

Culemborg's city centre

walk
5 km

city walk



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WELCOME TO CULEMBORG!

Culemborg has a colourful history that goes back to the Middle Ages. The city is located in the heart of the Netherlands, surrounded by a unique river landscape, the Betuwe region and the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie defence line. It's a special city in many ways: unique, enterprising, welcoming and sustainable. There's lots to do here: enjoy centuries-old streets, special shops, beautiful restaurants and inviting outdoor cafés, taste a bit of culture or stroll along the river.

This city walk takes you through quaint streets, past interesting buildings and the most beautiful locations in Culemborg. Learn more about the history of this fascinating city and look up to admire its beautiful façades. Discover the best shops and inviting outdoor cafés. In short, get to know beautiful Culemborg!

The city's history in a nutshell

The history of Culemborg goes back a long way. As early as the 14th century, the town became a so-called Vrijstad (free city) with its own jurisdiction.

Back then, Culemborg was a central market town. Later, it also had a lively industry. The city offered care to the poor and sick, and orphans were housed at the Elisabeth Orphanage (now a museum) as early as 1560. As an important city and trading centre, Culemborg was protected in turbulent times by no fewer than three walls and moats, with seven city gates. Today, many monumental buildings still bear witness to Culemborg's rich history. Has this sparked your curiosity? This walk lets you dive into the city's past!



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1 Markt

Culemborg has always been an important market town for farmers and traders from far and wide. The present-day market on Tuesdays dates back to the Middle Ages.





Town hall



Vierheemskinderstraatje

2 Town hall

Commissioned by Lady Elisabeth of Culemborg and her husband Anthonis van Lalaing, the town hall was built in 1534 to the design of master builder Rombout II Keldermans. Above the cellar door you'll see two lions bearing the coat of arms of the family of Elisabeth of Culemborg. Above the town hall's main entrance you'll notice the letters A and E (Anthonis and Elisabeth) and a Latin text: "Ignis omnia consummabit" (Fire will complete everything). A blue stone sits right in front of the town hall. This is where criminals used to be sentenced.

At the town hall's right corner you can find a so-called 'kaak', a sort of pillory that was used to tie up convicts and subject them to public humiliation.



Halfway down the Markt, turn right into Vierheemskinderstraatje.

3 Vierheemskinderstraatje

This small street takes its name from the inn 'De Vierheemskinderen' (The Four Sons of Aymon). A gable stone of the inn depicted the horse Bayard and its four young riders of folklore fame. Vierheemskinderstraatje, which links the Markt and Herenstraat, is one of Culemborg's oldest streets as a city map from 1560 has revealed.



Turn right into Herenstraat and after 25 m turn left through the gate to enter the courtyard of the Orphanage Museum.

4 Elisabeth Orphanage Museum

An orphanage was founded here in 1560 with money from the estate of Elisabeth of Culemborg. The gate has a gable stone with a Latin text that freely translates as:

“Citizens’ children who were deprived of their parents’ care too soon, are received here by Elisabeth, who nurtures them on her lap.”

Above it are the coats of arms of Elisabeth of Culemborg and Anthonis van Lalaing. The former orphanage (1560-1952) now houses the library and the Elisabeth Orphanage Museum. Behind the museum is a beautifully landscaped garden with the most authentic city wall of the Netherlands. The wall contains a part of the ‘Nije Huus’ city castle, built after 1318.



Walk back through the small gate, turn right into Herenstraat and continue to the end of this street. Then take just a few steps into Everwijnstraat.

5 Het Caffaigne

At the corner of Herenstraat and Everwijnstraat you’ll find Het Huys Mitter Hofstad, a former city farm.

To its left is the Caffaigne, where free food and lodging were offered to the poor for many centuries. Its name derives from the Latin word ‘caffagium’, which was used to designate the main building of a noble estate. The house was built around 1532 and was transferred to ‘de Poth’, an institution for the poor, in 1549. Poor people were allowed to live here for free “for God’s sake”, but in later times the cottages were rented out. Eventually the building was split up into four cottages with a small garden, intended for poor people of Roman Catholic faith.



