

Vlissingen by foot – ca. 1,5 uur
A walk along the history of Vlissingen



Start at the Bellamypark in Vlissingen.

Here you will find the green resting point of the park with the splashing fountain of Betje Wolffplein and Aafje Deken, two writers from Vlissingen. At the corner you can already see on the outside which residents this building houses. Reptiles and amphibians spiders and crocodiles, iguanas and turtles. Here is a reptile zoo that has the largest collection in Europe!

Cross the Bellamypark towards the reptile zoo.

In the road surface right in front of the reptile zoo is a stone with the year 1572. The stone commemorates the execution of the Spanish nobleman, Don Pachieco. He was hanged here on April 6, 1572, when the Vlissingers freed themselves from the Spaniards.

Follow Bellamypark and take the first right into Hellebardierstraat.

This street used to house the city guards. Some of the city guards were armed with a halberd; a long spear with an axe at the end. This explains the name of the street. At number 2 the Municipal Archives are located. The cultural heritage of the city is stored here. The Municipal Archives is freely accessible to the public Monday through Thursday from 09:00 – 16:30. Before the Municipal Archives moved in, it housed the poorhouse, guesthouse and orphanage since 1823. Before that is housed the Groot Heere logement. It served as a kind of luxury hotel for the guests of the Admiralty and for passengers who sailed via Vlissingen on a ship of the V.O.C. and the W.I.C.

Walk back to Bellamypark and turn right. Follow the street straight ahead (Beursstraatje).

Via Beursstraatje you arrive at the Beursgebouw (at the end of Beursstraatje on your left). Vlissingen developed in the 17th century as a transshipment place for grain and fish. In the city, grain from the countries around the Baltic Sea was sold to traders from France and Southern Europe. The grain often remained in the ship, but its sale took place in an exchange. In 1635 a new exchange building was constructed. Originally the lower floor was completely open. Here the traders met. The second floor housed the offices. Soon after its construction the grain trade moved to Amsterdam and the building was used to trade in other products. Today a restaurant is located in the exchange building. Straight ahead you can see the pilot boats (left of the entrance to the boulevard).

Cross the street and walk to the right of the quay wall. Straight ahead to the gate. You walk through the corridor under the Emperor's stronghold.

You arrive on the slope in front of the boulevard. Here lies the old pilot pier. It looks like you can touch the fitting ships. But beware: at high tide there is a chance of wet feet!

Walk back through the gate and go up the stairs on your left at the end.

If you walk up the steps to the Boulevard, you will immediately meet Michiel Adriaanszoon de Ruyter. The naval hero was born in Vlissingen in 1607. And it was he who, according to the well-known song, "turned the wheel in a blue checkered smock" and "whose boyhood heart suffered unbearable grief" because he wanted to sail so badly. This happened, he won many naval battles and finally died in 1676 as

admiral. In the early 1600s Zeeland was part of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and had been at war with Spain for almost forty years. At that time the Republic was the one of the most powerful countries in Western Europe, a time when a city like Vlissingen was flourishing. High guests such as the winter king were received by the prince of Orange in this city on the Scheldt in 1613. Not only did this impress the inhabitants, this event was also depicted extensively by painters of the time. Vlissingen developed into a city of allure. Through wars and other calamities part of this glory disappeared. However, much of it can still be found in the city. During this walk you will get to know it.

On the plateau, you walk along the little wall.

On the little wall you will see a tile that tells you exactly in which direction you should look, for (and how far it is to) great and important places in Europe. You imagine yourself in the center of the world! Perhaps at this very moment a pilot boat is sailing out to bring the pilot on board one of the more than 50,000 ships that pass here each year.

You continue walking along the Boulevard.

You first encounter Frans Naerebout. Frans Naerebout grew up in a poor fisherman's family and farmed as a Fisherman and Pilot off the coast of Zeeland. He became known for a spectacular act of heroism. During a storm a ship ran aground on a sandbank. Rescue vessels refused to come out because of the weather conditions. Frans Naerebout and his brother and six others did not change their minds. They tried twice to save the person on board, at the risk of their own lives. The second attempt succeeded in getting seventeen of those on board safely to shore. Frans Naerebout thus laid the foundations for the present-day Pilotage. On the boulevard we come across the Bombproof or Prison Tower, part of the old Vlissingen defence works from the 15th century. In the Middle Ages there were severe punishments, even for minor offenses. In addition to prisons on land, every ship had a prison on board. In Vlissingen, a remnant of the city gate was used as a city prison. The Prison Tower. This is actually a remnant of the western city gate, dating from the late 15th century. Due to city expansion, the Prison Tower came within the city walls and was used as a prison. During the French era, the gate and the other tower section were demolished to make way for a barracks. The Gevangentoren also served as a prison for a long time thereafter, this time for military personnel. In 1894, the tower was converted into a tavern and a room in which the antiquities collection of the city of Vlissingen was exhibited. During the Second World War, the building was severely damaged. It was not until 1963 that restoration began. Since then, a restaurant has been located in the Gevangentoren.

