

SO DARK YOU CAN
SEE CLEAR AS DAY

EXPERIENCE
THE DARKNESS

The Netherlands is the country with the most light pollution in the world. But there is a place where it gets so dark at night you can see clear as day. The Lauwersmeer lake area is a so-called Dark Sky Park. This means it still gets really, really dark here.

So you probably think it's very quiet at night. But it's then that many animals come out because they feel safer in the dark. And others appear to hunt their nocturnal prey. Some plants depend on moths and insects. In short: the nightlife is pretty wild here. Discover this fascinating nightlife for yourself by exploring Dark Sky Park Lauwersmeer Lake.

Accessing the Lauwersmeer lake area is the same at night as during the day: unlimited walking on roads and paths (except for Marnewaard military training terrain). National Park Lauwersmeer Lake is open year round 24/7.

There are four locations to get the very best views of the twinkling night sky:

- 1 Activity centre Lauwersnest
- 2 Sky platform Achter de Zwartén (past Suyderoogh)
- 3 Sky platform Vlinderbalg (on the Strandweg)
- 3 Sky platform Zoutkamerplaat (on the bike path)

NATIONAL PARK
LAUWERSMEER LAKE

The Lauwersmeer lake area is one of the most beautiful nature reserves in the Netherlands. You won't find this combination of infinite views on the horizon, fascinating flora and fauna and so much space for recreation anywhere else. A true bird paradise on the former seabed where nature has free rein and nature lovers can breathe in the infinite beauty to their hearts' content.

DARK SKY PARK

The Lauwersmeer lake area is a Dark Sky Park. Here, far removed from artificial light sources, it gets so dark you can see clear as day. Take a walk beneath the stars, enter the darkness and let all your senses take over.

COLOPHON

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NP-LAUWERSMEER.NL

DONKERTE
VAN DE WADDEN



DARK SKY PARK
LAUWERSMEER

YOUR GUIDE
IN THE DARK

NIGHT MAP

NATIONAL PARK
LAUWERSMEER LAKE

BIRD PARADISE
ON FORMER SEABED

The Lauwerszee Sea; a spectacular bit of the Netherlands. We're still plucking the fruits of the reclamation in 1969. The rugged nature and open landscape are an oasis for various species of birds and other animals. It's only the shells in the soil that give away that you're actually walking on what was once the seabed. This is National Park Lauwersmeer Lake...and it simply must be on your bucket list.

ACTIVITY CENTRE
LAUWERSNEST

Activity centre Lauwersnest is the ideal place to start your visit to National Park Lauwersmeer Lake. In and around the activity centre you'll find everything you could ever want to know about birds and the darkness. Address: De Rug 1, 9976 VT Lauwersoog np-lauwersmeer.nl

