A boat trip on the Binnendieze in ’s-Hertogenbosch
Welcome aboard for a boat trip of about 50 minutes. Look around you as much as possible but keep your arms inside the boat!

History

This area was part of a stretch of high sand dunes in the swampy wooded delta area between 2 rivers. It was populated by 1159 and not much larger than the market square today, receiving town right in 1185. To protect itself 's-Hertogenbosch (the duke’s wood) , a fortified wall was built around it. The first moats were built on branches of the rivers. The economy flourished and the town grew so that a second wall was built and this increased the size of town about 10 times. (you will see the 2nd wall later). The branches of the rivers were now inside the town walls and they are called collectively Binnendieze.
Starting point Molenstraat

Binnendieze

In 15th century there were few paved roads so most goods were transported by boats. ´s-Hertogenbosch had lots of waterways (about 12 kilometres) inside its walls and people built their houses on its banks with their workshops (at the back of the house) facing the water in order to have access to the water. Raw material were delivered and ready products picked up, so it was a busy coming and going. The water was used in leather, metal and brewing industries as well as for washing, cooking and drinking and it was also the sewer!!! (no wonder people preferred to drink beer).

At that time ´s-Hertogenbosch was a thriving town with about 25,000 citizens and as it was forbidden to build outside the walls for security reasons, they had to find space within. So every bit of space was used and houses were built over the water. You can admire this unique architecture during the trip.

So keeping looking around! You will see unexpected views, stairs and mysterious openings in the walls.

After a left turn the boat takes you underneath a shop, a busy street and a restaurant. There (on your right) you can see that parts of the waterways are filled in; so today 3.5 kms are left. We turn left again and you are at the back of the houses facing one of the main streets.
Next comes a sharp turn to the right. Have you noticed the dwellings for the bats in the form of a bat?

Even a chapel was built over the river. It was part of a large monastery dating from 16th century. There were once so many churches and monasteries that the town was called “small Rome”.

Here is the second town wall built in 14th century. There were 3 large gates and many small ones, like this one, which were used to get rid of water, when the water level in town was too high.

We now enter a modern passage way built through the old wall (watch your head!!!) and underneath a busy street, emerging outside the mediaeval town.

On the right is a nature reserve and on the left the ramparts with remains of the many roundels it used to have. We also pass a bastion built later to accommodate the canons to defend the town. ’s-Hertogenbosch could also use its water to defend itself. It could
inundate the area outside the walls so the enemy could not get to the ramparts.

We will go back into town through one of the three old gates; passing heavy wooden sluice doors. Continue

**Starting point Voldersgat**

**This area was formerly famous for its weavers, who also lived over the water (where the arches are now) behind the houses facing the streets. Most houses were wooden as bricks were only for the rich. Many fires occurred; the most terrible one in 1463. Today only one wooden house exists over the water.

Your journey will now be mostly in the dark. You will go underneath houses, the museum and shops. To your left, you will pass Hell hole, a secretive side stream underneath the museum and town hall with its glass floor. (we sometimes take bride and groom to town hall by boat).

If you started at Voldersgat, continue with Binnendieze on page 3.

Kring Vrienden van ’s-Hertogenbosch, a regional and historical society entirely run by volunteers, organises boat trips, walking tours as well as special interest tours.

Information can be obtained in our offices at the Bolwerk and the Parade (near the cathedral) as well as on our websites.
Decline and restoration

In 1822 a canal was dug around the town as boats had become bigger. A railroad was also constructed and after 1874 people were allowed to build, work and live outside the townwalls. So the Binnendieze waterways were no longer used much, but it was still used as open sewer. This caused an unbearable smell and as people no longer looked after the wall and bridges, decline set in and attracted many rats.!!

In 1964 the city council decided to fill in all the waterways, but this could not be done before the houses had a new sewage system. Fortunately some people recognized the historical and cultural value of the Binnendieze and prevented the closure.

In 1973 a unique restoration, lasting 25 years and costing 21 million Euros, started. The old infrastructure was kept intact and ruined arches were strengthened with a new arch underneath. The Binnendieze is now a protected area.

If you started at Voldersgat, continue with Binnendieze on page 3.