

When it's spring, it snows

Amsterdam is the elm tree capital of the world. And every spring, these slender green giants blossom, blanketing the city in its own kind of snow.

Back in the 1970s, a deadly disease swept through Europe. A fungal pest known as Dutch elm disease wreaked havoc on European elm populations. In the UK alone, nearly 30 million trees died while in France, 97% of French elms were destroyed. By the 1990s, there were very few elms left in continental Europe. Except, that is, in Amsterdam.

Ever since the 1950s, the city of Amsterdam has gone to great pains to preserve its population of elms, conducting annual inspections of the local elms to check for signs of disease and isolating them if found. As a result, Amsterdam is now home to more than 75,000 elms – with 5,000 of those found in its city

centre – making it the elm capital of both Europe and the world.

Spring snow

But why elms? These slender giants have been planted ever since the 1600s. Not just because of their durability in wet, windy and urban environments – and ability to stabilise canal embankments via their roots and combat the smell that came from the open sewers that were the canals – but also because of their aesthetic appeal. They don't obstruct the canal views beloved by residents and visitors, and provide just enough canopy to make for leafy, shaded streets. And every spring, elms blossom in what's fondly known as 'Spring Snow': a gorgeous natural



An ode to Amsterdam, Marie Stella Maris' eau de parfum Flower Water (€99 for 75 ml) is a symphony of blooming flowers.

KEIZERSGRACHT 357, MARIE-STELLA-MARIS.COM



phenomenon where the elm's seeds are released into the winds, swirling over the city and blanketing it in white.

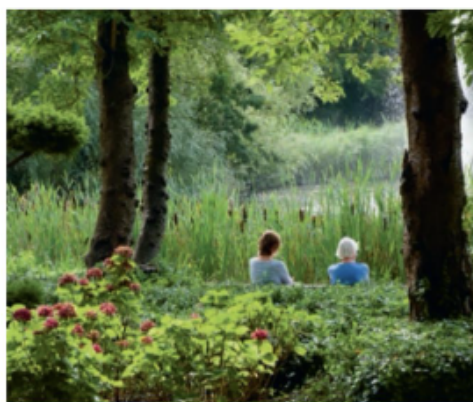
Taking place between April and May, the best place to witness the blossoming is on the Springsnow route – an 8-kilometre-long journey that takes you from the Elm Arboretum down to the Hortus Botanicus gardens. Here, elms line every viewpoint, and you'll find the delicate white seeds weaving their way along the Herengracht and Reguliersgracht canals. And although it's temporary, the elms remain an example of Amsterdam's resilience and the seeds a reminder of a beauty that lingers with us long after it's gone.

Don't miss these... OTHER BLOOMING SPOTS THAT ARE WORTH THE VISIT.

Tulp Festival

The Tulp (Tulip) Festival marks the moment in time when Amsterdam blooms with one of the country's most recognised flowers. Dreamt up by garden designer Saskia Albrecht, who wanted 'a tulip for and from every Amsterdammer', explore every neighbourhood from Noord to Zuid, with a custom walking route and discover every variety of tulip imaginable.

APRIL, TULPFESTIVAL.COM



Rhododendron Valley

What sounds like something from Tolkien's Middle-earth is actually a real place in Zuid's Amstelpark. Home to 8,000 rhododendrons and 139 species, a walk here from April to late May is a glorious, colourful affair that'll sweep you up into a floral dream for an afternoon. If you're not done, head to the rose gardens for a sweet-smelling walk.

APRIL & MAY, AMSTELPARK



Cherry blossoms

Forget Japan for cherry blossom viewing, Amsterdam isn't too shabby either. In fact, the blossom park in Amsterdamse Bos attracts thousands of visitors to its pink-hued realm. In spring, this green enclave turns pale red- and salmon-coloured as the blossoms work their own brand of magic over this corner of the city.

APRIL, AMSTERDAMSE BOS