

Putting Amsterdam's untold stories on the map: TUI Care Foundation launches TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam

- *New TUI Care Foundation initiative transforms Amsterdam's iconic canal tours into platforms for cultural exchange, storytelling and underrepresented local voices*
- *Almost 50 storytellers, captains and artists will receive tailored professional support, creating new opportunities in cultural tourism*
- *Project will preserve two historic boats as cultural spaces on the water and expand its cultural activities to more than 200 events per year*

Berlin, 23 July 2026. *Amsterdam's canals are amongst the city's most recognisable landmarks and a key part of its international appeal. Each year, visitors explore the city from the water, discovering its architecture, bridges and historic houses. However, the human stories behind Amsterdam's diverse identity are not always equally visible. Personal narratives, migration histories and contemporary cultural perspectives can remain outside the visitor experience, limiting opportunities for tourism to support deeper cultural understanding and stronger connections between people. This creates a gap between the Amsterdam seen by visitors and the lived histories of the communities that continue to contribute to the city's cultural diversity.*

To help bridge this gap, the TUI Care Foundation has launched TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam. The project brings cultural storytelling, performance and dialogue into one of the city's most recognisable tourism experiences: the canal cruise. By creating space for personal narratives and artistic expression on the water, the initiative encourages visitors to see Amsterdam from new perspectives and engage more deeply with its cultural diversity.

At the heart of the project are small-scale boat tours led by trained storytellers with roots in countries such as Colombia, Iran, Ukraine, Syria, Ethiopia, Yemen and beyond. Through their stories, visitors gain an insight into themes including migration, identity, belonging and cultural connection in a global metropolis like Amsterdam. The intimate setting of the boat creates room for conversation and reflection, turning a familiar tourism activity into a more personal and meaningful cultural experience.

In total, TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam will support 48 storytellers, captains and artists through tailored professional development. Storytellers receive training, mentoring and practical experience on the boats, while captains and artists benefit from targeted opportunities such as certification, mentoring and performance formats. This strengthens their professional skills and increases their visibility within Amsterdam's cultural tourism sector.

The first storyteller training has already been completed. Eleven storytellers successfully graduated from the programme, which focused on narrative skills, confidence building and audience engagement. Seven of them are now continuing their journey as permanent storytellers on board the project's boats, bringing their stories directly to

local and international visitors. At the start of the next boat touring season in 2027, a new group of storytellers will be trained.

Over the two-year project period, TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam will also strengthen operations, marketing and tourism partnerships. This will support the development of a new tour option and help Rederij Lampedusa, the operator of the tours, broaden its cultural offer, with more frequent tours and a wider variety of activities during the operating season. By bringing underrepresented voices into the heart of Amsterdam's visitor experience, TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam shows how tourism can create stronger connections between people, places and cultures. The project supports a more inclusive way of experiencing the city, whilst creating professional opportunities for local storytellers, artists and captains.

TUI Colourful Cultures Amsterdam is part of the global TUI Colourful Cultures Programme, which protects cultural heritage and empowers creatives in tourism destinations around the world such as Gambia, Mexico, Egypt, Jamaica and Croatia.

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About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

About Rederij Lampedusa

Rederij Lampedusa is a social enterprise based in Amsterdam that operates two boats on the city's canals that once carried people seeking safety across the Mediterranean Sea. Today, these vessels are used for storytelling, sailing, and cultural events, creating meaningful connections between residents, visitors, and people with migration backgrounds. Rederij Lampedusa works with a diverse team of captains and storytellers from countries including Syria, Somalia, Ethiopia, Colombia, Iran, Yemen, Ukraine and beyond. Trained in sailing and storytelling, they share personal narratives alongside Amsterdam's lesser-known migration history. Through this approach, Rederij Lampedusa reframes narratives around migration and replaces abstract debates with lived experiences and human connection.

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