

Rugged natural open landscape. Its green grasslands, reed beds and marshy bogs are a paradise for geese, water and reed birds, waders, spoonbills and raptors. You will come across large grazers such as Scottish Highland cattle and Konik horses, and the seashells are the only sign that this place used to be at the bottom of the sea. This is Lauwersmeer National Park, an absolute must-see.

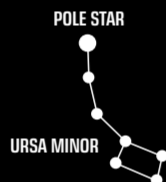
LAUWERSMEER NATIONAL PARK

If you think that the Lauwersmeer nature reserve goes to sleep at night, you could not be more mistaken. The area has a dynamic nightlife!

Many animals come out of their hiding places at night because they feel safer in the dark, while others go on the prowl because they prey on nocturnal animals. And some plants depend on nocturnal moths and insects. It is good to know that Lauwersmeer National Park is a spot where it really does get dark and there is hardly any light pollution. The reserve has earned the name Dark Sky Park as a result. Come and experience true darkness!



CASSIOPEIA



POLE STAR

URSA MINOR



URSA MAJOR



DELPHINUS

CONSTELLATIONS

Ursa Major or the Great Bear is a group of stars in the northern celestial hemisphere. The brightest stars in this constellation form the outline of the saucepan and are easy to identify. The shape has absolutely no resemblance to a bear, and the name, like that of Ursa Minor or the Little Bear, is probably derived from Greek mythology.

Ursa Minor is located with its back to Ursa Major. This constellation is a lot smaller and the stars are less bright, which may well be why it is not so well known. The most famous star in the Ursa Minor constellation is the Pole Star and Ursa Minor itself looks like a saucepan with the handle at the bottom.

Cassiopeia forms a big 'W' in the night sky and it can be seen all year round too (circumpolar constellation). This constellation

is located 'in' our own galaxy, the Milky Way. If you go to really dark places like Lauwersmeer Dark Sky Park, you can see this galaxy as a lighter strip across the night sky. The Milky Way is made up of between 200 and 400 billion stars!

Perseus consists of two diverging 'strands' of stars. The annual meteorite shower ('shooting stars') in mid-August is known as the Persid meteor shower and was named after this constellation because these meteorites apparently originate from it.

Delphinus is a small and rather dim constellation which can be found near the bright star Altair in the Aquarius constellation. It is rather hard to spot, but it is fantastic once you have found it because it really does look like a leaping dolphin.

GRONINGEN



NOTHING TOPS



Dark Sky Park. Lauwersmeer.

LAUWERSMEER NATIONAL PARK

DAYTIME AND NIGHTTIME MAP

COA OPEN © October 2018 DESIGN: GCM, HAN POUPE, COMPOSITION: Marianne Grooten, Disclaimer: All the information given has been compiled and processed with the greatest possible care. Weeding Groningen declines all liability for any errors. The map has been revised in collaboration with the Dutch Forestry Commission (Landbouwkamp).

GRONINGEN



NOTHING TOPS

LAUWERSMEER NATIONAL PARK
When the Lauwers Sea was closed off in 1969, this created one of the most beautiful nature reserves in the Netherlands: Lauwersmeer National Park. This map gives a summary of daytime and nighttime activities in the reserve.
DE BOSSCHUUR ACTIVITIES CENTRE
De Bossschuur Activities Centre is the ideal starting point from which to explore Lauwersmeer National Park, and it is a nice place to spend a few hours as well. You can see and experience all kinds of things in the activity centre as well as in the immediate vicinity, and lots of activities for people of all ages are organised there too.
WHEELCHAIR USERS
Wheelchair users can reserve an all-terrain wheelchair at Het Boeze Wilt (restaurant (Strandweg 1, Lauwersoog) or at the Forestry Commission offices (Restaurant (Strandweg 1, Lauwersoog). There are two routes mapped out specially for wheelchair users that take you along wide concrete cycle tracks. The MS Vinderbalg (Oostmahorn) and MS Silverwind launches and the hides at Jaap Deansgat and Ezumazijl are all easily accessible for wheelchairs. Or would you rather go fishing? If so, there are plenty of great fishing spots on a fishing pier that is accessible for wheelchairs.
For more information, please go to www.np-lauwersmeerneer.nl
Groningen Tourist Information Office (NVO)
Groze Markt 29, 9712 HS Groningen
T 0900 202 30 30 (€ 0.15 per minute)
www.tourism.groningen.nl



Dark Sky Park Lauwersmeer

WALKING WITH THE STARS

Going on a walk in the dark is a very special experience. And it certainly is pitch dark at Lauwersmeer National Park! Let your eyes get used to the darkness first of all. All the light fixtures in the reserve have been specially adjusted to cause as little light pollution as possible. If you are walking in the dark, you cannot see very much in your immediate vicinity, but objects in the distance are clearly visible and they are your only reference points. And of course, on clear nights you can use the stars to guide you! Experience the darkness at Lauwersmeer National Park. Look at the stars with the observators and walk through the park with the forest ranger.

