

# Self-Guided Walking Tour

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Castillo de San Marcos National  
Monument, St. Augustine, Florida



This brochure will assist you in a short walking tour of the Castillo's interior. If you require any assistance please contact a Park Ranger or a member of our volunteer staff. Further in-depth information is also available through other Park programs as well as on our website at [www.nps.gov/casa](http://www.nps.gov/casa)

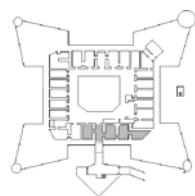
**For your safety and for the protection of the Fort and its historical artifacts:  
Please do not climb, sit, or stand on the fragile shell stone walls or on the cannons and cannon carriages**

## Welcome

You have entered one of the most extraordinary places in the United States incorporating over 335 years of America's history and culture. Construction of the Castillo de San Marcos started in 1672 making it one of the oldest standing structures in North America. This fortress has served six different flags, survived hurricanes, and withstood bombardments and sieges. The structure has undergone many changes over the years but appears today much as it would have looked at its final completion in 1756.

The Castillo (castle) was initially built by the Spanish to protect their empire in America. Spanish engineer Ignacio Daza incorporated a type of fortress construction called the "bastion" system. The star-like outline of the Castillo is formed by diamond-shaped projections or *bastions* at each corner of the fort, this design eliminates blind spots for the guards in the *garritas* or sentry boxes at each bastion point and increases the fort's firepower by allowing multiple cannons to fire on the same target, creating a crossfire effect.

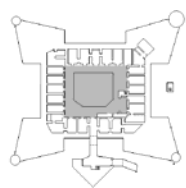
## The Sally Port



The start of your tour begins in the entrance to the fortress called the Sally Port. Its name comes from a French word "*sallie*" to go forth. This was the only way in or out of the Castillo. Here you can see the second drawbridge and the heavy sliding door called a *portcullis*. Between these two wooden barriers is the one place within the fort to actually see the thickness of the outer walls. Between 14 and 19 feet thick at the base they taper to 9 feet wide at the top. Note the solid stone blocks of *coquina* that make up these walls and how they were set together. There are over 400,000 blocks of *coquina* in the Castillo, all of it cut and set by hand.

As you enter the interior there are several rooms leading off of the sally port. To your right are the Spanish guardrooms and a locked room that served as the town jail. During the Spanish period no one lived permanently in the fort, the soldiers walked to work from their homes in town. These rooms housed the 20 to 30 enlisted soldiers who were detailed to be on guard duty overnight. The rooms reflect the simple communal lifestyle of the soldiers. They cooked in the fireplaces while using candles for light. With any free time, they would play cards, dominoes, mend clothes, or rest. As you reenter the sally port, the room to your left once was part of the officers quarters. This now houses our book store. *Continue through the sally port to the interior of the fort.*

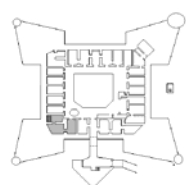
## The Courtyard



You are now standing in the courtyard. Almost all the other rooms are entered from this area. (The Public restrooms are to your right under the arch) This square central courtyard of the fort is ringed by a series of large rooms for storing provisions and ammunition. These vaulted (rounded ceiling) rooms or *casemates* are part of the main walls of the fort and support the wide gundeck or *terreplein* which forms the roof of the Castillo.

The courtyard was originally all sand and was called "the place of arms." Here the soldiers would assemble and drill several times a week. The courtyard also served another purpose, as a camping area. It was here that the inhabitants of St. Augustine would live when the town was attacked or under siege. In this sense the Castillo was a true "castle," it was initially built to house and protect the entire community in time of war. In 1702, for example, the town was attacked by the English and about 1,500 townspeople and soldiers were packed inside the Castillo for 51 days! Although at that time the rooms were smaller giving more room in the courtyard, you can imagine the crowding. *The best way to tour around the courtyard is clockwise so turn left and move to the second doorway*

## Exhibit Rooms



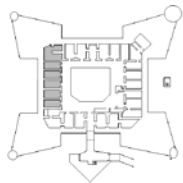
These rooms hold several exhibits which will introduce you to the fort's history, design, and construction. The flags you see hanging here represent the different nations that the Castillo has served. These include Hapsburg and Bourbon Spain, Great Britain, the Confederacy, and the United States. Though the fort changed hands several times it was never defeated in battle. It has always been transferred by political agreement such as a peace treaty. The reason for the fort's endurance is primarily due to its design and construction. An aerial photograph of the fort in this first (flag) room shows you its star-like outline and the projecting bastions at each corner as well as the multi- angled outer works that contributed to its defense.

In the next room and to your right you will see a piece of the stone from which the fort is constructed. This is a rather rare form of limestone called *Coquina*, a Spanish word meaning "tiny shell," of which the stone primarily consists. This limestone forms the base of the barrier islands on the Northeast Florida coast and is the only stone available in this area. Because of its conglomerate mixture *Coquina* contains millions of microscopic air pockets making it compressible. This provided an unexpected feature to the fort. A cannon ball fired at more solid material, such as granite or brick would shatter the wall into flying shards. Cannon balls fired at the walls of the Castillo burrowed their way into the rock and stuck there, much like a bb would if fired into Styrofoam. So the thick *Coquina* walls absorbed or deflected projectiles rather than yielding to them, providing a surprisingly long-lived fortress. Other exhibits here display artifacts from the Castillo's construction.

