



FULBRIGHT NETHERLANDS

HOUSING GUIDELINE

HOW TO FIND A PLACE TO
LIVE

**Searching for a place to stay:
where to start looking for a
room or apartment in the
Netherlands**

**Moving in: landlords, contracts,
deposits, rent, utilities**

**Moving out: things to keep in
mind when you're moving out of
your room or apartment.**

Welcome to the Netherlands. You will soon live in the most densely populated country in Europe. With a little over 17 million people in a country that is about the size of Maryland, which has an estimated population of around 6 million people, you can imagine that finding a place to stay can be a real challenge. In larger cities like Amsterdam and Utrecht ‘a real challenge’ is often even an understatement: the current housing situation in the Netherlands is bad. Hopefully, this example of ‘Dutch directness’ didn’t scare you! If you carefully read this document we can reassure you that you are well on your way to finding housing in the Netherlands.

1. Searching for a place to stay
2. (Before) Moving in
3. Moving out
4. Useful sources



1. Searching for a place to stay

After a long day conducting research, teaching English, or going to lectures, it is nice to have a place to return to and call home. We have already warned you about the shortage on the Dutch housing market, so our first recommendation in order to find your own ‘Dutch home’ would be: start looking for a place at least three months in advance. It is also important to ask yourself a number of questions, such as: What is my budget? With how many people am I willing to share a house? Do I mind sharing a bathroom or kitchen? These questions will help you manage your priorities and expectations. Once you’ve thought this through, it’s useful to read the following facts about (student) housing in the Netherlands:

- ✓ **Start on time: at least three months in advance**
- ✓ **Ask yourself questions about housing**
- ✓ **Read this document**

- The Netherlands does not have a lot of on-campus accommodation. Students usually either live on their own in shared houses in cities or stay with their parents and commute to lectures a couple of times a week. It is not uncommon to pay more than €500 a month for shared housing (especially in bigger cities).
- The Netherlands is a small country, we bet you already knew this. It is important to keep in mind that houses are also often small and stairways are steep. It is not uncommon for students or young teachers and researchers to share a house. This often means that you’ll have your own bedroom, but will need to share a kitchen, living room, bathroom, and laundry machine.
- The Dutch often rent houses that are ‘unfurnished’ and this *literally* means that houses are unfurnished. Don’t expect to find floors, wall paper, light fixtures or furniture in unfurnished rooms. Some rooms are semi-furnished. They usually come with flooring, curtains and other basic appliances.
- Rent prices clearly differentiate between basic rent (‘kale huur’) and utilities, such as gas/water/light and sometimes internet. It is not uncommon to sort out utilities yourself, although this could be included to the rent in shared houses (as ‘servicekosten’).
- The Dutch distinguish between ‘rent controlled’ and ‘non-rent controlled’ housing. ‘Rent controlled’ housing is meant for people with a lower income. It usually takes a number of years on a waiting list before you can have access to rent controlled housing’, so it is unlikely that you end up in such a place. In case you do, it is important to keep in mind that your rent cannot be more than €720,42 per month.
- Landlords can ask for a deposit. The amount is often one month’s basic rent and it is only meant to repair any damage done to the room during the rental period.

After reading this, you might want to rethink the answers to the questions raised above. Now that you have thought about what it is like to live in the Netherlands, know the basics about the Dutch housing situation, and might have lowered your expectations just a little bit, it is time to share some actual resources. The best starting point is contacting your university or host school: they may be able to help you in your search for a place to live.

Perhaps the easiest way to start looking for housing is online. We all know the world wide web has brought us many things, but it also brought us housing scammers. Unfortunately, many internationals have some experience with being scammed, since they are unfamiliar with the rules and regulations of the Dutch housing system. Although this guideline offers you a list of ‘reliable’ websites, lots of tips and tricks on how to avoid being scammed and much information on your rights as a tenant, it is extremely important to use common sense! In most cases: too good to be true, in fact means that it is too good to be true.

Of course, you can start looking for rooms through social media; there are many people who find rooms through Facebook, and there are many groups that specifically deal with housing (try: “zoekt kamer in *city*”). The good thing about Facebook is that you can directly contact people, but unfortunately scammers also use social media so keep this in mind.

Some housing websites charge a small fee for letting you access their website and allowing you to write an email to the landlord or housing agencies. Often you can create a profile for free, but if you actually want to make use of it, a small fee can be mandatory. It is also possible to directly contact a real estate agent, but this is really expensive. Only consider this if you have tried the suggestions below.

