



# Holland GOING DUTCH

The Netherlands has a rich golfing heritage, from some of the game's finest classic links courses to newer, inland layouts. Rob Smith seeks out some of the best...

**T**he word 'golf' can be traced back to the Dutch word 'kolf' or 'kolve' (meaning club), and there's evidence that the game of kolf, which was played with a stick and ball on frozen canals in the winter, was the forerunner of the sport that we know and love. In the Netherlands, golf has grown to the point where only football and tennis have more participants. With close to three per cent of the population playing, it has the highest rate of golfers in mainland Europe. One of the main reasons for this is undoubtedly its collection of very fine courses. The Dutch coast has some wonderful old links, with Harry Colt, the finest architect of his generation, making a major contribution.

There are now in the region of 250 courses in the country, many of great vintage, but also several exceptional new ones, such as The Dutch near Rotterdam. This inland links was designed by Colin Montgomerie

and European Golf Design, and was the focal point of the nation's bid to host the 2018 Ryder Cup. Other fairly recent additions include Lage Vuursche, penned by Kyle Phillips, and the new International Club



near Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, which was designed by former Ryder Cup captain Ian Woosnam. While there are plenty of excellent, but less well-known, courses dotted throughout the country, among the most acclaimed are the following.

## **NOORDWIJKSE**

6,317m, par 72

Located only a few miles to the south west of Amsterdam, Noordwijkse is one of several excellent links in the area. Although the club will celebrate its centenary in two years, its original course was lost in 1971 when the land was acquired for a housing project. Frank Pennink was drafted in, and the result is a tricky links exposed to the elements and played through some dramatic sand hills.

Twice you enter tall pines, which can seem quite claustrophobic after the more open holes. Standouts include terrific rolling par 5s at the 2nd and 11th, as well as the short par-4 8th through some substantial dunes. Despite its relative youth, it feels much older and has hosted the Dutch Open on eight occasions.

## **KENNEMER**

6,283m, par 72

Just a short drive up the coast, but separated from the sea by the small beach resort of



Noordwijkse

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## KENNERMER

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Zandvoort, Kennemer is one of Harry Colt's best, and is the oldest links in the country. The course dates back to the 1920s but was virtually destroyed during World War II. It was subsequently restored as close to the original as possible.

Just as Colt did at Muirfield, there are two loops, with the back nine encircling the opening holes. The 9th is a very strong par 4 heading along an angled fairway that gently rises to the basin green. The impressive 15th, played across a valley to the top of a steep dune, was Colt's favourite hole, and is the best of a strong set of short holes. It also heralds the start of a superb run home

that includes a reachable par 5, a short par 3 across a thorny gully, and an attractive closing hole towards the pretty, thatched clubhouse. There is a third nine at Kennemer, also worth investigating, which is the last work of architect Frank Pennink.

## ROYAL HAGUE

6,142m, par 73  
Although it's the oldest club in the country, dating back to 1893, the course at Royal Hague is a little more recent. It's yet another Colt masterpiece, which he designed for a wealthy Dutch golfer in 1938. Further inland than Kennemer, it is a dramatic layout

featuring big dunes. It has a strong seaside feel and little obvious man-made design, aside from the typically understated green sites. Some holes are very grand in their scale, with dramatic elevation changes, and there's a regular demand for a heroic drive over a ravine or gully.

Highlights include the short 7th, which is a terrific hole over the brow of a hill, and then down to a green nestling beside a large dune. The tumbling and rising 9th is another fine hole, as are the more subtle 11th, the wild 15th, with its green beside a hill and protected by a mound, and the 16th, played across a ravine and then a small knoll.



