

The Castle of Good Hope

Cape Town



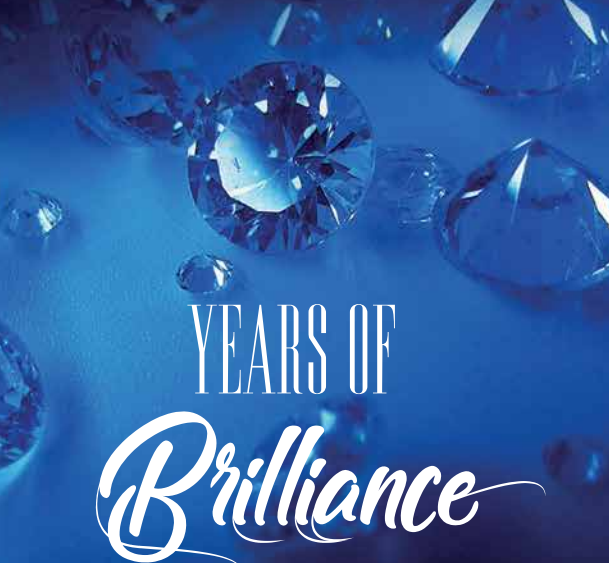
A guide to the history of The Castle of Good Hope, including interesting information, illustrations, photos and a timeline.



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The Castle of Good Hope

Over the centuries six different flags have flown over the Castle, yet in all that time not a single shot has ever been fired in anger at it or from it.



The Gateway and Bell Tower added (1682-1684) by Simon van der Stel and the visiting Commissioner van Goens. This entrance replaced the original one on the sea-facing curtain wall between Buuren and Catzenellenbogen.

there was abundant fresh water, a key requirement for a halfway station to break the long voyage to the East.

Three factors, however, allowed the Dutch to gain a strong foothold at the Cape. Firstly, the Portuguese avoided the Cape after an incident in which 64 of their men were killed by the local inhabitants. Secondly, when Portugal became virtually a province of Spain, she suffered at the hands of Spain's enemies, especially the English and the Dutch. Thirdly, an attempt to claim the Cape for England was not supported by the king. The way was therefore clear for the Dutch to increase their trade with the East, stopping frequently at the Cape.

In 1602 they had established the Dutch East India Company (VOC) which was a combination of many traders working together to share financial risk and resources. The VOC subsequently grew into a powerful international company which

Why a fort at the Cape of Good Hope?

With the expansion of world trade by the European powers in the 1500s, trade routes were vital to economic power. The main trade route to the East used to be overland, but in 1453 Constantinople was captured by the Turks which effectively closed off this trade passage. Other routes east had to be found.

The dominant European seafaring nation at that time was Portugal, so the Portuguese needed to find a way to the East by sea. After they had made many voyages down the west coast of Africa, sailing further each time, Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape in 1488, and in 1498 Vasco da Gama finally succeeded in making the voyage to the East and came back laden with spices. In 1503 Antonio de Saldanha put in at Table Bay and climbed Table Mountain to get his bearings. While doing so, he made a discovery that would change the course of southern African history:

