



ROOM'S DIY - REAL ROTTERDAM TOUR

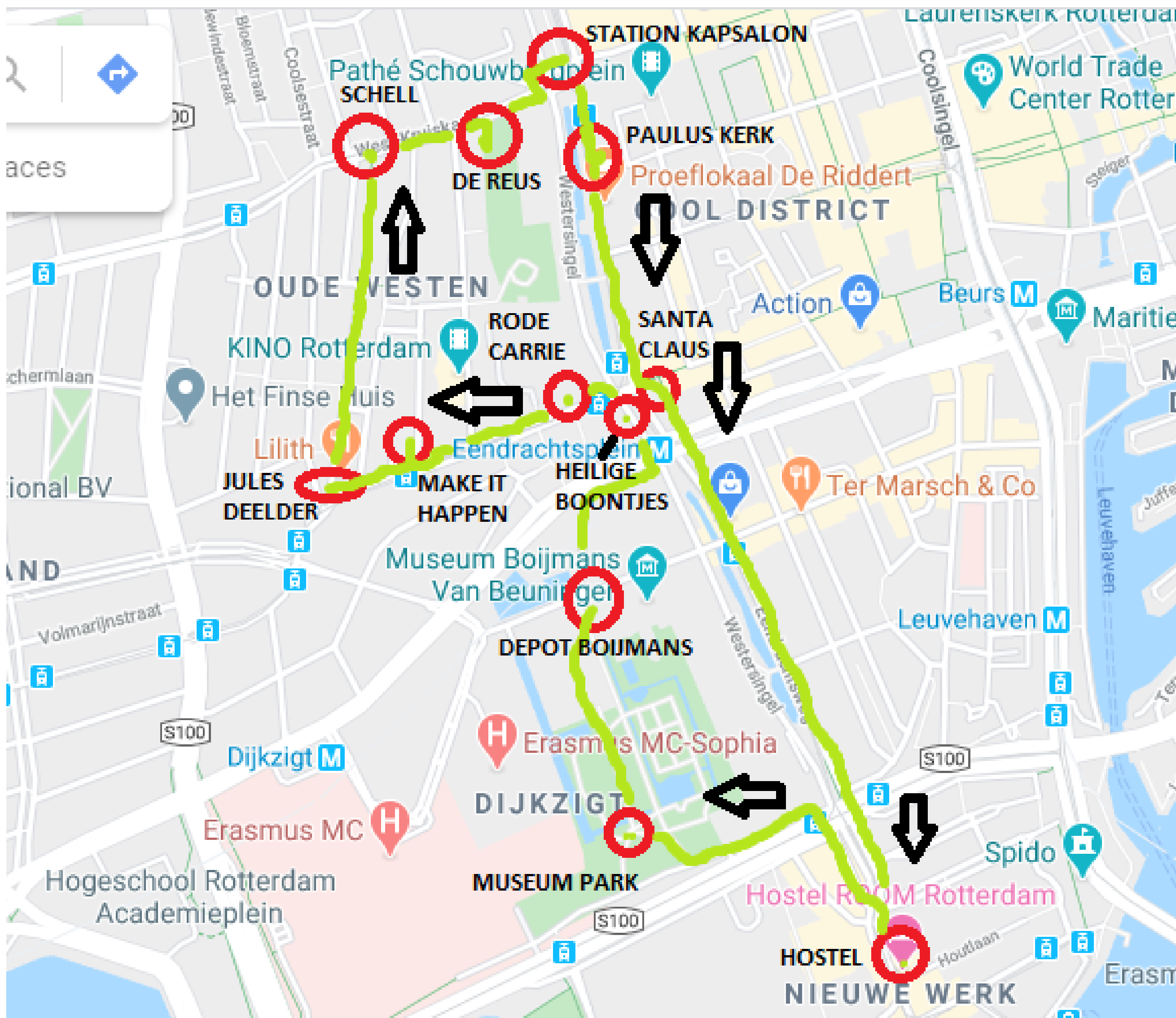
> 90 minutes

This is a tour about the local culture of Rotterdam, including local stories to learn about the recent history and the heart and soul of this modern city.

