

Travel directions to the Sterrekundig Instituut Utrecht (SIU)

NO LONGER VALID — the SIU ceased to exist in early 2012

Street Address

Sterrekundig Instituut Utrecht
Buijs Ballotlaboratorium
Princetonplein 5
De Uithof
Utrecht
Telephone: 030–2535200 within Holland; +31–30–2535200 international

Schiphol Airport

The long walk from the gate to the baggage claim area will unstiffen your legs. The wait for immigration (if you are not coming from Schengen) is usually brief.

Get a cart in the baggage claim area (no fee).

Money: cash machines (ATM's accepting Maestro, VISA, Mastercard, Cirrus etc) and money-change desks are found both in the baggage claim area and in the large shopping plaza above the railroad station. You may get Euros while waiting for your luggage from the ATM left of the ABN-AMRO change office close to a customs inspection gate beyond the luggage belts. There are also railroad ticket vending machines (yellow; see below).

Go out through customs inspection, along/across a busy shopping strip to the large plaza above the underground railroad station. There are drugstores, a grocery store ("food market"), a large 24-hour Burger King, etc.

Buy a paper railroad ticket to Utrecht at one of the yellow vending machines; at Schiphol these accept credit cards (beware: elsewhere in Holland they do not).

However, if you plan to use more Dutch public transport than it is practical to buy an OV-chipcard (cost Euro 7.50). Holland has gone over from paper tickets to a country-wide OV-chipcard: a debit card on which you need to have sufficient saldo for the ride (train, metro, tram, bus). At the start of your ride you "check in" by holding the card against a chip reader in a slender post marked by a purple chip logo. At the end of your trip you check out the same way; the chip reader then displays the cost of the trip and the leftover budget. If you forget to check out, a bus ride becomes 4 Euro, a train ride 20 Euro. The terms "check in" and "check out" are now part of the Dutch language.

At Schiphol it is easiest to buy an OV-chipcard at the railway (NS) service counters (with blue fixtures) along one side of the plaza. The ticket sellers speak English — nearly everybody in Holland does. Ask the seller how to put budget on the card and to register

it for use on the railroads.

Trains for Utrecht and elsewhere leave from underground railroad platforms. Select the half-hourly direct train to Utrecht. Beware: often the track is switched at the last minute between the two sides of a platform. Beware: do not take the slow train to Utrecht via Hilversum. Don't forget to check in.

The trip takes about half an hour, with some stops in Amsterdam suburbs. Halfway you may observe that the water in the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal to the East is well above the polders to the West. You may also listen to the archetypical Dutch mobile-phone conversation as language lesson: "Ja, met mij. Ja, in de trein. Ja, vertraging. Ja, klote. Ja, genoeg aardappels. Ja, is goed. Doei".

Utrecht Central Station

The station hall is at first floor level. There are expensive baggage lockers to the left at the Eastern end of the hall. And another Burger King, kiosks, bookshop, ATMs, etc. Fast trains to Amsterdam leave from Utrecht about every half and full hour. There are OV-chipcard loading machines in front of the AH-to-go food store. The check-in/check-out posts are at the transition from the station hall to the pedestrian passage. You don't have to check out if you switch here to another train.

A crowded pedestrian passage leads eastward through an extensive shopping mall to the old inner city. Beware of junks at night. There are a bakershop, grocery store, liquor store etc. along a branch-off corridor to the South.

Sterrekundig Instituut - by city bus

The city bus station is below the shopping mall to the Northeast of the railroad station. Go East from the station hall along a flower shop, book kiosk, nuts & sweets kiosk. The exit to the city bus platforms for De Uithof is a covered corridor to the right after the passage slopes down a bit.

Take bus #11 or #12 to University Center "De Uithof". Line #12 is faster but does not deliver you as close. The check-in/check-out OV-chipcard readers are within the bus, near the doors. The ride takes about 15 minutes. Your #11 stop is "Botanische tuinen" after three underpasses outside the old city. The first two are dips of the road through tunnels, the third is a wide overpass. The stop is after a sharp right-turn after you pass the conspicuous long low red Minnaert building to your left, between a dark concrete monstrosity (left) and a meadow (right). If you took bus #12 or #12S get out (after a wide highway overpass) next to a building of which the facade is adorned with ugly multi-color horizontal stripes. You went too far if you pass through an area with university buildings on both sides.

From each bus stop, cross the road and walk North in the direction of the low red barge-like Minnaert building.

The *Sterrekundig Instituut* is in the *Buijs Ballotlaboratorium* which is an eight-story oblong concrete building North-West of the Minnaert building. The little red road to its left brings you to its entrance in the middle of its North side, marked “Buys Ballotlaboratorium”.

You may also reach us through the barge-like Minnaert building. Its silly architecture is admired by Japanese tourists and hated by its users. It is supported by Minnaert’s name serving as struts. Enter it left of the name, take the too steep staircase to its first floor, pass along the sombre shielded-off indoor lake (in eternal disrepair) and Minnaert’s excellent portrait, turn right through a catwalk to the Buijs Ballotlaboratorium, turn left to get to the elevators at its center.

By car

The University Center *De Uithof* is to the east of Utrecht, in the middle of intricate highway intersections. Coming from the East, West or South, follow “A28 Amersfoort” and “De Uithof”. Take exit “De Uithof”. Left on the traffic lights at the exit. The road bends right and left again. Go right, across a raised bicycle path, at a rather unclear side road just before the first tall buildings on the righthand side. This is the Leuvenlaan. Turn right after a glassy building (Educatorium, by Rem Koolhaas) on the left and just before the red Minnaert building. Turn left at the end (after passing the entrance to the “Botanische Tuinen” at right), and continue to the large parking lot that eventually opens on the right. The Buijs Ballotlaboratorium (BBL) is the oblong eight-story slab at the far side, with its name (one of my mistakes) marking the entrance.

Inside the BBL Ride the elevator to the top floor (7) which houses the *Sterrekundig Instituut*.

Coffee: the once-famous communal “*Sterrewacht-koffie*” is long past, alas. You need to borrow a special chip card to use the coffee machine.

Lunch: the cafeteria in the Minnaert building sells sandwiches, salads and hot junk food at lunch time (12:00 - 13:00). Payment is exclusively with “*Chipknip*” money cards. The bad acoustics inhibit conversation, another architectural failure. Thanks to the “*Minnaert Bevrijdingsfront*” the excellent portrait of Minnaert painted at his 70th birthday hangs no longer near the dishwashers but in a more appropriate place.

Dinner: the cafeteria in the nearby Educatorium serves evening dinner of reasonable quality (as Dutch university cafeterias go) Monday through Thursday 17:30-19:00. During Friday and weekends only the hospital UMC offers food on campus.

Library: our old but excellent collection has been integrated into the University library elsewhere on the Uithof and is no longer used by astronomers because getting a volume requires a webform request and going there a day later. The collection is nearly complete in nineteenth-century institute publications not yet on ADS. The astronomy book collection is nearly complete until about 1975 (when Hans Rosenberg left). There is also an excellent history-of-exact-sciences collection.

You need a permit and a pass to be allowed in our building during evenings and weekends. If you are not from an EU country and stay over a week, the procedure to get you the required work permit and pass takes up to five weeks!

There are various sparse but effective guestrooms with toilets and showers in our buildings, but their use is no longer permitted by the local bureaucracy.