The following list consists of websites that are recommended by the Landelijke Studentenvakbond (LSVb), the advocacy organization for all students in the Netherlands. Please be aware of the fact that scammers might also be active on these websites, so again the best way to go about it on these websites is with common sense!

- ✓ **Check one of the websites mentioned in this document**
- ✓ **Use common sense at all times!**

Kamernet (ENG)

This website offers student housing all over the Netherlands. On this website, you can enter certain criteria and find a suitable room. Kamernet is well-known amongst Dutch and international students and therefore many people use it in their search. This also means that, if you directly contact a landlord or other tenant, it is very likely that many other people did the same thing. It helps to update your personal profile, and invest in a Premium account. Of course, you should not forget to cancel your subscription if you choose to use one.

Esteon (ENG)

On this website, you can easily fill out a digital form which enables you to specify all your wishes for your future room. You’ll receive a notification whenever there is a room that fits into your budget and matches with your other wishes. Creating a profile is free, but if you want to receive notifications you have to activate your account. There are a number of subscriptions you can choose.

Funda (ENG)

Dutch people use this website all the time if they want to buy or rent a house. There is a nice section on renting houses, but usually these rentals are quite expensive. Sometimes, if you’re lucky, a student room will pop up. If you consider renting a more expensive apartment and share it with a friend, partner or other grantee, Funda can be a wonderful source. Sharing flats and apartments is allowed in the Netherlands, although sometimes it is only possible for one person to become the ‘head tenant’. This tenant will transfer rent and costs for utilities to the landlord, but of course you can share costs amongst yourselves. Funda is free of charge.

Rooming.nl

On this website you can find rooms in Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam and Utrecht. The website offers many student rooms, but again you have to sign up and pay a fee if you want to make use of its services. According to the LSVb, many students are positive about this website, but they have also heard some negative stories. Again, this is a matter of using common sense.

Marktplaats.nl

Marktplaats is another one of the Netherlands' most popular websites and quite similar to Ebay. On Marktplaats you can basically find everything you like, and this also includes rooms or apartments. You might want to keep this website in mind if you need to furnish your house, because you can easily buy second-hand furniture for very low prices. Advertising on Marktplaats is free of costs, this means that anyone can upload rooms or apartments, so beware of scams.

Houselink (ENG)

This website does not necessarily have the highest number of rooms and apartments available, but it might be an ideal option if you're looking for an apartment to share with other people. This website also asks you to pay a small fee.

Unfortunately, there are many websites out there that are not reliable. The LSVb came up with a list of websites that you should either ignore or be extremely careful with: Directwonen.nl, and Housinganywhere.com. These websites offer housing to students at very high prices or charge a lot of extra (and sometimes even illegal) fees.



“Hello I’m King Willem-Alexander, and I would love to share some helpful Dutch words and phrases that might come in handy when you’re looking for your own Dutch palace.”

Huur – rent

Kale huur – basic rent (without utilities)

Servicekosten – utilities (often gas/water/light)

Gemeubileerd/stoffeerd – furnished/semi-furnished

Borg – deposit

Huisgenoten – roommates

2. (Before) Moving in

You've probably spent hours online searching for your perfect room in the Netherlands, and we truly wish that, after reading this document, you have a good sense of what your options are. Imagine this: you've found something you really like! Good for you! The next step, of course, is contacting your landlord or fellow tenants, presumably in response to an advertisement on one of the websites mentioned above. Please keep in mind that, in most cases, many people do the exact same thing. It is, therefore, important to recognize which advertisements are trustworthy and know how to stand out from the large crowd.

- ✓ **Check whether advertisements are trustworthy**
- ✓ **Stand out from the large crowd: present yourself as ideal candidate**
- ✓

“Excellent room for rent, good value of money!”

The Dutch are always on the search to get a great deal for their money, and this is also reflected in the way they advertise housing. You'll often come across the sentence 'perfecte locatie en goede prijs/kwaliteitverhouding', which means something like 'great location, good value of money'. This, however, is not always the case. Fortunately, there are great websites you can check out yourself to see what average prices in certain parts of the Netherlands are. Depending on what you are used to, it might strike you that student housing in the Netherlands can be quite small. In Amsterdam or Utrecht, for example, it is not uncommon to pay between €400-€600 for a 14m² room in a shared house. In the Netherlands, there's a strict definition for self-contained accommodation: the accommodation has its own entrance and does not have a shared toilet, kitchen or bathroom. If this type of accommodation is what you need, please expect to pay around €750 (excl. utilities) per month. There are, of course, cheaper housing options on the market, but it is very likely that advertisements for rooms or apartments within this price range are trustworthy.

