

NATNED Introduction

1-A few figures

The Netherlands occupy an area of 41,500km², to compare with Belgium (30,000km²), Germany (357,000km²) or the United Kingdom (242,000km²). One fourth of the country lies below sea level, Zuidplaspolder is the lowest place in Europe (-6,76m).

The highest point of the Kingdom is the Mount Scenery (887m), on the very small Caribbean Saba Island (13km²). It is located east of Porto Rico and south of Sint Maarten (Saint Martin Island). Unfortunately the mount is not reachable by bike, but the climb starting at the airport in Cove Bay, the aptly named Hell's Gate (415m), is worth a look: 3,4km-405m with tremendous gradients (11,5-14,0-12,8). The picture below speaks for itself.



Hell's Gate



Drielandenpunt

In the European part, the Vaalserberg (322m) is the highest point. It lies in the southern part of South Limburg, at the tripoint between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (see BIG110-Drielandenpunt).

2- Topography

Mountains are missing in the Netherlands. We find a hilly region (**Heuvelland**, « **Dutch Hills** » in English) in the south of Limburg. There are located the most difficult climbs of the country, there is the playground of the pro races Amstel Gold Race and Hel van het Mergelland or of the final stages of the Eneco Tour (now BinckBank Tour). There we also have concentrated a great part of the climbs of the list (21/50 in the Zone 3, from # 030 to 050).



The Vijlenerbos, a hill among so many others



The moorland of Veluwezoom

The **Hoge Veluwe**, between Arnhem (south) and Zwolle (north), provides some interesting climbs. We've selected 5 of them: the BIG Posbank and Emma Piramide to discover the Veluwezoom National Park, Steenen Tafel to visit Arnhem, the Torenberg from Apeldoorn and the Filipsberg near Zwolle.

West of Arnhem, the BIG Italiaanse Weg, the Grebbeberg and Amerongse Berg tower above the Rhine Valley. This is the region where the race Veenendaal-Veenendaal takes place.

Amerongse Berg and Grebbeberg belong to the **Utrechtse Heuvelrug** (literally « hill crest »), that stretches from Rhenen (south-east) to Amersfoort (north-west).



Utrechtse Heuvelrug



Rijk van Nijmegen

South of Nijmegen, the **Rijk van Nijmegen** is worth seeing. The BIG selected the Oude Holleweg. We add Zevenheuvelenweg to it.

North of **Enschede**, a heuvelrug without name (?), where the Tankenberg (85m) is the highest point.

The **Sallandse Heuvelrug** is represented by the Holterberg.

Out of the hilly regions, we'd like to give the opportunity to discover the Netherlands climbing **remote « bergen » and/or provincial high points**, that are places of interest (tourist attractions or media climbs). Montferland, for example, is a motte and an archaeological site, and also the place where the National Road Cycling Championships took place in 2017 (Peeskesweg). Some of them are artificial, like the VAM-berg (NRCC in 2020 and 2021).



The motte of Montferland



The « roof » of Brabant

Amongst the **provincial highest points**: Almere Boven (Almere), Kardingerheugel (Groningen), Gulbergen-Dak van Brabant (« Roof of Brabant ») (Noord-Brabant).

In the west part of the Netherlands, we've selected a few **dunes**.

-The highest, the Schoorlse Duinen, are reachable thanks to the Klimweg (460m at 9%), but unfortunately the climb is a one-way street. Half a loaf... we've chosen the Russenduin near Alkmaar.

-Vuurboetsduin, the second Dutch dune in altitude, gives the opportunity to visit Vlieland Island in Friesland.

-Kopje van Bloemendaal is appreciated by the cyclists from Amsterdam, thanks to the reference to the former Dutch pro cyclist Gerrie Knetemann on a letter box (official top of the climb).

-In The Hague, the Savornin-Lohman path allows to reach the Atlantic Wall.

-In the south-west, 't Oude Vuur belongs to the Kop van Schouwen coastal natural area.



Vuurboetsduin



't Oude Vuur

3-Sport and difficulty

The best elevation gains: Vijlenerbos-W 176m, Drielandenpunt-NW 149m, Schweiberg 121m, Toeristenweg-N and Keutenberg 90m, Torensberg 83m, Bergseweg Heerlen 1967 81m, Eyserbos 79m, Oude Holleweg 75m, Oude Huls 74m.

The best climbs in **europoints**: Drielandenpunt-NW 144, Vijlenerbos-W 142, Keutenberg 88, Eyserbos 81, Loorberg (via Rode Kruisweg) 79, Oude Holleweg 77, Brakkeberg and Posbank-SW (via Zijpenberg) 70, Duivels Bosch 66, Oude Huls 64.



