

# HOUSEBOAT WALKING TOUR

OUR WALKING TOUR BEGINS WITH THE CANAL ROUTE, WHICH PROVIDES ANSWERS TO MANY OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT LIVING ON THE WATER. THE TOUR THEN CONTINUES WITH THE AMSTEL ROUTE, FEATURING NINE EXTRAORDINARY HOUSEBOATS. DON'T FORGET TO MIND THE (BIKE) TRAFFIC. ENJOY!

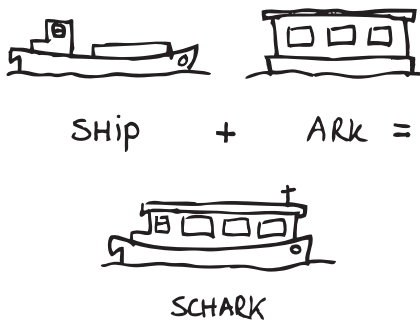
**CANAL ROUTE (2 KM)**  
 START: HOUSEBOAT MUSEUM (PRINSENGRACHT 296K)

## ① UTILITIES

Gas, water and sewage hoses run between the water's edge and the *Hendrika Maria*. Electrical and telephone lines are strung above street level. To prevent freezing, the sewage and water hoses are insulated and fitted with heat ribbons.

## ② ARK, SCHARK OR SHIP

These are the three basic types of houseboats. After walking 150 metres, look left from the bridge on the Runstraat and you can see an ark, schark and ship, one after the other.



## ③ SHOCK ABSORBERS

Lying opposite Prinsengracht 509 is a lead-clad schark, which is protected from the wall by shock absorbers. They ensure that a little bit of waves will not cause your coffee to slosh out of your cup. If boats cruise past faster than the permissible 7.5 km/h, shock absorbers aren't sufficient.

