

Fort Pulaski

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



Fort Pulaski National Monument

Self-guided Tour of Fort Pulaski

Welcome to Fort Pulaski National Monument. As you lead your students around the fort, please keep the following items in mind:

- The tour should take 30-60 minutes.
- Students should not climb on cannons.
- Students should maintain respectful behavior

and avoid running or shouting. The fort is the site of a military battle where men were killed and wounded.

- A map at the back of this brochure should help you find your way.

Stop 1

Your first stop is just outside the first drawbridge. Before you bring your students into the fort, you can share these facts with them:

- This is the original fort. It was completed in 1847. It took 18 years to build.
- It was built to defend Savannah. The city is located about 12 miles upriver from the fort.
- The fort was named after Casimir Pulaski. Pulaski came from Poland to fight for the United States in the Revolutionary War.
- The moat was built to make it harder for enemy soldiers to reach the fort. The moat is 8 feet deep.
- The mounds were built in the early 1870s as a replacement for the brick fort. The mounds were built to hold ammunition and provide shelter for soldiers.



Question for students: What was the purpose of the drawbridge?

Answer: To make it harder for the enemy to cross the moat.

Go across the two drawbridges and into the fort.

Stop 2

Stop 2 is the middle of the parade ground inside the fort.

- The fort was an active-duty military post from 1847-1873.
- The soldiers lived inside the fort 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The living quarters for officers were in the rooms on the same side of the fort as the entrance.
- The large, arched rooms are called casemates.
- Each casemate was designed to hold one cannon. During the Civil War, the fort was about $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ full of cannons.



- Originally, every casemate had big wooden doors and every door was numbered.
- Cannons were also placed on the top level of the fort, on all sides of the fort.
- The large grassy area is called the parade ground. The soldiers used the parade ground

Stop 2 (continued)

to practice marching and training with their weapons.

- In their leisure time, they also played baseball on the parade ground.
- The black circular structure in the middle of the parade ground is the original top of the Cockspur Island lighthouse, a Civil War-era structure near the fort.

Question for students: The troops played baseball in the fort. Where do you think they played?

Answer: On the parade ground.

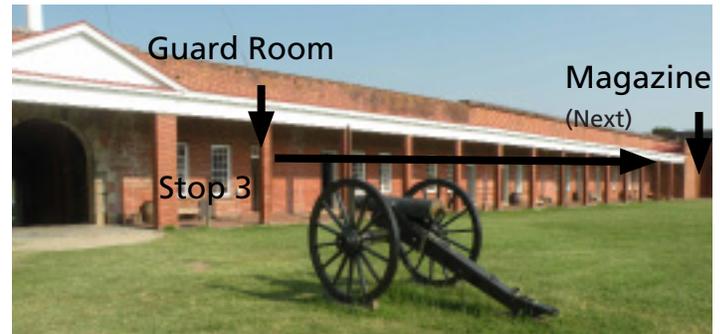
Go to the Guard Room, which is to the right of the entrance.

Stop 3

Stop 3 is the Guard Room, located to the right of the fort entrance. Soldiers slept and rested here when they were assigned guard duty but were not actually standing guard.

- Follow the arrow and lead your students to each of the rooms.
- The rooms are furnished to give some idea how the officers lived.
- The soldiers had to accomplish the same life functions we do today, but without electricity.

Question for students: The officers' quarters had flush toilets. Where do you think the "flushings" went?



Answer: The moat.

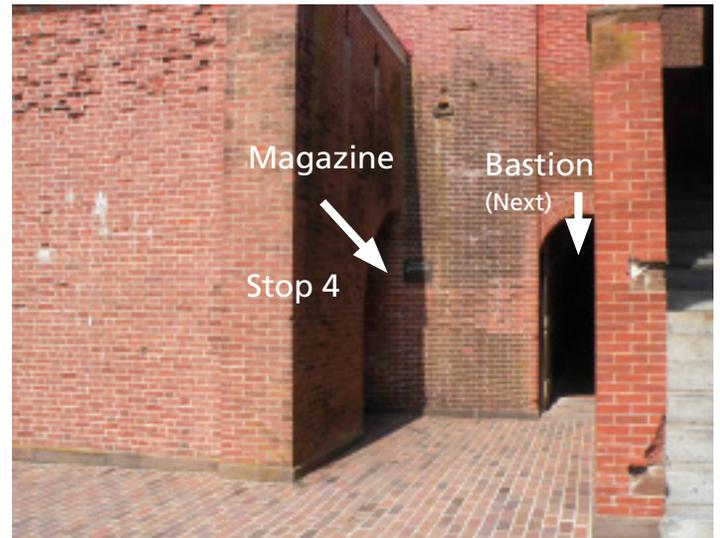
Go to the powder magazine, which is after the last officer's room.

Stop 4

Stop 4 is the powder magazine. Go inside the magazine. Only 15 students will fit inside the magazine at one time.

