

The Room Book



The handbook for (international) students looking
for student accommodation in Groningen

(2023 edition)

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Welcome to Groningen! ...

on behalf of the Groningen Student Union

A very warm welcome to the most amazing student city in the Netherlands! Every year thousands of new students from all over the world come to Groningen to study and get a taste of student life. We affectionately call our city a big village. It is a green and friendly place but with all the pleasures of a big bustling city.

However, it will likely not have gone past you that there is a lot that students have to deal with. The Groningen Student Union (GSb) connects students from different backgrounds and we help when students run into problems. We organize actions and represent your interests to the Hanze, UG and the municipality.

In recent years we have often had to speak up about the shortage of student housing and malicious practices on the housing market. With this housing guide, we hope to make you feel better prepared to start your adventure here in Groningen.

Are you passionate about aiding student problems and want to help out where you can? Then join the Groningen Student Union to speak your mind on matters like student housing, education, and well-being, among others. Join us for only 10 euros a year and help us speak out for students rights!
→ groningerstudentenbond.nl/en/lid-worden

The essentials of student housing in NL

What to know first

1. **Finding housing is your own responsibility!**
Universities do *generally* **not** provide housing for students!
2. Students live throughout the entire city (not on-campus) in rented-out student rooms, studios and apartments.
3. No roommates; it is uncommon to share a room.
4. **Be careful.** Malicious landlords, agencies and criminals take advantage of students desperate for housing.

Free sector v social housing

Most student housing in Groningen constitutes privately-owned housing. Landlords range from families with a second house to large real estate companies. How much rent you pay is partly determined by regulations.. For student rooms, landlords have to comply with points-based maximum rent prices.

→ Are you paying too much rent for your room?

Do the rent check on checkjeprijs.huurcommissie.nl.

For rental houses (incl. studios, apartments), the government each year sets a limit for '**social rent**'. If your rent is below this threshold, regardless of your landlord, a points system sets how much rent you pay. You will likely also be eligible for **rent benefits** (*huurtoeslag*) from the government. Above this limit, you rent in the '**free sector**' and your landlord sets the price.

A **housing association** (*woningcorporatie*) provides state-subsidized social housing for people with low incomes. Most students fall into this group but waiting lists vary from a few months for a single room to many years for an apartment. You can sign up for social housing through *ROOM.nl* (students only) and *WoningNet Groningen*.

'The *traditional* Dutch student house'

Groningen has a rich tradition of student houses as the most common type of accommodation.

A student house is usually an ordinary residential house in which each inhabitant has their own room and shares certain amenities with housemates. Each house has its own set of house rules and traditions. Whereas in some houses everyone goes mainly about their own business, in other houses it is customary to have a "house night" once a week.

A variation to the traditional student house are high-rise **student tower blocks** where students living on the same floor share a kitchen and bathroom.

Some **student associations** (*studentenverenigingen*) and societies have their own student houses. You will have to become a member to be able live there.

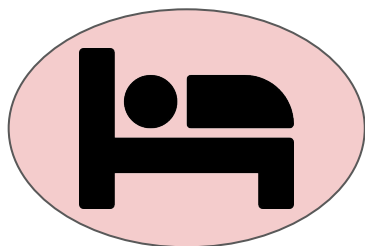
Yay! You have been invited to a room viewing! *But what is a 'hospi'?*

You responded to a room add and it appears to be hit this time! But be aware that the method of choosing a new tenant varies. In some houses, the landlord chooses a new tenant but it is also common for the other tenants of the house to have a say. For this purpose, it is custom to be invited to a *'hospiteer'* evening (*'hospi'* for short). You will meet the housemates along with other people interested in living there. After the *hospi*, the current housemates will choose who they think is the best fit for their student house.

The different types of rooms

Single room

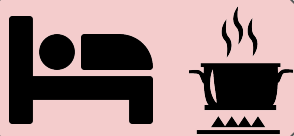
The most common accommodation is a single bedroom with shared amenities. You have one room to yourself and have to share the kitchen, toilet, shower, washing machine, wifi, and sometimes a common living room. **Avg. price: €410,- /mo**



Single room + *kitchenette*

These rooms tend to be slightly larger than the previous category and have their own kitchen with a sink and space for a fridge, and stove. You still share the rest of the amenities with housemates.

