



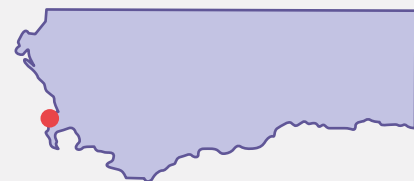
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The most spectacular show in town!

Children of the Mother City like to hold forth about her myriad attractions. They even go so far as to name her six biggest attractions, often in no particular order, but the assumption has always been that Table Mountain must surely take prime spot. Now, however, it is just possible that our beloved mountain may have to yield centre-stage to the V&A Waterfront.

With 24 million visitors every year, the V&A is certainly one of Africa's most iconic attractions, and Cape Town's most visited destination. Established in 1991, the V&A has transformed Cape Town's cultural and social presence by "reimagining a historic, working harbour" into the city's most vibrant and spectacular venue where people work, play and learn, side by side.

Incidentally, in case you're curious, the other five of the Big 6 attractions are the Table Mountain Cableway, Kirstenbosch, Groot Constantia, Robben Island and Cape Point. But let's tarry here at the Waterfront awhile ...



Memorable milestones along the way

Today, it's a bustling harbour and a vibrant mixed-use playground-cum-workplace, situated between the iconic Table Mountain and the sparkling Atlantic; a destination that seamlessly blends history and modernity. But back in 1858, it was little more than a wooden jetty, initially built back in the time of Jan van Riebeeck, and occasionally reinforced and buttressed during the interim years. The harbour that the British colonial powers called Cape Town harbour remained so exposed and vulnerable to storms that the particularly stormy winter of 1858 saw the destruction of more than 30 vessels in Table Bay. At that point, Lloyds of London refused to continue providing coverage for ships wintering in Table Bay.

The Breakwater and the Alfred Basin

In 1860, HRH Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, ceremonially opened the construction of a breakwater for the harbour, with the intention of making it safe for ships to winter here. The construction work was achieved largely through forced convict labour and the working conditions were extreme. Convicts were forced to work on the breakwater by day and housed in the infamous Breakwater Prison by night. Much of the harbour had to be dug out of rock, and the breakwater constructed from the hewn-out rock; it was forced hard labour and it took years. During its ten years as a place of incarceration, the Breakwater Prison became known as one of the most feared in the world. The resultant basin would become the harbour's first basin and, when completed, was called the Alfred Basin.

The Victoria Basin

After the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa, shipping at Cape Town's working harbour increased noticeably, as more and more immigrants arrived, determined to benefit from the country's new-found wealth. In order to accommodate the increased shipping, it was decided to extend the size of the harbour by adding a second basin. Subsequent enhancements included the

extension of the breakwater, as well as the construction of piers. The new sheltered area, once completed, was named the Victoria Basin. Today, it accommodates smaller



After 1910 - The pier at the end of Adderley Street
Credit: Carl Momborg, The Waterfront Story

commercial vessels, including fishing and pleasure boats, as well as smaller passenger cruise ships.

Construction on these first two sections of the harbour, the Alfred and Victoria basins, started in 1860 and continued till about 1920. These historic parts of the harbour still boast many superb heritage buildings from the Victorian era, buildings which have been carefully restored and preserved. The Victoria & Alfred Hotel, which occupies one of the main piers of the original harbour, is one of them. It used to be a dockyard warehouse; now it is a 5-star edifice of timeless elegance.

The Foreshore and Duncan Dock

In 1938, work began with a view to reclaiming land between the city centre and the harbour. The 230 hectares of reclaimed land became known as the Foreshore, and once reclamation was completed, Duncan Dock was built to accommodate larger tanker-sized vessels. Today, Duncan Dock contains the multi-purpose and fruit terminals, the tanker basin, as well as the Sturrock Dry Dock and repair quay.



Credit: V&A Waterfront



Credit: V&A Waterfront



An early photograph of the Robinson Dry Dock, with a ship in for repairs.
Credit: V&A Waterfront



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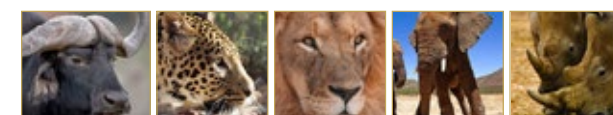


