

A man wearing a black hooded rain suit is riding a bicycle through a flooded street. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The water is splashing around the front wheel. In the background, there are traffic signs, including a triangular warning sign with a traffic light symbol and a circular speed limit sign with the number 3.90. The scene is set in an urban environment with a bridge or overpass visible in the distance.

How to survive
the Netherlands?

Hey future GSS'er,

if you're reading this, you are not native to the Low Lands in which the UU is located. In this text we will tell you some facts about this beautiful country, as well as some useful information, such as the definition of 'gezelligheid'

The Netherlands is not that big of a country; it is only 200 kilometres from the west coast to the eastern border and about 300 kilometres from the north to the south, which takes approximately three hours by car. The highest point of country is in the south, in the province called Limburg. This hill ranges 323 meters above sea level, though to our standards, this is called a mountain! The Netherlands has a population of 17 million people, reaching a population density of 410 people per square kilometre, with most people living along the west coast. In the Netherlands we have the most cultural diversity with regards to our size, and with nearly everyone speaking English, you will most certainly feel welcome here! Our most essential means of transport is the bicycle; we have 22,5 million of them in this country. You will have to buy one! The Dutchies cycle 2,5 kilometres a day on average, and in a while you will probably do this too.

We are a monarchy, which means we have a king: King Willem Alexander of Oranje-Nassau. Oranje is Dutch for orange, and is thus our national colour. Because of this you will see a lot of crazy over-enthusiastic Dutch people wearing orange, especially at sporting events. As soon as any Dutchman (or woman) participates in any sporting event, we suddenly become extremely patriotic and very confident that the Dutch athlete will win. This may not always be the case, but don't you dare say that the athlete stands no chance!

In addition to a king, who only serves a public role, we have a prime minister who is the leader of our democracy. The prime minister currently is Mark Rutte, he rules with the elected government from The Hague, where our government is situated.

When you think of the Netherlands you probably think of Amsterdam, but perhaps also of tulips (which are originally from Turkey), clogs (nobody wears these things anymore), and cheese. Maybe drugs also pop into your mind, since cannabis is tolerated in the Netherlands (not during the introduction week!!).

Though there are some rules attached, if you want to smoke weed, first learn about these rules and regulations. The Netherlands is also widely known because it mostly lies beneath sea level. If the Dutch dykes ever break, half of our country will be beneath the sea. Besides protecting ourselves from the water, we are also known for pumping the water away and creating polders. The province of Flevoland is entirely man-made, if the dykes break it will be entirely underwater within 48 hours. The mills we used for creating polders are still widely spread throughout the country and are part of our national heritage.

In the Netherlands life is effortless; we have the happiest children in the world and the best healthcare in Europe. Though everything is well organised in the Netherlands, we managed to find something we can complain about nicely: the weather. Luckily, it doesn't rain every day. Especially in recent years, due to climate change we have even experienced some droughts. Fortunately for us, this is also something we can complain about. When you run out of words in a conversation, just start talking about the weather, we love it. Besides complaining about bad weather, it is also typical for us Dutchies to storm the terraces when the weather picks up. From 16 degrees onward the terraces become jam-packed with people enjoying a beer in the sun, though we will obviously complain about the blistering heat.

After you enjoyed some drinks with your friends, don't be surprised to receive a tikkie (an online payment request via the tikkie app). We Dutch people are very friendly, but we do want you to pay for your own drinks, so we always split the bill (you might already know this as 'going Dutch'). In the first week, you will most likely be introduced to the 'Wie Betaalt Wat' app. This is just another way to split payments more equally among your friends. Another fun fact about something Dutch is the air alarm you will hear in the introduction week, specifically Monday 2 September at 12 o'clock. This is just the government testing the alarms that will be heard when your impending doom is near, so don't be afraid!

Hopefully this all and following, will help you a bit with starting and living in the Netherlands, but in a short time you will experience all this in a bit. We can't wait to see you during the introduction week.

