



Boer Prisoners of War camp with Longwood House in the background

## OUR HISTORY

St Helena is an island of volcanic origin in the South Atlantic Ocean and is a British Overseas Territory. The Territory consists of St Helena and the dependencies of Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha. The island's history spans more than 500 years since its discovery by the Portuguese navigator João da Nova, on his voyage home from India on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1502. He named it "Saint Helena", this date was the birthday of Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great.

Britain's second oldest colony, one of the most isolated islands in the world, was for several centuries of vital strategic importance to ships sailing to Europe to and from the Far East, to take on essential stores and leave sick crew members to recover in its healthy climate.

In the nineteenth century it played a huge and largely un-recognised role as a vital refuge for liberated African slaves. Since 1815, the British have also used the island as a place of exile, most notably for Napoleon Bonaparte, Dinizulu kaCetshwayo and over 6,000 Boer Prisoners of War.



Statue of Napoleon at Longwood House

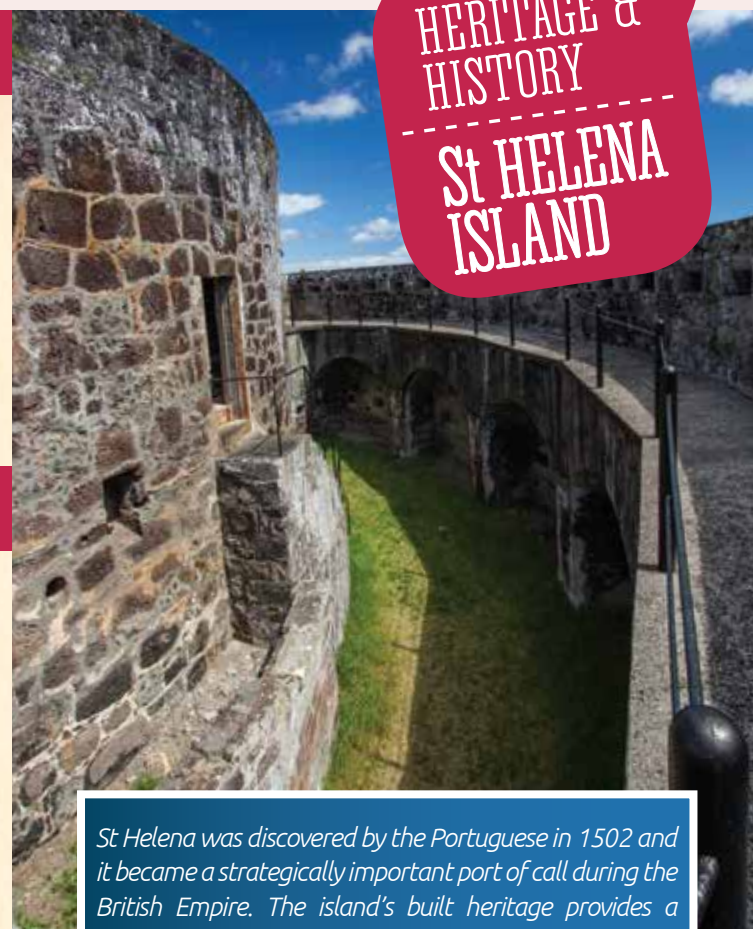


## ABOUT ST HELENA

St Helena is a small British Overseas Territory situated in the South Atlantic Ocean. One of the remotest places on Earth, it is also one of the most extraordinary places to visit. Its unique character and unspoilt beauty lies in contrasting and spectacular scenery, a rich cultural heritage and an environment extremely rich in biodiversity. These are just a few of the reasons why this remote jewel is a perfect location for active exploration and discovery.

## THINGS TO DO

- Walking and hiking
- Birding and wildlife
- Indigenous Fauna and Flora
- Diving, snorkelling, fishing and other marine activities
- Whale Shark, dolphin and whale tours
- Napoleon
- Astronomy and photography



HERITAGE & HISTORY  
ST HELENA ISLAND

*St Helena was discovered by the Portuguese in 1502 and it became a strategically important port of call during the British Empire. The island's built heritage provides a significant legacy of historic buildings, fortifications and monuments, including what has been described as "the quintessential Atlantic port" – Jamestown.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## FAMOUS VISITORS

1677	Edmond Halley – astronomer
1691	William Dampier – explorer & buccaneer
1761	Neville Maskelyne – astronomer
1771	Captain James Cook – British explorer
1792	Captain William Bligh of the Bounty
1805	Arthur Wellesley, later became the Duke of Wellington
1805	William Burchell – famous naturalist
1828-1833	Manuel Johnson – famous astronomer
1836	Charles Darwin – English naturalist & geologist
1840	General Sir Edward Sabine – astronomer
1890's	Joshua Slocum, the first person to sail around the world alone

## EXILES

1815-1821	Napoleon
1890	Chief Dinizulu and his family
1900-1902	6,000 Boer Prisoners of War
1957-1960	Three Bahraini nationalists

## ROYAL VISITORS

1838	Prince Hendrik (Dutch)
1860	Prince Alfred
1880	Empress Eugenie (Spanish)
1910	The Duke of Connaught & Princess Patricia
1925	Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII
1947	King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the Princesses Elizabeth & Margaret
1957	Philip, Duke of Edinburgh
1984	Prince Andrew
2002	Princess Anne





Jamestown Wharf

## HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

### 1500

The island's first known permanent resident was a Portuguese renegade, Fernão Lopez, who had been mutilated on being returned to Portugal. He lived on St Helena from about 1515.