Dark Sky Park
Lauwersmeer

UNESCO
WADDEN SEA
WORLD HERITAGE

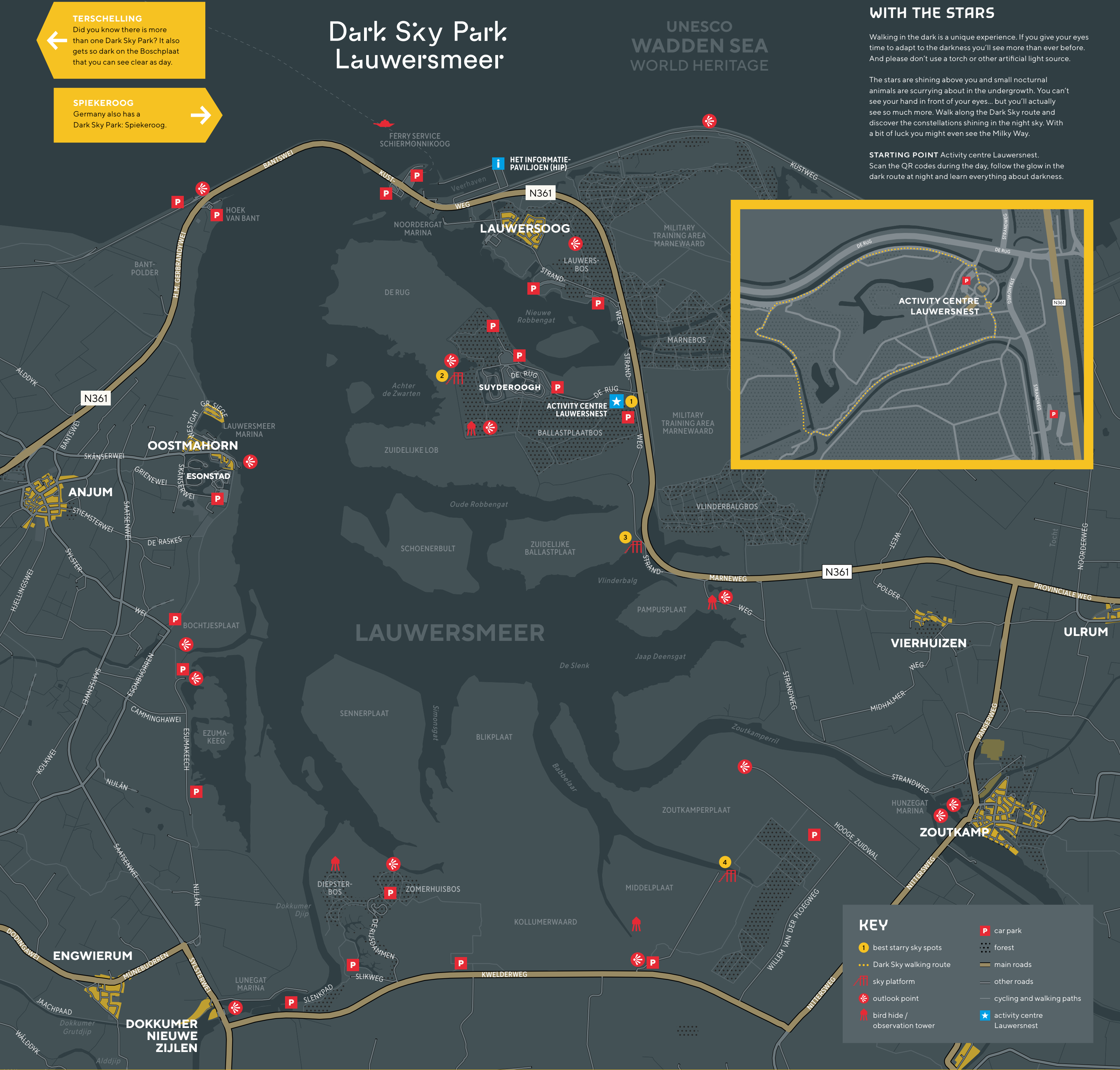
DANCING
WITH THE STARS

Walking in the dark is a unique experience. If you give your eyes time to adapt to the darkness you'll see more than ever before. And please don't use a torch or other artificial light source.

The stars are shining above you and small nocturnal animals are scurrying about in the undergrowth. You can't see your hand in front of your eyes... but you'll actually see so much more. Walk along the Dark Sky route and discover the constellations shining in the night sky. With a bit of luck you might even see the Milky Way.

STARTING POINT Activity centre Lauwersnest.

Scan the QR codes during the day, follow the glow in the dark route at night and learn everything about darkness.



TERSCHELLING

Did you know there is more than one Dark Sky Park? It also gets so dark on the Boschplaat that you can see clear as day.

SPIEKEROOG

Germany also has a Dark Sky Park: Spiekeroog.

KEY

- 1 best starry sky spots
- Dark Sky walking route
- sky platform
- outlook point
- bird hide / observation tower
- car park
- forest
- main roads
- other roads
- cycling and walking paths
- activity centre Lauwersnest

CONSTELLATIONS

What goes on in the sky is a story as old as time itself. The stars we’re looking at right now were born millions of years ago. Nobody knows exactly how it all happened. What we do know is that everything in the sky is in perpetual motion. Minute by minute, millisecond by millisecond, and at speeds of tens of thousands of kilometres per hour. Thinking about it too long will make your head spin. Stargazing does require a bit of imagination. Don’t expect to see a realistic mane or hear a roar when looking for the Leo constellation. But connect the dots and the lion will magically appear.

NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

The dark of night is wonderful for counting stars but animals also benefit from the protection it provides. They feel safer at night and emerge from their hiding places to hunt. Artificial light interferes with their orientation and natural circadian rhythm. They may get lost, start brooding earlier or it may even disturb them during hibernation.

At the Boschplaat Dark Sky Park we take extra care to ensure that any artificial light that can disturb animals such as birds, bats and moths is kept to a minimum. For example, the village of Oosterend has relatively few street lights and the ones that are there only emit dimmed light that shines straight down. So the light doesn’t disturb the animals going about their lives.

SPRING

Spring is here and the animals are coming out of hibernation. And so are the Leo and Cancer constellations. Some people believe that star signs influence their lives but we’ll not be making any such predictions. Though we can predict what you’ll see when you look up to the sky facing south: Leo and Cancer. You won’t recognise Leo by its mane but by the bright star Regulus (little king) just below to the right. The further up you connect the dots the more ‘obvious’ the lion becomes.

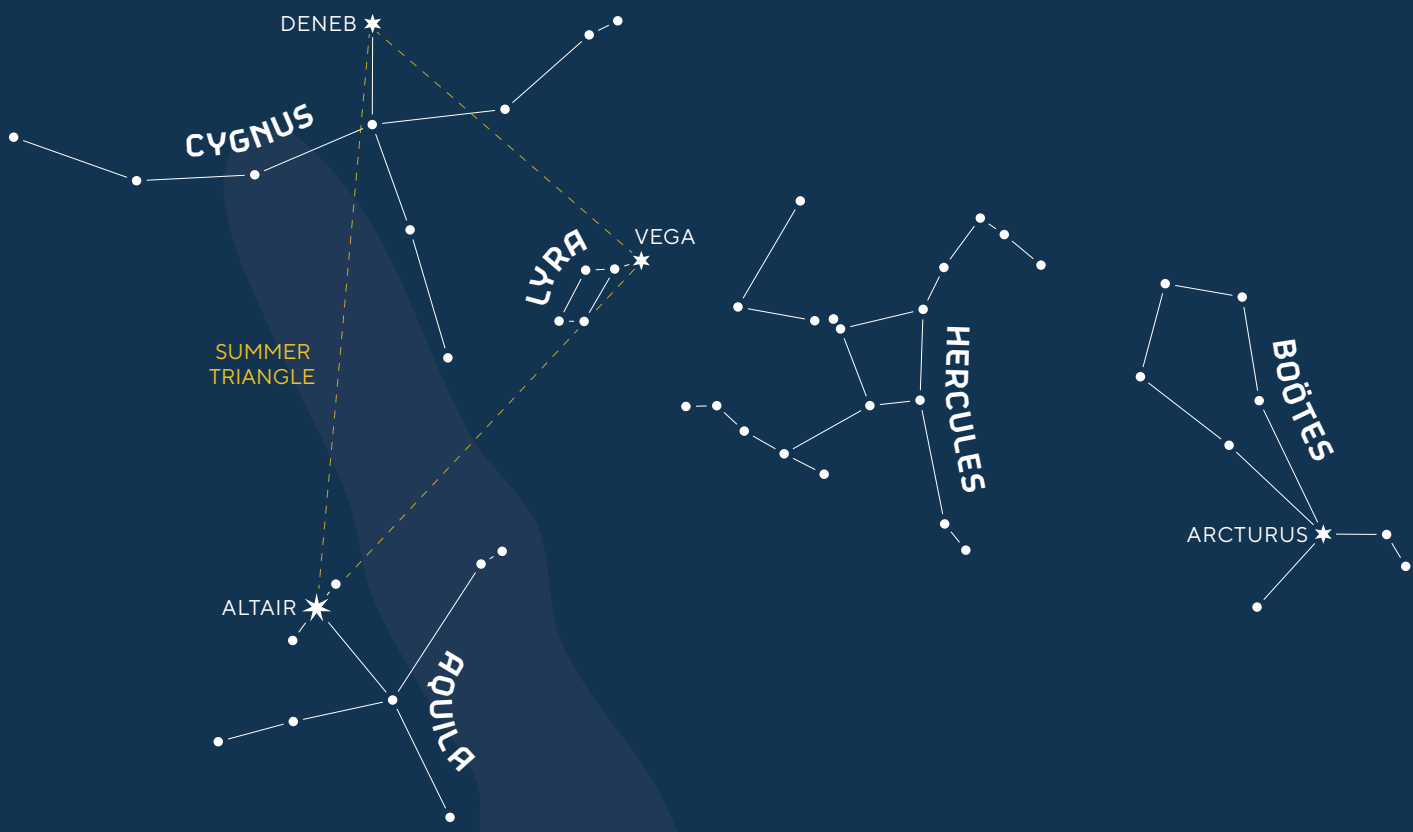
And then we have Cancer; not in the sea below but high in the sky above. Four stars, a bit to the right of the lion’s back, form a curved line. That’s the top, with the legs at an angle below it. Now turn 90 degrees to the west and you’ll see Gemini’s two faces peering down at you. Yet another constellation. These two are fraternal twins, one a bit more orange and the other a bit more blue. If you lower your eyes towards the twins’ feet you might just catch a glimpse of the Milky Way. So look carefully!



