



# Going Dutch...

**Martin Ferid** is lured by tales of Seppe's glory days, but he ventures beyond his destination in order to explore the nearby towns of Roosendaal and Breda

**T**he airport at Seppe is in some ways like the Dutch themselves, as it is known by a variety of names. Whether, we call it the Netherlands, Holland or you refer to the area as Dutch, it is geographically the same place. The airport is actually located at Bosschenhoofd, sometimes referred to as Seppe/Hoeven (a nearby village), not too far from Roosendaal the nearest town, and actually markets itself as Breda International Airport after the closest city. It all sounds rather more complicated than it needs to be, doesn't it!

At the field you can pay a visit to a small museum ([www.vliegendmuseumseppe.nl](http://www.vliegendmuseumseppe.nl)), plus a restaurant, De Cockpit ([www.hangar01.nl](http://www.hangar01.nl)), making it an easy lunch destination at around 1.5 hours from the Dover area.

For those needing to stay overnight, the nearest hotel is the four-star Golden Tulip Hotel De Reiskoffer, a 15-minute walk away on Pastoor van Breugelstraat 45, 4744 AA Bosschenhoofd, around £75 per night. (<https://tinyurl.com/yyv4vdbe>)

**Main** Down by the riverside, paddle your own canoe or take a romantic stroll along the river.

Long before my first visit to Seppe, it was a place I'd heard about from the more audacious pilots around at the time, and one that developed its own mystique, due to a series of fly-ins where members of the organising aeroclub would present a very professional musical show on the Saturday evening.

Unfortunately, that was before my time, this popular event having ceased some years earlier. Progress dictated that the grass runway was paved in 2002 and the once flying club airfield was sold by the local municipalities and Chamber of Commerce to a private company. However, it remained a place that my active imagination, plus a desire for travel, meant I had a need to visit. Simply speaking, I guess, the 'righteous and the good' had been there and I hadn't.

It was a time for me when anywhere but the local airfields was still a challenge, the spirit was willing and confidence was gradually building, but everyone appeared to have greater knowledge and, naturally, superior piloting skills.



**Above** Breda's most important monument is Grote Kerk, Church of Our Lady, which was built between 1468 and 1547.

I was then flying out of Headcorn, and adding to Seppe's allure was the fact that a group of Tiger Club members had decided to use it as a staging post on a week's touring holiday, one of them having just completed a four-year, ground-up restoration of a Piper Super Cub. After the initial test flying this was to be the Cub's first real outing and I watched slightly enviously as they took-off one after the other into the hazy sunshine.

Later that evening I received a message by way of an update as to their progress. As I opened the text, fully expecting tantalising words and imagery of an enjoyable *al fresco* meal somewhere, I was shocked to read that the Cub had been badly damaged whilst parked, shortly after landing at Seppe, while the owners were paying their landing fee.

The story goes that a local pilot had been trying to hand-swing a crop-sprayer throughout the day without success. Finally giving up, while pushing it back into the hangar the prop somehow moved, the engine fired up and off it went, careering into the poor Cub. There was

no controlling it and had the offending marauder not been halted by the unfortunate Cub, it could have shot off in any direction – and considering the number of people in the proximity, anything could have happened.

Fortunately, nobody was hurt and both occupants of the Cub were flown home by other members of the group, one of them by stalwart Richard Warriner, one of the greatest proponents at our end of aviation, whose Rans S6 manages more hours per annum than many pilots accumulate in a lifetime. Now none of us really need reminding I'm sure, but it is certainly a salutary lesson that props should always be treated as live!

### Grass airfields

Like many things in life, when I finally dropped into Seppe, the reality didn't measure up to the expectation. It essentially proved to be more formal than I like and without the laid-back atmosphere of nearby grass airfields like Midden Zeeland (EHMZ).

The mystique had clearly been formed by its earlier

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life as a grass field, with those memorable fly-ins. Now it is better suited to those who prefer full ATC and its associated support. It is a welcoming place in its own way, but for a strip flyer who is used to being self-sufficient and relies on the windsock for airfield information, it was somewhat OTT.

My subsequent visits were lunch trips with pilots on cross-channel check-outs, or on the odd biennial reviews where the pilot wanted to encompass a cross channel flight. But I hadn't ventured away from the airport, and the two nearby towns of Roosendaal and Breda had long been beckoning.

Pilots often complain about their '£100 cup of coffee' when they simply visit an airfield within an hour's radius, have the customary injection of caffeine, augmented by equally appetising greasy spoon style food, and eventually wonder why their motivation fades. One of the first things to realise is that 'flying', especially at our end of the market, is something that can't be rushed. It may be perfectly OK to squeeze-in a 30-minute local on a nice summer's evening, but if you're going somewhere there is a world outside the airfield boundary, and it really doesn't take much planning or effort to make the whole experience much more rewarding.

