

DUTCH

Characteristics

Straightforward. On the whole Dutch people say what they think, without realising that they may hurt the listener. Saying something in an indirect way is perceived as being dishonest and is considered more hurtful than being direct. You should say what you mean and mean what you say to avoid misunderstandings.

Independent. Strong individual opinions are expressed. It is fine to express a different opinion as long as you don't expect the other person to do it your way. Ten political parties are represented in the Dutch House of Commons that has only 150 members! (Progress has been made since 4 have recently amalgamated).

Individualism. 'Vrijheid, blijheid' (Freedom, happiness) is a well-known saying. Such individualism is the root cause of sexual and drug excesses within the country. It is noticeable on the sport's field. It is visible in Christian circles. There are about seven different 'Gereformeerde' denominations next to the 'Hervormde Kerk' from which they split during the 19th Century. The saying goes that if you have three Dutchmen they form a party and when the fourth person joins they split into two parties! The Dutch individualism can cause problems in teamwork.

Tidy, clean. The Dutch like their houses and gardens to be kept clean and tidy. They like cut flowers displayed in their homes and spring-clean twice a year. They regularly clean windows and sweep paths. This may lead to fastidiousness. The local governments mow all the public lawns and the sides of the roads regularly making the whole town look almost like a park. This tendency for tidiness and cleanliness probably stems from a Calvinistic background. Hence the saying, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' However, as Calvinistic influence declines, so do some habits of cleanliness.

Family-Oriented. The Dutch (who are coffee crazy!) drink coffee at set times during the day. Whoever is present in the family and/or guests are expected to sit down together for a break. Birthdays are celebrated yearly till one dies. Most families will not only visit married brothers and sisters on their birthdays, but also in-laws, even if it means taking a car journey of one or two hours.

Proud. Being a small country with one of the highest population densities per square mile in the world, the Dutch have been forced to recover land from the sea. Consequently the saying, 'God created the heaven and the earth, but the Dutch made Holland!' Holland boasts of many famous painters among its citizens (Rembrandt, Van Gogh), and it was the first nation to embrace the Reformation.

Good leaders. Men tend to lead conversations in the home, even when they are guests. However, this may result in becoming authoritative.

Stubborn. Dutch people often see things in black and white. As a result they are not good at compromising although the political situation forces two to three parties to form a coalition government, and water has to be added to the wine.

Adaptable. Being a small nation with a population of only 15 million, the Dutch have had to fend for themselves in trading with people abroad. They have adapted easily to the need to learn one or more foreign languages.

The Dutch Like:

- People to speak their minds. If, as a result, someone gets hurt, the person in question will think about it for a while and may bring it up when they meet next time.
- Things to be done properly. They like their language spoken correctly by foreigners. They like to possess a diploma for almost everything they do (e.g. running a shop).
- Their own privacy. As the country is small, everybody takes good care of their own little garden. They put a hedge or fence around it enjoying a private place to sit which is not on view to others.
- Hospitality. They like people to come to their homes for coffee and a chat. However, one isn't invited for a main meal to somebody else's place very often. People generally visit by appointment.
- To spend money with care. Items are not bought rashly. Prices and quality are weighed carefully against each other. The Dutch are collectors; everything that may have value is saved. Abroad there may be exceptions - cheese and peanut butter will be purchased whatever the cost!
- Hard Work. The Latin proverb, 'Ora et labora' ('Pray and work') can be found in or on houses. It is a virtue to use time effectively and work hard.
- Water. Water is the friend and enemy of the Dutch. It is, however, used for recreation - swimming in the summer, skating on the frozen lakes in winter.

The Dutch Do Not Like:

- Sacrifice. The Dutch, during the last few decades, have been taught how to exert their rights and not their duties. Holland is a real welfare state. The government gives subsidies for rents and good allowances for child endowment, being unemployed, sick, etc. So the Dutch are becoming lazy and only want to do what is written down in the rules. 'Going the extra mile' is not a common feature in society. If one goes the extra mile to earn more money, he gets taxed so heavily that it doesn't pay. The result is that one does just what he is allowed to do, not what he is able to do. 'Why should I work if my new wage is less than the government unemployment benefit I get for not working?'

Such a mindset is common today, so work ethics have been weakened and hence there is no sacrificial spirit left in young people. The general emphasis is on getting not giving. Recently the government, because of the necessity of austerity measures, is changing its policies and this may result in a different attitude in the Dutch race.

- Disorder. This may cause problems when a tidy Dutch missionary works alongside a person of another nationality with a more 'happy-go-lucky' approach to life. Needless to say there are some untidy Dutch people around as well!
- Rules and Regulations. The influence of hyper-Calvinism in the past, with all its do's and don'ts has led to a swing the other way. Paradoxically, though new laws are added to regulate social life, they often must be adapted because people do not adhere to them.