Zoetermeer

Dutch Topographic map of Zoetermeer, Sept. 2014

Zoetermeer (Dutch pronunciation: [ˌzutərˈmeːr]) is a city in the western Netherlands, in the province of South Holland. The municipality covers an area of 37.05 km^2 (14.31 sq mi) of which 2.50 km^2 (0.97 sq mi) is water. A small village until the late 1960s, it had 6,392 inhabitants in 1950.[5] By 2013 this had grown to 123,328, making it the third largest population centre in the province of South Holland, after Rotterdam and The Hague. It is part of the Haaglanden conurbation.

The name "Zoetermeer" (Dutch for "Sweet Lake") refers to the former fresh lake north of the town (reclaimed in 1614).

1 History

A street in the old town centre

In the tenth century Zoetermeer was a small village, pri-

marily home to farmers and fishermen. In the 13th century a village centre was formed, which still exists as the historic Dorpsstraat. Until the 17th century there was a lake, called the Zoetermeer. A reminder of this is the "Noord Aa" at the northern edge of town, an artificial lake was created when tons of sand were needed as building material for the foundations for new housing development, and the area north of Zoetermeer provided a good source.

Until 1935 the village centre was split into two villages, Zoetermeer and Zegwaard. The standard of living at the time was said to be higher in Zoetermeer than in Zegwaard. Seghwaert, an older way of spelling of Zegwaard, is now the name of a neighbourhood outside the old village centre.

Newsreel from 1973 about the 'fastest growing municipality of our country'

Zoetermeer began to grow slightly when the first train service came around 1868. A few decades later the Numico factory started near the station. The real growth started in 1966, when there was an urgent need of houses from people around The Hague. From then they started to build new quarters around the old village centre, so Zoetermeer began to grow and became a city in the meantime.

Although Zoetermeer nowadays has the image of a modern city, there are still remains of the past. Like the old village centre with its small houses and the church with late medieval 15th century clock tower (on picture, wooden top from 1642), and the old farms, surrounded by modern houses nowadays.

Lake Dobbe divides the old town from the new city centre, with the medieval village centre on one side of the

lake and the modern high-rise and skyscrapers on the other side.

2   Neighbourhoods

Zoetermeer is divided into 10 neighbourhoods, which cover most of the municipality's territory, with the remainder being the commercial area in the east and the mostly green and undeveloped *Buitengebied* in the west. Every neighbourhood has at least one (smaller) shopping mall and a tram stop. Each neighbourhood consists of one or more *wijken*, each of which has a separate postcode with differing last two digits following "27", from within Zoetermeer's 2710-2729 assigned postcodes (2700, 2701 and 2702 are used for post-office boxes and the rest are not used as of 2012)

These neighbourhoods have the following names (in brackets the year the neighbourhood was designated, although some of the neighbourhood already existed before designation):

Aerial view of Zoetermeer.

2.1   Dorp (1962)

Literally meaning "village", this *wijk* covers mostly the territory of the pre-existing village of Zoetermeer, with the central *Dorpstraat* (village street) with historic buildings serving as a shopping and recreation area. The area also features the historic *De Hoop* windmill, which unlike many other windmills in the area used for drainage, has always been used as a corn mill. The postcode for Zoetermeer-Dorp is 2712.

2.2   Driemanspolder (1965)

Driemanspolder (postcode 2713) was the first area to be developed as part of modern Zoetermeer, and contains mostly large multi-apartment buildings characteristic of the era. It is next to the A12 motorway, which forms the southern border of the *wijk*, and directly north of the

Zoetermeer railway station (which is on the other side of A12).

2.3   Palenstein (1966)

Palenstein (postcode 2722) is north of the Dorp, deriving its name from the former Castle of Palenstein, which used to stand there. It mainly consists of highrise residential development. A rejuvenation project was started in Palenstein in 2006, providing for the renovation of some and demolition of other older buildings.

2.4   Meerzicht (1969)

Literally meaning "lake view", Meerzicht is divided by the RandstadRail light rail tracks into Meerzicht-Oost (2715), with taller block of flats, and Meerzicht-West (2716) with low-rise residential development. Further to the west is the Westerpark green recreation area.

2.5   Buytenwegh de Leyens (1974)

The development of this area marked the shift to the development of single-family homes with private gardens more popular with Dutch families of that and coming decades, and encompasses the much older settlements of Buytenwegh (postcode 2717) and De Leyens (postcode 2725), and an area called "Buytenwegh de Leyens" per se (2726).

2.6   Seghwaert (1975)

Seghwaert was formed around what was the former village of Zegwaart (or Zegwaard), which fused with Zoetermeer in 1935, using the archaic spelling of the locale's name. The old Zegwaart was a ribbon development along what remains until today as *Zegwaartseweg*, which is perpendicular to *Dorpstraat*. It is further divided into Seghwaert-Oost (2723), -Midden (2724) and -Noord (2727).

2.7   Stadscentrum (1978)

The construction of a new centre of Zoetermeer actually started only in 1981, to serve as a shopping and administrative heart of the city. It followed modern urban planning principles, placing parking garages, some storage facilities and a RandstadRail station on the ground level, which is covered by pedestrian- and bicycle-only area with shops on the lower floors and apartments above them, to ensure the centre does not die out outside of the business hours.

