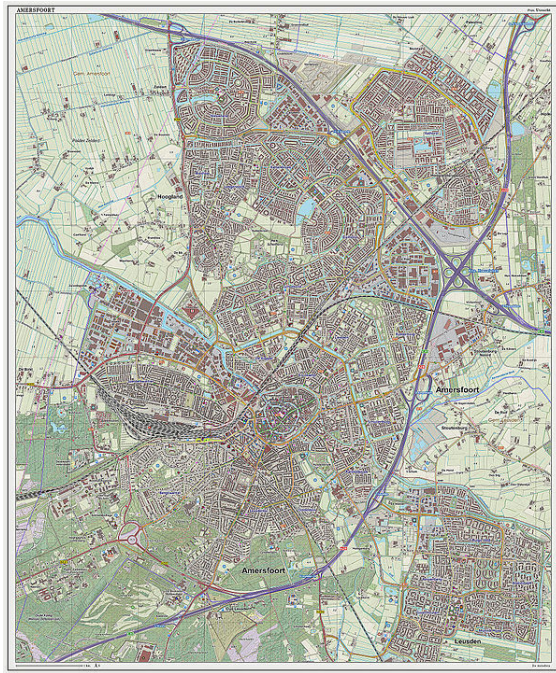


# Amersfoort

For other uses, see [Amersfoort \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Amersfoort** [ˈaːmərsfoːrt] is a municipality and the



*Topographic map of Amersfoort, Sept. 2014*

second largest city of the province of **Utrecht** in central **Netherlands**. The city is growing quickly but has a well-preserved and protected medieval centre. Amersfoort is one of the largest railway junctions in the country, because of its location on two of the Netherlands' main east-west and north-south rail lines. The city celebrated its 750th birthday in 2009.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 1 Population centres

The municipality of Amersfoort consists of the following cities, towns, villages and/or districts: **Bergkwartier**, **Bosgebied**, **Binnenstad**, **Hoogland**, **Hoogland-West**, **Kattenbroek**, **Kruiskamp**, **de Koppel**, **Liendert**, **Rustenburg**, **Nieuwland**, **Randenbroek**, **Schuilenburg**, **Schothorst**, **Soesterkwartier**, **Vathorst**, **Hooglanderveen**, **Vermeerkwartier**, **Leusderkwartier**, **Zielhorst** and **Stoutenburg-Noord**.

## 2 History

**Hunter gatherers** set up camps in the Amersfoort region in the **Mesolithic period**. Archaeologists have found traces of these camps, such as the remains of hearths, and sometimes microlithic flint objects, to the north of the city.



*Amersfoort, church (Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk) in the street*

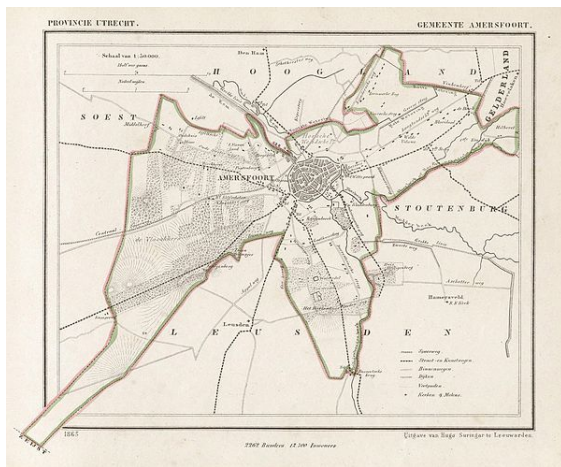


*Amersfoort, towngate: de Monnikendam*

Remains of settlements in the Amersfoort area from around 1000 BC have been found, but the name Amersfoort, after a ford in the Amer River, today called the Eem, did not appear until the 11th century. The city grew around what is now known as the central square, the *Hof*, where the Bishops of Utrecht established a court in order to control the "Gelderse Vallei" area. It was granted city rights in 1259 by the bishop of Utrecht, Henry I van Vian-den. A first defensive wall, made out of brick, was finished around 1300. Soon after, the need for enlargement



Amersfoort, brasserie



Amersfoort in 1865.

of the city became apparent and around 1380 the construction of a new wall was begun and completed around 1450. The famous **Koppelpoort**, a combined land and water gate, is part of this second wall. The first wall was demolished and houses were built in its place. Today's *Muurhuizen* (wallhouses) Street is at the exact location of the first wall; the fronts of the houses are built on top of the first city wall's foundations.



The famous Koppelpoort in Amersfoort, at night.

