

Highlights in and around Nijmegen – The battle with water

Most highlights are along the route, such as the *Spiegelwaal* and the *Ooijpolder*. Some are however a bit further off, but these are extras if you wish to explore more of the city. For example, you could have a walk at the *Stadswaard* or even visit the little village *Persingen*.



Highlights on the route

Nijmegen Station

This is the main station of the city, and an important for the connection with the south (Den Bosch), and the north (Arnhem). During World War II, the station got badly damaged due to the ‘bombing of Nijmegen’ and only the original roof has been retained.

City-center Nijmegen

Nijmegen is the oldest city in the Netherlands, founded around 10 BC by the Romans, they chose this location because its strategically located on the moraine and along the river. At first the city was called ‘Oppidum Batavorum,’ where the Romans lived together with their allies the Batavians. However, during the rebellion of the Batavians around the year 70 AD, the city got burned down. After the Romans had overcome the rebellion, they rebuild the city called ‘Noviomagus’ – which means ‘new-market’ and is the origin of its current name Nijmegen. During several centuries, there have been multiple settlements at various locations in the city, for example at the *Valkhof* and in Nijmegen-west. The city Noviomagus is estimated to have had 5000 to 7000 citizens and several monumental buildings, such as a temple and public baths. This was a real city, full of life and trade markets, but there also have been much larger military camps called ‘castra’ with up to 12.000 Romans. Many remains of the Roman time have been found in the city-center during excavations, for

example in the *Valkhofpark*. There is also the *Valkhof Museum* located, which is worth a visit when the Covid-19 measures allow it to further explore the history of the city. Besides its Roman history, the center also has its shopping areas, old buildings from the time of the golden age, many (lunch)cafes – which are popular by students living in Nijmegen – and many relaxing areas - such as parks and the *Waalkade*.

For more information on the Roman history got to: <https://www.romeinen.nl/the-romans-in-the-netherlands>

Spiegelwaal

The “*Spiegelwaal*” is a secondary channel parallel to the main stream of the *Waal*. The channel, also called a bypass, is a part of the Dutch project “Room for the River” (*Ruimte voor de rivier in Dutch*). The project is started in a response to the high-water levels in 1993 and 1995. During these high-water levels, the dykes along the rivers almost broke and some villages without dykes became flooded. These risky water levels lead to a change in the water management program. Instead of locking the water between more and higher dykes the Dutch decided to give their rivers more space to flow through. With this project they wanted to increase the safety and quality of life of the inhabitants of the river area. The total project consists of 34 different smaller projects and is a collaboration between the government, provinces, water boards and municipalities. The entire project started in 2007 and was finished in 2019.

One of the projects in the Room for the River project is the constructing of a bypass along the *Waal* in Nijmegen. By making a secondary channel the flow area of the river increases and the bottleneck, that caused a backwater of water on the east side of the city, disappears. The project started in 2012 and was finished in 2018. Because of the new bypass the water in the main channel of the *Waal* would be up to 34 cm lower during a peak discharge than without a bypass. More water can be drained at the same time, this creates more water safety in Nijmegen and the upstream regions.

In the middle of the main channel and the bypass lies an island called “*Veur-Lent*”. This island provides a place to live, a place for recreation and a place for nature. The bypass is less deep and less tumultuous than the main channel, which makes it a good place to swim and, for example, row. On the island also live Scottish Highlanders, which you might spot when you cycle over the island. The island increases the quality of life along the river, for both humans and nature.

More info about Room for the River: [Room for the River | Rijkswaterstaat](#)

Waalbrug

Till 1936, when the construction of the *Waalbrug* was finished, traffic had to cross the river using the ferry. Nowadays, it is an important bridge that connects Nijmegen with Lent on the other side of the river.

Battle of Nijmegen

During the Second World war Nijmegen was an important and strategic city due to the bridges and water. From 17 till 20 September in 1944 a heavy battle took place. This battle is known as the 'Slag om Nijmegen' (Battle of Nijmegen). The bridges were important for a direct connection with the city of Arnhem. For more information go to:

<https://liberationroute.com/the-netherlands/pois/t/the-battle-for-nijmegen>

If you are interested in the Operation Market Garden, browse to:

<https://liberationroute.com/the-netherlands/stories/o/operation-market-garden>

De Kaaij

This terrace is very well known in the city of Nijmegen for its relaxed and vibrant ambiance, and it is during the famous *Nijmeegse Vierdaagse* even more popular and full of foodtrucks, musicians, artists and all kinds of people. A great place to have a coffee or a beer under the bridge near the river.

