



Hans & Paul at  
Cafe De Barderij



At Cafe Montmartre

# AMSTERDAM

*Much is made of tolerance in Amsterdam, but Amsterdammers don't just tolerate, they celebrate things that elsewhere are prohibited. Europe's gay capital is sexy, raunchy, rational, and fun.*

Michael Thompson

**t**he city's lifestyle may disorient at first, but before long the sex in the bars, the sexually explicit window displays, soft drugs for sale in boutique shops, and that distinctive smell coming from many doorways – plus the pot plant starter-kits among the tulip bulbs – will seem completely natural. For now it's all still quite accepted and legit; and why not, you may soon wonder. Amsterdammers take it all for granted, and they welcome visitors with enthusiasm.

The Dutch take pride in the Netherlands as a nation of traders – sophisticated, canny, and at the crossroads of the world. English is almost universally spoken. The bicycle is the favored means of transportation still, and cyclists have their own lanes in most streets. Bikes can easily be rented. Public transit is also easy to use, and if you buy the discount tram strip, it's inexpensive, too.

With such native sons such as Van Gogh, Vermeer, and Rembrandt, Amsterdam has a rich art history and plentiful galleries in which to show it off. There's a diversity of restaurants of all ethnicities, plus miles of stores and boutiques to explore along the narrow pedestrian streets that lie between the major thoroughfares.

Follow the guys, and grab a free gay map from most anywhere to easily find your way around. *Gay News* (Gaynews.nl) and *Gay & Night* (Gay-night.nl) are local gay magazines in Dutch and English. *Gay Krant* (Gay-krant.nl) is in Dutch. The websites Nighttours.nl/amsterdam, Gayamsterdam.com, and Amsterdam.info are useful, too. The *Bent Guide* (Pinkpoint.org) is a guidebook with a colorful critique of "everything not straight in Amsterdam." The **Homomonument** (Homomonument.com) is now celebrating 20 years on the Westermarke as both an inspiration for the future and a

commemoration of those persecuted in the past.

## Lodgings

Amsterdam has many small gay hotels and guesthouses scattered around town.

Not far from the Liedseplein, find the **Amistad Hotel** (Kerkstraat 42; Amistad.nl) where the motto is "sleep with us." It's a pleasure to do so. Americans Jerry and Steve took over this year to run this beautiful, clean, efficient and stylish establishment. Their modern and spacious rooms and suites come with private or shared baths, cable TV, safes, phones, and mini-bars. Breakfast is served, and sleepy smiles are shared at the big table until 1 p.m. – a convenience if you've slept till noon! They now provide computers in every room as well as internet hook-ups for your own laptop, and their internet lounge, open to all, is open daily until midnight. Staff Mike, Robert, and Dickie are easygoing



