

ON THE TRAIL OF THE HANSE

A cycle tour through trade, water and time

Along the winding rivers of the Rivierengebied lie three towns that once belonged to a powerful network: the Hanseatic League, or Hanse. In the Middle Ages, merchants from Northern Europe joined forces to trade, protect one another and share their wealth. That trading spirit also flourished in the heart of the Netherlands: Zaltbommel, Tiel and Maasbommel, each with its own story, character and charm.

Cycling through time

This route takes you past the southernmost Hanseatic towns of the Netherlands, which together formed the gateway to the Hanse in the south of the country. Cycle from town to town, feel the centuries-old bustle and discover how the Hanse shaped the Rivierengebied.

Tiel Market town on the Waal

Tiel was a lively trading town from early on. Thanks to its location on the Waal, it grew into an important hub between Germany and the North Sea. In the 11th and 12th centuries coins were even minted here, a sign of power and independence. Later, Tiel naturally joined the Hanse as an indispensable link in the trading network.

On the Koornmarkt, sacks of grain once changed hands; today you can enjoy a cup of coffee there with a view of historic façades. A little further on, by the old town wall on the Waalkade, you can still see parts of the defences that protected merchants from high water and enemies.

The town tells its story in small details: street names such as Vismarkt and Korenbeursplein, where trade once made the town buzz.



Zaltbommel Town of merchants and town gates

Zaltbommel breathes history. Cycling along the Waal dyke, you can see its sturdy silhouette from afar. Centuries ago, fully laden ships moored here, carrying mainly kersey wool and salt. Within the town walls trade was brisk; the water was the town's lifeline. Walk through the Waterpoort and you literally step into history.

This 14th-century town gate has guarded access to the river for centuries. The Sint-Maartenskerk, too, recalls the prosperity of those days: built with the proceeds of trade, a beacon for skippers on the Waal.

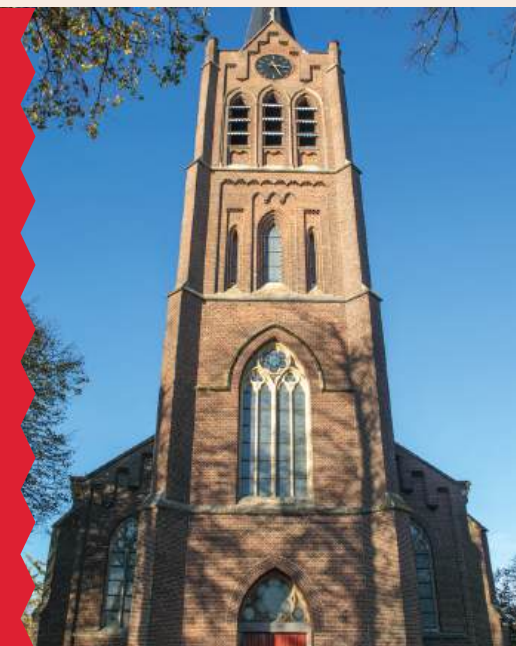
In the old town centre you can still sense the atmosphere of the past. Narrow streets, robust façades and the smell of freshly baked bread wafting from small bakeries.



Maasbommel The smallest Hanseatic town

Small but proud: Maasbommel is officially the smallest Hanseatic town in the Netherlands. A charming place where time seems to stand still. In the 14th century, fishermen and traders sailed the Maas here with cargoes of eel and pike. The town had no walls, but it did have town rights, which made it a full member of the Hanseatic network.

The Sint-Lambertuskerk forms the heart of the village and recalls its former heyday. Close by lies the old harbour, once the beating heart of trade. Today it is a peaceful spot with a view over the water, perfect for stepping off the bike and listening to a silence that was once filled with lapping river water and the sounds of ships.



COLOPHON

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**BUREAU
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On the trail of the Hanse

Cycle junctions: 85 kilometres

33 18 71 75 74 44 43 71 23 44
41 42 45 82 80 84 86 81 88
48 49 28 25 26 20 21 24 69 84
67 78 33 46 65 66 33

Possible starting points:



Zaltbommel

1 Waterpoort

The medieval Waterpoort has been the gateway to Zaltbommel for centuries. Ships laden with merchandise arrived here on their way to the town's markets. The sturdy stones and the passage to the river exude the atmosphere of the Hanseatic era, when water was the main trade route.

2 Houses on the town wall

Along the Waterstraat stand houses built literally against the old town wall. A unique sight: here, trade and protection went hand in hand. The stones of the wall whisper tales of merchants who stored their goods in warehouses behind thick walls.