Explore the REAL Rotterdam!



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Introduction

ROUTE: When you are at the entrance of the hostel, with your back to the door, go right along the sidewalk. At the end, cross the street to your left, and continue down the same street.

It is good to notice the historical buildings on your left side, and the modern architecture on your right. This is because of the most important event in the recent history of Rotterdam. The 1940 bombing of Rotterdam by Nazi Germany as a part of the Second World War. You are now right on the border of the affected side, and the non-affected side. This tour will criss-cross between them, so you will find yourself in very different-looking parts of the city in the next 2 hours. The bombing of Rotterdam resulted in a modern city. However, not long ago, Rotterdam was the ugly duck of The Netherlands. Poverty, high crime rates and many social issues made this a very unattractive place. Nowadays, Rotterdam is a pleasant, clean and safe city that attracts many tourists, a new development that many 'Rotterdamers' are still not used to.

1, Museum Park

ROUTE: Continue your way until you reach a big crossing with traffic lights. Cross the street and turn left immediately. Continue walking for a bit, until you can go down some stairs on your right. This leads to a park called the Museum Park. Find your way down and go to the left until you are in front of two buildings.



These are the 'Kunsthall' and the Natural History Museum. The Kunsthall is a contemporary art museum with only changing exhibitions. This building is an art piece in itself, and kick-started the career of a now very famous Rotterdam architect called Rem Koolhaas. The Natural History Museum is located in the former mansion of one of the most important families of Rotterdam's history, who's gardens have now been transformed into a beautiful park. The Museum Park is a popular city park, surrounded by museums that has many unexpected hideaways and houses many cultural events.

2. Depot Boijmans/Nieuwe Instituut

ROUTE: Cross the park by going over the little bridge, and continue walking straight, over the large asphalt parking until you are next to a giant UFO-like building covered in mirrors.



This is the Depot Boijmans. To the right of you, you will see the Boijmans-Van Beuningen Museum, this is temporarily closed for renovations, but it is the best and most important museum of the city. One of its projects is the Depot. Once it is finished, probably late 2020, it will be an open-to-the-public art depot. This impressive structure will house art pieces that haven't found their place in a museum yet. Across the street you will find the 'Nieuwe Instituut', which is a museum that focusses on architecture and design, a must-visit for the future-minded!

3. Heilige Boontjes

ROUTE: Follow the route by crossing the street into the 'Jongkindstraat', where you pass the Chabot Museum and 'Huis Sonneveld', two villas that are open to the public and show modernist and expressionist design. At the end of the street you turn right until you hit a big crossing, here you take a left (don't continue straight) at the traffic lights. You will pass Metrostation 'Eendrachtsplein'. Next to the station entrance there is the café 'Heilige Boontjes'.



Heilige Boontjes is a famous café in Rotterdam. They have won several prizes for the best coffee in town, but that is not even the most impressive part of this café. Situated in a former police station, this café's employees are all former delinquents. Rotterdam has long suffered high crime rates, and this café has successfully tried to have a positive impact. Every barista and manager has had a past that offered very little perspective until they started to work here. They receive training as a barista/waiter, but also seemingly basic stuff like arriving on-time and being polite. This helped many people to break the vicious circle of a life of crime and move on in their lives.

Fun Fact:

Heilige Boontjes means 'Holy Beans'. Besides the reference to coffee beans, in Dutch, a Holy Bean is somebody who pretends to be nice and trustworthy but who is actually not!



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4, Rode Carrie

ROUTE: Continue straight, cross the busy street and take a left into the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg'. You will very quickly arrive at a shop called 'Black Widow', a fashion store focussing on 'Gothic' style.



