



**Housing for internationals in the Greater The Hague Region**  
**The Dutch Rental Market**  
**2012**

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On a world map, the Netherlands is very small. The longest distance you can drive from the North to the South will take about four hours.

The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe, with almost 500 people per square kilometre. With little space available, houses at the lower and middle end of the housing market tend to be fairly compact.

How this is perceived depends on the experiences in your home country. Most Europeans claim that housing is expensive and gardens are small. Americans used to the spacious properties also feel that the rooms are small (particularly children's bedrooms). They tend more towards the more luxurious end of the market in terms of space, decoration, fixtures and fittings. Those coming from places such as Singapore however, where land is also at a premium, may see things differently.

Wherever you come from, it is essential to realise that housing availabilities will be different from what you are used to!



# I. Dutch Rental Market

## - what to expect?

Housing availabilities across The Netherlands vary from studio apartments (a single room including sleeping area, living area and cooking facilities) to more traditional apartments with multiple separate bedrooms to larger houses (row-, semi-detached or detached houses).

### Types of properties

**Fully furnished** (in Dutch 'gemeubileerd', adverts marked with an 'M') properties are provided with complete furniture, floor covering (wooden floor, carpets), curtains, kitchen & bathroom appliances (cooker, fridge, washing machine and tumble dryer) and often linen & towels. You just have to bring your personal belongings.

**Partly furnished** ('gestoffeerd', adverts marked with an 'S') accommodations are provided with floor covering (wooden floor, carpets), curtains, light fixtures and most of the kitchen and bathroom appliances. You will have to bring in your personal belongings and your own furniture or purchase new one.

**Unfurnished** ('kaal') accommodations are delivered empty with no floor cover, no curtains or any appliances (light bulbs may even have been removed). Such accommodations are usually much cheaper but require a higher initial investment from the tenant.

**Serviced apartments** are accommodations fully equipped and furnished offering extra facilities as TV & internet connections, housekeeping and sometimes laundry facility and health club. Rates are all-in including basic rent, rent for furniture/equipment, utilities and cleaning services. Serviced apartments are usually meant for short-term residence (1 week to 6 months).

**Short-stay accommodations** are suitable for international staff assigned on projects with a limited duration; but also for expatriates arriving to the Netherlands and wishing first to explore the city before deciding where they want to live with their family.

A few companies in The Hague offer short-stay apartments on a turn-key basis with a minimum rental period starting from one week. Most of these companies provide an internet online booking system enabling people to make their booking before arrival.

### Prices ranges

Type of accommodations	Rental price per month*	
	Unfurnished	Partly furnished
Studio apartment	€450 - €800	€700 - €1,000
One/two-bedroom apartment	€900 - €1,200	€900 - €1,750
Three-bedroom row house	€1,000 - €1,500	€1,500 - €2,500
Semi-detached house	€3,000 - €4,500	
Detached house	> €4,500	

\* Price indication excluding utilities

### In practice..

- Houses are smaller and more compact than in many countries. But the Dutch builders are extremely skilled in maximizing the use of space!
- One bathroom is the norm. Showers are more common than baths in most houses and apartments.
- Dining rooms are a luxury; there is usually a separate kitchen and a living room with a dining area. Kitchens generally are small and equipped with four gas rings and a microwave. Ovens are not always standard.

## Property market in The Hague and surroundings

In The Hague, housing availabilities mostly fall in the categories of apartments/flats and row houses rather than single family semi-detached or detached houses. Houses are typically on 2-4 levels and offer a reasonable amount of space. Gardens tend to be small.

Street parking is common, although some flat buildings have their own car parking arrangements. Because of the distance to walk between a parking spot and the house, do take the parking situation into consideration when making a choice, especially if you have small children. In the city of The Hague, a resident parking permit is needed in most of residential area (€36 per year for the 1st car, €420 per year per additional car).