- All the gunpowder used for the fort cannons was stored in this magazine.
- There is no gunpowder in the barrels.
- These are reproduction barrels.
- A spark or fire would cause all the gunpowder to explode.
- During the battle, the magazine was completely full of barrels.
- Each barrel would have held 100 pounds of gunpowder.
- During the battle, the Confederates inside the fort were afraid the magazine was going to explode, killing them all. So they surrendered the fort.

Question for students: Why are there no windows in the magazine?



Answer: Windows would provide access for a spark or flame to get inside the magazine and cause the gunpowder to explode.

Go into the bastion.

Stop 5

Stop 5 is inside the bastion. A bastion is a section of the fort that extends beyond the main wall, in this case, the wall of the entrance.

- This bastion helped the soldiers defend the outer entrance.
- Notice how the cannon can fire down the entire length of the wall of the fort entrance.
- The curved grooves in the floor were used for aiming cannons.
- The white paint-like covering on the walls was made from ground-up oyster shells. It may have been put on the walls to lighten the inside of the casemate.

Question for students: Why did the bastion have additional openings?



Inside the bastion
Stop 5

Answer: To allow the soldiers to view and fire in many directions.

Go to casemate 47 with the sling carts.

Stop 6

Stop 6 is casemate 47 with the sling carts.

- These are original Civil War sling carts.
- The carts were used to move heavy cannon barrels from one place to another.
- The cannon barrels were taken off the carriages and then hoisted under the sling carts.
- Ideally, horses pulled the loaded sling carts.
- But there were no animals at Fort Pulaski, so the soldiers had to pull the heavy sling carts.

Question for students: Why were such large wheels used on the sling carts?



Answer: They carried cannons that were very large.

Go next door to casemate 46, the barracks.

Stop 7

Stop 7 is the barracks.

- The fort did not have enough cannons to fill all the casemates, so the empty casemates were turned into barracks.
- Two soldiers slept in the top bunk and two soldiers slept in the bottom bunk.
- The beds would have included thin mattresses made of scraps of cotton.
- During the Civil War, 400 to 600 soldiers lived inside the fort at one time.
- With a stove, a water-tight roof and good doors, this casemate was considered good housing for a soldier during the Civil War.



Question for students: Would you have been comfortable living in these barracks?

Answer: Varies.

Go to the next open casemate (what would be #45) and enter the casemate.

Stop 8

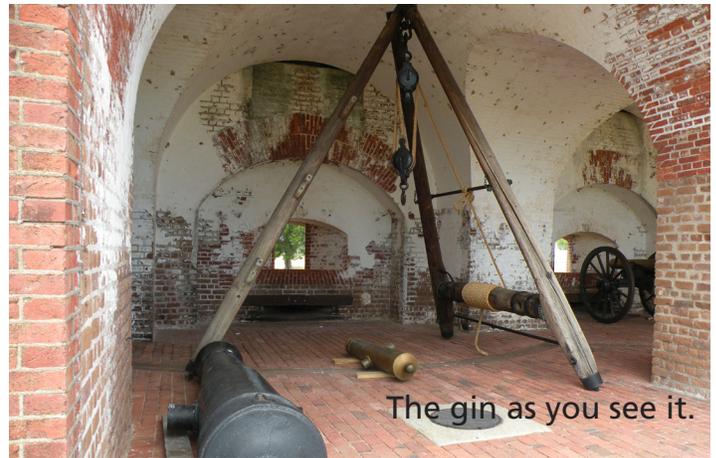
Stop 8 is the gin. (It looks like a tripod.)

- The gin was used to lift cannon barrels.
- The typical cannon barrel in the fort weighted 10,000 pounds (as much as an elephant).
- Civil war soldiers used simple tools to accomplish big jobs.
- Look at the photo of the gin rigged for use to help explain it to the students.
- The rope on the cannon was placed on the hook.
- The gin's rope ran through the pulleys, then down and around the roller.
- The soldiers placed a lever in the roller.
- When they pulled down on the lever, the hook raised the cannon.

Question for students: Historical photos show the gin on the top of the fort. Why was it there?

Answer: To raise the cannons to the top of the fort.

Continue walking through the casemates to what would be casemate #40. You will see a large cannon.



Stop 9

Stop 9 is the big cannon inside the casemate.

- This is an original cannon from the 1830s.
- It fired a cannonball that weighed 42 pounds.
- Five men were used to load and fire the cannon.
- For loading, the cannon was rolled to the back of the carriage.
- The gunpowder and cannonball were loaded into the hole in the front of the cannon.
- Then the cannon was rolled forward.
- There is a small hole on the top toward the rear of the cannon. A priming device was placed in that hole to create a spark that was needed to fire the cannon.
- Notice the iron track underneath the back of the cannon. The iron was placed in the grooves of the wooden floor so the wheels of the cannon could roll left and right more easily to aim the cannon.



Question for students: What would the cannon be aiming at?

Answer: Ships trying to go up the river and threaten Savannah.

