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## Basic Stuff

Parts of Amsterdam may be renewing, modernizing, trendifying, and gentrifying, but many of its hotels retain the character of earlier epochs. In Amsterdam hotels, don't mind the labyrinthine corridors and the lace-draped window that looks onto a wall. Call it *gezellig*, i.e., cozy. The Dutch obsession with coziness applies doubly to hotels in Amsterdam. Ask Amsterdammers what counts in a hotel and you're likely to hear them say "atmosphere" or "character," rather than "luxury," "comfort," or "convenience." A location on one of the Golden Age canal sides doesn't hurt either, and in that case, atmosphere and character are just about guaranteed. What locals might consider a great room can be cramped, cluttered, nearly inaccessible, and impregnated with the smell of stale tobacco, so long as it affords a taste of the two primarily desirable attributes noted above and doesn't disappoint when it comes to value. Happily, the Dutch are also a nation of neatniks, and, like the Swiss, worship efficiency. So, many Amsterdam hotels are homey, squeaky clean, and professionally run.

The city has a startling capacity to accommodate all tastes; you'll be delighted to discover hotels sleazy and sublime, catering to backpackers, gays, philosophers, musicians, S&M aficionados, dope smokers, and cyclists. If Dutch "charm" doesn't come high on your list, most international chain hotels are also here, as well as the home-grown AMS and what survives locally of the Golden Tulip group (most of its hotels were transferred to the Spanish-based NH Hotels chain, which seems to have somehow taken some of the class out of many of the hotels they took over). Amsterdam has two super-luxury hotels—the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** and the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam**—that rank among Europe's best, plus a constellation of bona fide charmers like the **Ambassade**, **Dylan**, and the **Hotel de l'Europe**.

Amsterdam's canal-house hotels—centuries-old, converted private homes facing the capital's 100-plus waterways—are the most sought-after properties. Most are small, *gezellig*, family-run gems. Only a few, such as **Ambassade** and **Estheréa**, have elevators, and the staircases in many are like steep ship gangways, leading to rooms where average Americans bump their heads and sleep with their feet hanging off the beds (they later will surely appreciate Abraham Lincoln's rueful remark, after spending a night in a cramped U.S. Navy ship's bunk, that "You can't put a long blade into a short scabbard"), and larger-than-average Americans may need to breathe in or turn sideways to

get through the door. Don't forget that there are dozens of leafy gardens and courtyards in town; often a room overlooking one of these, on the back side of a canal house or other hotel, is preferable to a potentially noisy canal-side room with a view.

Though bed-and-breakfasts are not common in Amsterdam, almost all one-, two-, and three-star hotels include in the room price a copious Dutch buffet breakfast of ham, cheeses, boiled eggs, rolls, butter, jam, croissants, and fruit juices (though in some downscale establishments what you'll actually get are a few sorry-looking, curled-up-at-the-edges slices of cheese, assorted cold cuts of indeterminate provenance, and eggs boiled hard enough to sink an enemy submarine). Some four-star and almost all five-star hotels charge extra—up to 30€ (\$35)—for continental breakfasts, and more for a Dutch or American breakfast.

Nonsmoking rooms are few and far between in Amsterdam, found primarily in luxury and business establishments, though even these sometimes smell of smoke, since the Dutch simply ignore smoking prohibitions. Be aware that in some Dutch hotels, especially family-run operations, double rooms could have twin beds pushed together. Calvin would approve.

## Winning the Reservations Game

Most of the hotels listed here have been inspected and rated by the Benelux Hotel Classification system, which assigns them stars—not according to quality, but simply according to the number of rooms and the facilities provided (such as elevator, garage, and special services).

But Amsterdam is an expensive city, and many of those beds are pricey (around 40% are in four- or five-star establishments). This overabundance at the high-end continues to ramp up competition, bringing prices down for travelers who know to ask for a favorable room rate: No one pays “rack rates” (standard list prices) anymore for upper-end rooms, and because of this continuing price war, you can often get a five-star room for the list price of a four-star room, or a four-star room for the price of a three-star. However, tourist-class and budget hotels are harder to crack, especially those in canal houses, which are very popular.

The best approach is to watch for offers on the hotel's own website; or call, fax, or e-mail several hotels, ask what their standard rates are, then ask for the corporate rate, the weekend rate, the special discount rate, the long-stay rate, the winter (and bad-weather) rate (which ought to be available 9 months of the

year), the advance-booking rate, and any other rate you can think of. There's almost always a better rate available (except during the Christmas and New Year's holidays and the last week of April, when the queen's official birthday celebrations occur) than the first one you were quoted. The Dutch are a nation of traders and are used to dickering. Book as far ahead as possible: The prospect of your business can soften up even the toughest managers, and you should also be able to request the kind of room you prefer. The longer your proposed stay, the more leverage you have. Visitors sometimes negotiate a room rate based on a lengthy stay—of a week or more—then switch gears and convince the hotel to apply that rate to their actual (shorter) stay. Dutch hoteliers whine and complain about such underhanded methods, but use them themselves when traveling.

Reserving through a travel agent in your home country will probably get you a good rate, too, since many hotels belong to international reservations systems (Accor, Bilderberg, Carlton, CIGA, Concorde, Golden Tulip International BV, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Mercure, NH Hotels, Swissôtel, Utell International, and so forth). The various branches of the **Amsterdam Tourist Office** (called the VVV—pronounced *fay-fay-fay*) will book rooms for you at the last minute, but you must go in person to one of their offices and pay a fee of about 3€ (\$3.75) per person (later deducted from your hotel bill). The main VVV offices are inside Centraal Station and opposite it at Stationsplein 10 (Tel 0900/400-4040; .55€ (69¢) per minute; [www.amsterdamtourist.nl](http://www.amsterdamtourist.nl), [www.visitamsterdam.com](http://www.visitamsterdam.com), and [www.holland.com](http://www.holland.com)). Branch offices are at Leidseplein 1 (corner of Leidsestraat), Stadionplein, and the main arrivals hall at Schiphol Airport (marked HOLLAND TOURIST INFORMATION). A further possibility for same-day reservations is the **Holland Tourist Information Office** located at Damrak 35, in central Amsterdam, or **Hotel Bookings**, a private website at [www.bookings.nl](http://www.bookings.nl). Internet bookings on the hotels' own websites usually command a discount.

## Is There a Right Address in Amsterdam?

It depends entirely upon what you're looking for. Of the dozen or so distinct neighborhoods within the A10 beltway, which separates Amsterdam from the suburbs, none is bad or dangerous, but not all are desirable, and those that *are* desirable may be so for different reasons.

The city's core, inside the Singelgracht canal, is, unsurprisingly, called the Centrum. Fanning out from it in a wide semicircle are, counterclockwise, the Oud West (Old West), Oud Zuid (Old South) and its multiethnic subdivision De Pijp (The Pipe), and Oost (East); beyond the Old South is Nieuw Zuid (New South). Distances are short: A fast walker can cross from Centraal Station to the New South in an hour and a quarter; a tram or taxi takes 15 to 20 minutes.

The Centrum, the biggest and most interesting district, is really a mosaic of neighborhoods. If you don't mind noisy sex-tourism crowds (both gay and straight), winking red neon lights, and hash or grass smoke wafting from the dozens of smoking coffee shops straight into your room, check out the several top hotels on the edge of the **Red-Light District**, a few hundred yards from the train station, abutting the Dam and the main shopping streets Rokin, Damrak, and Kalverstraat. Despite its reputation for prostitution, drug dealing, and petty crime, this area is perfectly safe if you know how to navigate it (see p. 11 in the You Probably Didn't Know chapter), and in any case, all the upscale hotels here are beyond the carefully contained sleaze zone. And, from these hotels, you can walk in minutes to anywhere in the center of town.