Average rent per city

	2018	2017
Nederland	403	385
Amsterdam	571	545
Rotterdam	458	426
Haarlem	455	435
Den Haag	436	420
Utrecht	431	408
Alkmaar	425	408
Amersfoort	423	403
Breda	375	366
Nijmegen	373	361
Delft	369	353
Den Bosch	368	365
Leiden	367	354
Zwolle	367	365
Arnhem	362	361
Eindhoven	358	340
Groningen	352	344
Maastricht	351	360
Deventer	350	345
Ede	339	323
Leeuwarden	336	341
Tilburg	321	308
Wageningen	313	311
Enschede	302	291



Source: <https://blog.kamernet.nl/blog/stijgende-huurprijzen-studentenkamers/>

In 2018, new data were published on the costs of student housing in the Netherlands. The above table, which comes from the website Kamernet.nl, clearly illustrates that student housing in the Netherlands is expensive. The table, moreover, also shows that within this small country, prices really vary per city.

Now that you know everything about reasonable prices, it is a good time to dive into the actual content of advertisements. The following information is far from complete, but after reading this you should be able to recognize the most common traps. Please feel free to contact us in case you come across something you don't understand or find suspicious.

Tenants

Please check out who's advertising the room or apartment. This is an important indicator whether or not the room is actually available. There are several ways to check this, which will be explained later in this section. As mentioned earlier, it is not uncommon for students to upload advertisements online. Often, on Kamernet for example, students elaborately write about what their future roommate should be like. If they are writing that a person should be 'netjes' or 'opgeruimd' this usually means that they have clear rules about cleaning. If the advertisement mentions something about 'stappen' or 'samen eten' it is very likely that your roommates expect you to hang out with them on a regular basis. There's another lovely phenomenon that you should learn about: hospiteren. **Hospiteren** means that you go to your 'future house' and 'present' yourself to your roommates. Sometimes other tenants ask you to come over for a short individual interview, but it is also possible that you are part of a large group. At the end of what the Dutch call a 'hospiteer' evening, the other tenants will let you know if they want you to be their future roommate.

Although tenants generally pick the new roommate, it is extremely important to check out how the relationship with the landlord is. You can simply ask this when you're invited to the 'hospiteer' evening. Often, tenants will tell you that they have never heard from their landlords. This, however, is not necessarily a bad thing because it means that he or she won't

bother you. On the other hand, we strongly recommend using your eyes and check the condition of the house. If everything is broken and old and the landlord is never present it probably also means that he or she won't be very helpful if you need him or her. Again, you can ask your future roommates about this, when you speak to them.

Landlords

It's also possible that, whenever you have found your dream room or apartment, you have to directly contact the landlord. Sometimes landlords make use of a third party, the so-called 'aanhuurmakelaar', but in the end the landlords are the ones you're paying rent to. It is important to know that the landlord is obliged to take care of the following things: ensure the availability of the room or apartment within the agreed rental period, take care of maintenance and major repairs within a reasonable time frame, solve problems that directly affect the tenant (such as fixing the internet or electricity), give a valid reason to cancel the rental contract.

There are some things you need to know before you contact the landlord of your future room or apartment:

