

press release

KUNSTHAL ROTTERDAM



Press release, 14 November 2025

Destination Rotterdam

13 December 2025 until 8 March 2026

In 2025, The New York Times declared Rotterdam one of the top ten must-visit cities in the world. Over 125 years ago, curious travellers were also drawn to Rotterdam, armed with an iconic, red Baedeker travel guide. Tourists have since been discovering the most beautiful spots in this city in full transition: from classical merchant city to modern metropolis. The exhibition Destination Rotterdam at the Kunsthal highlights this period of rapid growth, innovation, and international flair and shows how a city like Rotterdam was able to become an increasingly attractive travel destination for tourists from all over the world around 1900.

The red Baedeker travel guides created by German publisher Karl Baedeker appeared in various languages and offered travellers practical information, detailed maps, and listings of places of interest. In 1835, one of these guides first mentioned Rotterdam as an attractive stop during a journey along the Rhine. The exhibition uses the Baedeker as its point of departure: the places described and recommended in the Baedeker guide come to life in twenty paintings depicting these locations. The objects are part of the collection of Museum Rotterdam.

Rotterdam in the picture

In Destination Rotterdam, visitors are following in the footsteps of tourists who were exploring an actively evolving city. In 1871, the Baedeker guide describes Rotterdam as 'one of the cleanest, least smoky, and most pleasant of all the merchant cities.' Not long after, the construction of the Nieuwe Waterweg [New Waterway] canal and the city's expansion towards the south led to an explosive rise in harbour and shipping activities, as well as in population. Artists like Jongkind and Richters captured these transformations in their paintings: from the

lively Leuvehaven harbour to the impressive railway viaduct across the Kolk waterway. Built in 1898, the high-rise building Het Witte Huis [the White House] further emphasised the transformation from a traditional, old Dutch inland harbour to a modern urban district. Rotterdam not only became busier and more crowded, but also gained a livelier character. Van Voorden's painting, for instance, depicts the touristy adventure of three elegant ladies on the Oosterkade river bank, absorbed in their red Baedeker guide. He also captured the Oudehaven [Old Harbour] where large posters gracing the banks enticed tourists into visiting theatres and dance halls.

Collaboration

The exhibition Destination Rotterdam is a collaboration between Kunsthall Rotterdam and Museum Rotterdam.

Photo captions from left to right: 1. *Tourists at the Oosterkade*, August Willem van Voorden, c. 1915, Museum Rotterdam; 2. *Leuvehaven*, Johan Barthold Jongkind, 1873, Museum Rotterdam; 3. *Elevated Railway over the Kolk*, Marius Richters, c. 1915, Museum Rotterdam

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→ In case of publication please mention: info +31 (0)10-4400301, www.kunsthall.nl, opening hours: Tuesdays – Fridays 10:00 – 17:00 hrs, Saturday & Sunday 10:00-18:00 hrs

About Kunsthall Rotterdam

Kunsthall Rotterdam is one of the Netherlands' leading cultural institutes and is situated in the Museumpark in Rotterdam. Designed by the renowned architect Rem Koolhaas in 1992, the Kunsthall has seven different exhibition spaces. The Kunsthall annually presents a varied programme consisting of around 23 exhibitions. As visitors are always able to visit multiple concurrent exhibitions, the Kunsthall can offer them an adventurous journey through different continents and art movements. Culture for a wide audience, from modern-day masters and contemporary art to overlooked cultures, photography, fashion, and design. The exhibitions are accompanied by an extensive programme of activities. Follow the Kunsthall on kunsthall.nl | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)

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