

# Silhouette of a city

walk  
5 km

city walk



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# SILHOUETTE OF A CITY

## 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 and 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, hospitable 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 from the city centre through characteristic streets, past pretty avenues, a Zoicher park, the banks of the river Lek and the old harbour. The walk primarily spotlights the inner city's unique silhouette, as seen from a distance. In short, get to know Culemborg's protected cityscape with its many unique towers!

### **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 at the Pietersgasthuis, and children who had lost their parents were housed at the Elisabeth Orphanage (now a museum) starting in 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!



# START OF THE WALK



The city walk starts and ends at the Oude Vismarkt, near the town hall.

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- 3 Medieval city wall
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- 5 De Acht Zaligheden
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From the town hall, walk onto the Markt.

## 1 De Markt

Culemborg has always been an important market town for farmers, traders and rural people from far and wide. The present-day market on Tuesdays dates back to the Middle Ages. On the Markt you'll find the town hall. Commissioned by Lady Elisabeth of Culemborg and her husband Anthonis van Lalaing, it was built in 1534 to the design of master builder Rombout II Keldermans. In the 17th century, the city's main inns were found on the Markt. You can still find old buildings on both sides. Markt 11, built in 1549, is a very beautifully preserved example. Near numbers 8 and 34 there are rectangular sandstone pumps from 1718/1719 with a double outlet. The pumps have Louis XIV details, bear the city's coat of arms and are crowned with a vase. The water feature at the centre of the Markt is a reference to the high water that has ravaged Culemborg: each fountain's height represents the water level of a dyke breach in past centuries.





Great or Barbara Church



Medieval city wall



Chapel



Take a left into Kleine Kerkstraat.

## 2 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.



Cross Ridderstraat diagonally and enter Muntsteeg. Before the Muntbrug bridge, take a sharp right uphill.

*It's a nice tradition in Culemborg: at 9:55 pm the so-called 'porridge bell' is rung. In the old days this served as a reminder to the citizens of Culemborg that the city gate would close at 10 pm. The name 'porridge bell' derives from the fact that around this time people ate a bowl of porridge before going to bed.*

## 3 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.



Continue on the path. Following the canal, you can see the old city wall and the Chapel on your right.


#### 4 Chapel

The high roof of the Chapel with its slender turret is an iconic element of the city's skyline. The Chapel has had many uses. After its construction in 1853, it served as a seminary building. Following the small seminary's closure in 1935, the Chapel was used as a reading room for De Nijenburgh Academy and a cinema, among other things. When it was owned by the municipality, it served as training grounds for the fire brigade for a while. In 2014, after years of vacancy, the Chapel was converted into an apartment complex.

#### 5 De Acht Zaligheden

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

*'De Acht Zaligheden' has been in use as an exhibition space since 2003. It is Culemborg's smallest gallery. What is remarkable is that exhibitions can only be admired from the outside, because the monument is not accessible..*

 *At the end of Kruittorenpad, turn left across the bridge. The Jewish Monument and Synagogue are on your right..*

#### 6 Synagogue and Jewish Monument

The late-Gothic house of prayer dates from 1868 and was the property of the Culemborg Jewish community. Designed by city architect Cornelis Sillevius, the building is a simple



Synagogue


aisleless church with a 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. Only 10 of them returned. On 5 September 2018 the Jewish Monument was unveiled, as a reminder of Culemborg's vanished Jewish community. It says: "people hate when they don't understand". Nowadays the building is used as a church and for cultural activities.



de Waldeck Pymontdreef



Van Pallandtdreef


 Walk back, but take the bridge to the right. After the bridge, cross to the left and continue on to Oostersingel. At the junction go straight ahead, following the footpath along Van Pallandtdreef.

