



ROTTERDAM RISING

An easy side trip from Amsterdam, the Netherlands' second city continues to cement its reputation as a capital of European cool. BY CHRIS SCHALKX

Above, from left: Patrons at Aloha can drink in views of the Rotterdam skyline; coffee service at popular breakfast spot By Jarmusch. Opposite, from top: Hutspot offers a broad mix of fashion, accessories, and home decor; slow-roasted kohlrabi at Op Het Dak.

Something is brewing in Rotterdam, and it's not just the local coffee roasters or beer makers. There is an unbridled sense of creativity manifesting itself in all corners of town. Once razed by German bombing in World War II, this port city is often referred to as "the new Berlin" by the Dutch for its ascendant, avant-garde vibe. It isn't solely because Rotterdam is home to a high-profile film festival, Rem Koolhaas' heavyweight design firm OMA, and an impressive lineup of architectural showpieces like the yellow Cube Houses and horseshoe-shaped Markthal—its denizens are breathing new life into a range of unlikely venues from office blocks and warehouses to decommissioned swimming pools.



• WHERE TO EAT

On Rotterdam's east side, Het Industriegebouw is a brick-and-concrete monument to the postwar building boom. A more recent transformation following years of neglect has given the commercial complex a second lease on life, with more than 200 businesses now housed here. Among them is fine-dining restaurant **Héroïne** (Kipstraat 12; restaurantheroine.nl), where the modernist interior pairs raw industrial fittings with chrome wire chairs, velvet couches, and "melting" disco balls by Dutch studio Rotganzen. There is no menu—choose between a four-, five-, or seven-course dinner, and let chef Michael Schook surprise you with a weekly-changing array of courses characterized by inventive flavor combinations. These might include smoked celeriac with 62-degree egg yolk and pine-nut tapenade, or Norwegian had-dock with sea buckthorn, fennel, and pistachio.

Other Het Industriegebouw highlights include **By Jarmusch** (Goudsesingel 64; byjarmusch.nl), a local breakfast institution famed for its bacon-topped pancake stacks, and **Alfredo's Taqueria** (Goudsesingel 204; alfredostaqueria.nl). The latter serves Mexican comfort food (grilled corn cobs with chipotle mayonnaise; tortilla soup with Oaxaca cheese) against a backdrop of deep blue and hot pink.

Not far from the ultramodern Rotterdam Centraal train station, chef Valerie Kuster plates up colorful globetrotting dishes at **Op Het Dak** (Schiekade 189; ophetdak.com)—Dutch for "on the roof." As its name suggests, the restaurant takes up a pavilion and outdoor terrace crowning the creative hub Het Schieblock, a repurposed office building from 1960. Ingredients are as local as possible and, when the season is right, come straight from the adjoining rooftop farm and edible flower garden.

• WHERE TO DRINK

With more than a dozen craft- and microbreweries within city limits, it's clear that Rotterdammers

know a thing or two about beer. A frontrunner in the burgeoning craft scene here is Kaapse Brouwers, producing stouts, pilseners, and IPAs with experimental flavor profiles and mix-ins such as corn grits and Swedish fermented milk. While the waterfront **Fenix Food Factory** (Veerlan 19D; fenixfoodfactory.nl) hosts the company's main tasting room, a newer venture called **Kaapse Maria** (Mauritsweg 52; kaapsebrouwers.nl) packs in much more character, pairing Asian-leaning comfort foods with over 30 beers on tap. Also worth seeking out is **De Gele Kanarie** (Goudsesingel 284; degelekanarie.com), a funky, casual-chic gastropub known for its variety of small-batch Dutch brews as well as the eponymous house ale. You can take a peek at the brewery through a glass floor behind the bar.

For a brew of a different kind, look to Man Met Bril Koffie. Rotterdam's premier coffee roaster has long supplied high-quality beans to dozens of cafés around town, but it wasn't until 2015 that founder Paul Sharo opened a coffee bar, **Hoofdkantoor** (Vijverhofstraat 70; manmetbrilkoffie.nl), right beside his roastery in the Oude Noorden area. It's just the place for a perfect pour-over or a velvety latte.

