

HISTORY ON THE EDGE

Welcome to Castle Hill

Castle Hill overlooks Plaisance, the original French capital of Newfoundland, now known as Placentia. This 17th century French fortification predates the Fortress of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia and predates the role Louisbourg would later play as the French gateway to Canada and naval base for the French fishery in North America. Here you will discover why the French and British battled for control of Newfoundland. With its wide rocky beach perfectly suited to drying cod, Placentia, or “Plaisance” as the French called it, appeared to be a good choice. During your visit, you will learn how colonial settlers lived here, and why they eventually left.

A Few Things You Should Know

- Spectacular panoramic ocean vistas and superb walking trails throughout the Site.
- The Visitor Centre exhibit, gift shop and washrooms are all wheelchair accessible.
- Picnic facilities are available on site.
- Bilingual guide services are available.
- Please don't pick any plants within the Site's boundaries; all plant life is protected within National Parks and Historic Sites.
- Pets are welcome on the grounds but must be kept on a leash.

While You're In the Area

HAWTHORNE COTTAGE Hawthorne Cottage is just over an hour away. It is the Brigus home of world renowned arctic explorer Captain Bob Bartlett. Built in 1830, the cottage contains displays and monuments of Bob Bartlett's many achievements and adventures.

SHIP HARBOUR About forty minutes from Castle Hill, in the community of Ship Harbour, is the Ship Harbour Monument. This site commemorates the drafting of the Atlantic Charter in 1941 by Sir Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt on a battleship off Ship Harbour Point.

SALMONIER NATURE PARK This park is about one hour from Placentia, 53 km east on the Salmonier Line (Route 90). Here you can see moose, caribou, lynx, fox, bald eagles, and many other animals found in this part of Newfoundland.

CAPE ST. MARY'S ECOLOGICAL RESERVE Approximately 65 km south of Castle Hill is Cape St. Mary's. Here you will find the second largest colony of nesting gannets in North America as well as black-legged kittiwakes, Atlantic murres, Northern razorbills, black guillemots, double-crested and great cormorants. Northern fulmar also nest among a magnificent sea stack that rises 100 metres out of the ocean, just ten metres off the mainland. A bird watcher's must-see, and a photographer's delight.

For More Information

Castle Hill National Historic Site

709-227-2401
castlehill@pc.gc.ca
Twitter: ParksCanadaNL

Hours of operation

June 1 to Thanksgiving Weekend
Daily, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Aussi disponible en français.

Explore Castle Hill

The Placentia area attracted Basque fishermen as early as the 16th century. Large quantities of codfish, highly prized in Europe, brought fishermen in droves. The French government founded the colony in 1662.

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, French and British forces fought sporadically for control of Newfoundland, though the island's fate was still heavily influenced by events in Europe.

Determined to ensure access to the Newfoundland fishery, the French chose Plaisance for its excellent harbour and proximity to the Grand Banks and as a check to English expansion. Here they hoped to build a colony that would solidify their claim to a portion of the fishing rights around the island of Newfoundland.

In late 1696 and early 1697, under the leadership of New France's most famous soldier, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, the French marched overland from Plaisance to the Southern Shore, up towards St. John's and on into Conception Bay. D'Iberville was successful, easily taking all but one of his targets. His men destroyed 36 settlements and captured more than 500 fishing boats, 200,000 quintals of cod, and 700 prisoners in four months.

Back in France, a decision to send d'Iberville to Hudson Bay may well have saved the British from being driven out of Newfoundland.

Placentia proved to be a poor choice for the French colonists. Despite successful fortifications at Castle Hill which allowed the French to fend off British attacks, Plaisance had serious problems: the British were able to blockade Placentia Bay fairly easily; the French colonists had limited access to basic supplies; the land itself was not good for farming, and yielded little in the way of crops or livestock. With no supporting infrastructure and rivalries between residents and seasonal fishermen on the rise, the colony was destined to fail.

Today, the remains of France's 17th century fortifications at Castle Hill are all that exists of the French presence here. Events in Europe sealed Placentia's fate when Britain gained sovereignty over Newfoundland by the Treaty of Utrecht, leaving France with fishing rights along the northeast and west coasts of the island.

The French colonists and soldiers from Placentia moved on to build the Fortress of Louisbourg (now a National Historic Site) in Nova Scotia. Castle Hill was briefly occupied and fortified by the British during the Seven Years War, but Placentia was soon to be overshadowed by the island's burgeoning economic and political capital St. John's.



Time Well Spent

Spend an hour or more with us ...there's plenty to see and do!

- Take a tour of the inside exhibits. We also offer a self-guided audio tour of the outside grounds using our MP3 player or our Smart Phone app.
- See the Detached Redoubt behind the Centre.
- See the Ruins of Fort Royal and take the time to view the panorama of the Town of Placentia.
- Take a nature walk on the trails and see Le Gaillardin.
- Watch advertised theatrical and musical events in our outdoors amphitheatre (July-August; weather permitting)
- Ask Parks Canada staff about special events which may be taking place at the site or in the community.
- Browse through the Historic Site's Gift Shop located in the Visitor Centre and get a souvenir of your experience at Castle Hill National Historic Site.

- | | |
|--|--|
| P Parking is available for cars, motorhomes and buses | i Panoramic views |
| ? Information / tickets | h Groomed walking trails with signage throughout the site |
| ♿ Wheelchair parking available with full access to Visitor Centre | 🎁 Gift Shop located in the Visitor Centre |
| 🚻 Public washrooms located inside the Visitor Centre | 🐕 Pets are welcome on trails but must be kept on a leash |
| 🗺️ External Interpretation and smart phone panels throughout the site | 🎭 Internal and external theatre presentations on site |
| 🏛️ Exhibit | 🍷 Picnic facilities are available on site |
| 👥 Interior and exterior presentations ongoing throughout the season | |