Determining bus timetables or locating local taxis is so easy these days with the help of our friend Mr Google, which is where the adventure and ultimately the satisfaction kicks in. The cost will be a little more, but instead of a simple 'there and back' with an hour spent extolling the virtues of the wide open space of yet another airfield, the more perspicacious among you will

**Below** An interesting selection of aircraft were on view at the Wings & Wheels event. There is also an aircraft museum on the airfield.

notice that you probably have an opportunity of about four hours or so between arrival and departure to discover what the local area has to offer. Now doesn't that offer a much better return for your flying spend for, what is in truth, only a marginally higher outlay? Oh, and the choice of food is invariably better, too.

Anyway, on seeing an Old timer Classic Car & Plane event taking place at the airfield, I sent an email to the organisers and, on receiving a welcoming response, my partner packed a bag and off we went, this time planning to stay a day or two and explore. On arrival, we discovered that we had been allocated our own chaperone, named Harro Rantar, who very kindly took responsibility for everything. All the usual details were taken care of, with discounted rates for accommodation in Roosendaal, a local tour and lifts to and fro. My estimation of the airfield certainly rose a notch or two.

### Selling turf

With a population of around 77,000 Roosendaal was known as Rosendaele in the 13th century and thrived through the odd business of selling turf until the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), when itinerant marauding troops forced out the indigenous population.

In 1809 Roosendaal was elevated to city status by King Louis I, ruler of the Kingdom of Holland from 1806-1810. For those who know little about the monarch, it would be right to suspect a touch of nepotism once the full name of King Louis is known, as his surname was Bonaparte, younger brother to Napoléon, the then ruler of France.

As far as things to do in Rosendaal, the choice is limited. For an insight into the town's history try the Tongerlohuys Museum ([www.tongerlohuys.nl](http://www.tongerlohuys.nl)).

We ate at Thalassa, a local Greek restaurant. The food was excellent, with really good service and I have to admit a slightly overgenerous supply of complimentary liqueurs. Bloemenmarkt 9, +31 165 535 979. If you want to give the local cuisine a try, served the Dutch way with wooden platters on solid rustic tables, as good a choice as any is Het Hooihuis De Stok 13 +31 165 537 902. For the steak lover who likes to wash it down with a local beer, the eponymous Beer 'n Steak offer should manage to hit the spot. Raadhuisstraat 52 +31 165 533 900.

Turning the other way out of the airport takes you to Breda, which considering the fact that it's part of the airport's name is not so easy to get to by public transport. First, you have to walk 15 minutes to Bosschenhoofd, St Gerardushof and take the 211 bus to Roosendaal Station, and then the Intercity train 3668





Zwolle from platform 3a to Breda station, taking about an hour all told. Luckily for us, we had the car so could get there directly in about 20 minutes.

The city has a population of a little more than 180,000 and sits on the confluence of the rivers Mark and Aa. In Dutch 'breed' means 'wide' and the city was named as such being the widest part of the River Aa, at around 15 metres, compared to a width of only five metres throughout most of its length. The conjoined rivers continue their journey on toward the North Sea, where the River Mark eventually becomes the River Dintel and the lifeblood to prosperity through trade links.

Breda was a fiefdom of the Holy Roman Empire at a time when religious fervour was effusive in the 11th century under Lord Henry of Bruneseim. In 1252 it gained a municipal charter, which was a significant step for any town as it gave them enhanced rights and the ability to build their own fortifications and defences.

Through the centuries, like many perceived treasures, it was sold and resold, eventually passing through marriage to the House of Nassau and Orange, where it remained until 1795 when it was taken by French revolutionary forces.

With more than 300 restaurants dotted around the city you're not going to go hungry. One establishment where you can sample local Dutch food, which is relatively inexpensive, is Zand & Klei, Veemarktstraat 76, 4811 ZJ +31 76 886 2372 ([www.zandenklei.nl](http://www.zandenklei.nl)).

Also, the steak lover is well catered for with what is acclaimed as the 'best steak in town' offered at Restaurant Con Fuego, Grote Markt 24, 4811 XR +31 76 870 0179. ([www.restaurantconfuego.nl](http://www.restaurantconfuego.nl)).

