MEPPEL

Meppel is a small town in Drenthe, the Netherlands. The city has just under 35,000 inhabitants and is the fourth largest city in the province of Drenthe. Meppel is known as a tourist town with friendly people and a pleasant setting. There are plenty of opportunities for tourists and also around the small town there are great things to explore. The picturesque village of Giethoorn is about 10 kilometres away and major cities like Zwolle, Leeuwarden, Groningen and even Amsterdam,the Hague and Utrecht can be reached by car in less than two hours.

Presentation

The written history of Meppel began around 1141 AD, when it was just two farms at the point where three small rivers (Reest, Wold Aa and Beilerstroom) merged into a larger river, the Sethe (now known as Meppelerdiep).
The town acquired city rights in 1644, again confirmed by Napoleon in 1809. This strategic position made Meppel a regional trading town, which it still is today.
The presence of numerous canals, a relatively large Jewish community and numerous trade contacts with Amsterdam during the 19th century led to Meppel's nickname **Klein-Mokum or Klein-Amsterdam**.
Although most of the similarities between Amsterdam and Meppel have faded over the years, there are still strong connections between the two places. Every year in August there is a festival in Meppel for which busloads of Amsterdammers travel to Meppel for a day full of old-fashioned Dutch songs and canal
festivities. For some years now, there has even been a canal parade in the canals of Meppel on this day.

Getting there

Meppel is historically considered a relatively important place in the transport network of the northern Netherlands, and as such can be easily reached by road and rail.

- **By road**

Meppel is located at the intersection of the A28 (Utrecht-Zwolle-Groningen) and A32 (Meppel-Leeuwarden) motorways and is therefore an important transport hub in the north of the Netherlands.
The overview below shows indicative driving times from Meppel to other locations in the Netherlands.

- Groningen - 1 hour
- Leeuwarden - 50 minutes
- Zwolle - 15 minutes
- Utrecht - 1 hour 15 minutes
- Amsterdam - 1 hour 25 minutes (via Emmeloord-Almere)
- Rotterdam - 1 hour 45 minutes (via Utrecht)
- The Hague - 2 hours (via Utrecht-Gouda)

Meppel est également reliée par des lignes de bus régulières aux villes et villages des environs. L'aperçu ci-dessous montre les lignes de bus les plus utilisées qui pourraient intéresser un visite Meppel is also connected by regular bus routes to the surrounding towns and villages. The overview below shows the most frequently used bus routes that might be of interest to a visitor.

- Assen via Havelte, Diever et Smilde: route 20 (Qbuzz)
- Zwolle via Staphorst and Rouveen: route 40 (Syntus)
- Hoogeveen via Ruinerwold and Ruinen: route 32 (Qbuzz)
- Zuidwolde via De Wijk: ligne 34 (Qbuzz)

To reach Giethoorn from Meppel, take the train to Steenwijk (any train to Leeuwarden also stops in Steenwijk), then take bus 70 to Giethoorn (direction Zwolle), or during the summer months you can also take bus 249 from Steenwijk.

- **- By rail**

There are four trains per hour to Zwolle (17 minutes) and four to Leeuwarden (45 minutes), two per hour to Groningen (50 minutes) and one train every hour to The Hague (2 hours) and Rotterdam (2 hours). The train to The Hague also stops at Almere, Amsterdam and Leiden, and there is an hourly connection to Schiphol Airport. The train to Rotterdam also stops at Amersfoort, Utrecht and Gouda.

- **- By plane**

It is probably convenient to land at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, one of the largest airports in Europe with connections all over the world. From Schiphol Airport, Meppel can be reached by car in less than an hour and a half (as there are no traffic jams) or by train in an hour and a half (one direct train per hour, one with platform change in Zwolle).

Getting around

Everything of interest from a tourist point of view is within easy walking distance. The city centre is only 5 minutes walk from the station. If, for whatever reason, you intend to visit the residential areas, there is a bus line (line 1) that runs from the station to the districts of Oosterboer, Haveltermade and Koedijkslanden, stopping at the station each time between trips to the districts. It also stops in the city centre.

What to see

Meppel is not a very famous or unusual town, but it is appreciated for its quiet and touristy atmosphere. It is particularly pleasant as a base for visiting the surrounding areas, as it has many facilities in terms of shops, bars, restaurants and the like. The historic city centre and the Oud-Zuid district are however pleasant enough to make Meppel a destination in its own right.

Below you will find a brief overview of some of the attractions in Meppel.

