



Gemeente
Amsterdam



Vision on Tourism in Amsterdam 2035



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Many roads lead to Amsterdam. Tourists find their way to our city by bus or by privately owned or shared car, by water transport, by aircraft (a very popular mode of transportation) and, with increasing frequency, by train. Their reasons for coming here are as diverse as they are. Families from nearby Hoorn come to visit our shopping malls. Business people from Asia, the Middle East or America come for conferences. People from Belgium or Morocco come to visit family. Binge-drinking stag and hen parties from England make their way to our city as well. However, the great majority of tourists is attracted by the liberality and freedom in which Amsterdam takes so much pride. The beauty of the city, by our splendid museums, touches many. Others come to Amsterdam to visit the people they met before and the friendships they forged.

Undiminished popularity

In 2000, the record of four million annual tourists was broken. ‘This record number demonstrates that the city is still a popular destination,’ said a report published at the time by the City of Amsterdam’s department of Research and Statistics. The city’s popularity has not decreased over the past years. With more than 21 million overnight stays in 2019, Amsterdam is actually more popular than ever. This popularity affects the city and, in turn, how we live and work in Amsterdam. The recent city-council regulation on balancing tourism in Amsterdam identified a problem that people, particularly in the city centre, had already been aware of much longer: it is too busy. Too many visitors in too small a area in itself causes undesirable situations, and puts too much pressure on the city’s character and the quality of life it offers.

Influence on everyday life

Amsterdam is not alone in this. In 2019, more than half the tourist visits worldwide were to a destination in Europe. As a result, cities like Barcelona, Paris, Florence and Prague have problems similar to ours. The large number of visitors has unmistakable effects on life in the city, for example on the kind of work opportunities offered by the tourist sector. Also on the way we move through the city and on the places we like to frequent or avoid: individual visitors often stay for a short time, but their combined influence on life in the city is permanent. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it became painfully clear that this could lead to great contrasts. The once-packed streets were deserted. The canals showed us that a place that has grown too dependent on tourists looks forlorn, if not to say desolate, when it is suddenly empty. This image of our deserted canals also served as an encouragement to do things differently. Doing things differently means to go against the current. Worldwide trends are predicting further growth of the tourist sector in years to come, but to maintain the quality of live in our city we wish to set limits rather than stimulate growth.



It is not easy to make this happen, and it demands a shared vision of the future and stringent measures. The numerous discussions on this topic with residents and entrepreneurs have made clear that tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon, fraught with dilemmas, but also offers plenty of good angles and new ideas. Our joint challenge is to create a visitor economy that adds quality to the city instead of harming it. That is what we aim to achieve towards 2035.

The downside of growth

Tourists are welcome. Our cultural riches, including the museums and trend-setting venues, the Canal District, but also the nightlife in all its diversity, is something we love to share with visitors from all over the world. They have helped make Amsterdam the vibrant city it is today. However, there is a downside to the unbridled growth of tourism. Tourists put even more pressure on the already overwrought housing market. The city and its facilities are growing increasingly expensive. The balance between the influx of tourists and the quality of life experienced by residents of Amsterdam, particularly in the city centre, is completely disturbed. Groups of tourists that only visit the city for alcohol, sex and drugs are a **nuisance**. In a more general sense, the negative effects caused by those millions of visitors have resulted in **overtourism**. Nuisances and overtourism are signals that the limit has been reached and livability is in danger. Tourists are still welcome but our hospitality can no longer be at the detriment of our inhabitant's quality of life and mobility.

Wrong idea of freedom

Amsterdam has always been a free space and a place of refuge. Throughout the ages, political and religious refugees have found a safe haven here. Amsterdam is home to vibrant nightlife and vigorous counterculture. We are proud of these expressions of freedom: freethinkers and people from all lifestyles can be who they want to be in our city. However, in the past years this freedom has grown more and more commercial and is now under pressure. Nowadays, stereotypes about coffeeshops, sex theatres, the red light district and the misguided idea that freedom equals a lack of morality, dominate the international image of Amsterdam as a tourist destination. Some entrepreneurs abuse the city's image to promote it as a place of 'unlimited opportunity'. As a result, groups of tourists seem to think that Amsterdam is a place that will allow just about anything. We want to get rid of this kind of tourism, which is why we are targeting the offerings geared specifically towards these groups.

