



SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE NETHERLANDS STANDING MAST ROUTES (SMR)

by Machiel Lambooj (June 2024)



This guidance note provides details of the numerous sources for obtaining up to date information when embarking on the Standing Mast Routes in the Netherlands.

As the risk of temporary or long-lasting delays on the routes (due to bridge closures, lock issues, etc) is fairly high, this note is regularly updated as new information becomes available.

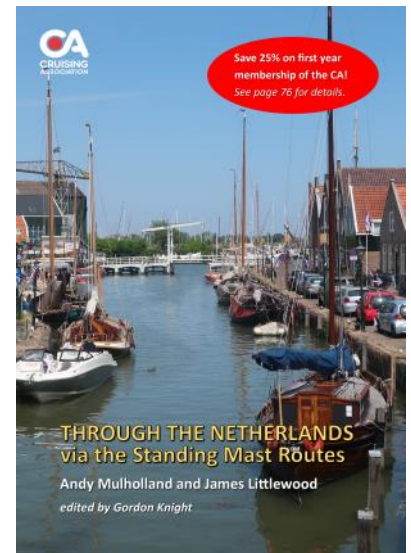
Please email any corrections or updates to eiws-editor@theca.org.uk.

The Standing Mast Routes (SMR) allow sailing yachts and other high air draft vessels to travel through or cruise around several of the inland waterways of the Netherlands. In some translated publications in the Netherlands, they are referred to as the 'Fixed Mast Routes'.

This guidance note details the various sources for obtaining the latest information on the status of the SMR. Use the hyperlinks provided or (if using a printed version of this note) scan the QR codes.

Information on the route itself

Through the Netherlands via the Standing Mast Routes – available as a free download for CA members (in PDF format) and also purchasable in a printed version. See: <https://www.theca.org.uk/catalog/publications/netherlands-standing-mast-routes> or scan the QR code.



The CA's guide to the SMR

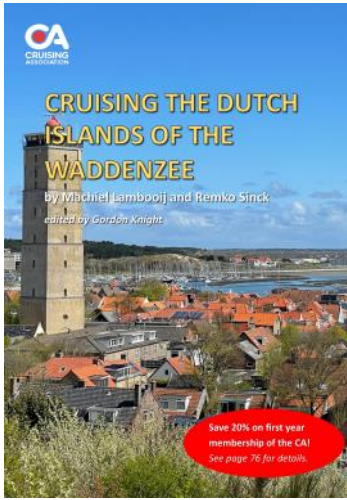


ANWB Wateratlas Staande Mast Route – in print. Available at most chandleries in the Netherlands or via the web shop of the ANWB. See: <https://www.anwb.nl/webwinkel/p/1545/anwb-wateratlas-staande-mastroute> or scan the QR code. It consists of a chart of the route in atlas form with operating hours and marina details. Basically, this contains printed charts from the **Waterkaarten** app (see below). If you have the **Waterkaarten** app this is only useful if you wish to have a printed version of the route.



Varen doe je samen (co-operation between various maritime organisations on safe boating). For their free, downloadable brochures (including one on the Fixed Mast Route and a map), see: <https://www.varendoejesamen.nl/en> or scan the QR code.





Cruising the Dutch Islands of the Waddenzee a further CA guide describing access to/exit from the northern part of the SMR (as an alternative to the Friesland/Groningen route). Available as a free download for CA members (in PDF format) and also purchasable in a printed version. See <https://www.theca.org.uk/catalog/publications/dutch-waddenzee-islands> or scan the QR code.



Blockages and restrictions, incidents

The route is not managed by one authority. It is a collection of rivers, canals, lakes etc. managed by various authorities that have been joined together to form the SMR by various boating associations. Maintenance works - sometimes longer term - may be carried out (and these are often not coordinated) on bridges or locks along the route restricting or even completely closing off branches of the route for boats with a standing mast. There may not be alternative routes around it that are suitable for boats with a standing mast. You should check for planned blockages and restrictions before you decide to take the SMR. To avoid surprises and delays during your journey, it is also useful to check every day for incidents on your intended route.