Just west of the Red-Light District, and still in the heart of the Centrum, is a boomerang-shaped neighborhood sometimes referred to as the **Dam** or **Spui**. Stretching from Centraal Station to the flower market at Muntplein, it contains a maze of tiny alleys, several appealing squares, and a handful of the city's best restaurants, spread along Spuistraat. However, the neighborhood's main arteries—Damarak, Rokin, and Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal—are noisy, with heavy tram traffic and crowds of pedestrians. Most of the canals here have been covered over; the exception is the Singel, originally the medieval city's moat, along which you'll see several fine hotels.

Beyond the Singel is the celebrated **Grachtengordel** neighborhood, clustering around three semicircular canals—Herengracht, Keizersgracht, and Prinsengracht—built in Amsterdam's 17th-century Golden Age. "Grachtengordel" in Dutch has also come to mean "chic," "plugged-in," "moneyed," etc., and here you'll find tony restaurants and cafes, boutiques for the megabucks crowd, and the antiques dealers' quarter on Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (see the Shopping chapter). A location here, in the northern sector of the canal ring, is great for exploring the adjacent quirky Jordaan neighborhood; a place in the middle of the Jordaan puts you within striking distance of the big museums

and one of the city's two liveliest squares, Leidseplein. At the southern and eastern ends of the curve, you'll be close to the second of the liveliest squares, Rembrandtplein, and to the Amstel River, the flea market on Waterlooplein, and the adjacent Muziektheater opera and dance venue. You may have to book far in advance to get into Grachtengordel hotels, but it's worth it.

Still within the Centrum, on the district's western edge, is the **Jordaan**, a wonderful part of town with narrow streets and narrower buildings; quiet, shady canals; and scads of one-of-a-kind boutiques, cafes, and neighborhood restaurants. Unfortunately, there are only a few hotels here, but these are moderately priced, decent properties.

The prosperous **Old South** neighborhood, beyond the Singelgracht, is looking better all the time, especially if you want quiet nights. The "big three" museums—the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and the modern art Stedelijk Museum (the Stedelijk has rehoused to a location near Centraal Station until 2008)—are here, as well as the handsome Vondelpark, a great place to bike, jog, rollerblade, or picnic. Here, there are quiet streets and turn-of-the-20th-century architecture, plus great shopping, but it becomes hard to wander the central city neighborhoods' marvelous streets at night—one of the great joys of staying in Amsterdam—because the neighborhood is a bit far away. The same (and more so) applies to the **New South**, an even more prosperous and farther-flung neighborhood dotted with interesting Amsterdam School architecture. The Hilton is here, as well as a few four-star places strung along Apollolaan. If you stay in the New South you'll have to rely on trams and taxis to get around. But if easy access to the airport and countryside are your priorities, then go for it.

## The Lowdown

**In search of canal-house coziness...** Just because a building overlooks a canal doesn't mean it's a canal house, or there would be hundreds in Amsterdam. True canal-house hotels occupy old private residences—usually from the 17th or 18th centuries—and have canal-side rooms with views. A few bare-bones canal houses have steep stairs, no elevators, and no facilities to speak of. Still, these are only-in-Amsterdam hotels, which is why visitors put up with their inconvenience. A beer can's throw from Rembrandtplein, popular **Seven Bridges** is a small, intimate

perch with affable owners, overlooking one of Amsterdam's most picturesque waterways. Luxuriate amid the comfy old furnishings, the houseplants, and views (ask for a canal-side room on an upper floor—not in the attic or the basement)—but be prepared for slightly inflated prices. The flower market, a few blocks away, seems to have opened an annex in the lobby of **Agora**, an upscale two-star in a 1735 house decorated with Persian throw rugs, feathery armchairs, and scattered antiques. A pocket-sized back garden adds to the charm. Next door at the **Waterfront**, owner Willem Van der Ham has totally remodeled and upgraded, with mahogany furniture, bay windows, thick carpets, and drapes—but it's still two stars and affordable.

At **Amsterdam Wiechmann**, visitors choose between *gezellig*, antiques-filled canal-side doubles or less expensive and more anonymous modern rooms. This narrow canal house has a memorable lobby, with delftware hanging on the walls and the kind of Oriental carpets you see draped over tables in many of Amsterdam's old-fashioned brown cafes. The breakfast room looks like a greenhouse, and there's a suitably snug bar and lounge. The modest **Hegra's** most distinctive feature may well be its step-gable facade; it sure isn't the dull, though tidy, decor or stern staff. The low price and handy central location, however, may make you very forgiving. Pricier but spanking new and full of Calvinistic minimalist charm is **'t Hotel**, a three-star overlooking lovely Leliegracht.

Higher-end canal houses mix charm with practical touches like elevators, bars, and restaurants, though you still shouldn't expect perks like pools, fully equipped health centers, or convention facilities. Near Westerkerk, the four-star **Toren** has a 17th-century marble entrance hall and a lovely breakfast room with a painted, molded ceiling, and some of its doubles come into the moderately priced category. Canal-side rooms have nice views, but consider instead a room looking onto the attractive garden. There are antiques, fireplaces, and cozy public areas. **Estheréa**, a comfy four-star, has cozy rooms with pastel colors and quirky light fixtures. **Ambassade** has museum-quality antiques, a library of books by author-guests, and a heady location near the famous Golden Bend—locals call this hotel the “Mini Amstel” (see “The grande dames,” below) because it offers luxury and character: marble bathrooms, prints and oils by minor Dutch masters, crystal chandeliers, and antique armchairs. The **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer**,



sprawling along Prinsengracht and dotted with hidden gardens and courtyards, is downright opulent, in a predictably plush corporate style that's totally un-gezellig.

**For tourists who want clogs, windmills, and tulips...** If gawking at Amsterdam from a tour bus suits you, book rooms at the **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky**. Commonly known as the "Kras" (can a nickname tell all?—although it's pronounced *kraz*), this Victorian grande dame saw its heyday 100 years ago; the Polish tailor-turned-hotelier who founded it started out in 1866 with the Wintertuin (Winter Garden) restaurant and went on to build a grand hotel around it. The Krasnapolsky now fills several city blocks, drawing package sightseers and conventioners to its cavernous interior, which has been remodeled countless times. Visitors on whirlwind tours of windmills and tulip fields will like the comfortable rooms and facilities at the **NH Barbizon Palace**—the rooms are basically decorated in cookie-cutter traditional, though some have exposed oak rafters. The over-the-top faux marble colonnade in the lobby looks like it was lifted from a Cinecittà sandals-and-toga movie set (*Hercules Against Rome*, perhaps). Across the center of town, at the immense Marriott-owned **Renaissance Amsterdam**, there's plenty of space to stow souvenirs in the forgettable rooms and to break in your clogs at the Boston Club, a place business types tend to like.

**For enemies of clogs, windmills, and tulips...**

There's not even room to park tour buses in front of the **Ambassade**, a canal-house hotel that occupies 12 17th-century properties on the handsome Herengracht. The discreet, anonymous owner collects antiques, and it shows in the total lack of kitsch. Each room is different, and that appeals to the literary crowd usually found here (many Dutch publishers and agents book rooms here for their star writers—there's now a charming author-guest library on the ground floor). Crystal chandeliers and enormous rooms make you feel like a pearl in an oyster; a few even have canopy beds. Savvy business travelers and other well-heeled guests stay at the **Estheréa**, an upscale canal-house hotel with a great location overlooking the Singel (and just a few doors along from the platinum-card flophouse Yab Yum described on p. 199). Between gazing from your window at surrounding mansions and chatting up your hosts,

a friendly family that counts several generations of owners of this hotel, you'll feel more like an Amsterdam resident here than a tourist. The lobby of **'t Hotel**, a canal-house hotel, doubles as an antiques shop. The **Toren**, a small, luxurious four-star, has antiques, a garden, and an exclusive atmosphere. Lovers of spare luxury—along with chic black decor and dress, and more males with pony tails than you'd find on a Kentucky stud farm—will want to check out the **Dylan** (formerly **Blakes**), with its garden court and top-rated restaurant. A few steps down the designer-price scale, but still with a reasonable claim to distinction, is the **Arena**, in a 19th-century former orphanage. The interior has been redone by a bunch of up-and-possibly-coming young Dutch designers. At the **Lloyd**, overlooking the old—and redeveloped—steamship docks in the Eastern Harbor, just about every room has a different shape, style, and modern decor. Visit the attic library and the Culturele Ambassade art center, and check out the modern art works scattered around.