The centre was completed in phases, the last one as of 2012 being the Spazio shopping centre and the Cadenza

residential development in 2005-2006 (however this has not been built yet, and it is unsure when, next to the RandstadRail station Centrum-West, which serves as the terminus for RandstadRail lines 3 and 4 and the central bus station of Zoetermeer. The Stadscentrum includes the modern town hall of Zoetermeer and the local police station. A small lake called *Grote Dobbe* is placed directly in between Stadscentrum and Dorp, with the promenades and bicycle paths along the lake connecting the old and the new centres of Zoetermeer. The postcode for Stadscentrum is 2711.

2.8   Noordhove (1986)

Noordhove (postcode 2728) is located between Seghwaert to the south and the artificial lake known as 'Zoetermeerse Plas' to the north. Unlike the other *wijken*, it has no dedicated RandstadRail station, as both RandstadRail track branches run to the south of it.

2.9   Rokkeveen (1987)

Rokkeveen is separated from the other *wijken* by the A12 motorway and the Den Haag-Gouda railway line. As such, it enjoys direct access to Zoetermeer's railway stations and features numerous crossings under or over both transport corridors to allow access to the rest of Zoetermeer. Rokkeveen is further divided into Rokkeveen-Oost and Rokkeveen-West. A significant turning point in the development of this part of town was the Floriade of 1992, which took place there.

Rokkeveen-Oost (postcode 2718) extends between the railway stations Zoetermeer-Oost and Zoetermeer. The *Mandelabrug* (Nelson Mandela bridge) was built over the latter for the Floriade (replacing an earlier smaller bridge, deemed insufficient for the increased traffic) as a covered bicycle and pedestrian passage over the railway, motorway and the RandstadRail, which adjoins it at this point from the North. The *Mandelabrug* connects the train station, the Randstadrail station Driemanspolder and the *wijken* of Randstad-Oost and Driemanspolder. Next to the Mandelabrug runs a road crossing - a bridge between Afrikaweg on the northern side and Zuidweg in Rokkeveen.

The other crossing are the road, pedestrian and bicycle tunnels between Tweede and Eerste Stationsstraat next to Zoetermeer-Oost train station, connecting Rokkeveen-Oost with Dorp. The historic water tower *De Tien Gemeenten* is also now located in Rokkeveen-Oost.

Rokkeveen-West (postcode 2719) mainly encompasses newer development on the grounds of the former Floriade-park, which includes both residential and office buildings.

2.10   Oosterheem (1999)

Oosterheem is the newest district of Zoetermeer, a Vinex-location and the source of Zoetermeer's most recent and continuing growth, which allowed it to become the third most populous municipality in South Holland. The districts development was not without problematic issues and delays, stemming first from the concerns over the environmental impacts of such development, and later from the planning and construction of HSL-Zuid, which now forms the district's and municipality's eastern border. An enduring concern is an old pipeline, now used for the transportation of pressurized CO_2, which runs through Oosterheem.

Oosterheem is served by three stations on RandstadRail line 4, whose tracks branch out from the original RandstadRail loop in Seghwaert. It is further divided into Oosterheem-Oost (postcode 2721) and Oosterheem-West (2729).

2.11   Wijkposten

Zoetermeer has a network of "*wijkposten*" ("neighbourhood stations"), which provide more direct contacts between the municipality and the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods. The *wijkposten* employ personnel to deal with housing issues and provide space for local police officers. There are six *wijkposten* throughout Zoetermeer. Buytenwegh de Leyens, Meerzicht, Oosterheem and Rokkeveen have a *wijkpost* each, while Noordhove and Seghwaert share a common station and *Wijkpost Center* serves Dorp, Driemanspolder, Palenstein and Stadscentrum, which are for some purposes also lumped together as "Zoetermeer Centrum".[6]

3   Economy

Zoetermeer is a so-called ICT-city which means Zoetermeer has a modern infrastructure and many schools that offer ICT-related education. Also 20% of the population of Zoetermeer already has an ICT-related job. Siemens and Toshiba also have factories in Zoetermeer. The municipality of Zoetermeer designates a comparatively large part of the budget to computers for schools.

To stress the ICT-tradition of Zoetermeer, the city is the first in the world to have a city hall in Second Life.

4   Transport

4.1   Light rail

The former Zoetermeer Stadslijn urban railway was rebuilt as light rail in 2006/2007. The stadslijn was the only

Wind turbine with observation deck at Siemens factory in Zoetermeer

urban railway in The Netherlands. It had 12 stations in Zoetermeer and ran to and from The Hague Central Station.

The new light rail system is part of the RandstadRail network between The Hague, Rotterdam and Zoetermeer. Besides the rebuilt Stadslijn, which now has 13 stations, the new line Oosterheemlijn leads to a new suburb called Zoetermeer Oosterheem. It will count up to 30,000 inhabitants when completed, making it the largest quarter of Zoetermeer. The Oosterheemlijn currently has three stations, but will be extended to Rotterdam in the future via Bleiswijk and Berkel.