In the third room you will notice some unusual features. First is the raised platform, this is believed to be the original mortar mixing pit during the construction of the Castillo which was filled in once the fort was completed. Looking up at the window (only the walls facing the city have windows) you will see a ledge. This ledge marks the original height of the walls; 22 feet at their initial completion in 1695. The north wall of the room also contains an unusual sealed doorway. *Re-enter the courtyard and turn left.*

## Casemates

### West Wall

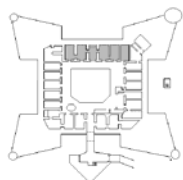


The Castillo was built as a military warehouse; these western casemates were used for food storage during the Spanish period, and would have looked much like the locked supply room immediately to your left. Other casemates were filled with military supplies including gunpowder, hardware and as many as 20,000 cannonballs.

All of the rounded casemates were constructed between 1738 and 1756, a time of almost constant warfare between Spain and England in the “new world.” The walls were raised to 35 feet during this remodeling and these curved ceilings constructed. Vaulted casemates disperse the weight of the structure throughout the supporting walls and foundation and so they are able to hold much more weight than a simple squared roof. This made these rooms “bomb proof” and allowed the Spanish to place more and larger cannon on the gun deck above *Proceed to the first room on the North wall.*

## Changing Nations

### North Wall



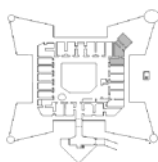
Here we recreate how one of the North wall casemates looked when Florida was under British control from 1763 to 1784. Divided into East and West, Florida became the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> colonies. These remained loyal to Great Britain during the American Revolution. During that time St. Augustine was the headquarters of the British Southern military command and housed thousands of English soldiers; as many as 500 of them in the Castillo. This exhibit demonstrates how the British redesigned eight of the Castillo’s rooms by adding a second floor in order to quarter these troops.

The next room to your right holds exhibits for Fort Mose, part of the outer defenses of St. Augustine, and the first free black settlement in the United States. The central room on this curtain wall is the Chapel of St. Mark and you can still see the altar niche and the holy water font on each wall.

The remaining rooms have served multiple purposes over the course of history including ration distribution and school rooms for Native American prisoners of war, who were held in the fort during the 1870s & 1880s. Exhibits in these rooms tell of their struggle to survive here.

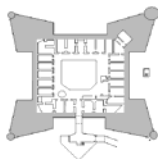
The last casemate was used as a supply room. The solid slab of stone at the entrance of the last room on this wall was placed there during the American period at the request of the Quartermaster to serve as a counter so that soldiers could not enter the room beyond that point. *Proceed into the first casemate on the East wall.*

## The Powder Magazine



This room was used as the Spanish Artillery quarters during the Second Spanish period, 1784-1821. As you go back further the next space you enter is the ordinance supply room where tools and materials for serving the cannon in the fort were kept and issued. The next long narrow room once held a wooden staircase which opened to the gun deck to carry supplies to the cannon crews. The low doorway you see here is the entrance to the original gun powder magazine. It became too humid for storing gunpowder and was eventually abandoned. It was used as a trash pit during the 51 days of the 1702 siege. This little room and narrow hallway were then sealed, not to be discovered again until 1832 when a cannon fell through the gun deck. Many stories circulate about this room being a dungeon, since bones were found inside it, but there is no documentation to prove this theory. *Re-enter the courtyard and turn left, proceed up the staircase to the gun deck.*

## The Gun Deck

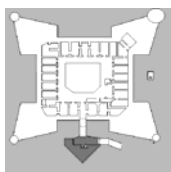


This is the “business” area of the Castillo. By 1740 this gundeck mounted 74 cannon of varying size. The largest of these guns had a range of over three and a half miles. With the clear view from these high walls it is easy to see how the Castillo could defend the town from attack by either land or sea.

The gun deck consists of four bastions at the corners and four connecting walls called *curtains*. Cannons were mounted in the “cut outs” in the *parapet* walls called *embrasures*. These walls protected the cannon and their crews from incoming fire. The east wall, facing the ocean, originally had a parapet wall like the other curtains. However, anticipating most of the attacks would come from this seaward side, the Spanish, seeing that the embrasures limited the number of cannons that could defend the wall, lowered the wall so as many cannons as possible could be mounted here. From the east wall you can look down into the water battery. Between 1842-1844 the moat was filled in and converted into a United States coastal defense battery. The small oven like structure known as a hot shot furnace was used to heat cannon balls which were fired at the wooden ships of that time. The watchtower in the northeast bastion once held a bell which was rung to warn the town of attack or danger.

From the west wall you can see original city gates, and a reconstruction of the Cubo line, which is a portion of the pine log wall, fronted by a ditch and topped with yucca plants, that once enclosed the town. Yucca is also known as *Spanish bayonet* because it was used in this way. *Exit the fort, pass over the moat walkway and enter the structure immediately in front of you.*

## Outworks of Castillo



The fort walls of the Castillo were not meant to stand alone, there was a complex of outer defensive works that protected the fort and the town of St. Augustine. A 40 foot wide moat surrounded the Castillo, this moat was dry and used by the Spanish as a corral for livestock in times of attack. The moat and walls were protected from cannon fire by the sloping hill outside the fort called the *glacis*. The entranceway and sally port were defended by a smaller fort-like structure called a *ravelin*. This prevented attackers from making a quick rush and capturing the entrance or from firing a cannon directly through the sally port. An outer defensive wall was built into the *glacis*; called the *covered way*, it shielded defenders from the enemy and allowed men and supplies to be moved without being seen. Combined with the Castillo’s cannon and musket fire these works provided a formidable “defense in depth,” a series of obstacles that would make direct assault on the Castillo too costly to attempt.

## IN-DEPTH DEFENSE

