

Self-Guided Walking Tour

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Castillo de San Marcos
National Monument
St. Augustine, Florida



The Castillo de San Marcos was constructed almost 350 years ago. It was built for warfare, not visitors. Be mindful that it is not built to today's safety standards. Surfaces are uneven, walls may crumble, and there are no safety rails. Use extreme caution when moving about in the rooms and especially on the gundeck. To ensure your safety and the preservation of the monument, please remember these rules.



Please do not sit or stand on walls or cannons. It is a long way down if you fall! If you need to sit, please use the benches provided.



No food or drink, except water. Drink lots of water during the summer months. Our climate is very hot and humid.



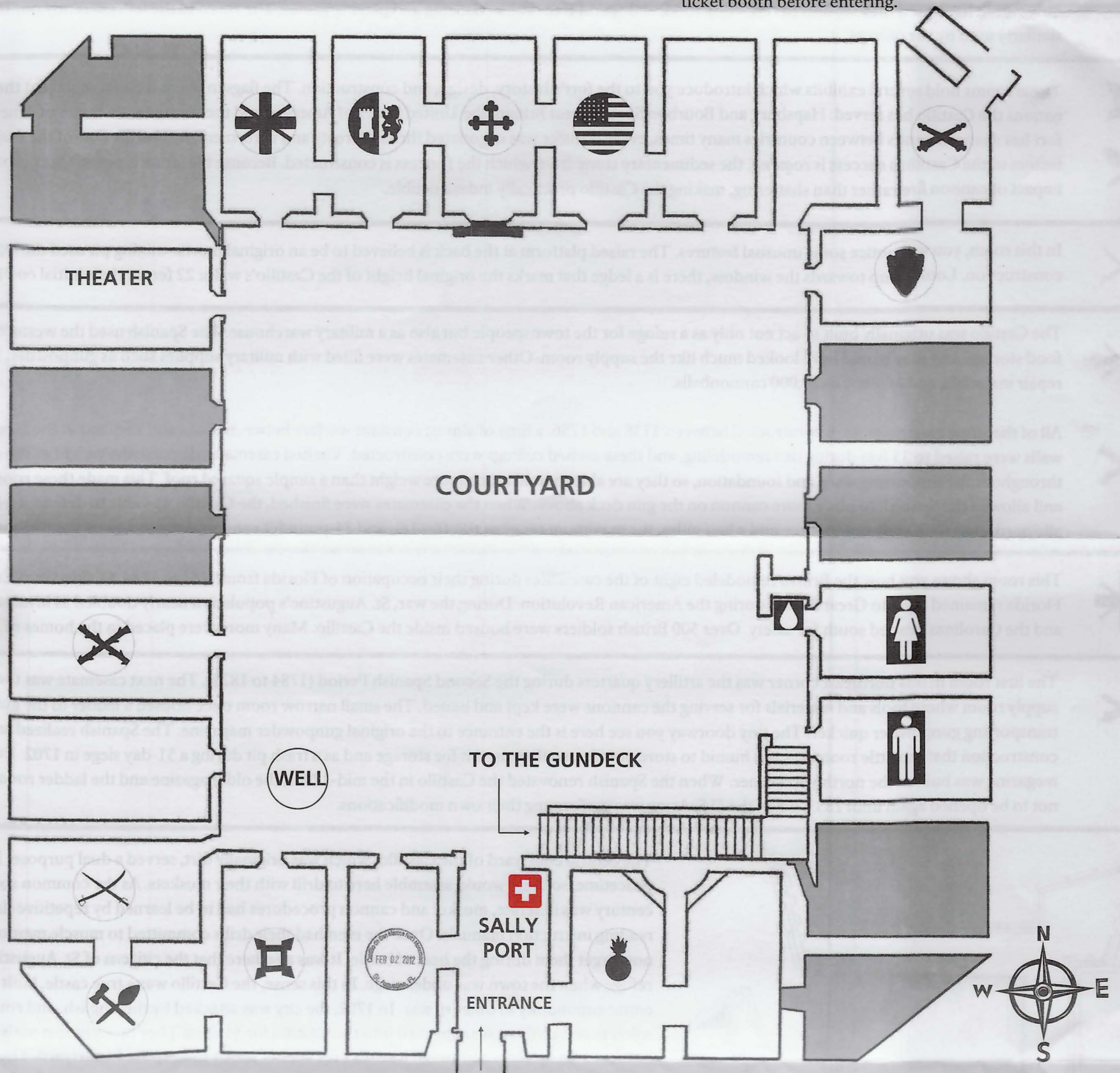
No smoking, e-cigarettes, vaping, or tobacco use inside the Castillo.



