



Saint Helena
THE ROCK

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ST HELENA ISLAND. PASSENGERS OF THE RMS ST HELENA IN THE CUSTOMS HALL IN THE PORT AREA OF JAMESTOWN, THE ISLAND'S MAIN VILLAGE



WELCOME TO
ST HELENA

RMS ST HELENA V2024



ST. HELENA: A LITTLE MORE THAN A ROCK THAT STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, RISING FROM A DEPTH OF ALMOST FIVE THOUSAND METERS, HALFWAY BETWEEN THE COASTS OF AFRICA AND THOSE OF SOUTH AMERICA. FOUR THOUSAND PEOPLE LIVE ON THE ISLAND: THE DESCENDANTS OF THE FIRST ENGLISH SETTLERS, OF THE CHINESE LABORERS WHO CAME FROM THE MALDIVES, OF THE LIBERATED SLAVES FROM MADAGASCAR AND THE GULF OF GUINEA.

IN THEIR OWN WAY, FOUR THOUSAND EXILES WHO IGNORED THE USE OF CELL PHONES UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO, AND SOMEHOW LIVE IN A SOCIETY FROZEN IN TIME AND SHARE THE SAME FATE OF NAPOLEON, WHO WAS DEPORTED TO THE ISLAND IN 1815, AND SPENT HERE AS A PRISONER THE LAST SIX YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

IN A WAY, IT WAS EASIER TO GET TO ST. HELENA TWO CENTURIES AGO THAN IT IS TODAY: BACK THEN, THE ISLAND WAS A NATURAL PORT OF CALL FOR THE MANY VESSELS CROSSING THE ATLANTIC FROM THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE TO THE AMERICAS. TODAY, THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO GET TO ST. HELENA, OR TO LEAVE: THE SATURDAY FLIGHT FROM JOHANNESBURG, A SERVICE WHICH STARTED IN LATE 2017, WHEN THE ISLAND'S AIRPORT WAS FINALLY OPENED AFTER A DISASTROUS AND LENGTHY TEST PROCESS.

AND EVEN BEFORE THAT, THE ISLAND'S ONLY CONNECTION TO THE WORLD WAS THE RMS ST HELENA, THE LAST MAIL SHIP ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE, WHICH RUN FROM CAPE TOWN AND ANCHORED OFF THE IMPERVIOUS CLIFFS – SINCE THERE IS NOT A PORT – ROUGHLY ONCE A MONTH. THE SHIP USED TO BRING GOODS, FOOD, LETTERS FROM DISTANT RELATIVES, THE ABUNDANT ALCOHOL THAT IS CONSUMED IN THE ISLAND'S THREE PUBS, THE HOPE OF SALVATION FOR THOSE WHO WERE ILL AND HAD TO BE EVACUATED, THE BODIES OF THOSE WHO HADN'T MADE IT AND WERE TAKEN BACK TO THEIR PRISON ISLAND TO BE BURIED. THE SHIP WAS DECOMMISSIONED IN 2018, AND NOW HER TASK IS PERFORMED BY THE AIRPLANE.

SOME HAVE CALLED SAINT HELENA THE LAST PARADISE LOST. BUT (PLANE OR SHIP) THE MAJORITY OF ITS INHABITANTS SEEM TO AGREE MORE WITH NAPOLEON, WHO OF HIS STAY HERE WROTE, "IT IS A DAILY DEATH".

ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. PEOPLE WALK
ON MAIN STREET PAST A NAPOLEON STATUE ON
THE TERRACE OF THE CONSULATE HOTEL



ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. A WOMAN
WALKS IN THE NOW ABANDONED ANCIENT
MILITARY GARRISON ON TOP OF LADDER HILL



ST. HELENA ISLAND. THE SOUTH
WESTERN COAST SEEN FROM THE TOP OF
BLUE HILL ON A STORMY DAY



ST HELENA ISLAND. ONE OF THE PASSENGERS
JUST DISEMBARKED FROM THE RMS ST HELENA
SITS ON HIS TRANSPORT ON THE WHARF OF
JAMESTOWN, THE ISLAND'S MAIN VILLAGE



ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. MIKE OLSSON, A SWEDEN WHO SETTLED ON THE ISLAND IN THE 1980S AFTER MARRYING A ST HELENIAN, IS THE FOUNDER OF SAINT FM, THE ISLAND'S ONLY INDEPENDENT RADIO STATION. EVEN THOUGH HE SOLD THE COMPANY'S SHARES TO THE PEOPLE FOR A NOMINAL FEE AND TURNED SAINT FM INTO A COMMUNITY RADIO, HE STILL READS THE LOCAL NEWS AT LEAST ONCE A DAY





ST. HELENA ISLAND, FARM LODGE. STEPHEN BIGGS, A BRITISH MAN WHO WORKED AS A PURSER ON BOARD THE RMS ST HELENA AND SETTLED ON THE ISLAND AFTER RETIREMENT, WITH HIS 1971 ROLLS-ROYCE, WHICH HE HAS NOT USED FOR OVER ONE YEAR BECAUSE OF A FAULTY BRAKE WHICH IS TOO EXPENSIVE TO REPLACE

ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. A WOMAN TALKS ON THE PHONE IN A BOOTH IN FRONT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY. THE ISLAND HAS NO CELLPHONE SERVICE, AND MOST COMMUNICATIONS ARE ON LOCAL LANDLINES





ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. THE COUNSELORS, OR MINISTERS, ATTEND THEIR WEEKLY MEETING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S MEETING ROOM IN THE CASTLE. THE ISLAND HAS A GOVERNOR APPOINTED BY THE QUEEN ON ADVICE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, AND IS BASICALLY RUN LIKE A STATE, WITH A CABINET OF 15 MINISTERS, WHOSE POWER, HOWEVER, IS MOSTLY SYMBOLIC

