



Pretoria is an historic city with many important monuments. The most prominent of these is the Voortrekker Monument, located just South of Pretoria. This massive granite structure located on a hilltop, was designed by architect, Gerard Moerdijk. The cornerstone was laid on Monument Hill, 16 December 1938, by three descendants of Voortrekker leaders: the granddaughter of Andries Pretorius, the great granddaughter of Hendrik Potgieter and the great granddaughter of Piet Retief.

Under the foundation stone is buried a copy of the Covenant vow made by the Voortrekkers on the eve of the Battle of Blood River, 16 December 1838, a copy of the anthem ***Die Stem*** and a copy of the land deal for Natal, signed by Dingaan, King of the Zulus after Piet Retief had fulfilled the conditions he had required. The monument was inaugurated 16 December 1949, by Prime Minister D.F. Malan.



### Visual History

The Voortrekker Monument is 40 metres high, with a base of 40m by 40m. It contains the largest marble frieze in the world. The frieze consist of 27 marble relief panels depicting the history of the Great Trek, the life, struggles and fervent Christian Faith of the Voortrekkers. In many ways the massive marble frieze depicting the vision, journeys, sufferings and achievements of the Voortrekkers parallels the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt.

### Cenotaph

In the centre of the floor of this Hall of Heroes is a large circular opening, through which the Cenotaph can be viewed. The Cenotaph, situated in the centre of the monument is the central focus. The architect intended the Cenotaph to resemble an altar, symbolic of the altar established by Noah after the Flood, and by Abraham, the Father of the Faithful.

### The Blessings of God

Through an opening in the dome a ray of sunlight shines at 12 o' clock on 16 December each year, falling on the centre of the Cenotaph, highlighting the words: "*Ons vir jou Suid Afrika*". This ray of light is to symbolise God's blessings on the lives and endeavours of the Voortrekkers.

The Cenotaph hall is decorated with the flags of the various Voortrekker Republics and contains wall tapestries depicting the travels and achievements of the Voortrekkers and display cases with artefacts from the Great Trek, including many Bibles, Hymn books and Psalms.

### Centenary Flame

Against the Northern wall of the hall is a nave with a lantern in which a flame has been burning ever since the centenary of the Great Trek, 1938. It was in that year that the symbolic ox-wagon trek, which began in Cape Town, arrived at Monument Hill where the monument's foundation stone was then laid.

### **Through Many Dangers**

Visitors to the monument enter through a black wrought iron gate made up of assegais. Surrounding the Voortrekker monument is a laager of 64 ox-wagons, the same number of wagons as were used at the Battle of Blood River.

### **Christian Civilisation**

At the foot of the Voortrekker monument stands Anton van Wouw's, stone sculpture of a Voortrekker woman and her two children. As the children look to their mother for love and guidance, she looks up to the Lord for strength and wisdom. On each side of this sculpture, wildebeest are chiselled into the walls of the monument, depicting the dangers of the wilderness in which the mother, representative of Christian civilisation, was establishing her home.

### **Leaders**

On each outside corner of the Voortrekker monument, there is a statue representing Piet Retief, Andries Pretorius, Hendrik Potgieter and a fourth leader, meant to represent all the other Voortrekkers.

### **Design**

The original design by Moerdijk had been rejected for its resemblance to an Egyptian temple, including a causeway linking to Egyptian obelisks. Public participation helped to determine the final design of the Voortrekker monument. Gerard Moerdijk was the chief architect of 80 Reformed Churches in South Africa. The Greek cross floor plan reflected the fact that the New Testament was initially revealed in Greek. The centrality of the Word of God was emphasized. The monument's huge upper dome was designed to draw the visitors eyes upwards, towards God who is our Creator, Sovereign Lord and Eternal Judge. As God communicates in general revelation through nature and in special revelation through Scripture, Moerdijk determined to focus on the Word of God and the Works of God, both in history and in nature.

### **Creation Mandate**

A beautiful garden of indigenous flowers, plants and trees surrounds the monument, reflecting

our duty to fulfil the Creation Mandate. The 3.41km squared area around the monument was declared a nature reserve in 1992. Zebra, blesbuck, mountain reedbuck, springbok and impala flourish in this nature reserve.

### **The Great Commission**

The Bible presented by the English speaking 1820 Settlers to the departing Voortrekkers, is prominent in the marble historical frieze, emphasizing the importance of the Great Commission. God has placed us at the foot of Africa to take the light of the Gospel of Christ throughout Africa.

### **Consecration**

From a distance, the Voortrekker monument resembles an altar, symbolising the Afrikaans people's determination to be consecrated to God, for the fulfilment of the Cultural Mandate, to care for God's Creation and to develop civilisation in the wilderness, and a commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission throughout Africa.

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