



Spain's Coat of Arms This coat of arms represents Spain's united kingdoms: Castile (castle) and León (lion). The original coat of arms was placed on the fort in 1756.

Beginning in the 1500s, many European powers, including Spain, France, and Great Britain, were fighting for control in the New World. With wealthy trade and territory at stake, how could they defend their colonial outposts from enemy attack?

In 1565 Spain established St. Augustine to protect its Gulf Stream shipping route and anchor its claim to La Florida (roughly today's Florida and parts of surrounding states). By the late 1600s, British colonies encroaching from the north threatened the city. The Spanish built nine wooden forts before constructing

the stone fort that stands today, preserved as part of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. From its first stones to its later massive walls, Castillo de San Marcos was constructed between 1672 and 1695. Once completed, this structure never fell in battle.

Outdoor Exhibits Look for these informational signs around the park and inside the Castillo.

Tour the Castillo The fort is open daily, year-round, except Thanksgiving and December 25. There is an entrance fee.

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information ask a ranger, call, check the park website, or download the NPS App.

More Information Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is one of over 430 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

Mailing address:
Castillo de San Marcos
National Monument
1 S. Castillo Dr.
St. Augustine, FL 32084
904-829-6506
www.nps.gov/casa

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

©GPO:2025—431-026/94160 Last updated 2025

ALL IMAGES—NPS EXCEPT CANNON
FIRING—© DAWN MOORE, SALLY
PORT—© TONY BENO



City gate

St. Augustine Founded in 1565, this Spanish city was a rich melting pot of cultures. Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans lived and worked here, bringing their customs and traditions to the city.

City Gate Beginning in 1739, people entered St. Augustine through a wooden gate. These stone pillars were constructed in 1808 as part of a major upgrade of the town's walled defenses.

Cubo Line After the English overran and burned St. Augustine in 1702, the Spanish built a wall around the city. Originally, the Cubo Line was an earthen bank, fronted by sharp yucca plants, that stretched from the fort a half mile west to the San Sebastian River. In 1808 the walls were upgraded to include palm logs and a 40-foot-wide moat on the north side. West of the city gate, three artillery redoubts (a type of fortification) provided additional protection.

Crosswalk An accessible route leads into the fort from the parking area.

Explore the Castillo Buy tickets at the entrance station, then head into the Castillo through the sally port. Your tour is self-guiding, so go at your own pace. We recommend at least two hours. Programs are scheduled throughout the day.

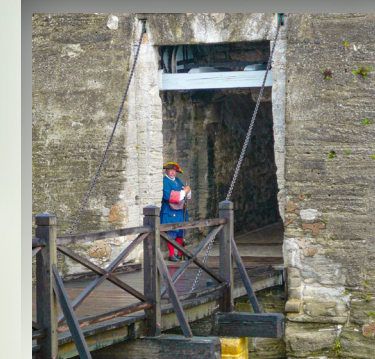
Some rooms are historically furnished to recreate their original purpose. Others now house museum exhibits or serve as administrative offices or facilities like restrooms. Download the NPS App for more options to explore the Castillo and grounds.

The Castillo is little changed from the time it was built. Surfaces are uneven and can be slippery. Do not sit, stand, or climb on walls or cannons. Federal laws protect all features. Using remotely piloted aircraft like drones is prohibited. For complete safety information and regulations, including firearms, visit the park website.

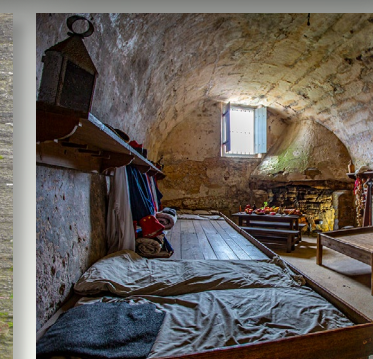
Enjoy reenactments like this cannon-firing demonstration.

Parking Paid parking is available in the lot in front of the Castillo and the public parking garage located one block northwest of the fort at 1 Cordova Street.

Features Inside Castillo de San Marcos



1 Sally Port The drawbridge leads to the sally port, the fort's only entrance and exit. The 14-foot-thick walls give a sense of the fort's strength.



2 Guard Rooms Spanish soldiers lived in town with their families unless on guard duty. During their 24-hour rotation, guards occupied these quarters.



3 Museum Exhibits Explore over 450 years of history in the exhibit rooms: Florida's origins, fort design and construction, everyday life in the fort and city, and the Castillo's preservation.



4 Storage Rooms Food, tools, and other items were kept safe and dry here. As a remote outpost, St. Augustine depended on supplies from the Castillo, especially in time of siege.



5 Meet the People Spanish and other Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans have passed through St. Augustine. Exhibits share some of the history of these cultural intersections.

Water Battery In 1842 US Army engineers filled the east side of the moat with earth to create a battery of cannons along the water.

Living Seawall Built in 2011, the "living" seawall protects the historic wall and provides habitat for marine life. With today's rising water levels, this submerged structure is more important than ever.

