



10 Minutes For The Planet

Amsterdam Leads the Urban Green Revolution©

by Pierre Vercueil

Hi there and welcome back to our weekly environmental series here on EnglishWaves, Ten Minutes for the Planet. In our current theme we're taking a worldwide tour of the planet's greenest cities and last time we visited the global leader, Copenhagen. Our cities play an indispensable part in affecting our transition to sustainability. In reality, urban areas cover only 2% of the earth's surface, but they're home to more than 50% of the global population and thus account for more than 80% of greenhouse gases produced. This means that the effort to curb global warming and move towards a more environmentally sustainable future starts in our metropolises.

Today we move on to number 2 on the *Economist* Intelligence Unit's Green City Index, none other of course than the vibrant Dutch capital. Amsterdam has long been one of the world's most environmentally progressive cities. With the number of bicycles vastly outnumbering the number of cars - more than 60 percent of inner-city trips take place on two wheels - the city boasts the world's most complex network of non-vehicle routes.

Like its European peer Copenhagen, Amsterdam also has a vision for 2025: reduce CO2 emissions by 40% compared to the 1990 baseline (in other words, by 2025 produce 40% less carbon emissions than the city was producing in 1990). How is the city doing this? First, it has implemented a comprehensive insulation program for its many existing buildings that the city's executive council put into place as far back as 2011. Homeowners have also been encouraged to improve the insulation of their buildings through numerous tax incentives.

Second, wind energy also forms a large part of Amsterdam's ambition for its 2025 goal. It's hoped that by then, 25% of the city's electricity needs will be generated sustainably within the city's boundaries. The ultimate aim is to produce 400MW wind energy by 2040, which is quite a bit more than the 334MW being produced now. On top of this, the global solar power revolution has taken roots locally with the city boasting one of the highest rates of homes being self-sufficient - in other words, homes that generate 100% of their energy consumption through solar technology.

But perhaps the most exciting green development in the city that has placed it at number 2 on the Green City Index is Amsterdam's Smart City partnership with Silicon Valley frontrunner Cisco Systems. The city signed an agreement with Cisco to "foster smarter and greener innovation" by working to shape the city as one of the company's showcase Internet metropolises. That might sound like exciting tech language, but what does it actually mean? Essentially, vehicles, buildings, thermostats, streetlights, motors, sensors, smart meters, vending machines, parking meters, traffic signals, and literally billions of other things will be connected to the Internet. This will enable the city's infrastructure to become ultra energy-efficient, and attract further global investment in its green infrastructure and initiatives.

Amsterdam might only be number two on the list but its future doesn't look any less green. With its Smart City initiative and rich tradition of non-motorized transport, Amsterdam is set to lead the urban green revolution for years to come. Join us again next time when we continue our look at the world's greenest cities. Stay tuned to Ten Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.