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Save or Splurge: Amsterdam

SLEEP Assuming that [Amsterdam](#)'s rollicking hostel scene isn't for you, the best bets for cheap accommodation are mostly found outside the old city center. [Hotel Linda](#) (Stadhouderskade 130; [31-20-673-8739](#); www.hotellinda.nl) is a pleasant spot in the charming Pijp neighborhood. It's convenient (a number of tram lines are a short walk away) and most of the hotel's 40 rooms are more spacious than you'd expect. (As with most buildings on Amsterdam's canals, the stairs are comically steep.) Cost: Prices for a double room start at 150 euros on weekends, but on weekdays are as low as **75 euros**.

EAT The complicated, layered history of the [Netherlands](#)' colonial past has given birth to Amsterdam's amazing variety of cuisine, as well as every sort of hybrid. Start with lunch at [Nam Kee](#) (Zeedijk 111-113; [31-20-624-3470](#); www.namkee.net), a city icon that serves delicious Chinese fare like Peking duck with pancakes and scallions (5.35 euros) and giant steamed oysters in black bean sauce (2.50 euros each; you'll need at least two for each diner) — the latter a signature dish that inspired a Dutch novel and movie. Then continue the global feast with dinner at [Kam Yin](#) (Warmoesstraat 6; [31-20-625-3115](#)), which serves Surinamese-Chinese cuisine; the plain restaurant's dizzying menu includes everything from curries to chop suey. The waitress will tell you all the rotis are good, but the frugal choice is the chicken special (5 euros): succulent dark meat served with doughy flatbread, string beans and a mildly spicy broth. Other tasty options include the fried rice with pork belly, roast pork and chicken (7 euros) and the spicy fried noodles with pork and prawns (10 euros). Cost: About 10.35 euros for lunch, 22 euros for dinner, for a total of **32.35 euros**.

SHOP There are multiple outdoor markets every day in Amsterdam. Albert Cuypmarkt is probably the city's most famous cheap shopping option, but [Dappermarkt](#) (Dapperstraat 279; [31-20-694-7495](#); www.dappermarkt.nl), on the eastern side of the city, is bigger and more varied. Five blocks long, the market attracts all varieties of working-class shoppers, including North Africans, Turks and Southeast Asians. It seems as if anything you could possibly need in Amsterdam is sold here: [bike](#) locks, plants, clothes, shoes, cheese, fresh herbs and vegetables. Fortify yourself with a smoked herring or mackerel sandwich (2.50 euros) and pick up a colorful wool scarf (5 euros). Cost of items: **7.50 euros**.

PARTY Brown bars, cozy neighborhood watering holes, are an Amsterdam staple. The moniker comes from the color the walls take on after years of tobacco staining. [Cafe de Pels](#) (Huidenstraat 25; [31-20-622-9037](#)), in the Nine Streets area, is a brown bar that hasn't quite browned yet: it's a pleasant spot that attracts a young, intellectual crowd who can get quite boisterous in both the after-work and late-night hours. Cost of a Leffe dubbel beer (3.70 euros) and small plates of cheese and pâté (3 euros each): about **10 euros**.

The New York Times

SAVE Biking, a local way of life, is also a great — and cheap — way to see the city. **Starbikes** (De Ruyterkade 127; [31-20-620-3215](tel:31-20-620-3215); www.starbikesrental.com) is a convenient and reasonable outfitter. Located just east of the Centraal Station, Starbikes rents what Amsterdamers call “granny bikes” — two-wheelers in which you press the pedals backward to slow or stop. Generator lighting for nighttime riding and a sturdy lock are included, and the pleasant owners will happily provide suggested routes and tips. Cost for a full day, with a 7 p.m. drop-off: **7 euros**.

TOTAL COST 131.85 euros, or about **\$178** at \$1.35 to the euro.

On \$1,000 a Day

SLEEP Though it opened in 2007, the **Grand Hotel Amrâth** (Prins Hendrikkade 108; [31-20-552-0000](tel:31-20-552-0000); www.amrathamsterdam.com) has a serious history behind it. The hulking waterfront building that houses the hotel was built in the early 20th century and served for decades as the Shipping House, the home base for **Amsterdam**’s maritime activity. Indeed, though the interior has been renovated to show off a gorgeous Art Nouveau décor, one can easily imagine bureaucrats navigating the labyrinthine hallways. Deluxe rooms, many overlooking the city or the port, have high ceilings and two-tone wood walls that echo the hotel’s nautical theme. Cost: deluxe rooms start at **209 euros**.

EAT Put yourself in capable hands at two of Amsterdam’s most creative restaurants. Start with lunch at **Restaurant As** (Prinses Irenestraat 19; [31-20-644-0100](tel:31-20-644-0100); www.platform21.com), next to Beatrixpark. The set lunch (22.50 euros), served at communal tables, is likely to include fresh ingredients, particularly from the vegetable kingdom. For dinner, head to Frankendael Park, well east of the city center. In 2001, the owners of **De Kas** (Kamerlingh Onneslaan 3; [31-20-462-4562](tel:31-20-462-4562); www.restaurantdekas.nl) took over the municipal nursery, which had fallen into disrepair, and turned it into the city’s most stunning restaurant. The theme is very much put into practice: the kitchen uses herbs and vegetables grown in adjacent greenhouses. Try the chef’s table in the kitchen area, mere feet from where dishes are prepared and plated. Recently, a 10-course early-spring menu (125 euros a person, including wine pairings) included smoked halibut with celeriac ravioli and sweet-pea sprouts, and grilled veal with Jerusalem artichokes and roasted onion over creamy lentils. Cost for lunch and dinner: **147.50 euros**.

SHOP **Destination Shop** (Weteringstraat 46; [31-619-20-0480](tel:31-619-20-0480); www.destinationshop.nl), which opened in November on a lovely side street in the canal belt, is owned by Robert Risteski, a self-described “one-man show” who has a penchant for **music** from Brooklyn (Yeasayer) and fashion from **Britain** (Marjan Pejoski) and **Finland** (Daniel Palillo). The shop is tiny, but Mr. Risteski clearly puts a lot of care into his choices. A pair of silk leggings with a matching scarf in a tropical 3-D pattern (they come with a pair of 3-D glasses) by the Dutch label And Beyond will make a statement when you get home. Cost: **205 euros**.

The New York Times

PARTY On a tony stretch of Hobbemastraat, past the requisite velvet rope, is the [Mansion](#) (Hobbemastraat 2; [31-20-616-6664](tel:31-20-616-6664); www.the-mansion.nl), a three-story club and restaurant. After passing a large photo of Frank and Marilyn (partying, of course), you have a choice of two cocktail lounges: one outfitted in pink velour drapery, the other in black-painted pressed tin walls and a back-lit photograph of the Sistine Chapel ceiling above. Fridays and Saturdays see dance parties in the basement (10-euro cover charge). If dancing isn't your thing, sit back in one of the lounges and enjoy a classic Champagne cocktail (12 euros) and a plate of oysters with caviar (28 euros). Cost for both: **40 euros.**

SPLURGE Amsterdam, of course, is a city of canals — and the equivalent of a gondola ride is provided by VIP Watertaxi (Stationsplein 8; [31-20-535-6363](tel:31-20-535-6363); www.water-taxi.nl). Boats launch from Smits Koffiehuis (also host to the Amsterdam Tourism Board), just across from Centraal Station. Call ahead for reservations. Cost for a one-hour private boat ride for up to eight people: **110 euros.**

TOTAL COST 711.50 euros or **\$961.**