At the top end, and be warned we're talking megabucks, for the discerning diner wanting somewhere to celebrate a special occasion, or just feeling flush, the Wolfslaar Restaurant has a Michelin star. Wolfslaardreef 100-102, 4834 SP +31 76 560 8000

**Above** The entrance to Kasteel Van Breda, once home of the Lords of Breda.

([www.wolfslaar.com](http://www.wolfslaar.com)).

Hotels are not cheap and in season most are in the £75-£150 per night bracket.

Compared to Roosendaal there's more to do, with several museums and places of interest. The museums range from the wacky beer museum, with a variety of pub/beer related memorabilia (<https://tinyurl.com/yy6qklwv>) to one of the nunneries that housed the followers of Saint Begga ([www.begijnhofbreda.nl](http://www.begijnhofbreda.nl)).

You can even visit the church where Vincent Van Gogh is said to have worshipped, Grote Kerk or Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk, Church of Our Lady. ([www.grotekerkbreda.nl](http://www.grotekerkbreda.nl))

### House of Orange-Nassau

Kasteel Van Breda was home to the Lords of Breda and the descendants of the House of Orange-Nassau and tours can be arranged through the tourist office. (<https://tinyurl.com/y5zsrdrv>).

A good place for shops is the Ginnekenmarkt, once past the Alameda you'll find a cosy little square and a perfect place for a drink or two. It's crammed with outside bars and is popular for an early evening drink and that universally popular pastime – people watching.

Breda has other historical points of interest, as in 1534AD about 90 per cent of the city was destroyed by a great fire and had to be rebuilt. There's a British connection too, as during the English Civil War, after the execution of Charles I in 1649, he was succeeded by his son Charles II. Following the Battle of Worcester in 1651, and defeat at the hands of Cromwellian forces, Oliver Cromwell proclaimed himself Lord Protector and Charles fled to Breda, where he spent most of his exile at the house of his widowed sister Mary, Princess of Orange and Countess of Nassau. She was also the first member of the British Monarchy to carry the title of Princess Royal, having been designated as such in 1642 by her

father, therefore establishing the tradition that the eldest daughter of the British sovereign might bear this title.

Cromwell had such a grip on power as an absolute dictator and zealot that a putsch was not only dangerous but realistically out of the question with society. Following Cromwell's death, the monarchy was finally restored in 1660, with Charles' return.

During WWII Breda was occupied for four years by German forces. It was eventually liberated by the 1st Polish Armoured Division during Operation Pheasant, led by General Maczek.

Both the General and many of his soldiers died during the battle and are buried in the nearby Polish Military Cemetery. Their story can be seen at the Stedelijk museum (<https://maczekmuseum.nl/en>). Each year there are celebrations that commemorate the contribution of the Polish Army to the final liberation of the city.

The fly-in was a Wings & Wheels event with a vibrant atmosphere, lots of stalls and plenty to entertain the whole family. At times the runway was closed and used for racing classic cars and trucks. The aircraft on display were an interesting mix of warbirds, the venerable and some interesting newer types. With the pilot's pass of course, you can by-pass the public to inspect and admire up-close and personal.

There were no landing fees for pre-registered aircraft, plus a complimentary lunch and, on this occasion, we were only met by customs for a passport check after having arrived the previous day. Unfortunately, this year's event had to be cancelled due to a double Dutch dose of bureaucracy from their CAA, but plans are well in place for next year.

Next month's *Flying Adventure* goes to Siena, in the Tuscany region of Italy. ■



**Above** A very British flavour for some of the vehicles gathered for the 'Wheels' side of the event.

**Below** Plenty of *al fresco* eateries, which are ideal for people watching.

## Get touring with the author!

**Martin Ferid** is a Class Rating Instructor and Revalidation Examiner and specialises in helping qualified pilots expand their horizons by introducing them to the splendours of flying in Europe, both as day trips or a few days at a time.

If you lack a little confidence in crossing the channel, touring in general or indeed any aspects of flying, contact Martin via:

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For anyone looking for a little inspiration, browse through our 'favourite destinations' on the website below. There should be enough on offer to quench most thirsts – and all discovered while cruising at a relatively sedate 90kt. ([www.lightaircrafttraining.co.uk](http://www.lightaircrafttraining.co.uk))

As part of this monthly series of 'Touring Adventures', throughout the season we have been arranging fly-outs to destinations in both the UK and abroad. The idea is to get pilots to take part in adventures that are literally at their fingertips by going a little further afield.

Picture a weekend away; a nice town, good food, a glass or two and a bunch of like-minded people. If you would like to join us, you will be most welcome. It makes no difference whether you are a seasoned tourer or have never crossed the channel before, there is enough support and experience around to help allay those fears.

Email the address above, then your name will be added to the list and you will be kept informed.

