

## The Porta de Santiago

The Porta de Santiago is one of the four main gates of the A Famosa fortress, and is the best evidence of Portuguese occupation hundreds of years ago. Located at the foot of St. Paul's Hill, it was built by the Portuguese in 1512 under the command of Alfonso de Albuquerque.

Hundreds of slaves and inmates were forced to work on building this concrete structure. It had a strong foundation and thick walls, and used boulders taken from the ruins of palaces, mosques and tombstones. Equipped with cannons, the fort with its four gates was once an object of fear and respect among the people of this city.

A Famosa was later expanded to include the surrounding hills and nearby European settlements. The surrounding area today includes Jalan Kota, Jalan Gereja, Jalan Mahkamah and Jalan Istana. In fact, the Portuguese had turned this fort into a Christian city, with brick buildings that included five churches, chapels, a monastery, a hospital, the governor's and bishop's palaces, and a castle.

For almost 150 years, this magnificent fort had successfully protected the Portuguese position in Melaka, until it was overrun by the Dutch. It was damaged during the attack, but the Dutch later repaired and renamed it VOC.

Its significance started to fade when the British settled here in the early 19th century. The British had almost destroyed the whole complex when Sir Stamford Raffles arrived in 1808. He was able to stop the destruction, but unfortunately what is left until today is nothing more than a gateway called Porta de Santiago with an embossed 'VOC' emblem above it.

### Getting There

Melaka is easily accessible by road. From Kuala Lumpur, you can take express buses to Melaka at Puduraya Bus Station. The two and half hour journey will cost you around RM7.90. This Porta de Santiago is facing the Padang Pahlawan (Warriors' Ground) in Bandar Hilir, where you can use either taxi (RM6), trishaw (RM20 per hour, RM6 for any one way trip) or town bus (No 17) to take you there from the bus stand.