Walk further after the Gevangentoren. Take the first right; Coosje Buskenstraat.

From this spot you have a magnificent view over the rest of the Vlissingse boulevard with at the end the beautiful beaches and ideal swimming possibilities. On the nolledijk (the Vlissing "pier" at the end of the boulevard) stands the wind organ. On a windy day you should definitely go and listen to this special musical performance.

Walk down the Coosje Buskenstraat.

At the intersection you will see Bioscoop Cine City on your left. With seven screens and an up-to-date film program, it offers plenty of choice for anyone who wants to grab a movie.

Walk straight ahead, you will arrive at the Scheldeplein. Turn right into Walstraatpromenade.

Here you will find the shopping center of Vlissingen.

Turn onto Kolvenier Street (2nd right) towards Zeemanserve. On the left in front of you you can see an "establishment". Walk around it on the right.

Here is the Cornelia Quackhofje. Through the staircase on the right you can enter the courtyard to taste the atmosphere of yesteryear while reading how you should behave as a resident.

The Cornelia Quackhofje or sailors' reserve was founded in 1643 by Cornelia Quack with 23 houses for the accommodation of needy widows and orphans of sailors and fishermen. Sailing at sea was not without risk. It regularly happened that the seafarer did not return due to illness or an accident. Often a spouse (with children) was left behind unattended. Widows had no choice but to find another spouse. Michiel de Ruyter, for example, even married three times. His third wife, Anna van Gelder, was the widow of a captain, not impecunious and a good match for Michiel de Ruyter. However, there were many widows who were less fortunate. They could go to this hofje. It was built on a dump in the middle of the city, where no one else wanted to live. The soil consisted of zelke, a waste product from the extraction of salt, on which nothing grew. It was impossible to build a drinking well, because the water was also salty. The management of the hofje passed in 1650 to the deacons of the Reformed congregation and in 1786 to the fund of the Seamen's and Fishermen's Exchange. The hofje still exudes the tranquility of the 17th century and you may go inside. In the 1980s, the 23 cottages were converted into 13 homes. Due mainly to war damage during World War II, this old hofje now stands amidst new construction.

Leave this nostalgic place. With your back to the hofje, walk left towards the shopping street (lange zelke). In the shopping street turn right and at the intersection left again. At the first intersection turn left again (marktstraat). At the square keep to the right (oude markt).

Here is the Old Market with the impressive St. Jacob church from 1328. In 1911 the church and tower were largely destroyed by fire, but immediately rebuilt. In July and August you can climb the tower via the stairs. A myth has it that Michiel de Ruyter climbed the St. Jacob tower, saw the sea and then decided to go sailing. Michiel told this story to his children, who in turn told it to Cornelis Gerard Brandt. He incorporated this story into the first book written about Michiel de Ruyter. For a long time it was assumed that this story should be seen as symbolic and illustrates how brave Michiel was as a small child. Archive research has shown that in 1616-1617 the Reformed Church was really under construction. Nineteen-year-old Michiel could have climbed the tower from the outside via the scaffolding.

To the left of the church you enter the covered St. Jacobs passage. Through this passage, with its surprising stores, you return to the Walstraat. Turn right and walk all the way down this street.

Via the Zeilmarkt, directly opposite us, you arrive at the Concertgebouw, also called the Arsenal Theatre. This building can accommodate over 275 visitors and all kinds of performances and was restored to its former glory in 1993.

Next to the Concertgebouw the Family Amusement Pavilion Carrousel already sparkles and shines at you. You'll feel as if you're at the carnival: antique carousel horses, a carnival organ from 1990 and, last but not least, a miniature carnival. Pinball machines, games of chance, snooker and pool tables, video games and antique jukeboxes complete the entertainment. And then we stand in front of the Maritime Attraction Center "the Arsenal". Here you will be short of eyes and ears. The sea forms the basis for a large number of fun and educational : sharks, rays, a fleet show, a sea voyage and the breathtaking view from the tower. They are well worth your visit! In the dike behind it, a dike theater has been built. In the summer months this has created a beautiful open-air stage with a grandstand, where many a wonderful evening has been experienced.

