

Amsterdam by Skye LeSage

If you just plan on spending a day in Amsterdam here are the places you want to check out:

I recommend touring Anne Frank's house first. The line is going to be the longest, so trying to get there early to avoid the line is a great idea. However touring the house does not take that much time. The cost of visiting this museum is 9 euros for an adult. You can also purchase your tickets online to help save some time.

Next you should hit up a canal ride. Most of the canal rides take off in front of Central Station and give you a general overview of the entire city. This is a good idea to just help you get more familiar with the city to make the rest of your day more familiar.

The Van Gogh museum and the Rijksmuseum are just right around the corner to each other, so visiting them back to back would be a good idea. There is also a nice park close by with the large “I amsterdam” phrase, which is an iconic tourist picture spot. This is also a nice place to relax by the reflecting pool and there are tourist shops nearby to get your souvenirs.

Next, hit up the Heineken Brewery. This isn't your average brewery, it is very interactive and was an awesome experience. They give a general tour with the history and everything, but then there is the second part of the experience. The second part of the tour has simulations and is very interactive. There are games to play and they even teach you the correct way to drink beer.

Towards the evening there is a Red Light District tour, which offers you a safe way of touring that area of town. This also gives a lot of history about Amsterdam and you still get to check out the more famous spots in the Red Light District.

Intercity Travel: I Amsterdam Card

I definitely recommend purchasing an I Amsterdam card. We purchased them through the hostel we stayed at, and I'm sure you can purchase them at the train station. Included in the kit is an intercity public transport pass, in which you can choose how many days you want to have when you buy. Also, by having the I Amsterdam you have automatic discounts on most popular tourists sites. So in the end the kit includes a discount card, a public transport pass, coupons, a map and great tourist advice.

Places such as the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum offer you free entrance. Also a plus is that at the Van Gogh museum, you can cut into the fast lane and don't have to wait in the lines. Another cool free thing is a canal ride. Canal rides were my favorite because they were relaxing and you got an awesome view of the city. Plus the guide has tons of touristy knowledge and fun facts that you can later use to impress your parents.

There are tons of other places that give you a discount with the I Amsterdam card, and even if its only like 3 euro, it still adds up. So definitely make sure you take advantage of it. Especially all of the coupons.

A lot of the coupons are for restaurants which, in reality are the more popular places that you want to check out. Make sure you hit the Pancake House, Amsterdam is very famous for their pancakes. (They were good)

The price for a card is 24 hours- 38 euro, 48 hours- 48 euro, 72 hours- 58 euros. You have to consider a lot of the money is going to be for using the public transit. Getting around in Amsterdam is fairly quick so just hopping on and off the busses is nice without having to pay, plus a lot cheaper than paying individually.

This is something that you can research online before going as well.

Hostels

The hostel I stayed at in Amsterdam was called the Stayok Amsterdam. It was very clean, very new and I was very impressed. The room was dorm style with bunk-beds and we had 6 people to a room. Also in our room we had a bathroom, so that was nice that we didn't have to share with anyone else on the floor.

The hostel is not directly next to a bus stop, but is a short five minute walk from one.

The people were very knowledgeable and gave us advice about getting around the town, and what to be careful for.

When choosing a hostel to stay at I did a lot of online researching. Just simply looking at reviews is very helpful. It may be cheap but when looking at the reviews you can really find out who has had good experiences and who has had bad.

We booked our hostels online, but it is a good idea to actually talk to someone on the phone before you go. That way they can give you some advice about finding the place and you ask what kinds of things are provided, such as breakfast or towels. A lot of times towels are not provided but you can purchase for a few euro. So if you're tight on money it might be a good idea to pack a towel just in case.

When first arriving to a city I think it's a good idea to take a cab first to the hostel instead of trying to find it yourself, after you find it, and don't have all of your luggage with you, it is a lot easier to find it the second time. Walking around with your bags being lost gets kind of frustrating and a lot of times locals don't recognize the names of hostels, since it is just a tourist thing.

I also found it was a good habit to grab business cards from the hostels we were staying at so that there wasn't any confusion later when we were trying to find our way home. If we were taking a cab you can just hand them the business card and it works a lot better. We found out that not always do they recognize the name of the hostel and we might have a hard time communicating the address because of the language barrier.