No pets inside the Castillo. Those on leashes are permitted on the grounds. If you have a service animal, please check them in with the ticket booth before entering.



Flying of drones is not permitted on park property, including inside Castillo de San Marcos.



Room Legend

- | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Eastern National Bookstore
Get your Passport Stamp here! | Contest of Nations | Second Spanish Period | Artillery Complex |
| Orientation | First Spanish Period | Religion at the Castillo | Preservation |
| Construction and Design | British Period | American Occupation | The Soldiers' Life |
| First Aid is available in the Sally Port, or ask any staff member. | Water fountain and bottle refill station | | |

Each room marked on the map with a circular icon contains an exhibit panel also marked with the same icon. These panels, as well as the other displays in each room, will help tell you the story of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. The rooms shaded in grey are currently closed to the public. On the back of this page, you will find more information about the individual rooms and other parts of the fort. From the Sally Port, we recommend that you enter the courtyard, turn left, and follow this self-guided tour clockwise around the Castillo.

Welcome! You have entered one of the most extraordinary places in the United States, incorporating over 345 years of history and culture. Construction of the Castillo de San Marcos began in 1672, making it one of the oldest standing structures in North America. The fort has undergone many renovations and changes over the years but appears today much as it would have looked at its final completion in 1756.

The Castillo was initially built by the Spanish to protect their vast empire in the Americas. Engineer Ignacio Daza designed a fortress using a *bastion* system. The star-like outline of the Castillo is formed by diamond shaped projections, called bastions, on each corner of the fort. This design eliminates blind spots for the guards in the *garitas*, 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. For an aerial view of the Castillo, please see the bronze model in the Orientation room.

As you enter the Castillo, you will cross two drawbridges. In between the two is a structure called the *ravelin*. The purpose of the ravelin is to protect the main entrance from enemy cannon fire. With this miniature fort in front of the door, no one could get a clear shot to break down the gate.



Your tour begins in the **Sally Port**, the entrance of the fortress. This was the only way in or out of the Castillo. Here you can see the large drawbridge and the *portcullis*, the heavy sliding door. Between these two wooden barriers, the strength of the Castillo is apparent. The thickness of the outer walls varies from 14 to 19 feet thick at the base and tapers to 9 feet towards the top. Note the blocks of *coquina* stone that make up these walls and how they were set together. There are over 400,000 blocks of stone in the Castillo, all of it cut and set by hand.



There are several rooms that are accessible only through the Sally Port. To the right are the Spanish guard rooms and a locked room that served as the town jail. During Spanish occupation, soldiers did not live inside the Castillo. They walked to work from their homes in town. The soldiers detailed to be on guard duty would have used these rooms to rest, cook food, and spend free time socializing and playing games. The room to the left, currently our bookstore, was similarly used by the officers.



These rooms hold several exhibits which introduce you to the fort's history, design, and construction. The flags in the first room represent the different nations the Castillo has served: Hapsburg and Bourbon Spain, Great Britain, the United States of America, and the Confederate States of America. Though the fort has changed hands between countries many times, every transfer was negotiated through treaty and agreement, not battle. One of the major contributing factors to the Castillo's success is *coquina*, the sedimentary stone from which the fortress is constructed. Because the stone is porous, it compresses under the impact of cannon fire rather than shattering, making the Castillo practically indestructible.



In this room, you will notice some unusual features. The raised platform at the back is believed to be an original mortar mixing pit used during the Castillo's construction. Looking up towards the window, there is a ledge that marks the original height of the Castillo's walls: 22 feet at their initial completion in 1695.



The Castillo was originally built to act not only as a refuge for the townspeople but also as a military warehouse. The Spanish used the western casemates for food storage, and they would have looked much like the supply room. Other casemates were filled with military supplies such as gunpowder, hardware, ship repair materials, and as many as 20,000 cannonballs.



