

# Beatrix of the Netherlands

“Queen Beatrice” and “Queen Beatrix” redirect here. For other uses, see [Queen Beatrice \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands** (Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard, Dutch pronunciation: [ˈbeːjaˌtrɪks ˌvɪlfɛlˈmiːna ˈɑrmyɑrt]; 31 January 1938) reigned as Queen of the Netherlands from 1980 until her abdication in 2013. Princess Beatrix is the eldest daughter of Queen Juliana and her husband, Prince Bernhard of Lippe-Biesterfeld. Upon her mother's accession in 1948, she became heir presumptive. When her mother abdicated on 30 April 1980, Beatrix succeeded her as Queen.

She attended a public primary school in Canada during World War II, and then finished her primary and secondary education in the Netherlands in the post war period. In 1961, she received her law degree from Leiden University. In 1966, Beatrix married Claus von Amsberg, a German diplomat, with whom she had three children: Willem-Alexander, King of the Netherlands (b. 1967), Prince Friso (1968-2013) and Prince Constantijn (b. 1969). Prince Claus died in 2002. At the time of her abdication, Queen Beatrix was the oldest reigning monarch of the Netherlands.<sup>[1]</sup>

Beatrix's reign saw the country's Caribbean possessions reshaped with Aruba's secession and becoming its own constituent country within the Kingdom in 1986 as well as the subsequent Antillean Dissolution in 2010, which created the new special municipalities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba, and the two new constituent countries of Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

On Koninginnedag (*Queen's Day*), 30 April 2013, Beatrix abdicated in favour of her eldest son Willem-Alexander.<sup>[2]</sup> He is the first King of the Netherlands in 123 years.

## 1 Early life

Beatrix was born *Princess Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, Princess of Lippe-Biesterfeld*, on 31 January 1938 at the Soestdijk Palace in Baarn, Netherlands. She is the first child of Princess Juliana of the Netherlands and German aristocrat Prince Bernhard of Lippe-Biesterfeld.<sup>[3]</sup> Beatrix was baptized on 12 May 1938 in the Great Church in The Hague.<sup>[4]</sup> Her five godparents were King Leopold III of the Belgians; Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone; Elisabeth, Princess of Erbach-Schönberg; Duke Adolf



*Princess Beatrix in February 1938 with her parents Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard*

Friedrich of Mecklenburg; and Countess Allene de Kotzebue.<sup>[5]</sup> Beatrix's middle names are the first names of her maternal grandmother, the then reigning Queen Wilhelmina, and her paternal grandmother, Armgard of Sierstorpff-Cramm.

When Beatrix was one year old, in 1939, her younger sister Princess Irene was born.<sup>[3]</sup>

World War II broke out in the Netherlands on 10 May 1940 (Westfeldzug). On 13 May, the Dutch Royal Family evacuated to London, United Kingdom. One month later, Beatrix went to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, with her mother Juliana and her sister Irene, while her father Bernhard and maternal grandmother Queen Wilhelmina remained in London.<sup>[3]</sup> The family lived at the Stornoway residence (now the residence of the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Canada).<sup>[6]</sup> With bodyguards and ladies in waiting, the family summered at Bigwin Inn on Lake of Bays, Ontario where four private stone cottages of the resort served as their retreat. While on

Bigwin Island, the constitution of the Netherlands was stored in the cast iron safe of Bigwin Inn's Rotunda building. Princess Juliana and her Family were remembered for their "down to earth" friendliness, general gratefulness and great reverence for their homeland and people, to whom they paid homage by refraining from all luxuries offered to guests at the resort that was once billed as the largest and most luxurious summer resort in Canada. In order to provide them with a greater sense of security, culinary chefs and staff catered to personal orders at meal time. Upon their departure, the hotel musicians of the Bigwin Inn Orchestra assembled dockside; and at every public performance afterward through to the end of World War II, the *Wilhelmus* was played. In the years following the shuttering and neglect of the island resort, the "Juliana" cottages were well maintained and preserved in an informal tribute to Princess Juliana and her family. In thanks for the protection of her and her daughters, Princess Juliana established the custom of the delivery to the Canadian government every spring of tulips, which are the centrepiece of the Canadian Tulip Festival.