In 1588 Thomas Cavendish, having captured a Portuguese ship, compelled the pilot to show him where the island was and thus became the first Englishman known to have visited the island. The Dutch formally made claim to St Helena in 1633 but abandoned the island by 1651.

### 1600

A fleet commanded by Captain John Dutton (first Governor, 1659-1661) arrived at St Helena in 1659 with the first permanent settlers and a few slaves.

The English East India Company was given a Royal Charter which allowed the company the sole right to fortify and colonise the island. The Dutch attempted to regain the island in 1673, but were defeated by the timely arrival of Captain Richard Munden. The island has remained British ever since.

### 1700

More settlers and slaves arrived over the intervening years until 1792, when the slaves outnumbered the civilian population, and it was ordered that no more slaves were to be brought to the island. The community until then consisted of British settlers, soldiers of the East India Company and slaves, mainly from India, South East Asia and Madagascar.

### 1800

During the eighteenth century buildings and forts were improved and the historic Main Street of Jamestown was constructed, only to be destroyed, requiring rebuilding in the middle of the nineteenth century after white ants, from wood used from a captured slave vessel, ravaged the town. Much of the labour used by the East India Company from 1810 to 1834 were Chinese labourers, with the highest number of 618 on island in 1818.

In 1815 the British Government selected St Helena as the place of detention for Napoleon. He was brought to the island in October 1815 and lodged at Longwood, where he died in May 1821. During this period the island was strongly garrisoned by regular British regimental troops, local St Helena regiment troops and the Royal Navy. Agreement was reached that St Helena would remain in the East India Company's possession, although the British Government would appoint its own governor for the duration of the captivity, and meet additional costs arising from guarding Napoleon.

In 1834 the island would revert to British rule. The East India Company withdrew their services and all their privileges disappeared. There followed a time of great poverty and emigration. Napoleon's body was exhumed in 1840 and returned to France.

A Vice Admiralty Court was held on St Helena in 1840, to try those ships which were carrying slaves from Africa, mainly to Brazil. The slavers were intercepted by a Royal Naval squadron based on island. Thousands of captives were set free and a liberated African depot was set up to deal with the huge influx of people, many of whom died on the island and were buried in Rupert's Valley. Most of the survivors were sent to the West Indies as indentured labourers.



Men at work in the scotching room, flax industry

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 dealt a major blow to the island's economy, resulting in further emigration. The next set of prisoners to be sent to the island arrived in 1890 – a party of 13, including Chief Dinizulu, bringing some prosperity to the island.

### 1900

At the start of the nineteenth century the island was extremely poor with men going to Ascension Island and the UK from 1922 which included the exodus of 100 men in 1949 to find work.

The only industry on island since 1907 was the production and export of flax fibre. This was poorly paid work and eventually this industry closed around 1966 with nothing to replace it. Prince Andrew Community High School opened in 1988 which allowed all children on the island an opportunity to gain subjects to "A" level and as a result many St Helenians have achieved excellent qualifications.

It wasn't until 1957 that the last exiles arrived. They were three Bahraini nationalists, who remained on the island until 1960, when they were released by a writ of habeas corpus.

The islanders lost their status as citizens of the United Kingdom in 1981 and were stripped of their right of abode in Britain. Full British citizenship was restored on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the island in 2002.

## HERITAGE

St Helena's built heritage provides a significant legacy of historic buildings, fortifications and monuments, including what has been described as "the quintessential Atlantic port", Jamestown.



Royal family visit of 1947



The Castle

In the capital of Jamestown nearly every building is listed because of its historic importance while Main Street has been described as 'one of the best examples of unspoilt Georgian architecture anywhere in the world.'

Many of the buildings are graded to indicate how important the building is to St Helena's heritage with Grade I being the most important. Grade I listed buildings include The Castle, St James' Church, Jacob's Ladder, Plantation House and High Knoll Fort.

Many of the batteries can still be seen today and were built during the eighteenth century and improved in the nineteenth century. Few of them were actually built in Napoleon's time. Cockburn's Battery on Egg Island was one such, and is also the only one built on an offshore island.

More interesting batteries lie between Banks Valley and Sugar Loaf. Known as the "Banks Lines" they were built here because the south-easterly trade winds forced sailing ships to come close inshore as they rounded Sugar Loaf and headed towards the anchorage in James Bay. This brought them in easy range of the 44-gun Banks Lines. All arriving ships were required to report and identify themselves.

In addition to forts and batteries, four valleys were walled-up to prevent landing. These are Breakneck Valley, Friar's Valley, Old Woman's Valley, and Thompson's Valley which has a battery and musketry tower above. Many fortifications are accessible by walks.