## Popular neighbourhoods for Internationals in The Hague

- Archipelbuurt
- Belgisch Park
- Benoordenhout
- Bezuidenhout
- Kijkduin
- Statenkwartier

## Popular Housing Areas for Internationals around The Hague

Municipalities adjacent to The Hague (15-20 min driving time)

- Leidschendam
- Voorburg
- Rijswijk

Municipalities outside The Hague	Distance to The Hague	Driving time
Wassenaar	+/- 10 km	15-20 min
Voorschoten	+/- 14 km	15-20 min
Leiden	+/- 18 km	35-40 min
Oegstgeest	+/- 20 km	35-40 min

### In practice..

- Washing machines are sometimes located in the kitchen or in the bathroom (especially in the older or smaller house/appartments).
- Garages (when available) tend to be used as storage space.
- Parking permits are often needed, particularly if you are living in the centre of the city.
- Houses are well insulated and newer buildings will be double-glazed.

## II. Finding a suitable accommodation – how to proceed?

### Public social sector versus private sector

The Netherlands has a large **public housing sector** whose dwellings ('sociale huurwoningen') are aimed for lower income groups with a maximum rent fixed by law (per 1st January 2012 net rent per month up to €664.66). Those social dwellings are allocated by housing associations on the base of eligibility criteria (among others: a maximum yearly taxable income of the entire household up to €34,085 (2012) and registration period).

The maximum net rent of €664.66 (in 2012) represents the so-called liberalisation limit between the controlled public housing sector and the **free private sector** with liberalized rents. Taking into account these criteria and average waiting time (often exceeding 3-4 years), social housing is not a favourable option for expatriates.

Expatriates usually turn to properties in the free ('vrije') private sector. Private rental properties are not subsidised and there are no pre-conditions of eligibility for tenants.

### Main real estate actors

There are many real estate actors in The Hague area. Some provide services in selling, buying and renting, some only with rentals.

**Real estate agents and housing agencies** manage private rental properties. The rental price for these properties is considerably higher than for accommodations found

through **housing associations**, but in general, these accommodations are available for immediate tenancy.

If you hire a real estate/housing/relocation agency to search for a suitable accommodation (including viewings and negotiation of the rental terms on your behalf), you will be charged a mediation fee (1 to 2 months' rent). Such a fee amounts to on average 8% of the annual rent (about 1 month's rent) excluding 19% tax (VAT).

The apartments/houses will often be delivered with upholstery and possibly furniture and all necessary home appliances (for which payment can be asked). Also a deposit will be charged. As these accommodations belong to private owners, the rent can be agreed upon for a fixed period of time.

**Real estate property managers** take care of properties belonging to the private sector. These properties are owned by public and private institutional investors (pension funds, banks, insurance companies, etc...) and are available in various price ranges (from relatively cheap to expensive). You will need to register, provide supporting documents and pay an administration fee. No mediation fee is charged for such properties.

In general, the apartments/houses will be delivered without upholstery. In some cases, the former tenant might offer to sell the upholstery or some appliances to the new tenant.

Also, many **private owners** offer their properties for rent. In those cases, the terms of tenancy can always be discussed. Often these apartments/houses are offered furnished and equipped. As no mediating agent is involved, initial costs can be kept down.

### Searching for a rental property

On the Dutch market it is common practice to use a real estate agent (in Dutch 'makelaar') or a housing agent when buying or renting an accommodation. On the rental market expats often make use of the service of a relocation company.

Time and patience are needed in large doses to succeed in finding a house that will eventually become your home. Although costly, hiring an estate agent or a relocation agency might make settling easier by saving you time and frustration.

**N.B:** if you do not use the services of an agent and wish to handle your house hunting on your own, be aware that agents represent owners. They only represent you when you pay them. Always check whether the property you are interested in is in the real estate agent's own portfolio and whether it is commission free.

 **You can start your house hunting online:**  
for example at: [www.funda.nl](http://www.funda.nl)

# III. Rental contracts

## – what you need to know!

### Rental contracts formats

Rental contracts used by real estate agents must comply with the **General Terms and Conditions for Lease of Housing Accommodation** (model established by the Real Estate Council 'ROZ' of 30 July 2003).