SUMMER

Summer is here and all the animals are out and about on the Boschplaat. And the sky is all a flutter with life. Three incredibly bright stars illuminate the sky’s centre stage all summer long. The Summer Triangle. You can see it in the east. They are depicted on the map as big, blue stars. Can you find them? Congratulations! Starting from this point it’s also easy to find Hercules.

Take the short side of Lyra (the uppermost star of the Summer Triangle) and extend it upwards in a south-westerly direction. Eventually you’ll come to the left thigh of Hercules’s bent leg. In the sky Hercules doesn’t look as tough as we know him from the tall tales of his exploits on the Greek mainland. His torso is a rather irregular square shape.



AUTUMN

Autumn’s here again. Nature is preparing for winter and the colours are changing. So too are the animals on the Boschplaat; preparing for a cosy hibernation or a chilly winter holiday. The Summer Triangle has moved. High up in the sky you’ll now find the Andromeda and Cassiopeia constellations. Andromeda is one of the largest constellations stretching out over an area of more than 722 square degrees. This may not sound

all that impressive but it’s almost 1,400 times the size of the moon! Do the maths yourself. When you’ve drawn the imaginary lines Andromeda looks a bit like an exercise bike. Cassiopeia to the left of the exercise bike is shaped like the letter W. Now look a bit to the left of Andromeda... and there’s Perseus. This hero once saved Andromeda from a dangerous sea monster. Now they enjoy each other’s company in the night sky.



WINTER

Winter wonderland on the Boschplaat. Cold and even darker than usual. Many animals are hibernating. While people are putting up lights in their Christmas trees the night sky is always illuminated for the animals on the Boschplaat. Just look south and you’ll see a plethora of glistening lights. The Taurus and Orion constellations are visible. You can recognise Orion by the row of three stars: his belt. If you extend the

line of his belt to the right you’ll discover five stars situated quite close to each other. Together they form a triangle: Taurus’s head. To the right of Taurus you’ll see several stars huddled together. These are the Pleiades and you’re now in the perfect spot to admire them. In the city you can usually only see five stars from this group but in the Dark Sky Park you stand a good chance of spotting nine or even ten of them. How many can you see?



LAUWERSMEER LAKE DARK SKY PARK OBSERVATORY

Who can say they’ve taken a peek into space? In Lauwersoog everyone can. Pull the universe a little closer with the telescopes in the observatory dome. Thanks to this observatory astronomy students from the Kapteyn Institute can study the skies. And so can you! Visit the observatory during a guided tour or star gazing evening and learn all about our vast universe.

np-lauwersmeer.nl