

## Tales from Amsterdam – Jordaan Area

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The 17<sup>th</sup> Century, as in The Netherlands it was called as the Golden Century, marked an important part of history of Amsterdam. With trade in areas nowadays called Cape Town (South Africa), Sri Lanka, Jakarta (Indonesia) and Nagasaki (Japan), The Netherlands became one of the biggest trade nations of the world. Amsterdam, which was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century rapidly grew. Canals were constructed in and around the city for several purposes: for transport of goods and rubbish and for defending the city. In 2010, the Canal Area was put in the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Main religion turned from Catholic to Protestantism after the Netherlands defeated the Spanish occupiers in 1648. Jews who were prosecuted in South Europe, found a new home in Amsterdam. The city became too small and a new area west of the town had to be built. This area is now known as the Jordaan Area. Originally, this area was destined for poor people and streets and houses were small.



Exercising Catholic faith was allowed, but it was not allowed to show it in public. The government did not fund poor Catholic people. Rich Catholics decided to help their poor fellows by building small houses for them. Some four hundred years ago, a small court yard was built in the Karthuizersstraat.







Nowadays, this court yard has been preserved as rentable houses for poor single women, not older than 30 years.

During the 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the city council had plans to destroy the small houses and streets and replace them by modern buildings. After much resistance of Monument Care this plan was revised and the slumbered buildings were renovated without changing the character of the area. In the 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many artists inhabited the cheap buildings in a small section next to the "Jordaan Area" which is known as the "Nine Streets Area". This area of 9 streets with names of professions in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, began a new life as a small shopping area for old items, special clothes, and café corners. You also find an old men barber shop in one of the streets.



Things went so well that this area attracts tourists in the last 10 years. The success had a turnaround. The rents went sky high and small clothing shops could not live from the profits anymore. The inhabitants of Amsterdam are now afraid that this area will be taken over by worldwide known clothing shops which will destroy the historic character of this area. For the moment we can enjoy walking around small shops with a feeling that we are landed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For Dutch people who have never seen this area, the Dutch movie “Hartenstraat” published in 2014, will warm them up.

Walking in the Jordaan area feels like a museum. Right of this local pub, a sign shows that it was built in 1643.



If you look closer in some buildings, you will notice that some of them have a gable stone above the front door.





Until the French occupation of the Netherlands in the 19th century, there were no house numbers at the front part of the buildings and the gable stone was a sign to mark the inhabitant of that house.

The roof of the houses tells you in which century it was built. Here is a 17<sup>th</sup> century built house.



And here is a 18<sup>th</sup> century built ware house.





There is a lot to watch in the Jordaan Area. Feel free to discover this area! There are many hidden court yards where the inhabitants can escape busy city life. Some of them are merged into a museum. The streets are narrow. If you have the feeling that you are lost, look up and you will see the West Tower (Dutch: Westertoren) as a guide.