- **Never do business with landlords who refuse to give personal details.** If he or she only offers a phone number, facebook page or email address, this could be a scam. Always ask for more information, such as an ID, a personal or business address. **Never pay a fee for a request for more information.** It is best to ask if the landlord can show you the room, this can either be in real life or through skype. If the landlord does not live in the Netherlands, you should be extra cautious as well.
- **Be careful with renting rooms or apartments you have never seen before.** This can be quite a challenge if you want to start looking for a place while still in the US, but there are ways to check if the offer is real. If in doubt about the pictures, for example, because they look too good to be true: use google! There's a simple way to find out if your future room also exists elsewhere: go to **Google images**, click on the 'search by image', insert the URL of the website on which you found the pictures and press enter. Let's be honest: if the same pictures appear on a Brazilian website, it is likely, if not certain, that your landlord is trying to fool you. **Kadaster**, moreover, is a perfect way to find out whether the contact information of the landlord matches with the property. Kadaster collects data on property rights involved. For €2,60 file a request to get 'eigendomsinformatie', which means information about the owner of the property.
- **Don't transfer money (rent, deposit etc.) until you've signed an official contract and watch out with payments in cash.** We understand that, after you've found what seems to be your dream room or apartment, you immediately want to make sure that everything is set. However, we strongly recommend you not to feel pressured. Scammers like to put you under a lot of pressure; they'll tell you there are many other suitable candidates, or they that they need to leave the Netherlands for some dubious reason. Be aware of the fact that asking for **sleutelgeld**, key money, is illegal in the Netherlands. In most cases, the same is true for high **administration fees** or **agency fees**
- **Deposits are legal.** Deposits are meant to cover the costs of repairs and other damages done to the apartment while you were a tenant. They are meant for specialist maintenance and costly repairs. Please keep in mind that tenants are responsible for taking care of inexpensive maintenance, like replacing a broken doorknob. The amount of a deposit is usually one-month's 'kale huur', rent without utilities.
- **You should be able to register with the town council.** In the Netherlands, registering with the town council is required for each citizen. If you refuse to do so, this can have serious (financial) consequences. Usually registering at the town council can easily be done online. There are, however, still some town and villages where actually showing up in person at a town hall is still required. Many landlords ignore this rule. Always check if it's possible to register. If this is not the case, then don't rent the room or apartment; it might be an illegal sublet, or the landlord is trying to avoid paying taxes.

Contract: the Tenancy Agreement

Signing the actual contract is probably the final step in the long journey of finding a place to live. Congratulations! The following things should be included in the contract for it to be legally binding:

- The amount of rent
- Whether tenancy is for a fixed or an indefinite period
- Clear distinction between 'kale huur' and 'service kosten'
- The date on which the rent will be increased each year.
- Maintenance agreements
- House rules
- The tenant's and the landlord's signature.

- ✓ **Sign your contract and check if it's legal**
- ✓ **Don't forget to register at the town council**
- ✓ **Start making the place your own!**

Be aware of the fact that both oral and written contracts are binding, but it is best to have everything in writing. If this is not possible: always bring your phone with you to record the actual agreements.

Questions, Housing Issues or Complaints

Whenever you feel the need to ask questions about your room or apartment or whenever you have a serious complaint about your landlord, there are a number of things you could do. First, check whether your municipality has an organization that can help you solve the problem. Luckily, for most municipalities in the bigger cities such organizations exist. They usually offer free advice or ask you to pay a small fee. Please note that often advice is free, but additional costs are being charged if you decide to start an actual process. Moreover, you can always reach out to the LSVB's **Housing Hotline**. In case of an emergency, don't hesitate to call 112. When you decide to go online you might stumble upon the website of the Rent Tribunal. Unfortunately, this organization only handles disputes about housing for people who live in rent controlled housing (see page 2).

3. Moving Out

You might not want to think about moving out just yet, but at one point you have to start planning for this sad moment. Tenants are obliged to give written notice, and the legal notice period can usually be found in your contract. If the information is not there, make sure that you contact your landlord in time; you don't want to pay rent for a room or apartment you don't live in anymore. When you hand in the keys, the landlord generally checks the state of your room or apartment. If everything is right, you will receive the deposit you transferred to your landlord when you moved in. Please discuss with your landlord when you can expect to get your money back. Whenever your landlord tells you that there are maintenance problems, the landlord could deduct the costs from your deposit. Always make sure that the costs are for maintenance problems only, because your landlord is not allowed to charge you for costs that require specialist skills. If the landlord claims that the room or apartment is not in the right condition, he or she always has to prove why this is the case.

Since most Dutch rooms and apartments are unfurnished when you enter them, you are expected to leave them in the same state. Sometimes this means that you have to get rid of all the wall paper or that pretty color on the wall. In most cases you cannot leave any furniture, but we can guarantee that your local **Kringloop** store is happy to resell your stuff to other people.

4. Useful Sources

For more information, or easy access to the websites mentioned in this document, please click on the following links:

General Information

- Government of the Netherlands
- Kadaster
- LSVb Dutch Student Union
- Real about Rent

Finding Housing

- Esteon
- Funda
- Houselink
- Kamernet
- Marktplaats
- Rooming.nl

Renting Agencies

- Amsterdam
- Den Haag
- Maastricht
- Nijmegen
- Rotterdam
- Utrecht

We are curious to find out how you've found your room or apartment. It would be great if you could let us know!