Main issues for the 2024 season (due to maintenance works)

- ◆ SMR North of the Noordzeekanaal to Den Helder: blocked for boats with standing masts due to two bridges not operating: whole 2024 season. Alternative route: Noordzeekanaal – IJ – Oranjesluisen (locks) – Markermeer – Enkhuizen (Naviduct lock) – Stevinsluis (Den Oever) – access from there to Den Helder/Dutch Wadden islands and North Sea. Second alternative: like the first alternative, from Markermeer – Houtribsluis (lock Lelystad) – Lorentzsluis (lock Kornwerderzand); from there access to Harlingen/Dutch Wadden islands and beyond.
- ◆ Schiphol bridge not operating (Leiden-Amsterdam via Schiphol, including the night convoy through Amsterdam, v.v.): blocked for whole 2024 season for boats with standing mast (over 6.25m). Alternative route: Haarlem branch, but see below for restrictions during some days in May and June.
- ◆ Haarlem branch: restricted operating hours Cruquiusbrug: various restrictions during working days in May and June (not blocked, but not operating at some times on working days; available early in the morning or late in the day and in weekends; check details).

Resolved issues (2023 season closures that have been resolved)

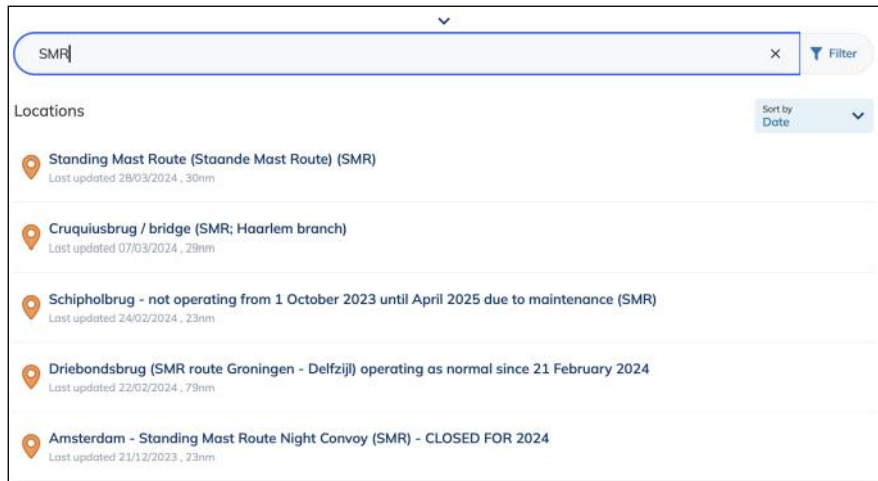
- ◆ Haringvlietbrug (Stellendam-Haringvliet): new schedule of operating hours. Check up-to-date information at **Fairway Information Services** (see below) or other sources; the old schedule of operating hours has been improved.
- ◆ Driebondsbrug (Groningen-Delfzijl): blockage lifted. Operating as normal.

These issues apply to boats with a standing mast. For motor yachts, check the details; some of the blockages may only be a restriction during working hours or not apply at all depending on your air draft.

Captain's Mate ('CM'; only for logged in CA members)

On CM you will find entries with SMR in the name. Log on to CM and search for SMR. Well known blockages and restrictions that affect travelling on the SMR for a longer period are usually reported here, with alternative routes if available. Members also report their experiences. If you find a blockage or restriction that has not yet been reported or one that has been resolved, please report it yourself.

Captain's Mate is available to members as an app in the Google Play and Apple App store and as a web resource (<https://www.theca.org.uk/ciapp>). Remember: you need to be logged in on the CA website as a member.



Left:
Example of entries in the Captain's Mate app resulting from a search on 'SMR'.