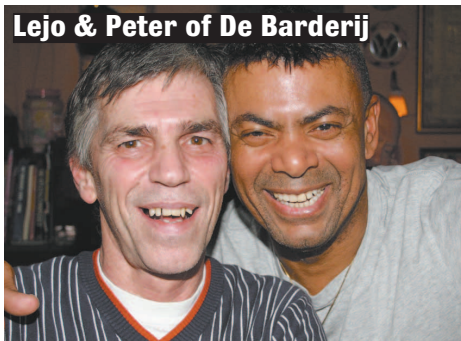
**Ruud of Eagle**



**Edson & Jan of Thermos**



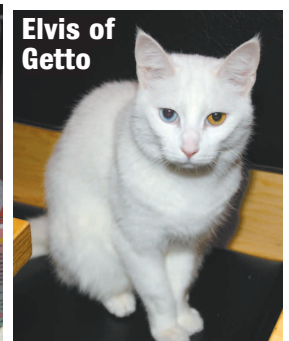
**Steve & Jerry of Amistad**



**Lejo & Peter of De Barderij**



**At Getto**



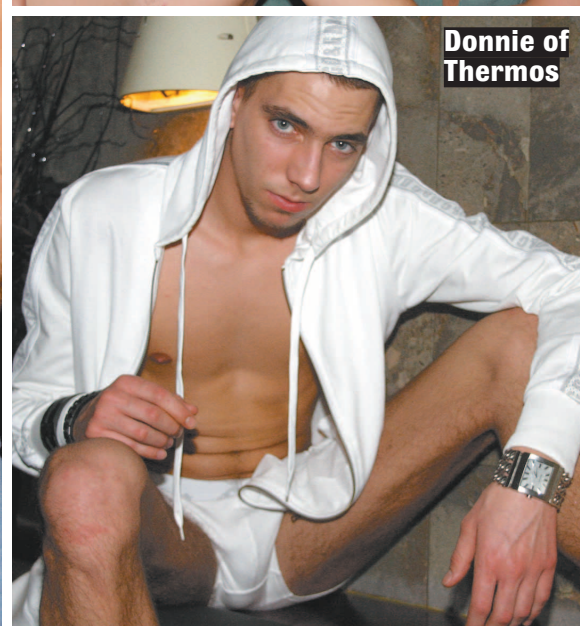
**Elvis of Getto**



**Hans & Manfred at Thermos**



**Andreey and Ivo at Thermos**



**Donnie of Thermos**



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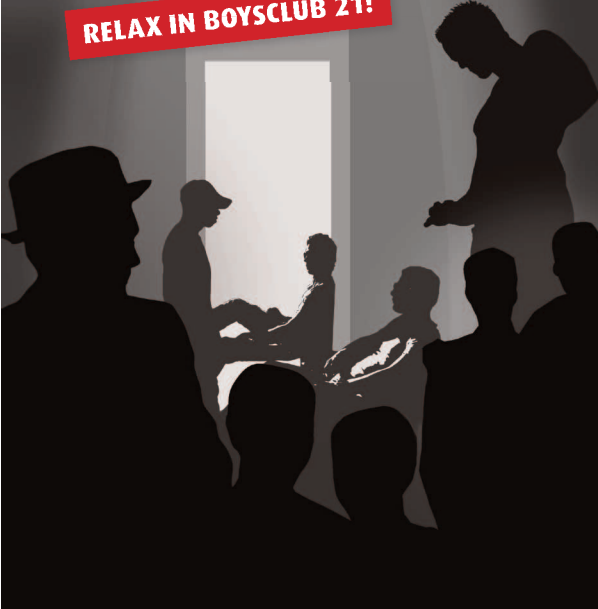
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and helpful. The common areas are adorned with attractive artwork, and besides having all the local gay magazines and flyers handy, they sell gay events tickets too. Amistad also offers luxurious apartments located in various gay neighborhoods of the city for the unmatched convenience of staying in your “own place.”

Across the street, the **Golden Bear** (Kerkstraat 14; Goldenbear.nl) is another comfortable guest house that flies the rainbow flag.

The gay-owned, “straight-friendly” **Hotel NL** (Nassaukade 368; NL-hotel.com) is just a few minutes walk from Leidseplein. This casually sophisticated hotel by award-winning designer Edward van Vliet is on the Singel Gracht (canal), surrounded by museums, shops, cafes, restaurants, and galleries. The selection of materials, colors and decorations, the comfortable furnishings, and the hospitality of the staff here will relax and refresh. Rooms have cable TV, wi-fi, private safes, and hair dryers. Laptop, fax, and mobile phone services can be arranged at reception, and breakfast is served each morning.

Not far from Warmoesstraat, the **Anco Hotel** (O.Z. Voorburgwal 55; Anco-hotel.nl), across and overlooking the majestic Voorburgwal canal, sits in the midst of the world’s most famous red light district. There are studios, singles, doubles, and dormitory lodgings, and they offer wi-fi. With a colorful history of over 30 years as one of Amsterdam’s first gay hotels, the Anco is favored by those who love leather, but all are welcome. There’s a pub in the lobby that serves breakfast in the morning for guests and has an early evening bar crowd as they close at 10 p.m. Sometimes, when guests come home after a night of cruising the bars, the cruising will continue later around the hotel interior.

**Black Tulip** (Geldersekade 16; Blacktulip.nl) has been called the “leather Ritz Carlton.” It’s close to Amsterdam’s epicenter, Central Station, and yes, Warmoesstraat, too.

Those who like to play a little kinky

will feel at home at **Amsterdam 37** (Beursstraat 37; Amsterdam37.com), just 69 steps from the center of Warmoesstraat’s leather and sex nightlife, and not far from the Damrak. Expats Kermit and Bo moved to Amsterdam from the U.S. Pacific Northwest and created executive guest-suites built to please. Besides the kitchen facilities, cable TV, and DVD players, there are private play-spaces loaded to the hilt with amenities that include a bondage/fisting chair and slings. Supplies are included, with special touches, such as daily linen service. Fresh towels, fruit, and pastries are left discreetly outside your door to minimize interruptions. The roomy, well-appointed suites are ideal for friends and couples traveling in search of fellow-travelers. Planning a party? Let your hosts know, and they’ll provide extra supplies. However you define yourself sexually, the “A-37” provides accommodations without discrimination, and the guys will share their extensive knowledge of the city.

**Getto Apartment** (Appartement@getto.nl) is a furnished luxury apartment for rent, just 100 meters from Central Station, with a large living room, two bedrooms, cable TV, and internet access at just 360 euros for (a minimum) two nights, for a maximum of four people.

**Radio Inn Hostel** (Radioinn.nl) has inexpensive rates for the gay backpacker at 25 euros per night in dorm rooms, with no curfew times.

Other small hotels include the **ITC** (Prinsengracht 1051; ITC-hotel.com) and the **Freeland** (Marnixstraat 386; Hotelfreeland.com). For a big, modern, comfortable, and central hotel the **Radison SAS** (Rusland 17; Radisson-sas.com) is a gay-friendly option with 242 rooms.

Go to our website (Guidemag.com) for additional guest house listings and web links.

## Bars, clubs, and more

For leather and men’s sex bars, the narrow, no-car Warmoesstraat is the

most famous gay turf, just east of the Damrak.

**The Eagle** (Warmoesstraat 90) is the premier leather bar in town and offers a pool table, a darkroom upstairs, and a backroom with cubicles. Fist-fucking parties every first Sunday (3 to 9 p.m.) will stretch your limits, and S.O.S., or Sex On Sundays, are second- and last-Sunday monthly attractions that feature clothing-optional safe-sex shenanigans from 4 to 8 p.m. There are rubber-only parties here, too. Open at 10 p.m. each night, the Eagle tends to get really busy only after midnight, and then go strong until the wee hours near dawn. Ring the bell at the front door here to be let in.

Brother-bar to the Eagle next door, the fittingly named **Dirty Dicks** (Warmoesstraat 86) has a darkroom upstairs and ground-level cubicles. The nickname for this bar is the Sleaze Pit, and many sexual pigs make this their sty. Golden-shower parties are held here on the last Thursday of the month from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. and they also have a door bell here, too.

Across the street, **Argos** (Warmoesstraat 90) is another leathermen and bear bar that’s been a local favorite for years.

**Getto** (Warmoesstraat 51) is a great bar and restaurant (see more below about their food) on this busy pedestrian walkway that welcomes everyone. Along with the meals and snacks, Getto’s amiable staff offers special cocktails and exotic beverages such as absinthe served in the traditional way, as well as coffees, beers, and other beverages. They have art-covered walls, a white cat called Elvis, and free internet access too.