The second sister of Beatrix, Princess Margriet, was born in Ottawa in 1943.<sup>[3]</sup> During their exile in Canada, Beatrix attended nursery and<sup>[7]</sup> Rockcliffe Park Public School, a primary school where she was known as "Trixie Orange".<sup>[8][9]</sup>

On 5 May 1945, the German troops in the Netherlands surrendered. The family returned to the Netherlands on 2 August 1945. Beatrix went to the progressive primary school *De Werkplaats* in Bilthoven. Her third sister Princess Christina was born in 1947.<sup>[3]</sup> On 6 September 1948, her mother Juliana succeeded her grandmother Wilhelmina as Queen of the Netherlands, and Beatrix became the heiress presumptive to the throne of the Netherlands at the age of ten.

## 2 Education

In April 1950, Princess Beatrix entered the Incrementum, a part of Baarnsch Lyceum, where, in 1956, she passed her school-graduation examinations in the subjects of arts and classics.<sup>[10]</sup>

In 1954, Princess Beatrix served as bridesmaid at the wedding of Baroness van Randwijck and Mr T Boey.<sup>[11]</sup>

On 31 January 1956 Princess Beatrix celebrated her 18th birthday. From that date, under the Constitution of the Netherlands, she was entitled to assume the Royal Prerogative. At that time, her mother installed her in the Council of State.

The same year her studies at Leiden University began. In her first years at the university, she studied sociology, jurisprudence, economics, parliamentary history and constitutional law.<sup>[10]</sup> In the course of her studies she also attended lectures on the cultures of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, the Charter for the Kingdom of



*Princess Beatrix and Queen Juliana in 1960*

the Netherlands, international affairs, international law, history and European law.

The princess also visited various European and international organisations in Geneva, Strasbourg, Paris, and Brussels. She was also an active member of the VVSL (Female Union for Students in Leiden), now called L.S.V. Minerva, after it had merged with the Leidsch Studenten Corps (which before then was male-only). In the summer of 1959, she passed her preliminary examination in law, and she obtained her law degree in July 1961.<sup>[10]</sup>

## 3 Political involvement

Her appearance on the political scene was almost immediately marked by controversy. In 1965, Princess Beatrix became engaged to the German aristocrat Claus von Amsberg, a diplomat working for the German Foreign Office. Their marriage caused a massive protest during the wedding day in Amsterdam on 10 March 1966. Prince Claus had served in the Hitler Youth and the Wehrmacht and was, therefore, associated by a part of the Dutch population with German Nazism. Protests included such memorable slogans as "Claus 'raus!" (Claus out!) and "Mijn fiets terug" ("Return my bicycle" – a reference to occupying German soldiers confiscating Dutch bicycles during WWII). A smoke bomb was thrown at the Golden Coach by a group of Provos causing a violent street battle with the police. As time went on, however, Prince Claus became one of the most popular members of the Dutch monarchy and his 2002 death was widely mourned.

On 25 November 1975, Beatrix and Prince Claus attended in representation of her mother, the Queen, the independence ceremony of Suriname, held in the new nation's capital, Paramaribo.

An even more violent riot occurred on 30 April 1980, during the investiture (sovereigns of the Netherlands are not crowned as such) of Queen Beatrix. Some people, including socialist squatters, used the occasion to protest against poor housing conditions in the Netherlands and against the monarchy in general, using the also memorable slogan “Geen woning; geen Kroning” (No home, no coronation). Violent clashes with the police and security forces took place. The latter event is reflected in contemporary Dutch literature in the books of A.F.Th. van der Heijden.

As monarch, Beatrix had weekly meetings with the prime minister. She signed all new Acts of Parliament and royal decrees, and until a constitutional change late in her reign, appointed the public servant who assisted in brokering the formation of new governments. At the state opening of parliament each September, she delivered the Speech from the Throne, in which the government announces its plans for the coming parliamentary year. As Queen, she was president of the Council of State. Her role was largely ceremonial and as a focus of national unity; she did not make legislative or executive decisions.

Beatrix is a member of the Bilderberg Group,<sup>[12]</sup> a secretive, invitation-only annual conference co-founded by her father which first met in Hotel de Bilderberg in Oosterbeek.

## 4 Marriage and children

On 28 June 1965, the engagement of Princess Beatrix to the German diplomat Claus von Amsberg was announced. Claus and Beatrix had met at the wedding-eve party of Princess Tatjana of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg and Moritz, Landgrave of Hesse, in summer 1964. (In fact they had already met once before, on New Year’s Eve 1962 in Bad Driburg at a dinner hosted by the count von Oeynhausen-Sierstorpff who was a distant relative of both of them.) Following the consent of Parliament to the marriage, Claus von Amsberg became a Dutch citizen, and upon his marriage became Prince Claus of the Netherlands, Jonkheer van Amsberg.

