

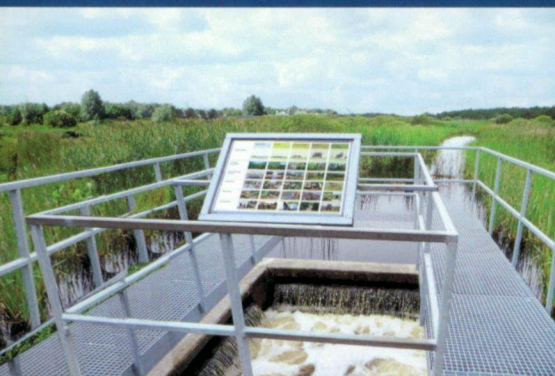
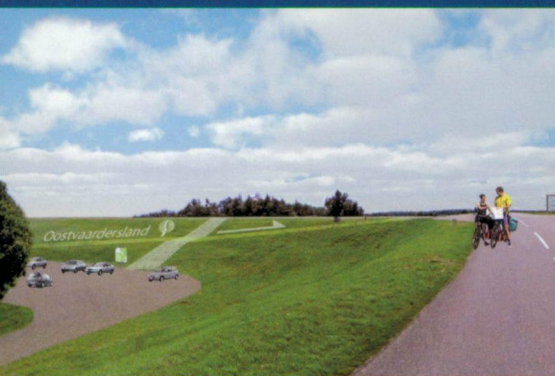


staatsbosbeheer

New Design

Nature Activity Centre Oostvaardersland





Gateway to 'Oostvaardersland'

The Nature Activity Centre 'Oostvaardersland' will be the gateway to a spectacular 15,000 hectare nature and recreation area in Flevoland: 'Oostvaardersland'. Here, Oostvaardersplassen, adjacent areas and Horsterwold are connected by the development of OostvaardersWold. The new visitor centre will be at the very heart of this incomparable wilderness. Information and education are key, as are the collection and exchange of knowledge. Everybody is welcome, from day-trippers to naturalists, scientists to schoolchildren.

In 2009, Staatsbosbeheer (The Dutch State agency for nature management) organised a competition for the design of the planned Nature Activity Centre 'Oostvaardersland'. Design teams including architects and landscape architects from both the Netherlands and abroad set to work. The creativity and quality of the designs were tremendous. The design of the Olaf Gipser team was selected as the winning design in April 2010. The connection to the Oostvaardersplassen and the larger 'Oostvaardersland' is manifest according to the jury. It can be seen in the design; in its functionality, sustainability and positioning in the landscape. The layout of the outdoor area and the use of form, materials, texture, colour and light make the nature activity centre stand out.

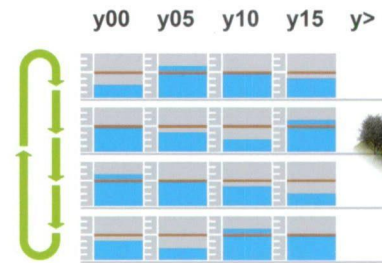
Primal force of nature

The primal force of nature creates new wilderness on the old sea-floor: that is the core message in the design of the Nature Activity Centre 'Oostvaardersland'. It embodies the genesis of the Oostvaardersplassen. In an entirely artificial landscape on the former Zuider Zee soil an unlikely rich nature area has been created in just a few decades, where natural processes are given plenty of space. The exhibitions, but also the architecture, the layout, the routing, the view, the outdoor area and the landscape, all tell the story of its genesis.

Inside and outside

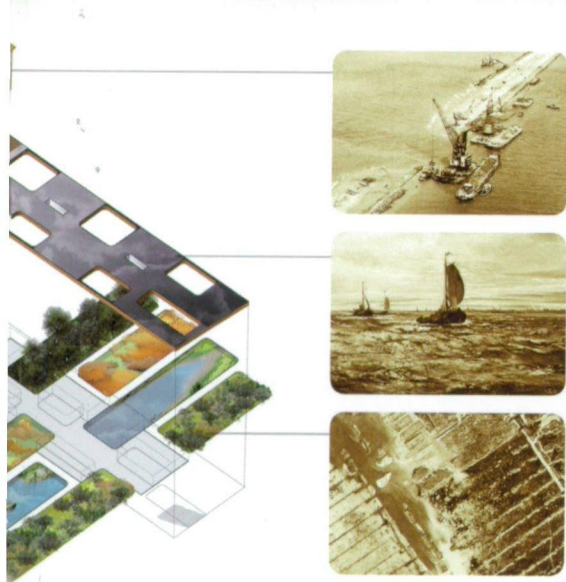
At the heart of the area is the striking building 'Oostvaarderspoort' (Oostvaarders Gate). The most prominent feature is the watch-tower, a tall construction of galvanized steel. This will be seen from afar: from Lelystad, from the A6 motorway and from the train on line Almere - Lelystad. The water roof of the building, which is connected to the Knardijk, is also remarkable. Through the roof - the water level - the visitor descends to the old seabed.