The Amsterdam freedom

There is a big difference between the young man going out to the city centre in drag for the first time and the party tourist wearing a tacky tutu, trying to make a mockery of the whole thing. There is a delicate balance to being free. In any case, it does not necessarily mean 'do as you please'. Real freedom leads to discovery and development. To growth and greatness. To creativity and entrepreneurship. To new collaborations and perspectives, to new initiatives and solutions. Freethinking also leads to innovation, to the courage to admit creativity and to room to draw outside the lines. Our diverse range of entrepreneurs, cultural institutions and nightlife venues throughout the city attests to this in a big way. We want to get rid of commercial parties that use the already scarce public space in the city centre to make money from cheap tourist entertainment, the kind of entertainment that completely ignores the interests of the people living or working in Amsterdam. That type of entrepreneurship undermines our underlying values and our idea of what freedom really is. We invite the tourists that are drawn to these kinds of experiences to go and look for them elsewhere.

A sustainable visitor economy that contributes favourably to the city demands a different way of thinking and acting from all of us. The city is not a product to make money, but an ecosystem to take part in. Our vision of entrepreneurship does not centre on big international money, but on value to the immediate environment. That is our prerequisite, on which we welcome one entrepreneurship, and tell the other its business is no longer tenable as it is increasingly becoming a burden to the city.

Towards a sustainable visitor economy

Our vision is to curb growth and bring about the transformation to a sustainable visitor economy. Efforts towards this include working on improving quality of life, combatting nuisances and overtourism and controlling the number of overnight stays.



We are committed to the polycentric city, responsible entrepreneurship and regional collaboration. Amsterdam has been working on this transformation for a while already, but from now on we will be making clearer choices.

Back to quality of life

To do all of this, we have to impose limits on the growth of the Amsterdam visitor economy. The city centre has taught us some important lessons, most notably that growth, purely in terms of quantity, knows no boundaries. This does not only apply to the centre, but also to the city as a whole. Said more simply, fewer visitors have to come to Amsterdam. The city centre has to become a place of residence for non-tourists again. The balance between living and working needs to be restored. The residential function is the prime importance to the entire city. The challenge to decrease the number of tourist overnight stays creates opportunities for stimulating transformation and new housing concepts. Amsterdam wants to be a free and open city where all kinds of people feel at home and are given physical and mental space to develop.

Responsible revenue models

Part of this vision is to work with entrepreneurs and sectors that see the added value of a visitor economy based on responsible revenue models. We make a clear distinction between appreciated contributors to the visitor economy on the one hand, and unwanted commercial activities negatively affecting the city on the other. What we offer tourists in our city also determines what kind of visitors come to Amsterdam. This is why our vision covers both the demand and supply side of the visitor economy.

A The visitor in the new visitor economy

In 2035, Amsterdam will still be drawing respectful visitors from all over the world. As an alternative to the city centre, the family from the nearby village now do their shopping in the Amsterdam Noord District. Business people keep visiting for the conferences and meeting opportunities in the South District, but new attractive locations such as Amstel III and Sloterdijk-Centrum have also caught their eye. Backpackers are also discovering exciting, bustling places outside of the centre. Stag and hen parties creating a nuisance have long since disappeared from the streets. School trips to the city are quite common. Large groups of visitors meekly following a travel guide or blocking the public road to take a group picture are seen less and less. We expressly focus on people visiting for Amsterdam's unique history and culture, visitors that respect the city and its residents.