Go to casemate #30. Walk under the large boards.

Stop 10

Stop 10 is the the blindage.

- Gather your students underneath the big boards.
- Tree trunks were floated down the river to the fort.
- The soldiers sawed tree trunks to make big boards.
- The boards were placed all the way around the entire inside of the fort in preparation for the battle.

Question for students: Why did the soldiers build the blindage?

Answer: To provide more protection in addition to the casemate doors for the soldiers inside the casemates.

Re-enter the casemates and walk through them till you get to the prison. You should recognize the prison by the bars.



Stop 11

Stop 11 is the prison.

- Originally, there were cannons in these casemates.
- Toward the end of the war, the Union soldiers turned this part of the fort into a prison.
- Prisoners of war were held here.
- Four to five men slept in each bunk.
- The prisoners had very little food--only one meal a day. So many of them ate rats and cats.
- The prisoners lived here during the winter. They did not have warm clothing.
- More men died in the prison than died during the battle of Fort Pulaski.
- The prison was larger beyond the bars. It included eight or nine casemates.



Question for students: If Union soldiers were in control of the fort, who were their prisoners?

Answer: Confederate soldiers captured on battlefields around the country.

Continue walking through the casemates till you come to the breached corner. The breached corner does not have embrasures (windows) in the casemates.

Stop 12

Stop 12 is the breached corner, the place where the fort wall was broken open during the battle.

- The Union Army attacked this corner of the fort from the outside with powerful cannons.
- The Union cannons were new-technology cannons that fired from a mile away.
- The cannons were very destructive and smashed two giant holes in this corner of the fort.
- The Union shots began sailing through the holes and across the parade ground. When the shots threatened the powder magazine, the Confederates surrendered.

Question for students: What's different about these walls compared to the other casemates?

Answer: The Union soldiers repaired the damage



after the battle and they did not make the effort to build embrasures (windows) for the cannons.



Keep walking through the casemates till you can go no further and re-enter at what would be casemate #6.

Stop 13

Stop 13 is inside casemate 6, where you will see a brick floor.

- The brick floor was used to cover a water storage tank underneath.
- The fort has a built-in water-collection system.
- Rain soaked through the top of the fort.
- The water was gathered in basins built above the casemates.
- The basins drained into pipes that ran inside the brick columns.
- The pipes carried water to tanks underneath the floor.
- The men could collect their drinking water by lifting the round cover off the floor and dipping a bucket into the tank.



Question for students: Why didn't the soldiers drink water from the river?

Answer: The fort is so close to the ocean that the river water is too salty to drink.

Walk through the casemates to the wooden railing.

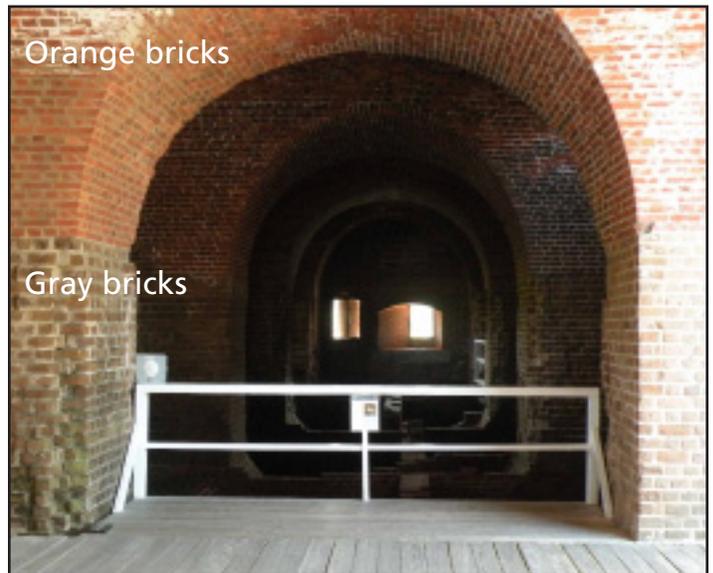
Stop 14

Stop 14 is a floorless section.

- A fire many years ago burned the wooden floor in this section of the fort.
- There is a lot of brick work below the fort floors to help support the vast weight of the fort.
- Twenty-five million bricks were used to build the fort.
- Notice the bricks are two different colors.
- The gray bricks are the historic bricks from Savannah, used in many of the buildings downtown.
- The orange bricks are also old, but they are from Maryland and Virginia. They are stronger than the Savannah bricks.

Question for students: Why didn't the National Park Service fix the damaged floor?

Answer: To give people a better idea of how



the fort was built and encourage people to help protect and take care of the historic fort.

Congratulations! You have completed your self-guided tour of Fort Pulaski. Your students are now experts on Fort Pulaski National Monument. Fort Pulaski is part of our National Park System,

which includes almost 400 historic sites and places of natural beauty. Thank you for helping us preserve Fort Pulaski for future generations.

Self-guided Tour of Fort Pulaski Map