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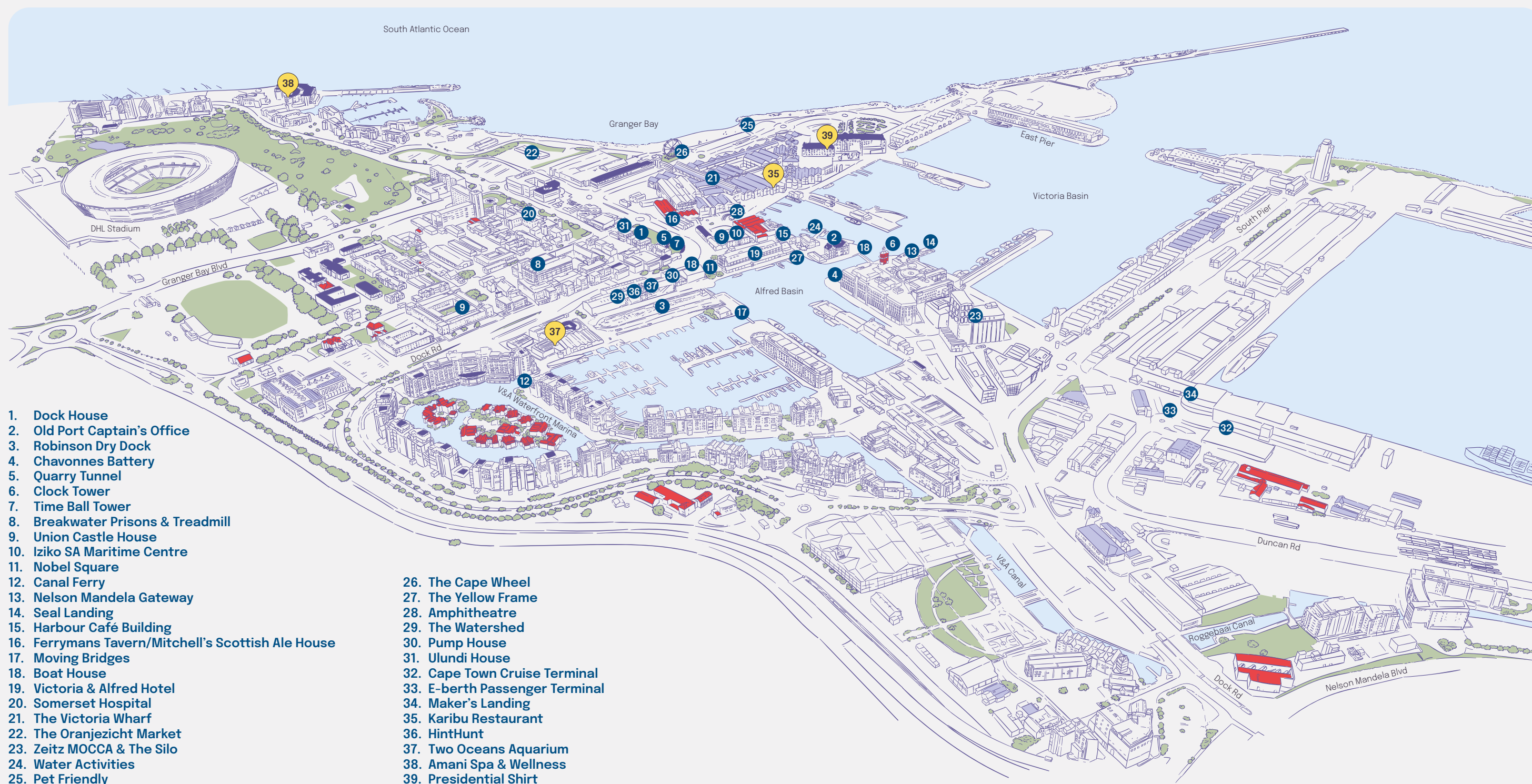
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2. Old Port Captain's Office
3. Robinson Dry Dock
4. Chavannes Battery
5. Quarry Tunnel
6. Clock Tower
7. Time Ball Tower
8. Breakwater Prisons & Treadmill
9. Union Castle House
10. Iziko SA Maritime Centre
11. Nobel Square
12. Canal Ferry
13. Nelson Mandela Gateway
14. Seal Landing
15. Harbour Cafe Building
16. Ferryman's Tavern/Mitchell's Scottish Ale House
17. Moving Bridges
18. Boat House
19. Victoria & Alfred Hotel
20. Somerset Hospital
21. The Victoria Wharf
22. The Oranjezicht Market
23. Zeitz MOCCA & The Silo
24. Water Activities
25. Pet Friendly

