

THE FORTIFICATIONS OF PRETORIA

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Pretoria is the most fortified town in Southern Africa and was fortified three times in history. Eventually more than 100 fortifications have been built. The first of these were fortifications built by the British during the Anglo-Transvaal War (1880-1881). This was followed by the building of four large forts by the Boers, in preparation for war, during 1896-1898. After the fall of Pretoria on 5 June 1900 (during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902), the British erected numerous forts, blockhouses and redoubts. Unfortunately not many of these have remained.

The tour will start at the East Fort, built by the British in 1901. This site is currently being researched as a project also aimed at teaching archaeology to interested school learners and others. The second stop on tour is Fort Klapperkop, one of the Boer forts. It is the only of the four Boer forts which have been restored to its original state. This also is the highest vantage point in Pretoria, and located in a nature reserve. On site the remains of a British blockhouse, will also be visited. The last stop on the tour will be at Fort Schanskop, another one of the Boer forts which today is a museum. This fort is managed by the Voortrekker Monument, a national heritage site on the same premises. Lunch can be obtained from the restaurant on site.

THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE POORT: DASPOORT IN HISTORIC CONTEXT

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Due to its unique topography, the city of Pretoria is enclosed off on the eastern, southern and northern sides by low mountains. Access to the 'outside world' used to be through a few very narrow ports and necks. Well-known in this regard is Wonderboompoort, where Prof Revil Mason has shown how during Early Stone Age times people settled here in order to utilise the mass movement of animals migrating seasonally between the sour and sweet veld.

Daspoort, located a few kilometres to the southwest, probably also experienced such migrations. After the establishment of Pretoria (1850/1855), it took on the role serving as a gateway to the north for people and goods. With the Aapias River flowing through it, passing through Wonderboompoort and then carrying on in a northern direction, it probably served as a 'highway' for early travellers to the north, giving access to water for stock and draught animals.

This funnel effect resulted in the Poort forming a focal point for development, with transport, other infrastructure, settlements, etc. It resulted in drawing together people of diverse backgrounds and interest, from ordinary folk to artists, scientists, soldiers, engineers and missionaries, all of whom played an important role in generating a complex layer of tangible as well as intangible heritage in the region of the Poort.

During this site visit, we will unpack some of these heritage features that gave rise to one of the most interesting parts of the greater Pretoria/Tshwane: some features only existing as documents in some form or the other, others only their ruins remain, whereas some are still available for visiting and investigating.

Most of the identified features can be discussed from a central point, where we will make a first stop. Depending on available time, on completion of this 'orientation' other sites and features can be visited, e.g. the Daspoort WWTW (1910) and the Mariaman Hindu temple (1927).