Matanzas Bay

Castillo de San Marcos

“Although I have seen many castillos of consequence and reputation,” La Florida’s governor said to Spain’s king in 1675, “this one is not surpassed by any of those with greater character.” But could Castillo de San Marcos withstand an enemy attack?

A few years after its 1695 completion, European nations were again at war, and the colonies were dragged into the conflict. In November 1702

English forces from the Carolina colony made a preemptive strike on St. Augustine by land and sea. They quickly overtook the Spanish city and its surrounding outposts.

Around 1,500 Spanish civilians and soldiers were already secured in the Castillo with two months of provisions. For several weeks, the English laid siege and attempted to gain entrance, cutting off



Protecting St. Augustine



Coquina shells



Coquina stone



Cut stone walls

Coquina Stone The Castillo is made out of cut coquina stone—tiny seashells compressed into limestone over thousands of years. Locally quarried and easy to cut, coquina was suitable for military construction and withstood cannon fire. It has helped the Castillo stand for 350 years.



Spanish soldier
NPS / DAVID W. RICKMAN



NPS / DAVID W. RICKMAN

1875 The US Army brings Native peoples from Plains and Apache Tribes to Fort Marion, pressuring them to adopt Christianity and learn the English language. Some record the experience in ledger drawings (*below*).

© DR. HERMAN VIOLA



1893 Reinforced seawalls support iron gun platforms (*below*). Artillery in the water battery could threaten ships miles away.



COURTESY CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE ARCHAEOLOGY



1942–45 US Coast Guard graduation ceremonies at Fort Marion. NPS

Timucua Spanish arriving in the 1500s encounter the Timucua people who live throughout northeast Florida, including the coastal village of Seloy where Pedro Menéndez de Aviles lands.

1565 Menéndez establishes St. Augustine on a defensible harbor. Warfare quickly ensues with French Protestants at Fort Caroline and the Matanzas Inlet.

1586 English forces under Sir Francis Drake attack and burn St. Augustine.

Spanish soldier
NPS / DAVID W. RICKMAN

1702 The Castillo is a refuge for the Spanish during a 51-day siege of St. Augustine. The retreating English forces burn the city (*above*).
NPS / STEVEN N. PATRICIA

1740 The Castillo withstands Oglethorpe's 37-day siege. To defend against a southern approach to the city, construction begins on Fort Matanzas (*above*).
NPS

1830s Osceola (*right*) leads the Seminoles in armed resistance against US-forced relocation. Some, including Osceola, are held at Fort Marion; others escape to the swamps.
NPS / DAVID W. RICKMAN

Left: Timucuan stone projectile point
Right: Fish bone hairpin or needle
CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE



1500s Spain claims southern and western North America. France claims Canada.

Late 1500s England aims to colonize eastern North America.

1619 First enslaved Africans are brought to Virginia.

1701–14 War of the Spanish Succession

1756–63 Seven Years' War

1775–83 American Revolutionary War

1821 US ratifies Florida cession from Spain.

1861–65 US Civil War

1898 Spanish-American War

1914–18 World War I

1939–45 World War II

1964 Civil Rights Act

1565 The Spanish build the first of nine wooden forts to defend St. Augustine.

1672–95 The Spanish build Castillo de San Marcos to protect St. Augustine. The moat, quarters, bastions, ravelin, and seawall are finished by 1695.

1704–19 Defensive earthworks are built north and west of St. Augustine.

1740s–50s The Castillo is strengthened with curtain walls, bombproof rooms, and a larger ravelin.

1763 The British take over Florida and change the Castillo's name to Fort St. Mark.
NPS

1825 Under US control, the Castillo is named Fort Marion.

1861–62 Confederate forces occupy Fort Marion.

1895 Florida's first golf course is installed on Fort Marion's grounds.

1942–45 Fort Marion and much of St. Augustine is used as a US Coast Guard training base.

Present Castillo de San Marcos National Monument—site of the oldest masonry fort in the continental United States—recalls the beginnings of European ventures into new worlds.



1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

1513 Juan Ponce de León's exploration leads Spain to claim Florida.

1564 French Protestants (Huguenots) establish Fort Caroline about 40 miles north of St. Augustine on land claimed by Spain.

1670 The English encroach on Spanish claims, establishing Charles Towne (Charleston) and the Carolina colony.

1763 A treaty gives Spanish Florida to Great Britain. The Spanish and a few remaining Timucua leave St. Augustine for Cuba.

1783 A treaty resulting from the American Revolution returns Florida to Spain, but Spanish colonialism—and the Castillo itself—are in decline.

The Castillo's bell tower looks over Matanzas Bay.
NPS / BETSY EHRLICH



Trade Routes For a time, Spain was the dominant European power in the New World. Trade, an important source of wealth, had to be protected at all costs. St. Augustine was an ideal location to defend the Gulf Stream route. As England and France encroached from the north, Castillo de San Marcos symbolized Spain's military strength and readiness to fight.



Galleon Nothing represents the golden age of Spanish trade like the galleon. This multi-deck sailing ship was designed for speedy cargo hauls and could be outfitted for warfare.

NPS / STEVEN N. PATRICIA

NPS / STEVEN N. PATRICIA