



## **Keukenhof: Sixty years as the paragon of beauty**

**LISSE -- On 19 March 2009, Keukenhof will open its gates for its 60th time. By the time they close again eight weeks later, an estimated 800,000 visitors from around the world will have visited the international flower exhibition in Lisse. In so doing, Keukenhof provides a substantial contribution to the health of the tourist industry in the Netherlands and the region.**

**Our annual turnover amounts to tens of millions of euros. Our suppliers and other related firms add several times that amount in turnover. Our 'exclusive' flower bulb suppliers number well over 100. Since the park opened in 1949, over 43 million people have visited Keukenhof.**

### **History**

Keukenhof was an initiative by ten flower bulb growers and exporters who responded to the invitation by Lisse's mayor at the time to create a 'shop window' for the flower industry. In 1949, they chose the garden around castle Keukenhof, which at one time belonged to the Teylingen estate.

After the death of Countess Jacqueline of Wittelsbach, the large estate went through the hands of several wealthy merchant families, including Baron and Baroness van Pallandt. They asked the landscape architects Zocher, who were also responsible for the Vondelpark in Amsterdam and the gardens of Soestdijk Palace, to design a garden around their castle. The English landscape garden they created in 1857 is still the foundation of the park today.

Keukenhof is saturated in historic details. The tulips alone have countless stories to tell. In the 17th century, wealthy investors paid enormous sums for tulip bulbs. Eventually, the middle class also saw a chance to earn immense profits, and the first commodities hype was born: the tulip mania. Traders could earn the fantastic amount of 30,000 Euros per month by trading in tulip bulbs. Some people sold their companies or their family jewels in order to take part in the trade. But in 1637, the market had collapsed completely, and thousands of people were ruined in a very short time. That history continues to repeat itself, as the uncanny similarities between the tulip mania of the 1630s, the Internet bubble at the end of the last century and the credit crisis today clearly show.

The mill at Keukenhof is also more than a century old. It was built in Groningen in 1892, and was used to pump water out of a polder. In 1957, the Holland-America Line bought the mill and donated it to Keukenhof.

### **Tempestuous Hostess**

For many years, Jacqueline of Wittelsbach has been the symbol of Keukenhof. In the 15th century, she was the owner of the area where Keukenhof is now located. At the time, it was still untouched nature, used only for hunting and for gathering herbs for the castle's kitchen - the Dutch name 'Keukenhof' means 'kitchen garden'.

Countess Jacqueline of Wittelsbach was born in 1401 and died in 1436. From 1417 to 1433, she ruled over the provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Henegouwen. 'Never a dull moment' is perhaps the best summary of the life of this somewhat tempestuous woman, who married four times, spent a few years in prison and lived for some time in exile in England. One of her favourite past times seems to have been waging war – she was even willing to go to war with former husbands. In 1433, she was forced to abdicate from all of her Counties. She withdrew from public life and at the age of 35 she died of tuberculosis in Castle Teylingen, not far from Keukenhof.

### **Royal Interest**

From its very first year, in 1950, Keukenhof has had the privilege of a great deal of interest from the Royal House. Former Queen Juliana was the official sponsor of the first edition, and she has visited Keukenhof many times, both in official capacities and as a private visitor. She has also attended the exhibition in the company of the four princesses and Prince Bernhard. The princesses have taken part in garden contest juries, and their evaluation cards have been preserved. The Prince Consort has also taken many photographs and made many film recordings of the floral displays. In 1962, the Royal couple even made a visit to Keukenhof as part of their 25th wedding anniversary. In that same year, the international flower exhibition also opened its gates for the 25th time, and its brand-new exhibition space, the Queen Juliana Pavilion, was first opened for the public.

The opening ceremonies are regularly performed by members of the Royal House: Queen Beatrix (including the Keukenhof's 50th anniversary), Princess Margriet and Prince William Alexander. Princess Maxima is also a regular guest. Her contribution in planting the King's Lime tree in 2001 was even one of our future Queen's first official presentations. Foreign royalty are also very common among our guests, including the Norwegian, British, Belgian and Spanish Royal couples and the visit of the Swedish Crown Princess Victoria only two years ago.