**The grande dames...** Back in 1866, when the **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** opened for business, things like heated winter terraces, modern plumbing, central heating, and electric lights were unknown. The Kras was the first in Amsterdam in all these departments and was the most fashionable place in town. Time hasn't stood still: Much of the charming decor of old is gone—though the Winter Garden, one of the hotel's restaurants, a classy 19th-century-type place, is still going strong—and the location on the rather tacky Dam isn't what it used to be, even if the Royal Palace is no more than an easy lob of a crown across the way. The Victorian gentry who frequented the Kras would probably go elsewhere today, yet there's a bit of the grande dame left, especially off season, when the Winter Garden is a joy and there are no tulips in bloom to attract the bus crowds. In an earlier incarnation, the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** (sans "Inter-Continental") was the Krasnapolsky's direct rival, opening a year later in 1867. The Amstel is in a class all its own, with sky-high prices to match. Liveried doormen flank the marble grand hall, and if you're on a shopping spree, diamonds are available at the hotel's boutique. Dutch royals have staged family celebrations in the opulent *Spiegelzaal* (Mirror Room), and the list of celeb guests is long.

The **Hotel de l'Europe**, built in 1896, was the top hotel in town for most of the 20th century. Haughtily perched over the river and Muntplein, it looks much as it probably did the day it opened. Despite all the usual trappings of luxury—the faux Empire furniture, thick carpets, molded plaster decorations, and doorman with epaulets and striped trousers—it remains behind the Amstel and the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam**. Though the Grand itself is new, it boasts a historic site—it started out as the 15th-century convent of St. Cecilia, that was captured as a prize by the Amsterdam Admiralty after the Protestant take-over, and served as city hall until 1992. (Queen Beatrix and the late Prince Claus were married upstairs in 1966.) Planted on two beautiful courtyards just south of the Red-Light District, this newest of the grand hotels offers muted colors and understated luxury.

**In search of the indefinable *gezelligheid*...** In a city where coziness means floral arrangements, knickknacks, antique furniture, grandfather clocks, and pianos (baby grands are best), a young Irish couple runs the cozy **Canal House**, occupying five old houses on (and behind) one of the city's prettiest canals. It wins hands-down in most *gezelligheid* categories. Quiet, quaint, and cute are the operative words. Guests swoon over the memorable breakfast room with its parquet floors, molded plaster ceilings, and baby grand piano. Luckily, back rooms are just as snug, and even quieter. The **Washington's** armchairs, polished parquet floors, red runners, and carved banister exude Edwardian comfort. It's the kind of seriously quiet place where you nod and whisper to your fellow guests, as classical music plays softly in the background: The Concertgebouw auditorium (Amsterdam's premier venue for classical music) is nearby and most guests are musicians or music-lovers. The book-lined salon and vaguely colonial terrace of **De Filosoof**—a one-of-a-kind hotel with philosophy as a theme (one of the co-owners, Ida Jongsma, is a former high school philosophy teacher)—are quintessentially cozy, though some of the rooms are anything but (the Heidegger Room is thoroughly black). The Aristotle Room has a classical pediment; the Plato Room is black and white, with *trompe l'oeil* decorations; and so forth. At the **Toren**, red bedspreads and heavy fabrics, the roaring fireplaces, and the twinkling chandeliers provide a taste of cozy-luxe *gezellig*, with class.

**Taking care of business...** If you're looking for a big, American-style hotel, with big, no-nonsense rooms and all the business facilities you'll need, try the **Renaissance Amsterdam** (a Marriott hotel). In addition to its seven-story atrium lobby and tidy theme-decor rooms (Scandinavian, Oriental, Old Dutch, Art Deco), the **Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam** has a business and conference center in its south building. You may not even have to leave your comfortable room at the **NH Barbizon Palace**, right across from Centraal Station: Telephones come with computer interfaces, and more technology is available at the front desk. Then, when working hours are over, you can amble downstairs to the lounge—though a bit starchy, it's not bad at all if you fancy relaxing with a book by a crackling fire in winter. If you don't need the apparatus of a big hotel, look into the practical, family-run **Estheréa**, which draws a mix of discreet businesspeople and tolerably well-heeled families. The hotel overlooks the Singel, between the Dam and the flower market, and offers nice canal views and free Internet access. If you want to venture off the buttoned-down track, stay at **Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken**, a quietly confident Museum District four-star in a Dutch Art Nouveau building near the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and modern art museum, the Stedelijk Museum. It's in a corporate "boutique-design" theme, with some rooms that are none too large, and attracts a midlevel business clientele.

**For travelers with old money...** The owner of the extraordinary three-star **Ambassade** knows that old-money travelers hate to spend more than they have to. For the price of a closet at the five-star competition, you can get a suite with a sitting room and two bedrooms here. Half the museums in town would love to get hold of the china and grandfather clocks in the hotel's common areas. If money's no object, then by all means settle into the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam**. Keen to have an instant pedigree, this recently founded hotel quietly and rather disingenuously touts the building's 600-year history (in fact, much of the complex dates to the early 1900s). The desk staff dress and behave like good Dutch ladies and gentlemen, whispering what others shout. Black-and-gray marble floors grace the vaulted lobby, and the rooms feature a subdued palette of salmon, teal, and saffron. Guests take tea (or

more interesting drinks) in a leafy inner courtyard and meals at Café Roux, the pricey brainchild of restaurateur Albert Roux of London's famous Le Gavroche. The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam**, with its 1867 birth date and megabucks pedigree, modestly calls itself "a favorite with cosmopolitan society—from royalty and the aristocracy to luminaries in the arts and international affairs." Indeed—as long as they have fat wallets. If you're worried about denting the old trust fund, instead check out the **Hotel de l'Europe**, little changed since its 1896 birth. Less sumptuous than either the Amstel or the Grand, this remodeled oldster will still be sufficiently coddling (and clean).

**For travelers with new money...** The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** has just enough old-school cachet to attract both Golden Age spenders and the aggressively nouveau. Rock stars and groupies with euros to burn monopolize the palatial health club and pool. Water taxis drop shiploads of crocodile bags on the private dock, and deeply tanned torsos draped in gold chains and diamonds are spotted in midwinter in the magnificent arcaded lobby. Some guests probably wish the pianist in the swank La Rive restaurant would stop with the classical stuff already and play "New York, New York," "Volare," or anything less stiff. The endless roster of glitzy visitors is the talk of the town (Red Hot Chili Peppers, Janet Jackson, Madonna, Jagger, Spielberg...). Naturally, a chauffeured Rolls-Royce and historic saloon boat are at your disposal.