There’s a late-night party seven nights a week at **Cocking** (Warmoesstraat 96). It’s dark, hot, male, packed to the walls on two levels, and very sexual. Mondays through Wednesdays the upstairs bar becomes a cruising area with cabins and darkroom. Thursdays to Sundays are the busiest. Highlights include alternating nights of live strippers and sex shows, jack-off



and dildo contests, naked parties, and "Horsemen and Knights" parties where "big" guys who measure up enter with a discount.

The Zeedijk crosses the top of Warmpjesstraat and there are three gay bars in close proximity among the many ornate and picturesque area pubs. They animate an increasingly lively quarter only a few minutes walk from Central Station. A sexually mixed, eclectic crowd (from maturely sophisticated to the young and artsy) move between them.

**Cafe De Barderij** (Zeedijk 14) brings in a hip, mixed draw of gays and straights to one of the most attractive and romantic locations in Amsterdam from 4 p.m. daily. Sunday evenings are especially popular. This neighborhood hangout has scenic canal views from rear windows and a cordial ambiance by the light of candelabra in the main bar. Peter, well known to locals and visitors alike, took over recently here. He and Thom join long-time staff Olivia and Lejo bringing a wealth of experience and enthusiasm. On Saturdays they're open until 3 a.m.

At the next corner, **De Engel van Amsterdam** (Zeedijk 21) is a new arrival this year but it's already become one of the city's most talked about. A gay pub and cafe, it's very much male territory;

small but with high energy. The place is soon warm enough, as the crowd grows bigger, for many patrons to doff their shirts. Outside, overlooking the water, De Engel is one of the few bars on Zeedijk with terrace seating. André and his friendly team of bartenders seem to know and welcome everyone in the place by name – but people seem happy to meet newcomers too. Open daily from 1 p.m. to 1 a.m., they go late on weekends until 3 a.m.

**Queen's Head** (Zeedijk 20) is a long popular spot across the street with a beautiful vintage chandelier, great canal-views, and a relaxed crowd.

On the other side of the Damrak around Nieuwezijds Kolk, **Cuckoo's Nest** (Nieuwezijds Kolk 6) is a friendly neighborhood bar with a large kinky play-cellar fully equipped with SM ware, videos, and plenty of cabins. A leather dress-code is encouraged, but not strictly enforced. Cuckoo is unusual in being well trafficked both day and night, and it's popular with both tourists and locals. Ted, behind the bar here, is a wonderful resource for those new to town.

One street away, the leather-friendly and venerable **Web** (Jacobsstraat 4-6) has stairs winding up to roof garden and a "not too dark" darkroom, with an earlier than usual cruising scene; popular Sundays.

Near Nieuwe Kerk, above Dam Square, **Prik** (Spuisstraat 109) is a new small, but popular, gay bar and cafe in an otherwise quiet area that attracts an almost entirely Dutch crowd, packing the place to capacity, especially late on

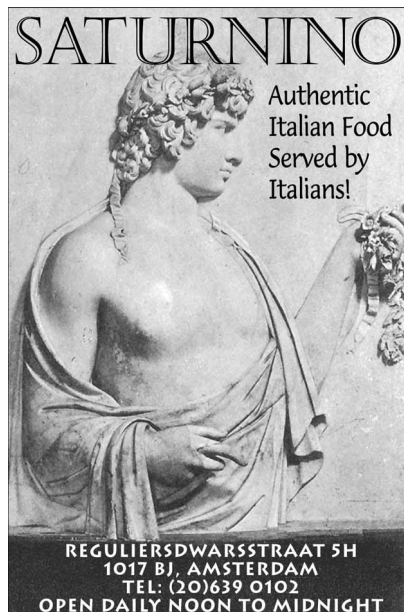
weekend nights.

Off Rembrandtplein and along the Amstel canal, there's another cluster of lively and typically Dutch bars. The long-established **Amstel Fifty Four** (Amstel 54) boasts a lively crowd at happy hour and late in the evening. They recently completely renovated the place. Tourists of many nationalities mix easily with a local Dutch crowd here. The bar is open every day from 4 p.m. until 1 a.m. (weekends until 3 a.m.), and they have pleasant terrace seating, looking out over the canal. In the summertime, they're open daily from noon. This is also one of the best places in the city to catch the Queens-day festivities from canal-side.

Around the corner **Montmartre** (Halve Maansteeg 17) is a fun watering hole that pulses loudly with a daily happy-hour from 6 to 8 p.m. Not to be missed if you want to be sure you've really seen Amsterdam. Young, local regulars rule here, but newcomers are treated to a raucous good time, and you'll soon be singing along to those old Dutch favorites that the DJ frequently slips in. Montmartre was voted best gay bar in Amsterdam for years running by the readers of *Gay News*.

**Entre Nous** (Halve Maansteeg 14) just across the street, is a mixed bar that gets gayest later at night as area other bars close their doors.

Also just off Rembrandtplein are **Cafe Reality** (Reguliersdwarstraat 129), bringing together people of many cultures and races in a tropical setting with hip-moving music from warmer climes; and **'t Leeuwte** (Reguliersdwarstraat



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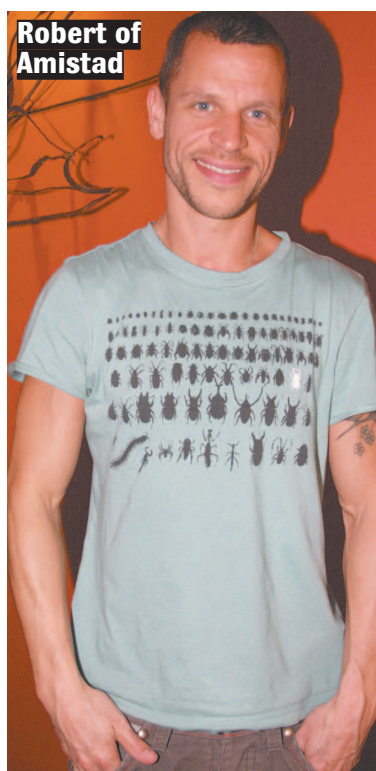
**José and Sebastiano of Saturnino's**



**Jürger, René, Taco &, Valerio of Mr. B**



**Valy (center) of Amstel Fifty Four with friends**



**Robert of Amistad**



**Dimitri & Henry at Cockring**



**Eric & Vasco of Cuckoo's Nest**



**One night at Cafe De Barderij**

105), a tiny but lively new bar in the neighborhood that mixes diverse generations and styles with casual aplomb and an accommodating outlook.