→ A private shower or toilet is rare.

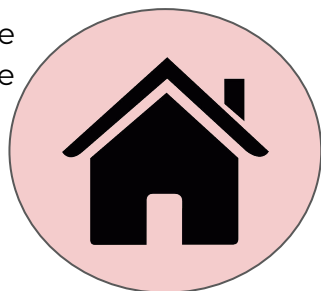


Apartment / studio

In **apartments**, everything is your own, you have your own shower, toilet, kitchen. They tend to be costly and often require an income statement.

Avg. price: €735,- /mo

A **studio** is a small apartment for usually one person, without a separate bedroom. These are often easier to come by. **Avg. price: €550,- /mo**



Don't be surprised if

- The toilet is in the bathroom
- The bathroom only has a shower
- The kitchen has no oven
- The room comes without flooring

Finding housing



1. Use your network!

Ask friends or acquaintances to keep an eye out for places where there will soon be a room available.

2. Many different websites

There is not a single online platform that is used for housing offers but some websites are more popular like:

- Facebook groups
- Kamernet.nl
- Athomeingroningen.com
- ROOM.nl (→ social housing for students)
- Marktplaats.nl
- Pararius.nl
- Funda.nl (→ homes and apartments)
- WoningNet Groningen (→ social housing)



Important! Some platforms only allow you to respond to an advert with a paid subscription (*Kamernet*) or assign rooms based on time duration since registration (*Room.nl*, *WoningNet*).

3. SSH Groningen

SSH offers non-profit short-stay (max. 1 year) housing to international and exchange students → **sshxl.nl**.

4. Private housing companies

Commercial parties offer housing for international students at large complexes, such as Xior, The Village, Blockhouse and Sugar Homes. This is often pricier than other options.

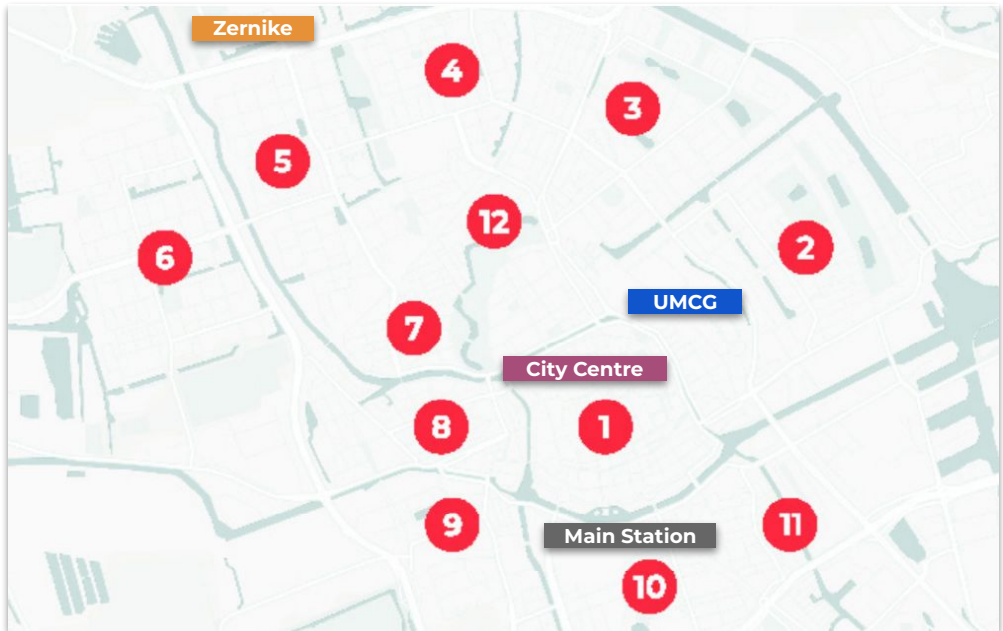
5. Real estate brokers / agencies

Brokers and rental agencies manage properties on behalf of landlords and act as intermediaries. You can easily find their services online or visit a office.