Similarly, longer term closures are also reported on the forum of the **European Inland Waterways Section** on the CA website (sometimes, if important, also copied to the forum of the Baltic Section and the North Sea Section). See: <https://www.theca.org.uk/forum/923> (only available for CA members who are logged in).

Short term incidents are not reported in CM or on the forums. Refer to the Fairway Information System (see below) for these.

Status map Waterrecreatie Nederland (in Dutch)

This viewer shows the various branches of the SMR (information in Dutch, but easily understandable). The colour coding of the routes only indicates the branch and does not refer to its availability. Look for the red and yellow circles with exclamation marks. These indicate blockages (red) and restrictions (yellow) - only longer term, not incidents. Click on a circle with exclamation mark and you will get the details (in Dutch; copy and paste into Google Translate or similar tool).

See: <https://waterrecreatienederland.nl/viewer-staande-mast-route> or scan the QR code.



You can click on the name of a route (right hand corner). You then get a zoomed in map, including bridges and locks. Click on such an object and you will get more information on the name of the object (locks, bridges, berths, marinas), often with a telephone number.



Waterkaarten app (previously called ANWB Waterkaart)



The very useful **Waterkaarten** app (subscription based) shows the status of objects (bridges/locks/waterways) with a separate red triangle if there is an issue. Click on the red triangle and you will get detailed information (often in English if you set the app language to English; if not, use Google Translate). The red triangle appears for blockages, restrictions and incidents (but only the next working day); the information is fed to **Waterkaarten** from the **Fairway Information System** (see below) but only if you have a working internet connection!

If you click on a bridge, lock or marina you will get more detailed general information on that object. The notices to mariners are not included in the regular object, you need to click on the separate triangle next to it.

Note: you can take a free trial subscription for 7 days. If you intend to transit the Netherlands within that period, then that is sufficient. Alternatively, you can take out a short term subscription or one for a full year.

This app is very useful in practice as it also contains details of marinas, operating hours of bridges, contact information and it shows basic AIS targets (provided there is a live internet connection and you are at the correct zoom level for that). The app includes information that is also available in printed form in the **ANWB Wateralmanak 1 and 2** and satisfies the obligation to have the Dutch water and VHF regulations on board (in Dutch).

Example of the closure of the Schipholbrug during the 2024 season

The screenshot shows the Waterkaarten app interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation controls. The map displays the Schipholbrug area with a red triangle indicating a closure. The information panel on the right provides the following details:

Schipholbrug, brug in de A-9

SAILING NOTICES

Ringvaart van de Haarlemmermeerpolder (oostelijk deel) - Schipholbrug, brug in de A-9 - work - Announcement

Valid from 1-10-2023 till 31-3-2025

In connection with work the following applies:
 Bridge - Schipholbrug, brug in de A-9
 Delay maximum 1.0 h from 1-10-2023 till 31-3-2025

Clearance height maximum 6.25 m from 1-10-2023 till 31-3-2025

Clearance width maximum 12 m from 1-10-2023 till 31-3-2025

No service from 1-10-2023 till 31-3-2025

Blockage from 30-5-2024 07:00 till 3-6-2024 23:00
 from 9-8-2024 07:00 till 11-8-2024 23:00

stemming van donderdag 30 mei 07:00 tot maandag 3 juni 2024 23:00 kan uitlopen t/m 4 juni 2024 23:00

Notice source (authority): E-mail 06-05-2024 Prov. Noord-Holland

Waterkaarten also provides charts and fairway information on Belgium, France, Germany and the UK. Only the information for the Netherlands and Belgium is extensive. For the other countries it is as yet basic. The plans are to improve this in the coming months.

See <https://waterkaarten.app/en> or scan the QR code.



Fairway Information System

There is a countrywide, free official **Fairway Information System** that contains all available information on waterways, water depths and bridges/locks. All notices to mariners on inland waterways are stored here. The system is available in English (*set the language to 'English' in the left upper corner of the screen*), but even then, some of the underlying details may be in Dutch (depending on whether the competent water authority translates it or not).

