



Dutch Diaspora Project mediakit

diaspora

noun

di·as·po·ra

- I people settled far from their ancestral homelands
- II the place where these people live
- III the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland

The Dutch Diaspora Project explores the impact of Dutch settlers on the world and connects their history to the present.

For centuries, the Dutch have traveled far and wide and settled all corners of the globe. Their influence is everywhere: in the language, music, cuisine, economy and politics of both local communities and nation states. In family names and traditions, in personal beliefs and philosophies. In life and in death.

Project mission

Traces of the Dutch diaspora are abundant, but not always evident. Many stories are left untold, or need to be retold and deepened with fresh insights.

The Dutch Diaspora Project sets out to uncover the history of Dutch settlers and their descendants, thereby tracing its influence on the modern-day world. Through extensive research in both the Netherlands and the Dutch diaspora, the project combines official documents, diaries, photos, and illustrations from historical archives with interviews, audio fragments, photos and videos featuring the present-day descendants of Dutch settlers.

Consequently, the past is connected to the present and even the future – how do the actions of Dutch settlers of generations past inform the identity and destiny of their descendants, for generations to come?

Project timeline

The Dutch Diaspora Project is an ambitious multiyear initiative and divided into several phases, spanning four centuries and continents. The first phase delves into one of the most controversial and consequential Dutch diasporas: the communities of Dutch slavers and slaves in Africa. We then move on to the Dutch diaspora of colonizers and the colonized in Asia. The third phase follows in the footsteps of twentieth-century fortune-seekers and their descendants in the Americas.

2022

Africa

2023

Asia

2024

The Americas

Photographed for the Dutch Diaspora Project: St George's Castle in Elmina, Ghana. Some four million slaves from the interior of Africa were imprisoned here and forced onto ships to the New World. The Dutch controlled the building, a crucial hub for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, for over three centuries.



The Dutch diaspora of slavers and slaves

In recent years, the involvement of the Dutch in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and its impact on contemporary Dutch society and culture, has been a topic of heated debate in Dutch politics and everyday life. Consequently, many Dutch people know their country was involved in one of the darkest chapters in human history. Yet the extent of the Dutch role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the ways it has shaped life at its points of origin in Africa are largely unknown. The first phase of the Dutch Diaspora Project aims to present a more complete picture and to put a human, contemporary face on what for many people is still an abstract concept or a topic confined to history books.

Photographed for the Dutch Diaspora Project: the slave cells in St George's Castle in Elmina, Ghana.



To this end, the Dutch Diaspora Project has traveled to Ghana's Gold Coast, the focal point of the Dutch slave trade from the 17th to the 19th century. From a series of forts strung along the coast, prime among them Elmina, the Dutch bought and sold millions of slaves, many of whom died before reaching their final destinations in the New World. This part of the trans-Atlantic slave trade has been well documented but, surprisingly, the impact of the Dutch on the African communities they settled in has gone largely unnoticed. Crucially, hundreds of Dutch settlers had children with African women, giving birth to a complex Dutch diaspora with fascinating family histories and profound consequences for African and Dutch culture and identity.

Photographed for the Dutch Diaspora Project:
descendants of Cornelius Ludwich Bartels,
governor of Dutch slave port Elmina from 1798 to
1804. Bartels had children with two local women.



Our team members have traveled to the Gold Coast to interview, photograph and record descendants of the Dutch settlers for posterity. Their stories and those of their forefathers have been meticulously documented and will be presented in a wide range of productions throughout 2022:

- * articles, photos and audio interviews on the dedicated website dutchdiaspora.nl**
- * online fact files for educational purposes**
- * feature articles in Holland's leading travel magazines Columbus Travel and In Eigen Land, with a combined readership of 40,000 per issue**
- * interactive exhibit(s) in museums and cultural spaces in the Netherlands**

Photographed for the Dutch Diaspora Project: Nii Marmah and his aunt Aku Vanderpuije in Accra, Ghana. Both are descendants of Jacobus van der Puije, who was in charge of the Dutch Gold Coast from 1776 till 1781.



Explore the Dutch Diaspora with us.

The Dutch Diaspora Project is an educational non-profit initiative by Leisure Lab, a think tank and media lab promoting sustainable tourism. If you would like to contribute to the project, please contact us. We'd be happy to hear from you and discuss ways to collaborate.

Leisure Lab founders

Tim Bilman, Tom Aussems & Mark Mackintosh
hello@leisurelab.eu | www.leisurelab.eu