Brakkeberg



Dodeman

The best **bombs**: Brakkeberg 25, Duivels Bosch 24, Eyserbosweg and Dodeman 23, Kardingebult 22, Vijlenerbos-E, Oude Holleweg and Gulperberg-NW 21, 't Oude Vuur-SW and Keutenberg 20.



Leon van Bon in Duivels Bosch

The best in **distance**: Torenberg-E 6,9km, Drielandenpunt-NW 4,9, Vijlenerbos-W 4,5, Meinweg (Nationaal Park) 4,2, Hooijdijk-E 3,8, Toeristenweg 3,7, Mookerheide-SW 3,2, Emma Piramide-SE 2,9, Schweiberg 2,7, Tankenberg-NW and Steenen Tafel 2,6.

4-Tourism

Green tourism

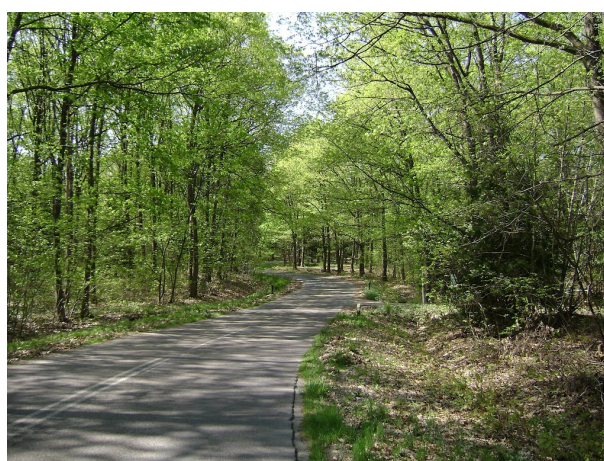
Amongst the 20 National Parks, 5 are represented in the list: from north to south, Zuid-Kennemerland (Kopje van Bloemendaal), Sallandse Heuvelrug (Holterberg), Utrechtse Heuvelrug (Amerongse Berg), Veluwezoom (Posbank and Emma Piramide) and Meinweg.

Map of the National Parks: <https://www.nationaalpark.nl/8614/nationale-parken/overzicht>

Informations: <https://www.anwb.nl/eropuit/dagje-uit/nederland/natuurgebieden>



Meinweg NP



Toeristenweg

Other natural areas are « Natuurgebieden »: Springendal (Hooijdijk), Bergherbos (Peeskesweg), Brunsummerheide (Toeristenweg) and Kop van Schouwen ('t Oude Vuur). A comprehensive list on <https://www.natuurmonumenten.nl/natuurgebieden>. And 3 estates: the moorlands of Petrea (Filipsberg) and Mookerheide, as well as the Kroondomein Het Loo (at the bottom of the Torenberg), the largest in the Netherlands (10.000 hectares).

Some pieces of history

Montferland is a motte, that means a natural mound changed into fortress. With its 17m high and an area of 135m x 150m, it's the most important in the country.

Rolduc abbey is located at the top of Duivels Bosch (Kerkrade). It's an Augustinian monastery built in the 12th century.

Near the top of the Lemelerberg we find the **Park 1813**, that celebrates the independance of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



Rolduc abbey



Geulzicht Castle

At the bottom of the Brakkeberg lies the **Geulzicht Castle**, built in the 20th century. It belongs to the Dutch National Trust (Rijksmonument).

A few climbs are linked to World War II: Savornin-Lohman and its bunker, that was a part of the Atlantic Wall, the Grebbeberg where a battle took place from 11 to 13 May 1940, and the Zevenheuvelenweg, in the climb of which there is a Canadian war Cemetery.



Groesbeek War Cemetery



Wilhelminaberg

A special case

Between Kerkrade and Landgraaf, the slag heap of the **Wilhelminaberg** was changed into a sport area: SnowWorld (indoor downhill ski runs, among which one is 500m long) and a stairway made of 508 steps. A real marathon is organized there with 42 climbs! There is also a downhill track for MTB. The top is reachable thanks to cycle tracks.

5-Media

The Cauberg is the inevitable Dutch media climb. Valkenburg organized the National Championships 19 times from 1937 and 1958, and also 5 times the World Championships (in 1938, 1948, 1979, 1998 and 2012). Can we imagine the Amstel Gold Race without it?

In the last three editions of the WC, the **Bemelerberg** was added to the Cauberg.

In 1967, the WC took place in Heerlen, the **Bergseweg** was climbed 20 times.



