

Hidden Gem: Oudenbosch Basilica

By Heather Tucker

When 3,000 Dutch soldiers left the Netherlands in 1864 – 1870 to fight for the maintenance of the ecclesiastical state in Rome, they inadvertently paved the way for the building of the Oudenbosch Basilica.

Willem Hellemons, who organised the soldiers, later returned from Rome and became the parish priest at Oudenbosch. He commissioned one of the most famous Dutch architects, Pierre Cuypers, to build a new church for the area. Built over a period of many years, the 81 metre high and 55 metre wide building is a one-sixteenth copy of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, with a handful of frugal Dutch adaptations thrown in. Walking into it is truly stunning, and if you had not already had, 'country confusion' from the distinct Italian architecture outside, then the domes and arches inside are bound to tempo-

rarily make you forget that you are still in the Netherlands.

If being down on the ground leaves you feeling a bit unfulfilled, then you might like to make the approximately 140 step climb up into the big dome, which reaches a staggering 63 metres high. From there, you can get some great views of the inside of the basilica down below and some close-ups of the details, such as the painted marble effect, Italian arches and large windows.

Whether you are a fan of religious architecture or not, Oudenbosch Basilica is definitely one location that needs to be on your list of things to see in the Netherlands.

For more information, visit www.basilekoudenbosch.nl (in Dutch).



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