

PORT ARTHUR HISTORIC SITE

EDUCATION GUIDED WALK STOP DESCRIPTIONS

Use these stop descriptions to decide which Tour Stops are relevant and useful to your areas of teaching. Talk to our Education Officer if you need more information.

The Penitentiary Precinct

Comprising: Prisoners' Barracks, The Penitentiary

In the early days of the penal settlement, convicts were housed in rough timber huts. Later, as convict numbers increased, the flour mill and granary was converted into a four-storey Penitentiary, due to its failure to supply adequate flour for the settlement. The Penitentiary's two lower floors contained 136 cells for 'prisoners of bad character'. The top floor provided space for 480 better behaved convicts to sleep in bunks.

A very large industrial area near the Penitentiary included workshops where prisoners worked and were trained in a range of skills including carpentry, shoemaking, wood turning and blacksmithing. While there is no longer any visible evidence above the surface, the evidence of the work undertaken here can be seen in the convict-built structures throughout the site.

Military District

Comprising: Guard Tower, Senior Military Officer's Quarters, Officers' Quarters

For most of the convict period, the Senior Military Officer's Quarters was the home of the Military Officer in charge of the soldiers at Port Arthur. The soldiers of Port Arthur were responsible for security and for pursuing and capturing escaped convicts. A small number of soldiers were accompanied by their wives who washed, sewed and provided basic nursing care for the men in their husband's company. Children of the soldiers, lower ranking settlement officials and free staff were educated together in the adjoining Free School. Visit this district to discover more about the lives of the soldiers and military officers at Port Arthur.

The Separate Prison

The Separate Prison was designed to deliver a new method of punishment and reform through isolation and contemplation. Convicts were locked for 23 hours each day in single cells. Here they ate, slept and worked, with just one hour a day allowed for solitary exercise in a high-walled yard. A major conservation program for the Separate Prison began in 2007. Visit the Separate Prison to view re-created cells and discover what life was like in this 'silent prison'.

The Commandant's House

This house was home to the Commandant, Port Arthur's most senior official. Five of Port Arthur's ten Commandants lived here and each man left his mark on the house and the settlement. Visit this house to find out more about the lives of the Commandants.

The Hospital

In the Hospital convicts were commonly treated for conditions including respiratory or rheumatic ailments contracted from working outdoors and sleeping in cold cells and wet clothing. Industrial accidents were also common. Visit this site to hear more about the medical care received by the convicts at Port Arthur.

Smith O'Brien's Cottage

This cottage housed one of Port Arthur's most famous political prisoners – Irish Protestant Parliamentarian, William Smith O'Brien. Transported for life, he was sent to Port Arthur after an attempted escape from Maria Island. Visit this cottage to discover why Smith O'Brien was afforded such special treatment.

The Church

The Church represents the important role of religion in convict reform at Port Arthur. Up to 1100 people attended compulsory services here each Sunday. Much of the decorative stonework and joinery in the church was crafted by boys from the Point Puer Boys' Prison. Visit the Church to discover more about the role of religion at Port Arthur.

Civil Officers' Row, Government Cottage and Government Gardens

Comprising: Visiting Magistrate's House, Roman Catholic Chaplain's House, Junior Medical Officer's House, Accountant's House, Parsonage, Government Cottage, Government Gardens

Civil Officers' Row separated senior officers and their families from the convict population and provided them with housing suited to their status. The Government Gardens offered a quiet and beautiful space, free from the unwanted presence of the convicts. Discover how the senior officers lived at Port Arthur in the furnished Junior Medical Officer's House.