Elisabeth Orphanage Museum



Het Caffaigne



Mill De Hoop



Town pump

 *Just before these two historic buildings, turn left across Het Hof to the breach in the city wall and cross the bridge. A little further on, along Het Jach, you'll find the mill De Hoop.*

6 Mill De Hoop

The mill De Hoop is located along Het Jach. This stone smock mill dates back to 1853. For many centuries, there were windmills on top of the city wall. Citizens were under obligation to let the Count's mills grind their grain and hand over a portion as payment.

Flour mill De Hoop still grinds grains with the help of wind power. The flour is made into a local bread named Kuilenburgs Molenbrood, among other things.

 *Opposite the mill, turn into Buitenmolenstraat and then go right to Varkensmarkt.*

7 Maria Regina

In the 19th century, the stately mansion on the right was the home of cigar manufacturer Dresselhuijs. His cigar factory De Trio was located behind the house.

8 Town pumps

On Varkensmarkt you can find a town pump from 1718, crowned with the city's coat of arms. Of the numerous town pumps that Culemborg once had, four remain that are listed monuments: two on the Markt, one on Varkensmarkt and one in Zandstraat. It's no coincidence that all of these pumps are located along the old 'Voorstraat', as the city's central main axis is sometimes called. The winding route of this axis follows the old course of the river De Meer.

 *Now walk to the three-way junction of Varkensmarkt, Prijssestraat and Zandstraat. This is the Nieuwstad area.*

9 De Nieuwstad

Nieuwstad used to be an area where many farmers lived. Until the 1950s and '60s, this part of the city still had a village feel. During hay season, dozens of loaded farm wagons rode into town to store the hay and grain. It was quite an attraction for the youth when the big threshing machines came to Nieuwstad to thresh the grain in the farmers' yards.

 *Enter Zandstraat and then follow St. Janskerkstraat to the left until Sint Janskerkhof.*

10 Sint Janskerkhof

Here once stood St. John's Church with a presbytery and a small cemetery. After the church was demolished, the cemetery was expanded but in 1870 it was closed. In the 20th century, archaeologists uncovered the outlines of the church and presbytery on this site. In the present-day parking lot you can find old tombstones that serve as reminders of former mayors and ordinary citizens, such as a bookseller named Blom.

 *Bear left on Sint Janskerkhof and continue straight on to the entrance of the synagogue.*

11 Synagogue

A former synagogue from 1867, once owned by the Culemborg Jewish community. Designed by city architect Cornelis Sillevius, the synagogue is a simple aisleless church with a



Nieuwstad city farm



Sint Janskerkhof



Synagogue



Binnenpoort



Catholic St. Barbara Church

white plastered façade in neo-Gothic style. Above the door, a text in Hebrew says: "My house will be a place of worship for all peoples."

Around 1900, Culemborg had a thriving Jewish community with about 200 members. During World War II, most of the Culemborg Jews were deported and perished in concentration camps.

 Turn left into Jodenkerkstraat, turn right and walk through the Binnenpoort.

12 Binnenpoort

This is the only one of the seven city gates that remains. After Culemborg was granted city rights in 1318, work was started on walling the city. This city gate dates from the 14th century, the upper part from 1557. In the niche you can see a statue of St. Barbara, the patron saint of Culemborg.

 After the gate, turn right into Processiesteeg. This old church path will take you to the city office.

13 Catholic St. Barbara Church

This parish church with its high spire was built in 1884-1886 to replace a smaller church from 1817, which was located a bit further north-east in the so-called 'Papenhoek' (Papists' Corner). Designed by architect P.J. van Genk, the church was altered several times over the years. Fortunately, part of the old inventory has been preserved.