To make life in the Netherlands a little easier, we have put some words/phrases here that you can use:

English	Dutch	Pronunciation
Greetings		
Hello	Hallo / Hoi	ha-low / hoy
Good morning	Goedemorgen	khoo-duh-mor-khen
Good afternoon	Goedemiddag / Fijne middag	khoo-duh-mid-dakh /fay-nuh-mid-dakh
Good evening	Goedeavond / Fijne avond	khoo-duh-ah-font / fay-nuh-ah-font
Good night	Goedenacht	khoo-duh-nakht
Goodbye	Tot ziens / Doeï (informal)	toat-zeens / doo-ee
How are you?	Hoe gaat het met je/U? (informal/formal)	hoo khaat het met yuh / oo
	Hoe is het met je/U? (informal/formal)	hoo is het met yuh / oo
I'm well, and you?	Alles goed, en met jou/U?	al-les khoot, en met yow / oo
Good, thanks	Goed, dank je/U	khoot, dank yuh / oo
	Goed, bedankt	khoot be-dankt
Essentials		
Please	Alsjeblieft / Alstublieft	ahls-yuh-bleaft / ahlst-oo-bleaft
Thank you	Dank je / Dank U	dank yuh/oo
You're welcome	Graag gedaan	khrahk khe-dahn
Yes	Ja	ya
No	Nee	nay
Excuse me (getting attention)	Sorry / Pardon	soh-ree / par-don
Excuse me (when you didn't hear or understand the person)		
I'm sorry	Het spijt me	het spayt meh
I don't understand	Ik begrijp het niet	ik be-grayp het neat
Do you speak English?	Spreek je Engels?	sprayk yuh eng-els
	Spreekt U Engels?	spraykt oo eng-els
Questions		
How much is...?	Hoeveel is ...?	hoo-feyl is
Where is...?	Waar is ...?	vaar is
When?	Wanneer...?	van-neer
Can I have...?	Mag ik alsjeblieft/alstublieft ...?	maakh ik als-yuh-bleaft / al-stoo-bleaft

Experience from an international student:
Elena Benfield



How to survive the Netherlands?

Simple. Get a bike. Asap. And I don't mean the sketchy ones from facebook. (trust me, it is not worth the €30 you save, you'll have to buy a new one) Go to a proper store. Just go to 'cheap bike' stores. Literally. Also, take a picture of your bike if you're going to a pub crawl, because if you're drunk, and you're parking your bike more than 3 times. Good luck. But honestly, the first thing you need if you want to survive the Netherlands, is a decent bike. (Trust me, I've had 3 bikes in this single year)

Actually, there's more to it than bikes. You've got to have a room, and good food. I can't help you with rooms, since I'm also struggling for more than three months to find my new place. (It is actually a big issue here, so don't be hard on yourself if you can't find a place, it's not you, it's the system. Beg your parents for a higher budget, or befriend a person who has a room :)) But with food... If you're Asian, **BRING YOUR RICE COOKER.**

Now that I've covered the practicals, in order to survive the Netherlands (or anywhere in fact) you have to attract good vibes. Good vibes only. I'm serious. Picture fun & fresh roommates, a fun committee, nice coworkers, hopeful study program, and great course mates. **DO NOT** worry about the opposite negative things, or else that is exactly what you're going to attract. I'm sounding like the basic GSS hippy, (which I'm not) but I wish you the best of luck, and make the most of the NL and GSS!

P.s. Don't be afraid to miss your home country, or not missing it from having too much fun! (I'm more the latter)

Love, the "No footprint nomads" mum -Elena Benfield

Welcome to Utrecht dear international friends!

Experience from an international student:
Luca Bartinger



Welcome to Utrecht dear international friends!

Contrary to some of you, who are coming from different parts of the world, I didn't experience big cultural and societal changes compared to my old environment. I am from Luxembourg, a country that is a 4 hours drive away and that is fairly similar to the Netherlands in many aspects.

After a year of studies and life in the Netherlands, some things are nonetheless different. First, everything is smaller in Utrecht. The buildings and streets themselves, as well as the apartments and shops they inhabit. It might explain the abundance of really small kamers on housing search pages. You might say: "Criminals! How am I supposed to live in that storage room?!" Well first, dutch people might just be used to smaller places, or second, the shortage of places in Utrecht leaves little to no space for selective behaviour, very much by the motto: "You should content yourself with what you get."