Beyond the square are the bars **Krokodil** (Amstelstraat 34) and **Vivelavie** (Amstelstraat 7). The latter is a tiny corner bar and restaurant that's popular with an intense crush of young women late on weekend nights.

Other nearby pubs include the tiny **Mix Cafe** (Amstel 50), drawing both men and women; Hot Spot (Amstel 102), likewise mixed, with a young crowd, open late; **Cafe Rouge** (Amstel 60), with a more mature atmosphere; and **You II** (Amstel 178), a newly renovated cocktail lounge with a well-heeled mostly male crowd, but women-friendly too.

**Music Box** (Paardenstraat 9) seems unabashed to be known as a hustler bar. A large contingent of Eastern European youth hangs out around the games machines and will accept drinks and other offers from men seated around the bar. The local press term it AYOR. **Lellebel** (Utrechtsestraat 4) bends gender with live shows, theme nights, and events seven days a week. **Het Wapen van Londen** (Amstel 14), formerly The Gaiety, recently became a favorite bar for area Czech expats.

The Koningsplein end of Reguliersdwarsstraat, one block south of the flower market on the Amstel, has a high density of gay businesses with many bars and restaurants, coffee shops, and clothing stores. A cluster of bars here dominates the block with a fashionable young crowd that hangs out among the clubs; it's car-free in the summertime.

**Cafe Pub Soho** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 36) has old-time British pub décor. The spacious three-story interior boasts ornate wood banisters and rails; from the top you can survey all those below. **ARC** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 44) by contrast, is an ultra-modern lounge setting where many of those seen later dancing at Exit gather. **Exit** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 42) is a four-story disco with multiple bars, dance floors, and choices of music from urban/R&B to hard techno; open

Fridays and Saturdays only.

Another bar in this group, **April** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 37), is closed for renovations (guttled to the walls), so expect a brand new venue here sometime later this summer.

A cozy locals' hangout not far from Leidseplein, **Spijker** (Kerkstraat 4) is a sub-level bar where everybody will soon know your name. Beer-busts all day Tuesday and Saturday, and big-jackpot bingo from 6 p.m. are popular attractions, as is their daily happy hour, 5-7 p.m. There's a pool table in the main bar, and a sling in their backroom/darkroom where porn and cartoons alternate on the TV monitors.

**Habibi Ana** (Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 4-6) means "my sweetheart" in Arabic, and this "first and only Arab gay bar" has cozy couches for comfortable conversations. There's dancing to Arabic music, too.

## Saunas and gyms

**Thermos Day Sauna** (Raamstraat 33) is open daily from noon till 11 p.m. weekdays, noon till 10 p.m. on Saturdays and holidays, and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sundays. This world-famous five-story complex is lubricated bliss and comes completely recommended. There are cabins, a pool, gym, bar, jacuzzi, movie theater, solarium, sun deck, and a restaurant complementing this pleasure palace. Every holiday snacks are free, and on-the-house champagne flows. Moreover, every so often, strippers show up. Clients still under 26 get discounted entry to both Thermos Day and Night saunas. Get your hair done at the sexy Thermos beauty salon, which, together with the little undie-shop, are hangout heaven. A fantastic cook on staff serves dinners nightly starting at 5 p.m. for only 10 euros. Sunday late-afternoons are a special time here attracting a big crowd, and there's a complimentary coffee break too.

**Thermos Night Sauna** (Kerkstraat 60) picks up where the Day Sauna leaves off, and the facilities are comparable, save the restaurant and pool. Thermos Night stays open till 7:30 a.m. Between

the two saunas there are over tens of thousands of towels a week to wash. If that's any indicator of the shagging that goes on. There's nothing else like it.

**Sauna Boomerang** (Heintjehoek Steeg 8) is a compact sauna alternative with full bar and cafe, cabins, steam room, sauna, and jacuzzi.

Need to flex more than just your love muscle? **Splash Fitnessclub** (Looiersgracht 26-30 and Lijnbaansgracht 241) is a premier gay-frequented gym.

## Houses of boys

Male prostitution is legal in Amsterdam and, as with the women, it is regulated to be healthier and safer.

Websites offer quick delivery and nearly endless choices of attractive young men, but there is one club where you can still mingle with the guys, in the flesh, before getting down to business. **Boysclub 21** (Spuisstraat 21; +31-020-622-8828) offers warmth not limited to carnal knowledge. The internet will seem cold and impersonal compared to this. A spiral stairway leads up to the club, where handsome and sensually talented guys lounge in big comfy chairs, by the fireplace, or around the bar, ready to meet and please you. They have an all-Dutch night on Wednesdays, with local strippers, videos, snacks, and drinks. On Fridays and Saturday nights they have no-cover strip performances at around 10 or 11 p.m. with porn stars who mingle with the audience. Their own young men of many national backgrounds will give you personal attention in the bar and offer to provide more intimate erotic pleasures, if you choose, upstairs in private rooms all of which have TV, video, showers and/or bath – one even has a jacuzzi. Rates are set by the house for these services, but there's no cover charge to come up and check it out. It's relaxed and friendly here, and there's no pressure or obligation. Full escort services are also provided from here by phone.

