

The Great Traveling Fabric Fairs

Get your craft on at one of Europe's traveling fabric fairs.

I'm a born-again sewist. I began sewing and crafting when I was 8 years old and never stopped until I moved to Germany 14 years ago. Why did I stop sewing? Mainly because I couldn't find affordable fabrics and notions. And the second reason? I couldn't find parts for my beloved Kenmore sewing machine. Fast forward a few years and I have a new Bernina sewing machine. But I need fabric and buttons and zips too. Well, I finally discovered there are traveling fabric fairs from Holland that stop in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France several times a year.



I don't know the history of these traveling fabric fairs, but they are reminiscent of America's traveling salesmen. The men would ride through your homestead on horseback, wagon, or buggy selling the small things needed in the household. You know, needles and thread, buttons, collar stays, and wicks for kerosene lamps. But where did the ladies get their fabric? Gonna have to watch an episode of Little House on the Prairie to figure that one out.

What I do know is that instead of having to fly back to the US to purchase fabric, I can visit one of Europe's traveling fabric fairs and see about 50 vendors and in one location. Sorry JoAnn Fabrics, but a sewist has to do what a sewist has to do—find great fabrics and save money too.

Stoffmarkt Holland vs. Stoffenspektal

So far, I've attended several of the [Stoffmarkt Holland](#) traveling fabric fairs held in large and small German cities throughout the year. Stoffmarkt Holland holds nearly 40 spring events (~Feb – June) and an multiple autumn events leading up to Christmas. Most of their traveling fabric fairs are held outside in an empty parking lot and have awnings to cover the fabrics and slightly shield you from the elements, but I wear a hat or carry an umbrella just in case the weather takes a turn for the worse.

At the Stoffmarkt Holland traveling fair you can find a large assortment of cottons, silks, wool, knits, and leather fabrics for sewing, crafting and quilting. There are also lots of designer fabrics too. There's quite an assortment to choose from, so you just need to look around and find which fabric suits your needs. No pun intended! ☐

If it's notions you are looking for, I find the assortment quite overwhelming and so do the other sewists. It gets really, really crowded at the notions tent where you need to nudge you way in to get a chance to view the pretty buttons, clasps, and ribbons.

I recently discovered a second traveling fabric fair called [Stoffenspektal](#). I learned about this one while buying fabric in Holland where the fabric shop owner said the prices are good as well as the selection. The Stoffenspektal event in France I attended had around 40 vendors and the selection of fabrics were different than the ones from Stoffmakt Holland, so I now I have an alternative fabric fair to visit. Stoffenspektal caters to sewists located in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg, but from, my home in Germany can reach those borders in a little over an hour—which makes for a perfect day trip.

Both the Stoffmarkt Holland and the Stoffenspektal offer a good selection of fabrics for the average and advanced sewists. If I ever get into making ball gowns again, I'd probably travel to Holland or Belgium to visit one of the designer fabric shops. For now any of the traveling fabric fairs will do since I'm just making skirts, dresses, bags, and some pretty table cloths.



They speak your language

Don't worry too much about the language barrier, because the Stoffmarkt Holland vendors are mainly from Holland and Belgium and speak good German, English, and French. Other vendors include Bernina, who is a sponsor of many fabric fairs, so a local rep is on hand to demo and/or sell you a machine.

Not everyone in the family may like sorting through bolts of fabrics and button bins like you do, so they can take a snack

break while you fabric shop. If you brought along the kids or your significant other, there's always a food stand selling beer, brats, and ice cream to keep the non-sewists busy for a bit.

Things to know before going to a traveling fabric fair

- Go really early to avoid the crowds.
- Wear sturdy comfortable shoes as you'll be doing a lot of walking on hard surfaces.
- The vendors accept EURO, and a few accept credit cards (mainly MasterCard or Visa).
- Bring a shopping stroller; you'd be surprised how heavy fabric can be.
- Metric Measurement Conversions
 - 1 inch = 2.54 centimeters (cm)
 - 45 inches = 1.15 meters (115 cm)
 - 60 inches = 1.52 meters (150 cm)
 - 1 yard = 0.91 meters
 - 9 inch zipper = 22 cm (22.86 cm)

Happy sewing, crafting, and quilting.

Breaking the Stroopwafel Addiction (Dutch Syrup Waffle)

A Stroopwafel sounds more like a dance, but it's actually a delicious waffle cookie which Dutch people have been enjoying for centuries.

The first mention of Stroopwafels goes back to 1784 when a baker from Gouda (which is also famous for its cheese) baked a waffle using remaining product from old crumbs and spices and then filled the waffle with syrup. This was the birth of the Stroopwafel which became a popular pastry among the poor which street vendors quickly began selling as snacks and people became hooked.