There have been so many 'Royal Moments' that we have had no trouble building an exhibition around this theme. The exhibition has already been displayed in the Nieuwspoort press centre in The Hague, and an amended version will be presented at Keukenhof 2009.

### **Importance for Tourism**

Keukenhof is very important for the tourist industry in the Netherlands. Research has shown that the flower exhibition is directly and indirectly responsible for more than 350 million Euros per year in turnover. More than half of our visitors come from abroad; there has been an especially strong growth in the number of tourists from American and Asia, and these groups are particularly likely to spend more money during their visit. Keukenhof and the flower industry in general are very important for the image of the Netherlands among tourists.

Half of all visitors to the province of South Holland come to the flower region during the two months that Keukenhof is open. In so doing, the park acts as a large magnet, attracting visitors to its own sector as well as the hospitality industry, retail, accommodations, transportation companies, marinas, museums and other attractions and events. In total, the flower-growing region is responsible for 23% of all revenues and employment in South Holland. In addition, Keukenhof attracts visitors during a period when very few other tourist attractions are open.

During the two months it is open, Keukenhof welcomes more than 80,000 visitors per week, making Keukenhof by far the highest-ranking tourist event in the Netherlands. As Keukenhof does not receive any subsidies, the income generated by these visitors is vital to keep the park open. The products are donated at no cost by the suppliers.

### **Themes**

Each year, thirty horticulturists plant their bulbs at pre-selected locations throughout the park. At the end of the season, these bulbs are harvested, and a new cycle of planting, blooming and harvesting begins again in the autumn.

The commemoration of Rembrandt's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2006 was the start of a new tradition for Keukenhof: each year the park would choose a theme for that year. This makes it easier to couple all of the numerous activities to one another, and if possible to tie in an international partner to the event. The next year, Keukenhof commemorated the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus, and in 2008, the Olympic Games and China were the natural choice. In 2009, Keukenhof has chosen to commemorate Henry Hudson's discovery of Manhattan while in the service of the Dutch East India Company. The settlement there, New Amsterdam, eventually became New York, so the Netherlands is the founder of the most important metropolis in the world.

### **Broad vision of the floral industry**

Keukenhof is a festival of flower bulbs, cut flowers and perennial plants. For years, Keukenhof has reserved the thousand square-meter Beatrix Pavilion specifically for orchids. A unique traditional top attraction is the world-famous lily show in the Prince Willem Alexander Pavilion. In its 6,000 square meters, visitors can admire approximately 35,000 lilies in more than 300 different varieties. Flower contests are also held in the various pavilions. These contests are the pinnacle of the competition among the growers to decide the best horticultural product, varying from tulips to chrysanthemums. The Permanent Evaluation Committee (VKC) judges the submissions, and the best submission per product receives the Keukenhof Award.

Keukenhof is also an introduction to many different gardening styles, from the English landscape garden, to the historic garden with old species of flower bulbs, to the renovated Japanese country garden. The contemporary Garden Forest offers surprising perspectives and exciting vistas through the ancient tree growth. Some less well-known places include the nature garden, where the shrubbery and perennial plants are combined with wild bulb plants; the historic garden with old tulip species and herbs for the kitchen or the apothecary; and the bridal lane for those romantic moments. Visitors can also look for ideas for their own gardens in the inspirational gardens and the formal rooms. For children, Keukenhof offers an exciting labyrinth, a playground and a menagerie. The treasure hunt and the 'Brainbox Puzzle Trail' lead them along the most beautiful places in the park.

Keukenhof is the largest sculpture park in the Netherlands. Under the name 'Art Keukenhof', 150 pieces by a number of artists are on display, and there is a painting exhibition by Ton Schulten and the Flower Power hat exhibition. The art exhibitions are characterised by a wide variety of styles, materials, figurative and abstract movements and different cultures.