In The Hague area, most of real estate agents belong to one of the main associations of real estate agents in the Netherlands. The main association is called NVM ('Nederlandse Vereniging van Makelaars'). Members of the NVM operate under standard guidelines and use a rental contract consisting of a model tenancy agreement and related General Terms and Conditions. Both documents are available in English language via your HR department.

Most of the rental contracts that tenants have to deal with are drawn up based on the ROZ or the NVM model.

### Essential points to check in the tenancy agreement

**Before signing check whether, the following data are defined correctly:** date of entry, duration of the contract, notice period, rental price (with specification of service charges, etc... if applicable), deposit amount (1 up to 2 months' rent), diplomatic clause (for the tenant and eventually for the landlord-owner), property manager, and special provisions.

**Duration of the contract & notice period:** in principle a minimum of 1 year with a notice period of one calendar month for either party applicable on termination of the 1st rental period. If the accommodation belongs to someone who might want to claim it back at any time (e.g. someone on assignment outside the Netherlands), it may be better to fix the contract for a longer period and to limit the landlord-owner's diplomatic clause.

Notice should always be given by registered mail, even if a specific termination date is mentioned.

**Rental price:** usually the rental price is exclusive of the utilities costs (gas, water, electricity, TV/phone/internet connections). Still a rental price may be inclusive (all-in-price); in the latter case a detailed specification should be given of the basic rent, the costs for utilities, and whether the utilities' respective amounts are considered as advance payments (to be balanced with the actual costs once a year) or as a lump sum (risk of overcharge).

**Security deposit:** in general, before entering the premises, you will have to pay a deposit (equal to 1 to 2 months' rent). This amount will be (partly/fully) returned to you when you leave the apartment/house in good condition. The security deposit is not meant to be set off against the last month's rent payment.

**Diplomatic clause:** if, on account of his work the tenant is transferred to a place 50 km or more away from the premises or must leave the premises for reasons beyond his control, the tenant is entitled to terminate the tenancy agreement prematurely – provided that he informs the landlord by registered letter whereby 1 to 2 full calendar months' shall be observed.

**Property manager:** when renting a property, both the landlord and the tenant have obligations regarding its maintenance. The tenant sees to small and day-to-day repairs (ref. guidelines on minor repairs in annex). The property manager (landlord or his delegate) is responsible for the major repairs and maintenance to the premises (building and if applicable garden); his contact details should be clearly mentioned in the contract.

**Special provisions:** any additional provision (for example, wall paints to be refreshed, new carpet to be provided, etc...) should be clearly mentioned in the contract.

**Condition report ('état des lieux') at check-in:** is an integral part to the tenancy agreement and should be attached to it.

## IV. Practical tips ...

### ... Regarding the search for a suitable accommodation

#### Tip 1

Before starting your search, you should **list - by order of importance - the criteria that are relevant for you and will influence your choice** – for example:

- type of accommodation (apartment/house), number of rooms, surface...
- location (close to work or to childrens' school, type of neighbourhood);
- availability of connections by public transportation;
- price range;
- etc...

#### Tip 2

If you decide to handle your house hunting yourself (not using the services of an intermediary), read the information available carefully. When you make an appointment, show up (or cancel in due time if you are not able to make it).

Do not sign any agreement or pay any rent before having visited the property, being definitively interested and having agreed all conditions with the landlord or his representative.

**In the Netherlands, a verbal agreement is binding once parties agree on the conditions.** Do not commit yourself verbally but make a written proposal to the landlord or his representative. This will avoid any misunderstanding. Upon reaching an agreement with the landlord or his representative, ask for a written confirmation while waiting for the tenancy agreement to be drawn up.

#### Tip 3

**Prices are asking prices and are always negotiable.** It is worth negotiating the price with the landlord or his representative. As part of the negotiations you may ask also for works to be done in the premises (refreshing the wall paints, replacing old carpets, etc...) and/or additional appliances or furniture to be provided by the owner.

