

LET'S GO DUTCH! THE 50 BEST

Sex and clogs and rock 'n' roll – what other European city offers visitors quite so many diverse pleasures as quaint, historic, sleazy old Amsterdam? Author **Paul Murphy** goes flat out to show us where the good times roll.



The Begijnhof retreat is a timeless oasis of calm in cosmopolitan Amsterdam

- BEST PLACES TO DRINK
- BEST MUSEUMS
- BEST NIGHTLIFE
- BEST SHOPS
- BEST RESTAURANTS
- BEST GETAWAYS
- BEST PLACES TO STAY

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NB: Details were checked at the time of going to press, but prices and opening times are liable to change. When dialling from the UK drop the initial 0 from the 020 Amsterdam code and prefix all telephone numbers with the 001 31 international dialling code.

NEXT WEEK: 50 BEST WAYS TO PUT YOUR FEET UP

1 WIJNAND FOCKINK

This ancient *proeflokaal* (liqueur tasting house) looks more like a tiny apothecary's shop than a drinking den. When you're there try a glass of *half-om-half* – no, it isn't a pint of light and bitter, but rather two thimblefuls of a strange, sweet, brown concoction that is guaranteed to loosen your fillings. Be warned that the bartenders fill the glass to the brim, so you have no choice but to bend down to take a sip before you pick it up – a feat in itself, given the crowds of suits that pack the place out. **Where:** Pijlsteeg 31, off Dam Square, behind the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky. **When:** Open daily 5-9pm.

2 VAN GOGH MUSEUM

You'd have to be mad not to like this place. Revamped last year, it's fresh and clean, beautifully presented and home to most of Vinnie's greatest hits – sunflowers, irises, poppies – in fact, the

whole damn bunch. In addition to the excellent permanent collection, from 19 May to 17 September you can also catch the *Japonaiseries* exhibition, which reflects Van Gogh's fascination with the land of the Rising Sun. **Where:** Paulus Potterstraat (020 570 5252), www.vangoghmuseum.nl. **When:** Open daily 10am-6pm. **How much:** Admission €15.50.

3 BOOM CHICAGO COMEDY CLUB

Take a troupe of Chicago improv comedians, relocate them to the heart of Amsterdam, and then give them full rein to poke fun at the city's trams, canals, sex and drugs and dog mess. Oh yes, and because they insist on cajoling the audience into shouting out daft suggestions, one night is never quite the same as any other. Razor-sharp reactions, brilliant wit – these comedians' jokes hit the funny bone every time. Bill Bryson would certainly approve.

Where: Leidseplein Theater, Leidseplein (020 530 7300), www.boomchicago.nl. **When:** Performances every night during the summer. **How much:** Ticket price €18-€32.

4 KLOMPENBOER (THE CLOG FACTORY)

Amsterdam's favourite *klompen* shop proves that not all clogs have to be decorated with windmills or end up gathering dust on your granny's mantelpiece. Join the clog-noscenti and have a pair made to measure on the antique lathe at the back of the shop – for two blocks of wood, they're surprisingly comfortable. **Where:** Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 20 (also entrance on Spuistraat).

5 DORRIUS RESTAURANT

An Amsterdam institution, Dorrius has been serving the best in traditional Dutch cooking since 1890.