Utrecht De Pan

Photography Getty Images, Jan van Mandfrans, Thijs Tuurenhout and Ronald Speijer



Hilversum



Royal Hague

## COURSES & TRAVEL

### ● Eindhoven

W: eindhovenwegolf.nl

E: info@eindhovenwegolf.nl

GF: €90, weekdays

### ● Utrecht de Pan

W: ugc-depan.nl

E: secretariaat@ugcdepan.nl

GF: €100, weekdays

### ● Hilversum

W: hilversumwegolfclub.nl

E: info@hilversumwegolfclub.nl

GF: €135 all week

### Travel

Low-cost flights to Amsterdam are readily available from a wide variety of UK airports. Airlines operating include British Airways (ba.com), easyJet (easyjet.com) and KLM (klm.com). Alternatively, Stena Line (stenaline.co.uk) runs a frequent ferry service between Harwich and the Hook of Holland.

### ● Kennemer

W: kennemergolf.nl

E: secretariaat@kennemergolf.nl

GF: €120, Mon-Sat

### ● Noordwijkse

W: noordwijksegolfclub.nl

E: info@noordwijksegolfclub.nl

GF: €120, weekdays

### Further information

For more details on golf and travel in the Netherlands, please visit the Golf in Holland websites at [golfinholland.org](http://golfinholland.org) and [playgolfinholland.com](http://playgolfinholland.com)

### ● Royal Hague

W: khgcc.nl

E: secretariaat@khgcc.nl

GF: €100, weekdays

## UTRECHT DE PAN

6,082m, par 72

Yet another Colt creation, De Pan was completed in 1928. It's heavily wooded and laid out over wonderfully undulating sandy terrain. Many of the holes are covered in the same heather that typifies heathland golf in the UK, including the long, rolling 6th, which is played over a rise and then around a large hill that obscures much of the green.

A real feature hole is the unusual 10th – a lovely short par 4 played through a small saddle gap between two tall hills. The par-3 15th, with a narrow green cut into the side of a dune, is also great fun. For those who are happy with the occasional blind shot and no water hazards, this course is perfect.

## HILVERSUM

6,303m, par 72

Host of the most recent three KLM Dutch Opens, Hilversum dates back over a century, with Harry Colt once again an influential figure in its development. Kyle Phillips has recently made some modifications, and this

remains an extremely pretty and undulating tree-lined course. There's plenty of heather, so there's an emphasis on straight driving. Holes of note include the long par-3 5th, the beautiful short par-4 12th, and the tiny 14th, which is protected by a necklace of bunkers. There are no weak holes, and so long as you

**"Royal Hague is a dramatic layout with big dunes, a strong seaside feel and some very grand holes"**

keep the ball in play from the tee, the dips and hollows make Hilversum great fun.

## EINDHOVEN

6,311m, par 72

This attractive woodland course, on the outskirts of Eindhoven in the south-east of

the country, was created by the family of the Philips electronics company. Yet again it is Colt who was responsible for the design. During World War II, German, and later Allied, troops flattened the 16th hole and used the 17th fairway as a runway. All has been faithfully restored, and the 16th is now a lovely short hole that looks across a lake toward the clubhouse. Indeed, there is a particularly strong collection of par 3s, while the short par-4 2nd, with its slippery green, is also a highlight.

None of these clubs is resting on its laurels. Kennemer, Hague, Utrecht de Pan and Eindhoven have all benefitted from renovations by Colt expert Frank Pont, whose work is just starting to appear in the UK at clubs such as Cruden Bay and Tandridge. While the superb courses of the Netherlands are known and appreciated domestically by its own enthusiastic golfers, they're not yet so frequently considered for golfing trips from further afield. With quick, easy and affordable access from the UK, now is the time for them to gain wider acclaim. **GM**

## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The Netherlands is packed with unique cultural and geographic delights.

Amsterdam is full of museums and galleries, many of which are architectural gems themselves. Highlights include the Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum, while a guided tour along the city's 60-mile network of canals is an absolute must.

The miniature city at Madurodam is great fun, especially for those with children. Although it's only open to the public for a few weeks in the spring, Keukenhof is the world's largest flower garden, with not only tulips but many other varieties. The 19 windmills near the village of Kinderdijk are on UNESCO's World Heritage list and are well worth a visit.



The windmills of Kinderdijk are a UNESCO World Heritage site