

## Dutch Folklore

If you're still looking for Halloween costume inspiration, look no further than the vivid characters of folktales. (There's a reason why witch costumes, for example, never go out of style.) These stories have incredible staying power; these tales of caution, entertainment, and education are embedded in cultures all across the world.

Like that of other European countries, Dutch narrative culture has historically consisted of a blend of stories from neighbors like Belgium and Germany and the tales of the everyday farmers and fishermen. Such a mix has created alternative versions of popular classics from the Brothers Grimm, like Snow White or Rapunzel, with unique Dutch flairs.

However, there are also homegrown folktales. Many of these legends tend to be educational and revolve around the power and threat of water. (This is not too surprising for a coastal country made up of polders and canals, constantly under threat from changes to water level!)<sup>1</sup>

### The Mermaid of Edam

One such tale is called [The Mermaid of Edam](#). Though there are multiple retellings, a popular version alleges that a mermaid got stranded in Lake Purmermeer when a terrible storm broke down the dyke in 1403. The mermaid was spotted by two milkmaids and brought to Edam, and later to Haarlem.

Vestiges of this story can be seen today: the mermaid graces a Purmerend shield (see below, credits to [HHNK](#)), and various buildings in Edam and Haarlem are decorated with ornamental mermaid details.



Good stories know no bounds, and their impacts often span across time and place.

### Immerse yourself in the places of folktales

If you're interested to see the towns of Dutch lore and learn more about local history and culture, email us at [travel@dutch-tours.com](mailto:travel@dutch-tours.com)!

### Reference notes (to read on!)

<sup>1</sup> Meder, T. (2008) *The Flying Dutchman and Other Folktales from the Netherlands*. Bloomsbury Publishing.