's lots more where this came from.

Sneek

This is one of the livelier towns in the Friesland region, built around a lake and a 15th Century water gate. Sneek is a popular spot for watersports, and a sailing festival brings a party atmosphere to the town every August. Back on dry land, the Shipping Museum and the Model Railway Museum give a fascinating introduction to the town's history.

De Alte Feanen National Park

Covering 20km² of peat bog and wetland, this green oasis has everything you need for a day out amongst nature. Paddle through the park in a canoe or paddleboard and see how many plant species, birds, fish, otters and windmills you can spot, or explore on land using miles of walking and cycling trails.

AquaZoo Friesland, Leeuwarden

Learn about marine life through AquaZoo's programme of interactive activities which take you closer to the animals than any other wildlife park. Sail to the middle of the lake to feed seals, walk among the penguins, watch zookeepers examine polar bears... and don't forget to say hello to the monkeys, capybaras and lemurs too!



Lemmer

Sitting on the edge of the Netherlands' largest lake, IJsselmeer, this charming fishing town attracts lovers of watersports, beaches, history, and authentic cafés. The chimney of the Woudagemaal Steam Pumping Station rises above the town – take a look inside to see 100-year-old engineering at work and learn about its role in flood prevention.

Wadden Islands

The Wadden Islands separate the North Sea and the Wadden Sea, with sweeping beaches and dramatic dunes on one side, and lush forests on the other. All the islands are accessible by boat, but at low tide you can also walk across the mudflats accompanied by a local guide. Look out for seals, birds and porpoises!

CULTURE FIX



Groningen

Old and new worlds meet in the northern Netherlands' largest city – with historic buildings, cobbled canal-side streets, excellent shopping and a lively atmosphere. Climb the Martini Tower for a panoramic view of the city, and check out contemporary art and design in the Groninger Museum.



Leeuwarden

Floating museums, leaning towers, maze-like shopping streets, canals... if you're interested in Frisian culture you'll love Leeuwarden. Learn about the region's history at the Fries Museum, climb the Oldehove (The Netherlands' own leaning tower), and visit the former home of graphic artist M.C. Escher, which now houses a ceramics museum.



Sloten

Vibrant foliage lines the streets alongside canals in this postcard-perfect city. Yes, city – despite having the size, population and atmosphere of a village, Sloten is one of Friesland's 'Eleven Cities'. Stroll around to admire rustic buildings and historic sights, and call in one of the cosy waterside restaurants for a hearty supper of locally-caught fish.



Hindeloopen

This town of only 800 residents has its own language, its own traditional costume, and an artistic culture going back centuries. In shops and homes around the town, you'll see intricate, hand-painted floral patterns – a style that originated during a period of prosperity brought by international trade. The Hindeloopen Museum is the best place to learn more.



GET ACTIVE

Cycling

The Netherlands is known for its safe, family-friendly cycle routes and Friesland is no exception! Hire bikes from the parc and enjoy a leisurely ride around the countryside, or if you're feeling adventurous, take on the 'Eleven Cities Tour'. This route takes in all of Friesland's cities, following the same course as the ice skating race of the same name.

Canal jumping

Centuries ago, locals developed an ingenious way to get across the flooded landscape – jumping over the water! Fierljeppen, or canal jumping, involves using a

metal pole to leap from one side of the water to the other. Look out for people practising on the region's canals, and if you fancy a go, head to Boerderij Recreatie on the shores of Tjeukemeer Lake.

Canoeing

A day out on the water is the ideal way to experience all of Friesland's treasures. Canoes, paddleboards and sloops are available to rent from Sloterveer Lake, and from here you can access over 20 lakes by following the extensive canal network. These waterways link up the region's towns too, so you've got a choice of beautiful places to take a rest stop!

Sailing

You're in one of the best regions for sailing! Amateurs and professionals alike love the Frisian Lakes' consistent wind conditions and protection from the tide. Lemmer is a good place to try it out – it's situated on the shores of the Netherlands' largest lake, with a cluster of sailing schools and boat rental offices, and excellent cafes for post-sail refreshments.



KIDS WILL LOVE



Model Railway Museum, Sneek

This kid-sized museum sits inside the railway station, and displays a selection of miniature trains from 1800 to the present day. Several tracks have been set up too so you can see the models in action – just push the button to watch carriages travel around Friesland and across Europe!



Swimfun, Joure

If you're ready to take poolside fun up a level, Swimfun is the place to go! This tropical-themed waterpark has a wave pool, rapids, Jacuzzi and slides, one with an interactive light show. But the best part is the outdoor wild river, which takes you down waterfalls and through caves before the final plunge into the pool.

Duinen Zathe Amusement Park

This theme park is packed with attractions for all the family, ranging from slides and soft-play to rides and rollercoasters. Little ones can ride around a realistic traffic circuit, and if they follow the rules they'll get their (pedal car) driving licence! A meal at the restaurant is included in the ticket price too.



Frisian Nature Museum, Leeuwarden

Discover the creatures that live beneath the waves in Friesland on the Underwater Safari - you'll travel along the sea bed in a glass-roofed passageway to look for seals, porpoises, catfish and more. Inside the museum you'll also find a range of interactive exhibits, and sea mammal skeletons recovered from the local area.

DAY TRIPS

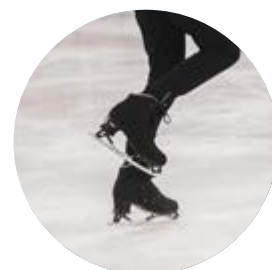


Amsterdam

The vibrant Dutch capital feels like a different world to rural Friesland, but it's only an hour and 15 minutes' drive away! There you'll find 30 parks, 50 museums, 100km of canals, 605 cheese shops and 2500 houseboats to explore. But amongst all that sightseeing, take a moment to look around the canal side streets and appreciate the beauty of the city!

Heerenveen

Several villages founded in different centuries now make up the modern-day city, leaving behind historical monuments from throughout the ages. But today Heerenveen is best known for its sports facilities. Try a variety of activities at Sport City, and get your skates on at Thialf, a huge indoor ice rink popular with speed skaters.



Lelystad

Friesland contains some of the Netherlands' oldest cities, but cross over into Flevoland to explore some of its youngest. Lelystad sits on land reclaimed from the sea when the Afsluitdijk Dam was built, which you can learn more about in the Batavialand open-air museum. This town also has a vast nature park, excellent shopping and watersports.

Zwolle

Always dreamed of a Beauty and the Beast style library? Step inside Waanders in de Broeren in Zwolle's medieval centre. This bookshop is housed in an old church, with a huge selection of Dutch and English titles. Zwolle is a celebrated culinary city, with a range of superb restaurants, sweet shops, and even a bakery museum just outside the city!



WHEN THE SUN SETS

Nature provides the evening entertainment in Friesland, and the best seats in the house are on your decking! Stock up on locally-brewed beers from Brouwersgilde Sleat in Sloten, then settle in as the night sky puts on a dazzling display.

If you fancy something a bit livelier, head to Sneek for dinner and a show at Lewinski, or live music at Poppodium Bolwerk. Closer to home, Balk has a smattering of waterside restaurants where you're sure of a warm welcome and a quality meal – don't miss the desserts at Willem de IJskoning!



FIND OUT MORE

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