26. The Cape Wheel
27. The Yellow Frame
28. Amphitheatre
29. The Watershed
30. Pump House
31. Ulundi House
32. Cape Town Cruise Terminal
33. E-berth Passenger Terminal
34. Maker's Landing
35. Karibu Restaurant
36. Hint Hunt
37. Two Oceans Aquarium
38. Amani Spa & Wellness
39. Presidential Shirt

V&A Waterfront (Pty) Ltd is established

A mixed-use area with a working harbour

Unfortunately, the Municipal Pier which connected the people of Cape Town with the harbour, had to be demolished in 1939 to make way for Duncan Dock, and Woodstock beach was done away with as part of the reclaimed land. Gradually, Capetonians became increasingly separated from their harbour, and by the sixties and seventies, the harbour itself was in decline. Finally, in 1984, Mayor Sol Kreiner of Cape Town formed the Waterfront Steering Committee whose sole task it was to develop a viable future for the waterfront area and make it part of Cape Town again. To this end, the national government established Victoria & Alfred Waterfront (Pty) Ltd in November 1988 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Transnet Ltd. The aim was to redevelop the historic docklands around the Victoria and Alfred Basins as a "mixed-use area with a focus on retail, tourism and residential development with a working harbour at its centre."

Districts of the V&A Waterfront

Today, the V&A Waterfront is indeed a mixed-use neighbourhood that spans 23 hectares of prime retail, residential and hospitality premises, all developed around a recreational and working harbour, and it gets more than 24 million visitors a year. The entire precinct consists of seven integrated districts.

Portswood Ridge District

Connects the V&A Waterfront with the Atlantic Seaboard, and includes the UCT Graduate School of Business, a golf course, and an urban garden.



Credit: V&A Waterfront

15-Harbour Café Building

These are the premises of the Waterfront's very first restaurant, built on Erf 1. It was once a tea-room, then dubbed the Crow's Nest, and now the world-famous Hildebrand Restaurant. The building was also one of Cape Town's first racially segregated buildings but, of course, that is now history.

16-Ferrymans Tavern / Mitchell's Scottish Ale House

These two pubs were among the first tenants of the V&A Waterfront. They offer good beer, great food, and plenty of live entertainment. The structure itself dates back to the 1860s. Today, there is the convenience of the Swing Bridge which gives easy access to Ferrymans and Mitchell's. Decades ago, however, pub-goers had to use a small rowing boat (the Penny Ferry) to get there.

17-Moving Bridges

No walkabout through the Waterfront is complete without setting foot on at least one of its three movable bridges. The oldest of the three was built in 1882 and



Credit: V&A Waterfront

Canal District

This urban district straddles both sides of the Dock Road entrance to the Waterfront, and includes Battery Park. The Roggebaai Canal connects the Waterfront to the city of Cape Town and boasts a regular hop-on/hop-off ferry.

Clocktower District

Boasts the iconic red and light grey clocktower first built in 1882, a retail shopping mall with superb eateries, and the Nelson Mandela Gateway to Robben Island ferry terminal, where visitors can board ferries bound for Robben Island.

Silo District

This district is next to the Cape Town Cruise Terminal, which also houses Makers Landing, a home for budding food entrepreneurs showcasing an eclectic mix of local cuisine. The district includes the visually stunning Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), as well as restaurants, bars, hotels and office space.

Granger Bay District

Contains the Oranjezicht City Farm Market, the Breakwater residential development, the Grand Beach Café, The Lookout Events space, and pedestrian boardwalks with stunning ocean views.

South Arm District

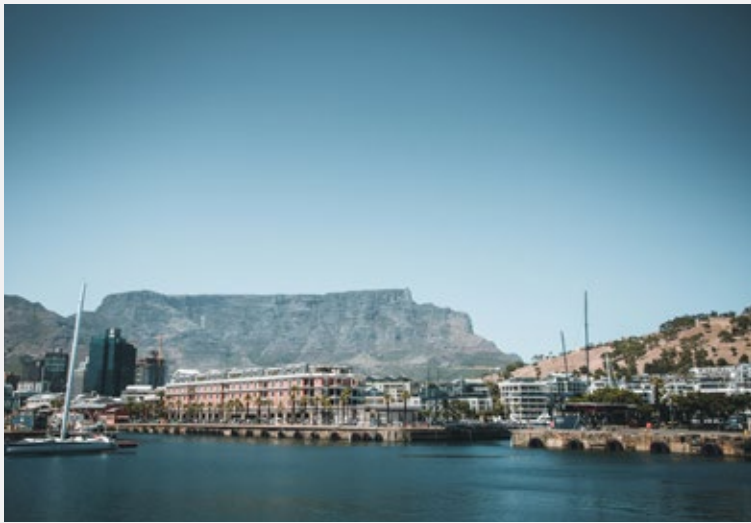
This district is mostly industrial space, and contains a commercial harbour where fishing industries and other commercial vessels operate.