For many Dutch people, Stroopwafels are a daily treat eaten with morning coffee or tea. In our household, the warm caramel gooey cookie is becoming increasingly popular too. Being that I'm obsessed with caramel – I'm so not a chocolate fan, so the Dutch syrup waffles and a mug of tea are a "compulsory" afternoon treat.

Can you Make Stroopwafels at Home?

Sure, but it takes time. The batter for Stroopwafels is baked in a special waffle or pizelle iron that has a diamond pattern. Once the waffles are cooked, they are split in two, spread with the caramel syrup and sandwiched or glued together. Sounds easy right? It is essentially, so watch this video to see how it's done.

The delicious treats are still made using traditional recipes and nearly every bakery has its own recipe as well as families too. The recipes are a well-guarded secret which are passed down from parent to child, one generation to the next, even along with the baking iron.

Being that I don't have a lovely silver Stroopwafel iron at home, I make it a point to purchase a fresh one from a food markets such as the Markthal in Rotterdam. Since I can't get enough of the caramel-gooey-goodness, I stock-up on packaged Stroopwafels every time I visit Holland – which is often. ☐

How to eat a Stroopwafel?

If you eat a fresh Stroopwafel, I advise you to wait until it cools down as the sticky caramel center is extremely hot. In fact, Stroopwafels should come with a warning just like the coffee at Mickey D's.

If you purchase packaged Stroopwafels, you can eat them at room temperature. Boring!

You can also heat them in the microwave for a few seconds. Lame!

Ideally, make a cup of coffee or tea and place a Stroopwafel on top of the cup and wait a few moments until it begins to warp in the middle. Now sink your teeth into the gooey center. Lekker, lekker! That's Dutch for tasty.

Stroopwafels, the Official treat of the Wikimedia World

Next time you're in Holland have your nose follow the sweet caramel buttery scent coming from a Stroopwafels vendor and try one. After your first bite, you'll definitely want to buy one or more, but be aware they are addictive. You might get so hooked you'll want to join the [Association of Stroopwafel Addicts](#). No joke, it's real. ☐

Experience an Indonesian Rijsttafel

Experience an Indonesian Rijsttafel, a Culinary Treat for the Senses

Love Dutch food? You know, pancakes, pea soup, pancakes, raw herring with onions, and more pancakes. If so, great! If not, think again because there's more to Dutch food than you know and when you experience an Indonesian Rijsttafel, your senses will be open to a tongue tantalizing wow.



Indonesian Rijsttafel. Wiki photo by Takeaway.

The History of Indonesian Rijsttafel Food in Holland

During the 17th and 18th centuries, thanks in large to the Dutch East India Company, the lush abundant area in Maluki Islands, known as Spice Islands supplied the world's demand for spices. The new, unheard of spices such as nutmeg, mace, clove and black pepper were in high demand especially among high-ranking Dutch workers in the sea and trade industry.

Dutch colonials became enamored with the Indonesian seasonings and cuisine which was colorful, vibrant, delicious and far from what they had eaten in Holland. The Dutch colonists and the Indonesian that migrated to Holland introduced an array of luscious foods namely the Indonesian Rijsttafel (literally means “rice table”).



Rijsttafel in Dutch family in Bandung (West Java) in 1936. Wiki photo by Japing.

With around 17,000 islands in Indonesia the cuisine and recipes vary. So when Dutch officials decided to feast, they did so by having their servants prepare mini portions of the country’s top culinary dishes to highlight the best of Indonesian cuisine for their dinner guests.

What to Expect at an Indonesian Rijsttafel Feast

So what can you expect from a Rijsttafel? Well, how about magic in a dish. Actually more than 18 dishes in my experience. Think chicken satay in peanut sauce, curried meats

and vegetables, roasted coconut, sweet-sour cucumber—all served with rice.

This tantalizing combination of tastes and spices are hot, cold, sweet, salty, sour, and bitter—and eaten in an orchestrated manner. Your wait staff will use every centimeter of table space to line up the colorful dishes and guide you through the recommended eating order. Then get ready to enjoy the taste explosion.

I've ordered Rijsttafel at various Indonesian restaurants such as [Blauw](#) in Holland where I had a positive eating experience. Do check the internet and hopefully you'll find authentic Indonesian restaurants serving Rijsttafel near you.

If you've burnt out on hearty Dutch classics, head to an Indonesian Rijsttafel restaurant or try making Indonesian dishes at home. Once you do, you'll be clicking your clogs for more.