

City Walk 'Meeting Mariken' **A tour of Nijmegen's past and present**

Start: Arsenaal [s]

Duration: approx. 1 hour

The tour starts at the place where once the Mariënborg nuns lived in one of Nijmegen's medieval monasteries. The chapel is the only remaining part of this convent. It is one of the few 'double churches': it has an upper storey where the nuns used to attend services, separated from the lay people on the ground floor. The Catholic Church lost power in Nijmegen when Prince Maurits conquered the city and defeated the Spaniards in 1591. As a result the convent was literally doomed to die out: the nuns could stay, but they were no longer allowed to practice their faith or take on novices. Over the years, the convent has been used for various purposes including as a barracks, a peat barn and the city's printing office. The convent buildings became dilapidated and were – with the exception of the chapel – demolished around 1820 to make way for the Arsenal, where the arms of the fortified city of Nijmegen were stored.

Here we turn right and walk along LUX [1] to the crossroads. This spot gives a good impression of the expansion after 1874 as well as of the reconstruction after the bombardment in 1944. It is not entirely a coincidence that so many banks are situated here. This part of the city was destined to become the city's new financial centre after the war. Behind you on your right you will find Tweede Walstraat. The name of this street refers to the place where the walls enclosed the city. The furniture shop on the corner of Tweede Walstraat is part of a large 19th century building (with Jugendstil features) that was built after the demolition of the city walls. In front of you, on the corner to your left, you will see a building with glazed pillars and wrought-iron railings. This is the former Rotterdamse Bank [2]. It was designed by J.G. Deur around 1930, in a period in which his works were to some extent influenced by the Amsterdam School. In the recent past, the former vault was used as a rehearsal studio by rockbands.

Across the street to the building on your left; the building on the corner is the original Agentschap van de Nederlandsche Bank [3] (branch of the Netherlands Bank), the first post-war bank building. It looks solid and impregnable as may be expected from a building of the Netherlands Bank. On the other hand, it also has the openness of a modern office building. The metal sculpture above the entrance depicts the circulation of money around the globe.

Turn right, past the former Rotterdam Bank and across the road, leaving Klein Mariënborg behind you. In the middle of the triangular square stands the Wilhelmina tree, a linden tree that is over a hundred years old and was planted on the occasion of Queen Wilhelmina's coronation (1898). Enter Gerard Noodtstraat to the right of the shop. At number 135 on your right, you will see a decorative sign, a well-preserved example of advertising by Jansen-Ederveen, a car dealer.

The Nature Museum is located at number 121 in a former synagogue [4] that was opened in 1913 as a substitute for its smaller predecessor in Nonnenstraat. A dome-shaped tower crowns this characteristic building designed by Oscar Leeuw.

At the end of the street, the rampart wall comes into sight. As a result of the invention of gunpowder, ramparts lost part of their protective quality. They were therefore altered around the turn of the fifteenth century. Most of the wall-walk with its arches and merlons was broken down and a heavy earthen wall was laid against the old shield wall on the city side. This is still visible in the remaining part of the wall. Halfway along the rampart wall in Hunner Park, you will find the Keupers Tower [5].

The stairway, which can be seen through the opening in the wall, leads to the wall-walk.

Turn left into St. Jorisstraat. Cross the square keeping the Valkhof Museum on your right and walk towards the bridge across the Voerweg. The bridge connects the mounds of the Valkhof and Kelfkensbos. Originally, these formed a single hillock. Probably around the beginning of the fifteenth century, a road was constructed right through its heart. This road is now called the Voerweg. At the other side of the bridge lies Valkhof Park where, until 1796, the castle dominated the view on Nijmegen. The ornamental wrought-iron gate € at the beginning of the bridge was erected in gratitude to the committee in charge of the city's expansion following the demolition of the walls around 1880.

Behind the museum, to the right, stands the Belvedere [6], a fifteenth-century wall tower.

Continue towards Hoogstraat via St. Jorisstraat. The Burchtpoort (castle gate), one of the oldest city gates, once stood on the corner of Burchtstraat and Mariëburgsestraat. After the new and wider walls were erected in around 1500, this became an inner gate which survived until it was demolished around 1835 to make room for a theatre, which was in turn torn down in 1934. The present-day shopping/apartment complex was built after the war.