The immense **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** is especially popular if you want to show the locals that you own (or have rented) a large luxury car and are going to drive through Amsterdam despite traffic restrictions, right into the garage at the Kras, at the center of the universe on the Dam. The landmark Dutch Art Nouveau **Amsterdam American**, on lively Leidseplein, likes to call itself "the entertainment hotel" because minor rock stars and groupies who can't quite manage the Amstel (though still manage to be mildly obnoxious) book spacious rooms here (redone in mock Art Deco, many have views over Leidseplein or the Singelgracht canal). Guests here pose in the famous Bar Américain (p. 207), feeling wonderful when the bartender remembers their names and favorite drinks. (He remembers everyone's name and favorite drink.) The

hip new-rich are fighting over the 20-odd rooms of super-luxe **Dylan**, in a 17th-century former theater/almshouse/lawyers' office converted into a showcase for British designer Anouska Hempel's megabuck Asian-spartan-look rooms (mostly black). And if you've got not very much new money, try the **ArenaA**. The exterior of this ex-19th century orphanage bears a passing resemblance to Dracula's castle, but the interior proves they really knew how to do an orphanage in those days. Monumental marble staircases, cast-iron banisters, stained-glass windows, marble columns, original murals—all have been faithfully restored. The rambling spaces where the dormitories once were now house stylish doubles and twins. Spare modern rooms, some sporting timber roof beams and wooden floors, line long, high-ceilinged corridors on two floors. Or go out on a limb at the **Lloyd Hotel**, which opened in 2004 on the waterfront redevelopment zone of the old steamship docks east of Centraal Station. The Lloyd has returned to the city hotel scene after a long absence and a colorful history. Originally an emigrants' hotel, it opened in 1921 and closed in 1935. You'll stay here in a standout Amsterdam School of Architecture building that from 1940 to 1999 served as a prison, then a house of corrections for young offenders, then a studio space for hard-up artists. Since then it has been thoroughly renovated—you'll scarcely believe you're lodging in a former prison. The two restaurants aim to make it cool to dine in a hotel: Snel is fast, affordable, and open 24/7; Sloom is leisurely and expensive, and you can order whatever you feel like, and the kitchen will aim to cook it.

**Dowdy but lovable...** Even the name sounds nice and sweet: **Acacia**. It's the kind of place where first-time travelers meet gentle, middle-age folks wearing sandals and white socks. Owners Hans and Marlene van Vliet have kids and like people, and their little, triangle-shaped Jordaan hotel is simple and clean. The staircase is as steep as they come (naturally there's no elevator). The **Amsterdam Wiechmann**, a narrow canal-house hotel, has too much character to be prim, but the lady at the desk will protect you from undesired elements: "No one not registered is allowed in the rooms," she booms. The **Bridge** has a grand lobby but plain-Jane rooms and a mousy-friendly staff. The

**Owl**, a pleasant, family-run three-star hotel with two-star prices, just one block from Vondelpark on a quiet residential street, is the kind of place where you might run into birdish maiden aunts who've brought their nieces up from the provinces. With a pastel color scheme, the no-nonsense, summery style matches the garden setting. Tidy **Van Onna** is a cheap one-star on peaceful Bloemgracht canal in the Jordaan. All rooms are furnished in a modern but comfortable style; the bathrooms are squeaky-clean but eccentric: The shower heads stick out over the toilets and drain in the middle of the floor. At the **Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel**, a little hotel wedged into a narrow, early-1900s building in the blue-collar De Pijp neighborhood, guests are encouraged to pedal their days away sightseeing. A bike hangs from the facade of the hotel, and its owners, Jos and Clemens, are keen cyclists and will rent you two-wheelers for about 5€ (\$5.75) a day (fractionally cheaper than commercial rates). Renovated in 1995, the place is clean both literally and figuratively: A NO DRUGS sign adorns the front door.

**For those who hate surprises...** If you're used to the plush, overstuffed, thick-carpeted brand of luxury found at the Sheraton hotels worldwide, you'll be delighted by the **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer**. Occupying 24 old canal houses in the shadow of Westerkerk, this luxury hotel has a warren of inner gardens and courtyards, some with a private entrance on one of the canals. The **Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam**, in Old Amsterdam south of the Red-Light District, offers typical SAS theme rooms—choose between faux Scandinavian, old Dutch, Oriental, or Art Deco. There's a pleasant enough restaurant (the De Palmboom Brasserie), a brown cafe (the Pastorie Bar, set in a transplanted 18th-century landmark vicarage), and a glassed-in atrium lobby with a fountain. The **NH Schiller**, a seven-story, turn-of-the-20th-century property overlooking Rembrandtplein, remains a monument to its original owner, Fritz Schiller, a slightly mad amateur painter whose kitschy landscapes adorn the lobby, cafe, and rooms to this day. A certain amount of character remains in the comfy leather armchairs and sofas in the vaulted lobby and in the wood-paneled, crepuscular Cafe Schiller, once a cutting-edge literary hangout but now a comfortable and original hideout for friendly locals.

**Luscious love nests...** The hushed, antiques-filled salons, library, and canal-view rooms of the **Ambassade**, on the Herengracht's Golden Bend, are ideal for soulful yearnings. Middle-age and older romantics who don't make noise when making love will find a cozy, antique-feathered nest at **Canal House**, overlooking Keizersgracht, almost next door to Westerkerk. If you always wanted to float that romantic proposal but didn't know how, you can rent a cute little houseboat covered with flowers from the **Acacia**, in the supremely romantic Jordaan, and make love afloat on the leafy Lijnbaansgracht. Gays who prefer a mixed clientele, lots of green plants, and comfy old furniture favor **Seven Bridges**, a tiny canal-house hotel near Rembrandtplein. The **Toren**, a plush four-star with red bedspreads, antiques, fireplaces, and crystal chandeliers, also has a pocket-sized garden for sniffing roses and tiptoeing through tulips. Westerkerk is nearby, in case you want to tie the knot before (or after) parting the thick curtains here. The marble entrance hall is nearly 400 years old, and if the breakfast room with the molded, painted ceiling ain't romantic, nothing is ("Hey, aren't those cupids flying around up there?").

**Rooms with a view...** There are no skyscrapers or tall buildings in central Amsterdam, and the only high-rise hotels are so far out that the scenery isn't worth seeing. This is a flat city of intimate, keyhole views—a tree-lined bend in a canal, a stretch of wide river—rather than Empire State Building-style oohs and ahs. The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** luxuriates on the east bank of the Amstel River, just south of the old locks that regulate the flow of water through the city's canals, and from the rooms' French windows, guests have a panorama of river traffic, city lights, and drawbridges. The **Hotel de l'Europe** also overlooks the Amstel River and some rooms have loveseat-size riverside balconies—make sure you get one so you can watch the trams slink by and the private boats pull up to the hotel's dock. The **Seven Bridges**, a small canal-house hotel, gets a special mention because it overlooks Reguliersgracht, one of the city's prettiest waterways; you'll actually get 15 bridges at a glimpse, but who's counting? Another upscale canal house, **Estheréa**, has several beautifully redecorated rooms with large windows three-abreast looking out at gorgeous Singel houses and mansions, while the **Ambassade** does much the same over



the Herengracht or Singel. The most expensive rooms at the **Lloyd** have views of the Eastern Harbor—which is not exactly to die for but is not bad either—or of a specially designed interior (or both).

**Home away from home...** You can count the actual B&Bs in town on the fingers of one hand, though simple Dutch hotels practically qualify as B&Bs because breakfast bread, ham, and cheese are generally included in the price of the room. A small guesthouse-residence does, however, fit the bill. The simply named but sumptuous **Nr 40** doesn't call itself a B&B, but functions like one. Affable owner Tony van der Veen converted the 1893 Herenhuis mansion, one block from the northern edge of Vondelpark's panhandle, into four full-service studio apartments, rentable by the day, week, or longer. Each room has a minibar, fax/answering machine, and stereo. Chic designer furniture mixes with antiques. And the number is no longer quite accurate, since an expansion into the next-door house (number 38) added two large, split-level one-bedroom apartments with a shared garden.

