



Netherlands



The Road to Climate-Neutral Tourism

For several reasons, climate neutral-tourism is not an easy task in the Netherlands. Both the subject matter and the sector are diverse and complex. This makes it impossible to draw up one plan for the entire sector, in which everyone can simply take action in line with their existing role.

Joint goal: climate-neutral tourism by 2050

Action, however, is desperately needed. Stakeholders jointly create a vision, communicate aspirations and provide guidelines, but they always decide for themselves - based on their own position, interests and opportunities - which initiatives they can or want to participate in. The latter takes place in coalitions of stakeholders, who join forces for aspects of the roadmap and jointly collaborate on specific action. This is how we are jointly working toward climate-neutral tourism by 2050.

By and for the sector

When creating this roadmap, we combined expertise from the scientific community with knowledge from the many reports available from inside and outside the sector.

We supplemented this input with the experience of a large number of professionals at companies, levels of government, knowledge institutions, DMOs and sector organisations, who are committed to the Netherlands as a destination on a daily basis.

Pillars of the Glasgow Declaration

This roadmap is structured around the pillars of the Glasgow Declaration signed in 2021 by NBTC, CELTH, Merk Fryslân and many other actors in the tourism landscape. For each pillar and subsector, the current state of affairs, what needs to be done and the lines of action to be taken up by governments, industry, knowledge institutions, DSOs and industry associations are outlined. The key outcomes are presented below.

Measurement and research

Both more research and research that is more accessible are needed in the field of climate-neutral tourism. We want to bridge the gap between the availability and the applicability of research. Destinations and business owners need better insight into their CO₂ emissions and information on how to reduce them. In addition, better insight is needed into ways to encourage consumers and business owners to make sustainable choices.

Transport to the Netherlands

Of all the transport options to the Netherlands, aviation produces by far the most CO₂ emissions in absolute terms. We will need to reduce our dependence on aviation, while investing in a mobility landscape of sustainable alternatives that work seamlessly together.

Transport in the Netherlands

On the one hand, we want to entice motorists to choose more sustainable transportation options in order to reduce CO₂ emissions from transport in the Netherlands. On the other hand, we would like to make the kilometres that are still travelled by passenger cars climate-neutral. The public transport network must continue to be of high quality, and bicycle and walking infrastructure must be improved.

Transport by water

Although transport by water - by ferries or by means of sea and river cruises - does not generate the largest numbers of passengers, it is still a subsector with a significant climate impact. To prevent this

from becoming a blind spot, we must commit to knowledge-gathering. In addition, we must take into account the potential downsizing that may be necessary in the sea cruise sector.

Accommodation

A key opportunity for making tourist accommodation climate-neutral is the dissemination of information and knowledge. Such as information about energy-saving measures, best practices and positive business cases. Support during the drafting of customised climate plans is also useful, as is an understanding of the value of labelling and certifications.

Leisure product range

Besides making physical buildings more sustainable, there are also opportunities with regard to foodstuffs and plastics policies in particular. Such as various initiatives and pilots, often in the form of collaborations between business owners and the government, in order to reduce the climate impact of foodstuffs.

Tour operators, including online tour operators

The overall picture is that a growing number of tour operators are working towards climate-neutral tourism. Because of their position between supply and demand, tour operators and online platforms can make a substantial difference vis-à-vis both business owners and consumers. From the perspective of the Netherlands as a destination, it would be valuable to gain a better understanding of the extent to which this is happening and ways to better manage this.

Strengthening ecosystems

In addition to CO₂ emissions, there are many other elements that currently or shortly will create urgent challenges for the Dutch visitor economy, such as air quality, water quality and use, biodiversity and landscape quality. Solutions also often do not correspond to the measures needed to make transport to and within the Netherlands climate-neutral: emission-free zones, electrification of passenger cars, investments in charging infrastructure, limiting or reducing the number of air movements and sustainable last mile solutions to and from airports. We need to move towards a nature-inclusive society, in which we prevent damage to nature in all parts of society while exploiting nature’s potential.

Funding and support

Lack of financial resources, time and/or know how in the tourism sector make sustainability in general and climate neutrality in particular difficult. Customised solutions that meet the needs of individual business owners and their local context seem the most promising. An approach on a region-by-region basis is desirable.

Cooperation and leadership

While there is much that each of us can do ourselves, we can only achieve climate-neutral tourism in the Netherlands together. Many questions and actions lie ahead. We can make it easier on ourselves if we work together on this in coalitions. By creating a network of the Netherlands as a destination, we safeguard our cooperation and strengthen the feeling that we are working together towards tomorrow’s tourism.

Three key themes

Three key themes emerge from the analysis of the roadmap. These are in play across the board, regardless of theme or subsector:

- 1. while we must commit to innovation, innovation alone is not a magic bullet that is going to save us;
- 2. although consumers and business owners consider climate an important issue, they need help making sustainable choices;
- 3. our current collaborative structures are stalling: we need boldness and leadership to overcome this.

Five actions everyone can tackle right now
Not all the actions in The Road to Climate-Neutral Tourism can be implemented tomorrow. But there are five actions that the Netherlands as a destination can take right now:

- 1. make a start and follow through;
- 2. standardise and incentivise desired action;
- 3. programme development focusing on local perspective;
- 4. jointly examine opportunities for behavioural change;
- 5. formation of an action-oriented network.

By taking these five actions, we shift from mere good intentions to taking real action - and can accelerate substantial steps towards climate-neutral tourism in the Netherlands.