Pierhead District

This is more the working area of the Waterfront, but it is also where you will find the helicopter companies that offer scenic flights around the Peninsula. It is also the home of the V&A's Waste Recovery and Recycling Centre. Here, the V&A recycles 27% of its total waste.

20-Somerset Hospital

This hospital, now a national monument, has much historical significance. It was the first hospital in the country to be used for the training of doctors, the first to train nurses of colour, and in 2005, it became the country's first distribution centre for anti-retroviral drugs to treat the HIV/AIDS pandemic.



SHOPPING

21-The Victoria Wharf

The Victoria Wharf is a bustling shopping complex that caters to a wide range of tastes and preferences. With its diverse mix of local and international brands, visitors can explore a vast selection of fashion, accessories, homeware, and more. It has over 450 retail outlets, including renowned global brands and exclusive boutiques. The vibrant atmosphere and stunning waterfront views create an enticing shopping experience that truly captures the essence of Cape Town's cosmopolitan culture.

ARTS & CULTURE

22-The Oranjezicht Market

This is a haven for food enthusiasts and fresh produce lovers. Located in a charming setting, this bustling market offers a wide array of locally sourced fruits, vegetables, artisanal products, and delectable treats. With its vibrant atmosphere, live music, and diverse culinary offerings, the market is a must-visit destination for those seeking to immerse themselves in Cape Town's multi-cultural food scene.

1-Dock House

Today, it is the Dock House Boutique Hotel & Spa, but when it was built in 1870, it was the private residence and office of the harbour master.

2-Old Port Captain's Office

This beautiful gabled building is a prime example of the Arts and Crafts School of Architecture. It was built in 1904 for the Port Captain, but is now home to the African Trading Port, housing collections of African arts and crafts.

3-Robinson Dry Dock

The Robinson Dry Dock was built and came into operation back in 1882, making it the oldest of its kind anywhere in the world. It has played a vital role in the repair of many ships, something which it continues to do to this day.

4-Chavonnes Battery

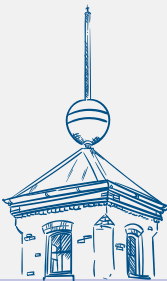
Named after a governor of the Cape Colony, Mauritz Pasques, Marquis de Chavonnes, this fortification was completed by 1725 to protect the Cape Colony against naval attacks. Over the centuries since then, it has served as a prison, a hospital, and a museum which charted the structure's rich history. Unfortunately, the museum now seems to be permanently closed, but you can still see the huge cannons mounted on ramparts at the entrance.