Socially responsible and sustainable tourism

To make all of this happen, we are acting now. There's less and less room in the city for the type of tourism that draws large groups of visitors. To curb overtourism, we are not distinguishing between organised group trips, cruise passengers visiting the city in droves and coaches or FlixBuses dropping off loads of visitors in our city centre. By 2035 there will be much less of all of this. This doesn't mean we won't welcome school trips or conference visitors to our city, but we will talk to the travel sector about limiting private group bookings. To this end, we aim to decrease and spread out the number of coaches, cruises and other facilitators in the city and to discuss this with regional stakeholders. In addition, we will be taking further action with respect to hen and stag parties and other binge-drinking tourists that create a nuisance in the city centre. This will also affect market players and entrepreneurs targeting these groups, such as sex theatres, tourist hospitality and tour operators with revenue models that take away from the quality of life in the city centre. There will be no more room for destructive tourism. Within Europe, low-budget flights are increasingly being replaced by international train traffic. Train travellers will arrive and depart from Amsterdam Zuid Station. Together with market players in the hospitality sector we will explore the options of reaching a covenant geared towards constructive, socially responsible forms of tourism (with offerings to match).

Image versus identity

What kind of city do we want to be? And how do people abroad see it? At the moment those two things don't match. Correcting this will take a lot of time. Building and projecting a realistic and appealing image will therefore be top priority in the coming years. The development of an innovative story and the city's 750-year anniversary celebrations in 2025 will offer a great opportunity to put Amsterdam on the international map in a new way.



B Positive contributions to the city

The type of visitor that comes to Amsterdam depends largely on what the city has to offer in the way of tourism and culture. Brand campaigns to draw a certain type of visitor to Amsterdam do not work on their own, but go hand in hand with what we as a city have to offer. That is why we are making a clear distinction between tourism we want and don't want. This is of course not a new development. Examples from the past include the ban on new tourist shops and, in many parts of the city, new hotels, as well as the stricter requirements for holiday rentals. The beer bike has also been successfully banned from the centre. However, this is just the beginning. If we really want to control the number of visitor accommodations, we have to make sure that no new accommodations of this kind are added and more residences are made available to people who want to live in the city. If we want to get rid of intoxicated party tourists that create a nuisance in the red light district, we have to do something about cheap tourist entertainment. The city is for everyone, but most of all for Amsterdam residents, who have to feel at home.

At the same time, we want to encourage entrepreneurs that can run a successful business in our city by not only making money but also adding value to the city, the neighbourhood and the residents. We support the entrepreneurs whose business operations actively contribute to boosting the quality of life, the diversity of shops and the local identity. This development has already been set in motion with the City Centre Approach programme. We cherish and support authentic local entrepreneurship and will make sure this does not succumb to the competition.

Tourism concerns the entire city

Overtourism is not just an inner-city problem. In some parts of the canal district you can hear the birds chirping, while in parts of Vondelpark and the residential area De Pijp locals are increasingly being bothered by the noise of trolley cases, street pollution and marijuana smoke.



Parts of the East and West districts are also at risk of depleting their tourist capacity. Overtourism has led us to increase law enforcement and cleaning work force in the centre. At the same time, other parts of the city are also facing challenges relating to enforcement and keeping public areas clean. Conversely, jobs in the hospitality sector could add to the quality of life and employment opportunities in districts such as South-East and New-West. The visitor economy enables students with a side job in hospitality to pay their rent. Recent hotel management graduates can develop their careers in Amsterdam hotels. Yet, we have to look critically at the kinds of jobs the visitor economy brings the city. We are currently seeing too many flexible and temporary jobs that do not offer any perspective or job security.