Different is also that you can quite often look right into people's living rooms just by passing by on the streets. Physically, people live closer to each other and seem to have a different interpretation of personal space. From my experience, the average dutch person is also a more social person than the average Luxembourgish person. The infamous dutch word "gezellig" definitely has a reason of existence. Really appreciated to me came the universal use of bikes in the Netherlands. It is simple, quite relaxing and enjoyable to bike anywhere in the city. Also, since everyone uses the bike in Utrecht, it adds to the feeling of living closer together, in the sense of: "We all live together here."

Also, if you are coming from a more southern country, you might feel insulted by the dutch food culture. Of course does Utrecht have very diverse food offers. Dutch taste buds just might be less demanding than yours, focus more on the monetary aspect, and are regularly satisfied with 5 slices of cheap supermarket hummus bread for lunch. A special RIP goes out to all french and german people: places selling good bread are really rare.

On the other hand, however, you will be blessed by the musical offer of the area. There are countless regular concerts, day or weekend festivals happening every week: in Utrecht e.g., venues like Tivoli, Ekko and dBs are worth to check out and cover many genres. If that is not enough, then a 30 minute train ride taking you to the cultural hotspot of Amsterdam will fulfil your fantasies: all the latest hot artists and big shots you always wanted to see live stop by.

All in all, I wish you a pleasant stay here! Don't take my words as only truth, go out there and make your own idea of Utrecht

Best, Luca Bartringer

Eating Out		
Beer	Bier	<i>beer</i>
Red wine / white wine)	Rode Wijn / Witte Wijn	<i>row-de vayn / vit-ah vayn</i>
Water	Water	<i>vah-ter</i>
I don't eat...	Ik eet geen...	<i>ik ate khayn</i>
I'm a vegetarian	Ik ben vegetariër	<i>ik ben fey-kher-ta-ree-yer</i>
Can I/we have the bill?	Mag ik de rekening?	<i>maakh ik duh rey-kuh-ning</i>
	Mogen wij de rekening?	<i>mo-khen vay duh rey-kuh-nin</i>
Getting Around		
Left	Links	<i>linx</i>
Right	Rechts	<i>reckhts</i>
Straight ahead	Rechtdoor	<i>reckht-door</i>
Turn left	Sla linksaf	<i>sla links-aff</i>
Turn right	Sla rechtsaf	<i>sla reckht-af</i>
Bus stop	Bushalte	<i>boos-hal-te</i>
Train station	Treinstation	<i>trayn-sta-shyon</i>
Airport	Vliegveld / luchthaven	<i>fleekh-felt / lookht-ha-fen</i>
Entrance	Ingang	<i>in-khang</i>
Exit	Uitgang	<i>out-khang</i>
Emergencies		
Help!	Help!	<i>help</i>
I need a doctor	Ik heb een dokter nodig	<i>ik heb un dok-ter no-dikh</i>
I don't feel well	Ik voel me niet goed	<i>ik vool muh neat khoot</i>
Call the police!	Bel de politie	<i>bel deh pol-eet-see</i>
Fire!	Brand!	<i>braandt</i>

Numbers		
1	één	<i>ayn</i>
2	twee	<i>tway</i>
3	drie	<i>dree</i>
4	vier	<i>feer</i>
5	vijf	<i>fayf</i>
6	zes	<i>zes</i>
7	zeven	<i>zay-fen</i>
8	acht	<i>akht</i>
9	negen	<i>nay-hken</i>
10	tien	<i>teen</i>
20	twintig	<i>twin-tikh</i>
30	dertig	<i>der-tikh</i>
40	veertig	<i>feer-tikh</i>
50	vijftig	<i>fayf-tikh</i>
60	zestig	<i>zehs-tikh</i>
70	zeventig	<i>zay-ver-tikh</i>
80	tachtig	<i>takh-tikh</i>
90	negentig	<i>nay-khen-tikh</i>
100	honderd	<i>hon-dert</i>
Monday	maandag	<i>maan-daakh</i>
Tuesday	dinsdag	<i>dins-daakh</i>
Wednesday	woensdag	<i>voons-daakh</i>
Thursday	donderdag	<i>don-dur-daakh</i>
Friday	vrijdag	<i>fray-daakh</i>
Saturday	zaterdag	<i>za-tur-daakh</i>
Sunday	zondag	<i>zon-daakh</i>

