

Free (or almost) family activities in Amsterdam

Amsterdam is famous for its decadence but is also relaxed and friendly, with plenty to keep children busy, for little or nothing

Rowena Carr-Allinson
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In Amstrdam kids can ride up front in a cargo-tricycle, called a bakfiets. Photograph: Ingolf Pompe/Getty Images/LOOK

Explore by bike

With parking near impossible and bike lanes aplenty, cycling is definitely the best way to get from A to B. Get a rear-fitted child seat, or seat them up front in a cargo-tricycle, called a *bakfiets*, with seats and safety belts. Plan an itinerary including the 400-year-old canals and houseboats, the flower market and the busy docks.

- *Bikes from 10€ a day, bakfiets 25€.* MacBike (+31 20 620 0985, macbike.nl/en has seven branches in Amsterdam)

Hit the library

Perfect for a rainy day, the city's Openbare Bibliotheek is the largest library in Europe, spread over seven floors in a cutting-edge building on the waterfront. An entire floor is dedicated to children, with hundreds of books, colourful contemporary oversized furniture to clamber over and regular story times (including in English). With free membership for under-19s, teens will enjoy the movies, music and free internet access on the 600-odd computers. Another must is the seventh-floor cafeteria deck for the best skyline views – and sociable pigeons!

- *Oosterdokskade 143, open daily 10am-10pm, oba.nl/allerkleinsten*

Let loose in Vondelpark



Vondelpark.

Photograph: Carve

Amsterdam's beautiful 116-acre central park is paradise for little ones. There's an outdoor theatre with free children's shows in summer, duck ponds and six playgrounds. The one near the Groot Melkhuis cafe has a dizzying array of slides, swings and rides, plus a sandpit, and a cafe for parents to indulge in tea or cake. The playground opposite the Melkhuis also has a water feature kids can paddle in on warmer days.

- *Entrance off Van Baerlestraat, Open daily 8am-5pm, amsterdam.info/parks/vondelpark.*

Commute for fun

For the best views, take the GVB commuter ferry from behind Central Station across the IJ river to Amsterdam Noord. Absolutely free, it offers plenty to see, from the digital clocks counting down to departure to the frenzy of the bikes' last-minute-dash. Toddlers

will love riding the trams, too. They're free for under-fours, and €2.80 adult fares are valid for an hour.

- *Ferry timetables and OV-chipkaart tram ticket outlets from en.gvb.nl*

Museums for minis

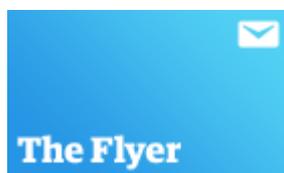


Children scaling the

giant I AMsterdam sculpture. Photograph: Graeme Robertson

The Neerlandia building on Nieuwe Herengracht is now Amsterdam's Hermitage museum for children () with exhibits and workshops for kids. And the Van Gogh Museum (under-sixes free) has a free treasure hunt (with gift on completion) and colouring pages. If you prefer to stay outdoors, Museumplein, in front of the magnificent Rijksmuseum, is an ideal spot for a picnic and a go at scaling the giant red "I AMsterdam" sign. Cool off afterwards in the Hide and Seek fountain.

- *Hermitage for Children open daily 10am-5pm, adults €15, under-18s free, hermitage.nl/en/hvk. Van Gogh museum open daily 9am-5pm (10pm Fridays), adults €15, under-16s free, vangoghmuseum.nl*



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Posted by jefffunnekotter 18 Apr 2013

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You've emerged, blinking like a newborn, from the perilously touristic Damrak street which took you from Amsterdam Central Station to Dam Square. You

Posted by jefffunnekotter 21 Mar 2013

Amsterdam: Cafe van Kerkwijk

Psst. You. Yes you standing there in Dam Square, map in hand, wondering where to eat and not eager to sit down at the dozens of lousy tourist trap spots...

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