



Go for the coast

The Netherlands have a coastline of no less than 250 kilometers, with beautiful beaches along the North Sea. For good reasons, the locations and venues situated by these beaches mention these facts as definite USPs for the organizers of business meetings. Meeting International asked the marketing and convention bureaus of The Hague, Noordwijk and the Frisian Wadden islands to name their specific advantages of meeting at the coast.

THE COAST OF THE HAGUE

The title 'best known Dutch beach' belongs to Scheveningen in The Hague, and this year it even celebrates its 200th anniversary as seaside resort with the theme Festival at Sea. Throughout the year various remarkable events are programmed, with the finish of the Volvo Ocean Race as the main event. In positioning the city, The Hague Convention Bureau makes good use of the possibilities the beach offers and its wide range of varied options for corporate meetings. "The Hague characterizes itself as City of Peace & Justice and as sea-

side city", says director Nienke van der Malen. "As much as possible we link the corporate meetings organized in The Hague and Scheveningen to one of the profiles. The big advantage of a seaside location is that you can combine the serious part of the meeting or congress with an informal, relaxing activity on the beach. Many of our partners, varying from Grand Hotel Amrâth Kurhaus and Paviljoen De Witte to the Beachstadium and the Zuiderstrand theater, make good use of the location. As an addition to business events beach activities are offered like kitesurfing, supping or riding an RIB boat. In combination with the locations and activity in the inner city, at the redeveloped Binckhorst site, on the former industrial estates and in the international zone you can offer a greatly varied and divers program. Besides all this we have a unique platform for events with the completely renovated Pier. A part of the program of the One Young World Summit will take place in Scheveningen, for instance." "Apart from that, the sea also offers quite a lot of inspiration and themes to follow up on", marketing manager Mandy Groenewegen adds. "A great deal of

ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS

The coast of Zeeland

In March, the coastal areas of Schouwen-Duiveland and Veere together with those of Goeree-Overflakkee and Westvoorne, all in the province of Zeeland, were acclaimed best international sustainable coastal destination worldwide. This puts these locations in first place of the Green Destination top 100 in the category coastal destinations. But the beaches of Cadzand, Zoutelande, Domburg, Renesse and Vlissingen are also very suitable as corporate destination. In and around these cities you can find various locations where you can hold meetings, or have team-building activities. The combination with a relaxing activity on the beach is easily made. Apart from that, Zeeland has a huge variation of regional products that are on the menus of the many restaurants. This may very well be the reason why in this province there are seven restaurants boasting one or more Michelin stars. Of course, the menu lists oosterschelde crab, oysters and glasswort.

Artists' colony

In the province of Noord-Holland you can also find several beaches. In Zandvoort aan Zee and Castricum aan Zee there are various locations at or in the vicinity of the beach. Leisure tourists contribute to the relaxed holiday atmosphere. Bergen aan Zee has a somewhat more easygoing ambiance, but with its extensive range of dunes is certainly not less attractive than other coastal areas. An extra USP is the fact that Bergen is known as an artists' colony. Early in the twentieth century artists took up residence here who would later form the 'Bergense School'. Their works can be admired in the museums in Bergen, amongst other places.

Texel and Den Helder

For years now, the seven villages on the island of Texel have been welcoming a steady flow of tourists. The Wadden island is popular thanks to the combination of dunes, white beaches, nature parks and pine forests and the peace and quiet you find there. In 2016, the Wadden island was deservedly acclaimed top destination for the summer by Lonely Planet. There are several large hotels on the island that can offer various corporate meetings as well as activities, be it in collaboration with the local activities and event agencies. But the smaller locations, the holiday parks and the beach pavilions also welcome the corporate guest. Out of the high season a ferry leaves from Den Helder to Texel every hour. A stay on Texel can also be extended with an anticipating day of fun in Den Helder. The marine city has several museums. You can also enjoy the nature or visit the old Rijkswerf (State wharf) and the marina.

