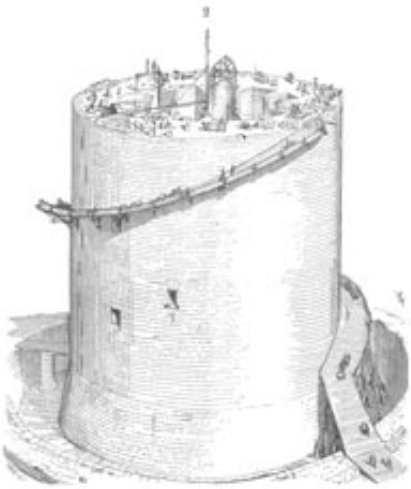


# Inside a Medieval Castle

The rooms where the lord of a castle, his family and his knights lived and ate and slept were in the **Keep** (called the Donjon), the rectangular tower inside the walls of a castle. This was meant to be the strongest and safest place.

The outer wall of a castle was called **Bailey**. This was where buildings for the castle's cattle, horses and servants lived. Some of the soldiers needed to defend the castle might live in part of the gatehouse known as the **Barbican**.



**The Donjon**

In medieval castles, the lord and his followers carried out most of their daily life in the Donjon. 'Dungeon' comes from donjon as the prisoners were kept there, though down in the darkest, dampest parts way below. There were also rooms for storing food. They had to be kept stocked with food to last for a long time in case there was a siege. People in the castle would also need water, so there was almost always a well here too. There were kitchens and pantries where food was stored for everyday preparation. The Great Hall and the bedchambers were there too. The Donjon could be as much as 70 metres high, and often a watchtower where sentries kept watch and where the lord's flag flew from the top.

### **The Great Hall**

This was the most important room in a castle. All the members of the household sat down to eat at tables. It was where feasts were held for special days, or when there were guests. King Arthur's Pentecost Feast took place in his Great Hall. A lord or king carried on nearly all the business of the castle there, running of his estate, listening to reports from his bailiff or his reeve (the men who managed affairs on his land for him) and hearing complaints from one peasant about another.

### The Bedchamber

Mice were a problem in the Middle Ages. There was a pole in the bedchamber for hanging clothes on at night so the mice wouldn't nibble them. People didn't wear anything in bed except a nightcap and they slept half sitting up. Nightshirts weren't worn until the 14th Century!



### Kitchen

Food was roasted or boiled in cauldrons over a fire on a hearth made out of large blocks of stone. The washing was done in a tub on the stone floor nearby.

A wealthy knight, his family and guests ate well. Unlike most people, they had plenty of meat like deer, goose and rabbit. On Fridays and Holy Days meat was forbidden by the church, so they ate fish or eels. If there was a special feast, the people working in the kitchens would prepare wild boar, roast swan, or even roast peacock, served with all its feathers as decoration. Some of these would be caught by the lord of the castle and his friends while out hunting with their hawks.

### Toilets & Bathrooms

Many castles had stone toilets built over holes in the outer walls. These emptied into a pit way below. The Teutonic Knights (warrior-monks of central Europe) of Poland used to murder their enemies by inviting them to be guests at the castle only to hurl them down the toilet.

Medieval castles did not have running water, yet people did like to bathe at least once a year. In some castles there was a room next to the kitchen where they bathed in groups. The lord

might have hot water brought to his bedchamber and poured into a big wooden tub, where he sat on a low stool in. The water might have perfume or rose leaves sprinkled in it. Soap was made of sheep fat with ashes and soda. Teeth were cleaned by scraping them with a hazel twig and rubbing them with a woollen cloth.

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