

Stichting Koninklijke Defensiemusea

Abstract

The Stichting Koninklijke Defensiemusea (Royal Defence Museums Foundation) was established in 2014 and houses several museums that previously fell under the direct authority of the Ministry of Defence. The various museums manage extensive collections of weapons and other military objects. Their collections also contain many objects related to the (military) colonial past of the Netherlands.

History of the foundation

The Stichting Koninklijke Defensiemusea (SKD) was established in 2014 and acts as the umbrella organisation for the Marinemuseum in Den Helder, the Mariniersmuseum in Rotterdam and the Nationaal Militair Museum in Soesterberg. Previously, these museums fell under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, as is still the case for [Museum Bronbeek](#). Below you will find a brief history of the three museums that fall under the SKD and the collections they manage.

Marinemuseum Den Helder The [Marinemuseum](#) in Den Helder (province of North Holland) manages the museum collection of the Dutch navy. Founded in 1962, the museum is located on the former Willemsoord naval base. In addition to various ships and other navy-related objects, the Marinemuseum collection includes objects and collections from a colonial context. The Dutch navy also manages its own historical collection, housed in so-called tradition rooms. If you wish to visit the tradition rooms, you will need to contact the administrator in advance. The [tradition room of the Naval Aviation Service](#) has made part of its collection available online.

Mariniersmuseum Rotterdam The [Mariniersmuseum](#) in Rotterdam manages the collection relating to the history of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. Traditionally part of the navy, this elite infantry force is now mainly deployed as a special unit. The Marine Corps was active in many of the areas colonised by the Netherlands and this is reflected in the museum collection. The museum also manages various objects from the period of decolonisation, such as the Indonesian War of Independence.

Nationaal Militair Museum Soesterberg The National Military Museum (NMM) in Soesterberg (province of Utrecht) is the result of the merger of the [Legermuseum](#) (Army Museum) in Delft and the [Militair Luchtvaartmuseum](#) (Military Aviation Museum), which was already located in Soesterberg. The merger took place in 2014, when a new museum building was also opened. The former Marechaussee Museum became part of the NMM in 2023.

The former Legermuseum had a long history at various locations and originated from the collection of Dutch military officer [F.A. Hoefer](#). The Militaire Luchtvaart Museum was established in 1968 as the official museum of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Founded in 1936, the Marechausseemuseum was located in Buren (province of Gelderland), from 1972 until its closure in 2023. The NMM focuses on the entire history of the Dutch armed forces, with specific attention to the army and air force. The Royal Netherlands Air Force also manages its own [historical collection](#) in various tradition rooms. Here too, you will need to contact the administrator in advance to arrange a visit.

[image] *Wall of paintings in the Treasury of the National Military Museum* ([Nationaal Militair Museum](#))

Provenance research

The collections of the Mariniersmuseum and the Marinemuseum can be browsed via the [Maritiem Digitaal](#) website, which also comprises the maritime collections of other museums. Due to the large number of objects, it can be difficult to navigate to the desired collection but you can select a specific museum collection using the 'uitgebreid zoeken' option. The [library collection](#) of the Mariniersmuseum is available for public perusal. Please contact the museum for more information.

The collection of the Nationaal Militair Museum can be browsed via its own [collection website](#), where the library collection can also be found.

Archival material relating to the three museums that fall under the Royal Defence Museums Foundation can be found in various inventories of the Ministry of Defence (and its predecessors). When searching for archive material, please note the various former ministries that are now part of the Ministry of Defence. For example, during various periods up until 1959 there was a Ministry of the Navy, and the Ministry of Defence was called the 'Ministry of War'. The various museums themselves also manage archive material, which is currently being inventoried.

Related Aids

- [Museums and collections](#)
- [Army and navy personnel in colonised territories](#)
- [Museum Bronbeek](#)
- [Hoofdcursus Kampen](#)
- [Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau](#)

Primary sources

Secondary sources

Collection website:

Nationaal Militair Museum - Collectie Collection website of the National Military Museum. This website allows you to browse the collection managed by the museum in Soesterberg. The Naval and Marine Museums have their own collection websites.

<https://collectie.nmm.nl/nl/collectie/?ga=2.218030102.1046968903.1660553611-298675809.1660564803&gac=1.837534>

Collection website:

Maritiem Digitaal Website that brings together the collections of various maritime museums in the Netherlands. The collections of the Marinemuseum in Den Helder and the Mariniersmuseum in Rotterdam can be browsed on Maritiem Digitaal.

<https://www.maritiemdigitaal.nl/index.cfm?event=page.home>

Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

first edited by Wiebe Reints as original_author on 2025-11-19
last edited by Wiebe Reints as original_author on 2026-01-06