

HISTORY

The history of the **Castle of San Felipe** dates back to the sixteenth century. The discovery of America, its colonisation and the struggle for control over the Atlantic Ocean led to the port of Ferrol becoming a point of great **strategic importance**. The problem arose of protecting and supplying the fleets of the Kings of the House of Austria.

As a result, a supporting infrastructure was studied and created, as the constant threats against the naval base from land and sea meant that a defensive system would need to be built at the mouth of the estuary. On the orders of Felipe II, in 1589 work began on building the first castle, named 'San Felipe' (St. Phillip) in honour of the King's patron saint. Part of the original structure still stands, now integrated in the reformed construction dating from the eighteenth century.

Around the same time, two other castles were built on the opposite shore. Further east was the castle of Nuestra Señora de La Palma, named after the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. To the west stood the castle of San Martín, named after Martín de Padilla, the Captain-General of Castile at that time. Today only the ruins of the bulwarked zone remain, although in their heyday the network of three castles situated in strategic points along the estuary were capable of protecting the military installations from attacks by land and sea, forming a deadly and unassailable triangle of gunfire. Their position also made it possible to run a chain between the castles of San Felipe and San Martín, preventing the entrance of enemy vessels. The fortifications received their baptism of fire in 1693 during the assault of the French admiral Henri D'Escobeaude Sourdis on the naval base at Ferrol, and were easily able to repel the invaders.

All three castles, particularly the Castle of San Felipe, played a decisive role during the **attack of English forces** under General Pultney on 26 August 1800. The English troops came ashore on the beaches of Doniños and San Jorge with the intention of destroying the Navy's arsenal, but were repelled by successive attacks and retreated to the Heights of Brión, where the Spanish victory was completed. Local inhabitants enthusiastically commemorate the battle every year, with a re-enactment of the fight between the English troops and the town of Brión.



Every year a ceremony is held at the Castle of San Felipe to commemorate the battle between the English troops of General Pultney and the inhabitants of Brión on 26 August 1800, which resulted in a victory for the Spanish.



The seabed still preserves the remains of the anchors that held a chain in place to close off the mouth of the estuary, stretching between the castles of San Felipe and San Martiño to prevent enemy vessels from entering.



The village of San Felipe is ideal for a quiet stroll, to admire the beautiful views over the estuary and enjoy the area's excellent seafood.



From the opposite shore we have excellent panoramic views of the Castle of San Felipe and the estuary of Ferrol, ideal for adventure sports and sailing.



Concello de Ferrol
TURISMO

THE CASTLE OF SAN FELIPE

Edited by:
Ferrol City Council. Department of Tourism

Source:
Juan Antonio Rodríguez-Villasante Prieto

Design and layout:
item-aga

Photos:
Ovidio Aldegunde

Legal deposit:
C 508-2008

Tourism Office
Magdalena 56 - Tlf. 981 944 272

www.ferrol.es

Ferrol
Turismo



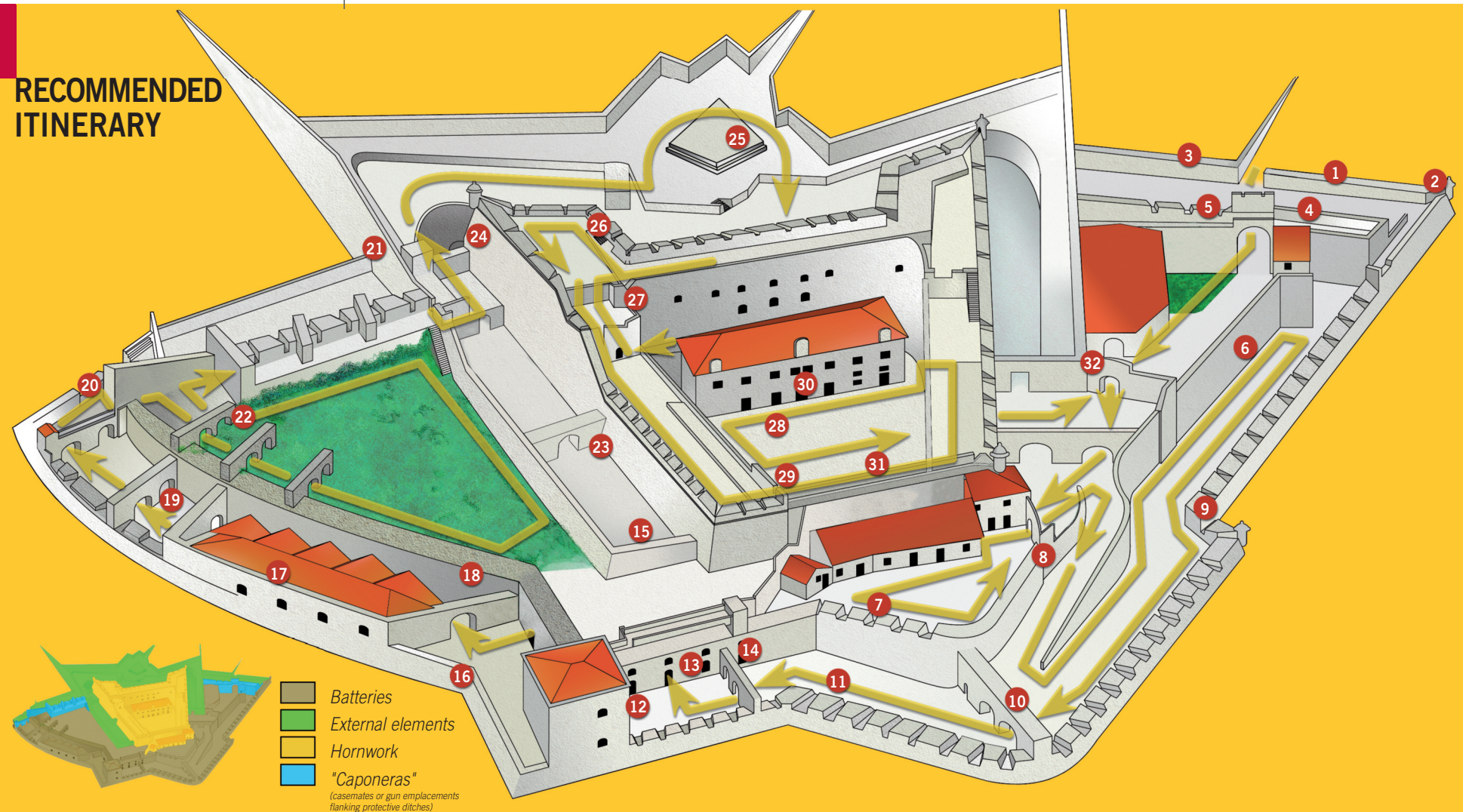
The **Castle of San Felipe** was reformed between 1731 and 1775, according to the plans of the engineers Francisco Montaigú, Juan de la Ferrière and Juan Vergel.

