

11 strategies to feel more home in the Netherlands as an Expat



“Nobody ever said it would be easy all the time, but it is worth it!”

Feeling truly at home in the Netherlands as an Expat is a continuous process and does not happen overnight.

Welcome to the Netherlands! When we move to a new country with a new culture and a new language, we usually experience different phases throughout that journey. Firstly, we tend to be in a “honeymoon” phase where everything is new & exciting. In this phase we often still feel like we are on a vacation and take on a role of a tourist who sees everything with brand new eyes. Everything is an adventure and a new experience.

Once this phase wears off, we start to realize that this is really the place that we have chosen as our new home. Everything starts becoming more normal and our everyday life kicks in. A feeling of ‘everything is still new and foreign’ can start to come in and we become aware of loved ones being far away or all the things we still need to take care of in the upcoming time.

Let’s be honest here: These first phases are a normal part of the journey of moving abroad. There is probably not a single expat who has not experienced this rollercoaster of emotions while adjusting and arriving in their new home country. Feeling home in a new country does not happen at all once and it is a continuous process, so here are our top 11 tips for how to feel more home in the Netherlands as an Expat when you are seeking clarity:

1. **Trust the journey and be patient with yourself.** Allow yourself to get the experience and remind yourself that you do not have to have it all figured out from the start. You have the time and chances are you will be living in the Netherlands for a while, so take it one step at a time. It can often feel like a huge relief when we take that pressure and high expectation off of our chest. Start asking yourself what your main priority is right now in the current phase you are in to feel more at home. Maybe that means learning the language or meeting new people.
2. **Remind yourself why you moved to the Netherlands.** Make a list of all the reasons why you find it exciting and important to live in the Netherlands. Why did you pick this country and what do you appreciate about it so far? Use this as a reminder for yourself whenever you have a moment of doubt coming in or are wondering if you have made the right decision.
3. **Make your home cozy.** Feeling at home in a new country does not only start with integrating into the culture but also with making your home environment cozy and comfortable. Make sure you come home to a safe and comfortable space and surround yourself with things that are familiar to you.

4. **Find a new circle of friends and connect with Dutch people.** A great way to meet new people is on the 'Meetup' app where you can find local events, language meetups, sports groups and other activities.
5. **Try out volunteering:** Volunteering is a fantastic opportunity to meet locals and to practice your language skills. In the Netherlands volunteering is very popular and there are dozens of different ways to volunteer. You can for instance help out at a second hand shop, at an animal shelter, at a local garden or in a library.
6. **Try out local restaurants and become familiar with local dishes and typical Dutch words.** Have you already had a Frietjes Oorlog, Boerenkool, Bitterballen, Softijs and a Koffie Verkeerd? Challenge yourself to trying out something local every week. Have fun with silly Dutch words and expressions !
7. **Learn the language:** The more you are able to speak the Dutch language, the more at home you will tend to feel. This does not mean you need to become an expert of the language straight away, but Dutch people do appreciate when you make an effort to speak Dutch. And if they reply in English then don't worry, keep practicing and acknowledge that you are making the effort. Even though one can get by with English very well in the Netherlands it is often that step towards brushing up ones language skills that build that bridge from feeling like a tourist to feeling more and more like a local.
8. **See every fear or doubt as an opportunity to grow.** You are a rockstar for having the courage to move to a new country and to start a new chapter in your life. Many people let limiting beliefs or fears hold them back from taking that step into the unknown. Acknowledge yourself for having taken that step and trust that you are exactly where you are supposed to be in your journey abroad. Embrace every change, development and challenge you go through in the process of making a new country your home. The more we acknowledge ourselves and remind ourselves of all the actions we are taking to live our best life, the more we feel uplifted and in the present moment. This motivates us and loads us up with positive feelings, which then again gives us the courage to continue to embrace the journey we are on.
9. **Combine your own culture with the Dutch culture.** Moving to a new country and integrating into a new culture means that you combine the best of both worlds. Instead of having the vision that you need to let go of your cultural values, traditions and memories from home, approach your new life in the Netherlands with a sense of curiosity about how you can combine your own culture with the Dutch culture. Maybe you can bring a traditional dish from your country to the office to share with

colleagues or maybe you can meet up with fellow expats to learn about each other's country.

10. **Let go of perfection or expecting that everything in your new home country will be perfect and like a vacation.** No matter where we live, we will always have responsibilities, such as a day job. Find the joy in everyday life and seek new activities that bring you energy and peace whenever you feel a rollercoaster of emotions of being an expat. Sometimes all it takes is to try out something new or exploring what brings us joy, happiness and fulfillment.
11. **Be fully present in your new home country:** Give yourself time to be fully in the moment. Pay attention to small details, such as the colors of the houses in your neighborhood, the boats on the canals or the colorful tulips on the market. Try to experience your new home country with all your senses. What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you see? What do you feel? Tune up the volume of your senses and take time to fully soak up your new home environment. We challenge you to leave your phone at home for some time and step outside. Enjoy this moment, right here, right now. You deserve the best. You deserve to be happy. You deserve to call the Netherlands your home. Be patient with yourself and enjoy the process.