**Convention hotels with flair...** The **NH Barbizon Palace** is a city within a city, including a conference center in the startlingly handsome, 15th-century St. Olof's chapel across the street, reached via a tunnel. Unconventional conventioners will be delighted to know that the Red-Light District and S&M/gay Warmoesstraat (a kind of sleazyish Red-Light District street with a few establishments that raise the tone) are a block away (more conventional ones will want to steer clear), and though it's sanitized, the hotel's Hudson's Terrace is an improvement on the kind of coffee shop found in most convention hotels. The **Renaissance Amsterdam** also has a former church now used as a convention center (is business a religion around here, or what?): the circular, 17th-century domed Lutheran Koepelkerk, the only wholly round building in town. A Marriott property, this thoroughly American-style complex is shoehorned into a series of converted warehouses and other buildings just off the Singel, near Centraal Station. Saying that it has charm would be stretching it—this is a business hotel, after all, but Marriott has redecorated with coziness (and red) as a theme, and quirky architecture adds interest.

**To relive the Golden Age...** If you want to know what the canal house of a wealthy Netherlands family probably looked like circa the late 1700s, book a room at **Ambassade**, just off Herengracht's snooty Golden Bend. Antiques dealers' hands tremble when they spot the 1750 grandfather clock by celebrated clockmaker Jan Theo van Kempen in the salon (little ships dance on the waves as the seconds tick by). A china cabinet displays delftware and other valuable pieces that would make handsome souvenirs, if only you could convince the hotel's owner, a collector, to part with them.

**In search of the perfect pool...** Amsterdam is not a city for hotel-bound sports fanatics. Most buildings are centuries old, and space is at a premium, so most hotels simply don't have room for fitness centers and pools. The pool at the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** is arguably the city's best, an admittedly smaller version of the one at Hearst Castle. The hotel also sports a big Jacuzzi, a sauna and Turkish bath, and a rather modest weight room, and employs a small army of muscular masseurs, beauticians, and trainers to pummel and pamper you. The **Hotel de l'Europe** has fallen behind in terms of sheer luxury, but it has a pond-sized colonnaded pool with a coffered ceiling (with some nutty garden statuary scattered around). Sybarites staying at the **Grand Sofitel Demeure** are probably more interested in trying out the Molton Brown aromatherapy bath milk in their two-tone Art Deco marble bathrooms; nonetheless, hidden under the 600-year-old complex's beautiful courtyards in the heart of Old Amsterdam is the grandly named "Spa at The Grand," which offers a smallish pool not intended for swimming laps and a serviceable sauna and steam bath. It's not a bad place to sweat off the pounds you put on by eating at the Café Roux (a determinedly trendy restaurant at the Grand).

**The royal treatment...** The owners of the multigenerational, family-run **Estheréa** may be sartorial look-alikes for Prince Willem Alexander and his bride Máxima, but sisters Esther and Caroline Esselaar are a mine of info on restaurants and culture in Amsterdam, and brother Jan-Willem and his desk staff remember your name and room number, are authentically friendly, and never seem obsequious. Free coffee and tea are served in the lobby. At the

**Acacia**, Hans and Marlene van Vliet will draw you up lists of their favorite restaurants, cafes, parks, herring stands, canals, foods, books, hairdressers, and more. Coming from hotelier families, they seem to have hospitality in their blood. Many of their clients are repeat customers who appreciate the laid-back atmosphere of this small, extremely simple hotel with triangular rooms (it's a corner building, shaped like a wedge of cheese). You can also rent one of a pair of houseboats from them. If you're really nice, they might even invite you for a ride on their motorboat. The quiet but efficient staff of the **Bridge** are the kind of folks who seem genuinely honored (and somewhat surprised) to have such nice people like you as guests. This modest property (don't be fooled by the misleadingly grand marble entrance) looks out on the locks on the Amstel River that control the flow of Amsterdam's canal water. A handful of the large, spare, casually decorated rooms and new top-floor apartment offer views of the river or Nieuwe Prinsengracht canal.

**For cheap sleeps...** Don't bother to take your hiking boots off before tramping up to the **Acacia**: You'll need them to scale the Matterhorn of a staircase. Its superb location—in the Jordaan, overlooking peaceful Lijnbaansgracht—offsets the spartan lodgings. The **Van Onna**, on Bloemgracht, is good and cheap; though rooms are tiny, the staircases are plenty wide to allow for giant tortoise-style packs to get through. On the posh Herengracht, the one-star **Hegra** (no elevator) has supremely simple, plain, sturdy furniture in the rooms, which are small with beamed ceilings. The **Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel** is the quintessential place for penurious students and sandal-shod young bikers. Rooms are spartan but neat as a pin, and there's a no-drugs policy. You can buy your daily picnic at the nearby Albert Cuypstraat street market. Cheapest of all (though you might not sleep) are the dormitory-style **Bulldog Low Budget Hotel** and **Kabul Young Budget Hotel**. Good luck! Former cheap sleepers who've come into some cash could try out the **ArenA**, out in Amsterdam East. You'll still see some kids toting backpacks here, but they're a better class of backpack than those that clog corridors in the city's hostels and cheap hotels.

**Lavender lodgings...** Amsterdam's hotels are used to welcoming people of myriad sexual persuasions, and many

small, charming hotels here are gay-owned or -managed. It's illegal for a proprietor to deny lodging due to sexual orientation; this goes both ways. A dozen or so self-styled gay hotels in town may discourage straights from staying in them (some are hardcore places for S&M aficionados, and others practice or tolerate male prostitution). Most other gay properties are simply hotels that happen to be plugged into the gay circuit, though the atmosphere is such that if you're not one of the guys or girls, you might feel uncomfortable. The **Seven Bridges** is considered particularly gay-friendly, though it's not a gay hotel per se, but rather an unpretentious canal-house hotel, a small one-star charmer down the block from Rembrandtplein and within shouting distance of gay-prominent Reguliersdwaarsstraat.

**Party scenes...** Most Amsterdam party hotels are in the Red-Light District and specialize in beyond-the-pale activities. If you want to book into one, just slip on your leather and chains, pack your condoms, and fill your pockets with joints. Don't worry, you can't miss them. The rest is up to you. Or, you can nibble at the edges of exotica by staying at the **Kabul Young Budget Hotel**, stuffed into an old building on the gay stretch of Warmoesstraat in the Red-Light District. Rooms range from monastic singles to 16-bed dormitories equipped with lockers and not much else. The **Bulldog Low Budget Hotel**, above a smoking coffee shop, is redolent of grass and hash, lit by fluorescent lights, and offers bunk beds with a 24-hour rotation of gamey puffers. Zounds! In either of these hotels, sleep should not be a priority, and anyone squeamish about body or dope odors will want to look elsewhere. Hey, the price is right, though, and you asked for it. A far better bet is the designer-ish **ArenA**, way out east near the Tropenmuseum (p. 114). The hotel's continental cafe-restaurant To Dine looks a bit like an upgraded cafeteria but has a great alfresco terrace in the garden and an attached bar, To Drink. Hotel guests get discounted admission to the in-house nightclub, To Night, which plays music from the 1960s onward in an old orphanage chapel. Rooms are collectively called To Stay and there's a conference section called To Meet—it's enough to make you want To Grimize. The ArenA is a bit removed from the center but isn't too far away, and the traffic is two-way, since youthful revellers head out here from the center to the nightspot and the outdoor cafe.