The St. Barbara Church houses a number of beautiful objects. In 1628 Rubens' pupil Jan Cossiers made the painting 'The Mercy Seat', which now hangs in the side chapel. The monumental organ is by the famous organ builder Witte-Bätz.

The pulpit from 1911 was made by the well-known Kuypers workshop in Roermond. The tower contains the 'Elisabeth bell' from the former St. John's Church, cast in 1555 by Utrecht bell founder Jan Tolhuis.

 *Bear right and then turn left before the small bridge over the canal, onto the footpath through the city office garden (Kruittorenpad).*

14 De Acht Zaligheden

In the garden behind the city office is a kind of gazebo, which mockingly used to be nicknamed 'De Acht Zaligheden' (The Eight Beatitudes) because it housed eight toilets for priest students.

 *Follow the path along the city canal and along the city wall.*

15 Medieval city wall

On 6 December 1318, Culemborg was granted city rights, which included the right to wall the city to protect it from invaders. In several places, the wall is still intact.



De Acht Zaligheden



Medieval city wall



Great or Barbara Church



Drostenhuis

 Turn sharp left just before the little bridge and walk through Muntsteeg to Ridderstraat, which offers a view of the Great or Barbara Church.

16 Great or Barbara Church

The foundations of this church were laid before the year 1300. It was here that Lord Hubert established a chapter dedicated to St. Barbara in 1421. Since then, Barbara has been the patron saint of Culemborg. In 1515, Lady Elisabeth had the church renovated and embellished. This is when it received its current form of a cross basilica and was outfitted with beautiful stained-glass windows. Among other things, the tower houses a series of Hemony bells from 1654-1655.

'Porridge bell'

A nice historical tradition in Culemborg is that at 9:55 pm the so-called 'porridge bell' is rung. In the old days it served as a reminder to the citizens of Culemborg that the city gate would close at 10 pm. Around that time people often enjoyed a bowl of porridge, hence the name.

 Turn right into Ridderstraat and follow it to the end.

17 Drostenhuis

At Slotstraat 10-12 you'll find the Drostenhuis, built in the late 15th century. It's one of the oldest residential houses in Culemborg that was made of stone. In the 16th and 17th centuries the Drostenhuis was owned by the lords and counts of Culemborg. For some 250 years, it served as a home for staff at the court.

 *Turn right into Slotstraat. When the street widens you have arrived at Het Voorburg, which used to be a sort of square.*

18 Het Voorburg

In the late 19th and early 20th century, villas and large mansions were built on the south side, some designed by city architect Gerard Prins with Neo-Renaissance influences.

 *Halfway down Het Voorburg, turn left and take the footbridge. Then walk across the castle's former forecourt.*

19 Culemborg Castle

Lord Johan II of Culemborg started construction of the castle around 1350. Its white tower may have been there as early as 1270, though. The castle consisted of three parts - the higher grounds, the lower grounds and a farm with stables - and was surrounded by wide moats. Remarkably, the castle managed to remain intact throughout the Middle Ages. The Lords of Culemborg rarely engaged in battle. However, during the Eighty Years' War the castle sustained considerable damage. In the Dutch 'Disaster Year' of 1672, it was plundered and severely damaged by French soldiers who were housed there. The lord of the castle, Count Van Waldeck-Pyrmont, then moved to another accommodation. The castle wasn't repaired and was demolished over time. Around 1812, Culemborg Castle had disappeared completely. In the 1990s the moats were excavated, revealing the contours of the upper and lower grounds. The castle grounds are a national heritage site.



Het Voorburg



 *Leave the castle grounds via a small plank bridge, turn immediately left and continue to the end of the parking lot. Then turn right onto a dirt path that ends up at the bottom of the dyke.*

20 White mill

On the north side of the city centre once stood a big flour mill named 'De Koornvriend', constructed in 1725. The mill is said to have been built with stones from the demolished Culemborg Castle. The old mill of the Count of Culemborg, it was located a little further

down town originally. In 1472 it was relocated to a spot in between the city and the river. In 1725 the mill was moved back into the city, on the wall tower along the Borgwal. There, its stump still stands today.