The Black Widow is as much a part of Rotterdam as Heilige Boontjes, an icon of this street. The owner of this store, Rode Carrie (English: Red Carrie, referring to the colour of her hair) might even be more famous than the store.. In the 80s and 90s, a big problem was street prostitution. The 'girls of the Keileweg' were selling their bodies day and night, on Christmas-eve and on their birthdays. The local government mostly ignored them, even though the girls were often homeless heroin-addicts. Red Carrie decided to organize a fashion-show where the girls would be the models. This quickly became a topic in the media and in talkshows. The whole country was talking about it.

Help came from everywhere, a dentist offered free dental care, a visagist offered free make-up. But most importantly, a political debate was

started and the public opinion shifted against the government. Quickly after the fashion-show had taken place, street prostitution became illegal, the girls were taken off the streets and into rehab, they received health care, mental care and housing, all kinds of project were started and still exist today. All because Rode Carrie decided she wanted to put these girls in the spotlight for a moment. A true Rotterdam hero.



5, Make It Happen

ROUTE: Continue straight down the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg' until you reach the 'Tabak & Gemak Shop', now look behind you into the 'Bloemkwekerstraat'!

This colourful mural is part of series of interactive street art, commissioned by the city of Rotterdam. Make it Happen is the name of a campaign, launched in 2014, that has the goal of changing the image of Rotterdam. After a long period of being the laughing-stock of the country, Rotterdam has recently become a very attractive and hip city. Make It Happen focusses on architecture, social projects, culture and also on street art! Since a few years, the city has opened up to street art, giving colour to the formerly grey streets. For us, this is a symbol of the new Rotterdam. Open, progressive, colourful and ready to embrace creative and new projects!



6, Jules Deelder

ROUTE: Continue your way on the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg' for a few blocks and look out for café Lilith with the large outside terrace. On the café's façade you can see the words written in blue: "De omgeving van de mens is de medemens."



These words are written by Jules Deelder and mean something like: "The environment of men is his fellow men." Jules Deelder is the face of Rotterdam. He was the most recognizable icon of this city. He represented the night as the 'Night Mayor' of Rotterdam, a renowned poet, a worshipper of Jazz. Always dressed in black. Black shoes, black suit, black hair, black sunglasses. Pale skin, strong facial features. Heavy Rotterdam accent. A cynical optimist. Hard and warm. A relentless speed addict that never thought he would live passed 35. He is one of those people that is famous just for being himself. He passed away early January 2020 at the age of 75.



Fun Fact:

Jules Deelder was signed up as a member of Sparta Football Club Rotterdam before he was registered as a new born at the City Hall.

7. Schell

ROUTE: Right on the corner of this café where you see the mural, take a right, away from the 'Nieuwe Binnenweg' and into the 'Josephstraat'. You will walk straight through a post-war residential neighbourhood. Keep on following this street straight ahead. You will pass a playground with football fields, usually swarming with kids and teenagers. Continue straight until you hit the main street 'West-Kruiskade'. On the façade on your left you will see an impressive mural of John Travolta in Pulp Fiction. Right across the street you will see 'Slagerij Schell', but don't cross the street towards it.



Schell is a butcher, but not just any butcher. It is considered to be the best butcher in The Netherlands. However, there is more to it. Right now you are in the 'West-Kruiskade'. This street is known as the most multi-cultural street in Rotterdam, a city which prides itself in housing 174 different nationalities, one of the highest numbers in the world. As you can see, this butcher has been here since 1796. In a neighbourhood like this, that has changed so much, so quickly, so often, that is an incredible feat. They have found a way to adapt themselves by offering many different types of meat, well beyond the Dutch classics of chicken, beef and pork, and by hiring staff of mixed background who speak different languages in order to cater to everyone.

Fun Fact:

Schell works with a head-to-tail concept, meaning they will sell any part of the animal you request!