WALKING TRAILS AT LAUWERSMEER DARK SKY PARK

1 THE DARKEST CYCLE TRACK IN THE NETHERLANDS
Anyone game to try it? The darkest cycle track in the Netherlands is probably the one in the Kollumerwaard. It really is pitch black here and no light whatsoever is visible. The cycle track starts at Kwelderweg and finishes at Hooge Zuidwal. When you get to the end, you will see the lights at Zoutkamp, the Gripskerk gas jet and the glow of the city of Groningen away to the south-east.

2 EZUMAZIJL
A walking tour of Ezumazijl. You can see the lighting and gas jet at Oostmahorn if you walk along the blackness of the water.

3 NIJE FAERT
A nocturnal walking tour around Lauwersoog harbour is a truly amazing experience. You can see the lights on the boats and at the harbour and the lock, with Schiermonnikoog in the distance. And there is a lovely view of Lauwersoog harbour all lit up from the car park by Hoek van Bant. If you go to the beach at De Rug, you will also have a great view of Nieuw Robbengat and the harbour lights across the water.

4 LAUWERSOOG HARBOUR
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5 BALLASTPLAATBOS
Try a walking tour through Ballastplaatbos woods! This tour takes you past black water at times, while at others you can see lights in the distance. It is very exciting, especially if there is a bit of wind!

6 ZOUTKAMPERRIL
Go for a walk along Strandweg past the Zoutkamperril near Zoutkamp, where there is a fantastic view of the fishing port industrial estate all lit up. If you turn around, you will see the Willem Lodewijk van Nassau Barracks and the Vierhuizen windmill.
You can go on walks with a forest ranger all year round. Have a look on www.np-lauwersmeerneer.nl for a list of all the activities.

EXTRAORDINARY ANIMALS

The animals living in Lauwersmeer National Park make the surrounding area even more beautiful. Come and see them in their natural habitat!

SPOONBILL
The spoonbill is a striking-looking bird with its white feathers and odd-shaped bill. This bird nests on the Wadden Islands, but it comes to the Lauwersmeer nature reserve to forage for shrimps and sticklebacks. From the end of August on, hundreds of spoonbills - adults and juveniles alike - gather at Lauwersmeer lake for their migration to West Africa (Mauritania and environs) to spend the winter there.

EURASIAN BITTERN
The bittern is a rather squat, brownish-yellow variety of heron and it is extremely shy. If danger threatens, it immediately points its bill upwards and freezes in this elongated position, which makes it almost invisible among the reeds. Bitterns nest in the extensive reed swamps and you can hear the males' mating call - known as 'booming' - between March and June. Their diet consists of frogs, fish, large insects and even mice in the winter.

BARNACLE GOOSE
The barnacle goose has a compact build and can easily be recognised by its black neck and white face. This goose nests at Spitsbergen, but many thousands of them spend the winter at Lauwersmeer. During the spring and autumn migrations, you can see up to 30,000 barnacle geese a day flying overhead. A most impressive sight!

OTTER
The otter was extinct in the Netherlands at the end of the 1980s. However, after otters were reintroduced at Weerribben-Wieden National Park in Kop van Overijssel, the species started to advance to the north. This was a great success! A population of these beautiful aquatic animals has been living in the Lauwersmeer nature reserve for a few years now, and they obviously feel at home there!

SCOTTISH HIGHLAND CATTLE AND KONIK HORSES
If the Forestry Commission did not take any action, the Lauwersmeer nature reserve would gradually turn into a forest. This is why big grazers have been put out to graze there. The Konik horse in particular is a real brushcutter. Thanks to their grazing activities, these animals - in collaboration with Scottish Highland cattle - help to keep the reserve open and free of trees.

UNIQUE PLANTS

Come and explore the reserve with our forest ranger and discover everything it has to offer!

COMMON SEA BUCKTHORN
The sea buckthorn's orange berries are not only a magnificent sight; they are a source of food for thrushes too. Thrushes migrate from Scandinavia to their winter quarters in the autumn, and they make a stopover at the Lauwersmeer reserve. And that is exactly when the buckthorn berries are ripe for them to eat!