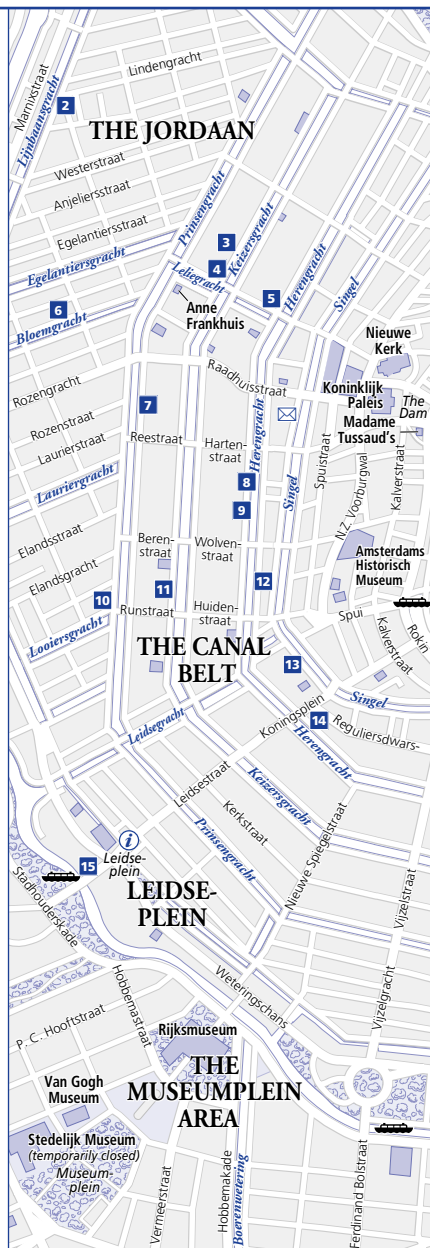
**Family values...** You can wheel the rented station wagon right into the garage at the **Renaissance Amsterdam** and feel at home. After all, this is a Marriott hotel, and the kids will never know they've left the theme park. They'll also have a blast running through the huge lobby and tripping up all the dazed conventioners in the round 17th-century Koepel church congress center (a sort of convention center set in the 17th-century domed Lutheran church, Ronde Lutherse Koepelkerk, which now belongs to the hotel). The location, a few hundred yards from Centraal Station, means easy access to trams and trains and buses. For moms and pops with money to burn, the **NH Barbizon Palace** is another sort of theme park—corporate Dutch—with 19 rebuilt old houses kids can explore. The proximity of the Red-Light District, a block or so away, is no problem, since Centraal Station is across the street, with trams, trains, and so forth to all the places you'll want to go, including the zoo. There's a top-flight coffee shop—style restaurant for the well behaved, and don't overlook the souvenir shop in the lobby.

No such attractions are found at the **Estheréa**, but the Esselaar family likes kids, has produced many of late, and has equipped nine beautifully redecorated rooms with spiffy Murphy beds that brats get a kick out of. The big, comfy, practical rooms are furnished with child-resistant wooden built-ins. Extra beds, and children's toys, are also available. The double sinks will come in handy, no doubt, and so will the elevator (only a handful of canal-house hotels have one). Though there's no restaurant, the desk staff can order in food for you if you're too exhausted to go out (or grab takeout from the fab Mykonos-style **Traiterie Grekas** [p. 68] a couple of doors along), and kids will love the croissants that are part of the Dutch breakfast (not included in the room price). Across town at the **Owl**, near Vondelpark, you'll be happy to discover a small backyard in which to turn the children loose. This small, family-run, three-star hotel is in a converted turn-of-the-20th-century mansion, which has been so thoroughly transformed that you might be in a pastel Miami resort hotel. Best of all, it's on a quiet residential street, safe from traffic hazards, with the park one block away (it's minutes from the Museum District, if your youngsters are so inclined).

**When everything else is filled...** “Bigger is better” must have been the motto of the people who built the **Renaissance Amsterdam**, a sprawling, American-owned property filling several skillfully converted warehouses and other buildings. With 400-plus comfortable, if bland, modern rooms (totaling over 500 beds), they’ll almost always be able to find space for you, no matter how many conventioners they have under their roof. It’s only a few hundred yards from Centraal Station and has a garage, which comes in handy if you’re driving through town. Faded, sprawling **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** gets first prize for total number of beds (around 900). Little did the Polish tailor-turned-hotelier who founded this landmark property in 1866 know that his name, writ rather large, would now be spread across several city blocks, between the Dam and the Red-Light District. If you’re set on canal-house charm, the **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer** has the most rooms (230) and beds (338) of all the canal-house hotels—it can’t hurt to check here for last-minute cancellations.

## Map 2: Central Amsterdam Accommodations

- Acacia **2**
- Agora **14**
- Ambassade **12**
- Amstel Inter-Continental  
Amsterdam **27**
- Amsterdam American **15**
- Amsterdam Wiechmann **10**
- ArenaA **28**
- Bridge **26**
- Bulldog Low Budget Hotel **20**
- Canal House **3**
- Dylan **11**
- Estheréa **9**
- Grand Sofitel  
Demeure Amsterdam **21**
- Hegra **8**
- Hotel de l'Europe **23**
- Kabul Young Budget Hotel **17**
- Lloyd Hotel **1**
- NH Barbizon Palace **18**
- NH Grand Hotel  
Krasnapolsky **19**
- NH Schiller **24**
- Radisson SAS  
Hotel Amsterdam **22**
- Renaissance Amsterdam **16**
- Seven Bridges **25**
- Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer **7**
- 't Hotel **5**
- Toren **4**
- Van Onna **6**
- Waterfront **13**







## Map 3: Southern Amsterdam Accommodations

Bilderberg Hotel Jan  
Luyken **4**

De Filosoof **1**

Nr 40 **2**

Owl **3**

Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel **6**

Washington **5**







## The Index

<b>Note:</b>	1€ = \$1.25 U.S.
\$\$\$\$\$	over 275€//\$345
\$\$\$\$	180€–275€//\$225–\$345
\$\$\$	110€–180€//\$135–\$225
\$\$	50€–110€//\$60–\$135
\$	under 50€//\$60

Price ratings are based on the lowest price quoted for a standard double room in high season, including taxes and charges. Unless otherwise noted, rooms have air-conditioning, phones, private baths, and TVs. Note that four- and five-star hotels in Amsterdam often charge an additional 5% city tax.

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express
DC	Diners Club
DISC	Discover
MC	MasterCard
V	Visa