De Pier, Scheveningen



innovation is taking place in, on and around the North Sea. Great examples of these innovations are the growth of seaweed at the Noordzeeboerderij, the developments in the field of sonar fishery, underwater wifi and many maritime innovations. The presence of these kinds of initiatives, knowledge institutions and the largest cyber security cluster in Europe, proves that The Hague has a great deal to offer and provides a huge number of opportunities to make every event a successful event."

SPACE TRAVEL

The cities of Noordwijk, Noordwijkerhout, Hillegom, Lisse and Teylingen

jointly labor for a distinct profile of the Duin- en Bollenstreek (Dunes and Bulbs region). In the coming years, the recently established Stichting (Foundation) Economic Board Duin en Bollenstreek will start several projects related to the themes of greenport, space, tourism and care. Noordwijk Marketing makes good use of the themes space and wellness & health for the promotion of the (congress)seaside resort in the corporate market. "Here in Noordwijk we have the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), known as the technical and administrative heart of the European Space Agency ESA", says Sandra Nonhebel,



Photography Els Bax



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product manager corporate market/MICE. "Thanks to the collaboration with the cities of Leiden, The Hague and Delft the Space Studies Program of the International Space University took place in Noordwijk. Partly because of this, Noordwijk has declared 2018 the theme year City of Space."

WELLNESS & HEALTH

Among other issues, the theme wellness & health takes up on the sportive nature of the inhabitants and the beautiful nature. The Noordwijk beach, for instance, rates 13th in the Top 21 chart of beautiful beaches worldwide compiled by National Geographic last year. Nonhebel: "Recently, Natuurpark de Hollandse Duinen was acclaimed National Park. In earlier days, in combination with the dunes and the beach Noordwijk was popular place of pilgrimage. A number of hotels take advantage of this and boast extensive wellness

facilities. In May this year, to even better promote this aspect of Noordwijk the Noordwijkse Ondernemers Vereniging (Union of Entrepreneurs) established a foundation aiming to obtain the 'Bathing-status: wholesome sea bathing location'. In the case that this aim is achieved, the city will become a 'European Health Destination'. Besides this, since 2015 we have a fixed position in the Sustainable Destinations Global Top 100 of green touristic destinations worldwide." According to Nonhebel Noordwijk is a very popular destination, thanks to the combination of interesting themes and excellent facilities. "Noordwijk's big advantage is that all facilities are within walking distance of each other and that the beach is always just around the corner. Here, you will find four large congress hotels, various smaller locations, a Michelin-star restaurant and over one hundred restaurants, bars and beachclubs.

It is no surprise then that jointly, our locations host more than 2,000 corporate meetings each year."

COMPANY FESTIVAL ON THE BEACH

Apart from the mainland the Wadden islands are also an excellent option for corporate meetings. These islands have jointly set themselves the ambition to be energy-neutral in 2020. Various sustainability projects are under way to realize this ambition. For instance test garden Lab Vlieland and Innofest are collaborating to test innovative prototypes during eight prominent Dutch festivals. Besides this, Urgenda stimulates various projects in the field of sustainable energy on the islands, including the disconnecting the houses from the natural gas mains and making them energy-neutral. "The nature plays an important role on the islands", says Yvonne Hulleman, Marketeer Meetcentives at Merck Fryslân. "Many loca-

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tions and organization agencies make use of the nature to organize inspiring gatherings at which meetings or teambuilding sessions are given an exceptional form or combined with special activities. You can organize a company festival on the beach, or drive in Jeeps to the end of the nature reserve De Boschplaat on Terschelling to go on a guided tour with the local forester and enjoy the starry sky. On the island of Ameland you can climb the lighthouse where former lighthouse-keepers tell you what their lives were like. With the Vlielandexpress you travel to the 'Sahara of the North', a vast sand plain with breathtaking views. In all these activities a lot of attention is paid to sustainability and the role man plays in this. Sports activities are also very popular, like surf kayaking, blokarting and powerkiting." Corporate groups particularly opt for meetings lasting several days. Hulleman: "The choice is almost always for a meeting, seminar or congress in combination with an incentive or teambuilding activity. You are away from the office and find yourself in a completely different environment with a lot of nature and restfulness. This feeling starts the moment you step off the ferry. By the way, you can also make the crossing in an authentic sailboat with meeting and stayover facilities or in an RIB-boat. A great deal is possible here."



