

# Castle Information



Castle of Good Hope: Blurb for map—English  
Final edit: Captain Francois Morkel (6 April 2006)

Built between 1666 and 1679, the Castle is the oldest surviving building in South Africa.

From 1678 it was the centre of civilian, administrative and military life at the Cape, until the settlement grew and some functions and activities moved away from the Castle. Today the Castle is the seat of the military in the Cape, and houses the Castle Military Museum and Iziko Museums Cape Town (William Fehr Collection).

1

### **Bell Tower**

The bell tower situated on the wall between the Leerdam and Buuren bastions, was built in 1684 from 'ijselstene' (*klompjes*). The original bell – the oldest in South Africa – was cast in Amsterdam in 1697 by Claude Frémy, and weighs 670 lbs. Used to toll the hours and warn citizens of danger, the bell could be heard 10km away. It was also rung to call residents and soldiers to the Castle for important announcements.

2

### **Main Entrance**

This gateway – built in 1682 – replaced the old entrance, which faced the sea. The pediment bears the coat of arms of the United Netherlands, portraying the crowned lion rampant holding the seven arrows of unity in its paw. Carved on the architrave below are the arms of Van Hoor, Delft, Amsterdam, Middelburg, Rotterdam and Enkhuizen—all Dutch cities in which the United East India Company had chambers. Two VOC (Vereenighde Oost-Indische Compagnie) monograms flank the carvings.

The two pilasters, entablature and pediment above are built of grey-blue stone, while the entrance is made of small yellow bricks called *ijselstene*, making it a unique example of 17th century Dutch classicism at the Cape.

Sections of the moat, which previously formed part of the defence system of the Castle, were rebuilt in 1992 during restorations.

3

### **Inner Gable**

This somewhat unusual Cape-Dutch gable probably dates back to the early 17th century. This unusual bas-relief gable decoration in Cape Teak, is a replica of the surviving original. It depicts four symbols of military life, namely a flag, a regimental banner, a drum, a mortar and pyramid of cannon balls. It is crowned by the helmet of a knight, and shows some of his weapons.

4

### **Information Centre**

Detailed information about the Castle and Cape Town is obtainable here.

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### **Restaurants**

Both "De Waterblommetjie" and "De Goewerneur" Restaurants serve light meals and is also open to functions.

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### **Toilets**

Wheelchair access is provided.

7

### **B Block—The oldest section of the Castle**

The walls are made of stone from a quarry on Lion's Head. A sundial against the wall was used to tell the time during the morning.

8

### **Main Foyer, Ceremonial Offices**

The gallery of photographs of previous twentieth century commanders of the Castle is shown here. Also exhibited are courtesy gifts from other commanders from around the world.

9

### **Captain's Tower**

For nearly a century this was the highest building at the Cape. It was used as a command post for observation of Table bay and the town.

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### **Stairs to Leerdam Bastion**

This was the first bastion to be built, containing the purser's office and the kitchen.

The flags on Leerdam bastion represent different periods of occupation of the Castle. From L–R:

- The orange, white and blue flag of the United Netherlands (*De Prinzenvlag*): 1652–1654 and 1655–1695
- The Union Flag of the United Kingdom of England and Scotland: 1795–1800
- The *Statenvlag* (state flag) of the Batavian Republic: 1803–1806
- British Union Jack: 1801–1803 and 1806–1957
- Union and later Republic of South Africa: 1928–1994
- Republic of South Africa: Since 1994

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### **Inner Wall**

The courtyard of the Castle is divided by a wall, which was initially intended to protect inhabitants from attack, whether from Devil's Peak or Lion's Head. The wall is 116m long, 12m high, 3.5m wide at the base and 2m at the top. 'Kat' is a Dutch term for a military command centre.

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### **Sundial**

The sundials measured the official time for the settlement. The bell was rung hourly to announce the time. At night, or when it was overcast, an hourglass was used. The guard on duty (*rondeganger*) was responsible for turning the hourglass every hour, and ringing the bell.

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### **Iziko Museums Cape Town (Secunde's House and William Fehr Collection)**

This residence was built in 1695 to accommodate the second in command. Like all the officers' residences, the kitchen is situated in the cellar, the living and dining rooms on the floor above, and the sleeping quarters at the top.

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### **Iziko Museums Cape Town (Kat Balcony and the William Fehr Collection)**

The original balcony was built in 1695, then rebuilt in its present form by the VOC between 1786 and 1790. The bas-relief on the pediment was created by the German sculptor, Anton Anreith.

From this balcony proclamations and announcements were made to the soldiers, slaves and civilians at the Cape. All judicial sentences were read here, and official visitors welcomed to the Castle.

This balcony leads to the famous William Fehr Collection of historical paintings and period furniture, which have a special relevance to the Cape.

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### **Military Museum**

The original entrance to the Castle, the 'Waterpoort' was located in the wall between Buuren and Catzenellenbogen Bastions. But from the outset, the sea level at high or spring tides made access to the Castle impossible. Today this is the entrance to the Military Museum.

