

# If you lived in... the Rivierenbuurt

Style



The Rivierenbuurt's streets are full of Amsterdam School architecture

If you're looking for some private space in the global village, **Sophie Komieko**, suggests the answer may be the Rivierenbuurt – especially if you hate tourists and dogs

The Rivierenbuurt, just south of De Pijp, ranks lowest in canines per capita, with only about 2 per cent of households owning a four-legged friend. As for out-of-towners, they rarely fall out of their RAI-exhibition-centre-to-Hotel-Okura-and-back race, which explains why the neighbourhood's busiest bars and cafés are situated along the tourist route: Café The Corner on – you guessed it – the corner of Scheldestraat and Scheldeplein; and opposite it, Café D'Overkant, which means 'The Opposite Side'.

The rest of the Rivierenbuurt is a fuss-free oasis of architectural delight, consisting mainly of spacious family properties and shops. The most prestigious housing is concentrated where the three residential lanes meet – Churchilllaan, Rooseveltlaan and Vrijheidslaan (the former Stalinlaan). Intersecting them are the three main shopping streets named after Dutch rivers (Maas-, Waal- and Rijnstraat) and giving the neighbourhood its moniker, 'River Neighbourhood'.

#### Property prices

Buying prices start at €4,000 per square metre. Marcel de Groot,

founder of De Groot & Compagnons real estate agency, says you can land a free-market rental for €1,400 per month – if you can find one.

#### Good for:

##### Families

Although not technically in the Rivierenbuurt, the serene Amstel and Beatrix parks are where all the neighbourhood families flock to when the skies permit. 'You get a feeling of being outside the city while being inside the city. And it's safe for children to play outside alone,' says eight-year Rivierenbuurt resident Giovanna Fosati, from Italy.

##### Bikers and walkers

What more do you need on a lazy Sunday than the winding Amstel? But if you do, why not create your own architectural tour? Use our guide below as a starting point and let your wheels – or feet – take you away.

##### Commuters

Close to Amsterdam's ring road, the main shopping street Rijnstraat actually becomes the A2 further south.



#### Architectural avenues

Everything about the Rivierenbuurt reflects its careful planning. The mastermind behind it was the Neth-

erlands' architectural star Hendrik Petrus Berlage who, at the end of the 19th century, was asked to construct an all-inclusive middle-class paradise on the city's newly acquired Binnendijkse Buitenveldersche polder. It was not until 1917 that construction began, and then under strict supervision of a schoonheidscommissie or 'beauty commission'.

Luckily, most of its members were from the Amsterdam School of architecture, a movement influenced by expressionism which encouraged round or other natural forms, with an emphasis on ornamental spires, figurative sculpture, towers, wrought iron and doors painted dark green.

After the death of the architect Michel de Klerk in 1923, non-functional ornaments were abandoned, bringing rows of plain clones around Uiterwaardenstraat and behind the 'Skyscraper' on Victorieplein.

#### Fascinating fact

Although all's quiet on the Rivierenbuurt's banks today, it does have its dark past. Many in the neighbourhood still remember Jewish orphans returning home after the war, only to be rudely turned away by new owners. During the interbellum years, the Rivierenbuurt Jewish community numbered about 17,000; some 13,000 didn't survive the death camps. The apartment at Merwedeplein 37-II, where Anne Frank used to live with her family, has recently been restored and the original interior reinstated and it now serves as a shelter for writers prosecuted in their home countries.



## FIGURES

**Number of properties:** 27,200

**Primary schools:** 16

**Dentists:** 72

**General practitioners:** 47

**Pharmacists:** 6

**Cafés:** around 20

**Transport:** 12 minutes to Amsterdam Central Station by metro (from the nearby Amstel station). Tram lines 4, 12 and 25.

#### Addresses:

Café The Corner, *Scheldeplein 2*

Café D'Overkant, *Scheldestraat 182*

De Groot & Compagnons real estate agency, *Rijnstraat 157*

#### Notable architecture:

Masterpieces of the Amsterdam School style by Michel de Klerk can be found on *Vrijheidslaan 10-46, 50-54, Kromme Mijdrechtstraat 2-4, 1-5 and Meerhuizenplein 34-36, 7-11.*

The apartment where Anne Frank lived with her family before they went into hiding: *Merwedeplein 37-II.*

## Pros

These broad, stately avenues boast second-generation family businesses from cheese specialists to art galleries. The larger Dutch supermarkets are also in abundance: Albert Heijn, Blokker and Dirk van den Broek. 'It's a calm and safe neighbourhood, with a very mixed population and a substantial expat share,' says De Groot.

## Cons

Locals don't love the big supermarket chains. They've nicknamed Dirk van den Broek, for example, 'The Red Scare', fearing its expansion and accompanying tree felling on Rijnstraat may disturb them.