

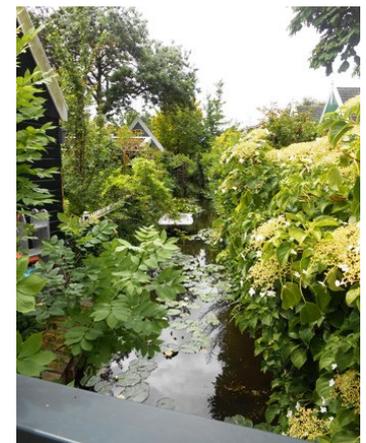


Windmills, Clogs and more...

On a blustery day of rain showers, we decided to visit **Zaanse Schans**, *the* place to see windmills. And more. These 6 operating mills are authentic and operated with passion and care. These, too, are a work of art and skill.



Think again if you have only ever thought of windmills in terms of flour or water. Here, these 6 large mills, along the lovely river-bank setting in Zaandam, grind herbs (especially mustard), operate a sawmill producing huge lumber planks with vertical saws powered by the wind and complex wooden gears, a paint mill that grinds pigments used to produce the great Renaissance masterpieces, clothing dye and chalk used for the markings down the centre of roads, and two oil mills that extract oil from nuts and seeds. They are really unbelievably simple, yet complex inside





Other buildings have been brought here from all over the country to create a living 17th century community, displaying among other things a cheesemaker and a wooden clog factory. The clogs included carved clogs (made in the old days by young men courting their fiancés), Sunday- best clogs with hand-painted religious motifs, or flowers and even a diamond-encrusted clog! (Dutch bling?)



A little ferry, pulled across by chain, takes you to the other side of the river to the oldest part of town where you can wander among the tiny wooden cottages of the former mill workers, now beautifully restored and the larger, elaborate mansions of the wealthy mill owners- many of whom owned a number of mills. It was a hard life for the workers, cold, back-breaking work from morning to night in the draughty mills. Today, many of the homes and gardens are extremely picturesque in the traditional green wooden style with elaborate gables. It was the oldest industrial area in the world in the 1700's with over 1000 working mills. More than 200 sawmills alone were situated in the nearby fields. The mills worked on a system of sails and boards. From 1850 steam engines took over the work of the mills. In 1920 only approx. 50 windmills were left and a society was founded to preserve them. Using modern computer technology, the 6 mills here were reconstructed. And in the late afternoon sun and light, you could see the inspiration for those Old Masters...



Above- a familiar sight in these lowlands, sails across the fields! Left- we celebrated our wedding anniversary in Leiden with a Riistaffel dinner of 28 courses! Spicy but delicious! Below, midsummer celebrations at marina on the tiny island of Kaag in the Waterland Region on the way north to Monnickendam, Volendam and Aakmaar. Beautiful, area of reedy lakes and narrow canals, thatched roofed cottages, birdlife, where everyone has a little open boat for Sunday afternoon picnics. many, many small boats