The railway monument † in the shape of an angel at the entrance to Valkhof Park was erected in commemoration of the first railway line built in 1865, which was a private enterprise and connected Nijmegen with Cleves in Germany. The zinc angel personifies victory. On the pedestal you can read the words 'Eendracht maakt macht' (unity is strength). It was not until 1879 that Nijmegen managed to get connected to the national railway network with links to Arnhem, Venlo and Den Bosch respectively. The building of these railway lines was funded by the Dutch government.

Turn right towards the river Waal and go down the Veerpoorttrappen (ferry gate stairs).

Before these stairs were built, there was a street that the people called 'het stikste' (the steepest street in town). In winter, when there was snow, children used to come here to sleigh downhill.

Below, on the Waalkade, you will find museum The Stratemakerstoren [7] €, a unique fortress tower, and you cannot overlook the road bridge across the Waal built in 1936. As early as 1905, some citizens of Nijmegen began to consider the possibility of a permanent cross-river connection. However, it would take more than thirty years before the bridge was actually built. The greatest opposition came from the people living in the lower town. Quite understandably, because, thanks to the ferry connection, the lower town was the economic centre of Nijmegen. They feared that the upper town would become the new economic centre once the permanent connection was built. And that is exactly what happened.

Behind the Casino, to the left, you will find the 'Groene Balkon' (green balcony), a huge retaining wall from 1953, which changed the original slope considerably. As a result, part of the lower town became upper town with more well to do houses 'where you did not see washing hung up to dry'.

Walk down the back of the Casino through Vleeshouwerstraat and then turn right into Steenstraat †. At number 19, what seems to be a cellar is actually the Lossertpoort, originally a medieval city gate. In the old days, the Waalkade used to be at a much lower level. To protect the citizens against high water, the Waalkade was gradually raised.

To the left, near Mussengas, is a mosaic € depicting Mother Mary and child, and St Olaf, the patron saint of the Skippers' Guild in Nijmegen.

Continue down Steenstraat. During the reconstruction of the lower part of town, the authentic memorial tablets were saved. Here and there they have been incorporated into the new façades as on the corner of Steenstraat and Grotestraat: the family arms of Arnold Kelfken € from 1729.

When you get to the Waalkade, turn left and walk towards the Lage Markt. High water and floating ice were and still are a serious threat to the city. When water levels are high, the Waalkade floods. The high-water jetty was built to enable ships to moor even when the water is very high. That is why the mooring posts are so high here. To prevent the water from reaching the lower part of town a number of retaining walls were built. The openings in the retaining wall €, for example, those near the beginning of the Lage Markt can be closed off in the traditional way with wooden shutters, the edges sealed off with horse manure.

On the corner of the Lage Markt and Priemstraat, the sign with the elephant € points out that the house was once a shop where colonial goods were sold; nowadays, it stands for the name of the graphic workshop and bronze foundry owned by the artists who currently live there.

Both in the Lage Markt and Priemstraat, you can still admire a number of wooden shop fronts; unfortunately these have become very rare in Nijmegen. Via Priemstraat, you can reach the memorial on the Kitty de Wijzeplaats, which was designed by Paul de Swaaf and erected in memory of all the Jewish citizens of Nijmegen who were killed during the Second World War. On your left in Nonnenstraat, stands Nijmegen's oldest synagogue which was built in 1756 and to the left of it a small Jewish school in oriental style, dating from 1870. This synagogue served as such until 1913. Recently, the city council gave the synagogue back to the Jewish community for a symbolic amount.

You are now near Smidstraat. A name that reminds us of days gone by, when it was still common for people in the same trade to live in one neighbourhood. This explains street names such as Smidstraat (Smithy street), Korte Brouwerstraat (Brewer Street), Snijderstraat (Tailor Street), and Platenmakersstraat (where the armour makers lived).

Turn left at the Ganzenheuvel and walk up Stikke Hezelstraat. On your right you will find the Lange Hezelstraat, which was already a connecting road in Roman times is the only medieval street in Nijmegen that was largely saved. An organisation called 'De Oude Stad' is now working hard to restore the medieval character of the street and its houses. It is quite nice to walk the narrow streets on your right-hand side and have a look at, for example, St. Jacob's Chapel [8], also known as the Glass House, or the façade of the former orphanage € in Begijnenstraat.