Historical centre

- Grote de Mariakerk - The largest and oldest church in Meppel (built in 1422), it is located on the Kerkplein (Church Square) in the centre of town. It has an iconic tower with a small dome on top that can sometimes be climbed for a bird's eye view of the city. Address: Kerkplein 1.
- ameppel sign - After the famous "Iamsterdam" sign in front of Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum was removed by the municipality in November 2018, the local entrepreneurial association of Meppel decided to place a similar sign in the canals of Meppel, as a nice reference to the city's former. nickname Klein-Amsterdam. Location: at the intersection of the Gasgracht and Keizersgracht canals.
- Traditional mills - Meppel originally had more than 10 traditional Dutch mills, of which 2 still survive. Molen De Weert (Weerdstraat 80) is a working corn mill, from where you can buy flour and other baking ingredients on Saturdays. The other is Molen De Vlijt (Sluisgracht 20), which is beautifully situated at the intersection of three canals. The Boazbrug is a great place to watch it, especially at sunset.
- Old canals - Meppel had an extensive network of canals running through the historic centre. Although many of them were filled in during the second half of the 20th century, some of them are still there. Note that most of the canals are named after their world-famous Amsterdam counterparts (Prinsengracht, Keizersgracht, Herengracht), which explains the city's nickname of Klein-Mokum (Little Mokum / Little Amsterdam). Some canals have been rebuilt in recent years and others are due to be rebuilt.
- Drukkerijmuseum - A nice little museum about the evolution of printing techniques through the ages. The printing industry was (and to some extent still is) an important economic activity in Meppel. Address: Kleine Oever 11.

Oud-Zuid

- Oud-Zuid - literally meaning 'Old South', this relatively posh district was built in the last decades of the 19th century by wealthy people who set up businesses during the industrial revolution (the most notable being Gist-Brocades - a former multinational medical company). The houses on Stationsweg and Zuideinde are particularly worth a visit. It is located north of the Wilhelminapark, west of the railway station and south of the historic centre. This part of the city is a protected area of the city under the monument law.
- Wilhelminapark - A quiet and beautiful city park, located next to the train station and an ideal place for an evening stroll..

Outside the town

- Havixhorst - A beautiful old haszathe (a manor house surrounded by a moat that was inhabited by a rich or noble family) about 5 km southeast of Meppel at the river Reest. There is a white stork breeding station called De Lokkerij right next door. Interesting place for a short walk or bike ride.

Things to do

- Take a bike and cycle through the countryside! In all directions out of the city you can find very different landscapes; in the West are the marshes and old peat deposits of the Weerribben-Wieden National Park and fishing villages like Giethoorn and Dwarsgracht.

To the east and north are forests, ancient dolmens and farming villages with Saxon farms and to the south you can find farmland grazed by black and white cows with some traditional villages like Staphorst and the wide IJssel-Vecht Delta.

- Visit the Grachtenfestival (Canal Festival), which is held every year on the second weekend in June. During the festival, the canals are filled with old sailing ships and numerous pleasure yachts and there are performances by sailors' choirs and old trades.
- Visit one of the Donderdag Meppeldagen, held on 6 consecutive Thursdays from July to August. More than 100,000 visitors come to these events every year. The squares of Meppel are filled with stages where local artists perform in the evening. During the day, there is a different theme every day. The themes change every year, although there is always one of the six themed "Mokumdag". On this day, busloads of Amsterdammers visit Meppel for a day of Amsterdam, old-fashioned Dutch folklore. This event is widely known in the region and visited by many young people from the surrounding countryside.
- The Sinterklaasintocht (Sinterklaas Entrance) always takes place on the second weekend in November. Sinterklaas and his 'Pieten' (Petes) arrive from Spain in a steamer full of gifts and sweets. This is a traditionally important event in Meppel and after Sinterklaas' arrival from the steamboat, he rides through the town with his white horse Amerigo to hand out sweets to children. This event takes place in all Dutch places at the same time, but it is becoming increasingly controversial because of the custom of using black face paint for the Pieten.

Shopping
Meppel has everything you need for your daily needs (from large supermarkets and pharmacies to pet shops and bank branches), as well as a basic selection of clothing shops (such as H&M, Vero Moda, C&A, etc.), but for real shopping you would probably prefer Zwolle or Groningen, to name just two places.