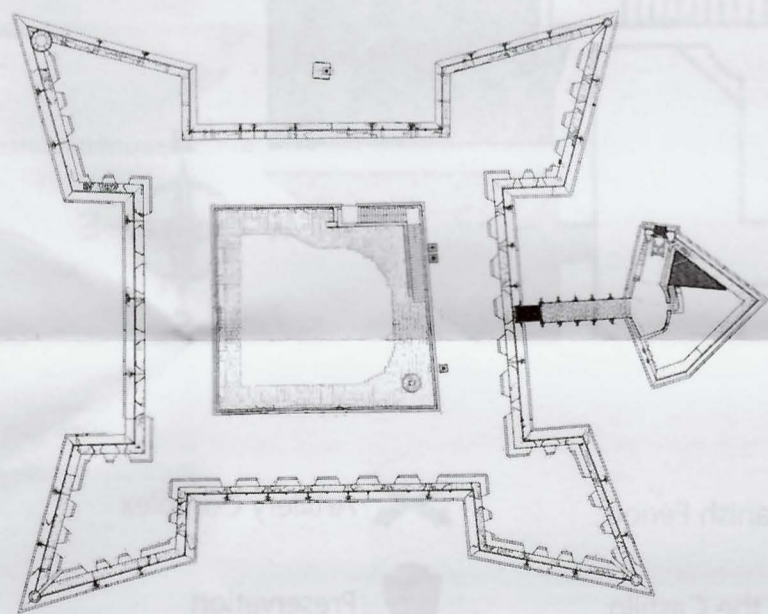
All of the stone casemates were constructed between 1738 and 1756, a time of almost constant warfare between Spain and England in the New World. The walls were raised to 35 feet during this remodeling, and these arched ceilings were constructed. Vaulted casemates disperse the weight of the structure throughout the supporting walls and foundation, 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 cannon on the gun deck above. When the casemates were finished, the Castillo was able to defend itself, the city, and all approaches to the city out to three and a half miles, the maximum range of the 16-, 18-, and 24-pounder cannon mounted along the fort's walls.



This room shows you how the British remodeled eight of the casemates during their occupation of Florida from 1763 to 1784. Divided into East and West, Florida remained loyal to Great Britain during the American Revolution. During the war, St. Augustine's population nearly doubled as loyalists from Georgia and the Carolinas headed south for safety. Over 500 British soldiers were housed inside the Castillo. Many more were placed in the homes of local citizens.



The first room in this northeast corner was the artillery quarters during the Second Spanish Period (1784 to 1821). The next casemate was the ordinance supply room where tools and materials for serving the cannons were kept and issued. The small narrow room once housed a ladder to the gundeck to make transporting gunpowder quicker. The tiny doorway you see here is the entrance to the original gunpowder magazine. The Spanish realized soon after construction that the little room was too humid to store powder, so they used it for storage and as a trash pit during a 51-day siege in 1702. Eventually, a new magazine was built in the northwest corner. When the Spanish renovated the Castillo in the mid-1700s, the old magazine and the ladder room were sealed, not to be opened again until 1833, when the U.S. Army was performing their own modifications.



The central courtyard of the Castillo, which was originally dirt, served a dual purpose. During peacetime, soldiers would assemble here to drill with their muskets. As the common soldier of the 18th century was illiterate, musket and cannon procedures had to be learned by repetitive drilling, not by reading instruction manuals. Once the men had their drills committed to muscle memory, they would not forget them during the heat of battle. It was also here that the citizens of St. Augustine would take refuge when the town was under siege. In this sense, the Castillo was a true castle, built to protect the entire community in times of war. In 1702, the city was attacked by the English, and roughly 1,500 soldiers and civilians were packed into the Castillo for 51 days! They brought materials from their homes to set up tents and rough lean-to's for shelter inside the exposed courtyard. They could not take refuge in the rooms themselves, as they were filled with the supplies necessary to feed and defend everyone.

As you climb the stairs from the courtyard, you will come upon the most important part of the Castillo. By 1740, this gun deck and the surrounding city wall mounted over 60 cannons of varying size. The largest of these guns had a range of 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 any attack by either land or sea. The large tower once housed a platform for a lookout and a bell to warn the town of attack or danger.

The design of the fort consists of four diamond-shaped *bastions* and four connecting walls known as *curtains*. Cannon were mounted in the *embrasures*, the cut-outs in the *parapet* walls. These walls protected the cannon and their crews from incoming fire. The east curtain, facing the water, originally had a parapet wall and embrasures like the other curtains. However, anticipating that most attacks would come from the ocean, the Spanish lowered the wall so that more cannon could be mounted there without limitation. As you look down from the east wall, you will see the water battery installed by the U.S. Army in the 1840s. The moat originally encircled the entire fort and was kept dry to be used as a pen for livestock while under siege, but the east side was filled in to make room for large cannon along the seawall. The small oven-like structure is a hot shot furnace, used to heat cannonballs red-hot to be fired at wooden ships.

Visible from the west wall are the original city gate and a replica of the Cubo Line, one of the earth and palm tree log walls that encompassed the city. The wall was fronted by a shallow moat lined with sharp stakes to make it even more difficult to attack.