

AMSTERDAM

WORDS - HEIDI MORTLOCK

FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL CAPITAL CITY, AMSTERDAM MANAGES TO TICK ALL THE EPICUREAN BOXES AND THEN SOME, WRITES HEIDI MORTLOCK.

RESTAURANT RED

Those with a penchant for lobster and beef should make Restaurant Red top of their Amsterdam itinerary. The surf 'n' turf concept is straightforward enough: opt for the steak served with homemade béarnaise sauce or the lobster drizzled in *beurre du chef* (that's chef's butter to you and I). If you are a lover of both land and sea option then try the duo, which is cooked to perfection and complemented by tasty French fries. While the model is simple, the experience is nothing short of memorable. Located in a house that overlooks one of the city's most beautiful canals, Keizersgracht, Red's ambience is something the Dutch might describe as *gezellig* (cosy and intimate). The waiters are attentive, the wine flows freely and the prices are reasonable for such a fine experience.

WHERE Keizersgracht 594, 1017 EN
PHONE +31 20 320 1824
ONLINE restaurantred.nl



CONSERVATORIUM HOTEL

In the epicentre of Amsterdam's museum precinct, the Conservatorium Hotel stands on the well-known site of the city's former Sweelinck Conservatory of Music. Opened in 2011, the striking Neo-Gothic building is beautifully complemented by the modern design of Italian architect, Piero Lissoni. Surrounded by the popular Jordaan neighbourhood, the Conservatorium's location is prime given its proximity to shopping avenue P.C. Hooftstraat and a string of museums and galleries. Housing 129 bedrooms and suites that feature high ceilings, generous windows and gorgeous views, another lavish bonus is the restaurants and bars onsite. Head to the Conservatorium Brasserie & Lounge for all day dining in a beautiful internal courtyard or pop into the Tunes Bar for a pre-dinner cocktail or some tasty tapas after a night on the tiles. The hotel is also home to one of Amsterdam's finest retreats, the Akasha spa, where you can enjoy a day of holistic massages, beauty treatments, a spot of yoga and a dip in the relaxing whirlpool.

WHERE Van Baerlestraat 27, 1071 AN
PHONE +31 20 570 0000
ONLINE conservatoriumhotel.com

HERMITAGE MUSEUM

Not one of your mainstream suspects, the Hermitage Amsterdam is in fact an overseas branch of the famed Russian institute of the same name. Having opened just four years ago, 2013 has been crowned 'Netherlands – Russia Year' and celebrates the historical bonds the two countries share: cross-royalty marriages, a trading partnership dating back to the Golden Age and the Russian Cossacks liberating Amsterdam when Napoleon fell from power in 1813. Currently, there is a major exhibition dedicated to Russian Tsar Peter the Great and later this year the museum will showcase the work of French artists of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries such as Gauguin, Bonnard and Denis. Situated on the banks of the Amstel River in a building dating back to 1683, the museum has a particularly tranquil feel and also offers visitors the lovely Café-Restaurant Neva, a great place to unwind, relax and ponder the exhibitions.

WHERE Amstel 51
PHONE +31 20 530 7488
ONLINE hermitage.nl/en

DOOR 74

When you finally navigate your way to this little hidden gem all those wrong turns will seep into the background and you'll be glad you made the effort. The first speakeasy-style cocktail bar in The Netherlands, Door 74 boasts all the essential ingredients for a bona fide hit: hidden door, antique barware, chic atmosphere and unique drinking concoctions. First-timers should be warned that there are some fairly tight house rules imposed by the staff who consider the digs their second home: no screaming; no hitting on other guests; and no hats. Above all, they encourage you to slide on in to one of the plush sofas, bask in the dim lighting and order yourself a drink. The 'Gimme a Mejisjo' made from Choya Plum wine, fresh lemon, lapsang souchon tea syrup and fresh shiso leaf is a personal favourite. That said, bartenders are incredibly gifted so if you tell them what you're in the mood for they'll work their magic and whip you something up on the spot. Just make sure you phone ahead to make a reservation.

WHERE shhh it's a hidden bar near Rembrandt Square
PHONE +31 63 404 5122
ONLINE door-74.com