See: www.vaarweginformatie.nl for further details or scan the QR code.

Check this system for longer term blockages and restrictions, but also for incidents. Incidents are shown in this system **the next working day**. So during the day, you will not be able to find an incident, but you will find incidents of the day before and whether they are resolved (resolution is also reported only the next working day); if in doubt whether a reported incident was resolved in the meantime, you can phone the bridge/lock keeper.

The easiest access is through the map provided at: <https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/nts/map> or by scanning the QR code (*in the left upper corner click on 'English'*). The yellow circles with a figure in it show the number of available notices to mariners in that area. If you zoom in you will get circles with an envelope depicted; click on that and you will get the details of the notice itself. Some notices may apply in one direction only.



The screenshot shows the website interface for the Fairway Information System. At the top, there are language options for 'Nederlands' and 'English', and a search bar containing 'e.g. Erasmusbrug'. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for 'Notifications', 'List', and 'Map'. The main content area displays a map of Amsterdam with several yellow circular icons indicating waterway notices. The map includes various filters and controls: 'Fairway and traffic r...' (dropdown), 'All areas' (dropdown), 'Only blocked' (dropdown), and 'Valid period: 08-05-2024' to '21-05-2024' (calendar icons). The map shows the city's canal network, including the IJmeer and the Amsterdamse Bos area. At the bottom, there are links for 'Links Services About this site' and 'Help Disclaimer Privacy statement Cookies'.

Similarly, you can get details on bridges and locks at: <https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/geo/map?layers=BRIDGE> (again: switch to 'English' in the left hand corner if not already active and choose the layer you wish to see). Click on an individual bridge and on more details and you get all the available details, including telephone numbers, operating hours, the name of the operating authority and increasingly also whether the bridge is in the open or closed position (live if you are connected to the internet). Note that bridge heights are given relative to the standard canal or river levels. If these deviate for whatever reason, you should take these deviations into account.



Nederlands English

Waterways and Objects

e.g. Erasmusbrug

< Back

Bridge

Waterway

Lock

Exceptional Navigation Item

Tourist Harbour

Trailer Slipway

Berth

Harbour

Terminal

Openstreetmap

Links Services About this site

Help Disclaimer Privacy statement Cookies

Water level information is available on the main commercial waterways: https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/hydro/water_level.



Depth information (maximum allowable draught) is available (Map, Waterway, Maximum, all. Dimension) through this link: https://vaarweginformatie.nl/frp/main/#/geo/map?layers=MAXIMUM_DIMENSIONS&viewport=51.71001238595862;1.0107421875000002;53.44226352500859;8.920898437500002.



Click on the waterway you intend to use and on 'more details', and you will find the maximum allowable draught for that waterway.

Example: Maximum allowed dimensions around Groningen and Reitdiep

Maximum allowed dimensions

e.g. Erasmusbrug

< Back

Max. toeg. afmeting ViN(29948)

Identification

Common

Name	Max. toeg. afmeting ViN(29948)	Country code	-
Situated on route	Vaarwegen in de stad Groningen, Reitdiep en Lauwersmeer	Route code	006
Remarks	Zie: bijz. bep. vergunningen en max. toegestane afmetingen.		

Dimensions

	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Height (m)	Length (m)
Generic dimensions	6,6	2,4	-	50,0

Frequently asked questions on the SMR

Q: The *hefbruggen* (lifting bridges) around Alphen a/d Rijn do not lift to the maximum air draft, so I cannot pass. How does that work?

