

Title:

Robben Island, a treasure

Word Count:

436

Summary:

This is probably the most famous island in South Africa. If you hear the word Robben Island, your first thought and association is with Madiba (as Nelson Mandela is known to South Africans). Robben Island is an island in Table Bay and lies about 8 km from Cape Town and measures around 3.4 km by 2 km.

Keywords:

Robben Island, Cape Town, travel to Cape Town, South African travels

Article Body:

This is probably the most famous island in South Africa. If you hear the word Robben Island, your first thought and association is with Madiba (as Nelson Mandela is known to South Africans). Robben Island is an island in Table Bay and lies about 8 km from Cape Town and measures around 3.4 km by 2 km. The name was given to the island because of the seals (robber is the Netherlands for seal) that lived here. Geographically, this island used to be part of the African continent many years ago.

The Netherlands were not the first Europeans to walk on this island. The Portuguese visited this island many years ago before the English admiral set foot here in 1591. In 1601 Joris van Spilbergen (from Netherlands) followed and only in 1652 Jan van Riebeeck came. They tried very hard to develop the fish and seal industry on this island, but because it was so remote, it was used to ban people that had incurable sicknesses and "crazy" people (from 1846 - 1931). Even people that stole sheep or cows were banned to this island, centuries ago.

During the Second World War, the island was used and a light tower was built because of the bad stranding record. After the war ended it was turned into a training camp for the South African Navy.

But in 1961 the island was placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice and was used as a jail. None of the public was allowed to go there and a protective sea border of around 1.5 km was placed around it. This was the place where old president Nelson Mandela was sent in 1964 to serve a life sentence. Equipment to start a war in the country was found and 10 people all together

were charged.

Since 1997, Robben Island has been a museum and the public was allowed back to visit, leaving from the Waterfront in Cape Town. Lots of work is also been done to try and bring back the wildlife that ones lived on this island. The northern part has been declared a bird sanctuary and lots of penguins can also be found here today.

No visit to the Cape is complete without setting foot on this island, learning more about it's colourful history and paying a visit to Nelson Mandela's old jail cell. Boats leave for the island from the V & A Waterfront in Cape Town every day, so make sure you check out the times so you don't miss out! When you arrive on the island, you will have the most breathtaking view over Cape Town and Table Mountain. A magnificent moment you will treasure forever!