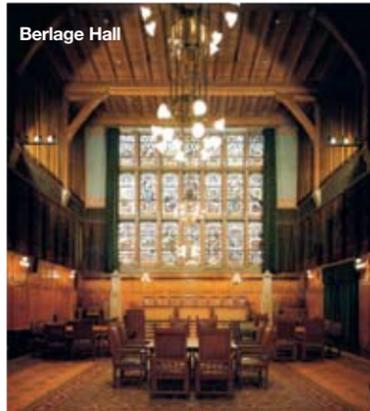


GOING DUTCH

From stock exchange to cinema, Amsterdam offers an enticing range of unusual venues for meetings and events – and it's only 50 minutes by air from London. **Jenny Southan** reports



Berlage Hall



BEURS VAN BERLAGE

Damrak 277; tel +31 20 530 4141; beursvanberlage.nl

Located on the main street linking the station to the Dam Square, this imposing red-brick building was the Merchant Stock Exchange until the last traders left in 1998. In addition, for the past two decades Beurs van Berlage has been a venue for exhibitions, conferences and royal weddings, as well as home to the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra.

The building was designed by Hendrik Berlage and inspired the Amsterdam School style of modern architecture, which emphasised the importance of function as opposed to form – in the corridors, for example, the walls have not been plastered, the only form of decoration being a blue or yellow glaze over the lower brickwork.

The Main Hall, with its high glass ceiling and tiered galleries, is one of the largest indoor spaces available to hire in Amsterdam, with a capacity for 1,000 cabaret-style or 1,275 people for a reception. In total, there are 20 meeting rooms available for hire, including the Café, which is often used in conjunction with the Main Hall as a reception area, the Auction Room (with space for up to 175 delegates), and the Safe Deposit (accommodating 90 for dinner) in the basement.

Catering is either provided in-house or by the highly regarded Maison van den Boer, while sound, audio-visual presentations and lighting can be arranged by specialists.

PRINS VAN ORANJE

De Ruyterkade, pier 16; tel +31 20 419 1516; prins-van-oranje.nl

Built in 1908, the 53-metre Prins van Oranje originally served as a ferry transporting passengers and cargo along the canals between Amsterdam and the northern cities of Zaandam and Alkmaar. It was taken out of service in 1950 and has since passed through several incarnations, including a spell as a floating hotel.

Most recently renovated in 1995, this historic saloon boat is now moored on the Amstel river behind Amsterdam's central station and can be hired for corporate cruises. Pick-ups can be arranged throughout the city, and organisers can also choose the route, ports of call and the destination.

The wood-panelled art deco interiors are light and airy, with large windows and comfortable armchairs. In total, the boat's upper two floors can accommodate 320 guests for a sit-down dinner or 500 for a reception, and there is access to narrow decks outside. Catering can all be done on board – there is a well-appointed galley, and food options range from Indonesian buffets to freshly prepared five-course meals.



Lower Deck



AMSTERDAM CONVENTION FACTORY

Czaar Peterstraat 213; tel +31 20 535 6949; thefactory.nl

Located in the developing district of Amsterdam East, the Convention Factory is a hyper-modern dark industrial space. Until 1999, the building was part of a huge complex owned by the Dutch manufacturing giant Stork, which produced ships' engines and railway carriages on the site. It was subsequently converted into an events venue for up to 5,000 people, and is very popular for product launches, concerts and fashion shows.

Thanks to an innovative approach to the facelift, much of the exposed pipe work, cranes and machinery have been left, which allows for some space-age lighting effects. Entering the venue (whether by boat from the back or car from the front) brings you directly into the APD Hall, an 896-sqm area which holds 1,500 for a reception or 800 cabaret-style, and can be subdivided into any number of smaller areas.

Also on the ground floor are the Food Court and two more connecting halls. The biggest, the BAD Theatre, has a permanent stage and sloping theatre-style seating with a capacity for over 1,000 people, while next door is SW38, which has enough floor space to race cars on.

On the first floor, up a flight of steel stairs, is an open-plan restaurant called the Void – it has its own bar and provides guests with great views of the high-ceilinged structure criss-crossed with metal beams.



ARTIS ZOO PARTY AND CONGRESS CENTRE

Plantage Middenlaan 41A-43; tel +31 20 624 5522; artis-horeca.nl

Home to hundreds of species of animals from camels and chimps, to parrots and piranhas, Artis is the oldest zoo in the Netherlands. Its range of original events venues includes the Flamingo Conservatory, a large glass pavilion with space for 100 people standing and views of the long-legged pink birds in the pools outside, as well as the Aquarium, which can seat up to 150 for dinner and boasts a grand marble entrance and a long hall lined with fish tanks.

Other options include the Planetarium, the Kings Hall (seating 250 theatre-style) and the Butterfly House, which is probably better suited to a reception than a sit-down event – this glass-walled room is a pretty warm and humid venue, so guests are likely to be more comfortable if they can get outside into the garden for some fresh air.

