

Venetian Walls of Heraklion

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This is considered the best-preserved 15th–16th century fortification in the world and the most intact example of fortification in the Mediterranean.

History

Heraklion has existed under the same name since the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, originally serving as the port for the Minoan city of Knossos.

During the first Byzantine period, before the Arab conquest, the settlement was known as Kastro (Castle), due to its defensive wall. Remnants of this Byzantine wall have been discovered near Heraklion's port.

In 824 AD, Byzantine Crete fell to the Saracen Arabs led by Abu Hafs Umar, also known as Apochapsis. They destroyed the then-capital of Crete, Gortys, as it was inland and unsuitable for their seafaring needs. In contrast, the small fortified settlement of Heraklion was ideally located to serve as a base for their raids across the Mediterranean.

The Saracens built a strong fortification around Heraklion, using unbaked bricks reinforced with goat and pig hair. The walls were broad enough to allow two carriages to pass side by side. A deep trench surrounded the walls, which could be quickly filled with seawater, providing an additional line of defense. Due to this trench, the Arabs named the city Trench Castle (Rabdh el Khantak). This name later evolved to "Chandax" under the Byzantines and "Candia" under the Venetians.

Overview

Purpose: Excursion	Type: Castle	Country: Greece
City: Irakleio	Zip code: 712 01	

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Greek Map