Important! Avoid paying for unnecessary costs! Some agencies charge extra 'administrative' or 'intermediary' fees. This is illegal!

Popular areas to live (as a student)

Students live across the entire city. But especially in the north and central areas (see map). The Zernike Campus and city centre is also where most university buildings are located. Do not worry about location and travel time when looking for accommodation. Almost any corner of the city can be reached within a 20-minute bike ride.



→ Legend: Popular districts and neighbourhoods near campus

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. | Binnenstad ('inner city') | 6. | Vinkhuizen |
| 2. | Oosterparkwijk | 7. | Oranjebuurt |
| 3. | Korrewegwijk | 8. | Schildersbuurt |
| 4. | Selwerd | 9. | Zeeheldenbuurt |
| 5. | Paddepoel | 10. | Rivierenbuurt |
| | | 11. | Oosterpoortbuurt |
| | | 12. | Tuinwijk |

Affordable living as a student

Starting a live as a student can be expensive, fortunately we know exactly how to look after the pennies. Here are some tips and tricks to make your student life in Groningen a little more affordable.

Buying **second-hand** is often cheaper than buying new. In addition you also positively contribute to the environment.

Popular second-hand shops in Groningen are:

- Mamamini
- GoudGoed
- Kringloop Plus

The Netherlands has its own equivalent of *ebay* and *craigslist* namely "*Marktplaats.nl*" and "*Vinted*". Marktplaats offers a wide range of products from kitchenware to furniture, while Vinted mainly focuses on second-hand clothing. In addition, in order to help you move your furniture etc. in Groningen you can rent a cargo bike (*bakfiets*) which is quite common and affordable.

Groceries

Plan your grocery shopping and shop fresh on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday between 9am and 5pm on Vismarkt square in the city centre. Here you can find a large open air street market with many fresh food and budget options.



"OP DE KLEINTJES LETTEN"

Transportation



Going from A to B in Groningen? Grab a bike!

Cycling is a way of life for the Dutch. Groningen has excellent cycling infrastructure and over 60% of all the traffic is cycling. Cycling here may be a bit different from what you are used to. So here are a few tips!

- Bicycles regularly get stolen. Leave your expensive sport bike at home and rather buy a used street bike from a bike shop or online; also make sure to invest in a good bike lock.
- Be careful not to purchase a stolen bike. This is illegal.
- **Act responsibly in traffic.** Drive on the right and give way. Signal directions with your hands. Have front and rear lights and a bell on your bicycle. Follow traffic signs. Use bike lanes and never cycle on a highway. Stay off your phone while cycling!
- Make use of bicycle racks and underground storages. The municipality removes wrongly parked and abandoned bikes.



Public transport (OV) in Groningen

takes some getting used to but it is very user-friendly once you get the hang of it. Here are some key guidelines for using Groningen public transport:

- **Operators:** *Qbuzz* runs the city and regional busses. *NS* and *Arriva* operate the trains. Groningen is also served by a few international bus lines.
- **Payment is contactless and cashless.** You pay by holding your bank card or ov-chipcard against the scanner at the train platform, access gates or in the bus. You have to scan your card both at departure and arrival at the scanner of the corresponding operator.
- Check the website of your operator for **discounts** and **season tickets**. You can only use these with an ov-chipcard → order at ov-chipkaart.nl.
- **No seat reservations.**
- Visiting another city? Rent a bike (**OV-fiets**) with your ov-chipcard → check ov-fiets.nl.



Groningen is not a city for cars. In many neighborhoods there is paid parking and a car may only park for a few hours. In the city centre there are large parking garages for visitors.

Do you want to park longer than a few hours? Then you must apply for a permit. Do you have family or friends coming by car? Then it is best to park at a **P+R** just outside the city and continue the journey by city bus. Vans may only enter the city centre from 5 to 12 AM.

The different types of contracts



Indefinite term rental agreement

This is a lease with no end date. A tenant with an indefinite lease enjoys full rent protection and therefore cannot be evicted. This is the most common contract type.



