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[A Romance with the Fort](#)

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*Bastion de San Miguel*

A fortification is a military structure built for defense against invaders or the threat of it. Here in Cebu with the establishment of *Villa San Miguel*, later to be renamed *Villa del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús*, Miguel López de Legazpi saw the need to protect the new Spanish settlement. On May 8, 1565 he ordered the construction of a fortification which was to be named San Pedro. Triangular in shape, the structure was

originally made of wooden palisades.

The present stone structure of the fort dates back to 1833 as indicated in a bas-relief at the entrance. It is still triangular in shape and is known to be the smallest fort in the country. It has three bastions namely San Miguel, Ignatio de Loyola, and La Concepcion. Since the fort sits on land that originally jutted out to the sea like a promontory before the adjacent areas were reclaimed, the three bastions all point to strategic points toward the original coastline.



*A cannon at the Ignatio de Loyola bastion.*

There are two buildings inside the fort. One housed the personnel that manned the fort while the other one served as the living quarter of the lieutenant. Near the San Miguel bastion was the *Almazanes del Polvora*, a storage area for the fort's supply of arms and gunpowder.

During World War II, the fort was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army. A tunnel that linked to the sea was built. Certain parts of the fort were reinforced. At the Ignatio de Loyola bastion for example the tower was topped with a thick slab of solid reinforced concrete. Perhaps to make it bombproof? This concrete slab is still there today.



*A view of the eastern side of the fort from the Ignatio de Loyola bastion.*

When the fort was turned over to the city government post-war, it underwent a number of transformations although the structure itself was preserved. It used to house some government offices and then surprisingly the Cebu Zoo. Thanks to the heritage consciousness of some locals, the zoo was transferred and the fort underwent rehabilitation.

In the mid-1990s as the country was preparing to celebrate 100 years of independence from Spanish rule, Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sophia visited Cebu, entered the fort, climbed up and waved the Spanish flag. It was the first time in Cebu's history that the Spanish King and Queen would step on its soil and into the very fort that was built to protect its interests more than 400 years ago.



*The Spanish royal seal emblazoned in low-relief above the main entrance of the fort.*

Today, the fort remains as one of Cebu's iconic attractions. On a normal Sunday, the fort would be filled with locals either enjoying a walk or a date with a loved one. It should also be noted that the Plaza Independencia, where the fort is located, is an archaeological field. When an underground road tunnel passing beneath the plaza was built, an archaeological rescue dig was conducted which yielded various pre-Spanish artifacts such as a [gold death mask](#) and [Chinese pottery](#).