Where to eat
- Sukade: More upmarket restaurant. At an excellent location at the intersection of two canals. Address: Stoombootkade 10.
- De Liberté Pannenkoekenschip: Pancake restaurant located on an old boat. Address: Stoombootkade 12.
- De Nachtwacht: Middle-class restaurant with a Dutch master theme. Address: Groenmarkt 13.
- ZIZO: Has a well-priced three-course menu for €30. Address: Steenwijkerstraatweg 10 (a little outside the centre).
- Restaurant De Tipbrug: Restaurant. Address: Prinsengracht 8: Prinsengracht 8.
- Eetcafé de Beurs: Good place for a simple lunch or dinner. Voted the best café in Drenthe. Also good for an evening drink, especially at the weekend. Address: Grote Kerkstraat 3.
- Herberg 't Plein: Comfortable and traditionally Dutch inn where you can have a simple and hearty lunch or dinner in the afternoon or evening. Address: Prinsengracht 1.
- Peking: Chinese-Indian restaurant that also serves traditional Chinese and Mongolian interior dishes. Address: Grote Kerkstraat 10.

Have a drink
- Eetcafé de Beurs: See above. Address: Grote Kerkstraat 3.
- Herberg 't Plein: Comfortable and traditionally Dutch hostel. On weekends it is packed with young locals. Address: Prinsengracht 1: Prinsengracht 1.
- Oasis de Stadscafé: A good place for a coffee or lunch at the Kerkplein. Especially nice in summer when there is a terrace. Address: Kerkplein 15.
- De Buren: A bar that attracts a slightly younger clientele at the weekend. Address: Grote Kerkstraat 19.
- Café de Casteleyn: Bar. Address: Grote Kerkstraat 17.
- Bar-Dancing Lord Nelson: Popular place in the area for young party-goers at the weekend. Address: Prinsenplein 48: Prinsenplein 48.

Where to sleep
- City Hotel Meppel: Hôtel central mais simple. Address: Dirk Jakobsttraat 6.
- Hôtel De Poort van Drenthe: Face à la gare. Addressse: Parallelweg 25.

Stay safe
Meppel is a very safe town where no special security measures apply. Use your common sense (as you would anywhere else) and you will be fine. In the rare event that you encounter problems, go to the police office a stone's throw north of the city centre (Eendrachtstraat 28).

Get out
Meppel is a very good base for exploring some of the less visited areas of the Dutch countryside.

Immediate surroundings
The area around Meppel is full of interesting sites, both natural and cultural. Among the most interesting are:
- Staphorst - A culturally interesting village about 5 kilometres south of Meppel. Staphorst is very religious and conservative. The window frames and doors of its old farmhouses and houses are painted in bright green and blue, and many of its older inhabitants (especially the women) still wear traditional clothes. It is unique in the Netherlands for this. Do not photograph the women without their own permission! The best way to get there is by bike, which you can rent at the station.
- Giethoorn - An internationally renowned village that is nicknamed "the Venice of the North". In Giethoorn, boats are still the most common mode of transport. In summer it can get very crowded here. It makes an excellent day trip by bike. Alternatively, see the "Entrance" section above.
- Steenwijk - Small town with one of the highest church towers in the Netherlands. About 10 minutes by train / 12 km by bike.
- Zuidwest-Drenthe - North-east of Meppel is a beautiful area with old traditional villages full of Saxon farmhouses, forests and ancient dolmens (hunebedden) in two national parks (Dwingelderveld and Drents-Friese Wold. The region is best explored by bike, although it is possible to go by bus. The area is well known to Dutch tourists and many pensioners choose to live here after a life of hard work in the Randstad. Some of the most beautiful villages here include Havelte, Diever, Dwingeloo and Ruinen.
- Schokland - A former island that was in the Zuiderzee, which is now the province of Flevoland. The old village still remains and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. About 40 km via Meppel, and therefore best visited by car. No public transport. For the more adventurous among us, we could try to go by bike on a day trip if it's not too windy.

Further afield

The destinations below are best visited by car or train: Zwolle – Vieille ville hanséatique qui fonctionne comme la capitale de la province d'Overijssel. Environ 15 minutes en train ou en voiture.

- Kampen and Deventer were also part of the Hanseatic League and therefore also have beautiful medieval town centres. Both can be reached by train with a change of trains in Zwolle. The total journey takes about 45 minutes for both.
- Groningen - A lively student city with many shops and some of the best parties in the Netherlands. About 50 minutes by train, 1 hour by car.
- Leeuwarden - Capital of the culturally distinct province of Friesland / Fryslân. Leeuwarden was the European Capital of Culture in 2018 and has a lovely old town centre. About 45 minutes by train or car.
- The major cities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) are all within one to two hours by train and all have at least one direct train connection per hour.



Molen De Weert