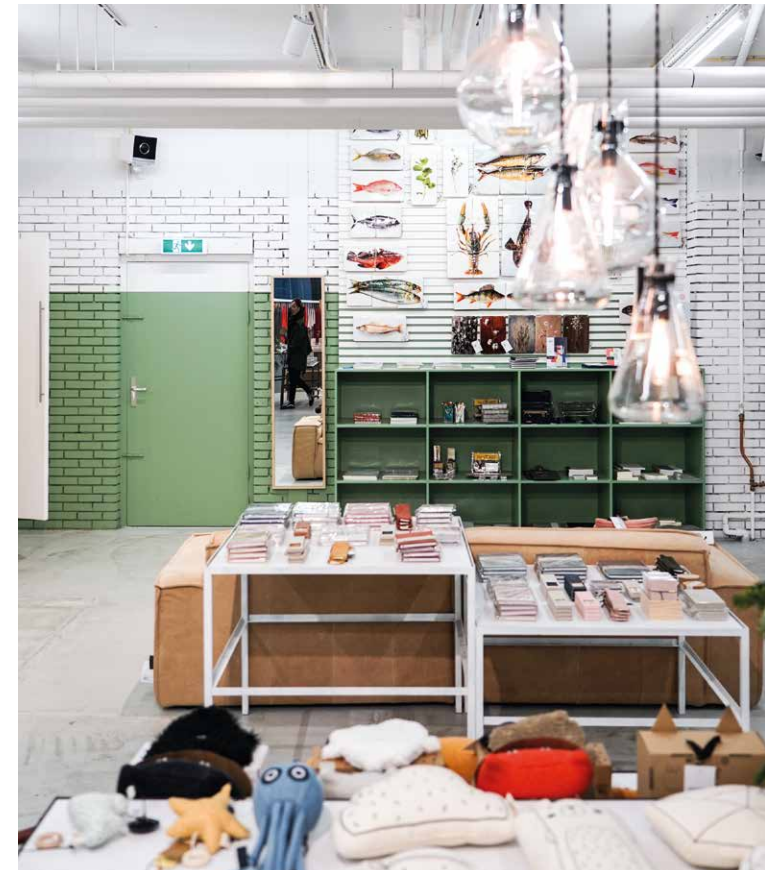
End the day with a drink at **Aloha** (Maasboulevard 100; alohabar.nl), a bar and restaurant occupying the water slide of a former indoor swimming park along the Nieuwe Maas River. Its outdoor terrace is a popular hangout during the summer months, offering excellent G&Ts and views of the Rotterdam skyline.

• WHERE TO SHOP

The basement of a nondescript apartment complex in one of the city's most fashion-forward shopping lanes is the unlikely setting for **Hutspot** (Karel Doormanstraat 317; hutspot.com). True to its name, which is Dutch for "hodgepodge," the store showcases a mix of products created by young, mostly local designers. Look out for Pinqponq's backpacks made from recycled PET bottles or one of illustrator Lotte Simons' bold lino prints.

More local talent comes to the fore at **Susan Bijl** (Mauritsweg 45a; susanbijl.nl) downtown. An alumna of the city's Willem de Kooning design academy, Bijl set out to create a durable alternative to the omnipresent plastic shopping bag. Now, 20 years later, her signature nylon tote bags with the distinct "flash" design are sold in boutiques from Barcelona to Seoul. But it's the Rotterdam flagship store that stocks the biggest collection, including hard-to-find colorways and unique brand collaborations.

Hidden under a railroad viaduct near Rotterdam Centraal station, **Pantoufle** (Vijverhofstraat 100; pantoufle-design.nl) stocks artisanal homewares from all corners of the globe, including porcelain dinner plates from Nagasaki and German-made brass and copper baby mobiles. The showroom only opens on Fridays and Saturdays, so call ahead to make an appointment if you're visiting at other times. ☉



Trip Tips

Reaching Rotterdam is a cinch thanks to the excellent intercity trains of **Nederlandse Spoorwegen** (ns.nl), the national rail company. The trip from Amsterdam will take an hour, from Utrecht just half that. Stay at the smart **CitizenM Rotterdam** (31-10/810-8100; citizenm.com; doubles from US\$100) for compact, iPad-controlled rooms smack in the middle of town, or opt for a bit more space at **Room Mate Bruno** (31-10/892-9580; room-matehotels.com; doubles from US\$110), a colorful hotel occupying an old warehouse in the up-and-coming Kop van Zuid district.