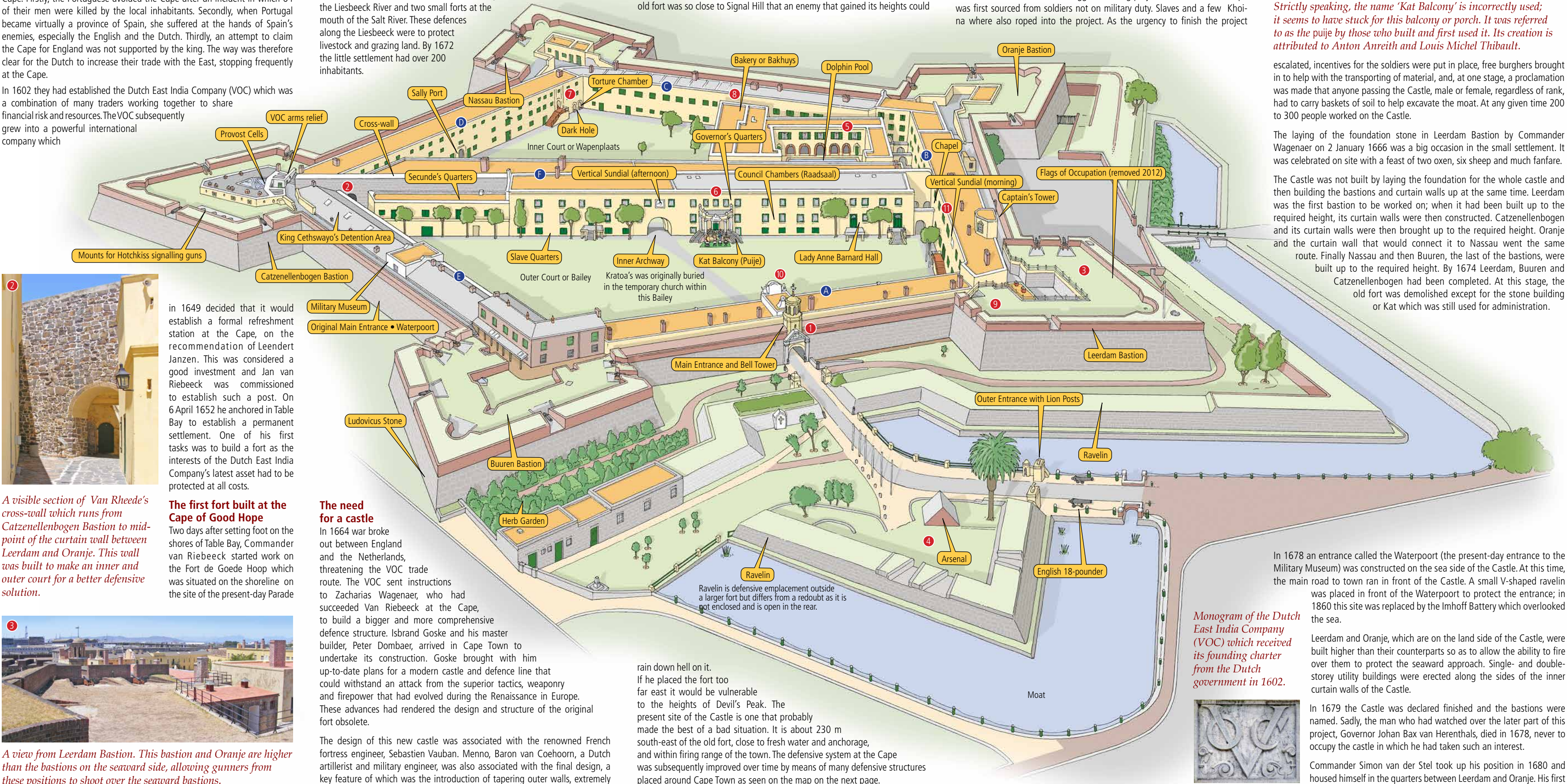


The Ravelin was added in 1697 just after the new entrance and Bell Tower were moved to this position. The idea behind the Ravelin was the concept of 'defence in depth'. The entrance road angles right which does not allow an enemy a direct shot at the entrance gate.

collapsed more then once under heavy rains. For several years it served its primary function as a provision station and, luckily, no major attack by the local Khoi-na or a foreign power threatened its existence. An accurate model of this fort can be seen today in the Military Museum in Block E.

At the same time as the fort was being built and subsequently maintained, the Company's Garden was planned to fulfil the primary goal of the endeavour – to supply passing ships with fresh produce.

Jan van Riebeeck left for Batavia in 1662, leaving behind the fort he had built and a defensive line of smaller forts along the Liesbeeck River and two small forts at the mouth of the Salt River. These defences along the Liesbeeck were to protect livestock and grazing land. By 1672 the little settlement had over 200 inhabitants.



A visible section of Van Rheede's cross-wall which runs from Catzenellenbogen Bastion to mid-point of the curtain wall between Leerdam and Oranje. This wall was built to make an inner and outer court for a better defensive situation.



A view from Leerdam Bastion. This bastion and Oranje are higher than the bastions on the seaward side, allowing gunners from these positions to shoot over the seaward bastions.

The need for a castle

In 1664 war broke out between England and the Netherlands, threatening the VOC trade route. The VOC sent instructions to Zacharias Wagenaer, who had succeeded Van Riebeeck at the Cape, to build a bigger and more comprehensive defence structure. Isbrand Goske and his master builder, Peter Dombaer, arrived in Cape Town to undertake its construction. Goske brought with him up-to-date plans for a modern castle and defence line that could withstand an attack from the superior tactics, weaponry and firepower that had evolved during the Renaissance in Europe. These advances had rendered the design and structure of the original fort obsolete.

The design of this new castle was associated with the renowned French fortress engineer, Sebastien Vauban. Menno, Baron van Coehoorn, a Dutch artillery and military engineer, was also associated with the final design, a key feature of which was the introduction of tapering outer walls, extremely

parking lot next to the Golden Acre building. His choice of design was the novel square with two-gun bastions at each corner. These bastions were the same shape as the ones seen on the Castle today.

The four bastions of this original fort were named after the ships that brought Van Riebeeck's party to the Cape: Oliphant, Rijger, Drommedaris and Walvisch. The outer walls were constructed using sods, clay, and brushwork. Timber and brick were used on interior structures. The fort was surrounded by a moat, which was fed by the Varsche River. As a defensive structure it was very poor: the outer walls

thick at the base, but thinner at the top. This revolutionary design made the cannon balls ricochet off the wall whereas a right-angle hit would weaken the wall far faster. Breaching the wall (by means of concentrated fire and explosive charges placed in the weakened area) became extremely difficult owing to the thickness of the wall and the nature of the tapering design, which did not easily collapse under its own weight. The other feature of this revolutionary design was the extensive defensive positions outside the main wall, based on the premise of defence in depth. This system allowed defenders to enfilade or fire into the flanks of attackers.

