

Circling SCHIPHOL

An adventurous cycle tour through an unknown world

The best way to explore Schiphol? By bicycle, of course! Circle the airport and discover powerguzzlers and vanished villages, old forts and new churches, giant warehouses and pocket parks. A narrow corridor meandering between the motorway and a runway, makes even the epicentre accessible: Schiphol Plaza. You'd be hard-pressed to find that anywhere else in the world.

The airport's impact on its surroundings is enormous. International headquarters, distribution companies, hotel chains, freight forwarders, data centres, taxi companies: they all descend on it like flies on molasses. Bringing in their wake infrastructural bundles and parking lots, repair shops and detention centres, fast-food restaurants and spotter zones.

Schiphol is like a stone in the pond of the over-regulated Netherlands, sending shock waves rather than ripples through its wide surroundings. Administrators, planners, designers and local residents diligently try to get a grip on the impact the airport has outside its gates. Successfully? Podium voor Architectuur Haarlemmermeer en Schiphol asked journalist and urban researcher Tijs van den Boomen to thoroughly explore the airport's surroundings.

Van den Boomen got on his bicycle and found a landscape full of contrasts: a little shack in which bands perform opposite a huge warehouse more than a hectare in size, a sign 'keep clear for fire brigade' right next to the monument for the victims of the Schiphol fire, a listed farm building dating from 1860 just around the corner from a brand-new prison, an uninhabited insect hotel in between huge distribution warehouses.

Circle Schiphol is a cycle route that takes in lots of *Extra Extra Extra Large* with a pinch of *Small* here and there. Most of the route runs on paved, tiled or cobbled roads, but there are also stretches of sand road, shell path, dirt road and even an escalator. A word of warning: this is a working area, so roadworks are part of the deal, as are cycle paths that suddenly end as well as makeshift roads. So sometimes, you'll have to improvise. As an aid, here is a map on Google Maps with the route and all its points: bit.ly/3wY3YNh

You can start at any point, for example in one of the places you can rent a shared bicycle. If you only want to cycle a part of the route, FlickBike is recommended (one euro per half hour, many pick-up and drop-off locations). For the entire route, a public transport bicycle (ov-fiets) makes more sense (3.95 per day, Schiphol Plaza and Hoofddorp train station). Or you could use your own bicycle of course (for Amsterdammers, Badhoevedorp beach is the best starting point, see point 5).

The route is a total of 42 kilometres long, but you can take a shortcut in four places, which makes a difference of ten kilometres. Don't feel like cycling? The Connexion Circle Line will take you around the airport in 45 minutes (line 180 clockwise, line 181 anti-clockwise).

'An architectural route confronting us with the way we engage with our space.'

Yvonne Lub
Podium voor Architectuur
Haarlemmermeer en Schiphol