Other phone escort services include: **Guys International** (+31-020-

*Continued on page 28*





Wim of Mr. B



George, Ted, & Lica of Cuckoo's Nest



Tom of Spijker



George of Amstel Fifty Four



Danny & John of Getto



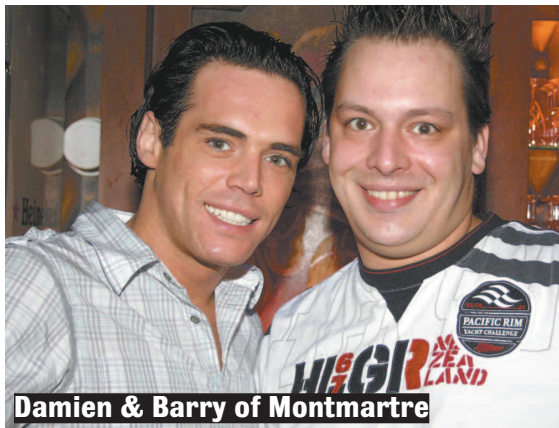
Daniel of Dirty Dick's



Onno, Andre, & Paul of De Engel



Eduard of De Engel



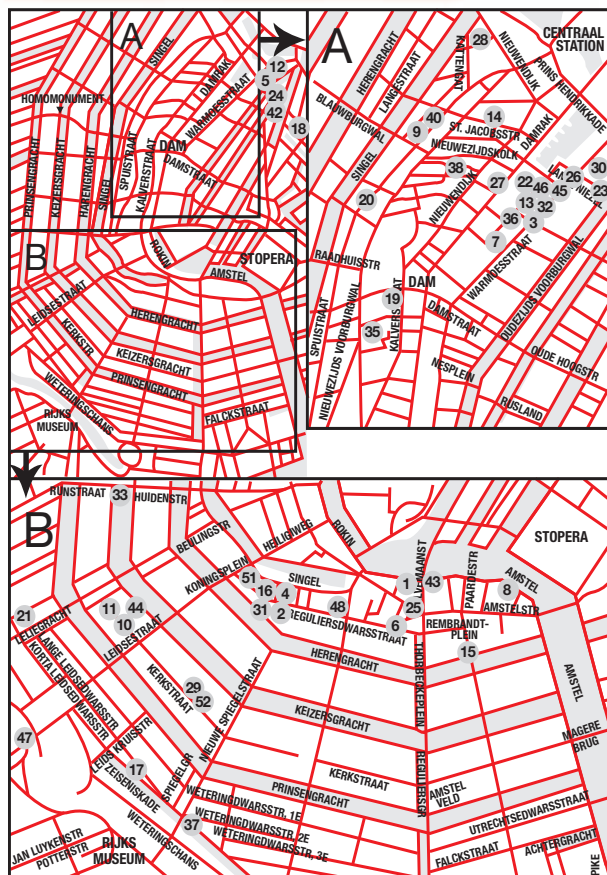
Damien & Barry of Montmartre



Hanging out at Cafe 't Leeuwte



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- 31) **Cafe Pub Soho**  
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- 6) **Cafe Reality**  
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- 43) **Cafe Rouge**  
Amstel, 60
- 7) **Cockring**  
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- 16) **Coffeshop Downtown**  
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The guys at Mr. B's new Amsterdam warehouse

*Continued from page 25*

420-0640) with a pan-European selection; **Gay Fantasy Escort** (+31-020-626-9468), with experienced and talented escorts to make fantasies come true; **Gay Muscle Escort** (+31-020-622-8036), with 22-to-40 year-old muscular guys; and **Boys Only** (+31-020-626-9468), mainly Dutch, aged 18-22. These phones operate 1 p.m. until 1 a.m.

**People Escorts** (People.nl) offers a large selection of 18-to-35-year-olds "any place, any time, anywhere." Their pay-per-view web site features photos, too.

See our website [Guidemag.com](http://Guidemag.com) for links to even more escort services.

## Events and dancing

Queen's Day, the commemoration of Queen Beatrix's birthday, is an occasion for the whole country to party. The streets surge with celebrants full of national pride and joy, and of course the bars are packed and circuit parties throb. You'll be able to see video streams online at [Gayamsterdam.com](http://Gayamsterdam.com).

This year's celebration kicks off on

Tuesday April 29 with street festivals. The actual birthday party, Wednesday, April 30, features canal boat parties and more crowds as an expected 100,000 gather in all the gayest places. There's also the Wester Festival at Westerkerk by the Homomonument.

On Thursday May 1, the **Empire Party** (EmpireParty.nl) will take place to warm people up for Queensday Leatherpride events. These include the Friday May 2 rubber-only Sleazy Gummi at **Club Lexion** (Overtoom 65, Westzaan). Shuttle buses depart every 20 minutes from Central Station for the event. A XXXL event, Rear, will also take place on May 2 at **Club JvG** (Jan van Galenstraat 24) with a party until 4 a.m. On May 3 the Playground's leather and fetish party will be at **Club Lexion**, with DJ Jack Chang, a huge dance hall, and chill-out, dark-, and wet-rooms, plus playrooms that are well equipped with plenty of slings and other gear. The dress code here is strictly leather, and there's a shuttle bus here too. For more information consult [Leatherpride.nl](http://Leatherpride.nl), which also has details about their other big weekend of

events in October/November.