 *Just before the dyke curves, turn right and walk up the steps. At the top, turn left and keep going straight, entering the marina area. Just before the water, turn left onto the footpath along the harbour. Just before the bend, turn left onto the footpath along Veerweg.*



Castle garden

21 Veerweg

In 1650 it was decided to dam the Kleine Lek. This canal had been dug in 1558 to connect the small harbour constructed in 1518 outside the Lekpoort city gate with the river Lek. The new Veerweg ran along this canal. The construction probably served two goals: to improve Culemborg's harbour and to push the river Lek northward as much as possible. From the head of the harbour you can see the railroad bridge. Until World War II, this was an industrial site with a gin distillery, a glassworks and a brick factory.

The Veerweg is lined with houses that were built around 1870 for employees of the glassworks and the gin and liqueur distillery. Interestingly, they are genuine dyke houses that have an underground floor below the main storey at the back. Near the ferry, between the Veerdijk and the city harbour there's a block of two dyke houses that date from the 18th century and may have been skipper's houses.

 Continue on this path through the passage in the dyke



Veerweg



De muurtjes



Vishal

22 De Muurtjes

During a dyke strengthening in the 1960s, a coupure (opening) was made that could be closed with stop logs during high water. Because of its masonry, the coupure is nicknamed 'De Muurtjes' (The Walls).

 *Continue straight on into town via the Havendijk.*

23 Vishal

Built in classicist style, the Vishal (Fish Hall) dates from 1787. Between 1788 and 1940, fresh sea and river fish was auctioned here every Friday. In front of the fish hall you'll see a statue of Manus van Empel, Culemborg's last town crier. The intermediate canal is the former Schoteldoek harbour. In front of the bridge there used to be a city gate that gave access to the city centre. You now arrive at Den Scherpen Hoek

 *At the junction with the mural, turn diagonally right into Achterstraat.*

24 Jan van Riebeeckhuis

The Huis de Fonteyn, also known as Jan van Riebeeckhuis. This 16th century building was the birthplace of Jan van Riebeeck, founder of a Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope. The history of Culemborg is closely intertwined with that of South Africa.

25 Pietersgasthuis

The Pietersgasthuis (a remnant of the original building) is one of the oldest buildings in Culemborg. From 1386 onwards it provided shelter to poor travellers and the sick. Wounded soldiers were nursed here as well. The complex also included a farm and a chapel. Old bills show that the building served as a place of shelter/hospital well into the 16th century.



Jan van Riebeeckhuis



Pietersgasthuis



Lutheran Church



Gable stone next to town hall

26 Lutheran Church

In the Dutch 'Disaster Year' of 1672, the French army invaded Culemborg. After they had left, Count Georg Friedrich of Waldeck-Pyrmont decided to convert the chapel of the Pietersgasthuis into a Lutheran Church.

So-called Luther roses adorn the pilasters of the Lutheran Church, whose bell tower is topped with a swan. These symbols are clear indications that this is a Lutheran church..



Keep going straight after the crossroads, following Herenstraat. Then turn left into Vierheemskinderenstraatje. At the end turn left onto the Markt and walk straight back to Oude Vismarkt.

