

35 DE SLUYSWACHT BAR

This 300-year-old sluice-keeper's cottage, opposite Rembrandt's House, is Amsterdam's equivalent of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Sit down outside or secure yourself an upstairs window seat for views of the landmark tower known as the Montelbaanstoren – for many sailors of the Dutch East India Company, this offered them their last ever glimpse of Amsterdam. If you discover that De Sluyswacht is no longer on the skant when you finally emerge from the bar, then you know you are in trouble.

Where: Jodenbreestraat 1.

36 SEX MUSEUM

Dig out your dirty mac and enjoy a bit of vicarious sex at this extremely popular Amsterdam institution. It's tacky, jokey, mildly interesting in parts (mostly private parts) and about as erotic as Ena Sharples's hairnet. Copies of hard core Indian and Far Eastern sculptures offer proof that the Dutch were not the inventors of copulation, while the funniest moments are to be had from the risqué Victorian movies. Obviously not a place to take your maiden aunt, but plenty of people find it entertaining.

Where: Damrak 18 (020 622 8376).

When: Open daily 10am-11.30pm.

How much: Admission f8.

37 MELKWEG (MILKY WAY)

If you were last in Amsterdam in the 1970s you might just remember the Milky Way as the hippy hangout, permanently swathed in a purple haze. These days it's a bit less risqué but no less worthy of a visit. It's definitely the most eclectic showcase in town, with acts ranging from a Senegalese soirée to Blondie, battling DJs to skank, jazz to hip-hop, topped off with a rich helping of film and theatre, too.

Where: Lijnbaansgracht 234 (020 531 8181).

www.melkweg.nl

When: Closed Mondays.

38 CONDOMERIE HET GULDEN VLIES (CONDOM SHOP)

A trouser-boggling variety of condoms (to quote one reviewer) is the stock-in-trade of this stylish little Red Light district shop. In contrast with the especially tacky immediate locale, it's all done in the best possible taste, prompting another guide book to describe it as "oddly wholesome". My favourite is the one that sings "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" at the appropriate moment.

Where: Warmoesstraat 141.

39 GILUBANG RESTAURANT

It's said that Dutch plantation owners invented the *rijstafel* (literal translation, rice table) by adding their own bits and pieces of meat and fish to the basic Indonesian meal of rice and vegetables – the result being a feast of some 20-30 small plates. Whatever, this spicy fusion is now most visitors' favourite Amsterdam meal and there is no better place to be initiated than at Gilubang. This charming, friendly little place on one of the city's prettiest streets is also a perfect lovers' tryst.

Where: Runstraat 10 (020 626 9755).

When: Dinner only from 6pm.

How much: Rijstafel meal f50-60.



All aboard for the ship museum



An enlightening trip to the Condom Shop



There are some 18 types of beer on draught at De Wildeman, plus a smoke-free room

40 CAFÉ DU LAC

The décor in the Café du Lac is material proof that you don't need spacecakes to see the strangest things in Amsterdam's bars. Here, it's to hell with *gezelligheid* (cosy and comfortable) – this is a sort of art deco, Mervyn Peake meets Ridley Scott with a bit of Gaudi and the occasional stuffed alligator thrown in, kind of place. It could have been awful but instead it's strangely entrancing – dead trendy, too.

Where: Haarlemmerstraat 118.

41 THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT

You've got to do it, but what do you do when you get there? If you're really stuck there's always the friendly Prostitute Information Centre right by the venerable Oude Kerk. Alternatively, you might want to indulge in a bit of vicarious pleasure at either the infamous Bananenbar (in which case you'll never look at a banana in the same light again) or perhaps

the Casa Rosso. Whatever you do, though, if you want to keep your camera (and your teeth), don't point it at the window-girls.

Where: Both the Bananenbar and the Casa Rosso are on Oudezijds Achterburgwal. www.casarosso.com, www.bananenbar.com

How much: Bananenbar f75, Casa Rosso f50.

42 DE SILVEREN SPIEGEL RESTAURANT

A picture-postcard-perfect 17th-century Dutch house, The Silveren Spiegel (the Silver Mirror) not only looks the business, it's also famous for producing some of the best Hollandische cuisine in the country. The wine list is highly acclaimed, fish is a speciality of the house and its lamb, bred on the tiny North Sea island of Texel, is simply sublime. An absolute must for dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists.

Where: Kattengat 4 (020 624 65890).

When: Mon-Fri 12-2pm, 6-10pm, Sat 6-10pm.

How much: Average main course f50.