

UITWAAIEN

Cycle into a hidden world of relaxing mini, *ADVENTURES* nearby.

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Did it ever strike you that untranslatable words cover the most interesting parts of a culture? Hygge in Danish, Ikigai in Japanese, Ubuntu in the Nguni languages, and then there's also quirky Dutch. The Dutch have a word for going out into nature and literally blow-drying one's mind: uitwaaien. It pinpoints the mental relief you feel after a walk or ride into the wind: hair utterly ruined, yet every dark or chaotic thought rattled into clarity. Clearing out the cobwebs so to speak. Unsurprisingly, the inhabitants of The Netherlands are masters at understanding the wind: their flat, unsheltered country is exposed to it pretty much all year round. The perfect place, in short, to get one's ideas into place and enjoy some stunning scenery along the way. We spent a few days biking around the often-overlooked isle of Texel, the largest West Frisian Island. It may be the biggest of the Wadden islands,

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yet this place is hardly 8 kilometres wide and 20 kilometres long. Surrounded by vast sand beaches and the endless nothingness of the Wadden Sea, it’s not hard to guess that over the centuries this is where many an adventurous expedition took off. Texel has traditionally been the home of rugged seamen and sheep herders. These days tourists join in on the fun and explore its natural diversity by bike, on horseback, on foot, or -for the brave- by boat. Getting there means boarding a ferry at picturesque Den Helder, after which we recommend leaving the car and hopping on a rented bike. Bike rentals can be found in all of Texel’s seven villages. We rented ours at Den Burg, which is centrally located and is a good starting point for excursions all over the island.





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SLEEPY PARADISES

STARGAZING

Posing as a traditional stolpboerderij on the far eastern side of the island, separated from the sea by a mere dike, Op Oost offers a surprisingly refined experience. The Kook Atelier restaurant combines fine dining and heritage crafts. Relying on the typical Nordic traditions of home growing and foraging, the menu consists of oysters, edible flowers, mutton, and vegetables from the garden. At night, when the wind finally settles, guests can relax by the bonfire and marvel at the surrounding darkness and complete silence. Morning bliss is accompanied by the soundtrack of some far-off rooster's crow as breakfast is served in copious picnic baskets to be enjoyed on your private terrace or wherever else you'd like in this picture-perfect scene. Yoga classes, massages and guided foraging hikes can be arranged on demand.

opoost.nl

THE WOOLLY ONE

Spa woolness. Let us repeat: Spa. Woolness. The quirky Boutique Hotel Texel has turned local heritage into an incredible wellness experience, offering wool baths. What to expect? First you get all wrapped up in wool and settle in a rustic cradle. Then your hands and feet are immersed in natural wool grease, and you are tucked in under a sheep wool blanket. As the material and the cream work their magic, you get to dream away... Why in the world would you consider this? Because the insulating heat of the wool relaxes muscles and joints, but also because lanoline (pure wool oil) stimulates the skin's healing abilities and leaves your skin feeling soft and supple. There's an array of massages and other treatments as well as a pool, sauna, hot tub and steam bath. Both the spa and pools are open to non-staying guests.

hoteltexel.nl/

CAMP TEXEL

The Dutch love going camping, and Texel is abound with farms that host bivouacking visitors. The one next door from Boutique Hotel Texel, Hoeve Nieuw Breda, has excellent amenities and child-friendly extras like a playground and soccer goals. They collaborate with the hotel to cater breakfast, lunch and dinner, and happy campers are welcome to visit the spa or take a plunge into the pool after a day out - the best of both worlds.

hoteltexel.nl/camping-hoeve-nieuw-breda

LIKE A LOCAL

“Staying and dining with us is like a theatre performance. From the music and lighting to the dishes and wine, we tell you an enchanting story with the best Texel has to offer.” The island is a source of inspiration for renowned chef Jef Schuur's culinary creations, concocted with whatever its natural wealth has to offer on the day: pure tastes without ado. Situated in a former parsonage in historic Den Hoorn it's a stone's throw away from the beach. Bij Jef boasts twelve cosy design suits with wide-ranging views over the kitchen garden and surrounding farmlands. Sweet dreams guaranteed, as is the joy of waking up to another delight: Jef is famous for his incredible breakfast menu!

bijjef.nl

Out and about

Texel is a treat for active travellers looking for outdoor adventures. Most hotels will help you book activities, or you can visit the tourist board's website for contacts and beautiful trails for every level. texel.net

The island is a **paradise** for hikers. Nowhere else in The Netherlands will you find such diversity of landscapes within such a small area - ranging from tulip fields and forests to dunes and historical villages.

The same goes for biking, the **Dutch's** preferred means of transport.

Take a mudflat walk on the bottom of the **Wadden Sea** with a nature guide, explore the island's biodiversity, and forage plants and herbs for your dinner. (Book at Op Oost).

Ecomare is a shelter for seals, but they also organise mudflat walks. Its centre has a cute little museum showcasing impressive historical whale skeletons. ecomare.nl

The graceful **Friesian horse** stands out and looks majestic with its black coat and sturdy legs. Throughout the Middle Ages its ancestors were famous war horses, but the breed serves a more peaceful purpose these days. Known for its brisk, high-stepping trot and docile nature, this horse is the perfect companion to explore Texel's vast beaches at low tide -even with children.

Are you looking for a bird's-eye view? **Paracentrum Texel** is known for its parachute courses, which are available for all levels. Experienced jumpers like to come here for specialist programs whereas beginners get the opportunity to jump for the first time with an instructor. Imagine seeing the whole island for the entire thirty seconds in free fall, after which the jumpmaster will open an extra-large parachute above your head, bringing you down as softly as a feather on the ground below... paracentrumtexel.nl

Set out for an oyster-picking expedition. The **Oude Oesterhaven** on Oost was the beating heart of the oyster and seaweed trade on Texel in the 18th century. A traditional picker takes you down memory lane, collecting oysters and telling stories along desolate mudflats and beaches. The walk is concluded with a tasting and a glass of wine in the open, salty air. (Bookable through Op Oost).

Voedselbos Texel is a type of collaborative garden or as the Dutch call it a “zelfpluktuin” (which directly translates to “pick-it-yourself garden”, there's that funny Dutch again) where you can harvest and pick fruit, relax on the indoor and outdoor terraces, or stroll through the farm shop. Kids can explore the gnome path, ride go-carts, visit the little petting zoo and join creative workshops. zelfpluktuin.nl

Schapenboerderij Texel is another farm-turned-children's-paradise. There are lambs almost all year round and they enjoy being petted in the Cuddle Corner. Also hanging around are goats, chickens, pigs, ducks, rabbits, ponies, and even a donkey. Play in the straw, enjoy a picnic in the farmyard, buy local products in the shop, ride a pony, or drink coffee in the cosy canteen. A sheep herding demonstration with kelpies is provided daily, and there is also a nice playground with among other things a cable way and bouncy castle. schapenboerderijtexel.nl