



Where glamping goes rustic

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When Wil Hoogeboom entered the hayloft, she was instantly captivated. The bundles of straw were beautifully lit by the sunlight filtering through the cracks in the wooden roof. Soon, the loft became a popular guest room, and became the start of a unique ‘sleeping in straw’ experience.

“Ever since we began, it hasn’t been quiet,” says Hoogeboom, owner of the Hayema Heerd in Groningen province. In 2010 they started offering an overnight stay in the hayloft with one king-size bed with a mattress made from straw. Now the Hayema Heerd offers multiple straw beds in luxury igloos – single-room domes made from straw packs – and in an indoor ‘straw castle’.

“We combine the rustic, pure sensation of sleeping in straw, with a luxurious experience: we use beautiful bedlinen and the rooms have cosy decorations,” says

Hoogeboom. “The straw castle is made from over 500 straw packs and includes battlements walls, medieval-style furniture and even a harness.”

Aside from being a unique bed and breakfast, the Hayema Heerd is also an original location for events and business meetings. “Our concept attracts all kinds of people, from groups of friends and work colleagues to wedding parties, young love birds and elderly couples,” she says.

Constantly finding new ways to expand, Hoogeboom is planning to introduce ‘huifkarlappen’ this month; sleeping in a traditional, covered wagon, either at the Hayema Heerd or on location. Moreover, Hoogeboom and her team are currently creating an ‘indoor beach’. She explains: “We are covering the floor of the old cowshed in sand. We’ll build a stage from straw packs and dress the room up with lights, parasols and sun chairs.”

A room in the straw castle and the igloos can be booked individually. The hayloft is available for groups from six people. An overnight stay can also be combined with various activities (see box).

www.hayemaheerd.com

TEAMBUILDING WITH A FLOCK OF SHEEP

The Hayema Heerd offers several activities and workshops, such as a teambuilding herding challenge where participants need to direct a flock of sheep around a track.

They can also arrange a farming crash course at one of the nearby dairy or agricultural farms; igloo building with straw packs; a 30-kilometre ‘proud to be in Grunn’n’ cycle route around independent produce shops, and an outdoor cooking workshop on open wood fires using Dutch ovens.