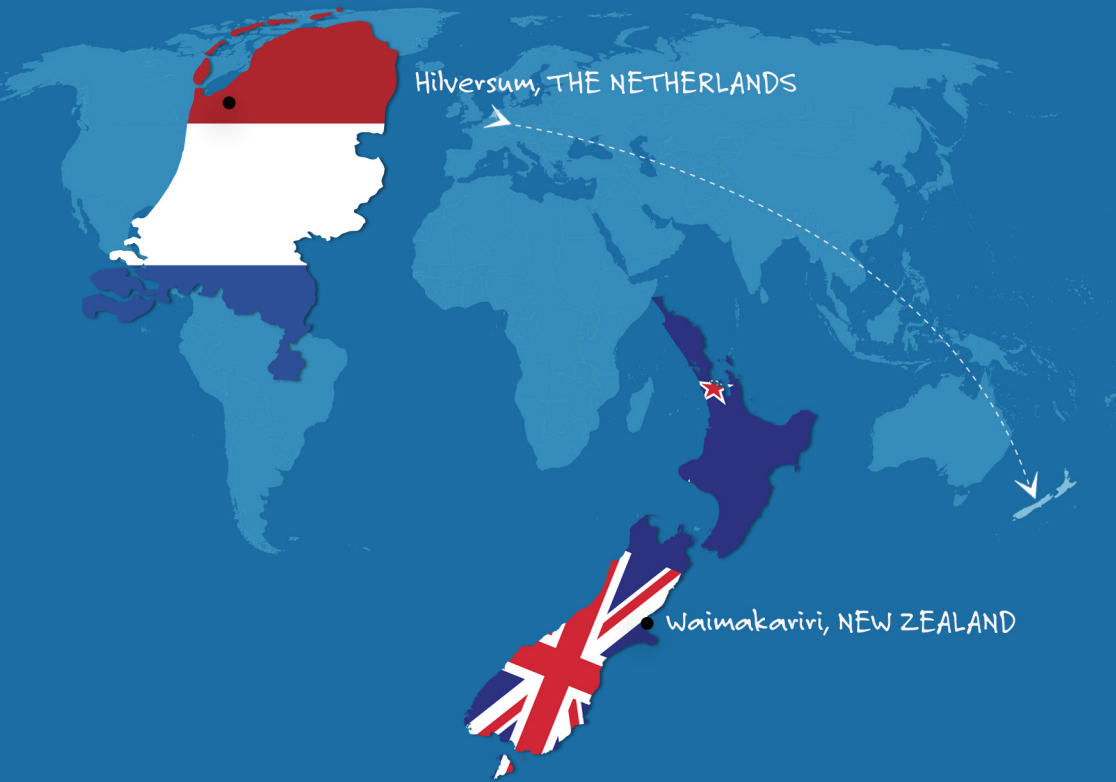


# PACKING for a new life



## **Migrant Suitcase** **Nanda Rammers**

Nederland – The Netherlands  
to New Zealand, year 2001

## The Story

My suitcase story: I grew up in the Netherlands in a family with three children. While growing up my father told stories about New Zealand and how much he wanted to live here. It was an ongoing theme in our family. Although my Dad really wanted to leave his home country after the war, eventually my Mum decided against it. She was an only child, leaving her parents behind and not being able to communicate and see them was too much for her. My father was heartbroken but chose to stay with my mother. What my mother couldn't foresee at the time was that this decision became an issue between them for the rest of their married life until my father died in 2015. Influenced by our father's stories both my sister and I eventually left the Netherlands. My sister and her husband arrived in 2000. I left in 2001 together with my husband and daughter, at that time five years old. All our belongings stayed behind in storage until we found work and a new home over here.

I will never forget the first time I saw New Zealand. It was from the plane flying over the ocean towards the West Coast of the South Island. Snow and ice covered mountains rose up from the sea, what a beautiful sight. We finally drove over the Weka Pass Road to North Canterbury to our holiday home at midnight, and stopped at the Frog Rock, the highest



point on the pass. This was the first time we saw the stars and the Milky Way, a fairytale like view. We had never seen anything like it, as in the Netherlands there is too much light pollution to see so many bright stars in the night sky.