The exterior of the building tells the story of the drained sea, whilst inside the primal force of nature is depicted. Through the glass facades and mirror planes, the world outside enters the building. Opportunities for outdoor activities, excursions and accommodation connect the building with its environment. Short bush walks have been plotted around the building. There is also a pioneer garden outside, with finds from the seabed that serve as seating and play elements. Welly walks, tilt-carts and sailing trips depart from a central point to explore the area. From here, play landscapes centred on the themes of water, clay, willows and forest can also be reached. In addition, there will be a campsite and a system of nature trails for cyclists, walkers and riders, as well as routes for canoeists.



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Landscape Showcases

The surroundings of the building are designed as a 'showcase' for the Oostvaardersplassen. The four elementary stages through which wetlands naturally turn into land (water, reeds, scrub and forest) are shaped by strips, which go on into the building as four landscape showcases. The strips refer to the parcelling out of polders and simultaneously highlight the dynamics of nature. On the outside, the strict separation fades and the stages through which wetlands naturally turn into land come together in the new wilderness.

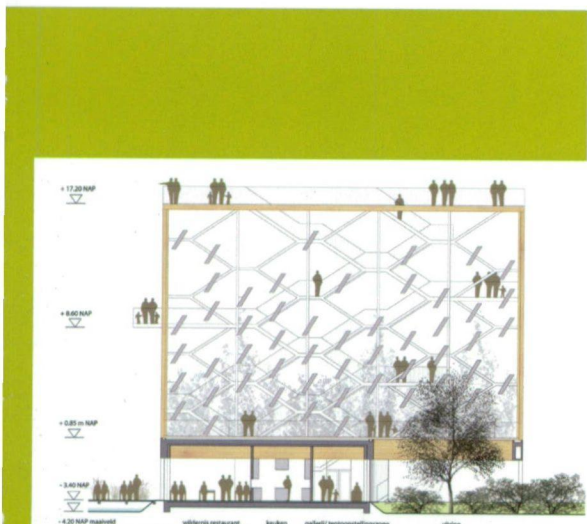
The spectacle is supplied by nature herself. She goes her own way. Straight ditches and embankments will remain visible in the new wilderness. They show the influence of man and emphasize how nature slowly reclaims its rights.

Muur naar de natuur

The Staatsbosbeheer visitor centres are developed according to the concept of 'Muur naar de natuur'. The landscape of the Knardijk and the pole screen of the preamble route form the 'wall' at the entrance. In the building itself the concept is translated on three levels.

The first level is the water roof. The vast water surface on NAP-level, linked to the dyke slope, makes the history of the site understandable: the Zuider Zee and its draining. Through the water surface the visitor descends to the new world of the reclaimed seabed.

The second level is the map. Separate areas and routes are established for five groups (including schoolchildren, bird-watchers and families). In addition, the four 'landscape showcases' literally pull the landscape inside. The intermediate space, which has a flexible use, forms the backbone for the exhibition (as the main circulation line through the centre). The third level is the watchtower. This represents the human transformation of the sea. Its design, for example, refers to the towering excavators used to design the polder. One can also see the tower as a vertical 'sky garden', with multiple intersecting paths (the stairs) and squares (the platforms). Finally, the tower offers a wonderful view of the bigger picture.



Sustainable Design

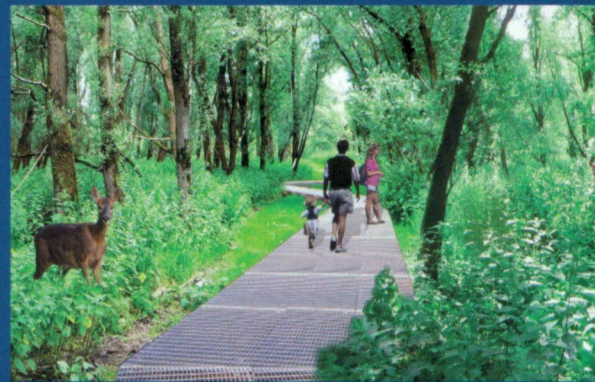
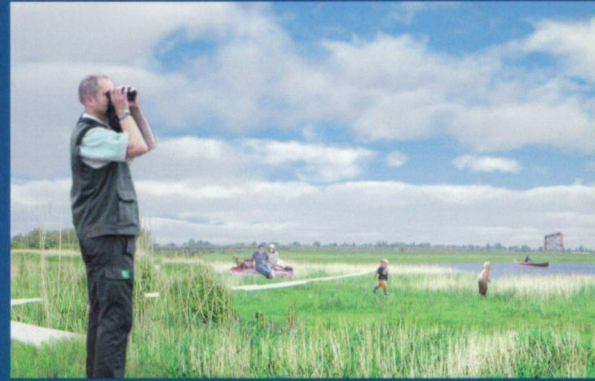
The building is designed to be energy efficient. It has a differentiated interior climate with two climate zones, actively heated lounges and a passively heated circulation area. The ventilation is either natural or mechanical with heat recovery. In addition, the building has its own energy production. A biomass boiler produces heat with wood chips from the area. The building is therefore CO₂ neutral when it comes to heating. Solar panels on the watch-tower supply electricity.

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