



In Transit

A Guide to Intelligent Travel

May 4, 2009, 6:00 am

A New Digital-Age Dutch Companion

By JOEL WEICKGENANT

AMSTERDAM | Those of us with iPhones or other web-equipped mobile devices have a new travel companion in Amsterdam. But the question is, does the [Amsterdam Mobile Guide](#), the service newly offered by the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions, know its way around town well enough to be useful?

I put the app to the test during a recent stroll around town. The interface, whose load time compared favorably to other sites I visit regularly on my phone's browser, is pretty user-friendly. Click on the "browse" tab, and you are presented with a menu including options for entertainment, bars, attractions, a section on how to get around town, one for gay and lesbian entertainment options, and so forth.



Courtesy of the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions

I found the service, which can be downloaded from the iTunes app store, useful in a couple of ways. First of all, the designers laid out the text alongside attractive photos, which are designed to look especially appealing on small screens and actually enhance the reading experience. Second, the important information hits the browser within two sentences. So, for example, you know immediately that the [Bimhuis](#) serves up jazz and improv in the Plantage neighborhood, and that its neighbor, the brand new Amsterdam Central Library, is Europe's largest public library.

The breakdown by neighborhood helps as well, since Amsterdam neophytes will usually have trouble distinguishing individual neighborhoods from the undifferentiated pastiche of historic streets in and around Centrum (the city center).

The service, unfortunately, doesn't offer too much to travelers who have been through Amsterdam before. Most of the information on here is better acquired ahead of time, through a travel guide or on a computer, or simply by walking around, which is still, even in this age of progressive technology, the undisputed best way to discover Amsterdam.

But all in all, the tourism board has created a nifty service packed with insider information that can definitely come in handy if you're looking for that perfect, authentic dive bar, want directions to some of the city's newest architectural feats, or need to know the best spot to rent a bike.

[f](#) FACEBOOK [t](#) TWITTER [+](#) GOOGLE+ [✉](#) E-MAIL [+](#) SHARE [🖨](#) PRINT

Amsterdam, Globespotters, technology