NOTRE
EUR•PE
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Netherlands

1. Flag

• Created c. 1572
  and adopted in 1937

The Dutch flag consists of three horizontal bands in red, white and blue. William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, who led the struggle for independence against King Philip II of Spain, ruled that the three colours orange, white and blue were to form the flag of the Northern Provinces of the Netherlands whose governor he was, in an attempt to proclaim the sovereignty of the northern regions, or "United Provinces". The flag was christened *Prinsenvlag* (the Prince's Flag) and was inspired, in all likelihood, by William I's heraldic colours. Its existence is mentioned for the first time in 1572. For reasons of which no one is really certain, orange was replaced with red in the course of the 17th century. Some scholars have suggested that orange may have fallen out of favour because it was so difficult a colour to manufacture and keep bright, while others argue that red was more visible out to sea, and yet others that the House of Orange's popularity was on the wane.

The red, white and blue flag was officially designated as the Dutch flag for the first time in 1796, when the Batavian Republic, the "sister republic" annexed by the French in 1795 following the revolutionary uprising and the French invasion, was officially established. The colours of the bands evoked at once a new proximity with France and a marking of distance from the House of Orange, following the exile to England of Prince William V of Orange after the Batavian rebellion. When the French left the country in 1815, William V's son re-established the Royal House of Orange and became King William I, uniting the Netherlands with Belgium and Luxembourg. His descendants continue to sit on the Dutch throne today.

The Dutch flag is similar to the flag of Luxembourg, the only difference being the shade of blue chosen. The Luxembourger flag has light sky blue band while the blue on the flag of the Netherlands is decidedly ultramarine.

A code determines the occasions on which the flag can be flown today. For certain ceremonies an orange pennant is added to the flag to honour the House of Orange, particularly to mark royal birthdays or on 30 April each year to mark "King's/Queen's Day" (*Koningsdag/Koninginnendag*). The colour orange is also used by Dutch teams in international sporting events.

2. Anthem

• *Het Wilhelmus/Wilhelmus van Nassouwe*
  (William of Nassau)
• Written by Philippe de Marnix
  and composed by Adriaan Valerius
• Composed c. 1574 and adopted in 1932

Wilhelmus van Nassouwe	William of Nassau
Wilhelmus van Nassouwe ben ik,	William of Nassau
van Duitsen bloed,	am I, of German blood.
den vaderland getrouwe	Loyal to the fatherland
blijf ik tot in den dood.	I will remain until I die.
Een Prinse van Oranje	A prince of Orange
ben ik, vrij onverveerd,	am I, free and fearless.
den Koning van Hispanje	The king of Spain
heb ik altijd geëerd.	I have always honoured.

The Dutch national anthem pays tribute to William of Orange (William of Nassau, Prince of Orange), who lived from 1533 to 1584. Of German descent through the Ottonian branch of the House of Nassau, William received the Principality of Orange by inheritance from his cousin René de Chalon in 1544. Close to the court of Emperor Charles V in Brussels, William of Orange-Nassau was the man who masterminded the uprisings in the Northern Netherlands with an army of peasants known as the "gueux". He took part in the struggle against Philip II of Spain, a staunch Catholic and the son of Charles V who, on abdicating, had left him half of his empire. The text of the anthem singing the praises of the German suzerain was mentioned for the first time in 1572 and recited in public during the Eighty Years War, an era characterised by the Dutch peoples' struggle that was to result in recognition of the United Provinces' independence. These provinces, with additional lands to the southeast, were to become the country of Holland as we know it today. Inspired by popular melodies, Adriaan Valérius, a poet and composer, set to music one of the texts taken from the "Chansons des Gueux" imbued with Calvinist morality and patriotism.

Some people associate the melody with a Catholic hymn entitled "O la folle entreprise", celebrating victory over the Huguenots following the siege of Chartres in 1588 after Henry III of France had chosen to seek refuge in that city. Die-hard supporters of the Huguenots, the Reiters led by Calvinist Prince Jean-Casimir rode from central France to join the Protestant troops of the Prince of Orange in Germany, who were fighting for their independence against Philip II of Spain's Catholic armies at the time. On that occasion the song was revived as a symbol of the people of the north who had had their fill of excessive taxation, of the persecution of Protestantism and of Philip II's centralising ambitions.

Mozart heard the song *Het Wilhelmus* at the age of nine, in 1765, and used it as a theme in his Twenty-fifth Symphony. But when the Dutch monarchy was established in 1815, the song was rejected as a national anthem because it embodied Calvinist sentiment and was considered to be partisan in its explicit support for the House of Orange. A competition was run and another anthem, felt to be more neutral, was chosen and adopted in 1815. *Wien Neerlands Bloed* ("Those of Dutch Blood"), written by Hendrik Tollens, was adapted to a melody composed by Johann Wilhelm Wilms, but it never received official endorsement.

Het Wilhelmus, whose popularity never waned, was thus officially adopted as the national anthem of Holland in 1932. The first couplet is usually the only part of the anthem sung, but on certain festive occasions the sixth couplet is also sung at the end.