Princess Beatrix married Claus von Amsberg on 10 March 1966 in civil and religious ceremonies.<sup>[13]</sup> The bride wore a traditional gown with train in duchesse silk satin, designed by Caroline Bergé-Farwick of Maison Linette, in Den Bosch, and the Württemberg Ornate Pearl Tiara.

The senior bridesmaids were the bride’s youngest sister, Princess Christina of the Netherlands; Princess Christina of Sweden, Lady Elisabeth Anson, Joanna Roëll, Eugénie Loudon and the bridegroom’s sister, Christina von Amsberg. The junior bridesmaids were Daphne Stewart Clark and Carolijn Alting von Geusau, with page boys Joachim Jencquel and Markus von Oeynhausen-Sierstorpff.<sup>[14]</sup>

The royal couple travelled to the ceremony together in the

gold state carriage.<sup>[15]</sup> The civil ceremony was conducted by the Mayor of Amsterdam, Gijsbert van Hall, at Amsterdam City Hall. The marriage blessing took place in the Westerkerk, conducted by Rev. Hendrik Jan Kater, with a sermon by Rev. Johannes Hendrik Sillevius Smitt.<sup>[16]</sup>

Princess Beatrix and Prince Claus have three sons: King Willem-Alexander (b. 1967), Prince Johan Friso (1968–2013)<sup>[17]</sup> and Prince Constantijn (b. 1969).

The royal couple lived at Drakensteyn Castle in Lage Vuursche with their children until Beatrix ascended the throne. In 1981, they moved into Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague.

## 5 Reign



*Queen Beatrix and President Vladimir Putin during his state visit to the Netherlands in 2005*

On 30 April 1980, Beatrix became the monarch when her mother abdicated.

By longstanding convention, Beatrix had to sign every piece of legislation before it becomes law. As Queen, her main tasks were to represent the Kingdom abroad and to be a unifying figurehead at home. She received foreign ambassadors and awarded honours and medals. She performed the latter task by accepting invitations to open exhibitions, attending anniversaries, inaugurating bridges, etc. Beatrix was rarely quoted directly in the press during her reign since the government information service (*Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst*) made it a condition of interviews that she may not be quoted. This policy was introduced shortly after her inauguration, reportedly to protect her from political complications that may arise from “off-the-cuff” remarks. It did not apply to her son Prince Willem-Alexander.

Throughout much of her reign Beatrix had a considerable role in the cabinet formation process; notably she appointed the *informateur*, the person who leads the negotiations that ultimately lead to the formation of a government. However, this was changed in 2012, and now the largest party in the States General appoints a “scout” who then appoints an *informateur*.



On 1 January 1986, Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles and became a separate constituent country in the Dutch Kingdom.

On 6 October 2002, the Queen's husband, Prince Claus, died after a long illness. A year and a half later her mother died after long suffering from senile dementia, while her father succumbed to cancer in December 2004.

On 8 February 2005, Queen Beatrix received a rare honorary doctorate from Leiden University, an honour the Queen does not usually accept. In her acceptance speech she reflected on the monarchy and her own 25 years as Queen.<sup>[18]</sup> The speech was broadcast live.<sup>[19]</sup>



*Queen Beatrix and Prince Willem-Alexander in the Golden Coach in 2007*

On 29 and 30 April 2005, she celebrated the 25th anniversary of her reign. She was interviewed on Dutch television, was offered a concert on Dam Square in Amsterdam, and a celebration took place in The Hague, the country's seat of government.

On 10 October 2010, the Netherlands Antilles were formally dissolved. The new municipalities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba and the new constituent countries of Curaçao and Sint Maarten were established in its place. The dissolution ceremony in the Netherlands Antilles' capital, Willemstad, was attended by the then-Prince and Princess of Orange, Willem-Alexander and his wife Máxima, representing the Queen.

