

## *Is this what we are?*

Do you know Laura Dekker(16)? She is trying to become the youngest one who sailed around the world. Solo. Sven Kramer. Probably world's best speed skater but during the last Olympic Games in Vancouver he rounded twice in the same track. Luckily we have Nicolien Sauerbreij. Coming from a country flat as a pancake she was the one winning the gold metal downhill snowboarding. And yes yes yes: we are the base ballers of the world. We beat every big baseball national last year.

Mr. P. Balkenende lost his job last year. He wanted to continue but other politicians wanted to bail out of Afghanistan. Chief executive minister Balkenende has to apply for another job.

We were one of the two teams which played the soccer final last year.

Maybe the names and facts above aren't familiar to you. Or you don't associate them with my country. Still I'm more than sure you know my 'under the sea level' country. One name will do the trick. Or one city will pop up your imagination: Joran van der Sloot - - - Amsterdam.



Now you know what I'm talking about. But let me say this: this is not what we are.

Being Dutch means paying a lot of tax. On the other hand we get back a lot for the paid money: good unemployment benefits, free schools, good welfare and very good social- and health security. Born in the Netherlands means being born in a democracy. A steady political environment. In my opinion everyone who wants to live a good life is able to get it down here (at least: in case you want to do something for it).

Most of these things are not very interesting for foreigners. Tourists choose a destination based on different facts. Weather, high lights, costs, tourists attractions. Can you visit one of the world's wonders down there? Or maybe nature, architecture and/or history will do the trick.

It is small in size but I can assure you it is also big in many ways. Tell me: which other country covers only 0,008% of the world and still manages to rule an entire market. The flower market is ours. It is nothing secret we do it in the open: if you want to you can visit world biggest flower auction! You are invited.

Driving through the Netherlands you will soon discover we have to fight the sea. Sea barriers everywhere along the coast. As big as the Eifel town the Maasland barrier is able to float\*. It took us about ... years to protect the low lands against the sea. It is an eternal fight: we face a rising sea level and even worse: water from the other side. Floods from the big rivers are getting more than rare.

\*the floating barrier is moved in position before they sank it and the barrier can do it's protecting job.



WOII. We are still thankful every day so many soldiers fought for our freedom. Everywhere within the country reminders of the war are visible. They tell us we have to be tolerant to others.

Being small gives us also some advantages. Within a week it is possible to see all of the country and learn about our culture. After a week you can say in all honesty: I have done the one and only Dutch experience. But be aware it takes courage to drink our beer and liquor and even more: to eat our food and work through the day according to our habits. (We kiss three times to say goodbye).

Why we are, I don't know, but fact is we are the Gay capital of the world. We are even the free space of soft drugs. At least people do think so. In fact we are struggling with the free spirit of minds more than ever nowadays. Free travel of people within the European community makes it harder and harder to keep up with our ideas about handing drug related crimes. Still we think the job we do isn't any worse than in most other countries.

Do you know the 'Dutch mountains'? Want to see them? Cycling subterranean? Ever want to milk a cow? Want to know how wooden shoes are made?

Of course we will offer you some time with the common Dutch things: wooden shoes, tulips, wind mills and cheese. You probable think you can skip this part because you know it already. But please don't make that mistake: we manage to make something new out of

well-known facts about the Netherlands.



Do you know by now where we are aiming for?

**Yes:** go to the last line of this story

**No:** just continue

By now we know you are interested in the Netherlands. Or at least just curious. The first step to solve this 'problem' is to read the last part of the letter. The second step will be: surfing the web looking for the

answers you need. The third step is probably the most easy one: just visit the Netherlands. Go there and find out. See, hear, taste, smell, talk and listen. Experience the Dutch way of live. Do for one week what we do. Go home with a mind full of memories and thoughts. Nothing is mandatory, at least most things aren't. One task is: to have fun! To enjoy. Here and now. To have the best time of your life. That's what vacations time should be: quality time.

How to do this: join us at one of our tours. We want to show you: this is what we are!

ProHolland motor vacations [www.proholland.com](http://www.proholland.com)

Have a great day and talk to you soon.

Kyle Hoekstra

