

Cultural bike tour from Museumplein in Amsterdam to Cobra Museum in Amstelveen

Time now to show off your skills on two wheels. Take this 40-minute bike ride to the Cobra Museum in Amstelveen and discover lots of experimental, modern and contemporary art on your way. This cultural excursion takes you through the beautiful and posh South district, the Olympic district and the Amsterdam Woods before reaching Amstelveen, before returning to the city along the meandering River Amstel. On your route you will pass plenty of places of historical, architectural and urban design interest. The map also features some spots of interest not quite on your route, but not that far from it either. So if you've got some extra energy and don't mind getting a little lost, here's your chance. There are places to stop and enjoy a drink at the midway point on the route. And awaiting you at your destination is the Cobra Museum, with its collection of experimental modern art. Afterwards you can reflect on all you've seen while sitting down to lunch or Dutch apple pie in the museum restaurant.

Cycle Tour

Your bike trip starts at the Cobra Café on Museumplein, the cultural heart of Amsterdam. Arranged around this square, are the Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Royal Concertgebouw. Cycle to the corner where the Concertgebouw, the concert hall, is located.

Connoisseurs consider this to be one of the best concert halls in the world. On numerous occasions the resident orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, has been selected as the best in the world and is currently led by the Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons. In 2013 the harp on the roof was gilded again with 3750 sheets of gold leaf.

Turn down De Lairesestraat, to the left of the concert hall as you face the facade. This street marks the start of your trip through Amsterdam South, the city's swankiest district and home to Dutch stars who are world famous, at least in the Netherlands.

Turn left when you get to Willem Witsenstraat, the fourth street on the left, and then take the first right onto Apollolaan.

Located immediately on your right are the Amsterdam Montessori School and the Willemspark School, both designed in 1980 by Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger and very influential throughout the Netherlands.

Continue along Apollolaan until you reach the Indonesia-Netherlands Monument by artist Frits van Hall. Now a memorial that marks a black page in Dutch colonial history, it was originally built as a military tribute to General J.B. van Heutsz, under whose command so many Indonesian people died.

Keep cycling along Olympiaweg as you pass through the Olympic district. Turn right when you reach Stadionweg, cross the road at the traffic lights, and follow the street as it curves gently to the left. On your right-hand side as you take the curve you see a former gatekeeper's lodge, where you can now enjoy a coffee.

Located behind the gatekeeper's lodge is world's oldest Olympic Stadium still in use. The Olympic flame was lit here for the first time during the Olympic Games of 1928. The tower built for the flame still stands today. Another first at these Olympic Games was the introduction of advertising, in the form of sponsorship from Coca Cola. Built with 2,000,000 bricks, the stadium is still the finish of the annual city marathon and the venue for a host of other sporting events.

Flanking the entrance to the stadium forecourt are the two volumes of the Citroën garage, originally built as the head office of Citroën in the Netherlands. André Citroën, the founder of this innovative French automobile manufacturer, was the son of a diamond trader from Amsterdam. The garage was an extremely modern building when completed in 1931. Like the Olympic Stadium, it is the work of architect Jan Wils and is a protected historical structure today.

Situated across the road, a little further down the street at the bridge across the water, is the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. This school of art was the last and largest building by Dutch architect and industrial designer Gerrit Rietveld, renowned as a member of De Stijl and a pioneer of Dutch Functionalism.

Continue your route out of the city, passing under the ring road around Amsterdam, to the Zuidas (South Axis) business district. On your right you see ING House, nicknamed the Shoe or the Dustbuster and designed by architects Meyer and Van Schooten. This ultra-modern building marks the most westerly point of the Zuidas, which boasts the largest concentration of office buildings in the Netherlands and is the most expensive piece of land in the country.

As soon as you pass ING House, turn right onto Skutjespad and then left onto Jachthavenweg. Continue along this cycle track, past the marina on your right, towards the Amsterdam Woods. When you reach the edge of the park you see the Bosbaan, a rowing lake that has been used for competitions since the 1930s. To your left you see the visitor centre, where you can obtain information about the park.

Keep left of the visitor centre and avoid turning onto Bosbaanweg. Instead, turn right onto the cycle track, then after about 100m. the first left, which you will recognize by the sign 'Richting de manege' (Towards the riding school). The entire park, most of which is on your right side, is a nature preserve planned and created as part of a work-relief programme in the 1930s.

When you reach Nieuwe Kalfjeslaan, turn left and continue for a short distance and then turn right onto Jan Tooropplantsoen en Jan Tooroplaan. As you cycle all the way to the end you see the railway tracks running parallel to the cycle track for some distance. These tracks are still in use, and on Sundays you can spot historical trains shuttling back and forth between Amsterdam and Amstelveen.

When you get to the end of the cycle track through the park, go left at the T-junction, cross the wooden bridge and turn left on de Amsterdamseweg (cross the railway tracks), and then turn right at the traffic lights. You're now in Amstelveen. Keep cycling along Keizer Karelweg, cross the roundabouts, and continue straight.

Keep on this road until you can see the park and the rear side of the Cobra Museum. Cross the street at the parking lights and lock your bike in the bicycle rack.

