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A charmed life in Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Jaden Birch, from Rotorua, loves the classic, good looks and multiculturalism of his adopted city.

What inspired your move, and how long have you been there?

I had been here for work and fallen in love with the city. My partner Mathew is English and his NZ visa expired so, to stay together, we decided to move, and Amsterdam was our lucky destination. Thankfully, I could relocate here with my work. It is one year this month since we moved.

What do you do there?

I work for Booking.com in partner services.

What are the greatest advantages to living there?

It has all the charm of a European city. Amsterdam has a very multicultural feel, so you don't feel out of place even though you're half a world away from home.

Disadvantages?

Some parts of the city are packed with tourists all year round. Since I live in the city centre, a trip to the supermarket often leaves me caught up in pedestrian traffic.

How expensive is it compared to New Zealand? How much is a beer?

The cost of alcohol is pretty much on a par. You can get a beer for 4-9 euro (NZ\$9-NZ\$14). Restaurants and fast-food outlets are a little dearer.

What do you do in your spare time?

We go to the cinema regularly. Locals get an unlimited movie pass for 19 euro a month. Now that it's getting warmer and lighter, we try to get out of the house as much as we can. I love

going down to Vondelpark to lie in the sun, checking out new areas by bike, finding new places to eat and exploring the nightlife.

What's the local delicacy and would you recommend eating it?

My favourites would be the delicious Dutch cheeses. And *bitterballen*: it's

made from a meat mixture that's then deep fried. Another thing they love is herring, usually served with bread and pickles. It's a bit too oily for me, though.

Easiest way to get around?

Walking or biking. The public transport is also pretty good.

What's the shopping like?

Good, and a lot cheaper than in NZ. You have a wide range of well-known brands, high-end stores and smaller boutiques. Online shopping is also better here. The best shopping strips to check out in the city are Kalverstraat and Nieuwendijk.

Best after-dark activity?

The 17th century canals are Unesco World Heritage sites, and you'll be constantly going alongside them as you navigate the city. Cruises on the canals at night bring a different perspective. If you're up for more, check out the nightlife in Rembrandtplein or explore the red-light district.

Best time of year to visit?

Between June and September. Every week there are festivals.

What are the top three things you recommend for visitors?

Rent a bike or join a bike tour. It's an

exciting way to explore, plus you get a feel for how the locals get around. Also, check out the history. There are many world-famous museums such as the Anne Frank House, the Van Gogh and Rijksmuseum. The red-light district is a definite must-visit.

Besides family and friends, what do you miss most about home?

The food. Except for Indonesia, a former Dutch colony, there's not much of an Asian influence here. I also miss the natural landscape of NZ. The rolling hills, forests and beaches are worlds away from the Dutch countryside.

How easy is it for you to get back to NZ?

Not easy, which is why I haven't visited since I moved. A typical journey back will take a minimum of two flights, and the trip from airport to airport will take anywhere from 25 to 40 hours.

For Kiwis looking to move there, which industries are seeking fresh talent?

People who are skilled in IT are always in demand and a lot of successful start-ups have their origins in Amsterdam.



If you know an expat who wants to share inside knowledge of their home away from home, email travel@stuff.co.nz with Expat in the subject line.



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Jaden was able to relocate to Amsterdam for work.



Jaden recommends a ride on the Unesco World Heritage-listed canals at night. PHOTOS: JADEN BIRCH