

GLOBAL

DESTINATIONS

A Guide to the world of Hospitality and Tourism

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Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

A unique airport hotel



With 433 rooms including suites and 1.700 square metre of meeting and event space, unique design innovative technology and abundance of natural light makes Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol stand out among the airport hotels across the globe feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**

Having heard a lot about the newly built Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (replacing the previous Hilton Schiphol Hotel, which was opened in 1972) from Charles Muller, Cluster GM, Hilton Frankfurt Airport and later from Dagmar Muhle, GM, Hilton Munich Airport and after seeing the photos, I decided to pay a visit to another Hilton airport hotel. With really a tight schedule having decided to limit my International trips to only 16 a year, I took the opportunity to visit the hotel when I was invited for IBTM, Barcelona. Rerouting my trip via Amsterdam, I co-ordinated with Jolijn Zeeuwen, GM at Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and Marije Bekker, DoDB, The Netherlands at Hilton Worldwide for the visit.

Arriving into Amsterdam Airport the hotel is located through a covered walkway – a 10 minute walk with your trolley and into the hotel in the morning my first impression on entering was the fascinating 42-meter high atrium with the natural light streaming in and the spacious lobby with plenty of leather armchairs and a couple of computers with a printer. Check in was smooth and they were kind enough to provide me with a suite on the 11th floor. The Executive lounge is located on the 10th floor so for me it was an easy access via a stairwell from the 11th floor (of course with elevator access also).

My suite with a separate living room to two HD TVs provided an excellent view of the atrium. Dejan Steiner, Interim General Manager, Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol was kind enough

Hilton's legacy as a pioneer in airport hospitality is well known when Conrad Hilton opened the first airport hotel in San Francisco in 1959, followed by another airport property 15 days later in New Orleans. With newer designs in place today the most prominent airport hotels in its kitty are mainly in Europe - Frankfurt, Munich, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Paris etc. While having dinner Dejan Steiner rightly pointed out, "Airport hotels are no more transit points but have evolved as destinations with a luxury option. One such example is the hotel in which we are having dinner."



Jolijn Zeeuwen

Marije Bekker

to put some nice goodies along with the welcome card. Felt so nice.

After freshening up I went in the lobby to catch up with Marije. I told her the hotel is really beautiful and well done up. "Yes the contemporary interior design is being appreciated globally. We have been awarded with the European Hotel Design Award in the category of 'New Build' and also have won the European Hospitality Awards with the 'Opening of the Year'. Also our unique structure has won laurels," said Marije.

Taking me on a tour of the property we started off with the lobby and atrium. The design is by acclaimed Dutch Mecanoo Architects is already and has an iconic cubic mould and diamond shaped windows. The large atrium with a 42-metre high glazed roof and an internal garden with abundance of natural light has a pleasing effect. The Axis Cocktail Bar is located right in the lobby – open from all four sides. Creating a unique atmosphere this island bar serves as a café during the day and a lively lounge in the evening.

We then proceeded to see the rooms which I found fairly large, by European standards. The Deluxe Rooms start with sizes from 300 sqft to the most luxurious Diamond Suite with three separate rooms spread over 900sqft with possibilities to connect with the adjoining room.

Marije pointed out that while the inner rooms give an excellent



view of the atrium while most outer rooms have views of the airport and the runway. Also from outside the hotel looks like a chess board – a striking black-and-white combination with diamond-shaped windows. We also stopped by at the executive lounge providing stunning airport views while one can relish complimentary refreshments.

As we crossed the eforea Spa, Marije arranged for a spa experience that evening. The eforea Spa experience was wonderful as I felt refreshed. The Spa has 4 treatment rooms, offering a variety of treatments, a relaxing steam room, sauna and whirlpool. Adjacent to the spa is the 24-hour Fitness Centre with state-of-the-art equipment. Right next door is the indoor pool and Jacuzzi.

The hotel also has huge MICE facilities. “With 17 meeting rooms and six boardrooms and a spacious, pillar less ballroom for up to 640 delegates it’s the largest meeting and conference space

in the Schiphol Airport area. We also have a Vine Room, with floor-to-ceiling wine racks, for private dinners for up to 20 guests,” said Marije.

Guests who are coming by train or airports in Europe don’t even have to come into the hotel as they can directly come via covered walkway into the conference halls that offers a meeting reception on the first floor and go back to the airport, in the evening if required. All rooms are equipped with ergonomic chairs and state-of-the-art A/V technology. Our Conference Centre also, where guests can check in for their meeting.

Dinner was arranged at the Bowery Restaurant along with Dejan Steiner. The restaurant provides international and Asian cuisine made with fresh authentic produce. It also caters to breakfast, lunch and dinner with a taste of Dutch culture. They have three live cooking stations serving up contemporary flavors, healthy grill dishes and popular Asian specialties. Over dinner Dejan Steiner highlighted the location advantage, “Its ideal for both business and leisure and those who want to stay close to the airport without the hassle of transportation as you as you land or when you want to depart. Also the convenience of trains to Amsterdam Central – just 20 minutes to the city center from the airport railway station or to Brussels by train make it an excellent option.”

Being a vegetarian the chef prepared vegetarian food for me. “We get quite a few Indians (this I did notice the next day morning when I came for breakfast) and in our buffet we have lots of veg options. Also our chefs that can prepare vegetarian food,” said Dejan Steiner.

The city of canals and museums



Rijksmuseum

When I decided to visit Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol I thought it a good opportunity to also update my readers on this wonderful city. Co-ordinating with Marloes Beekhuis from Amsterdam Marketing I worked on a small sightseeing itinerary. My first impressions on arrival at the airport was the helpful nature of the Amsterdam people and this was visible throughout my stay. Also noticed during my tours that most of them speak English.