8. De Reus

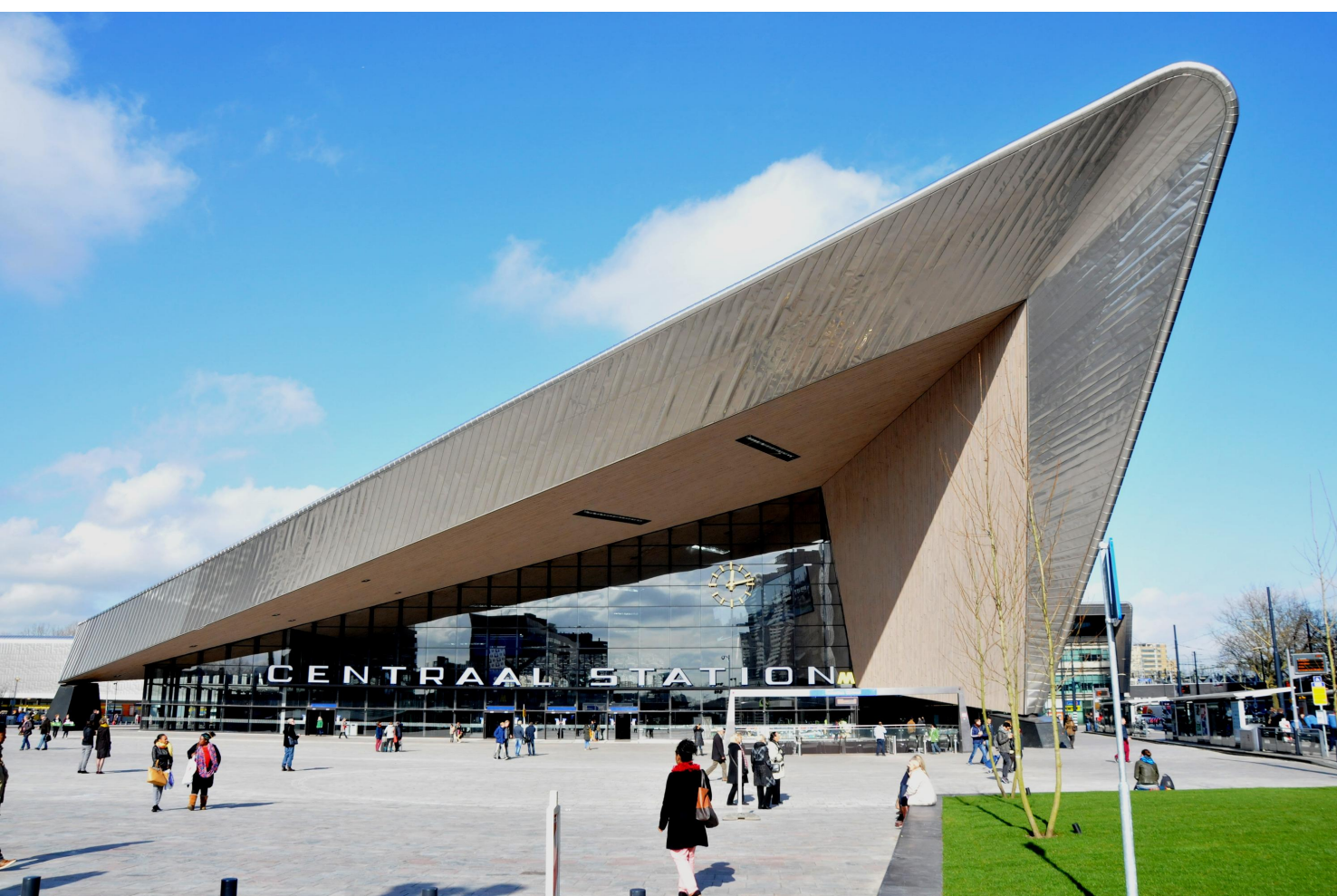
ROUTE: Continue the route to your right, following the 'West-Kruiskade'. Notice how mixed the restaurants, shops and crowd is! At some point, on your right side, you will see a steel fence. Continue walking until you get to the entrance of this fence, leading to a square with a statue on it.