The Cauberg in 1938



The Bergseweg in 1967

The Amstel Gold Race criss-cross the Heuvelland in the South of Limburg. A lot of climbs belong to the list. In 2019, there were 12 (different): Raarberg, Bergseweg, Cauberg (already mentioned), Geulhemmerberg, Loorberg, Camerig, Drielandenpunt, Vijlenerbos, Gulperberg, Bemelerberg, Eyserbosweg and Keutenberg.

In the past, the Maasberg was often included, like Hulsberg and Dodeman, and the Sint-Pietersberg was the last climb before the arrival in Maastricht.

An uncomprehensive list of the climbs of the AGR:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lijst_van_beklimmingen_in_de_Amstel_Gold_Race



The Keutenberg



The Gulperberg

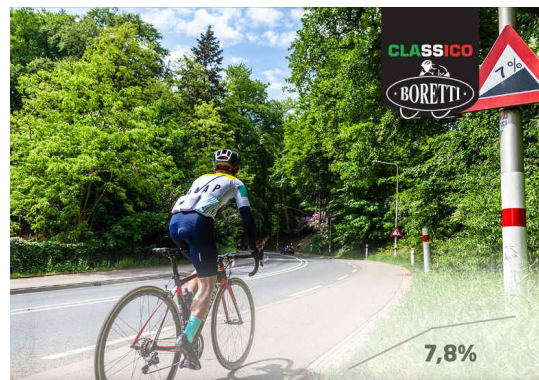
The same region is criss-crossed by the Hel van het Mergelland, renamed « Volta Limburg Classic » since 2012. On the profile of 2018, we find Bemelerberg, Bergenhuizen, Loorberg, Camerig and Gulperberg (Koning van Spanje) as epicentre.

The route of Veenendaal-Veenendaal changes in time, but it always uses the northern bank of the Rhine (Amerongse Berg and Grebbeberg) and of the IJssel (Emma Piramide and Posbank). The Amerongse Berg was also a KOM in the 2nd stage of the Giro d'Italia 2010.

The Ronde van Drenthe can't go without the VAM-berg (« Vuil Afvoer Maatschappij », that means « Company of Waste Disposal »). The same mount pulled the Olympia's Tour (in 2019 and 2020) and the National Championships in 2020 and 2021.



The VAM-berg



The Grebbeberg

The Tour de France went three times through the Netherlands (in 2006, 2010 and 2015). The only stage with KOMs was the 3rd in 2006 (Esch-sur-Alzette-Valkenburg): Loorberg and Cauberg as finish line.

A few climbs are linked with professional cyclists:

- A letter box in honour of Gerrie Knetemann marks the top of the climb.

- In the Erbens Vechtdal Toer, you're encouraged to beat the Anna van der Breggen's personal best. In 2018, 5 cyclists out of 500 did better than 2'57.

- The Theo de Rooij Classic climbs the Holterberg.

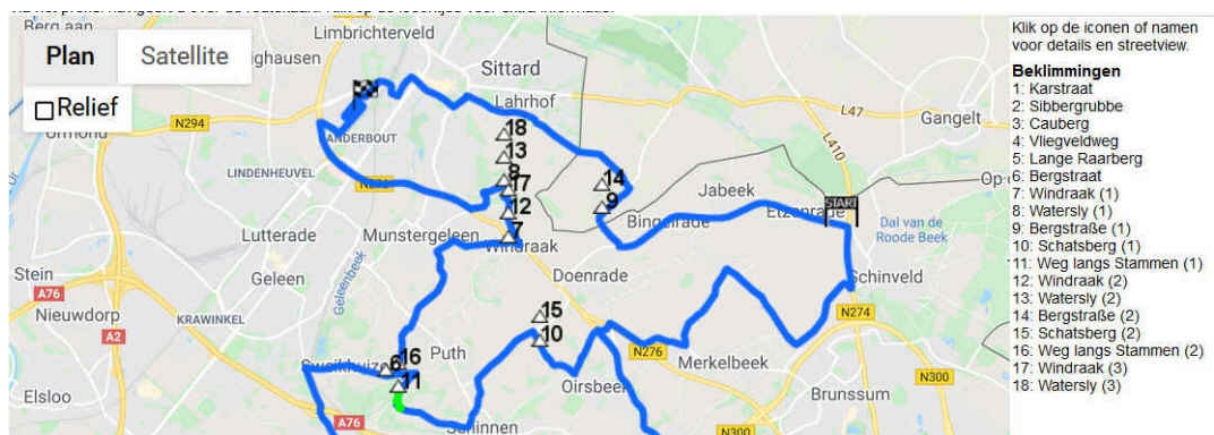


National Championships

- The Cauberg 19 times between 1937 and 1958.
- The Slingerberg 9 times from 1979 to 1987.
- Posbank was chosen in 1988 and 1989.
- The Raarberg made the lap harder in Meerssen from 1990 to 1998.
- Gulpen hosted the Championships in 1999 and 2000.
- The Duivels Bosch appealed to the organizers in Kerkrade in 2012 and 2013.
- Peeskesweg was the climb of Montferland in 2017.
- And Rijzendeweg the one of the Brabantse Wal in 2018.
- In 2020, Van der Poel tamed the VAM-berg. And what about 2021?
- In 2022 and 2023 the Championships could take place in the ... Swiss Alps!



