

Visit to Sluis

Opinions about Sluis are divided, as some people find it too busy. Admittedly, it can indeed be very (too) busy during the summer months. But personally, we enjoy shopping there. You won't find the big chain stores here, but rather small boutiques.

In the centre of Sluis, you cannot miss the Belfort. This is the only Belfort in the Netherlands. Belfort means a medieval Flemish building that served as a town hall, council chamber, court, etc. The higher the tower, the more power the city had. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Bruges was an important trading city in Europe. The Zwin was the gateway to Bruges, the economic heart of Western Europe. From 1500 onwards, Sluis fell into decline because the Zwin silted up and ships could no longer pass through it to Bruges. The trade route shifted via the Westerschelde to Antwerp.

During the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), Sluis was in the line of fire. Bell ringer Jantje ultimately played a heroic role. The Spanish had planned a new attack on the city and were to attack when the bells of the Belfort rang. But it was fair time in the city and bell ringer Jantje was so drunk that he could no longer climb the stairs of the Belfort. So the bells were not rung. The Spanish suspected treachery and did not attack. You can still admire Jantje van Sluis in his seventeenth-century attire, as a statue of him stands at the top of the Belfry tower near the carillon. There he watches over the town. On the terrace in Sluis, you can order a “Jantje van Sluis”, a delicious triple beer.



The old city walls around Sluis are still reasonably intact. This offers a pleasant walk with views of the city, the old city gates and nature. The rare tree frog seems to be abundant here.

From Sluis, you can also visit the world-famous nature reserve Het Zwin. The Zwingel is a tidal channel that lets in seawater several times a day. This creates a unique area with salt marshes and mud flats. The visitor centre on the Knokke side is also very nicely designed. You are sure to spot storks there during the season.



(Incidentally, the Verdrongen Zwarte Polder in Nieuwvliet is a similar nature reserve, but much smaller, of course.)

If you happen to end up in Sluis by bicycle, try cycling through the polders from Sluis to Retranchement. It is so idyllic, with winding, old dykes lined with pollard willows on both sides.