Nowadays we have all the means of communication like computers and phones, it is not at all like in the fifties when people couldn't communicate with their families. However leaving your family, your home and home country behind to settle at the other side of the world is a huge decision, incredibly difficult and challenging. You can't foresee what is coming once you're in the midst of it. In order to start a new life it is essential to be a strong character, have the right attitude, drive and persistence to succeed, have a sense of adventure, have an incredible work ethic and courage. A good positive relationship with your spouse and children is also a must. You have to be on the same page and committed to each other for obvious reasons.

Many things happened in the weeks, months and years after our arrival. It was challenging to say the least to find jobs in the first place. Immigration was suddenly not working along with us with rules and regulations changing while we were applying for a residence visa. When we finally got jobs, many months after our arrival, we ended up applying for a



The flag: The colors used in the flag of the Netherlands are based on the coat of arms of Prince William of Orange, who was a leading fighter in the freedom for the Dutch. The main difference is that the red band was originally orange in color.

Netherlands

Europe

Russia

Africa

work permit instead of a residence visa and it took six years before we finally received our official Residence status. I was the one who became responsible for getting us the visa, working four days a week, studying full time and raising a little family. It was an incredibly stressful and difficult time because we never knew whether we could stay, as Immigration notified us several times to leave the country.

I studied for years and gained several certificates relating to my job at that time, three business papers, the Interior Decor Certificate and Interior Design Diploma. Immigration officials noticed how hard I worked



and finally started to believe in our story. Eventually the government implemented the Skilled Migrant category and this provided us with the opportunity to apply for Residence. Once the visa was granted, I immediately resigned from my job and started my own business in Interior Design.

You can say we are successful immigrants and made our dream come true. We are happy here and feel we do belong but we also still feel at home in Europe.

Immigrating has had big implications on our personal lives as a married couple.

I have a successful business, which was challenging and took years to establish but by believing in my dream, it became successful. I work in education as a Program Leader and a Tutor in Interior Design. My husband has a good job and our daughter became Dux at Rangiora High School and studied at Massey University. She is very successful in her career as a designer herself. Character building has definitely been part of our immigration story. It has made us strong and helped us learn and grow immensely as human beings. If you don't have the right attitude you end up going back home, this was not an option for us though. We look



back at the journey with a positive outlook and I don't think we would have achieved the same lifestyle if we had stayed in the Netherlands.

Eventually my father passed away in 2015, he was already sick, and while I was on the plane traveling to see him, he died and I ended up arriving too late. I am sure that every immigrant will feel the same being far away from your family is something that is very hard to accept. You cannot be together with your family in times of sickness and death. After the cremation of my father, my mother asked me to take my father's ashes back to New Zealand to scatter him here, which we did at the Wharariki Beach. I chose this location because of the sheer beauty and remoteness,



there is no place like it anywhere else in the world. My father deserves to be in a place like this.

I chose the beach too because it is a spiritual place, the meaning of the Maori name Wharariki is: "Place where spirits depart from!" I eventually made my father's dream come true, in the end he did come home to New Zealand and I am sure he is happy here.



## Country and its history

The Netherlands has a developed economy with coal, gas and agriculture highly mechanised. It is the world's second-largest exporter of food and agricultural products.

The oldest human traces dating from 250,000 years ago. From 800 BC to 1000 AC Celts, Germanic tribes and Romans then Franks, Saxons and Angles inhabited the country till to be controlled by the Carolingian Empire. Around 1100 AC, farmers began draining and cultivating uninhabited swampy land. Then from 1384 to 1890 Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands kingdoms, Dutch and Batavian Republics follow each other. In the 17th century, the Dutch Empire grew to become a major seafaring and economic powers. The country has a long record of social tolerance having abolished the death penalty in 1870, allowed women's suffrage in 1917, and legalised same-sex marriage in 2001.

The Netherlands has had many well-known painters: Rembrandt, Vermeer and Van Gogh and philosophers: Erasmus. Football is the most popular sport.

***This Suitcase exhibit is prepared by Hanna Mason and Nanda Rammers***





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