

ABOUT THE AREA

The Kromme Rijn region is located in Central Netherlands. The Kromme Rijn area (219 km², 86.090 inhabitants) is a dynamic area that is characterized by a cultural landscape with differences in scale, openness and relief. The name of the area refers to a 28 km long river that flows through the area, which is a former branch of the river Rhine. The fluvial deposits of the river have strongly influenced the current land use pattern, as fruit orchards are established on the sandy and clay levee deposits of the former riverbed. Fruit cultivation (e.g. apples, pears and cherry) is a financially important sector, which is currently expanding. Fruit cultivation takes place in both high-stem and modern orchards and the sector currently consists of 109 farms (1200 ha). A second important agricultural sector is dairy farming, which mainly takes place on lower lying grassland areas (reclaimed back swamps). The area has 234 dairy farms (7496 ha), with an unknown area of grassland also used for feeds. Arable land plays a minor role, with cereals (27 ha) and vegetables (1 ha). There is only limited forestry in the area, but the ash-coppice and willow-coppice forests are characteristic for the area. These types of forests were established for wood production during the Middle Ages.

RECREATION IN THE AREA*

1.766.895

That is how many (short-term) recreationists annually visit the Kromme Rijn area according to recent calculations. Many choose the area due to its location close to the urban agglomeration Randstad. In the near future their number will in all likelihood increase even more. This will not only bring new opportunities, but pose new challenges as well.

The Kromme Rijn area is multifunctional; next to recreation, the region is well-known for its agricultural character, while many find a pleasant home in the area. Finding a good balance between the different functions is therefore of great importance. Analyzing 'recreation' in 'the garden of Utrecht' is a first valuable step in this process.

RECREATIONISTS' PREFERENCES**

LANDSCAPE PREFERENCES

Recent research asked recreationists about their landscape preferences. They were asked which three characteristics of the Kromme Rijn landscape they found most appealing. This provided the following top 3:

- 1 Degree of naturalness of a landscape
- 2 Degree of scenic beauty of a landscape
- 3 Unique character of a landscape

COMMON RECREATION SITES

- Fort Vechten
- Hardenbroek
- Huize Doorn
- Kaasboerderij Ossenwaard
- Kasteel Amerongen
- Kasteel Sterkenburg
- Langbroek
- Leersum
- Rhijnauwen
- TOP Kersenpracht
- Verdrongen Bos
- Waalse Bos
- Werkhoven
- Wijk bij Duurstede

They were furthermore asked which specific landscape elements they appreciated most during their recreational activities. The following three elements were considered the most appealing:

- 1 Rivers and water
- 2 Forest
- 3 Cultural heritage

RECREATIONISTS' PROFILE**

Average age
55 years

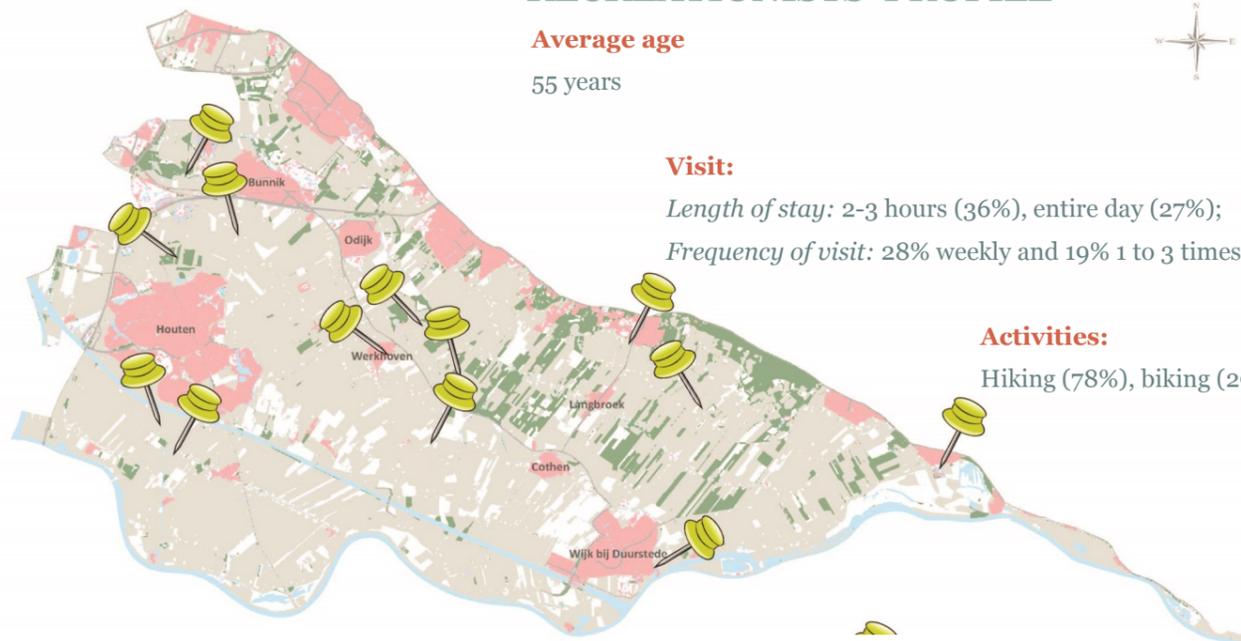
Visit:

Length of stay: 2-3 hours (36%), entire day (27%);

Frequency of visit: 28% weekly and 19% 1 to 3 times a month.

Activities:

Hiking (78%), biking (29.5%) and educational activities (19.5%).



OUTDOOR RECREATION USER GROUPS**

There are large variations in outdoor recreation preferences and recreation needs as each human being is individual. Understanding the heterogeneity of recreation preferences is essential to articulate effective landscape management strategies, targeted to ensure the multi-functional character of peri-urban landscapes accounting for different types of users. Current research is trying to develop a workable typology of outdoor recreation user groups accounting for variations in landscape preferences, socio-demographic information and visitation behaviour.

The typology will be based on data originating from a structured questionnaire with a total of 200 respondents conducted between 22th October to 13th November 2016, in the Kromme Rijn area. Preliminary results show three distinct user groups. One user group is focussed on convenient, short-term close to home recreation. Another showed clear preferences for one-day recreational activities and destinations, while the last group was mainly defined through its strong interest in culture and nature.

* Data used for calculation is the dataset 'Dagrecreatie' (Day recreation) using the statistics published for "Openluchtrecreatie" (ENG: Outdoor recreation) from Statistics Netherlands. Calculation of final numbers based on relative area of each cluster of municipalities in the Kromme Rijn area outline. Calculation results formed part of input data for D4.2 of the PROVIDE project. For more information visit: <http://www.provide-project.eu>

** For more information regarding ongoing recreation research in the Kromme Rijn area see: Komossa, F., Van der Zanden, E.H., Verburg, P.H. 2018. Characterizing outdoor recreation user groups: a typology of recreationists in the Kromme Rijn area, the Netherlands. (draft).