Fixed-term rental agreement

A fixed-term contract is a contract for up to 5 years in the case of rental rooms. After this period you have to leave the house if you do not get a new contract. However, the tenant can still terminate the contract in the meantime. The contract can eventually be converted to an indefinite lease. You may not get another fixed-term contract after five years. If the landlord does not notify you within the term of notice that you need to move out, the contract becomes an indefinite lease.

→ ***This contract type may soon be abolished as part of new legislation aimed at providing tenants more security.***



Campus contract

Housing associations often use campus contracts. This means you can only live there if you are enrolled as a student. You may be required to provide a *Statement of Enrollment* every few months. Are you no longer a student? Then you usually have to move out within a year.



Subletting

It is not unusual for a student to spend some time abroad. It can then be convenient to sublet the room. As a subtenant, you enjoy (limited) rent protection. Your rent cannot be terminated just like that. For this it is important that you draw up a contract and that you make clear arrangements about which of the primary tenant's things you may use, what the house rules are and how you will handle financial matters.



Short-stay

A short-stay contract is intended for specific groups (exchange, international students and PhD'ers) who otherwise have more difficulty finding housing due to long distances. The lease is six or twelve months and the contract cannot be terminated.

Your rights as a tenant

1. Contract errors

Landlords often have little legal knowledge and this causes contract errors. The law takes precedence; you are not bound by unlawful provisions.

2. Rent protection

You cannot be home evicted just like that. A landlord may go to court to (prematurely) terminate the lease but only under very strict conditions:

- **Misbehaviour:** i.e. nuisance, drugs, violence, vandalism, non-payment for >3 months.
- **Urgent own use:** a) A landlord may claim to be compelled to own use in which case the tenant's interest is deemed less pressing. You are then entitled to compensation.
b) The property is intended for a specific group (young people, students) and the contract includes a max. age or requires you to be enrolled as a student.

Subtenants have rent protection only against the person from whom they are subletting. So you are left in a vulnerable position against their landlord.

Tenants can always terminate their rent, while observing the payment term (usually 1 month).

3. Rental price

Rent is made up by the basic rent and service costs. **Basic rent** (*kale huur*) refers to rent minus service or other costs like utilities. Many students also pre-pay for electricity, gas and water with their monthly rent. This must be agreed upon in the contract. The landlord must account for the different costs per category, provide insight into the total annual utility costs and offset overpayment (or underpayment) for utilities with the tenant.

The prices of student rooms or other housing below the **social rent** limit are regulated. It does not matter if you rent privately or from a housing association. The 2023 social rent limit is set at a basic rent of €808.06 or €452.20 below age 23. If your rent is below this threshold than it should be set in line with a national points system.

Does your rent exceed this threshold? This is called **free sector** rent. Your landlord thus sets the rental price.

4. Rent increases

From July 1st, 2023, the max. annual basic rent increase entails 3.1% for student rooms and social rent or €25 for rents below €300; and 4.1% for the free sector.

5. Security deposit

The landlord can ask for a security deposit. As of July 1, 2023, the security deposit may be a maximum of two months of basic rent. Always make sure you have a payment transcript.

The landlord must refund the deposit within 14 days after the lease has ended. The landlord may only offset the following charges against the deposit:

- Overdue rent
- Service costs
- Damage to the property that is the tenant's responsibility

6. Intermediary fees

A rental agency or broker may not charge a fee for acting as an intermediary between you and the landlord. If you, however, hire an agency to find housing for you then they are allowed to charge a (reasonable) price.

7. Rent benefit

Rent benefits (*huurtoeslag*) from the government cover a significant portion of your monthly rent. You are entitled to rent benefits if you rent a house (apartment, studio) with your own front door, bathroom etc. below the social rent limit; Your income and assets also may not be too high to receive benefits and you have to be officially registered at that address with the municipality.

8. Maintenance

Major maintenance works are the responsibility of the landlord.

Examples are exterior painting and a new central heating boiler. The tenant is responsible for daily maintenance and minor repairs such as painting interior walls or unclogging the toilet or sink.