De Boschplaat on Terschelling
Photography Hans Jellema

SECLUDED ENVIRONMENT

One of the organizing parties on the Frisian Wadden islands of Vlieland, Terschelling and Ameland is Island Events, part of WestCord Hotels. "Ever since our hotels have been here, we have been organizing extracurricular events. The demand for tailor-made programs has been there from the start", says Karen van der Leest, sales manager at Island Events. According to Van der Leest the main reason for choosing the Wadden islands

for events lasting several days is because you have left the mainland behind you, literally. "You find yourself in a unique part of the Netherlands, for the Wadden islands are included in Unesco's World Heritage list. The wind is blowing through your hair and you feet rest in the sand. It is a secluded environment, the participants can not take the boat home in the evening. This enhances the team spirit." The Wadden islands are not too far away from the Randstad region. "From the town



Vlieland



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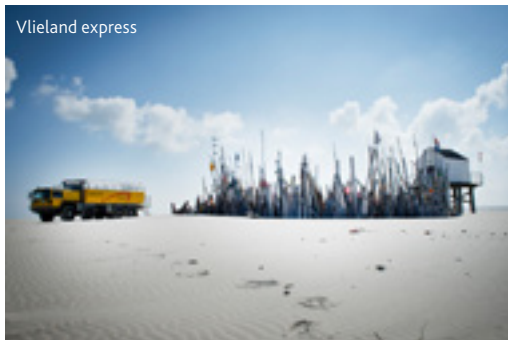
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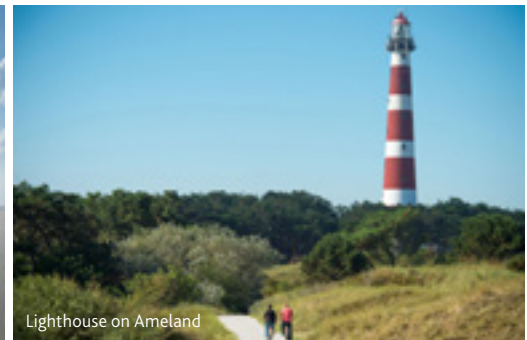
Surf karting at the beach



Photography Hans Jellema



Vlieland express



Lighthouse on Ameland

of Harlingen you can reach Amsterdam within the hour and there are no traffic jams towards the north part of Holland. Besides, the event already starts the moment you step on board. That is something that appeals to the clients. The most popular part of a program is, of course, the beach activity.”

OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Karin Lodder, owner of Bureau Basalt, also makes good use of the advantages offered by the Wadden islands. “I organize training sessions in the field of leadership and organizational development. A part of the sessions is held on Terschelling. Almost every element of the island can be used as part of the training sessions. The session already starts on the boat. You travel together, you cannot be late and you are out of your comfort zone. At the same time, the crossing works relaxing, you are

away from the hectic and immersed in nature.” For the compilation of a program with suitable locations and activities Lodder collaborates with the companies on the island. “The entire island forms one huge location, but it is advisable to collaborate with the islanders. They have first-hand knowledge of Terschelling and know exactly what is possible. Think, for instance, of a tailor-made camping at a unique location where you sleep in sleeping bags printed with the company logo. Or, guided by an expert, you can reap oysters and prepare these together, while learning more about the UNESCO World Heritage. At the Hogere Zeevaartschool (Higher Nautical College) you can even take a seat in a simulator and experience driving a big ship. The island makes a lasting impression on all participants, it does something to them and with each other. Everybody always takes a souvenir with

them. It is for good reason that each year in September, the three-day Spring tide Forum is organized. Some 500 executives from corporations, scientists, NGOs and government institutions gather to share knowledge and initiatives in the field of climate, natural resources, agriculture, nature and economy. For this, they use very special locations like a historic shed, a dip in the dunes, a church or the beach.”