

## Three stages of The Vecht valley footpath, rural Netherlands

Near Darfeld and Schöppingen, Germany, the river Vecht rises. At two small springs. After nearly 120 kilometers, the river enters the Netherlands near Gramsbergen, Overijssel. 60 kilometers later the river flows into the Zwartewater, near Zwolle.

This little article is about the Dutch stretch of the river and the hiking trail that takes its name from the valley formed by it: the Vechtdalpad ( path of the Vecht valley).

**Total distance of this route:** over 70 km

### Stages:

Zwolle - Dalfsen.....22 km

Dalfsen - Ommen.....14 km

Ommen - Mariënberg.....17 km

Mariënberg - Gramsbergen.....18 km

### Maps

There is a nice walking guide for sale at the VVVs of the Overijssels Vechtdal. It contains detailed topographic maps of the stages. "The Vechtdalpad. On foot along the Overijsselse Vecht".

### Marks

The route is very well signposted. Blue - white stripes, mostly the colors of a route along a river.

### Accommodation:

Several hotels and B&B 's in the stage towns. Directly on the route is a campsite ( de Roos, Beerze), or camping at the farm. Wild camping is not allowed.

### Transportation, public transport:

All stage towns have a train station with a frequent connection to Zwolle train station and onward.



the river near Vilsteren

### **Brief history of the landscape**

Largely responsible for today's landscape in the Vecht valley are the last ice ages. First came the land ice, from 200,000 B.C. to 130,000 B.C., which provided the ramparts and hills. Including the deposition by floating ice of boulder clay: sand, clay, boulders, gravel.... Then a strong northerly wind and the shifting of sand covered the land.

The Vecht made its way through the sand hills formed. Along the bed of the river ramparts and river dunes formed. It is assumed that the first inhabitants settled in the prehistory and whether temporarily or not, settled on the higher sand dunes, the ashes. These were probably the only places where it was possible. The rest was bog, soggy peat, wet and wet..... not really suitable to live in. The ending "mountain" of many namespaces in the area still refer to these heights.

A few thousand years BC, the first farmers settled in the area. Forests were cut down, sheep on the moors provided manure. A heather-dung mixture came on the ever higher growing ash. You can still see it during the walk. And look for today's parallels: as the flattening of the heathland and the felling of the forest was taken to great tackled - it had to because of a shortage of manure - various sand drifts and drifting dunes. During the tour you will become acquainted with them near Beerze. With the arrival of fertilizer the sheep became redundant, the moors disappeared, the area reclaimed with the help of many of many unemployed people came into the hands of the land consolidators. The efficiency and the bank made their appearance (Mansholt plan!) and the rest is history.

The nobility built several country houses, mansions, manors and castles. You will encounter.



**House Vilsteren, neo-renaissance, 1908**

### **The route**

If you start the route at Zwolle's train station, you will have some time to walk around and get an impression of the old Hanseatic city of Zwolle. With a number of beautiful old buildings. After which the route goes in search of the mouth of the Vecht in the Zwartewater. Among others via beautiful Dutch views of water and meadows and - with some luck - beautiful skies. You pass the Agnietenberg, where Thomas a Kempis (1399 - 1741) wrote his world famous "Imitatione Christi." Now, after a hefty fire, a teahouse.

The route goes mostly through a vast river landscape and along a dead river arm. Of which you during the trip will encounter several. Here, over the years, very specific nature reserves with special flora. Yellow splash, water lily and bladderwort (the water flea eater), calamus, water sorrel, meadow grass.....



**Zwolle, Hanseatic city**

Just before Dalfsen you see Huis den Berg. The prototype of an Overijssel country house. As in Twente the inhabitants have devoted themselves to the reclamation of the "wasteland".

In Dalfsen you cross the Vecht river.

Looking for your first place to sleep?



**Huis den Berg**



**Huis - Manor House - den Beg in winter**

Between Dalfsen and Ommen, you first walk along the northern bank of the river. Through an open scenery. Pay close attention to a sign on the right side of the road: here you may walk through the meadow to the bank of the Vecht.

A fantastic spot by the water. See below.



**What a cow needs**

Before the village of Vilsteren cross the weir to the other side of the river. Again along a dead arm, on your way to Huis Vilsteren. If you keep following the route closest to the river you will come across encounter a number of folly's: the corkscrew, the tea dome and the hermitage. Part of the construction of the park in English landscape style. The folly's were used to make the landscape more exciting and romantic. Ruins were also part of this. But you don't see those here.

A delightful piece of trail!

Vilsteren as a whole is part of the Vilsteren estate. Eduard Cuypers designed House Vilsteren.

Through the woods of the estate you continue walking towards Ommen. At the point where the Regge and Vecht rivers meet is Ada's Hoeve. Donated by *the baron* of Pallandt donated to the movement of Lord Baden-Powell. In other words: the Boy Scouts. Who has not not camped here? Just before the end of this stage you see Huize het Laar from the 16th century.

By the way: along the Regge runs [the multi-day Reggepad](#). Also very worthwhile!



**cattle grazing on the bank**



**a so-called dead arm of the river**



### **Campsite “de Roos”**

You'll end up at camping de Roos. That has given permission for your route across the campsite to continue. It is also the only opportunity to buy food and/or drinks along the way. At least: If the kiosk is open. Dogs are not allowed on it. Then you have to make a detour.



### **Ommen**



**Ommen, city centre**

After the campsite, it's climbing time: the Beerzerzand. For some time drifting dune upon drifting dune. By the strong northern winds the dry bed of the Vecht was "blown empty" during the ice age and it piled up again a little further on. Anyway: a fascinating walk. Which ends in the *esdorp* Beerze. A protected village sight. With many authentic Saxon farmhouses. The village was probably formed around 900.

The farms you see now are about 150 years old.

Just before Mariënborg you walk along a heath landscape with many junipers. Then walk under the Vecht bridge of the N36 – the highway - and into Mariënborg. Here you can take the train towards Almelo, Emmen or Zwolle and others. The Dutch part of the trail continues to Hardenberg and Gramsbergen.

And for the enthusiast: the route just continues in Germany.....



**Rechteren castle** ( photo St. Rechteren)

The only castle in the province of Overijssel from the Middle Ages that was preserved.



Signposted all the trail



just a picture.....



Sanddrift (called Sahara!)





Old farm Rheeze ( museum)



Dalfsen village