**Acacia (p. 40)** JORDAAN This flatiron-shaped, family-run hotel has strictly spartan rooms, but a great location overlooking the leafy but by no means stylish Lijnbaansgracht canal. At slightly higher rates, houseboat and studio apartment rentals are also available. No elevator.... Tel 020/622-1460. Fax 020/638-0748. [www.hotelacacia.nl](http://www.hotelacacia.nl). Lindengracht 251 at Lijnbaansgracht, 1015 KH. Tram 3 or 10 to Marnixplein. 18 rooms, including 2 studios and 2 houseboats (no A/C). MC, V (5% surcharge). \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Agora (p. 29)** CANAL BELT A small, comfortable canal-house hotel near the flower market, run by Els Bruijnse and Yvo Muthert. Many rooms have been remodeled and upgraded since 2001. No elevator.... Tel 020/627-2200. Fax 020/627-2202. [www.hotelagora.nl](http://www.hotelagora.nl). Singel 462 at Koningsplein, 1017 AW. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Koningsplein. 16 rooms (15 with bathroom; no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Ambassade (p. 30)** CANAL BELT Twelve gorgeous, 17th-century canal houses on the so-called Golden Bend of Herengracht, the Algonquin of Amsterdam. Rushdie, Boyle, Ford, Seth, and Le Carré are among the literary lights who stay here. No pretensions; discreet class; library. "Float & Massage" spa next door. Elevator to some rooms.... Tel 020/555-0222. Fax 020/555-0277. [www.ambassade-hotel.nl](http://www.ambassade-hotel.nl). Herengracht 335–353 between Wolvenstraat and Huidenstraat (across the canal), 1016 AZ. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Spui. 59 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam (p. 31)** EAST For many, this is the best hotel in town, with more bang for the buck than the Grand. Though located on the eastern bank of the Amstel River beyond Frederiksplein, in an unanchored and rather uninteresting area, the Amstel is perfectly grachtengordel (see explanation on p. 27).... Tel 020/622-6060 (800/327-0200). Fax 020/622-5808. [www.interconti.com](http://www.interconti.com). Professor Tulpplein 1 at Sarphatistraat, 1018 GX. Trams 6, 7, or 10 to Weesperplein. 79 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Amsterdam American (p. 34)** LEIDSEPLEIN Formerly a Crowne Plaza hotel, this magnificent Dutch Art Nouveau landmark hotel was built between 1900 and 1902, overlooking Leidseplein. Unfortunately, the rooms, heavily remodeled and "improved" in the 1980s and 1990s, have lost much of their charm. Fitness center, solarium, and sauna.... Tel 020/556-3001 (800/227-6963). Fax 020/556-3222. [www.amsterdamamerican.com](http://www.amsterdamamerican.com). Leidseplein 97 at Leidseplein, 1017 PN. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, or 10 to Leidseplein. 174 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Amsterdam Wiechmann (p. 29)** CANAL BELT A narrow canal-house hotel with a charming lobby straight out of a Vermeer painting. Some *gezellig* canal-side double rooms are furnished with antiques. There's also a bar and lounge.... Tel 020/626-3321. Fax 020/626-8962. [www.hotelwiechmann.nl](http://www.hotelwiechmann.nl). Prinsengracht 328–332 at Looiersgracht, 1016 HX. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Prinsengracht. 38 rooms (no A/C). MC, V. \$-\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Arena (p. 35)** EAST This rambling hotel in a former orphanage has gone upmarket with a bang, marked by designer flair—and far higher room rates. The location may be a tad too far from the center for some tastes, but the Arena carries its own action with it, in the shape of a hot-rep dance club and bar.... Tel 020/850-2410. Fax 020/850-2415. [www.hotelarena.nl](http://www.hotelarena.nl). 's-Gravesandestraat 51 at Mauritskade, 1092 AA Amsterdam. Trams 7 or 10 to Korte 's-Gravesandestraat. 121 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$-\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken (p. 33)** MUSEUM DISTRICT This Dutch Art Nouveau four-star—totally remodeled in 2001—is within striking distance of the designer boutiques on PC. Hooftstraat. There's a pretty patio garden and a comfortable wine-bar and lounge. Some rooms are nonsmoking. Spa center.... Tel 020/573-0730 (800/641-0300). Fax 020/676-3841. [www.janluyken.nl](http://www.janluyken.nl). Jan Luijkenstraat 58 at Honthorststraat, 1071 CS. Trams 2 or 5 to Hobbemastraat. 62 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Bridge (p. 40)** EAST This small, friendly hotel overlooks the locks on the Amstel River. Rooms and the top-floor apartments are tidy but spare, with linoleum or carpeted floors, rattan chairs, and blond wood furniture. No elevator.... Tel 020/623-7068. Fax 020/624-1565. [www.thebridgehotel.nl](http://www.thebridgehotel.nl). Amstel 107-111 at Nieuwe Prinsengracht, 1018 EM. Tram 4 to Prinsengracht; Metro and trams 6, 7, or 10 to Weesperplein. 36 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Bulldog Low Budget Hotel (p. 40)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Strip fluorescent lights, the smell of hash and grass wafting up from the smoking coffee shop downstairs, spartan rooms, and dormitories stuffed with bunk beds. No elevator. Talk about gezellig.... Tel 020/620-3822. Fax 020/627-1612. [www.bulldog.nl](http://www.bulldog.nl). Oudezijds Voorburgwal 220 at Damstraat, 1012 GJ. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, or 25 to the Dam. 95 beds (no A/C, no phone, no private bathroom, no TV). AE, MC, V. \$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Canal House (p. 32)** CANAL BELT A young Irish couple runs this hybrid Dutch/Victorian inn, on one of the city's prettiest canals, near Westerkerk church. No kids under 12 or pets are allowed. One of few canal-house hotels with an elevator; there's also a cozy bar.... Tel 020/622-5182. Fax 020/624-1317. [www.canalhouse.nl](http://www.canalhouse.nl). Keizersgracht 148 at Leliegracht, 1015 CX. Trams 6, 13, 14, or 17 to Westermarkt. 26 rooms (no A/C). DC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**De Filosoof (p. 32)** MUSEUM DISTRICT As the name implies, the theme of this unusual small three-star hotel, a stone's throw from Vondelpark, and in an annex across the street, is philosophy. The garden, veranda, and book-lined lounge encourage mingling.... Tel 020/683-3013. Fax 020/685-3750. [www.hotelfilosoof.nl](http://www.hotelfilosoof.nl). Anna van den Vondelstraat 6 at Overtoom, 1054 GZ. Tram 1 to Jan Pieter Heijestraat. 38 rooms (no A/C). AE, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Dylan (p. 35)** CANAL BELT Anouska Hempel's ultrachic, designer hotel (modeled on Blakes and The Hempel in London), where East (Asian furnishings) meets West (English silk and style) in a uniquely neospartan temple to trendiness. Housed in a recon-verted 1637 Grachtengordel property (theater, almshouse bakery, then law offices). Garden court, gorgeous public areas haunted by well-heeled, black-clad jet-setters.... Tel 020/530-2010. Fax 020/530-2030. [www.dylanamsterdam.com](http://www.dylanamsterdam.com). Keizersgracht 384 at Runstraat, 1016 GB. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Spui. 26 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

See Map 2 on p. 44.

**Estheréa (p. 42)** CANAL BELT Family-owned and run for the last 50-odd years, this canal-house hotel on the Singel is a thoroughly professional property, with many tastefully redecorated rooms. One of few canal-house hotels to boast an elevator.... Tel 020/624-5146 (800/223-9868). Fax 020/623-9001. [www.estherea.nl](http://www.estherea.nl). Singel 303-309 at Oude Spiegelstraat (across the canal), 1012 WJ. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Spui. 75 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

See Map 2 on p. 44.

**Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam (p. 33)** CENTER Possibly Amsterdam's top super-luxury hotel. Exudes confidence, from the marble-paved, vaulted lobby to the immense, tastefully decorated rooms. Pity they've only got 15 nonsmoking rooms.... Tel 020/555-3111 (800/SOFITEL). Fax 020/555-3222. [www.thegrand.nl](http://www.thegrand.nl). Oudezijds Voorburgwal 197 at Oude Doelenstraat, 1012 EX. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, or 25 to Spui. 182 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

See Map 2 on p. 44.

**Hegra (p. 29)** CANAL BELT Modest is the operative word for this narrow, 17th-century canal-house hotel located on the Herengracht near the Dam, the flower market, and Leidseplein. No elevator.... Tel 020/623-7877. Fax 020/623-8159. Herengracht 269 at Hartenstraat (across the canal), 1016 BJ. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, or 17 to the Dam. 11 rooms (6 with bathroom; no A/C, no TV). AE, DC, MC, V. \$

See Map 2 on p. 44.

**Hotel de l'Europe (p. 32)** CENTER This 1896 grande dame offers an excellent, though noisy, location at Muntplein overlooking the Amstel, plus all the trappings of luxury. The lobby and many rooms have been remodeled and upgraded in the last 5 years.... Tel 020/531-1777 (800/223-6800). Fax 020/531-1778. [www.leurope.nl](http://www.leurope.nl). Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2-8 at Muntplein, 1012 CP. Trams 4, 9, 16, 24, or 25 to Muntplein. 100 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

See Map 2 on p. 44.