They provided me with a voucher and an I amsterdam City Card which enables visitors to visit a wide variety of museums and other sights for free. In addition to this one can also travel for



City of Canals

free by metro, tram and bus (company GVB) using the I amsterdam City Card. Picking it up from the I amsterdam Visitor Centre at Schiphol Airport along with the press kit I was all set to tour the city of canals.

Amsterdam with 800 years of history today is a popular tourist destination more so from a heritage point of view especially with an estimated 165 canals cover 60 miles of area lined with 17th century buildings, lots of museums including Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum, the legalized Red Light District, a tulip season and an abundance of green spaces makes it a must visit. Apart from tourism many may not be aware it’s a city that

has seven of the world's 500 largest companies, including Philips and ING and is also well known for its innovation

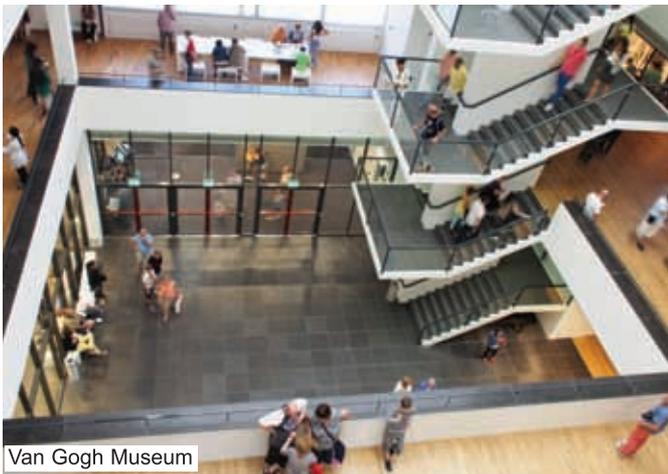
Using the public transport I could sense Amsterdam is a pedestrian-friendly city and many locals and tourists opting to ride a bicycle. Amsterdam has two UNESCO World Heritage Sites - the 17th-century canals of Amsterdam and the 19–20th century Defence Line of Amsterdam.

Canal Cruise is a must for first time visitors. Created in the 17th century to keep the sea at bay, Amsterdam's UNESCO protected canal belt is can be experienced by both day and night. Most canal cruises take around an hour and are generally luxury glass-topped canal boats. With recorded commentary in numerous languages - English, Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Italian etc. they give some interesting facts and anecdotes.

Besides providing a stunning backdrop to the city's historical centre, floating down Amsterdam's canals is one of the most memorable ways to discover the city's sights and attractions including Anne Frank House, the Skinny Bridge and the old port.

Museumplein has some of the best museums located including Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art.

The largest collection of artwork by Vincent Van Gogh in the world is housed at the **Van Gogh Museum** in Amsterdam. The museum is divided into two buildings. Spread across four floors



Van Gogh Museum

the main building holds the permanent collection as well as some temporary or rotating exhibits. For the researchers there is a library in a separate location. The museum offers extensive programs for children too. An estimated 1.5 million visitors come every year.

The Dutch National Museum, or Rijksmuesem, is a grand four floor museum. The **Rijksmuseum** was founded in The Hague in 1800 and moved to Amsterdam in 1808. It gets around 2.2 million visitors. The museum has on display 8,000 objects of art and history, from their total collection of 1 million objects from the years 1200–2000, among which are some masterpieces by Rembrandt, Frans Hals, and Johannes Vermeer. The museum also has a small Asian collection.

A visit to the house and secret annex where **Anne Frank** and her family hid for two years during the Holocaust is also a must visit. Unfortunately when I went the line was too long.

Later in the evening I visited the **Dam square**, Amsterdam's biggest square, which has been in existence since 13th century.



Red Light District

The dam was constructed to make it impossible for the Zuiderzee Sea to come swarming into the city. The Square is quite lively with various food stalls, bars and cafes, shops, street performers etc. The main attraction here is the Royal Palace, former home of the Dutch Royal family. There's also the National Memorial Statue and Madame Tussauds close by.

From here I proceeded to the famous **De Wallen or the Amsterdam Red Light District**. I had heard about window shopping as women of several nationalities parade their wares – I was able to see it for myself. Walking down the streets or basically a network of alleys containing several one-room cabins rented by prostitutes who offer their sexual services from behind a glass door. As you walk you can also see a number of sex shops, sex theatres, peep shows, a sex museum etc.

The next day morning I caught up with Machteld Ligtoet, Manager Press & Communication and Spokesperson at Amsterdam Marketing I Amsterdam Visitor Centre at Central station. Over a cup of coffee and a croissant we discussed on what I had seen and if I missed anything. She suggested that I visit two museums - Museum Van Loon and Museum of Bags and Purses.



Machteld Ligtoet

Heading her advice I proceeded to the **Museum Van Loon**. The museum located in one of the finest canal houses provides guests a glimpse of the life of the Amsterdam Van Loon family. It's a magnificent private residence built in 1672 by the architect Adriaen Dortsman. The interior of the house has remained largely intact and showcase a large collection of paintings, fine furniture, precious silvery and porcelain from different centuries is on display. Behind the house is a beautiful garden beyond which is the coach house with a collection of carriages, sledges and harnesses.

From here I proceeded to the **Museum of Bags and Purses** – one of the largest in the world. Located in a lovely canal house it displays the development of bags and purses from the Middle Ages to the present day. This unique collection has over 5,000 bags and purses and was awarded the title of one of the 10 Best Fashion Museums in the World. It showcases the iconic hand bag of Margaret Thatcher and the actual Versace bag worn by Madonna. I also had the chance of meeting the owner's daughter Sigrid Ivo who is the director of the museum.