Ooijpolder

The *Ooijpolder* is a beautiful nature area just east of the city, which is very popular among both citizens as tourists for recreation. People love to walk or bike through the area, although they have to be careful with the wild animals, such as wild horses, beavers and Galloway cattle. A long time ago, it was a swamp, but due to the construction of dykes, it slowly developed into a habitable area. However, now and then the river the *Waal* still flooded the area, which contributed to the creation of a rich nature area full of water, flora and fauna. Till around 20 years ago, this was also done on purpose when the *Waal* was at high tide, it was a so-called flood storage area. This also explains why you can spot many houses build on 'mounds' (*terp in Dutch*), to protect them from the water.

Moraine/Ubbergen

'Few towns or cities in the Netherlands can be said to rise above their surroundings, but Nijmegen is an exception, and the city owes its elevated position to its icy past. During the Saalian stage of the Pleistocene epoch, glaciers pushed south from Scandinavia to the area we now know as the Netherlands. Ice masses with an estimated thickness of 650 feet pushed up the ground in front of them. This is how the Utrecht and Nijmegen-Kleef Hill Ridges and the Veluwe were created. The history of the river Waal started at the end of the last ice age. The melt water that forced its way from the German region to the North Sea formed a wide, bare plain between Arnhem and Nijmegen. This plain was a mishmash of watercourses, which mainly deposited coarse sand, gravel, and stones. With the passage of time this braided river channel changed into a meandering river channel with less strong currents. Over five thousand years ago a wide river belt carrying the water in a north westerly direction towards the coast formed in front of the Nijmegen moraine. This large watercourse, which also cut through the Waalsprong area, stayed intact for nearly three millennia. The precursor of today's rivers Nederrijn and Waal originated about four thousand years ago. Thanks to the river, the Nijmegen area became a Roman legion camp, a civic centre, a prospering trading place and a fortified town. The Roman historian Tacitus had no doubt that the Waal was the widest river in the region, as it still is today.' Source:

https://www.huisvandenijmeegsegeschiedenis.nl/info/1_Ice_and_water

For more geological information:

<https://www.vcbio.science.ru.nl/en/virtuallessons/landscape/geology/>

Watchtower

The watchtower ('Groenlanden-uitkijktoren') in the *Ooijpolder* is located just off the road and provides a beautiful view over the area.

Oortjeshekken

Already since 1600 is *Oortjeshekken* the place to be within the *Ooijpolder* to have a cup of coffee, a beer or even stay overnight. The beautifully located 'homy-feeling' café near the *Bisonbaai* and the *Waal* is popular among hikers and cyclists to have a relaxing break.

Bizonbaai

The *Bizonbaai* is a former area used for sand extraction, which is now full of water and a popular place for visitors to swim and recreate. The water is also popular among nudists and Galloway cattle.

Valkhofpark/Hunnerpark

Until the year 1797, there was a castle situated at the location of the *Valkhofpark*, but it was then decided that most of it should be broken down, and so it happened. However, some remaining parts are still visible, namely the Sint Nicolaas chapel and the ruins of Barbarossa. The park is nice to walk through and offers a nice view over the river. Also, the *Hunnerpark* is a relaxed park to visit, although it is most exciting during the 'Vierdaagsefeesten' (parties during the 'Nijmeegse Vierdaagse') when it is filled with people and podia.

Other highlights – these are extras if you wish to explore more

Waalstrand/Stadswaard

The beaches on the riverside of Nijmegen are beautiful to watch the sun disappear in the water at night, and the *Stadswaard* is a beautiful nature area to walk through during the day.

Kronenburgerpark

This beautiful park, situated at the centre of the city, is very popular among students to relax and enjoy the sun with some beer and music, but also lovely to just walk through. The ruins of the defensive wall from the Middle Ages are still visible along the side of the park.

Persingen

This village with just 95 inhabitants is known as the smallest village in the Netherlands with a church, although it has been larger in the past. The first time *Persingen* was mentioned in history goes back to 1333 and since then it had grown quite a bit, and even a castle was built. However, the castle gets burned down in 1613 and since the village was badly protected against flooding, most of the original village has been swallowed up by the river, and only the higher up area remained intact.