



REVIEW

First in: De Durgerdam, Amsterdam

A cool new hotel on the coast near Amsterdam


Studio Unfolded


 Reviewed by **FRANCESCA SYZ**

Why book

Opening just after the hotly anticipated Vermeer exhibition at the Rijksmuseum (for which tickets are rarer than hen's teeth), 14-room-and-suite De Durgerdam is entering a crowded hotel market, but what it offers is like nothing else out there for those seeking a mini-break immersion into **Amsterdam's** art, design and food scenes. This is the perfect blend of city break and seaside escape, with homely convivial communal spaces and cosy, calming bedrooms. Just four miles east of the city centre, the coastal village of Durgerdam, after which the hotel is named, is just 15 minutes in a cab from Amsterdam Central Station, or a 20-minute cycle (the hotel has a fleet of electric bicycles you can borrow, from Dutch manufacturer Veloretti). Or one can book a transfer in the hotel's electric-powered vintage salon boat, De Eeuw, which was waiting for us on the canal right outside the train station. Then it's just a 45-minute glide to the hotel, glass of chilled Dutch white in hand.

Set the scene

The village of Durgerdam, a sweep of water-facing traditional wooden houses, many dating back to the 17th century, was built on what is now Lake IJmeer. Back then, it was still a salt water inlet of the North Sea, and the houses were painted white to help fishermen navigate their way home – the moon would light up their facades.

Built in 1664, the hotel was an inn for sailors (their captains would continue onto more refined lodgings). After repeated flooding, the inlet was finally dammed in 1932, and today it is three freshwater lakes fringed by pretty villages, canals and marshland. The village is a real insider's secret, quietly loved by its inhabitants – Friso Heidinga is a jazz musician who runs a world-renowned saxophone repair workshop on the harbourfront, and forager Hennie Koopman, now in his eighties, is famous for his delicious smoked goose breast. After a major restoration by Aedes, an Amsterdam-based company specialising in restoring historical buildings, it re-opened in March as De Durgerdam, a cosy inn with 11 rooms and three suites split between the main building and an additional 'guesthouse', plus a restaurant, De Mark, by Richard van Oostenbrugge and Thomas Groot, the duo behind [Amsterdam's](#) two-Michelin-starred 212 and one-Michelin-starred De Jewelier.

The backstory

Prince Henrik, husband of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, loved spending time at the inn in the 19th century, when it was known as the Prins Te Paard (The Prince on Horseback). Later it doubled as a ferry terminal, and most recently, it was a rustic-chic café-restaurant known as Zuyderziel. To create De Durgerdam, Aedes CEO Paul Geertman (who has helped develop high profile [hotels in Amsterdam](#), including Soho House, Rosewood, The Hoxton and Andaz) hired Buro Belén, a local design team, to create a look inspired by its history and maritime setting. The elegant little hotel is a nod to Vermeer and his Golden Age peers in its rich, earthy colours and use of natural light, and a celebration of good, simple design, achieved through a mix of vintage and custom-made furniture, books and art. Geertman hired Richard van Oostenbrugge and Thomas Groot of 212, who hired brilliant chef Koen Marees, known for his imaginative, vegetable-forward menus (and habit of bringing dishes to the table himself).

The rooms

Both classic rooms and suites feel special, with ochre and putty-coloured walls, armchairs in burnt orange, green, golden yellow or rust, and fabulously soft, velvety throws draped upon king-size Hypnos beds dressed in crisp white linen with wave-inspired headboards made of local tulipwood. All are moodily downlit, but the North Sea light floods in through the windows. Built-in wardrobes conceal less-aesthetic elements like televisions. Each room is named after its view. Mine, De Zee (The Sea), one of the three suites in the main house, has a front-row seat for the sea itself. It has two rooms, the second a drawing room with a dining table, two armchairs and a wood-burning stove. Another, De Maan (The Moon) is one large space with a snug-like 'bed box' under the eaves, a window seat, an armchair in-front of a wood burning stove and a free-standing copper bath. In the guesthouse, several rooms open up onto private terraces. All are decorated with ceramics and Dutch artwork. At turn-down, rooms are freshly stocked with artisanal treats including delicious cubes of butterkuchen (fudge-like shortbread) and a decanter of local sherry; or sachets of verbena tea, and soon, sleep kits, including pre-recorded guided meditation sessions. Bathrooms are stocked with products by Netherlands-based vegan beauty brand, Zenology. Suites come with sky-blue raincoats designed by Dutch fashion house KASSL Editions.