Walk left past the Arsenal Theater and enter the Baljuwstraat. At the end of the street go onto the Oranjedijk (left).

As you clamber up this, a grand view of the Westerschelde and its busy shipping awaits you. On the left you will see the Oranjemolen, a round stone windmill from around 1650. There were once two wooden windmills here. In 1645, during a storm, both mills were blown off the wall. They ended up on the roofs of the houses behind the city wall. In 1650 a stone mill was built. Behind the mill used to be the Zeeland palace of the princes of Orange, built around 1580. Behind this palace there was a luxurious garden, which was situated behind the Oranjabolwerk. The mill was rebuilt on

the Oranjebolwerk. Hence the name Orange mill. On the sea side the mill was plastered to ensure that rain and seawater did not penetrate the stones.

The plastering can still be seen today.

Walk right, through the locks. Walk down. You come out at the Nieuwendijk.

You see the parking lot and behind it the Bellamypark. Where the parking lot is now, there used to be the main port of Vlissingen; the Koopmanshoeven. This port was dug in 1304 and around it Vlissingen was founded. The soil of the harbor was thrown on the shore as a dike. This can still be seen in the side streets; they are still sloping. In the picture it is a beautiful sight, but in the time of Michiel de Ruyter the harbor was dry twice a day. Ships then sank into the mud. That made loading and unloading very difficult. In addition, all the waste was simply thrown into the harbor. At low tide it stank terribly. The city government had this harbor dredged very regularly, but it was carrying the water to the sea. In 1906, during a storm surge, Vlissingen was flooded by this harbor. Besides the stench, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was decided in 1910 to fill up the harbor. The ships disappeared from the cityscape and moved to a new port, outside the old town, near the current station.

Turn right onto the Nieuwendijk.

You will see the Zeeuws Maritiem MuZEEum on the left. Vlissingen became rich through merchants at sea, the shipowners. They had ships built with which Vlissingen captains sailed the world's seas. Their mission was to return with a rich cargo. One of the most important shipowner families of the 17th century was the Lampsins family. It owed its wealth to captains of ships. The story goes that the family sometimes had more than thirty ships sailing. On one of them, Michiel de Ruyter was captain. As a young boy he began his career as an assistant at a rope-making workshop owned by this family. From 1631 to 1640 he sailed with ships owned by Cornelis Lampsins from Dublin to South America and from Jan Mayen to the Caribbean islands.

Cornelis Lampsins had the Lampsinshuis (Nieuwendijk 11) built in 1641. This is one of the buildings in which the MuZEEum is located. Until that time the city mainly had stepped gables built with bricks (like the one on the right of the Lampsinshuis). Because of the different design. Moreover, it was built of natural stone. Captains came into contact with other cultures and thus interests through sheet travel. It was Constantine Huygens who sparked the interest in ancient Roman and Greek forms. The ultimate example is the Paleis op de dam in Amsterdam and the Mauritshuis in The Hague. Cornelis Lampsins became enthusiastic and had the Lampsinshuis built. The interior of the Lampsin House is built of oak, originating in Prussia. The facade was also made in Prussia. As individual pieces it was shipped here and put together. In short: an expensive building.

In the Zeeuws maritiem muZEEum you will find, among other things, portraits of Cornelis Lampsins. But also a large number of objects that tell something about the life of Michiel de Ruyter. Of course Vlissingen's history and prosperity is not missing either! Taking a look is certainly worthwhile.

Facing the MuZEEum: go back and turn left, then right into Sarazijnstraat.

The first intersection is Nieuwstraat. Here you will find the residence of Michiel de Ruyter, called "de Gecroonde Liefde" (the crowned love). He did not live there for long. In 1649 he bought this house with the capital he had earned in the service of the Zeeland Admiralty. He married his third wife Anna van Gelder, to retire in peace.

When the First Naval War broke out in 1652, Michiel was asked to join. He left for Amsterdam in 1655 and did not return to Flushing as a resident. He did have long hopes of returning, as he did not sell the house until 1666.

On Sarazijnstraat take the first left into Nieustraat. You now come to the Bellamypelein again. This is the end of this city walk.