## **7** De Vier Dreven

The four avenues ('vier dreven') - with the Volencampen at their centre - form an area of

great historical value. The current Waldeck Pymontdreef used to be part of the former Lekdijk, a dyke that ran from Achterweg to Goilberdingen. This is Culemborg's oldest avenue, constructed under the reign of Lady Elisabeth. It was called Meisteeg at the time and later became Noorderdreef. A drawing from 1610 already shows the Oude Dreef (the present Waldeck Pymontdreef), the "newly constructed avenue" (the present Elisabethdreef) and two "newly outlined" avenues (the Lange Dreef and Wilhelminadreef). The avenues are an important part of a structure of lanes and avenues that the Lords and Counts of Culemborg had constructed to the east of the city.

*A special 'one-and-a-half-metre bench' was placed along Elisabethdreef in 2022. The bench is a reminder of the COVID era, when everyone had to keep a distance of a metre and a half. Now it's a nice meeting place that offers beautiful views over the avenues and the Volencampen. The bench features a line by city poet Ria Koppen: "thanks for being there, and sitting next to me".*


 At the end of the footpath, turn left into Wilhelminadreef. After 100 m, cross the road and turn right into the park.

## **8** De Plantage

In 1779, members of the House of Orange had De Plantage (then also called 't Boschje) laid out to the east of the Volencampen. In 1785, the small park was expanded with the Nieuwe Plantage. A 1789 map shows that in those days it was a forest with cross lanes

and small winding paths. In 1828, the municipality of Culemborg purchased the park. Mayor A.J. van Hoytema commissioned L.P. Zocher to design a park in landscape style in 1850. Constructed as an unemployment relief project, the park's layout and design have hardly changed since then. Some of the trees date back to its early days.



 *Now continue diagonally to the left. After Dresselhuysbank, keep to the right until the end of the park. After 50 m turn left, back into the park. Follow the footpath to the right until the beginning of the park. Then turn right into Wilhelminadreef.*

## **9 De Volencampen**

The history of the Volencampen, the grasslands area between the four avenues, goes back to the Middle Ages. At the time, the grasslands belonged to Culemborg Castle and were used as horse pastures. The name Volencampen comes from 'veulencampen' (foal fields) and refers to the fact that the Count's foals and horses were grazing here. It was owned for a long time by the Counts and later by the Domeinen, the Dutch state's real estate company. In 1908, a manor house for the steward of the Domeinen was built in the northwest corner.







De Volencampen

*In the early 20th century, the so-called TBC tram connected Tiel (via Buren) to Culemborg. The tram often had to wait for a little while near the former St. Barbara Hospital on Elisabethdreef. Nowadays there's a footpath where the rails once ran. One of the tram conductors was a certain Mr. Van Mourik. In a 1964 newspaper article he told the following story about the TBC tram: "One of the drivers loved to fish. Now, in those days the ditches along the Volencampen were a bit wider than today and they held plenty of fish. If we had to stop at Elisabethdreef, the driver would get off the tram and quickly walk to the ditch. At times he managed to catch three pike in that short space of time, cheered on by the passengers."*



*At the end of the footpath, turn left: Waldeck Pyrmontdreef. At the end, cross the street diagonally: Het Voorburg.*




Het Voorburg

## 10 Het Voorburg

This was a sort of square, to the north of which used to be the castle's forecourt. 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.



Former castle


 After 20 m, turn right and cross the wooden bridge. Continue straight on through the castle park. On the left there used to be a white castle, which was demolished in 1812.

### 11 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 accommo-


modation. 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.

 After the pontoon bridge, turn left. Go to the end of the parking lot and directly turn right onto the footpath along the bottom of the dyke.

### 12 White mill

The windmill stump on the north side of Culemborg is the remnant of flour mill 'De Koornvriend'. This mill was built in 1725 with stones from the demolished Culemborg castle. In 1909, the mill burned down to the ground. It was rebuilt, but in 1917 the top part of the mill was demolished.

 Just before the dyke curves to the left, take a right uphill and climb the stone steps. Then turn left onto the dyke and keep right at the bend, until the head of the marina.