3 Sint-Maartenskerk

With its tall tower and Gothic windows, the Sint-Maartenskerk tells the story of a flourishing town. Built between 1450 and 1540, when trade on the Waal brought prosperity. Inside, you can still feel the pride of a Hanseatic town that dared to think big.

4 Town ramparts

The rampart embraces the town like a green ring of history. Where guards once patrolled, you now stroll past bastions and moats that recall the days when Zaltbommel was a proud Hanseatic town. Turn into the Waterstraat and you will still see medieval buildings, Renaissance façades and old cellars that tell of the wealthy merchants who lived and worked here.

5 Former town pharmacy

At Markt 3 stands this elegant building with its stepped gable and sculpted details. It was once the town pharmacy. The building is known as the 'Huis met de Spiegel' (House with the Mirror). The name refers to the window on the second floor, which together with the small wall column beneath it resembles a hand mirror. Like the Hanse itself, the façade speaks of craftsmanship, trade and pride in one's craft.

Tiel

6 Inundation canal

A straight line through the landscape, three kilometres long. This canal links the Waal to the Linge and is part of the New Dutch Waterline, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Although younger than the Hanse, it reflects the age-old bond between people, water and protection.

7 Passewaaij

Long before the Hanse, a Roman settlement stood here. The ground beneath Passewaaij therefore tells not only of trade but of thousands of years of history. Cyclists literally pass through layers of time here – from the Romans to Hanseatic merchants, all connected by the river.

8 Sint-Maartenskerk

The imposing Sint-Maartenskerk, whose history goes back to the 9th century, grew into the largest church in Gelderland. Its tower served as a beacon for skippers and travellers. This church embodies Tiel as a town of many faces: trade, faith and community.

9 Gothic House

At Weerstraat 47 stands this fine Gothic building, a remnant of the prosperous Middle Ages. With its characteristic stepped gable and arched niches, it shows how wealthy Tiel once was. Here you see at a glance the face of the Hanseatic era – stately, powerful and full of mercantile spirit.

10 Waterpoort & old harbour

Where the Havendijk now runs, Tiel's inner harbour lay for centuries. The Waterpoort gave access to the bustling life on the water. Ships came and went, laden with goods. Today the spot offers a view over the Waal, but you can still sense the bustle of the past.

Maasbommel

11 The Blauwe Sluis

Between Maasbommel and Appelteren, a drainage canal flows into the Maas at the Blauwe Sluis (Blue Lock). For centuries, water levels and shipping were regulated here. Today it is no longer a place of trade but a lively recreation area where people enjoy life on and by the water.

12 Hanse and basket-weaving mural

On the Bovenwijk, a colourful mural refers to the craft that made Maasbommel great: basket weaving. A modern tribute to the craftsmanship and trading spirit that once earned the little town a place in the powerful Hanseatic network.

13 Ruins of Kasteel Het Hof

This is where Kasteel Het Hof once stood, the noble residence of the lords of Maasbommel. The moat and the landscape still reveal the contours of the past. Here, power and trade went hand in hand, a tangible trace of a time when Maasbommel flourished.

14 H. Lambertuskerk

The neo-Gothic H. Lambertuskerk and its presbytery were built in the 19th century, when freedom of religion once again made room for faith and community. Today it is a unique care facility where older people can stay or attend day activities.

15 Old Sint Lambertuskerk

The medieval Sint Lambertuskerk once stood in the village churchyard. Nothing remains of the building, but the place breathes history. Here, residents came together to pray, to mourn and to trade – the heart of the smallest Hanseatic town in the Netherlands.

Tip along the way

Discover the stories of the region.

Along the Hanseatic Cycle Route lie three regional museums that together tell the story of the Rivierengebied. At Stadskaatsel Zaltbommel, Flipje en Streekmuseum Tiel and Museum Tweestromenland in Beneden-Leeuwen, you will discover how people here lived with the rivers for centuries, from trade and crafts to fruit growing and hydraulic engineering.

The Hanse is an important chapter in that story, but certainly not the only one. Each museum shows in its own way how water, work and prosperity have shaped the identity of this region.

Stadskaatsel Zaltbommel

Nonnenstraat 5-7, Zaltbommel

Flipje en Streekmuseum – Tiel

Pluin 48, Tiel

Museum Tweestromenland – Beneden-Leeuwen

Pastoor Zijlmanstraat 3, Beneden-Leeuwen