ST. HELENA ISLAND, HUTT'S GATE. RAYMOND
ISAAC, AKA "JESUS", IS A FARMER. AT 60,
HE IS ONE OF THE FEW ST HELENIANS WHO GROW
VEGETABLES AND FRUITS FOR SELF SUSTAINANCE



ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS EMPLOYED AT THE AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION SITE PLAY POOL AT THE WHITE HORSE TAVERN, ONE OF THE ISLAND'S THREE PUBS, ON A FRIDAY NIGHT. THE AIRPORT, WHICH IS DUE FOR COMPLETION IN 2016, IS BEING BUILT BY A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTRACTOR



ST HELENA ISLAND. THE RMS ST HELENA ANCHORED IN THE BAY OF JAMESTOWN, THE ISLAND'S MAIN VILLAGE. SINCE THE TOWN HAS NO DOCK, THE SHIP STAYS ANCHORED FOR THE TIME NEEDED TO OFFLOAD ALL CARGO, AN OPERATION THAT SOMETIMES TAKES UP TO THREE DAYS. ONE OF ST HELENIANS' FAVORITE HANGOUTS IS THE MULE YARD (RIGHT), A PUB WHERE THEY GATHER FOR A DRINK AFTER A DAY AT WORK





ST. HELENA ISLAND, LONGWOOD. THE ENTRANCE OF LONGWOOD HOUSE, THE FORMER BRITISH VICE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE WHICH WAS USED TO HOUSE NAPOLEON FROM LATE 1815. THE FORMER EMPEROR SPENT THE LAST SIX YEARS OF HIS LIFE HERE AS A PRISONER. HE DIED IN HIS BEDROOM ON MAY 5TH, 1821. HIS BODY WAS TAKEN BACK TO FRANCE IN 1840 AND INTERRED AT LES INVALIDES

ST. HELENA ISLAND. KEITH YON, A SOUTH AFRICAN LONGTIME RESIDENT, ON HIS FISHING BOAT STARLITE DURING A DAY OUT FISHING. ALTHOUGH SMALL-SCALE TUNA FISHING IS THE ISLAND'S MAIN BUSINESS, IT IS STILL PRACTICED ON SMALL BOATS WITH A CREW OF ONE OR TWO. THE FIRST COMMERCIAL FISHING BOAT WAS PURCHASED BY A LOCAL COOPERATIVE ONLY IN 2013



ST. HELENA ISLAND. A MAN CLEANS HIS CAR IN DEADWOOD PLAIN. MANY ST HELENIANS, ESPECIALLY THE EXPATS WHO HAVE EARNED GOOD SALARIES WORKING ABROAD, SPEND THEIR MONEY ON SPORTS CARS, EVEN THOUGH IT IS HARD TO FIND A SUITABLE ROAD WHERE TO DRIVE THEM ALL OVER THE ISLAND





ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. A MEN'S HAIRDRESSER SALON ALONG MAIN STREET

ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. PEOPLE GATHERED
IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HORSE TAVERN, ONE OF THE
ISLAND'S THREE PUBS, ON A SATURDAY NIGHT





ST. HELENA ISLAND, BRIARS PAVILLION. MICHEL MARTINEAU IS THE FRENCH HONORARY CONSUL, IN CHARGE OF TAKING CARE OF FRANCE'S PROPERTIES ON THE ISLAND, WHICH WERE INHERITED OR PURCHASED BY PARIS IN THE LATE 1800S. AMONG THOSE IS BRIARS PAVILLION, THE HOUSE WHERE NAPOLEON SPENT THE FIRST MONTHS ON ST HELENA

ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. PEOPLE AT A TEA PARTY THROWN BY PATSY FLAGG AT HER HOUSE. MRS FLAGG IS FAMOUS ON THE ISLAND FOR HER PARTIES, DURING WHICH SHE RAISES MONEY FOR CHARITY



ST HELENA ISLAND. THE RMS ST HELENA ANCHORED IN THE BAY OF JAMESTOWN, THE ISLAND'S MAIN VILLAGE. SINCE THE TOWN HAS NO DOCK, THE SHIP STAYS ANCHORED FOR THE TIME NEEDED TO OFFLOAD ALL CARGO, AN OPERATION THAT SOMETIMES TAKES UP TO THREE DAYS. ONE OF ST HELENIANS' FAVORITE HANGOUTS IS THE MULE YARD, A PUB OVERLOOKING THE BAY, WHERE THEY GATHER FOR A DRINK AFTER A DAY AT WORK





ST HELENA ISLAND, JAMESTOWN. A PRESS STILL USED TO STAMP OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS IS KEPT IN A STORAGE ROOM BELONGING TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

ST. HELENA ISLAND, LONGWOOD. COLIN CORKER,
A TAXI DRIVER, STILL TAKES HIS PASSENGERS
ON THE 1920S CHEVROLET WHICH WAS PURCHASED
AND TAKEN TO THE ISLAND BY HIS FATHER



ST. HELENA ISLAND, SANDY BAY. A FEW YEARS AGO, SIX CANNONS, PROBABLY BRITISH AND DATING BACK TO THE 18TH CENTURY, WERE FOUND ON THIS BEACH, WHERE THE BRITISH BUILT A FORTIFIED STRUCTURE BETWEEN 1695-1742. THE CANNONS, IN THE WORDS OF ONE ST HELENIAN, WERE TOO HEAVY TO BE TRANSPORTED ELSEWHERE, SO THEY WERE SIMPLY LEFT ON THE BEACH





ST. HELENA ISLAND, ST PAULS. PEOPLE ATTEND
A FUNERAL SERVICE AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL



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