This is a statue of Rigardus Rijnhout, born in 1922, died in 1959. Rigardus was known as 'De Reus' (English: The Giant) of Rotterdam. This was his real size! He was 2.38m tall. You can even see his real shoe size and the chair is an example of furniture that was custom-made for him. Rigardus was often teased, and he had a difficult life. He had poor health and lived in poverty, making ends meet by selling pictures of himself to tourists. People often made fun of him, but he was known to be a very warm and friendly person. This statue was made in his honour. His life is seen as a parallel to that of the story of Rotterdam, the underdog.

9. Station Kapsalon

ROUTE: Go back to the 'West-Kruiskade', and continue to your right. At the big square with the traffic lights, cross the street to your left, and immediately again to your right. Watch out for trams and cyclists! You should now be on a small square, and if you look to your left, you should see the Central Station of Rotterdam in the distance. There is no need to walk closer to the station.



Rotterdam Centraal is one of the architectural high-lights of the new Rotterdam. The new station opened in 2014 and quickly got his nickname, 'Station Kapsalon', referring to a local kebab dish, the Kapsalon. The Kapsalon traditionally comes in a tinfoil container that looks just like the roof of the station. In Rotterdam, many structures have nicknames, which often ridicule the building. We believe that this is typical for Rotterdam, a city that has a very down-to-earth and direct culture. In Rotterdam it is not appreciated when you act as if you're better than anyone else, not even if you're a building. So everytime a structure that stands out is build, it will quickly get a nickname in order to put it 'in its place'. It doesn't get more Rotterdam than that.

Tip:

Go on a 'Rotterdam Nicknames Tour' and discover 'De Koopgoot', 'De Glasbak', 'De Blokkendoos' and 'De Hoerenloper'. Find out about their meanings and the stories behind it!

10. Pauluskerk

ROUTE: From the little square in the middle, continue crossing the street, and take a right, following along the 'Mauritsweg'. Keep going straight, passed the Bagels & Beans and some Japanese restaurants until you reach a strange brown building with a church bell.



The Pauluskerk (English: Paulus Church), is much more than a church. I suppose the building itself would tell you that already. This church has a long history of fighting social injustice and helping those in need. The church became famous for being the first in the world to provide free heroin, clean needles and a safe place to use, in order to help the growing number of heroin addicts in Rotterdam. After a long battle against almost everyone, this approach proved to be succesful, eventhough much went wrong as well. The city now takes care of drug addicts, but the church remains to be a shelter for the homeless, the poor, refugees, illegal immigrants, people with mental issues, young people with troubles etc. This church is yet another example of Rotterdammers taking matters into their own hands to create a better city for everyone, when the government fails to do so.

Good to Know:

In Rotterdam, people will never have to sleep in the street or go hungry, there are many good programs to help those in need. Don't give money to beggars

11. Santa Claus

ROUTE: Continue walking down the same street, the 'Mauritsweg'. Just keep going straight until you find a large square with a big statue of a Santa Claus and...

For the grand finale of this tour, we present you: Santa Claus. Santa is holding a Christmas tree. Right? Nah, just kidding. That's a buttplug. This statue is known as 'Kabouter Buttplug' (English: Gnome Buttplug). Originally meant as a critique on the Christmas holidays, consumerism and capitalism, this statue has been laughed at, hated and moved around for a long time. Finally, the people of Rotterdam embraced it. In Rotterdam you will rarely see a statue of a proud knight on a white horse, here we have Kabouter Buttplug, and we are proud of him!



THE END

To go back to the hostel, keep on walking straight for 15 minutes. Notice that you are very close to Café Heilige Boontjes and that you are in the city centre and can easily visit some city highlights like the 'Witte de Withstraat', 'Blaak', the 'Cube Houses', the 'Markthal' etc.

If you have any questions, please ask at the reception. We would also love to hear your feedback about the tour!