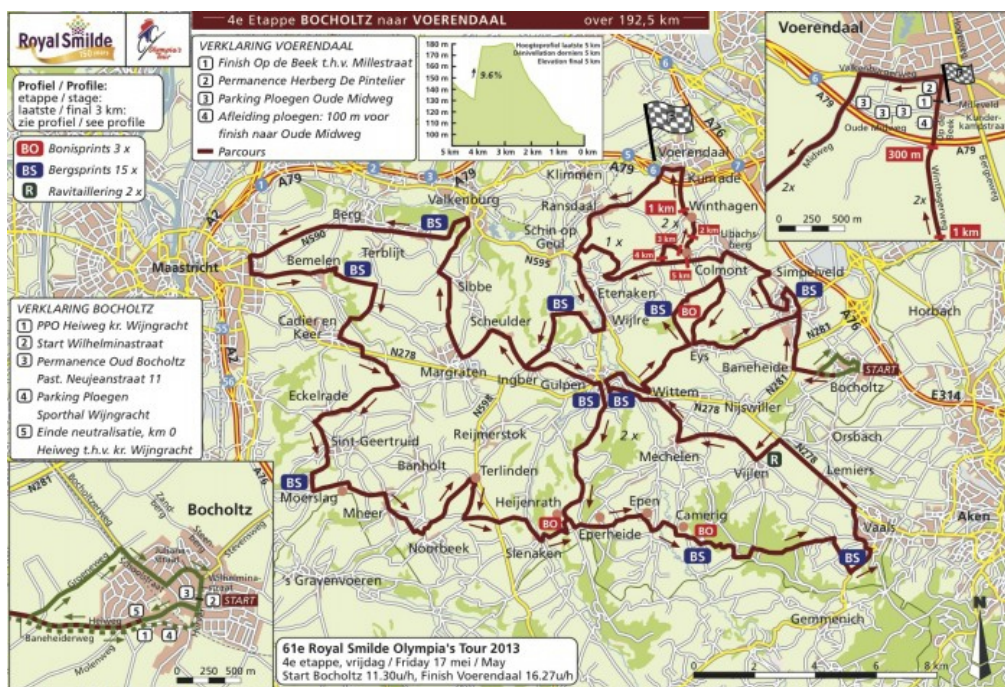
The outcome of the **Eneco Tour**, become **BinckBank Tour**, is determined in the Walloon and the Flemish Ardennes, as well as in the inescapable Limburg stage (NL). Since 2005, Sittard-Geleen is the most frequent « landing place ». The routes change, the southern classic climbs are often there (Cauberg, Camerig, Loorberg, Eyserbos, Huls, ...), but also some bergen in the north, like Sweikhuizen / Stammenhof (respectively « Bergstraat » and « Weg langs Stammen » on the map below, 5th stage in 2017), as well as the Watersl(e)y Estate.



The Bergseweg can help to go out of Heerlen towards the Walloon Ardennes, like in 2014 and 2015.

The Rijzendeweg is always welcome to make a time trial harder, in the flat lands around Hoogerheide (4th stage in 2015).

The **Olympia's Tour** is an ancestral race (continuously since 1955), which forms the Dutch U23 cyclists. It's a real Tour of the Netherlands, with the natural predominance of the flat landscapes and the final « mountain stage » in the Limburg, like in 2013 (4th stage). It's an avatar of the Amstel Gold Race and the Hel of het Mergelland.



In 2016 (3th stage), an interesting time trial took place in 's-Heerenberg. It climbed both sides of the Peeskesweg before an arrival in Hoch Elten (in Germany, see NATDEU-006). It probably was a test for the National Championships in Montferland in 2017.



The Lemelerberg, besides the Anna van der Breggen Challenge, belongs to the route of the Ster van Zwolle and sometimes of the Olympia's Tour (for instance from 2017 to 2019).

The VAM-berg becomes a real media climb. The Olympia's Tour uses it in 2019 and 2020.