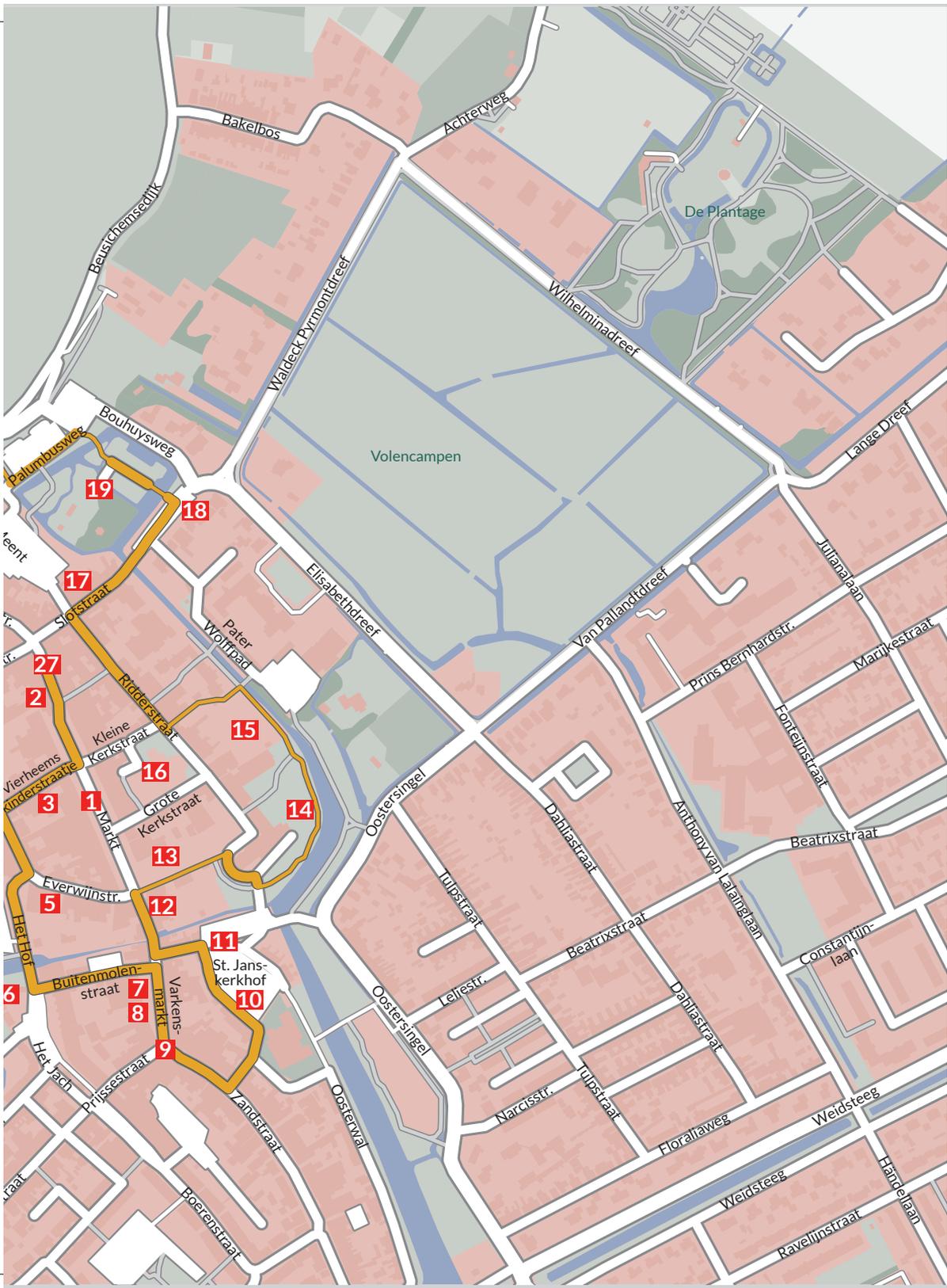
27 Oude Vismarkt

If you look closely, you'll discover an unusual scene on the grey gable stone above the side door of the town hall annex. In 1428 a battle was going on for the position of Bishop of Utrecht, which involved Zweder van Culemborg. Jan van Buren, who supported the other candidate for the job, tried to capture both the city and Zweder with his army. The attack failed and Van Buren was hacked to pieces at the fish market by Culemborg fishwives.

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