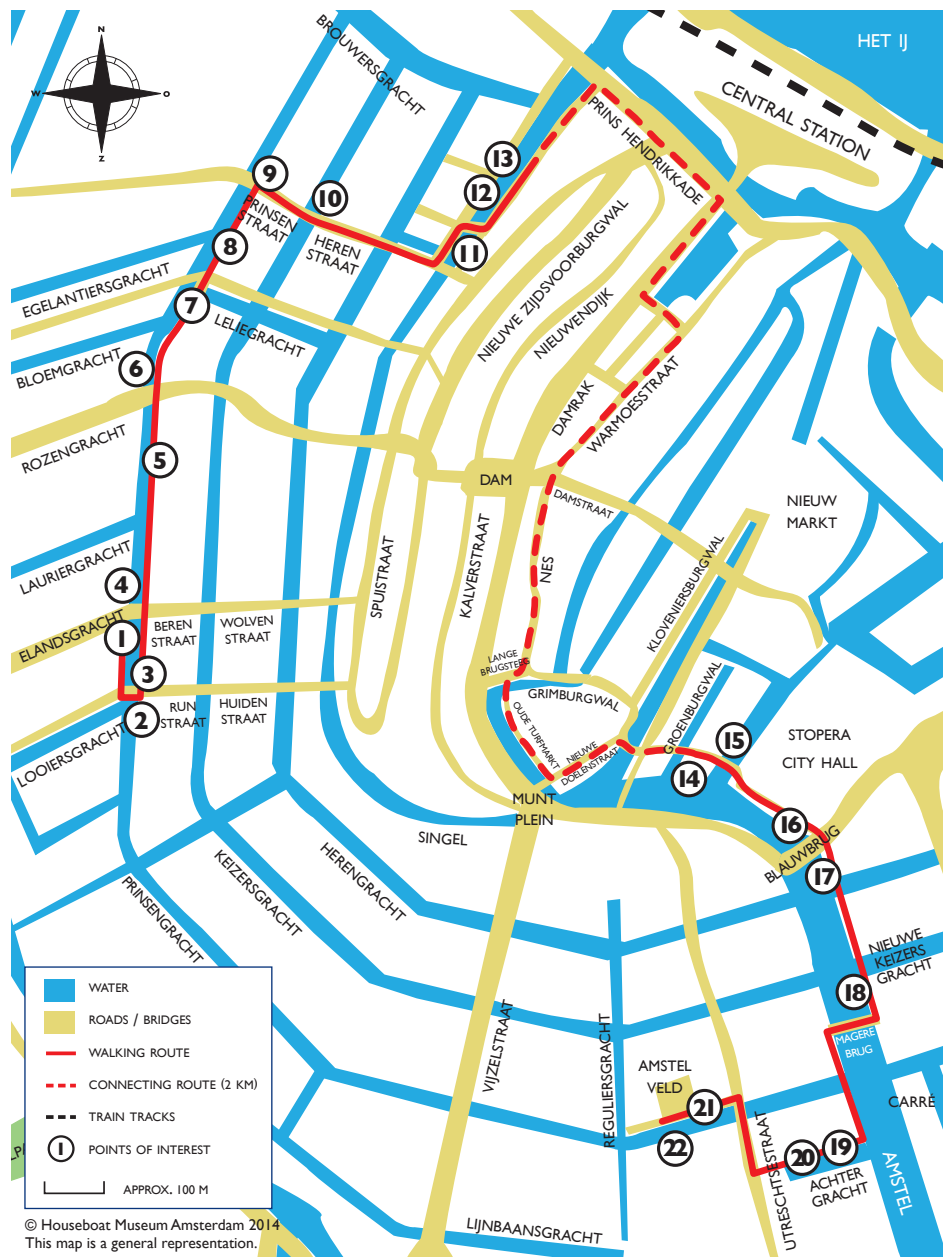
## ④ MAINTENANCE

Immediately after the bridge on the Berenstraat, across the canal from no. 447, you will see *Musard*, a French ship that dates to 1926. When the ship has to go to the shipyard, the large pilothouse has to be dismantled so that it can fit under the bridges. In the case of smaller boats, the roof of the pilothouse is lifted off by hand, after which the hinged walls are folded down. A houseboat which has a substructure that can rust

must be taken to the shipyard every 3 to 6 years for maintenance.

## ⑤ MOORING SPOT

After no. 337, there are no houseboats in the canal until the Westerkerk church. Houseboats have fixed berths which are included in the zoning plan. There are currently about 900 houseboats in the city centre – that is the maximum number permitted. In some canals, there are no houseboats at all because the bridges are too low. ▶





Point of interest 4: The pilothouse of *Musard* being dismantled



Window in the 'Amsterdam School' style



Point of interest 15: The *Wiekslag*



Point of interest 8: A concrete frame can also float

### ⑥ PILOTHOUSE

Lying directly opposite the Westerkerk is a *hagenaar*, the same kind of ship as the Houseboat Museum. This particular ship dates to 1906. At a certain point, its sails were replaced by a motor and the mast and boom were removed. This makes it look a lot more bare, though it does have pilothouse.

### ⑦ BRIDGES AND WATER LEVEL

All 252 bridges in the city centre have been assigned a number (look for the number "61" in white on the metal undercarriage of the bridge). The vertical clearance is known for each bridge. Because the water level fluctuates, this must be taken into account when the houseboat is being towed – otherwise the boat might get stuck. This can be prevented by taking tubs of water on board to serve as ballast, which will cause the boat to lie deeper in the water.

### ⑧ CONCRETE FRAME

Houseboat no. 213M has a concrete frame, which means it will not rust and therefore doesn't need to be taken to the shipyard.

### ⑨ THE CIGAR

From the Prinsensluis bridge, you will see a houseboat to the right that deviates from the typical "shoobox"

shape of the ark. Locals refer to this boat as the *Cigar*.

### ⑩ MOST POPULAR SNAPSHOT

Amsterdam's most photographed houseboats lie to the left of the bridge over the Keizersgracht. A number of these were once sailing cargo ships. The canals used to be full of these kinds of ships.

### ⑪ MS SUZANNE

Lying across the Singel canal opposite no. 98 is *Suzanne*, a motor barge from 1923. It has a lovely window which dates from the time when the boat was used by prostitutes.

### ⑫ DONALD DUCK BOAT

Lying across the Singel canal opposite no. 17 is *De Nieuwe Gerrit*, a ship quite like one you might see in Donald Duck. It looks like a real ship, but it can't sail under its own power. It was built to be a houseboat and has a spacious interior, with vertical walls instead of the curved walls that characterise a ship.



### ⑬ THE CAT BOAT

Lying next to *De Nieuwe Gerrit* is

the *Cat Boat*, a world-famous shelter for stray cats since 1968. Each year, the *Cat Boat* finds owners for over 250 animals.