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### **Archway**

Note the wooden blocks. These were used as paving so that horses' hooves and coaches passing through would not disturb the Governor. The blocks also ensured that people would not have to walk through mud and water in winter.

The cross inside the arch is made of wood from the forest at Delville, France, in memory of South African soldiers who lost their lives at Delville Wood during the First World War.

The well was stood in the centre of the original large courtyard of the Castle, before the dividing wall was built. Apparently the five bastions of the Castle were measured from here.

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### **Iziko Museums Cape Town (Granary and William Fehr Collection)**

A single storey building with a gabled roof was built in 1695 by Governor Simon van der Stel to house grain. One of the driest places in the Castle, this room now houses an archaeological collection of relics and building materials recovered during restorations.

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### **Reddish-brown shutters**

Originally painted green, these shutters were changed to a reddish-brown after the grain store was moved to 'De Scheur' outside the Castle. This room then became an ammunition store. The colour acted as a warning that smoking was forbidden.

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### **Ammunition Store**

It is believed that this dungeon was used as an ammunition store and gunpowder magazine, but the room was too damp and it was later used as a coal store. It has been incorrectly called the 'Dark Hole' (*Donker Gat*).

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### **Stairs to Catzenellenbogen Bastion and Garrison Cells**

The VOC garrison cells were designed by Louis Thibault in 1786 and later subdivided by the British. One can still see inscriptions carved by prisoners on the doors. The cells were last used to detain prisoners from passing ships on their way to the East during the Second World War. On the left, as you leave the cells, is the jail warden's office—look for the fire-place and safety box for keys.

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### **Dungeon (Dark Hole) and Torture Chamber**

These adjacent rooms were the torture chamber and dungeon. Because old Dutch law required that a criminal confess to his crimes before sentence could be passed, prisoners hearing the sounds of torture from next door would more readily admit to their crimes. Prisoners were not allowed to be detained here for longer than 24 hours. The inverted horse-shoe on the door suggests that here one's luck had run out.

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### **Beams and Hooks**

Supplies were hoisted up by rope and swung through the doors. Tradesmen's workshops, stables and store rooms were situated on the ground floor.

23

### **Sally Port**

This exit is known as the Sally Port—indicating an opening in a fortification through which troops could 'sally' forth against their attackers, or to flee.

24

### **Hearth**

Here the blacksmith performed his daily tasks of making door-handles, nuts, hinges, bolts, ships' nails and weapons.

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### **Het Bakhuis**

During building restorations in 1982, excavation exposed foundations of buildings surrounding a pool. Very little evidence of the building was found. 'Het Bakhuis' is therefore an architect's reconstruction of the original bakery and offices built in 1706 during the era of VOC Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel. The British gradually demolished them during the 19th century and used the space as a parade ground.

Today the venue is popular for hosting functions and events and bookings can be made at [events@capetowncastle.co.za](mailto:events@capetowncastle.co.za)

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### **Dolphin Pool**

The original Dolphin Pool and fountain have been reconstructed from the remains of the clay floor and walls exposed in 1982, using descriptions and sketches made by Lady Anne Barnard during the late 1790s. In the past the dolphin was a popular maritime symbol, often used on maps and other objects.

### **Points of Interest**

- In 1969 a comprehensive restorations process was begun at the Castle; it was largely completed by 31 March 1993.
- Restored to its former glory, the Castle represents Dutch, French and English building styles.
- The ochre wash on the walls reduces glare from sunlight, and reflects less heat.
- The slate used as paving came from quarries on Signal Hill and Robben Island.
- Wood was brought from Hout Bay.
- The mortar was made by firing sea-shells in kilns to obtain lime. This was mixed with crushed shells and sand to create an extremely strong cement.
- All the beams are of Baltic pine, shipped from Europe to the Cape during the original construction between 1666 and 1679.

### **Please Note—Certain areas in the Castle are dangerous:**

- The stone surfaces can be very slippery, especially when wet.
- All the stairs are slippery and uneven.
- All bastions and cannon ports.
- The roof area at the Captain's Tower is particularly dangerous since there are no barriers.

- The Dolphin Pool
- Children must be under adult supervision at all times.
- Kindly heed all red warning signs.
- The Castle of Good Hope accepts no responsibility for injuries or damages incurred during your visit.

#### **General Information**

- Toilets are in the Buuren corner and De Kat wall.
- The Castle is open to the public from 9:00–16:00 (last entry 15:30)
- The William Fehr Collection opens at 9:30
- Entrance fees are payable.
- The Key Ceremony takes place every weekday at 10:00 and 12:00
- Firing of the Signal Cannon takes place every weekday at 10:00 and 12:00 directly after the Key Ceremony.
- Horse and Carriage Tours depart from Castle daily (excl. Sundays)
- For medical assistance, contact Information (See map No: 4)
- Lost property: Information (See map No: 4)
- To book for a guided tour: Tel (021) 787 1249; Fax (021) 787 1089
- For information on special lectures, exhibitions, functions and conferences:  
Tel (021) 787 1260; Fax (021) 787 1089
- For functions and educational tours in the William Fehr Collection:  
Tel (021) 464 1263/4