### 13 Marina


Culemborg's harbour started out as a small lake, constructed in 1518 on the south side of the river Kleine Lek by order of Anthonis van Lalaing and Elisabeth of Culemborg. In 1558, a connection between the Kleine Lek and the





Veerweg

river Lek was dug, making the harbour more easily accessible. Between 1974 and 1980, the harbour was expanded and converted into a marina.

 Turn left onto the footpath along the harbour. At the end turn right, Veerweg.

#### 14 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 was constructed next to the harbour. 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. The steamboat waiting room is also still there. The steamboat to Schoonhoven and Rotterdam used to dock east of the ferry landing. In the waiting room, travellers could have a drink while waiting for the boat. Factory workers also frequented this place.*

 Turn right onto Veerweg.

### 15 Graaf Egbert' mural (visible at the end of Veerweg, looking back)

The advertising mural for 'Graaf Egbert' cigars is immediately noticeable when you come off the ferry. The mural, on the side wall of Veerweg 78, was created around 1920 by Klaas van Os and recently restored. Graaf Egbert was one of the top brands of the Dejaco cigar factory founded in 1921. At the time, the tobacco industry in Culemborg was booming. Today there's still one cigar factory left in the city: the Van der Donk company, founded in 1919. The mural is a protected national monument.

 Before the ferry landing, turn left: Veerkade.

### 16 Ferry and quay

The Mason ferry company offers crossings of the river Lek ever since 1750. Around 1850, the quay along the Lek was buzzing with activity. The ferry was eventually replaced by a cable ferry that still sails daily. There was also a docking site for the daily steamboat to Rotterdam. Ships carrying raw materials and fuel for the glass factory and brick kiln unloaded their goods here as well. The high quay (where the buildings are) and the low quay together were part of the towpath.

### 17 Steenovenslaan

Steenovenslaan used to be known as the Leerdam Quarter, because many glass blowers from Leerdam had come to live here. This neighbourhood was created in the mid-19th century when a Van Hoytema glass factory and distillery were built.

In 1934, Van Hoytema had a director's house



Mural 'Graaf Egbert'



Ferry



Quay



Steenovenslaan

with office constructed in the Amsterdam School style. Number 16 is the only remaining residential house and one of the few visible reminders of the Veerweg area's industrial past.

 Turn left just before the railway bridge.

### 18 Railway bridge

The railway bridge across the Lek opened in 1868. The bridge is 675 metres long in total and consists of a main structure spanning 153 metres and connecting bridges across the Steenwaard floodplain. At the time of its construction it was Europe's longest bridge. In 1983, the bridge was replaced. The piers are still the original ones from 1868. A piece of the old railway bridge has been preserved as a monument.




Railway bridge




Ronde Haven

*After the construction of the railway bridge, the railway company had to pay compensation to the skippers since they had to adapt their masts so that they could pass underneath the bridge. How they were paid, is unknown.*

 Follow the footpath along the railway track up until the dyke.


### 19 Ronde Haven

This was originally a small lake that had been created by a dyke breach. By digging an access channel to the Kleine Lek in 1609, it was turned into a harbour. A Johan Blaeu map from 1649 depicts several ships in the Ronde Haven (Round harbour). After the construction of the Veerweg and damming of the Kleine Lek around 1650, the Ronde Haven lost significance and the water along Veerweg became more important as a mooring site for ships. The Ronde Haven and part of the access channel have been preserved.

 *Turn left along the road. In the left-hand bend, keep to the right and go downhill: Goilberdingerstraat.*

## 20 Havenkwartier with moat

The Havenkwartier (Harbour Quarter), where skippers and fishermen used to live, was annexed to the city around 1370. A moat and rampart were constructed around the area. City walls and a gate, the Havenpoort (Lekpoort), were added in circa 1425. The Havenkwartier and moat are part of the protected cityscape.