Opportunities in the polycentric city

Problems and solutions with respect to the visitor economy are not limited to the city centre. Many solutions for the problems busy tourism poses can be found elsewhere. More and more often visitors also check out other areas, which creates opportunities to increase the quality of life throughout the city. In a polycentric city, the visitor economy in new urban centres may contribute to better job opportunities, accessibility and facilities. The foundations are already in place and developing rapidly. Take ArenAPoort, where prominent artists are drawing an international crowd, but where entrepreneurs are also contributing to a lively new urban district. In a nearby part of the Amsterdamse Poort we are working on the development of several new cultural facilities, including for hip-hop and the visual arts. The development of the South-axe District, where in the future all international trains will arrive and depart, and whose

new facilities will include a museum for modern art, also has a growing appeal to visitors. With the new Meervaart Theatre, the New-West District will have a cultural attraction drawing visitors from Amsterdam, other parts of the country and abroad. In the coming years, Osdorplein will continue to develop as an urban centre with a variety of facilities. The latter will include the *Verhalenhuis*, a new art and culture centre for New-West that will appeal to everyone from the district, but also from the rest of the city and further afield. We are also working on a new cultural cluster, including film, theatre and night culture, in and around Buikslotermeerplein. There is also plenty of room in Sloterdijk-Centrum to realise new facilities for nightlife and other culture. This will make these parts of the city more attractive for Amsterdam residents and other visitors alike.

All these places will transform into lively urban centres, possibly sooner than we think. On the back of this optimism, we would like to talk to tourist attractions about moving their activities to new city centres. This will help us spread out visitors across the city, positioning the entire city more clearly and intently on the regional, national and international levels. We will develop smart, data-driven interventions to allow visitors to discover the polycentric city.

Amsterdam as a gateway to the region

There are also some urban centres outside of Amsterdam. We will therefore start working even more closely with regional partners to do an even better job drawing our visitors' attention to the existing culture, heritage and nature that set the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area apart from other places. Owing to its status as the country's capital, many national and international cultural icons are based in Amsterdam. And surrounding cities and regions also boast unique culture that we would like to showcase to our visitors, such as the Hem in Zaanstad, the Cobra Museum in Amstelveen and the M. museum in Almere. In so doing, we will also focus on good accessibility of these locations by public transport. This way, Amsterdam will function as a gateway to places in the region and beyond.

Collaboration with the sector

A sustainable visitor economy is essential for a futureproof city and metropole. To make this happen, we are working on a healthy balance and a liveable city in close collaboration with partners in the tourism sector. We need pioneers from this sector that dare to experiment, as well as frontrunners that show that responsible growth and social returns can go hand in hand. We collaborate with real estate entrepreneurs on the sustainable recovery of the city centre through real estate.

Amsterdam residents and entrepreneurs have the power to give concrete shape to this change. We are already seeing examples of creative and sustainable entrepreneurship that works both ways: the products or activities offered appeal to tourists but also make a positive contribution to the city and the facilities for its residents.

Amsterdam to remain an attractive city

With the vision outlined above as a starting point, we are working on a future-proof visitor economy and a liveable city. But there are also forces at play that we cannot control. The expected growth of the middle class in various parts of the world goes hand in hand with a worldwide growth of tourism and Amsterdam is and will remain immensely popular as a travel destination. We have to deal with the paradox of an attractive city. The nicer we make Amsterdam, the more attractive it becomes to live or to work, but also to visit. Low-traffic streets with wider pavements are great for residents, but also offer space for day tourists and trolley cases. If we increase the diversity of shops in our high streets to offer Amsterdam residents a better experience, before you know it international travel guides will be all over this 'authentic local shopping experience'. Changes that are positive for residents will also draw new visitors that appreciate the city for its quality of life, beauty and diversity.

So let us acknowledge that the city will always be busy and vibrant, while at the same time making a joint effort to increase the quality of life. We as Amsterdam residents also want to enjoy the many facilities and the beauty our city has to offer. We like visiting a museum, festival or theatre, going to the cinema, shopping in the high streets, enjoying a new restaurant and exploring a new neighbourhood by bike, tram or metro. Residents, entrepreneurs and visitors are not at odds with each other. The city is for everyone. And Together we are responsible for **the city as a whole**.