9. Disputes

Are you paying too much rent? Is your landlord not doing any maintenance work? Did you not get your security deposit back? And does your landlord not cooperate? Or do you have another question about rental law? You can always contact the **Rent Support Center Groningen** (→ p. 14) for information or advice or visit → [steunpunthuren.nl](https://www.steunpunthuren.nl).

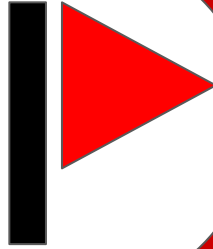
The Rent Tribunal (**Huurcommissie**) helps tenants of student rooms, free sector and social housing. The tribunal deals with differences of opinion about, among other things, the rent, rent increase, rent reduction, service costs, utility costs and disputes about maintenance and home improvement. For certain other matters like eviction, you will need to go to court.

You can also report a 'bad' landlord or intermediary to the **Rental Harassment Helpdesk (MOV)** of the Municipality of Groningen. If justified this can lead to sanctions.

Red Flags

Unexplained
service costs

Not allowed
to register
your address
with the
municipality



You have to
sign before
you can see
the room

You have to
pay admini-
strative or
intermediary
or mediation
fees

Rent Support Center Groningen

Rent Support Center Groningen (in Dutch: *Steunpunt Huren Groningen, SHG*) has the task of providing free legal advice, support and mediation in matters between tenants and landlords in the municipality of Groningen. Every inhabitant of the municipality with a rental question or rental problem is welcome at the Rent Support Center.

Tenants can find all kinds of information about renting on our website. Examples of topics are:

- high rents;
- unclear all-in prices;
- problems with maintenance;
- excessively high service costs or;
- incorrect mediation costs.

**Walk-in
consultation hours:**
Every Wednesday,
from 15.00 to 13.00,
at *Damsterdiep 36..*

If tenant and landlord can not come to an agreement through our mediation, the Rent Support Center can also offer a tenant support in filing a case with the Rent Tribunal (in Dutch: *Huurcommissie*). In extreme cases, the Rent Support Center can also support a tenant in filing a court case.

The aim of all our efforts is to help the rental sector of the municipality of Groningen move forward. We want everyone to be able to live fairly in Groningen.

Email: info@steunpunthuren.nl / Tel. 050 785 1453
→ steunpunthuren.nl



**Steunpunt Huren
Groningen**

Your to-do list

❑ Find a room using this guide

❑ Register at the municipality

Registering yourself at your new address is required and allows you to get a BSN number. This can be done on the Groningen municipality website → gemeente.groningen.nl.

❑ Set up a DigiD

Once you have your BSN number, it is time to set up your DigiD. You can either do this on the website (→ digid.nl) or download the app.

❑ Get insurance

You might want to get household and liability insurance and health insurance while you stay in the Netherlands. Dutch health insurance is not required for international students unless you have a job, including paid internships.

❑ Arrange healthcare

Whether or not you are obliged to obtain Dutch health insurance. It is important, either way, to sign up quickly at a GP practice! In Dutch healthcare almost all medical issues have to be consulted first with your General Practitioner.

❑ Arrange utilities

Many students pay for utilities together with their rent. But many other students must arrange electricity, gas, water (and wifi) by themselves. Be sure to do this well before moving to avoid high bills. You can contract gas and electricity from a variety of energy companies. Tap water must be arranged at the *Waterbedrijf Groningen*.

❑ Acquire transportation

If you do not have one already, a OV-chip card allows you to use all the public transport in the Netherlands with discounts. We also highly recommend getting a bicycle! Cycling is the main mode of transport in Dutch cities.

Colophon

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And a special thanks to:

Municipality of Groningen.

GGD Groningen.

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Are you passionate about aiding student problems and want to help out where you can?

Then join us for only 10 euros a year and help us speak out for students rights on matters like student housing, education, and well-being, among others!

We offer:

- Student representation
- Free legal advice
- Free information
- Committees & working groups
- Fun activities



Defending Student's Rights since 1971



050 363 4675
groningerstudentenbond.nl