The *Onze-Lieve-Vrouwentoren* tower (The Tower of Our Lady)<sup>[7]</sup> is one of the tallest medieval church towers in the Netherlands at 98 metres (322 ft). The construction of the tower and the church was started in 1444. The church was destroyed by an explosion in 1787, but the tower survived, and the layout of the church still can be discerned today through the use of different types of stone in the pavement of the open space that was created. It is now the reference point of the **RD coordinate system**, the coordinate grid used by the Dutch topographical service: the RD coordinates are (155.000, 463.000).

The inner city of Amersfoort has been preserved well since the **Middle Ages**. Apart from the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouwetoren*, the **Koppelpoort**, and the *Muurhuizen* (Wall-houses), there is also the *Sint-Joriskerk* (Saint George's church), the canal-system with its bridges, as well as medieval and other old buildings; many are designated as national monuments. In the **Middle Ages**, Amersfoort was an important centre for the textile industry, and there were a large number of breweries.

In the 18th century the city flourished because of the cultivation of tobacco,<sup>[note 1]</sup> but from about 1800 onwards began to decline. The decline was halted by the establishment of the first railway connection in 1863, and, some years later, by the building of a substantial number of infantry and cavalry barracks, which were needed to defend the western cities of the Netherlands. After the 1920s growth stalled again, until in 1970 the national government designated Amersfoort, then numbering some 70,000 inhabitants, as a "growth city". In 2009 the population was 140,000 plus, with an expected 150,000 by 2012.

## 2.1 Second World War

Since Amersfoort was the largest garrison town in the Netherlands before the outbreak of the **Second World War**, with eight barracks, and part of the main line of **defence**, the whole population of then 43,000 was evacuated ahead of the expected invasion by the Germans in May 1940. After four days of battle, the population was allowed to return.

There was a functioning Jewish community in the town, at the beginning of the war numbering about 700 people. Half of them were deported and killed, mainly in *Auschwitz* and *Sobibor*. In 1943, the synagogue, dating from 1727, was severely damaged on the orders of the then Nazi-controlled city government. It was restored and opened again after the war, and has been served since by a succession of rabbis.

There was a concentration camp near the city of Amersfoort during the war. The camp, officially called *Polizeiliches Durchgangslager Amersfoort* (Police Transit Camp Amersfoort), better known as *Kamp Amersfoort*, was actually located in the neighbouring municipality of *Leusden*. After the war the leader of the camp, Joseph

Kotälla, served a life sentence in prison. He died in captivity in 1979.

## 2.2 Origin of *Keistad* (Boulder-city)



Amersfoortse Kei

The nickname for Amersfoort, *Keistad* (boulder-city), originates in the *Amersfoortse Kei*, a 9-tonne (19,842 lb) boulder that was dragged from the Soest moors into the city in 1661 by 400 people because of a bet between two landowners. The people got their reward when the winner bought everyone beer and pretzels. Other nearby towns then nicknamed the people of Amersfoort *Keientrekker* (boulder-dragger/puller). This story embarrassed the inhabitants, and they buried the boulder in the city in 1672, but after it was found again in 1903 it was placed in a prominent spot as a monument. There are not many boulders in the Netherlands, so it can be regarded as an icon.

## 3 Culture

### 3.1 Museums

- **The Mondriaan House:** birthplace of the painter Piet Mondriaan. Exhibits a lifesize reconstruction of his workshop in Paris. Some temporary shows and work by artists inspired by the painter.
- **Flehite:** historic, educational and temporary exhibitions behind a splendid facade. The museum closed in 2007 due to asbestos contamination. It was refurbished and reopened in May 2009.

- **Zonnehof:** small elegant modernist building designed by Gerrit Rietveld on an eponymous square just south of the centre with temporary exhibitions of mostly contemporary art.(closed)
- **Armando Museum:** Work by the painter Armando (who lived in Amersfoort as a child) in a renovated church building. Mostly temporary exhibitions.(closed) (Most of the church and the art on exhibition was destroyed in a fire on 22 October 2007).<sup>[8]</sup>
- **Dutch Cavalry Museum**(New museum will be opened in 2014 in Soesterberg)
- **Culinary Museum** (was closed in 2006)
- **Kunsthal KADE**<sup>[9]</sup>

## 3.2 Sports

Amersfoort had its own professional football (soccer) club named **HVC**. It was founded on 30 July 1973, but disbanded on 30 June 1982 because of financial problems. The city also hosted the riding part of the modern pentathlon event for the 1928 Summer Olympics.<sup>[10]</sup> Amersfoort also hosted the Dutch Open (tennis) tournament from 2002 till its end in 2008.

## 3.3 Other

The city has a zoo, *DierenPark Amersfoort*, which was founded in 1948.

## 4 Transport

### 4.1 Bus

Bus services are provided by 3 firms: U-OV, Connexion and Syntus. Connexion provides services in town and to some destinations in the province of Utrecht, while Syntus offers connections to the province of Gelderland.