A: To avoid too long delays for road traffic, these bridges lift normally to an *intermediate* height by *default*. Once the intermediate default opening is achieved, the bridge keepers are usually unwilling to open it further if you then complain, as this creates more delays for the road traffic; you will then have to await the next opening. If you need the maximum air draft, please say so explicitly when you request an opening by VHF radio or by calling up by telephone. In practice, the bridge keeper may recognise, upon your approach, that you need the maximum opening, but it is safer to specifically point out your air draft to him. If you travel in convoy with other pleasure craft or commercial barges, it is especially relevant to call up the bridge keeper and ask for an opening that meets your air draft, even if he has already confirmed that he is opening the bridge at the request of other ships, as he will probably lift the bridge only to the intermediate height. Similarly, do not start to approach the opening bridge if you have not confirmed to what height the bridge is opening. It may stop halfway up.

Q: What is the maximum air draft for the SMR?

A: The route has been designed for sailing boats with an air draft up to 30 metres. However, note that the canal/river level may occasionally deviate from the standard level, and this may reduce the available height. If you are close to 30 metres, you should check actual water levels on stretches where there are lifting bridges (*'hefbrug'* in Dutch). In practice we have not heard of boats with an air draft up to 24 metres having issues.

Q; Where are there draught issues?

A: You can check the normal draught in the **Waterkaarten** app (shown in decimetres). These obviously assume standard water levels. You can check the maximum allowable dimensions (refer to fairway information systems above) for a waterway and for some waterways the actual water levels. You can also check user provided depth contours in apps like **Navionics**. In practice, (temporary) draught issues are sometimes reported in the Groningen-Lauwersmeer route, around the town of Zoutkamp. Also sometimes alongside moorings without jetties in Dokkum are reported as having a draught issue. Check **Captain's Mate** and the forums for specific recent experiences.

Q: Do I need a vignette for passing through Amsterdam on the SMR?

A: Only if you transit Amsterdam through the Kostverlorenvaartgracht (the night convoy route). **NOTE THIS ROUTE IS CLOSED FOR THE WHOLE OF THE 2024 SEASON FOR BOATS WITH A STANDING MAST.** More information on the vignette can be found here: <https://www.theca.org.uk/system/files/Amsterdam%20vignette.pdf> (free download, also available for non-CA members). Alternatively, scan the QR code. You do **not** need a vignette if you transit Amsterdam over the Noordzeekanaal from Haarlem or IJmuiden to the Oranjesluizen (locks into the Markermeer) and vice versa.



Q: How does the night convoy work for transiting Amsterdam?

A: Check the general resources mentioned above. Particularly: search on **Captain's Mate** for: 'Amsterdam - Standing Mast Route Night Convoy (SMR)'. **NOTE THIS ROUTE IS CLOSED FOR THE WHOLE OF THE 2024 SEASON FOR BOATS WITH A STANDING MAST.**

Q: The Night Convoy route is not available, or I do not want to transit by night. Is there an alternative?