In the eighteenth century it was considered as an example of a 'bulwarked battery', meaning that on the one hand it had an area with batteries of cannons aimed seawards, complemented by those in the castles of **La Palma** and **San Martín**, and on the other, it had a system of bulwarks covering the flanks of the curtain walls and frontal walls, designed to repel attacks by land.

This defensive system was virtually imposed by applying the academic models to the rugged terrain of the point where the castle stood, and the shape of the mouth of the estuary. The circle formed by the channel where vessels entered conditioned the direction of the batteries. Also, the steep slope between the land and sea level meant that a structure known as a 'hornwork' had to be used – with two half bastions and a curtain wall, with two long sides known as 'branches'.

However, the sheer size of the **Castle of San Felipe** means its structure may be divided into different parts, described in the illustration, and that it may be visited by guiding our tour based on the **32 most important elements in construction terms**. Inside the Castle, following this itinerary, we will find a detailed description of each element on the information panels, providing us with a clearer understanding of this magnificent example of the academic models applied to fortifications in the Age of Enlightenment.

RECOMMENDED ITINERARY



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| 1 BATTERY OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE | 17 LOWER BATTERY, 19TH CENTURY REFORMS (CASEMATES) |
| 2 TOWER OF THE BATTERY OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE | 18 INTERIOR OF THE LOWER BATTERY: 19TH CENTURY REFORM |
| 3 WALKWAY PROTECTED AGAINST ENEMY FIRE | 19 PROTECTIVE WALL OF THE LOWER BATTERY IN THE EASTERN SECTION |
| 4 EASTERN GATEWAY AND GUN EMPLACEMENT | 20 EXTERNAL BATTERY OF THE WESTERN EMPLACEMENT |
| 5 MAIN GATEWAY | 21 WESTERN EMPLACEMENT |
| 6 LOWER BATTERY, EASTERN SECTION (AT WATER LEVEL) | 22 HIGH BATTERY |
| 7 BATTERY OF THE OLD CASTLE (FROM THE PERIOD OF FELIPE II) | 23 EASTERN DITCH |
| 8 RAMP LEADING DOWN TO THE BATTERY | 24 HORNWORK (LANDWARD SIDE) WITH TWO SEMI-BULWARKS |
| 9 LOWER BATTERY, EASTERN SECTION (INTERIOR) | 25 EMPLACEMENTS COVERING THE EXTERNAL CURTAIN WALL |
| 10 PROTECTIVE WALL OF THE LOWER BATTERY | 26 HORNWORK (LANDWARD SIDE) |
| 11 OLD CASTLE, PROTECTIVE WALL AND BATTERY | 27 INTERNAL NAVE OF THE HORNWORK |
| 12 19TH CENTURY TOWER FOR BREECH-LOADING ARTILLERY | 28 CENTRAL OR WEAPONS PATIO IN THE GORGE OF THE HORNWORK |
| 13 BATTERY STOREROOM: FORMER GUNPOWDER STORE | 29 SMALL TOWER IN THE SOUTH-WEST END OF THE HORNWORK |
| 14 SPIRAL STAIRCASE COMMUNICATING THE BATTERIES | 30 COMMANDANT'S QUARTERS |
| 15 19TH CENTURY CISTERN ('THE QUEEN'S BATH') | 31 ARCHES IN THE GORGE OF THE HORNWORK |
| 16 ANCHORS TO HOLD IN PLACE THE CHAIN PROTECTING THE MOUTH OF THE ESTUARY | 32 ENTRANCE TO THE HORNWORK (EAST) |