4.2   Heavy rail

Zoetermeer has two stations on the main railway between The Hague and Utrecht. Zoetermeer-Zegwaard, built when the city was connected by railway in 1868, burnt down in 1906. On its location stands Zoetermeer-Oost. Zoetermeer station, the main station, is more recent.

The HSL-Zuid high speed line from Amsterdam to Paris passes Zoetermeer on its eastern side. Although there have been proposals to open a station on the line, this seems highly unlikely.[7]

4.3   Motorway

Zoetermeer is next to the A12 motorway, connecting The Hague with Utrecht, Arnhem and Germany.

5   Religion

Zoetermeer is the only place in the Netherlands with a temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is situated near the old village centre.[8][9]

6   Entertainment and recreation

This former new town used to be a satellite city of The Hague, as many residents worked, shopped and were entertained in The Hague. With the growth of Zoetermeer came a large theatre, mega cinema, and other entertainment such as go-karts, laser gaming, survival centre, and a golf centre. The "Locomotion" discothèque, the first mega disco of The Netherlands, was the oldest of them. Locomotion closed its doors in 2011 and has since become a restaurant called Eten Enzo.

6.1   SnowWorld

SnowWorld indoor ski slope

SnowWorld was the first indoor ski slope made of real snow in Europe, opened in 1996. It now has three slopes, of which the 200 metre slope is the longest. Plans are being made to extend this to 300 metre. SnowWorld attracts over a million visitors each year, making it the most important tourist attraction in Zoetermeer.

6.2   Dutch Water Dreams

Dutch Water Dreams (DWD) is an artificial Olympic wild water rafting circuit. It is a copy of the one built in China for the 2008 Olympic Games and is mainly

used for training by European rafting teams, and also for team building and recreation. DWD also has an indoor Flowrider centre.

6.3   Silverdome

Silverdome is an indoor Olympic ice skating track and convention centre. It is used as a training centre for the KNSB, the Dutch Olympic and world championship ice skaters. Outside the skating season it is used as a convention centre and concert hall and for large raves.

6.4   Indoor Dive

There are plans to build an indoor diving centre in Zoetermeer. 70 m in diameter and 30 m deep, it will be the largest indoor diving centre in the world. There will be a coral reef and underwater caves and a large beach around the edge. Ten thousand lives, tropical fish should make it as realistic as possible.

6.5   Parks

Zoetermeer has many parks, the biggest being the "Westerpark" on the west side of town. It is almost as large as Central Park in New York. Other notable parks are the "Buytenpark", the "Aldo van Eyckpark", the "Binnenpark", the "Van Tuyllpark (with Dutch Water Dreams and Aquapark Keerpunt), the "Hoekstrapark", the "Wilhelminapark", the "floriade park", the "Seghwaertse Hout" and the "Seghwaertpark".

At the north side there is a lake, the "Zoetermeerse Plas", often called "Noord Aa" because it is in the Noord Aa Recreational Area. There is a beach along one side of the lake and a marina on the other. Wind- and kite surfing, sailing and fishing are the most popular activities on the lake.

On both the west and east side of the city forests are being planted, called "Balijbos" (west side) and Bentwoud (east side). These forests are intended to form a "natural" barrier between The Hague and Zoetermeer.

7   International relations

See also: List of twin towns and sister cities in the Netherlands

7.1   Twin towns – Sister cities

Zoetermeer is twinned with:

- 🇸🇰 Nitra, Slovakia

- 🇳🇮 Jinotega, Jinotega, Nicaragua

- 🇨🇳 Xiamen, China

- 🇷🇴 Odorheiu Secuiesc, Romania

8   Notable people from Zoetermeer

Born in Zoetermeer:

- Romee Strijd (1995), Model

- Antonius van den Broek (1870-1926), Dutch amateur physicist and lawyer

- Suzanne Harmes (b. 1986), Dutch gymnast

- Leroy Fer (b. 1990), Dutch footballer

- Rutger de Regt (b. 1979), Dutch designer

- Bert van der Spek (b. 1949), Dutch ancient historian

- Dennis Princewell Stehr (b. 1984), better known as **Mr Probz**, Dutch singer-songwriter, rapper, producer and actor

- Karen Venhuizen (b. 1984), Dutch figure skater

- Charlton Vicento (b. 1991), Dutch footballer

Residents of Zoetermeer:

- Xenia Stad-de Jong (1922–2012), Dutch track and field athlete

- Hilbrand Nawijn (b. 1948), Dutch politician

- Jopie Selbach (1918–1998), Dutch freestyle swimmer

9   References

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[6] "Wijkposten", on www.zoetermeer.nl (official webpage of the municipality of Zoetermeer) (Dutch)

[7] AD, 29-1-2007: "BleiZo nog niet in zicht", on www. stationsweb.nl (Dutch)

[8] The Hague Netherlands LDS (Mormon) Temple

[9] The Den Haag-temple (Dutch Wikipedia)

10   External links

- Official website (Dutch)

- Zoetermeer in Beeld (Dutch)

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