Other parties include Warehouse at **Club BG** (Oosterdokskade 3) and Roxy Colosseum at **Club Marcanti** (Jan van Galenstraat 6-10), both on Wednesday April 30. On Sunday May 4 Rapido does their big bash at **Paradiso** (Weteringschans 6-8; [Clubrapido.com](http://Clubrapido.com)). See their website for other events, such as: the Latin Fuego t-dance at **Club CHI** (Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 161) every third Sunday; Reflexxx on May 2 at **Escape** (Rembrandtplein 11); and Fresh (October 18) at **Hotel Arena** ('s-Gravesandestraat 51), plus other dates including those in August around pride.

For the CO2 and White Party and other events find details at [Riedijkproductions.com](http://Riedijkproductions.com).

For Bears there is Furball scheduled for May 2. See [Furball.nl](http://Furball.nl) for information; and for Amsterdam Gay Skins events see [Agskins.nl](http://Agskins.nl).

**(Z)onderbroek** (Kerkstraat 52) is an underwear party with a young athletic crowd dancing on two floors every second and last Saturday 4 to 8 p.m. **Club Trash** ([Clubtrash.com](http://Clubtrash.com)) is another

big fetish party that takes place once or twice a year.

**De Trut** (Bilderdijkstraat 165) is a young alternative Sunday night dance party in a tight basement space, which starts at 11 p.m. and fills up fast – a bit off the map, southwest of Leidseplein.

**Club Stereo** (Jonge Roelensteeg 4) is a small and mixed dance venue open Wednesdays to Sundays from 8 p.m.

There are many other performance, alternative and underground clubs popping up all the time in a city as vibrant as Amsterdam. Poke around a bit, and you'll find a lot more than we can possibly list here.

Amsterdam Gay Pride is slated for August 1 to 3, with events and street parties all weekend. The main event, Canal Parade, is on Saturday from 2 to 6 p.m. Watched by tens of thousands from canal-side perches along the Prinsengracht and Amstel River, the parade is one of floating barges decorated in over-the-top gay glory, unique to this city and a treat to behold. Visit **Amsterdampride.nl** for more info and

a slideshow from last year. Last year, "Danny's Boat" caused a ruckus, the project of 14-year-old Danny Hoekzema working with COC, as it was designated for gay 11-to-16 year olds wanting to join the flotilla.

Finally for art lovers, besides all the well-known museums, there's a wonderful little museum that's called, in Dutch, "Our Lord in the Attic." It was a real church a wealthy burgher built in his home in the 1600s that is now a museum; check out **Museum Amstelkring** (Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40; Museumamstelkring.nl).

### Shopping, cinemas and more

For leather clothing and equipment look first to the heart of the leather scene: at the black and blue flag where you'll find **Mister B** (Warmoesstraat 89; Misterb.com), purveyor of the best-anywhere leather and rubber wares. With 14 years of experience (and eight at their Berlin location), Mister B offers leather clothing and accessories such as dressing aids and leather shines, both retail

and wholesale, to a devoted customer base. Their Warmoesstraat shop is spacious and immaculate with a stunning collection of sex toys, ranging from stainless steel dildos to chain mail and bondage-gear, plus all the accessories from lubes and condoms to anal relaxants. They offer the largest selection of "domestic partners" anywhere.

Piercing and tattooing are done upstairs at Mr. B, and there are leather/fetish art-exhibitions on their walls, plus a good selection of DVDs, cards, and fetish and leather-community magazines (including the works of graphic artist The Hun). At their online store you can see and order their goods from wherever you might be, but if in Amsterdam visit the store if only to meet their exceptionally gracious staff and perhaps also big boss, Wim Bos, who has his finger on the pulse of Amsterdam's intense leather scene. Traders, shop owners, and internet stores who'd like to join the more than 200 businesses that stock Mr. B items are welcome to visit their wholesale company ware-



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house location (Van der Madeweg 5b; +31-020 788-3000), a ten-minute trip from the center on the metro. They also have house fairs, not only in Amsterdam, but in Paris, Berlin, and Birmingham too. See their website for details.

Unique tailor-made leatherwear is a specialty of **Robin & Rik Leermakers** (Runstraat 30) with jackets, pants, caps, waistcoats, and shirts. They can also do made-to-measure articles here quickly.

**Black Body** (Lijnbaansgracht 292; Blackbody.nl) is the place for rubber. From socks to body bags, this store assures the best prices in town, and their leather collection is impressive, too, with an assortment of jeans, chaps, britches, shirts, and vests. Online shopping at their newly improved site can stretch your fashion horizons.

**Rob Leathers** (Warmoesstraat 71), an institution in this town, recently moved to a new more central location. In addition to leather garments renowned the world over, they also

have a nearby accessory store (Warmoesstraat 32) that sells a big selection of leather, rubber, and custom-made items as well as lubes, poppers, harnesses, videos, and ball weights.

Amsterdam houses some of the best sex shops and cinemas anywhere. **Bronx Video and Bookshop** (Kerkstraat 53; Bronx.nl) has been in business over 21 years, and it's one of the city's finest sex shops exclusively devoted to gay people, with a sleek and seductive retail store, just off Leidseplein. Here you'll find a huge selection of magazines, books, DVD rentals and sales, not to mention erotic toys, penis pumps, and more. Bronx also has cabins with video shows at the rear of the store. Buy an hour of internet time at their computer terminals and you can come and go until the time is used up. Many of their items are available on the web, and you'll find the European selection of porn to be quite unlike that of the U.S., so check out the difference.

**Adonis Cinema** (Warmoesstraat 92) is a busy, centrally located gay movie theater screening porn and selling pleasure toys and a big selection of male DVD videos. There are private cabins in addition to the dark rooms. Pass outs are available, and they're open from 10 a.m. until 1 a.m. daily, and until 3 a.m. on weekends.