The name COBRA is composed of the first letters of the capital cities where the artists and followers of the movement came from: COpenhagen, BRussels and Amsterdam. Members of the group included Asger Jorn, Constant, Karel Appel, Shinkichi Tajiri, Henry Heerup, Pierre Alechinsky and many more. The fountain in front of the museum is by Cobra artist Karel Appel, and the museum was designed by architect Wim Quist in 1995.

The IAmsterdam Card entitles you to free admission to the museum.

The Way Back

Walk your bike towards the town square, which is called Stadsplein. Once you're on Stadsplein, turn left onto Rembrandtweg. Cycle all the way to the very end of Rembrandtweg and then cross Beneluxbaan.

This is the main road leading directly to Amsterdam. The weak-hearted among you might choose to hop on Metro 52 (including bicycle), which will take you all the way to Amsterdam Amstel Station. But if you do that you'll miss the route along the River Amstel!

So to reach the river, continue straight on Saskia van Uylenburgweg, crossing the two roundabouts on the way. Cross the street and turn right onto Aanloop. Take this cycle track and turn left at the T-junction, then turn right at the following junction. Keep your head down and an eye out for balls flying through the air, as you're now cycling between the pitches of the Amsterdam Hockey & Cricket Club! Cycle to the end of the lane and turn right onto Kalfjeslaan.

At the end of Kalfjeslaan you'll reach the River Amstel. Situated on the corner where Kalfjeslaan meets the river is a café called Klein Kalfje, occupying a building that once served as a tollhouse. In days gone by, lots of people from the city used to boat out here and relax. And to this day it's still a fine spot to enjoy a drink and admire the boats passing by. You can still take a ferry to the opposite bank, but that will take you off the route. And if you turn right, you will reach the village of Ouderkerk aan de Amstel in 15 minutes, passing some wonderful houses from the 17th to 19th centuries along the way.

But turn left instead. On your left you pass a statue of the Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn and, behind it, the Rieker Windmill dating from 1636. Rembrandt often strolled along the banks of the Amstel and made many drawings here. The bronze and cast-iron statue of the painter was unveiled in 1969 to mark the 300th anniversary of his death.

Continue cycling alongside the riverbank until you reach Amstel Park on your left. Created in 1972 for the Floriade, an international exhibition of flowers and gardening, the park still boasts some 70 attractions, including an old train that rides around the grounds. You can see some wonderful houses dotted along the River Amstel as well as houseboats lining the banks. On warm days you even see people swimming in this city river.

Continue cycling and pass beneath the ring road. On your left, a little further on, is Zorgvlied cemetery, designed by garden architect J.D. Zocher. One of the city's most important places of burial, it's the final resting place of many renowned and prominent Dutch notables and is certainly worth a visit. Of particular interest is the auditorium to the left of the cemetery, built in 1930 to a design by architect K.J. Mijnaerends.

Keep cycling along the Amstel, passing the Martin Luther King Park on your way. Turn right onto President Kennedylaan, then left at the Berlage Bridge, and cycle along Vrijheidslaan until you reach the junction at Victorieplein (Victory Square). Overlooking this square is a statue of the architect Berlage, who lived from 1856 to 1969 and was responsible for the urban design of all Amsterdam South. The statue is the work of city sculptor Hildo Krop.

Located behind the Berlage sculpture is the Wolkenkrabber (Skyscraper), built in 1932 by architect J.F. Staal and the first Dutch high-rise structure. Cycle to the left of the skyscraper onto Deltastraat and you end up at Merwedeplein. Apartment number 37 II was once home to Anne Frank, and in the only existing film footage of her we see her looking out of the apartment window. A statue in the garden by Jet Schepp depicts Anne just before she went into hiding, glancing back for a last look at her home.

Cross Waalstraat and cycle down Roerstraat all the way to the end. Turn left onto Maasstraat and then right onto Niersstraat. At the corner with Dintelstraat you pass the Anne Frank Montessori School, which Anne Frank attended until she was forced into hiding. At the end of Niersstraat you reach Europaplein, where you turn right, and right again when you reach Scheldestraat.

Number 45 on Scheldestraat is home to the renowned kosher sandwich shop Sal Meijer. On the subject of the Meijer breadroll, a newspaper once wrote that: 'Someone who comes to Amsterdam and doesn't eat a pickled meat roll from Meijer is like someone who comes to Amsterdam and doesn't see *The Night Watch* by Rembrandt.'

Turn left at the traffic lights onto Churchillaan. Soon the road curves gently to the right and becomes Apollolaan. On your left you see a sculpture entitled *Amsterdam dankt zijn Canadezen* (Amsterdam thanks its Canadians) by the artist Jan de Baat. On May 8, 1945, thousands of Canadians entered Amsterdam, cheered on their way by around half a million Amsterdammers.

Apollo House on the opposite side of the junction was built in 1938 to a design by architect Dirk Roosenburg. Also located here are sculptures by Hildo Krop. Cycle down Apollolaan and turn right at the second set of traffic lights onto Breitnerstraat. On your left you see the Hilton Hotel, the venue for the famous 'Bed-In for Peace' held by John Lennon and Yoko Ono during their honeymoon in 1969.

Continue along Cornelis Schuytstraat, turn right onto De Lairessestraat, and keep cycling until you reach Van Baerlestraat. Cross the street here and you're back where you started, at Museumplein.

That wasn't so hard, was it?