

Tour de Femmes Den Haag | background info-DH

On Monday, August 12th, the final 21 kilometers of the first stage of the Tour de France Femmes will take place in The Hague. The cyclists will ride from Rotterdam, through Westland, to The Hague, with the finish in Kijkduin. As is customary in the Tour, various interesting facts and background information about the surrounding area will be shared.

For all those interested, here is this information. Enjoy the Tour and the beautiful city of The Hague

****The Hague, City in the Dunes:****

The Hague is the only city in the Netherlands that lies directly on the beach and the sea. The history of The Hague begins on the old high dunes, the sandy grounds, where the first parts of the city were built. The locals here are called 'Hagenaren'. Between the dunes lies the lower, wet peatland, an area that was settled later and was once home to many gardens (horticulture). Here, the residents are known as 'Hagenezen'.

With all those old dunes in the city, small dune peaks are certainly noticeable while cycling.

These types of landscape still form the foundation of the city's structure, recognizable in the street pattern as a grid structure. A grid structure with long streets running parallel to the coast, such as the Laan van Meerdervoort, Loosduinsekade, Erasmusweg, Escamplaan, and the streets perpendicular to them, like Zeestraat, Scheveningseweg, Vaillantlaan, and Lozerlaan.

A fun fact is that the colors of The Hague's flag, yellow and green, are derived from the sand and the peat.

****The Grid Structure of The Hague:****

The route of the Tour de Femme will go over some of these roads from the grid structure, such as the Lozerlaan, Vaillantlaan, Erasmusweg, and Loosduinsekade.

1. **Lozerlaan**

The route of the Tour de Femme will cover some of the roads from the grid structure, with the final kilometer traveling over one of the oldest connections from 'land to sea.' During the Roman Empire, a route to the coast ran here, even before The Hague as we know it existed. There was even a Roman fort at Ockenburgh.

This historic route now serves as a green recreational connection between various green areas, known as the route from 'Zee tot Zweth'. It connects the sea and dunes at Kijkduin, the green fields and forests at Ockenburgh and De Uithof, and continues to the river Zweth near Delft.

Fun fact: The flag parade for the Tour de Femme is not the only flag parade in The Hague. In the World Forum area, there is also a flag parade of all national flags. The World Forum is part of The Hague's International Zone, home to numerous international offices, institutions, tribunals, embassies, a convention center, museums, and hotels. In 2025, the NATO summit will be held in this World Forum area.

2. **Vaillantlaan:**

The Vaillantlaan is also one of those long avenues from The Hague's grid structure, an avenue perpendicular to the coast as they say. The Vaillantlaan has traditionally been the main street of the Schilderswijk district.

This avenue is 1.5 km long and is located in the Schilderswijk neighborhood. This district underwent a very extensive urban renovation in the 1990s. One of the defining projects is the master plan for this Vaillantlaan, designed by Dutch architect Jo Coenen. The plan features very recognizable architecture

and high urban quality due to the uniformity of the facade, strong residential character, continuous tree planting, and concentration of businesses and shops at the intersections.
The avenue begins at an underpass of the railway (known as "de Put").

3. Parallelweg / The Hague Canal:

The Tour de Femme route passes by the Hague canal at the end of the Vaillantlaan, at the location of the Parallelweg.

The canals of the Hague were constructed by order of Prince Maurits during the Eighty Years' War as a defense for the city, which at that time was entirely contained within the canals. The canals were used for goods transshipment, markets, and trade, as the names suggest: Hooikade (Hay), Bierkade (Beer).

For the now increasingly dense inner city, the canals are a place for relaxation and greenery. A good example is the recently renovated Piet Heinplein, the Noordwal/Veenkade with an underground parking garage beneath the canal, and a restored historic swing bridge.

4. Loosduinsekade

Along the Loosduinsekade was the Loosduinsevaart until 1932, an important waterway between the gardens (horticulture) of Loosduinen and the current Westland to the Vegetable and Fruit Market in The Hague's city center. With the relocation of the vegetable and fruit market, the importance of the canal diminished, leading to its partial filling in 1932.

The Hague's Zuidwest (Southwest) District:

The route of the Tour de Femme follows the edges of the Zuidwest-district. A post-war neighborhood, built according to the designs of the internationally renowned Dutch architects/urban planners Dudok and Berlage (the oldest part). The district was built after the war based on the principles of the time, emphasizing 'light, air, space,' and focusing on community. Zuidwest was meant to be the neighborhood of the future. After the harsh war years, there was hope: life would get better!

Now, roughly 70 years later, Zuidwest is not what it once was. The principles of that time are still there, and many residents of Southwest still feel at home and connected to their neighborhood. However, the district now struggles with outdated housing, high unemployment, and social problems. The municipality of The Hague has planned a large-scale restructuring over the next 20 years in the district as part of the National Program Zuidwest, involving extensive demolition, renovation, and new construction. The goal is to build on the neighborhood's principles. This restructuring in The Hague Zuidwest is the largest urban renewal project in the Netherlands.

Important places in Southwest: the green cross of axes with numerous parks, sports fields, and allotments, the recently renovated Haga Hospital Leyweg, the iconic municipal district office on Leyweg, the adjacent new residential areas Erasmusveld and Wateringseveld.

Zuiderpark:

The route of the Tour de Femme goes through Zuiderpark, a landscape, recreation, and sports park in the heart of the Zuidwest-district. A park that every Hagenaar or Hagenees is familiar with.

Construction of the park began in 1923 as a work relief project after World War I. The official opening did not take place until 1936.

The park consists of large expansive lawns, water features with fountains, and various very green, wooded areas with different functions. A key feature of this public park is the recreational inner route in the form of a ring around the water feature, connecting all these functions and areas.

Over the years, The Hague's Zuiderpark has truly become a sports park. The recreational route in the park is 4.5 kilometers long and is widely used for running, rollerblading, and cycling.

For many years (until 2007), the Zuiderpark was the home base of The Hague football club ADO Den Haag with the Zuiderpark Stadium. Nowadays, the Sportcampus Zuiderpark is located on the site of the former stadium, featuring numerous training fields for professional athletes and housing The Hague's sports education. In addition to all the sports activities, many concerts and events are organized in the park, bringing a lot of vibrancy. At the same time, it offers an oasis of peace and

greenery in the city.

After all these years, the park is still highly valued both in use and design. In 2011, Zuiderpark was therefore granted the status of a protected cityscape.

****Additional for Kijkduin: The Kijkduin Lighthouse:****

After years of transformation, the new Kijkduin is almost complete. The old 1960s buildings have been almost entirely replaced by new developments with shops, restaurants, and many homes. The new boulevard was completed in early 2024, once again functioning as a meeting place for city residents and beachgoers. Cars and bicycles have been completely kept out of sight by ample built-in facilities.

The Kijkduin lighthouse is one of the eye-catchers in the area. But did you know there are two versions of this lighthouse, and one isn't in Kijkduin or The Hague?

In the 1970s, a lighthouse in Hoek van Holland was demolished. The Hague bought this tower and turned it into a tourist attraction on the Deltaplein in Kijkduin. Over 30 years later, the lighthouse was returned to Rotterdam and placed at its original location on the Queen Emma Boulevard.

However, Kijkduin and the city had become so attached to the lighthouse that they couldn't just let it go. The original tower was handed over to Hoek van Holland, and Kijkduin made replica. The original lighthouse was flown back to Hoek van Holland by Chinook helicopter. Recently, the 'original remake' has been restored to its full glory at the renewed Kijkduin and Deltaplein!