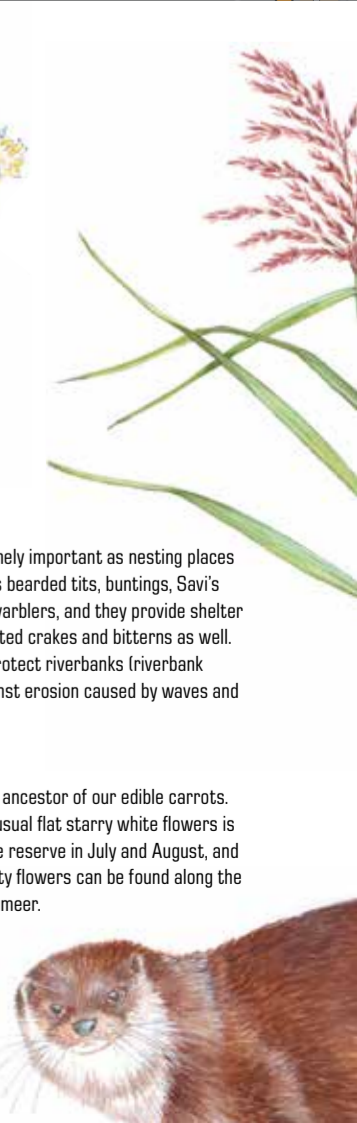
WHITE-TAILED EAGLE
This bird is not easily heard, but you can hardly miss seeing it. When the white-tailed eagle soars through the air with wings spread, it measures at least two metres in width and one metre in length. The 'flying door' as it is colloquially known, has been nesting at Lauwersmeer since 2010.

MARSH HELLEBORINE
The grasslands in the northern part of the Lauwersmeer nature reserve turn white in August due to a species of small orchid known as marsh helleborine. This little plant is extremely rare and is protected by law. It likes to be in a sunny spot with damp soil. The flowers mainly attract wasps - hence the Dutch name of moeraswespenorchis - as well as hoverflies, beetles and ants.

SOUTHERN MARSH ORCHID
You can see masses of southern marsh orchids at the reserve in May and June. This orchid is protected by law, but of course you can take photos, or just look and admire it without touching. The flowers are a striking pinkish-purple colour with dark red dots or stripes on the lip.

REEDS
Reed beds are extremely important as nesting places for reed birds such as bearded tits, buntings, Savi's warblers and sedge warblers, and they provide shelter for shy birds like spotted cranes and bitterns as well. And reed beds also protect riverbanks (riverbank defence system) against erosion caused by waves and currents.

WILD CARROT
The wild carrot is the ancestor of our edible carrots. This plant with its unusual flat starry white flowers is a common sight at the reserve in July and August, and masses of these pretty flowers can be found along the roadsides at Lauwersmeer.



THE WADDEN SEA: A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Unesco World Heritage Site The Wadden Sea is one of the world's last tidal regions and a unique foraging area for birds and seals. You can book a 'seal trip' to watch these animals in their natural habitat. Or put on a pair of stout wellies, go for a walk along the mud flats with a guide and experience the silence. Or would you rather look for benthic animals (bottom-dwellers) on the Engelsmanplaat sandbank? Or watch seals being released? You can do all these things at the Wadden Sea! www.waddenland.groningen.nl/en

SCHIERMONNIKOOG NATIONAL PARK

The island of Schiermonnikoog has an extensive dune system with a very special atmosphere and its own flora and fauna. You can get there by ferry from Lauwersoog harbour. The Rottum and Monnik ferry boats run every day, and you can take your bike along for a lovely day's cycling and that unique island feeling. The island is also accessible by catamaran from Oostmahorn.

An information office is located at Lauwersoog harbour (Het Informatie Paviljoen, HIP). Hosts and hostesses welcome visitors there and give them information on the background and the available options in the wide open spaces at Lauwersmeer National Park, Schiermonnikoog National Park and Unesco World Heritage Site The Wadden Sea.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE

The fact that a pair of white-tailed eagles are residing at Lauwersmeer National Park is a tremendous compliment for the area! These magnificent birds succeeded in hatching and raising one juvenile in 2011 too. This raptor is nicknamed 'the flying door' and you can see why if you visit the Vlinderbalg, where there is a life-size picture of the white-tailed eagle on a landmark made of weathering steel.

DECK PATH

A floating deck path with an exciting place for a picnic runs between Lauwersoog village and the harbour. If you sit on the picnic bench, you are actually suspended over the water and you can watch all the water birds and dragonflies - and bats on the hunt in the evenings. And there is an orchid window at the edge of the woods, at a spot where a lot of orchids flower. This is a beautiful spot for you to take some unique photos!

