

## Timeline

- 1792 Plantation House is built
- 1832 Jonathan is hatched
- 1882 Jonathan arrives to St Helena
- 1903 Wright brothers, in USA, undertake first 'real' airplane flight
- 1930s Cars comes into use on the island
- 1947 Royal party including Princess Elizabeth visits the island and meets Jonathan
- 1969 First people land on the moon
- 1995 Television introduced to St Helena
- 2002 Saint's British Citizenship restored
- 2007 Broadband introduced to St Helena
- 2015 Mobile phones introduced on-island
- 2017 St Helena Airport opens
- 2019 Jonathan receives Guinness World Record 'World's oldest living land animal'
- 2022 Jonathan celebrates 190th birthday and receives Guinness World Record 'Oldest chelonian to have ever lived'

One of the remotest islands on Earth; an extraordinary place to visit.

Nearly halfway between southern Africa and Brazil, the subtropical St Helena Island rises dramatically from the midst of the South Atlantic Ocean.

The 47 sq. mile island is home to a globally important natural environment, both land and sea, with spectacularly contrasting scenery and astounding biodiversity – all available within a few minutes' drive.

The island's unique culture and cuisine reflect the melting pot of peoples and nationalities that have transited St Helena since its 1502 discovery. The community of around 4,400 'Saints' is renowned for being safe (serious crime is a rarity), welcoming (the driver of each car waves to the other as they pass) and more deeply connected to 'people and planet' than to modern technology (mobile phones were introduced in late 2015).

An off-the-beaten-track, bucket-list location, St Helena is a breath of fresh air in today's busy modern world.

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## Plantation and Jonathan



## Plantation House

Plantation House was built in 1792, as a country residence for the island's governors and as part of the existing plantations (now the gardens below the tortoise viewing corridor). At the time, the East India Company still controlled the island and slavery was prevalent. The plantations were run by the EIC and worked by the EIC's slaves. The house also had slaves working there until abolition of slavery in 1834.

The house has 35 rooms, most of them very spacious, each connected by passages and archways. The main entrance hall is dominated by **large paintings** of King George V and Queen Mary. The dining room is the largest room in the house, able to accommodate up to 22 people for formal dining. The **Duke of Wellington dined here** on his way back from India in 1805, and the chandelier is partially the original chandelier from Longwood House (where Napoleon spent the majority of his on-island exile).

Built by Governor Sir Hudson Lowe around 1816, the **library** has been referred to as 'the heart of the house', its glass-fronted **bookcases** holding more than **2,000 volumes**.

The **gardens** below Plantation are partially connected to the house; one piece being used to grow produce for the Governor's residence, and the other pieces rented to local farmers.

Although today Plantation is the formal residence of each Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, requests can still be made to book the house for **receptions, exhibitions** and **events**, accommodating up to 300 guests.

## The governors

A parchment roll bearing the names of all St Helena's governors is mounted in Plantation's main corridor. From 1659 to 1828, **31 governors** were employed by the East India Company, including the first **St Helenian-born** governor, John Goodwin. In 1834, administration of the island was transferred to the **British Crown** and since then more than 30 governors have been employed. The first **female governor**, Lisa Honan (nee Phillips), was appointed in April 2016.

## The tortoises

The grounds of Plantation House have long been home to **giant tortoises**. As of early 2023, four tortoises were living within the grounds: **Jonathan, David, Emma** and **Fred**. The former two were brought into St Helena in the 1960s, while Fred was gifted to Plantation by the Honorary French Consul in 1991 (Fred had spent 19 previous years at Longwood House). The tortoises are cared for by the Plantation House team as well as the local veterinary department. They spend their days grazing the lawns, ambling through the grounds, sleeping and being hand-fed their favourite fruits and veggies (in order to keep their beaks healthy). The **tortoise viewing corridor** allows visitors to view the tortoises at any time.

## Jonathan the Tortoise

Jonathan holds **two Guinness World Records**: The world's oldest living land animal, and the oldest chelonian to have ever lived. His birth year has been calculated using shell measurements and archive information; 2022 was celebrated as his **190th birthday year**.

Jonathan is one of few surviving **Seychelles Giant**

**Tortoises**. He arrived to St Helena in 1882, as a mature adult of at least 50 years, presented as a **gift to the Governor**. By 2022, he had seen more than 30 governors pass through Plantation House. A familiar figure through generations of Saints, Jonathan is known as **St Helena's national treasure** and is featured on the local 5p coin. During the visit of the British Royal Family in 1947, photographs were captured of the Queen offering Jonathan a banana.

## Plantation Forest

Explore the **tranquil**, shaded Plantation Forest, following the **nature trail** through groves of **bamboo** and **eucalyptus**, enjoying the **bird life** and stopping off at the viewing points.

Of interest to dark history fans, an area called 'Butcher's Grave' is also located along the nature trail. Two headstones sit side-by-side, one (marked as the burial site of 'Margaret') bearing a skull and two arrows and the other a butcher's cleaver crossed by two bars. **Dark history** stories exist about how Margaret died, and why the graves and positioned as they are.

## Tours

**Plantation House tours** lead visitors through the house, then offer a look at **Jonathan and his companions**, ending with a complimentary cup of tea or St Helena Coffee (guests can also purchase cream scones/cakes and souvenirs). Each tour lasts approximately an hour.

The library is also available for visitors to enjoy the large volumes of books. For more information on booking a tour or visiting the library, please contact the Tourist Office.