Above: the Aquarium



As well as providing in-house catering for any event, Artis can also offer delegates reduced-rate tickets to the zoo (€9 as opposed to €17), behind-the-scenes tours in English, access by boat, and even the chance to adopt an animal of your choice. If you hire either the Aquarium or the Butterfly House, the fees for renting the venue go directly to the zoo as donations, which means that they will be put towards the care of the animals and the upkeep of the buildings.

BAD Theatre



APD Hall



ODEON

Singel 460; tel +31 20 521 8555; odeonamsterdam.nl

Due to an old tax on wide buildings, houses in Amsterdam tend to be tall, narrow and deep. The eight-floor Odeon, positioned on a tree-lined canal, was built as a brewery in 1662. It has since served as a theatre, a cinema and a gay club, but you can still see a projecting beam at the top of its gable which was used to winch barrels, goods and furniture, to avoid having to carry them up the steep stairs.

On the first floor is the Green Room, which juxtaposes wall-size prints of models with a baroque-style mural on the ceiling (up to 20 boardroom-style), as well as the Gold and Red Rooms. These two form a restaurant and cocktail bar (open Thurs-Sun), but can hold up to 80 people for a sit-down meal when they're closed to the public.

Upstairs is the Concert Hall, an oval room with a stage and stuccoed ceiling, and the Royal Balcony, an area with low pink velvet seating (up to 60 people). The Concert Hall is used as a club from 11pm, but can also be hired for private receptions (up to 450), with catering provided by Odeon's brasserie in the basement.



Green Room

Royal Balcony

PATHE TUSCHINSKI**Reguliersbreestraat 26-34; tel +31 20 625 8581; tuschinski.nl**

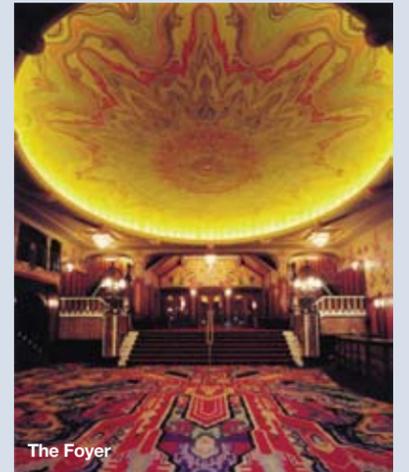
Designed and built in 1921 by Polish immigrant Abraham Tuschinski, this unique cinema is a stunning fusion of art deco and art nouveau architecture. The building has tragic associations – during the Nazi occupation of Holland, it was not allowed to bear the name of its Jewish patron, and Tuschinski and his family were sent to their deaths in Auschwitz. After the war, however, the cinema regained its full name and, thanks to Tuschinski's determination to ensure his vision lives on (he bought hundreds of spare fixtures and furnishings), has been preserved in all its original glory.

The foyer is decorated with a plush carpet (flown by KLM in one piece from Morocco), art deco lamps, and ornate hand-painted walls and ceilings, and can accommodate 300 people for a reception. There are six screening rooms, three in the old building and three in the new wing, but it is the main auditorium, with a capacity for 786 delegates, which is the most impressive. The balconies offer sweeping views of the theatre, with its Aztec-influenced murals and softly lit central stage (Powerpoint presentations can be projected onto the screen). The space can also host a sit-down banquet for 250 people, by having a false floor built over the stalls.

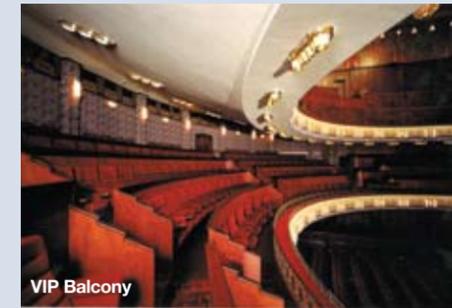
All the areas in Pathé Tuschinski are available for hire, including a VIP room with a capacity for 100 people for a buffet (catering can be outsourced to two companies) and the wood-panelled hallways, lit by stained glass windows.



Main Auditorium



The Foyer



VIP Balcony



Boardroom



Meeting Room

REMBRANDT TOWER BOARDROOM
Amstelplein 1; tel +31 20 561 8080;
rtboardroom.nl

High flyers should head for the 32nd floor of the Rembrandt Tower in Amsterdam's business district – it is the highest point in the city and promises views as far as the coast on a clear day. The venue features four areas for hire, each with floor-to-ceiling

windows, electronic blinds, cream-coloured furnishings, state-of-the-art communication facilities and high-tech audio-visual equipment. The two Boardrooms can hold 20 to 26 delegates, while the Lounge and the Meeting room can each accommodate up to 50 theatre-style. Top-quality catering is supplied in-house, with all the food prepared in a kitchen on the same floor, and drinks available at a small bar.

GETTING THERE

Flights to Schiphol airport operate from Heathrow, Gatwick, City, Luton and Stansted. Airlines are: BA (LHR, LGW, LCY), Bmi (LHR), Easyjet (LGW, LTN, STN), VLM (LCY) and KLM (LHR, LCY).