**Kabul Young Budget Hotel (p. 40)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT An Amsterdam institution. Not for light sleepers. No elevator.... Tel 020/623-7158. Fax 020/620-0869. Warmoesstraat 38-42 at Oude Brugsteeg, 1012 JE. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, or 25 to Centraal Station. 23 rooms (no A/C, no phone, no private bathroom, no TV). No credit cards. \$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Lloyd Hotel (p. 35)** EASTERN DOCKS Upscale hotel with a colorful history.... Tel 020/561-3636. Fax 020/561-3600. [www.lloydhotel.com](http://www.lloydhotel.com). Oostelijke Handelskade 34 at IJhaven, 1019 BN. Tram 26 to Rietlandpark. 120 rooms (106 with bathroom). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**NH Barbizon Palace (p. 30)** CENTER There's something for everyone in this quintessentially Dutch theme park of a business hotel. The neutrally attired rooms have thick, flowery curtains and old oak rafters. Remodeled in recent years, with about 45 nonsmoking rooms.... Tel 020/556-4564. Fax 020/624-3353. [www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com). Prins Hendrikkade 59-72 at Zeedijk, 1012 AD. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, or 25 to Centraal Station. 275 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky (p. 30)** CENTER The most exclusive place in town, it's now a business, convention, and package-tourism hotel, comfortable if undistinguished. The plant-filled Winter Garden (1879) is still a joy in winter, and the Reflet Brasserie has a striking 1883 decor; otherwise, the hotel's bars and restaurants are forgettable. 100 nonsmoking rooms.... Tel 020/554-9111. Fax 020/622-8607. [www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com). Dam 9 at Damrak, 1012 JS. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, or 25 to the Dam. 468 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**NH Schiller (p. 36)** REMBRANDTPLEIN Gorgeous turn-of-the-20th-century hotel overlooking Rembrandtplein. Square-side rooms have the best views, but can get noisy.... Tel 020/554-0700. Fax 020/624-0098. [www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com). Rembrandtplein 26-36, 1017 CV. Trams 4, 9, or 14 to Rembrandtplein. 92 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Nr 40 (p. 38)** MUSEUM DISTRICT This luxury B&B offers four full-service studio apartments, an elegant dining room, wood-paneled lounge, and a small roof garden. (Next door are two split-level, one-bedroom garden apartments with faxes and answering machines, but these are rented long-term and are rarely available.) No elevator.... Tel/fax 020/618-4298. [www.number40.scarlet.nl](http://www.number40.scarlet.nl). Roemer Visscherstraat 40 at Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat, 1054 EZ. Trams 1 or 6 to Eerste Constantijn

Huygensstraat; 3 or 12 to Overtoom. 4 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Owl (p. 42)** MUSEUM DISTRICT A converted turn-of-the-20th-century mansion, this family-run, three-star hotel is tidy and pastel, and no nonsense. TV lounge/bar and garden.... Tel 020/618-9484. Fax 020/618-9441. [www.owl-hotel.nl](http://www.owl-hotel.nl). Roemer Visscherstraat 1 at Tesselschadestraat, 1054 EV. Trams 1 or 6 to Stadhouderskade. 34 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam (p. 36)** CENTER Even though it's just south of the Red-Light District in Old Amsterdam, it looks like it could be anywhere.... Tel 020/520-8300 (800/333-3333). Fax 020/520-8200. [www.radissonsas.com](http://www.radissonsas.com). Rusland 17 at Oudezijds Achterburgwal, 1012 CK. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, or 25 to Spui. 243 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Renaissance Amsterdam (p. 42)** CENTER Owned by Marriott since 1999, this is a huge, sprawling, American business hotel composed of converted warehouses. The round, 17th-century Koepel church is used for conventions, and there's a covered courtyard. The charm factor has been improved with red decor, old prints and paintings, and cozy furniture.... Tel 020/621-2223 (800/HOTELS-1). Fax 020/623-7742. [www.renaissance-hotels.com](http://www.renaissance-hotels.com). Kattengat 1 at Spuistraat, 1012 SZ. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, or 17 to Martelaarsgracht. 405 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Seven Bridges (p. 28)** CANAL BELT This *gezellig* canal-house hotel has gone upmarket, with only eight remodeled rooms (inlaid wood, marble, and handmade furniture). No elevator.... Tel 020/623-1329. Reguliersgracht 31 at Keizersgracht, 1017 LK. Tram 4 to Keizersgracht. 8 rooms (no A/C). AE, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer (p. 36)** CANAL BELT The only full-blown luxury hotel in the Grachtengordel neighborhood; the restrained decor is lovely in an opulent, corporate way, though it's still less atmospheric than other canal-house hotels.... Tel 020/523-5235 (800/325-3589). Fax 020/627-6753. [www.luxury-collection.com](http://www.luxury-collection.com). Prinsengracht 315-331 at Westermarkt, 1016 GZ. Trams 6, 13, 14, or 17 to Westermarkt. 230 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**'t Hotel (p. 29)** CANAL BELT Opened in 2000, this charming three-star overlooking the leafy Leliegracht canal near the Jordaan has luxury rooms done in a neo-Calvinistic, minimalist style: simple



wooden furniture, cream-colored walls, burgundy carpets, and tiled bathrooms. The lobby doubles as an antiques shop. No elevator.... Tel 020/422-2741. Fax 020/626-7873. [www.thotel.nl](http://www.thotel.nl). Leliegracht 18 at Herengracht, 1015 DE. Trams 6, 13, 14, or 17 to Westermarkt. 8 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Toren (p. 29) CANAL BELT** This four-star, two-building canal-house hotel with elevator has a marble entrance hall, Old Dutch decor, crystal chandeliers, fireplaces, and an attractive garden.... Tel 020/622-6352. Fax 020/626-9705. [www.toren.nl](http://www.toren.nl). Keizersgracht 164 at Leliegracht, 1015 CZ. Trams 6, 13, 14, or 17 to Westermarkt. 40 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Van Onna (p. 36) JORDAAN** This unusual one-star, nonsmoking hotel occupies three separate buildings on a lovely side canal. From front rooms you get canal views and glimpses of the Westerkerk over the roofs. Lounge. No elevator.... Tel 020/626-5801. [www.hotelvanonna.com](http://www.hotelvanonna.com). Bloemgracht 102-104 and 108 at Prinsengracht, 1015 TN. Trams 6, 13, 14, or 17 to Westermarkt. 41 rooms (no A/C, no TV). No credit cards. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

**Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel (p. 40) OLD SOUTH** Rooms in this narrow, turn-of-the-20th-century building are tidy but spartan. No elevator (and the stairs are steep).... Tel 020/679-3452. Fax 020/671-5213. [www.bicyclehotel.com](http://www.bicyclehotel.com). Van Ostadestraat 123 at Ferdinand Bolstraat, 1072 SV. Tram 3 to Ferdinand Bolstraat; 12, 16, 24, or 25 to Ceintuurbaan. 16 rooms (8 with bathroom; no A/C). No credit cards. \$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Washington (p. 32) MUSEUM DISTRICT** Clean and classy, the simple, tasteful rooms here overlook a verdant street or an intimate garden. No elevator.... Tel 020/679-7453. Fax 020/673-4435. [www.hotelwashington.nl](http://www.hotelwashington.nl). Frans van Mierisstraat 10 at Johannes Vermeerstraat, 1071 RS. Tram 16 to Ruysdaelstraat. 21 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 46.**

**Waterfront (p. 29) CANAL BELT** Overlooking the Singel a hundred yards from the flower market, this narrow canal-house hotel has cheerful owners who've remodeled top to bottom.... Tel/fax 020/421-6621. [www.hotelwaterfront.nl](http://www.hotelwaterfront.nl). Singel 458 at Koningsplein, 1017 AW. Trams 1, 2, or 5 to Koningsplein. 10 rooms (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 44.**