Food and drink

The relaxed open-plan restaurant, De Mark, inhabits the whole ground floor, with a bar in the middle and interesting art throughout. Notable art includes a striking still life by 17th Century Dutch painter Pieter Jansz Van Berendrecht and a contemporary light installation called 'Fisherman's tears' suspended above a dining table - a fishing net hung with tiny glass pendants representing both the joy and hardship of life as a fisherman. At one end, doors open out onto a terrace overlooking the lake and there's a cosy living room area and a wood-burning stove. In the summer, there will be dining tables on the terrace and on the inn's restored jetty. Friendly, knowledgeable staff deliver the imaginative and beautifully presented dishes made from high quality, locally sourced seasonal ingredients, paired with wine from a vast collection. I tried the delicious tomato steak tartare starter one evening and the onions and shallots cooked in hay with salted lemon and mustard ice cream the next. The roasted cod with buttermilk and cream of BBQ celeriac main and a strange-but-heavenly desert of celeriac caramelised in the fire with vanilla and rosemary were two delights. As were the locally-sourced cheese, honey and jam made from Geertman's fruit trees.

The spa

There isn't one, but there are yoga mats and dumbbells in every bedroom and Havaiana flip flops and outdoor towels for all guests who want to take a dip in the lake. (We did: it was freezing but invigorating, and there's a good ladder on the jetty to ease you in.)

The neighbourhood

There's lots to do in Amsterdam but you could easily skip all that, stay put and explore the village on foot. We booked a [local cycle guide](#) and headed out for the morning. It's just a 10-minute ride to the village of Ransdorp, where we stopped off at the spire-less church Rembrandt liked to sketch. We headed on to the beautiful village of Broek in Waterland, stopping for savoury pancakes at a popular little bistro, De Witte Swaen. At Holysloot, there was coffee and delicious apple pie at Het Schoolhuis, a café in an old school. On the home stretch, we popped into Melktap en Boerderij Winkel, a rustic little farm shop, for cheese, yoghurt and apple juice.

The service

You'd be hard pushed to find a friendlier, more efficient team - from Thijs, the charming manager, and Ghislaine, who came bounding down the jetty to do warming-up exercises with us when she saw we were going for a swim, to the delightful Alma, who was serving us lunch one minute and laying a fire in our wood-burning stove the next. There is no formal reception area, and guests can go straight to the room. The hotel requests most of the check-in information before arrival; anything extra is gleaned after you've settled in.

Eco-effort

The hotel's entire concept is rooted in minimising its carbon footprint and positively impacting the local community. Furniture and floors have been made from reclaimed and repurposed materials wherever possible, and tiles are locally manufactured. There's also the infrastructure in place to reuse 150,000 litres of shower water per year, LED lighting throughout, gas-free heat pumps, solar panels and electric bicycles for all, including staff.

Accessibility for those with mobility impairments

Due to the protected status of the main building, it wasn't possible to make it wheelchair accessible, and all four bedrooms are up a rather higgledy-piggledy flight of stairs. However, the rooms on the ground floor of the 'guesthouse' would be much easier for those with mobility issues.

For families

While it's the perfect spot for a romantic break or dinner with a group of friends, families are welcome. There is one room that can be turned into a 'twin' and a cot and baby monitors are available.

Address: Durgerdammerdijk 73, 1026 CB Durgerdam

Price: from £260 per night, excluding breakfast

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