5-Quarry Tunnel

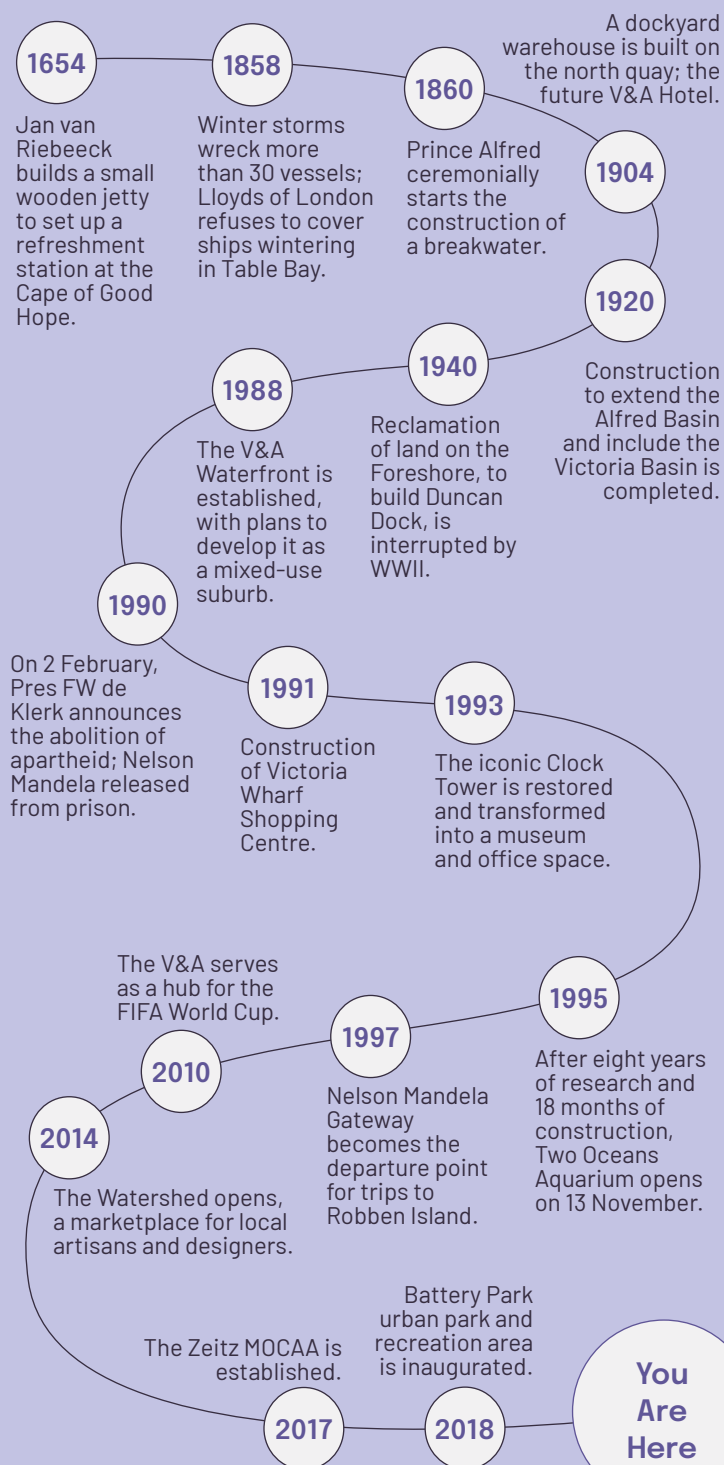
Diagonally across the road from Ferrymans Irish Tavern, you'll find the weathered wooden gateway to a 160-year-old tunnel, now called the Portswood tunnel. It was originally built to convey rock from the quarry to the breakwater, while the harbour was under construction, but has now been repurposed for all sorts of events, from wine tastings to secret dining clubs.

Did you know?

Over time, the **Clock Tower** began to **tilt slightly**. It's now off-centre by about 50mm. Brass pins have been added to arrest, or at least detect, any future movement.



A Timeline through the Centuries



6-Clock Tower

Today, this Victorian Gothic-style clock tower has achieved the status of an icon. It bears proud testament to the V&A Waterfront's dedication to preservation. During the restoration, the red paint selected for the walls was first carefully matched to scrapings of the tower's original paint. It was constructed in 1882 and served as the first Port Captain's Office, and the clock was imported from Edinburgh.

7-Time Ball Tower

The time ball may be an obsolete time signalling device today, but in 1894, when this one was built, it was considered essential to enable ships offshore to verify the accuracy of their marine chronometers. The time ball is a large painted ball that is dropped vertically, along a shaft, at a predetermined time. This one was in use for 40 years, before bowing out to more modern technology, and was restored in November 1997.

8-Breakwater Prison & Treadmill

Built in 1860, the Breakwater Prison initially housed British convicts constructing the breakwater, a project that



23-Zeitz MOCAA & The Silo

The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) and The Silo form an iconic cultural complex. The Silo, originally a grain silo dating back to 1921, was reimagined by renowned architect Thomas Heatherwick as a mixed-use space housing The Silo Hotel and the Zeitz MOCAA. The architectural transformation of the building is a testament to innovative design, featuring a spectacular geometric facade of glass windows illuminating the waterfront skyline. Inside The Silo, the Zeitz MOCAA showcases a remarkable collection of contemporary African art, spanning various mediums and reflecting the rich diversity and narratives of the continent.

This convergence of history, visionary architecture, and world-class art has made the Zeitz MOCAA and The Silo a must-visit destination, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the cultural fabric of Cape Town and Africa as a whole.

ADVENTURE

24-Water Activities

The V&A Waterfront in Cape Town offers a variety of water activities for all preferences. Visitors can embark on leisurely boat tours to enjoy panoramic views of Table Mountain and the Atlantic Ocean. For those seeking more thrill, jet ski rentals provide an exhilarating experience, while kayaking allows exploration of the Waterfront's hidden gems.