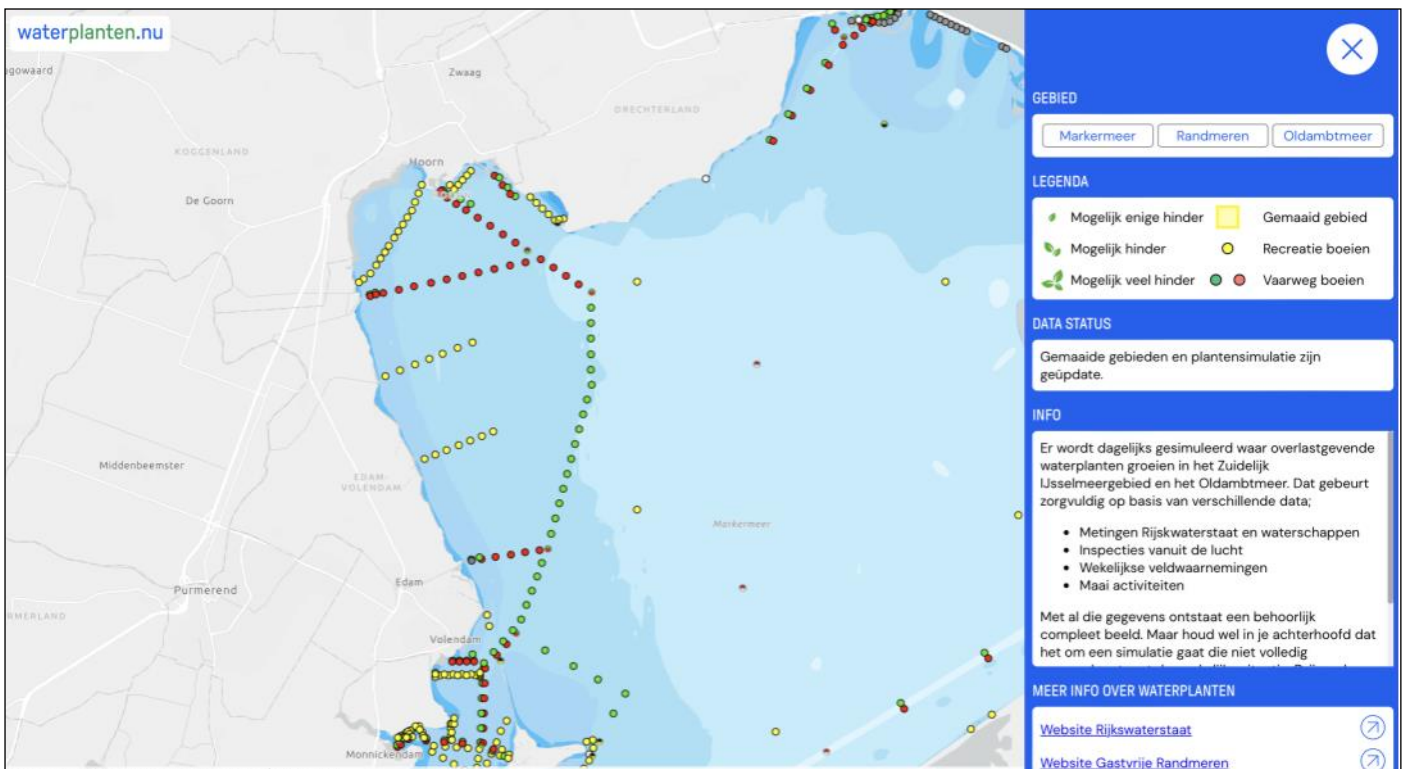
A: Yes, you can use the more westerly route through Haarlem. That is also a very pretty and convenient route. Haarlem is a beautiful, historic town and not to be missed (the transit fee payable for Haarlem is included in the berth fee for one night, so there is an incentive to stay at least one night). Upon arrival in Amsterdam over the Noordzeekanaal (from Haarlem or IJmuiden over the Noordzeekanaal) you can then find a berth in a marina in Amsterdam along the IJ and it is easy to visit Amsterdam from there on foot, by

bike or by bus (there are various free ferries crossing the IJ near most marinas). **NOTE THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS ON THIS ROUTE ON SOME WORKING DAYS IN MAY AND JUNE 2024.**

Q: Can I safely transit the Markermeer and IJsselmeer?

A: Yes, provided it is not bad weather. The Markermeer and IJsselmeer can be uncomfortable and even dangerous in bad weather. It used to be a sea before it was closed off by dykes. In bad weather (high winds/thunderstorms) it should still be considered a sea with rough and uncomfortable waves. The area is therefore under the supervision of the Dutch Coast Guard (VHF 16 for emergencies; call sign 'Den Helder Rescue') and the KNRM (volunteer rescue organisation like the RNLI) and qualifies as sea for boat licence rules. You need ICC Coastal rather than ICC Inland; ICC is only required if your boat has a hull length of 15 metres or more or is capable of a speed of 20 km/h or more). VHF 1 for hourly weather and navigational warnings (in Dutch). Check the weather forecast in a marine weather app (e.g. **Windfinder** or **Windy**) for 'Trintelhaven' (in the middle of the dyke that separates the Markermeer from the IJsselmeer) before you cast off to cross these waters. In acceptable weather, crossing should be fine and is very popular.

