

HOW COOLING CENTRES PROVIDE RELIEF DURING EXTREME HEAT

WEBINAR CHAT

The webinar “How cooling centres provide relief during extreme heat: Experiences from across Europe” ignited a lively exchange in the chat. These are the highlights:

Netherlands

- From the city of Amsterdam: the [heat risk map](#) of Amsterdam
- From the city of Amsterdam: the [Cool Green Streets Map](#) of Amsterdam, which identifies where streets have the greatest potential for greening and cooling interventions. By applying ecological, green measures, Amsterdam connects parks, green corridors and landscapes.
- From Wageningen University & Research: a document on [cool green routes](#) (in Dutch).
- From the city of Arnhem: the municipalities of Arnhem, Rotterdam and Middelburg and together with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) work together in the EU-project [COOL CITIES](#). The aim is a methodology set up by AUAS to determine where and how to realize a cool network (shaded outdoor routes and cool places).
- From the Netherlands: Amsterdam University of Applied Science and Platform31 together published a [research](#) based on interviews with people during and outside of a heat wave. They also interviewed practitioners about their 'cool' design practices and performed a literature review. Recommended guidelines for cool spots can be found at the end of the document.
- From Nieuwegein municipality: In Nieuwegein, a city near Utrecht, we ask our citizens via a short poll/questionnaire via diverse social media channels about their experiences during heat waves. We do so during a heat wave and a couple of days after. On an interactive map citizens can pin the places where they experience/feel the heat the most. We also do so after extreme rain fall or other 'extreme weather events'. This works rather well for feeding our local heat approach and collaborations.

- In 2025 Samen Klimaatbestendig/Klimaatverbond made guidelines for heat excursions (In Dutch) <https://klimaatverbond.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Veldgidsje-HEET-HE-Hitte-excursie.pdf>
- From the Netherlands : We (The Hague University of Applied Sciences) published a report some years ago on The Hague on how vulnerable people adapt, what frugal innovations are on the market (also to cool your own appartment) and how the local heat plan could be improved. [Heatwaves and vulnerable populations - HBO Kennisbank](#)
- From the Netherlands: A Dutch municipality provides hard copies of information to elderly citizens. You can fold the document into a hand fan to cool down instantly.

Spain

- From Spain: A Spanish [analysis](#) of the use of shelters.

Switzerland

- From Geneva: The city of Geneva uses cultural institutions like museums and libraries as cooling centers, but also supermarkets and commercial centers. Every summer they also install micro-spraying locations, as well as micro-oasis spots. See our [map with cool places](#).

UK

- From Greater London Authority: We have a [climate risk map](#). We suggest London Boroughs looks at it to encourage sign-ups (for cool centres, etc.) in areas that are more at risk or where sign-ups are low.

USA

- From Phoenix: We just published an [article](#) (open access) in which we measured the impact of a cooling shelter on body core temperature to allow to get a better understanding how long people should stay in a cooling shelter in the Phoenix area.
- On use of cooling centres by heat vulnerable people: [Studies and municipal reports](#) show that cooling centers in San Francisco are underused mainly due to accessibility barriers, including limited public transit, inconvenient locations for low-income communities, and a lack of supportive amenities. Evidence further indicates that vulnerable groups, especially people experiencing homelessness, are discouraged by restrictive policies (e.g. bans on pets or food) and insufficient outreach, which together contribute to persistently low utilization.

On the use of underground shelters/parkings:

- From China: I do have experience as a user - my hometown Chongqing, known as the furnace city, has many World War II bunkers where people take shelter in the summer. Some quick google-AI generated intro: *Chongqing uses its extensive network of old, World War II air-raid shelters as cool underground havens during extreme heatwaves, converting them into popular spots with hot pot restaurants, teahouses, and shops that offer significant temperature drops, providing relief from the city's "furnace" summers. These converted shelters are a unique cultural feature, offering respite with natural coolness, Wi-Fi, and modern amenities, becoming a key part of the city's tourism and daily life.*
From my experience these shelter locations are often packed with people, playing board games and socializing, because the air-raid shelters are incredibly cool (temperature).
- From Europe: In Germany and Switzerland there are examples of bunkers or nuclear shelters being used as cooling centers for data storage. I think Berlin also had some World War II infrastructure that doubled as cooling centers. It might have been ad hoc and opportunistic, as opposed to a policy decision.