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# Why Amsterdam's Canal Houses Have Endured for 300 Years

A different kind of wealth distribution in 17th-century Amsterdam paved the way for its quintessential home design.

By [Feargus O'Sullivan](#)

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they were always sites of a leisured, easy life. Look closely at the appearance and layout of these skinny, extremely photogenic buildings, laid out across the city's canal belt during the Dutch Republic's 17th century peak, and there are telltale signs that they were built not solely for living: Cranes projecting from their gables; deep, murky plots; and internal staircases almost as steep as ladders. Indeed, these houses may still be impressive, but when completed, their uses were a little different from what we might associate with a "house" today.