Typical dutch words

Gezelligheid

Although gezelligheid is often equated to cosiness, this catchall concept has considerably more depth than its English counterpart. For the Dutch, gezelligheid represents a broad spectrum of fun, jovial or amicable situations that are united by their sense of personal comfort and togetherness.

Lekker

In Dutch, the adjective lekker connotes several positive attributes including nice, appealing and high-quality. Whilst tasty or hearty food is commonly called lekker, the word extends well beyond gastronomy and is often applied to attractive people, well-made clothing, nice weather or even a good night's sleep.

Hè Hè

This short exhalation primarily denotes comfort, satisfaction or relief and is employed when someone wishes to relate their alleviation to others, e.g. after completing a busy day at work.

Lekker Bezig

Lekker Bezig literally translates into English as 'nice busy' and denotes the feeling of accomplishment someone has whilst pursuing a particularly engaging activity. By announcing this phrase speakers provide moral support to their interlocutor whilst acknowledging that their labours are definitely worth the effort.

Borrel

The Dutch have actually coined a word for informal gatherings at the [pub](#) and call this special time of the day a borrel. Although borrels often take place inside bars, many employers organise after work drinks in their offices on Friday afternoons, commonly known as vrijmibo.

-tje

The Dutch employ diminutives considerably more often than English speakers and make words sound smaller, cuter or friendlier by adding the suffix -tje. A regular beer, for example, is called in biertje in Dutch, whilst a small dog is a hondje.

Overzichtelijk

Although dictionaries state that overzichtelijk translates to uncomplicated or accessible, these words aren't quite perfect stand-ins, as the adjective is generally applied to things that have a clear overview. A well organised city, for example, is overzichtelijk, as it is possible to easily imagine its layout.

Uitbuiken

For the Dutch, delicious, filling meals induce uitbuiken, which literally translates into English as outbellying. Speakers employ this verb to express that their bellies need time to relax after a particularly hearty feast, and often proceed to unbuckle their belts, or loosen tight clothing in order to encourage healthy digestion.

Zeker

This exceptionally common adjective expresses absolute certainty and is added to sentences in order to strengthen their resolve. Answering a question with a phrase that includes zeker allows a speaker to express their conviction or strongly agree with another person's statement.

Voorpret

Voorpret represents the feeling of anticipation people commonly have before an exciting event such as parties or festivals. Whilst planning ahead or looking forward to something Dutch people will commonly state 'Ik heb voorpret' which roughly translates to 'I have positive expectations'.

Ogenblik

'Een ogenblik' literally translates into English as 'an eye blink' and denotes a short, indefinite amount of time. Although the word functions much like 'jiffy' or 'moment', by alluding to eye movements the word feels more elegant than its English equivalents.

Uitzieken

This clever verb literally translates into English as 'to out sick' and is employed when a speaker wants to express that they are resting in order to recover from a minor illness.

Uitwaaien

This beautiful verb represents walking outdoors to gain better insight or calm down after a stressful event. Although 'uitwaaien' usually connotes forest paths or windswept beaches, its possible to 'uitwaaien' in parks or even gardens.

Op Die Fiets

Like most idioms, 'op die fiets' barely makes sense when it is translated literally but conveys an obvious, useful message to native speakers.

Taken literally this phrase means 'on that bike' whereas Dutch speakers understand that it actually signifies 'Oh, that way' or 'I now understand how that happened'.



Contact details of Sham

If you have questions about something like, what do I need to arrange before coming to Utrecht (most of it can be found online), feel free to ask Sham. She is from the Dominican Republic so she probably struggled the same as you did. Sham is also in the Storm board, and did the first year committee last year so she knows a lot.

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