## AMSTEL ROUTE (1,5 KM)

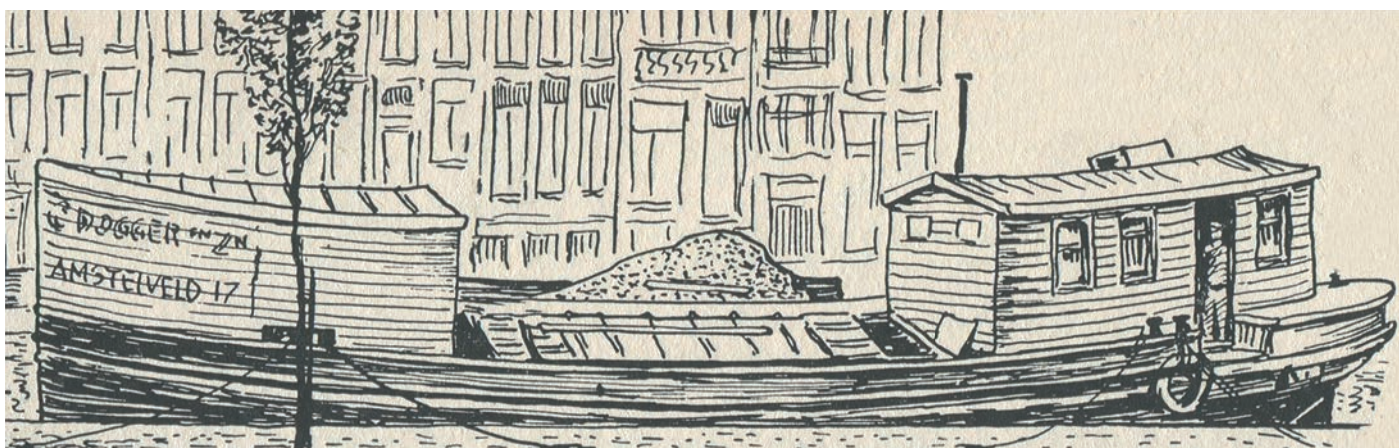
START: GROENBURGWAL 65

### ⑭ SMALLEST HOUSEBOAT

Lying opposite no. 65 on the Groenburgwal is the smallest houseboat on the route. Here, the quay walls have also been reinforced with steel panels to prevent them from collapsing and the canal houses from subsiding. This kind of restoration is a very expensive and time-consuming process.

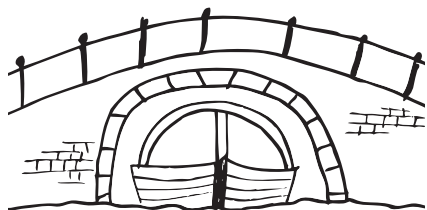
### ⑮ AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

Lying opposite Zwanenburgwal 182 is the white-green *Wiekslag*, which was designed in 1924 by A.P. Smits in the 'Amsterdam School' architectural style. The decorative façade is characteristic of this style.



Point of interest 21: De Dogger, originally used as a freshwater hauler

Drawing Jan Bouman, 1954



Point of interest 20: Bridges arches designed for the grain lighters



Point of interest 18: A pontoon bridge

### ⑩ CUTTER

Lying immediately before the Blauwbrug is a cutter. It is exceptional in that most of the boats along the quay are former barges that are no longer seaworthy. This ship is too large and has too much of a draught for the canals, but that's no a problem on the river Amstel.

### ⑪ VICTOR IV

Lying immediately after the Blauwbrug is a Groningen tjalk, with decorative lanterns. The American artist Walter Glück, who went by the name of *Victor IV*, constructed a world made out of discarded materials. He drowned next to his boat in 1986. His floating legacy of huts, chickens and goats has almost completely disappeared.

### ⑫ BRIDGE SHIP

The ship opposite no. 57 on the Amstel dates to 1857 and was one of several bridge ships that were used to span the river Waal. There was enough room between the bollards to serve as a road.

### ⑬ JANTJE

Lying opposite Achtergracht 31 is the hippy houseboat *Jantje* ('Little

John'). Just like *Victor IV*, the owner was fond of using discarded materials. *Jantje* was featured in a TV series about Ramses Shaffy, a famous Dutch singer who had once briefly lived on a houseboat. Houseboats are frequently used as television and movie sets.

### ⑭ GRAIN LIGHTER

The *Broedertrouw*, which lies opposite Achtergracht 17, was used to transport grain. This type of ship once had rounded hatch covers. Bridge arches in the city's canals were designed for these wooden hatches. This is the last example of this ship type known to exist.

### ⑮ FRESHWATER HAULER

Tied up by Amstelveld, diagonally

opposite *Café Marcella*, is/was *De Dogger*, a ship with a wooden structure. Until 1888, the ship was used to transport clean water to the Amstel Brewery. The Dogger family later bought it to use in their coal and peat trade. The ship is in such a bad shape that it has to be moved to avoid sinking. The high structure has been removed to pass under the bridges. It's only a matter of time before this piece of history disappears from the canal.

### ⑯ RAJPOOTANA

Lying just beyond *De Dogger*, on the opposite side of the Prinsengracht, is a creatively styled houseboat with stained glass windows. Extra living space was created by building above the boat frame at both ends. ■