

10 things I love about the Dutch

There are many articles out there about the Dutch and their strange habits. But, as you may agree, a bad habit can sometimes be one's best asset. It all depends on how you look at it.

Here are, in random order, 10 of the least-valued Dutch habits, with a few handy Dutch words and phrases. Look at them from a positive point of view and use them to your advantage!

1. Not so discrete!

When you've got food stuck between your teeth a Dutch person will tell you, without blinking his eyes: "*Er zit iets tussen je tanden!*"

But honestly, aren't you better off knowing there is something green in your mouth, or your zipper's open? Especially if you're told this before your presentation! Just thank the person ("*Bedankt voor de mededeling*") and go look for a toothpick (*tandenstoker*).

2. The Dutch are cheap

The Dutch are often called cheap (*zuinig / gierig / kreterig*). But maybe that is why they've got so many euros left to give to charity (*goede doelen*).

As it turns out, the Dutch are ranked number seven in both the World Giving Index 2012 and Wikipedia's listing of most charitable governments in the world. Not bad!

3. Dutch glitter and glamour

The Lowlands' lack of glitter and glamour can be linked to the national motto "*Doe maar normaal, dan doe je al gek genoeg*". Literally this means "Just behave normally, it's crazy enough". This Calvinist attitude is all about modesty (*bescheidenheid*) and being down-to-earth (*nuchterheid*).

Arrogance (*kapsones*) is considered a high crime in Holland. In talent shows in the Netherlands, the much-too-arrogant candidate will never make it to the next round. Talent or no talent, he will always be sent home by the Dutch audience.

4. The Dutch say no, whenever, wherever

When you offer a piece of cake to your Dutch colleague, and he doesn't feel like it, he won't have it. It can be really embarrassing, especially if he's not the first colleague to say no.

But remember this works both ways. If there are three birthdays in a row at your office, and you really want to stick to your diet this time, just say no ("*Nee, bedankt. Ik ben op dieet*" or "*Nee, bedankt. Ik heb net gegeten*"). Really, it's OK!

5. The Dutch don't offer twice

Suppose a Dutchman offers you another drink ("*Wil je nog wat drinken?*"), and you decline ("*Nee, dank je*"). This means you won't get that drink. He just assumes you don't want another drink while, truth be told, you were just being polite.

On the positive side, if you really shouldn't have that extra glass of wine, he won't nag you until you politely accept. You'll be thankful the next morning!

6. Gefeliciteerd!

At a birthday party, Dutch people congratulate each other. This doesn't make sense to foreigners. But actually it's an effortless way to make your entrance at a party with strangers, especially if you don't speak Dutch (yet).



Shake hands, introduce yourself and congratulate ("*Hallo, ik ben Bob, gefeliciteerd met Anita*"). Repeat this phrase with every person in the room!

7. Dutch assertiveness

Dutch assertiveness can come across as rude (*onbeschoft / lomp*) and sometimes even a bit aggressive. If you are not good at sticking up for yourself, you can easily become the victim in a conflict. Having at least one Dutch friend, male or female, can be handy!

8. Anyone can criticise anyone

Dutch organisations have a flat structure. This means you can, and will, be criticised by anyone in the company, from the boss to the trainee.

In general the Dutch are not ashamed when a mistake is pointed out to them ("*Bedankt, dat je me op deze fout wijst*"). They see this as a chance to correct the mistake and to learn.

It might be painful at first, but showing you can take criticism is considered a great virtue here.

9. Cold and wet!

Even though the last Elfstedentocht happened in 1997, Dutch speed skaters (*schaatsers*) live up to their reputation.

During the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, 24 medals were won by the Dutch, of which 8 were gold. Didn't you feel just a little proud when the winners' podium turned completely orange four times?

10. The Dutch never let you speak Dutch

We try to make Dutch people aware that expats should get the opportunity to speak Dutch. It can be quite frustrating when everyone answers back in English!

But on the upside, no matter how lost you get in our big little country, everyone you meet will speak at least a little English!

Of course, we don't try to offend anyone in any way by generalising character traits of different cultures :) We hope you enjoyed reading this article and learnt some new Dutch phrases!

- See more at: <http://www.iamexpat.nl/read-and-discuss/expat-page/articles/ten-things-i-love-about-the-dutch#sthash.PoF7dN81.dpuf>