25-Pet Friendly

The V&A Waterfront welcomes furry companions and provides a fantastic setting for dog walking. Its spacious promenade and scenic views offer an enjoyable and picturesque environment for dogs on leash and their owners. Whether strolling along the Waterfront or exploring nearby parks, dog walkers can enjoy a leisurely outing while enjoying the beauty of Cape Town's iconic harbour.

26-The Yellow Frame

Positioned against the backdrop of the vibrant Waterfront, this oversized yellow picture frame offers visitors a fun and interactive photo opportunity.

27-The Cape Wheel

The Wheel is a captivating attraction that offers breath-taking views of Cape Town. This giant Ferris wheel that towers over its surrounds, provides a unique perspective of the city, the mountain, and the landscapes in between. Day or night, a ride on the Wheel is an unforgettable experience that allows visitors to soak in the beauty of Cape Town from an exhilarating vantage point.

was crucial for a working harbour here. It was a prison for about 10 years, then became a place of correction for juvenile offenders, after which it was a hostel for black dock workers for many decades. However, from 1991, the surviving structure was repurposed to host the Breakwater Lodge and the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, an integral part of today's Waterfront. What was once the world's most feared prison has transitioned into a place of education and hospitality.

The penal treadmill, on the other hand, has been preserved, along with its rusty machinery, as a caveat for future generations of inhumanities that should never be permitted again.

9-Union Castle House

This building houses the South African Maritime Museum, which charts the maritime history of Table Bay and has the largest collection of model ships in South Africa. Originally, when it was built in 1919, it was for the Union Castle Mail Steamship Company. Today, the museum also has floating exhibits, one of which is the SAS Somerset, a retired Naval Defence Boom Vessel.

10-Iziko SA Maritime Centre

This museum charts the history of shipping in the city with a collection of ship models and thousands of photographs, as well as displays and photographs of shipwrecks. It also displays the earliest existing model of Table Bay harbour, created in 1885 by prisoners and warders of Breakwater Prison.

11-Nobel Square

Here, you will find four life-size bronze statues created by Claudette Shreuders. They are tributes to Chief Albert Luthuli, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, and former presidents Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. These men are South Africa's Nobel Peace Laureates, each one a champion in the fight for true democracy. Noria Mabasa's work can also be seen in the square – a sculpture dedicated to women and children and the part they played in achieving peace for South Africa.

12-Canal Ferry

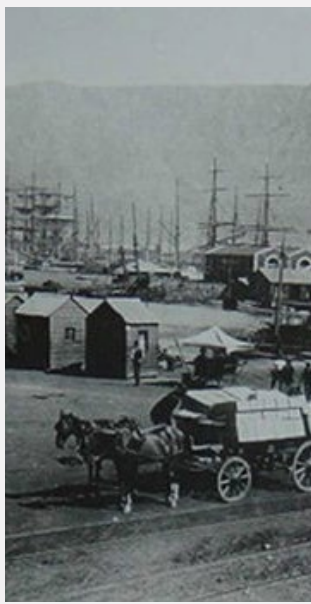
It's a 20-minute ferry ride that carries passengers from the CBD, along the Roggebaai Canal, to the Waterfront and back again. Hop on, hop off, as you wish.

13-Nelson Mandela Gateway

This is the aptly-named departure point for tours of Robben Island. Remember to make bookings for the tour and the 30-minute ferry ride to the island.

14-Seal Landing

Close-up sightings of seals are unusual because offshore islands are their preferred breeding grounds. However, a colony of seals has made Seal Landing their preferred hangout. There is also a second smaller wooden platform just behind the Two Oceans Aquarium where seals gather to relax and socialise, and this is a great place for visitors to observe them.



Credit: V&A Waterfront

WILDLIFE AT THE WATERFRONT

Seals are common around the Waterfront, often basking in the sun or playfully swimming near the docks. And if you're very lucky, on a fine day from June to October, you might see a humpback serenely cruising by. The last sighting of a humpback whale in the Waterfront was 24 June 2024, so it's time for another. In addition, seabirds such as seagulls and pelicans can be spotted gracefully gliding through the air or perched on the piers, adding a touch of natural charm to the bustling urban environment.



Another critical aspect of the V&A Waterfront's history is its role in the struggle against apartheid. In the 1980s, the harbour was a focal point for anti-apartheid protests, and many of the workers in the area played a critical role in the struggle for democracy. Today, the V&A Waterfront symbolises the progress made since those dark days and reminds us of the importance of standing up for justice and equality.



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Ask us to style and plan your unique African adventure!



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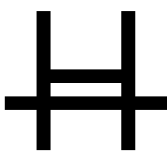
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