 *Take the first left: Rozenstraat. Cross the bridge and immediately turn right: Lange Havendijk.*

## 21 Lange en Korte Havendijk

The Havendijk was part of an early 14th century 'bandijk' (winter dyke). When the Havendijk was annexed to the city around 1370, the 'bandijk' was constructed in its present location around the new quarter. The



Canal

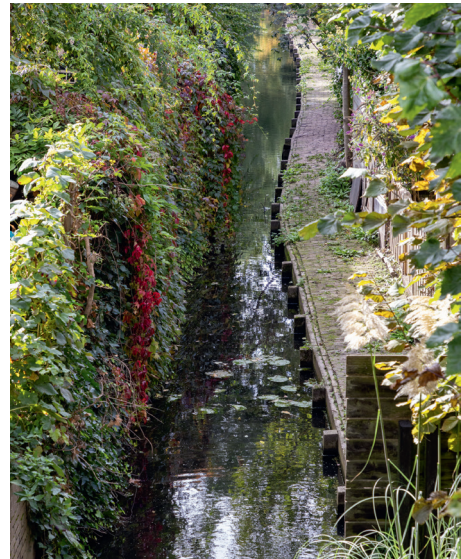
Lange and Korte Havendijk are still clearly recognisable as dykes due to their elevation and dyke houses.

## 22 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.

## 23 Schoteldoekse Haven

The Schoteldoekse Haven was Culemborg's first harbour and dates back to the time when the town was granted city rights (1318). Originally it formed the northern city moat and also had a defensive function. When the Havendijk was added to the city around 1370, the water lost its function as a defensive structure and harbour. It continued life as a canal between the two parts of the city.






Havendijk



Vishal



Scherpenhoek

 After 30 m turn left through a courtyard gate. At the end turn right: Noorderwal. At the end turn right: Havendijk. On your left is the Vishal and near the bridge used to be the Schoteldoekse Haven, where you'll now find city theatre De Fransche School.

## 24 De Fransche School


The city school for the poor dates from 1846 and now serves as a theatre. In 1891, part of the building was put into use as a public primary school. Children who could learn well were taught French here, hence its name ('The French School'). The building has also served as a fire station, a training room for the militia and a city bus workshop.

*In the late 19th century there were frequent floods, forcing those who lived in the plains around Culemborg to flee to the city. They took refuge in De Fransche School, which had a special flood room. The doors of this classroom were two metres above street level. In 1855, at high tide, 360 people found shelter here.*

 Keep right towards Achterstraat.

## 25 Scherpenhoek

Promoting cigarettes of the Virginia brand, Miss Blanche immediately catches your attention. This advertising mural was painted around 1925 by Vilmos Huszár, painter and co-founder of the art movement 'De Stijl'. In the first half of the 20th century, advertising murals like these were quite common. Now only a few of them ain. This painting is quite a rarity.

 *Miss Blanche or Scherpenhoek and on your right the Jan van Riebeeckhuis with a lovely herb garden at the back. Continue straight on, with at the end the Pietersgasthuis and Lutheran Church.*

## **26** Jan van Riebeeckhuis

The Huis de Fonteyn is 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. The unique herb garden at the back of the house, based on the ideas of Jan van Riebeeck, is accessible all year round.



Jan van Riebeeckhuis

## **27** 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. Even wounded soldiers were nursed here. 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.



Pietersgasthuis

## **28** 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. The present building dates from 1839.

 *Go straight at the crossroads: Herenstraat, with the Elisabeth Orphanage on the right after 60 metres.*



Lutheran Church





Elisabeth Orphanage



Vierheemskinderstraatje

*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.*

### 29 Elisabeth Orphanage

The Elisabeth Orphanage was founded through a bequest by 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, which was restored in 2003. The wall contains a part of the 'Nije Huus' city castle, built after 1318.

 *Take the first left: Vierheemskinderstraatje.*

### 30 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.

 *At the end of the street, turn left: the Markt, the end of the route.*

# CULEMBORG

