

The Indispensable Guide for Expatriates: Holland Handbook

Iqbal U*

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: Iqbal U, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia, 43650 UKM, Bangi Selangor, Malaysia, Tel: 60389215555; E-mail: uqbah@siswa.ukm.edu.my

Received date: October 27, 2015, Accepted date: October 30, 2015, Published date: November 5, 2015

Copyright: © 2015 Iqbal U. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Introduction

This paper has been compiled for a very mixed group of readers who have one thing in common and that is that they want to find their way in the Netherlands; the expat employee, the expat partner, foreign entrepreneurs, and the many foreign students who come to the Netherlands to train or study. Also for those involved in expatriate affairs who want to keep abreast of the latest developments in their various areas of interest, this book has also proven to be a very welcome source of information. Last but not least, this book is a wonderful reminder, including beautiful photographs, of life in the Netherlands for those who are moving on to their next posting or back home.

Background of Book

This book is the result of the enthusiastic efforts of more than 20 authors, organizations and proofreaders of various nationalities and with very different backgrounds. Most of them are specialists who work for international companies and organizations and who have impressive amount of know-how when it comes to providing expatriates with information. The diversity of the editorial team makes reading this book a journey in itself. You will find technical information on practical subjects interspersed with personal experiences, background information and columns, all written in each contributor's personal style. With so many topics to cover, this book may at time take an unexpected turn. However, as this book is primarily meant as a reference book and not as a book to be read in one go, you can simply select the topic you want to read up on, even if you only have a few minutes to spare.

Though this book contains a wealth of information, it does not have the illusion that it is all complete. It is meant as an introduction or orientation if you will, into the various subjects that can be of interest to you. By referring you to the relevant literature, addresses and websites, this book have provided you with as many sources of additional and more-in-depth information as the publisher can think of. Undoubtedly the publisher has forgotten a few subjects, websites or books. If readers feel that the publisher has left out something that should not have been missed, the publisher would greatly appreciate it if readers let them know about this, for instance by sending an e-mail to the editor.

Art, music, architecture, folklore, foods and dress, our roles and relationships, body language, gestures, greetings and partings, all weave together to form a rich cultural diversity. Every culture is the outcome of centuries of social interaction, a shared history, religious norms and experience. However, it is only when we are among people of a different culture that we really become aware of how much we are the product of those shared elements ourselves. It is just as important to realize that the majority of the people in our host culture are also

not aware of how their shared background influences their own behavior, and of how unfamiliar and uncomfortable this behavior may be for us. When attempting to understand and survive in another culture, there are many areas where we need to pause and consider how our own culture and the host culture differ. This takes time, patient, and some sense of adventure. The first step in achieving this is realizing that neither way of living is wrong or right, it's just different.

First off, relax in the knowledge that the Netherlands has one of the highest standards of living in the world. But what kind of people are the towering Dutch? What about their government and politics, economy, religion, the climate, their customs and etiquette, particular ways of celebrating holidays and special occasions, and their oh-so-challenging language? Chapter 1 will help you navigate through some of the canals of these riddles. Going through Chapter 2 will help you prepare for your ventures, by giving an overview about things you need to know before entering the job market as well as on the reference page, the addresses, phone numbers and websites of those organizations that can help you along the way. Chapter 3 offers you practical tips and useful information about things you should consider before buying or renting a house or apartment in the Netherlands.

Chapter 4 covers the legal, tax and financial information you may need during your stay in the Netherlands. Chapter 5 goes into some of the idiosyncrasies of Dutch drivers, as well as the public transportation system, how to get a Dutch driver's license, the system of vehicle approval, whether or not you should buy a car here, the fact that you have to pay road tax, the Dutch automobile association and last but definitely not least, the Dutch airports. In Chapter 6, the publisher has included material from the book Food Shoppers' Guide to Holland. If you would like to read more on shopping and food in the Netherlands, you can find information on this book at the end of the chapter. Chapter 7 covers about day care, the Child Benefit, parental leave, birthday parties, Sinterklaas, shopping, general entertainment and a host of other subjects. The first part of Chapter 8 has been written for parents of either elementary or secondary school children. It goes into the type of international education available, followed by what can be of importance to children when they move abroad, in terms of belonging and continuity, preparing for university, fees and taxes. Then it describes the Dutch school system.

The second part of Chapter 8 has been written with university-level students in mind. It describes the types of university whether research-oriented 'traditional' universities and 'universities' of applied sciences' as well as the international programs and courses available here. Here you will also find information on qualifications for entering a university program, the credit system and the type of degree you will obtain. Next, this second part goes into student life in the Netherlands; eating out, socializing, sports, as well as finding suitable housing, a job on the side and arranging a student grant. The final part describes 'Life on a Shoestring'; how to survive on little while either studying or

otherwise living in the Netherlands on a modest income. In Chapter 9, the publisher covers on finding a family doctor, going to the hospital, having a baby and other medical issues to help familiarize you with the careful, caring, though nonetheless Dutch approach to health care. Chapter 10 will set you on your way with an up-to-date selection of events for 2012 and beyond, the top ten tourist attractions, an exclusive list of extra haunts favored by the Dutch themselves, plus a special section for antique lovers intent on pursuing the perennial trail of the Netherlands' treasures and outdoor-lovers.

This richly illustrated handbook offers more than 250 full color pages of essential information for expatriates on all aspects of living and working in the Netherlands. This and the many useful addresses, phone numbers and websites make this book an indispensable guide for the employee expat, the expat's partner who does not have a paid or volunteer job, foreign entrepreneurs, the many foreign students who have come to the Netherlands to train or study and professionals who want to keep abreast of the latest developments in expat affairs.