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TRAVEL | By JOHANNA LENANDER | JUNE 4, 2010, 12:09 PM



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Inntel Hotel Amsterdam Zaandam.

“I don’t like anonymous hotels. I want people to wake up and immediately know where they are,” says Wilfried van Winden, the architect of the new **Inntel Hotel Amsterdam Zaandam**. He needn’t worry. The 160-room property is probably the most memorable example of gingerbread cottage architecture since Hansel and Gretel. Its quirky façade consists of nearly 70 irregularly stacked wooden houses fastened onto a concrete cement frame.

The hotel is the latest and most high-profile building in the ongoing radical revamp of Zaandam’s city center. The Amsterdam suburb, a 15-minute train ride from the central station and a popular day trip for travelers, is better known for windmills and quaint street lined with traditional green wooden cottages. It is these old-fashioned structures that are replicated in Winden’s hotel, which as part of the redevelopment plan, will bring some much needed whimsy to that area of post-war monstrosities around the train station. The plan’s master architect, the veteran urban transformer **Sjoerd Soeters**, will draw on local history for inspiration, restoring a long buried canal and creating municipal buildings that incorporate stylistic features of the traditional cottages in macro scale.



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In this setting, the Inntel Zaandam will practically blend in. But for now, as it stands as the only completed structure in a landscape of cranes and construction zones, it has an almost extra-terrestrial appearance. That doesn’t mean that it’s not already popular with the locals, however. “The overall reactions in Holland have been mixed, but the people of Zaandam love the hotel,” says van Winden. “They’re proud of their city heritage.”