When you have almost reached the end of Stikke Hezelstraat, turn left and climb the stairs to the southern portal of St. Steven's Church. Halfway up the stairs stands the statue of Moenen €, the devil from the medieval miracle play Mariken van Nieuweghen. Moenen, the personification of evil, is sitting cross-legged with his back to the church. Turn right and walk past the Latin School [9], through the church arch € towards the Grote Markt. Here, Mariken repented her sins whilst watching the pageant play Masscheroen, which told the people of God's mercy. How things ended for Mariken? The Pope in Rome heard her confession and as a penance for her sins she had to wear three iron rings around her neck and arms. After she had done her penance in a convent an angel removed the iron rings. Two years later, Mariken died.

To the left, you will see the Waaggebouw [10] (weighing house) from 1612. The calibrated scales for weighing market goods used to hang behind the large door to the right. The buildings behind you, with the church arch in the middle, used to have an open gallery where trade was conducted, and over it, across its entire width, was the Lakenhal (clothmakers' hall), where the trade in cloth took place. This long hall was also used to fete important guests.

Walk straight on into Burchtstraat: here stands the bronze statue of Mariken van Nieumeghen, who gives her name to this walk. It was made by Vera Tummers-Van Hasselt in 1956. Mariken is depicted as an elegant and somewhat hesitant figure, holding a basket in her hand. Depicted in this way, she reminds us of the Mariken in the first act as if the play could commence at any moment.

Farther on, at the crossroads of Grotestraat and Burchtstraat, lies the Blauwe Steen (blue stone). This spot was originally the very centre of town. Here, the major roads converged. It was on the Blauwe Steen that the judgements, pronounced in the sheriffs' courtroom, were executed.

Keep going straight on and you will see Nijmegen's Town Hall [11] on your right. The oldest town hall was located near the Lage Markt. With the gradual shift of the city centre, a new location for it was found uphill. According to ancient sources, there was a town hall at the current location as early as 1382. Turn right into Marikenstraat, the new shopping street with its magnificent façades. Here, you can shop on two levels. A number of apartments were built above the shops on the playfully designed flat roof. Here, with another view on the new cultural quarter and the Mariënborg chapel is where the walk both starts and ends at Arsenaal [s].

City Walk

- S Arsenaal
- 1 LUX
- 2 Rotterdam Bank
- 3 Branch of the Netherlands Bank
- 4 Former synagogue
- 5 Keupers Tower
- 6 Belvedere
- 7 Stratemakerstoren Museum
- 8 St. Jacob's Chapel
- 9 Latin School
- 10 Weighing House
- 11 City Hall

Information

- 11 Municipal Information Centre Open Huis
- 12 Tourist Office VVV Rijk van Nijmegen
- 13 Municipal Archives

Services

- 14 Police Station, Nijmegen District
- 15 Post Office

City of Nijmegen

- 11 City Hall (Civil Affairs Department, etc.)
- 16 Metterswane Building (Urban Development, Economic Affairs, Building and Housing, etc.)

Culture and recreation

- 17 Velorama Bicycle Museum
- 18 Valkhof Museum
- 19 Statue Garden Julianapark
- 20 City Theatre
- 21 Concert Hall De Vereniging
- 22 Kolping House
- 23 Cinemas
- 24 De Lindenberg, Municipal Centre for Art & Culture
- 25 Holland Casino
- 26 Central Public Library

Sights

- 27 Powder Tower
- 28 Rondeel (roundel)
- 29 Bedriegertjes
- 30 Mariënburg Chapel
- 31 Protestant Orphanage
- 32 Barbarossa Ruins
- 33 St. Nicolas' Chapel
- 34 Besiendershuis
- 35 Brouwershuis
- 36 City Brewery De Hemel
- 37 St. Steven's Church
- 38 Synagogue
- 39 High-water jetty
- 40 Labyrinth



B Bus Station
 Central Railway Station
 City Walk
 Cycle bridge (2002)
 0 300 m