

On the Circuit
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They have the right-of-way. That's the law here. Everyone *fiets* (cycles, in Dutch), some even learning on pink *fietsen* (bicycles) with Minnie Mouse baskets under the overhanging trees. Relaxed but unintentionally fast, they all ride from their homes with pristine gardens to local bakeries selling fresh-made baguette and sweet-smelling pastries to the six-floor cinema that shows international films. Together, they cycle the circuit of the city.

One pedal. The noise of wheezing pedals and squeaking brakes fills the air as it does every day. The sound of bicycle bells and conversations between friends highlights the carefree, but also fast-paced atmosphere of cycling. Increased pedaling. The busy city area contains more bicycles than cars, as is common in Dutch cities. The light turns green and they continue on their journeys inside the white lines of the path.

Here, oddly shaped building hold quaint coffee shops, small restaurants and brand-name shops. A little way down the path, glass buildings make up businesses that provide the main source of jobs for the city. And eventually, the shopping areas morph into neighborhoods and then homes. The curtains are drawn back, inviting members of the community to peer in from outside. Daffodils and hydrangeas fill the blooming gardens out front, surrounding the unique facades of each house. People walk through the neighborhood, chatting and saying hello to others as they pass. Children run through the street playing silly games. The cycling continues.

And the cyclists find their separate homes. They all retreat to them by 18:00 for much needed solitude from the outside world. In the winter, darkness creeps in, as early as 16:00, and in the summer, the light never seems to fade. Bicycles are left by the gardens or in a garage, awaiting the next day.

Pedaling through the parks, they wind along the river often times without a purpose. In passing, one hears “he was pushed in with a jacket and trousers on and expected to swim”; no heads turn. Children roam the city, stopping to occasionally buy *poffertjes* (small, fluffy Dutch pancakes) before dinner, riding and chatting with each other, only needing to be home by dinner.

Picture a wheel with spokes. The spokes are bike paths, leading to the hub of the city, the train station. With this much traffic, the train station serves as the center of a business with a wide clientele—drugs. Here in Eindhoven, normal, average, every-day people sell them. Parents advise children not to hang out at the train station at night.

The ride continues—another day another time. Turning the corner onto High Tech Campus Eindhoven, cyclists pass the many buildings that house some of the most creative, innovative minds of the Netherlands. One building in particular stands out. White, with large letters it reads Phillips (founded in 1891). Everyone has friend, parent or grandparent that has worked or works for Phillips. Right across the street, a glass, dome-shaped building stands. In suits and ties, the cyclists dismount. They walk across the street and head toward the doors of the famous Phillips. Upon entering, they are bombarded by questions about the next project. Ideas circulate through the building all day.

Then, hopping back on the seat, they go. But the ride never ends for the city of Eindhoven.