### 4.2 Rail

Amersfoort has three railway stations:

- **Amersfoort**, the main station, which has trains to Utrecht, Zwolle, Enschede, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Amsterdam, Schiphol and Leeuwarden/Groningen
- **Amersfoort Schothorst**, to the north of Amersfoort station.
- **Amersfoort Vathorst**, to the north of Amersfoort Schothorst.



Amersfoort train station

### 4.3 Road

Two major motorways pass Amersfoort:

- along the north, the **A1** motorway (Amsterdam–Apeldoorn)
- along the east, the **A28** motorway (Utrecht–Groningen)

### 4.4 Water

The river **Eem** (pronounced roughly “aim”) begins in Amersfoort, and the town has a port for inland water transport. The Eem connects to the nearby *Emmeer* (Lake Eem). The Valleikanaal drains the eastern Gelderse Vallei and joins with other sources to form the Eem in Amersfoort.

## 5 Local government



'Koppelpoort' Amersfoort

The municipal council of Amersfoort consists of 39 seats, which are divided as follows:<sup>[11][12]</sup>

- **VVD** – 5 seats (6 seats in 2010)
- **PvdA** – 5 seats (6 seats in 2010)
- **CDA** – 4 seats (4 seats in 2010)
- **GroenLinks** – 3 seats (5 seats in 2010)
- **ChristenUnie** – 5 seats (10 seats in 2010)
- **SP** – 4 seats (2 seats in 2010)
- **D'66** – 9 seats (5 seats in 2010)
- **Burger Partij Amersfoort** – 2 seats (7 seats in 2010)
- **Amersfoort2014** – 1 seat (not represented in 2010)
- **OPA** – 1 seat (not represented in 2010)

The city has a court of first instance (*kantongerecht*) and a regional chamber of commerce.

## 6 Economy

The city is a main location for several international companies:

- **Royal VolkerWessels Stevin N.V.**, a major European construction-services business.
- **FrieslandCampina**, a Dutch dairy cooperative.
- **Royal HaskoningDHV**, consultants and engineers.
- **Golden Tulip Hospitality Group**, international hotel chain Golden Tulip Hotels, Inns and Resorts.<sup>[13]</sup>
- **Nutreco**, animal feed and human foodstuffs
- **Yokogawa**, an electrical engineering and software company, the European headquarters for which are located in Amersfoort

It also has a number of non-governmental organizations and foundations:

- **ChristianUnion**, a Christian democratic political party in The Netherlands.
- **Oikocredit**, headquarters of global cooperative society, financing economic development focused on poverty alleviation.
- **Socialist Party**, a left-wing social-democratic political party in The Netherlands.
- **KNLTB**, the Dutch national lawn-tennis association.
- **Vereniging Eigen Huis**, the largest home-owners association in the Netherlands; with 700,000 members, it is also the largest in the world

## 7 Notable residents

See also: People from Amersfoort

- Paulus Buys (1531–1594) – Grand Pensionary
- Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547–1619) – statesman
- Piet Mondriaan (1872–1944) – painter
- Willem Sandberg (1897–1984) – graphic designer, Stedelijk Museum director
- Ben Pon (1936) – sports car racing driver
- Ben Pon (senior) – car importer and developer of the Volkswagen Type 2
- Loet Geutjes (1943) – water polo player
- Feike de Vries (1943) – water polo player
- Anke Rijnders (1956) – swimmer
- Frank Drost (1963) – swimmer
- Jan Wagenaar (1965) – water polo player
- Arie van de Bunt (1969) – water polo goalkeeper
- Johannes Heesters (1903–2011) – actor and singer
- Ton van Heugten (1945–2008) – former sidecar-cross world champion
- Victor Kaisiepo (1948–2010) – advocate for West Papuan self-determination.<sup>[14]</sup>
- Jeff de Neeling, Football player
- Joop Kasteel, Professional Fighter and Bodybuilder
- Valentijn Overeem, mixed martial artist
- Alistair Overeem, mixed martial artist & kickboxer
- Father Roderick Vonhögen, – television host, podcaster, founder of the Star Quest Production Network
- Gino Vannelli (1952), Canadian singer, songwriter, musician and composer
- Marco van Ginkel (1992), Dutch football player for Milan & the Netherlands national team
- Blaudzun (1974) – singer and filmmaker, stage name of Johannes Sigmond<sup>[15]</sup>
- Curt Wolters (1938 –1956), American diplomat

## 8 Sister cities

-  Liberec, Czech Republic

## 9 See also

- Rusthof cemetery

## 10 References

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## 10.1 Notes

- [1] The Russian word for the tobacco *Nicotiana rustica*, махорка (makhorka), may bear an etymological debt to this city. See the dictionary of Max Vasmer.

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