The Castle was designed in the shape of a pentagon with, at each of its corners, a bastion containing its own gunpowder magazine. Cannon positions atop these bastions would cover all fields of fire, even right up to the base of the curtain walls between bastions. Each bastion was given the name of one of the official titles of the Prince of Orange, these being Leerdam, Oranje, Buuren, Catzenellenbogen and Nassau. The average distance from bastion to bastion was 180 m; the average height of the curtain wall was 10 m.

The first of Isbrand Goske's jobs was to find a suitable site for the new castle. His first thought was to build around the old fort and demolish it once the new castle had been built. This idea was rejected as the functioning of the fort would be affected too much. His other concern was that the position of the old fort was so close to Signal Hill that an enemy that gained its heights could



This corner of the Inner Court was first developed by Simon van der Stel in about 1690 with a flower garden and exotic and indigenous trees which surrounded a small circular pool. His son, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, enlarged the pool to its present size. The pool was demolished in 1860 and restored in 1984.

cleared of bush and levelled. Hendrik Lacus did all the measuring and the taking of levels. Foundations were started with the concentration of work on Leerdam Bastion. Foundations were 5 m wide, and a depth of 3.5 m was required to reach bedrock. While the digging was taking place, the stone for the foundations was being cut out of Signal Hill in large blocks; it was then broken up and transported by cart to the Castle. Blue slate used for the walls and shells used in making mortar were obtained from Robben Island. (The mortar consisted of one part lime from shells mixed with one part clay.)

The workforce needed for the biggest building project of its time in the Cape was first sourced from soldiers not on military duty. Slaves and a few Khoi-na where also roped into the project. As the urgency to finish the project

The building of the Castle

The main structure of the Castle was started in 1665 and formally declared complete in 1679 after periods of varying building intensity, the sense of urgency or lack of it influenced by the state of alliances and treaties between nations in Europe.

Most of the materials needed for the Castle were found locally, the bulk of the raw material being stone and mortar. Materials that could not be procured at the Cape were brought in from Europe. These were more specialised materials like the klompjes (little yellowish or red bricks used as ballast in VOC ships) that can be seen at the main entrance gate. Wood was obtained locally at Hout Bay and from overseas.



Strictly speaking, the name 'Kat Balcony' is incorrectly used; it seems to have stuck for this balcony or porch. It was referred to as the puije by those who built and first used it. Its creation is attributed to Anton Anreith and Louis Michel Thibault.

escalated, incentives for the soldiers were put in place, free burghers brought in to help with the transporting of material, and, at one stage, a proclamation was made that anyone passing the Castle, male or female, regardless of rank, had to carry baskets of soil to help excavate the moat. At any given time 200 to 300 people worked on the Castle.

The laying of the foundation stone in Leerdam Bastion by Commander Wagenaer on 2 January 1666 was a big occasion in the small settlement. It was celebrated on site with a feast of two oxen, six sheep and much fanfare.

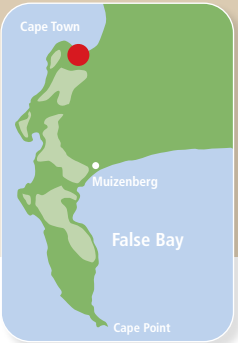
The Castle was not built by laying the foundation for the whole castle and then building the bastions and curtain walls up at the same time. Leerdam was the first bastion to be worked on; when it had been built up to the required height, its curtain walls were then constructed. Catzenellenbogen and its curtain walls were then brought up to the required height. Oranje and the curtain wall that would connect it to Nassau went the same route. Finally Nassau and then Buuren, the last of the bastions, were built up to the required height. By 1674 Leerdam, Buuren and Catzenellenbogen had been completed. At this stage, the old fort was demolished except for the stone building or Kat which was still used for administration.

In 1678 an entrance called the Waterport (the present-day entrance to the Military Museum) was constructed on the sea side of the Castle. At this time, the main road to town ran in front of the Castle. A small V-shaped ravelin was placed in front of the Waterport to protect the entrance; in 1860 this site was replaced by the Imhoff Battery which overlooked the sea.

Leerdam and Oranje, which are on the land side of the Castle, were built higher than their counterparts so as to allow the ability to fire over them to protect the seaward approach. Single- and double-storey utility buildings were erected along the sides of the inner curtain walls of the Castle.

In 1679 the Castle was declared finished and the bastions were named. Sadly, the man who had watched over the later part of this project, Governor Johan Bax van Herenthals, died in 1678, never to occupy the castle in which he had taken such an interest.

Commander Simon van der Stel took up his position in 1680 and housed himself in the quarters between Leerdam and Oranje. His first



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