FISHING

There is plenty of water to fish in at Lauwersmeer nature reserve! Bream and roach are the commonest species, but you can also catch pike perch there. If you prefer to fish from a boat, there are fishing spots at the Zoutkampernil or the deeper waters at the Slenk, and there are free slipways on Strandweg along the Zoutkampernil as well. We advise you to wear waders if you plan to fish from the banks. Go to www.np-lauwersmeer.nl for the regulations and information on the necessary permits.

BOAT TRIPS

If you enjoy boating most of all, you will be pleased to hear that there are four marinas at Lauwersmeer: Lunegat in Dokkumer Nieuwe Zijen, Jachthaven Lauwersmeer in Oostmahorn, Hunzegat in Zoutkamp and Noordergat at Lauwersoog. There is a 2,000-hectare lake with recreational piers and small islands where you can moor your boat. You can take the Staande Mastroute ('most-up route') and sail past Dokkum on the way to Leeuwarden, or past Groningen on the way to Delfzijl. And you can get to the Wadden Sea if you go through the Robbengatsluis lock.

WALKS

You can go on long walks through the rugged landscape at Lauwersmeer National Park. Leave your car at one of the car parks and go and experience adventure on foot! The signposted routes vary from 2 to 7.5 kilometres, and the names tell you what you may expect to see there, e.g. Hooglanderroute (Scottish Highland cattle), Konijnenroute (rabbits), Orchideeënpad (orchids) or Vogelroute (birds). You can take your faithful canine companion on a fabulous walk here! There are signs all over the Lauwersmeer nature reserve telling you where your dog can run free, where dogs have to be on the lead or where, regrettably, they are not allowed. You can find a number of locations on the map too. The Dutch Forestry Commission (Staatsbosbeheer) offers a large number of excursions that set off from De Boschuur Activities Centre. You can go butterfly-spotting, or look for Konik horses, spoonbills or bats. Go to the website (www.np-lauwersmeer.nl) for a list of the available activities.

- Duindoorn Route
- Marne Route
- Konijnen Route
- Nature Study Route
- Route for disabled people
- Diepsterbos Route
- Vogel Route
- Kiek over Diek cycle route

HET BOOZE WIJF MUSEUM MARINA

A number of authentic ships are on display and waiting to be admired at the Museum Marina. There are various walking routes that start from the café there and you can book a seal trip, a safari in a Land Rover or a spectacular trip in a rescue boat. And there is an educational water playground there as well where you can have a great time splashing about! www.beleeflauwersoog.nl

CYCLING

Go on an extensive cycle trip through beautiful countryside, where you can see all kinds of birds, unusual vegetation and spectacular views across the water. It is quite likely that you will come across Scottish Highland cattle or Konik horses too. The Lauwersveer, a ferryboat, powered by solar energy, runs between Het Booze Wijf and Suyderoogh.

Or go on a round trip of Lauwersmeer lake by bike (45 kilometres). This is an active day out and you can combine it with pit stops for a cup of coffee outside in the sunshine, or enjoy some delicious fresh-caught fish as a snack. You can buy a route map at Groningen Tourist Office (VVV Groningen), or in the web shop at www.toerisme.groningen.nl/webshop

Kiek over Diek is a 90-kilometre cycle track that takes you along the coast from Lauwersoog to Nieuwe Statenzijl. You can enjoy spectacular views of Unesco World Heritage Site The Wadden Sea and the beautiful Groningen countryside inside the dykes on your way. There are several tourist reference points (Toeristische Overstop Punten) along the route which enable you to make pleasant detours to interesting places like Zoutkamp or Pieterburen.

