

# The stages of coffee's history

1) The area of origin of coffee is the Ethiopian highlands in East Africa.

2) Slave traders carried coffee across the Red Sea to Arabia, where the drink quickly became popular, in the 13th/14th centuries. It also gained its name „kawha“ there. Coffee quickly became a hit in Arabia. The main export harbour in Yemen was Mokka; from there coffee spread across the whole Islamic world.



3) Coffee reached Europe in the 17th century via Turkey. In time many coffee houses opened across European cities. During the Turkish occupation of Vienna, the tradition of coffee took hold in the Austrian capital.

4) Ethiopia and Yemen were the only coffee suppliers for a long time. However, the European colonial powers quickly discovered that their own production in the colonies would yield money. The Dutch, for example, began to plant coffee on Java.

5) A Portuguese diplomat is said to have smuggled coffee to Brazil in a bunch of flowers, at the risk of his own life, in the middle of the 19th century.

6) Thus the coffee bush spread through the colonial powers to Jamaica, the Philippines and El Salvador.

7) In the 19th century drinking coffee became normal among all the classes in Europe. The demand for coffee grew. The people in the colonies benefitted little from this, however. In Java, for example, every family had to cultivate 650 coffee trees for the Dutch although the farmers would have preferred to grow rice for their own use. A consequence of this policy was famine. At the same time 30,000 Africans were taken as slaves by the French to work in the coffee plantations in Haiti as the labour force of the native population was not sufficient.

8) Even the end of the colonial period did not change much in the situation of the coffee producing countries: because they constantly have too little income, they produce a surplus of coffee which keeps prices low. The prices only rise periodically due to low supply caused by poor harvests. In order to get the price fluctuations under control, producer and consumer countries negotiated the „coffee agreement“ in 1940. This is meant to stabilize the price through an agreed limit on the supply of coffee. However, the agreement has failed again and again. The global coffee price today is subject to significant fluctuations which affect the farmers in Southern countries particularly.

## Sources

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