#### ...Hand-over of the accommodation

#### Tip 4

On entry into the accommodation (hand-over of the keys), **a condition report** should be drawn up in your presence by the landlord or his representative. This condition report has to be signed by both parties. If **an inventory list** is supplied too, do check that you have been provided with all the items listed. You have one month time to report the malfunction of electric appliances to the property manager.

#### Tip 5

**Buying goods from the previous tenant:** many tenants make improvements to the property at their own expenses, such as fixed modifications to the premises (fixed masonry or carpentry works as plastering, new shower...) or purchase new fixtures and furniture. The tenant must always ask for the permission of the landlord before bringing important fixed modifications to the premises. The landlord may give his permission under the condition that when leaving the tenant returns the premises to their original state.

When moving out of the premises, a departing tenant might ask the new one for payment for these improvements. This is only allowed for movable goods (such as floor covering

in an unfurnished accommodation, curtains, carpets, etc...). The costs for taking over these items are called in Dutch **'overnamekosten'**; their amount must be reasonable. There is no obligation for the new tenant to purchase any item from the departing tenant.

#### Tip 6

**Key fee:** some landlords request tenants to pay a fee before they may move into the property. Departing tenants might also request for such a payment, sometimes in relation with 'overnamekosten' whereas they do not offer any good in return. This practice is called the key fee (in Dutch **'sleutelgeld'**). **Charging key money to tenants is not allowed.**

#### ...Once you have moved into your rental accommodation

#### Tip 7

**Local taxes:** tenants are charged by local authorities with certain taxes, i.e. garbage collection tax, water surface pollution tax, environmental pollution tax, etc. Staff members of international organisations, consular posts or diplomatic missions should check with their respective protocol officer whether they may be entitled to local tax exemptions.

## Tip 8

**Insurances:** it is advisable for a tenant to take out a **household content insurance** (in Dutch ‘inboedelverzekering’ which covers damage to his household goods (furniture and personal belongings) caused by fire, burglary, explosion, storms, water, and various other factors. The sum insured will usually be subject to average; it is important that the tenant checks on a yearly basis whether the sum insured is up-to-date.

In the case of fully furnished rented properties, the owners are in principle to take out the residential premises insurance and the household content insurance.

Still it is advisable that tenants take out a household content insurance to cover their personal belongings.

## Tip 9

### **Regarding the rental price be aware of the following:**

The rental price of properties with a net monthly rent up to €664,66 (maximum for dwellings in the public sector) is limited by the Dutch law. The maximum rental price applicable for a property can be determined with the house valuation system (in Dutch ‘woningwaarderingstelsel’). It is a rating system that expresses the quality of an independent property in points; points are given on the basis of a number of criteria (condition, size, location and facilities of a property). The total number of points indicates the maximum rental price applicable for the property concerned. It allows a tenant to check whether the rental price is reasonable in proportion to the quality of the property.

If your net rent is higher than the maximum rent according to the points system, you may request to have it reduced by **the tenancy court** (‘huurcommissie’). A re-evaluation process has to be started within the first 6 months of the rental agreement.

The house valuation system does not apply in principle to dwellings from the ‘free’ private sector with a number of points above 141.

The necessary information about the house valuation system can be found on the site of the Ministry of Housing (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/huurwoning/puntensysteem-huurwoning>).

## **...Getting your deposit back at termination of the tenancy agreement**

### Tip 10

Usually **the deposit** sits on the account of the landlord for the duration of the lease (without interest). Before a tenant vacates premises, it is necessary that an inspection of the premises takes place with the landlord or his representative. It is important that the tenant is present at this inspection.

It is even advisable for a tenant to ask the landlord or his representative for a pre-inspection allowing the tenant to be aware of the eventual works to be done prior to the final check-out inspection. If there are deductions (for repair or cleaning outside the normal wear and tear) to be made against the tenant’s deposit, this should be noted in the inspection report which should be signed by both parties.

The deposit amount or its balance should be returned within 1 to 2 months by the landlord.

 **For more information**  
please contact your HR department