## 5.1 Attack on the Royal Family

Main article: 2009 attack on the Dutch Royal Family

On 30 April 2009, the Queen and other members of the royal family were targeted in a car attack by a man named Karst Tate. Tate crashed his car into a parade in Apeldoorn, narrowly missing a bus carrying the Queen. Five people were killed instantly and two victims and the assailant Tate died later. Other victims of the crash were critically hurt. One week after the attack another victim succumbed to the injuries he had sustained. The royal

party were unharmed, but the Queen and members of her family saw the crash at close range. Within hours, Queen Beatrix made a rare televised address to express her shock and condolences. The man reportedly told police he was deliberately targeting the royal family.<sup>[20]</sup>

## 5.2 Abdication



*Beatrix in 2013, prior to her abdication*

In a broadcast on national media on 28 January 2013 Beatrix announced her intention to abdicate on 30 April (Queen's Day), when she would have been on the throne for exactly 33 years. Beatrix stated that it was time to "place the responsibility for the country in the hands of a new generation."<sup>[21]</sup> Her heir apparent was her eldest son, Prince Willem-Alexander.<sup>[22]</sup> She was the third successive Dutch monarch to abdicate, following her grandmother and her mother.<sup>[22]</sup> The broadcast was followed by a statement from Prime Minister Mark Rutte who paid tribute to Beatrix, saying "Since her investiture in 1980 she has applied herself heart and soul to Dutch society."<sup>[21]</sup>

The official programme for the abdication and investiture took place on 30 April 2013. The Queen signed the Instrument of Abdication in the Vroedschapkamer (also known as Mozeszaal)<sup>[23]</sup> in the Royal Palace, Amsterdam at 10:07 a.m. local time. With the completion of her signature she was no longer monarch. The investiture of Willem-Alexander as King took place in the afternoon in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam.<sup>[24]</sup>

### 5.3 Personal wealth



*Princess Beatrix following her abdication with her son and successor and his wife*

In 2009, *Forbes* estimated her wealth at US\$300 million.<sup>[25]</sup>

## 6 Post Abdication

Princess Beatrix continues to undertake some royal duties and is patron of many organisations. She now lives in the small moated Drakensteyn Castle near the village of Lage Vuursche.

## 7 Cultural impact

Queen Beatrix has given her name to a number of facilities in the Netherlands and beyond. These include:

- Streektziekenhuis Koningin Beatrix, regional hospital in Beatrixpark, Winterswijk.<sup>[26]</sup>
- Queen Beatrix International Airport in Aruba.
- Reina Beatrix School in Aruba.<sup>[27]</sup>
- Queen Beatrix Hospital Medical Center, Sint Eustatius.<sup>[28]</sup>
- Queen Beatrix Chair in Dutch Studies at UC Berkeley.<sup>[29]</sup>
- Queen Beatrix Nursing Home, Albion Park Rail, NSW, Australia.<sup>[30]</sup>

A few parks in the country also bear her name:

- Beatrixpark in the Oud-Zuid neighbourhood in Amsterdam.
- Beatrixpark in Almere.
- Beatrixpark in 's-Hertogenbosch.
- Beatrixpark in Utrecht.
- Beatrixpark in Schiedam.

## 8 Titles, styles, honours and arms



*Royal Monogram of Queen Beatrix*

Main article: List of titles and honours of Beatrix of the Netherlands

Princess Beatrix has held titles throughout her life, as a granddaughter or daughter of a monarch, and eventually as the Sovereign. Queen Beatrix's official title was *Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, etc., etc., etc.*<sup>[31]</sup> The triple 'etc.' refers to the monarch's many dormant titles. She signed official documents with only "Beatrix". In common parlance she was referred to as *The Queen* (*de koningin* or *de vorstin*) or

*Her Majesty* (Hare Majesteit). But when in conversation with the queen the practice was to initially address her as “Your Majesty” or in Dutch as “Uwe Majesteit”<sup>[32]</sup> and thereafter as “Mevrouw” (ma'am).<sup>[33]</sup>

Beatrix has received honours and awards from countries around the world, both during her life as a princess and as a monarch. In her capacity as the Sovereign she was Grand Master of the Military Order of William (*Militaire Willemsorde*) and the other Dutch orders of merit. She is the 975th Member and Lady of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the 1,187th Dame of the Order of the Golden Fleece in Spain and has received numerous other medals and decorations.

From birth till her inauguration as queen she had the following name and titles, to which she reverted after her abdication: *Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, Princess of Lippe-Biesterfeld*.<sup>[34]</sup>

## 8.1 Arms

## 9 Issue

## 10 Ancestry

See also: Dutch monarchs family tree

## 11 Prime Ministers during the Queen's reign

## 12 See also

- List of heirs to the Dutch throne
- Line of succession to the Dutch throne
- Monarchy of the Netherlands

## 13 References

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## 14 External links

- Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix: Official website



## 15 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

### 15.1 Text

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