

The King's Bedchamber

The room is approximately 8 metres square, with an enormous four poster bed in the centre, its foot towards you. It's over 4 metres tall with a pink damask silk coverlet and bed head. It has pink silk curtains lined with blue ruched silk that sweep the floor. Around the top of the canopy is an elaborate frieze made of stiffened pink fabric cut out into a pattern of leaves and curlicues, almost like a crown.

Admission to the King's Bedchamber was a privilege to which all ambitious courtiers aspired. Like King Louis the Fourteenth of France at Versailles, Charles II would have conducted state business from his bed. Courtiers would witness and even assist him getting up and into his clothes, being washed and shaved and his long black wig fitted on, a ritual that often took several hours. However, Charles II died before he could sleep here, although his brother James did, and two hundred years later, Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's Consort, used it as a dressing room.

There's a fireplace on the right with Delft tiles and two carved wooden lions. They stand upright with their backs against the sides of the surround, supporting the mantelpiece on their heads, their teeth bared in a snarl. Over it is de Wet's painting of the Infant Hercules still in his cradle, proving his strength by strangling a serpent.

Hercules makes another appearance overhead in an ornate and exuberant ceiling painting, again painted by de Wet.