

Dutch Art Treasures



To include The Vermeer Exhibition

Monday 15 - Friday 19 May 2023

The Golden Age in Amsterdam witnessed a period of enormous prosperity, during a time when the Dutch Empire spanned the globe. Mercantile wealth spawned the extensive construction of waterways, houses, churches and civic buildings, resulting in a harmoniously beautiful city at the heart of its canal ring. Dutch Art also flourished during this time, with painters such as Vermeer, Rembrandt, Frans Hals, van Ruisdael and Jan Steen at the peak of their prowess. The works produced by these masters are best appreciated in the cities where they worked, in the galleries which boast the finest examples of the genre, against backdrops which have changed little in the intervening years.

The highlight of our tour will be the Vermeer Exhibition, presented by the Rijksmuseum in collaboration with the Mauritshuis in The Hague. It promises to be an exceptional exhibition offering a retrospective presentation of the life and works of Johannes Vermeer, displaying almost two-thirds of the paintings that he crafted, with works being transported from participating lenders all over the world.

MONDAY 15 MAY 2023

Our coach will meet us at our local pick up point and take us to Gatwick Airport, where we will depart on an early afternoon flight to Amsterdam (*flight schedule not available as yet*). Please note that flights are not included in the tour price. Upon arrival we will be met by our local guide and coach for a transfer to central Amsterdam, where we will check in to our hotel for 4 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation. After a little time to freshen up, we will meet our local guide for an **orientation walk** of the city. Amsterdam is the greatest planned city of northern Europe and is seen as the nominal capital of the Netherlands, although the seat of government is in The Hague. The enormous prosperity of the Golden Age in Amsterdam fostered the extensive construction of waterways, houses, churches and civic buildings, resulting in a harmoniously beautiful city of concentric canals. Amsterdam has a long tradition of religious, philosophical and political tolerance and today is a modern, vibrant city with a large number of museums and galleries. A **welcome dinner** will be taken this evening in the hotel or a local restaurant.

TUESDAY 16 MAY 2023

After breakfast at the hotel we will meet our local guide and visit the **Rijksmuseum**. Visitors are able to follow a chronological sequence of 80 galleries in the Rijksmuseum, featuring 8,000 works of art and objects telling the story of the last 800 years of Dutch history. Displayed in the Gallery of Honour, the Rijksmuseum's collection of Dutch Golden Age paintings is considered to be among the finest in the world.

The highlight of our visit will be **The Vermeer Exhibition**, a collaboration between the Rijksmuseum and the Mauritshuis in The Hague, offering a retrospective presentation of the life and works of 17th century painter Johannes Vermeer focusing on his artistic choices, techniques, and exploring the motivations behind many of his compositions. There are only 35 known paintings by Vermeer, and this exhibition displays more than two-thirds of them.

The remainder of the day will be at leisure. Members may choose to visit the nearby Van Gogh Museum, which boasts a collection of 200 paintings, including the famous *Vase with Sunflowers* and *The Bedroom at Arles*, 500 drawings and many letters written to Theo van Gogh by his brother. The museum also houses works by other 19th century artists. Alternatively, members may wish to visit the Stedelijk Museum, which houses modern and contemporary art and design from the early 20th century to the current day.

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 2023

We will meet our local guide after breakfast and walk to **Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder** (Museum our Lord in the Attic), a preserved 17th canal house in the heart of the old inner city which features a catholic church in its attic. The church was constructed in the 1660s, a time when it was prohibited to celebrate the Catholic Mass. Although it was considered to be hidden, the authorities were aware of its existence but turned a blind eye. It affords a fascinating insight into the tolerance of the Dutch authorities, and the ingenuity of those determined to pursue their religious beliefs. We will continue with a **canal boat cruise** (duration approximately 1 hour). Amsterdam is located on land reclaimed from the sea, and its network of canals and waterways need to be explored to enjoy the essence of this eclectic city.

After free time for lunch in central Amsterdam, we will reconvene and travel by coach to **Haarlem**, where we will enjoy a short **walking tour** of Haarlem's historic centre. The principal town of the Counts of Holland, Haarlem was sacked by the Spanish under Frederick of Toledo in 1572, and there are reminders of this all over the town. Haarlem went on to enjoy its greatest prosperity in the 17th century, becoming a centre for the arts and home to a flourishing school of painters. The town retains an air of quiet affluence, and its prosperous past is displayed in the wealth of Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

We will continue with a visit to the **Frans Hals Museum**, which is housed in the Oudemannenhuis (almshouses) where Frans Hals is said to have spent his final years. The Oudemannenhuis is a fairly typical *hoffe* whose

style of low buildings and peaceful courtyards may be seen repeated, with slight variations, all over the town. As well as housing a large number of works by Frans Hals, the museum also has collections of 16th century art by such painters as Jan Mostaert, van Scorel, van Goyen, Brouwer and van Ostade, and a good group of paintings by the Haarlem mannerists, including Carel van Mander, leading light of the Haarlem School and teacher of Frans Hals. In addition, the museum houses a large collection of period furniture, Haarlem silver and ceramics, and an 18th century dolls house. At the end of our visit we will return to Amsterdam, where the evening will be at leisure.

THURSDAY 18 MAY 2023

Following breakfast at the hotel, we will travel to Delft where we will meet our local guide. **Delft** retains much of its historic charm and intimate character in the narrow streets and picturesque canals, small bridges and tiny courtyards and in the carefully preserved façades of the old buildings.

The morning will begin with a visit to the **Royal Delft Blue Porcelain Factory** (Koninklijke Porceleyne Fles) on the outskirts of the town, where we will enjoy a short **guided tour** with a resident guide (*subject to availability*).

This factory was founded in 1653 when Delftware was already known and prized throughout the world. Although the potteries declined during the 18th century, there was a revival of their fine craftsmanship during the late 19th century. De Porceleyne Fles was re-founded in 1876 and continues to produce superb examples of New Delft.

We will continue with our guide to central Delft for a **walking tour** of ‘**Vermeer’s Delft**’, including a visit to both the **Oude Kerk**, a wonderful Gothic Church containing the tomb of Johannes Vermeer, and the **Nieuwe Kerk**, a late Gothic cruciform basilica, which houses the ornamental tomb of Prince William of Orange.

After free time for lunch we will conclude the day with a visit to the **Vermeer Centrum**, which presents a visual voyage of discovery through the life, work and

city of Johannes Vermeer. The museum is housed on the historic site of the former Lucas Guild, where Vermeer was Dean of the painters for many years. We will return to the hotel, and after a little time to freshen up a **group dinner** will be taken in a local restaurant.

FRIDAY 19 MAY 2023

After breakfast we will check out of the hotel and travel to **The Hague** where we will meet our local specialist guide. There are numerous museums and galleries in the city, many housed in particularly fine buildings, which are of interest in themselves. During our **walking tour** we will pass the historic Lange Voorhout, which is one of the most elegant and upmarket boulevards of the city, We will also view the parliament building, the Binnenhof, which comprises a number of adjoining buildings of varying architectural styles constructed around a central cobbled courtyard. Both parliamentary chambers and several government departments are based here with the oldest building dating from the 13th century.

We will continue to the **Mauritshuis**, a charming and intimate museum housed in a fine Renaissance mansion dating from 1633. The collections include numerous treasures of the Dutch Golden Age, with a number of outstanding works by Rembrandt. Frans Hals, Jan Steen and van Goyen are all well represented, as is The Flemish School with works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens.

Following free time for lunch we will return to Amsterdam for an early evening flight home, where a coach will return us to our local pick up point.

As this tour has been planned many months in advance, the final itinerary may vary slightly from the above.