**4Men** (Spuisstraat 21, walkdown; Amsterdamgayshop.com) is another gay store with a wide assortment of video DVD titles for all tastes. Open daily from 11-1 a.m. they're beneath the Boysclub 21. There's a cinema, a darkroom, and private cabins, and they sell sex toys, accessories, and magazines. Shop here online, too.

**Drake's** (Damrak 61) and **Le Salon** (Nieuwendijk 20-22) are sister stores. Drake's, founded by the celebrated flesh-film director William Higgins, has magazines and videos downstairs and peep booths, or "cockpits" upstairs (with huge glory holes, or "ventilations"). Le Salon

## Vaarwel, oud Amsterdam?

*Will conservative pols and real estate moguls succeed in Disneyfying the world's most fun-friendly city?*

Michael Thompson

**a**msterdam is renowned for its liberality. Soft drugs have been permitted here for some time, with hundreds of "coffeehouses" selling pot and hash, and "smart shops" peddling their magic mushrooms (fresh ones only, legally classified as "food"). Prostitution is regulated and visible, with prostitutes displayed in canal-side and backstreet windows. And social scientists cite the benefits: among the Dutch, drug use — hard or soft — is less prevalent, and crime far less common than in other places where sex and drugs are forbidden fruit.

But a new government, with a conservative agenda, wants to close two-thirds of the red light district's prostitutes' "windows," reduce coffeeshop numbers, and ban mushroom sales. So far (a big test comes this summer) they haven't succeeded. Some American press write (with

obvious satisfaction) as if it's already happened, but locals say it's not yet a done deal and hope that compromise is possible. Questions remain: Is this simply a gentrification land grab? Would tourism suffer if things were tamer? Some say no, pointing to the "clean up" of New York's Times Square as a precedent. Others who support the status quo count on Dutch pragmatism and cite a long history of Dutch forbearance, pointing to many attempts at control over the years that didn't succeed then, and may not prevail now.

### Pruning or cutting it all down?

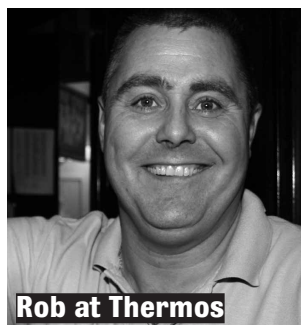
Binge weekends where the inexperienced mix drugs, drink, and all-night partying inevitably yield unfortunate results. Critics cite some recent lurid headlines to justify the proposed prohibitions. A few tourists with a bag of something they couldn't take home made the wrong choice when faced

with either tossing their goodies or swallowing them all whole. Then an attractive but perhaps unstable French schoolgirl died partying, and a campaign to ban mushrooms erupted in force.

Many believe the real impetus for new restrictions is a convergence of economic opportunism involving potentially lucrative real estate deals, along with a right-wing desire to roll back the clock on social issues. But many locals support the proposals, too — even smart-shop and coffeehouse business groups favor such refinements as a three-day hiatus (to eliminate weekenders), higher standards on both product quality and staff, and age limits on purchasing.

And what of the gay world? Some of the kinkier old-style venues may be at risk, too. Gay News reports that Stable Master, a gay bar on Warmoesstraat, lost their license and closed recently after refusing to unseal their door and open front windows to the view of passers-by. Never mind that they were famous for their jack-off parties.

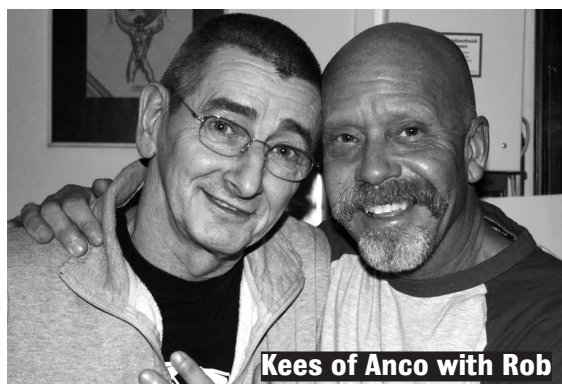
Who will control the old center of Amsterdam in the near future? Fingers crossed, it's yet to be decided. ▼



Rob at Thermos



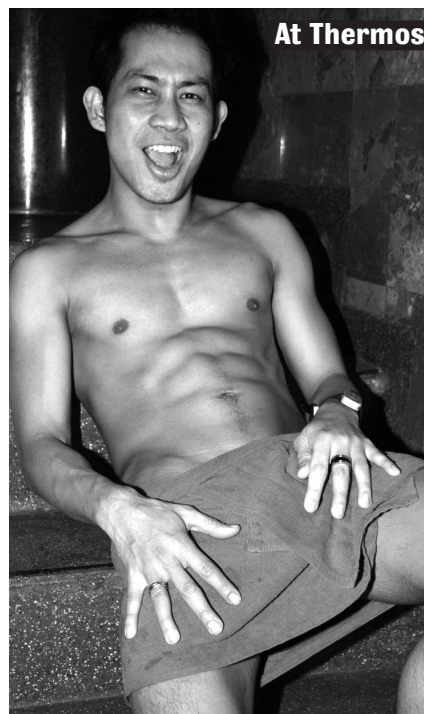
Shake me



Kees of Anco with Rob



Munt Square



At Thermos

is abuzz after 8 p.m.; on sale are toys, adult novelties, and magazines.

**Mantalk** (Reguliersdwarstraat 39) and **De Stringslip** (Reguliersdwarstraat 59) tout swim and club wear and unusual under-gear, among other items.

**Intermale** (Spuisstraat 251) is a male-oriented bookstore with selections from the world over, including some hard-to-find titles. Their helpful staff can help out with tips and info on current happenings around town.

**Boekhandel Vrolijk Gay & Lesbian Bookshop** (Paleisstraat 135) has an extensive selection of nonfiction, academic, and lesbian works in English and Dutch. Tons of videos and DVDs are available here too, especially the artsy kind.