There may be an issue with water plants, mainly in the Markermeer, that can block water intakes or entangle propellers. The buoyed channels should normally be fine, due to heavy traffic or because the channels are mowed frequently. Outside the buoyed channels there may be issues when temperatures rise (end of Spring/Summer/beginning of Autumn depending on the actual weather). Here you can check on the status of issues due to water plants: <https://waterplanten.nu> (shows Markermeer and the Randmeren – lakes S and E of the Flevoland area - but these have limited access for higher air draft boats due to fixed bridges). This is based on reports and aerial reconnaissance/mowing activity. Especially around Hoorn there are frequent issues. Click on the 'hamburger' menu for the explanation: the more green leaves are visible in an area, the bigger the water plants issue there. A yellow area means the plants have been mowed recently.



For more information on the Markermeer and IJsselmeer, check the entries for these waterways in **Captain's Mate** (CA-members only).

Q: I am coming directly from the UK to the SMR. What are the most convenient ports of entry?

A: For immigration purposes they are called 'border crossing points': the most practical border crossing points for pleasure craft are Vlissingen, Rotterdam,



Dordrecht, IJmuiden, Amsterdam (but IJmuiden is easier), Den Helder or Harlingen. Refer here for the procedure and the opening hours of the border crossing points: <https://english.marechaussee.nl/topics/reporting-requirements-for-commercial-and-recreational-vessels>. Here you can also download the crew and passenger manifests that you need to e-mail before arriving. **Tip:** do this at home before you depart to your boat and fill the form out and store it for sending later.



In summary: you do not have to go to an immigration office, but you announce your arrival at least 24 hours in advance (or when you depart to the Netherlands if shorter) and call the immigration authorities (*see * below*) once you have arrived; they will wait for you on the quay based on your pre-announcement or they will visit you by car or boat after you have called to stamp you in. You are also required to announce your departure to any non-Schengen destination (e.g. the UK) from the Netherlands in a similar manner for stamping out. This is the 2024 procedure, but may change when the new European Entry/Exit system (EES) becomes operational.

Note: Eemshaven, Hoek van Holland (Hook of Holland) and Moerdijk do not allow pleasure craft to enter their commercial harbours, so although these are mentioned as ports of entry they are off limits to pleasure craft and therefore not useable as ports of entry.

If your last harbour before entering the Netherlands was in a Schengen country (e.g. France, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark), there is no need to pre-announce your arrival and call immigration; the same applies if you depart from the Netherlands to such a country. Make sure you have some documentation of your last Schengen harbour (passport stamp, marina receipt). Note that the coast guard uses radar and AIS receivers to determine pleasure craft tracks and select boats for a visit on open water.

There is no need to report to customs if you come directly from an EU country or if you are coming from the UK, have nothing to declare (boat is brought into the EU for not more than 18 months or EU VAT is paid on the boat, and all goods onboard are under the allowances). See the [Dutch customs website \(in English\)](#) for details.



Incorrect links/QR-codes and suggestions

Links/QR codes were accurate at the date of publication. Please report any additional suggestions or non-working links to explorer@freedom.nl. Links should work from the pdf version. Use the QR codes if you have printed this document: focus the camera (or a QR code app) of your mobile phone or tablet on the QR code and click on the link shown on your screen (only works if you are connected to the internet).



All information is provided for practical purposes and in good faith. Its use is at your own risk. It is your own responsibility to check this information with official sources before you rely on it. Note that this note may be updated during the season. The latest version will be available from the CA's website, **CAptain's Mate** or the CA Forums.

**Koninklijke Marechaussee (Royal Marechaussee) and for Rotterdam and Vlissingen: Zeehavenpolitie (sea harbour police)*

© 2024, Machiel Lambooj, Amersfoort, the Netherlands
Version 10 June 2024