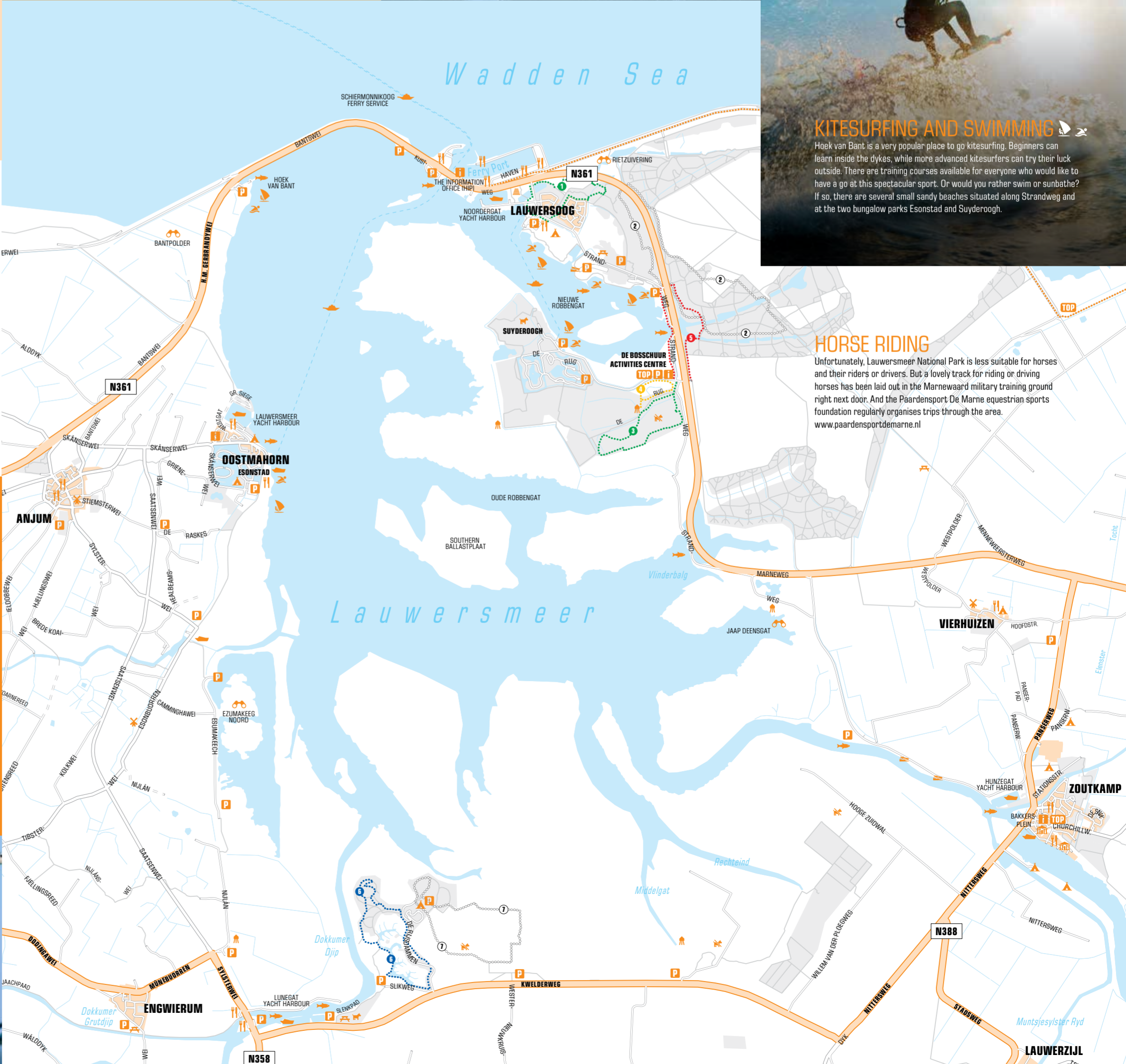
BIRDS

Lauwersmeer nature reserve is very well known among ornithologists. Not only because of all the unusual species you can spot there, but also because of all its hides, observation towers and vantage points.

Here is a list of the best places for bird spotting:

- RIETZUIVERING** This is a lake near Lauwersoog harbour with lots of birds to see during the nesting season, such as sedge warblers and shelducks.
- BANTPOLDER** Open grasslands where waders nest and large species of geese spend the winter.
- EZUMAKEEG-NOORD** Freshwater area inside the dykes. If you are lucky, you may see white-tailed eagles, spotted redshanks and ruffs.
- JAAP DEENGAT** You can see spotted crakes, bitterns and all kinds of migrants here, and sedge warblers, reed warblers and

You can go for a walk with the forest ranger. For more walks, go to www.np-lauwersmeer.nl or use the Wadvogels App to discover the area. You can download this app free of charge on the App Store, Google Play or Windows Phone Store.



HORSE RIDING

Unfortunately, Lauwersmeer National Park is less suitable for horses and their riders or drivers. But a lovely track for riding or driving horses has been laid out in the Marnewaard military training ground right next door. And the Paardensport De Marne equestrian sports foundation regularly organises trips through the area. www.paardensportdemarne.nl

KITESURFING AND SWIMMING

Hoek van Bant is a very popular place to go kitesurfing. Beginners can learn inside the dykes, while more advanced kitesurfers can try their luck outside. There are training courses available for everyone who would like to have a go at this spectacular sport. Or would you rather swim or sunbathe? If so, there are several small sandy beaches situated along Strandweg and at the two bungalow parks Esonstad and Suyderoogh.