**American Book Center** (Spui 12) and **Waterstones** (Kalverstraat 152) are large retail bookstores in and around Spui Center with the city's best assortment of English language books and magazines.

**Athenaeum Bookshop** (Spui 14) is also here with titles in diverse languages, and on Fridays Spui Square is filled with the stands of booksellers from all over town, and beyond.

**Gays & Gadgets** (Spuisstraat 44) offers a wide range of gay-themed cards and

gifts as well as an art gallery upstairs.

Lost yet? **Pink Point** (Keizersgracht at Westermarkt) is a friendly gay and lesbian information kiosk and souvenir vendor located right by the Homomonument that offers queer (and not so queer) tips about gay Amsterdam.

Art-house films, many of gay-interest, screen at **Cinecenter** (Lijnbaansgracht 236; Cinecenter.nl) just off Leidseplein. Cinemas here show films in the original language with Dutch subtitles, so you won't miss anything. Gay classic movies play at the **Pathé de Munt** (Vijzelstraat 15) every first Wednesday at 9 p.m. and they have a reception with drinks beforehand.

They're not up yet with 2008 information, but at **Rozefilmdagen.nl** you'll see details about Pink Film Days, a gay film festival that takes place in December.

## Restaurants and cafes

Eating out in Amsterdam is an experience as varied in flavors as the residents and foreign tourists alike. Creative chefs work with every type of cuisine imaginable.

Traditional Sicilian recipes are the specialty at **Saturnino** (Reguliersdwarstraat 5), Amsterdam's most

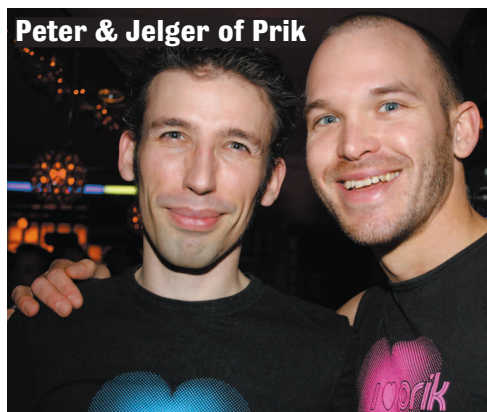
authentic Italian restaurant. Couples, straight or gay, on dates hold hands and share from an extensive, but not expensive, wine-list. Larger groups clamor for tables in one of their three small dining rooms. Owner and master chef Sebastiano Saturnino's food is outstanding and he's an extremely gracious host who enjoys being a vital part of such a gay block. The servers are downright affectionate and you may catch them singing to each other while at work, adding to this very Italian experience. Salads, antipasto, pasta, pizza, quality meats, and always the very freshest fish and seafood all contribute to an exceptional multi-award winning dining experience. *Mangia bene!*

The aptly named **Getto** (Warmoesstraat 51), a Dutch word loosely translated as a "gathering place for like-minded people," is an attitude-free zone "serving hungry homos since 1996." This bar, cafe, and restaurant offers honest home cooking and far-out international selections from chef Warren – who hails from Louisiana – and Parisian *sous*-chef Cedric. Freshly prepared fare ranging from grilled entrecote steaks, marinated breast of duck, or gigli pasta with smoked salmon are both appetizing and



Jeldrik of  
Queen's  
Head

At De Engel van Amsterdam



Peter &amp; Jelger of Prik



Marino of Getto



Paul &amp; Fred of Bronx

affordable. Wednesday nights feature Burger Queens' gourmet burgers for just 10 euros, and they have veggie fare too. Celebrate Thanksgiving here in American style with turkey and all the trimmings. Getto is open Tuesdays through Sundays and on public holiday and they have a daily cocktail happy-hour with drink specials, 5 to 7 p.m. to whet your appetite. On Thursdays check out their Beer 'n' Balls with two-for-one Grolsch and Becks. Absinthe is served here in the traditional way, with melted sugar, in several varieties, including cannabis flavored. Getto also serves Sunday brunch from 1 p.m., and then from 5 p.m. there's a Cocktail Bash party with DJs until midnight with special cocktail prices and Tarot readings from the lovely Bhasha.

**Supper Club** (Jonge Roelensteeg 21; Supperclub.com) is famous for diners' choice of reclining couches or regular

tables and chairs. In-house DJs and a rotating roster of VJs presenting their work on the immaculate white walls entertain, as do a cast of characters who animate the scene. The menu is not written, and diners receive an impressive five-course meal at a set price, before moving downstairs to their club. See their website for details about Supperclub on-location and canal boat options.

**Garlic Queen** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 27) celebrates the magical healing powers and the aromatic splendor of garlic. Everything on the menu contains garlic, including the ice cream!

**Coffeshop Downtown** (Reguliersdwarsstraat 31), a couple of steps from Cafe-Bar April, is busy inside and outside for lunch from noon to 2 p.m.

At **Pygma-lion** (Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 5A) the cuisine is an exotic safari of South African cuisine concocted by

Matthias, whose traditional family recipes include not just crocodile, zebra, and antelope, but a stellar range of vegetarian delights. An impressive array of wines, an herb garden at the back of the restaurant, and a terrace for al fresco dining make this gay owned "fusion kitchen" unforgettable.

**Hemelse Modder** (Oude Waal 11), literally meaning "heavenly mud" (an apt allusion to their chocolate mousse!), is a gay-owned and straight-friendly restaurant with a French/Italian kitchen sporting an Asian twist.

Many local Indian and Middle Eastern restaurants feature some vegetarian selections, but the **Golden Temple** (Utrechtsestraat 126) makes it their specialty to offer purely vegetarian international cuisine. For the super-strict, many vegan options are also available. ▼