

Venetian Fortress Rocca a Mare

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35.3446247, 25.1368624



The first fortifications on the site likely date back to the Arab period (9th–10th centuries). There is also mention of a tower called the Castellum Communis at the harbor entrance during the Second Byzantine period (10th–13th centuries). Several travelers who mapped Heraklion included a tower at the port, with the earliest known sketch by Buondelmonti in 1429.

In the mid-14th century, the introduction of gunpowder in Europe led to major advancements in warfare technology. By the mid-15th century, Heraklion's fortifications were deemed inadequate, and the Castellum Communis was no longer effective for defense. In 1462, the Venetian Senate approved a large-scale fortification plan to protect both Heraklion and its surrounding suburbs, using the newly developed bastion system. As part of this plan, the old harbor tower was demolished in 1523 and replaced by the Koules fortress, which remains standing today.

The natural rocky outcrop at the harbor entrance was heavily built up to serve as the foundation for the new fortress, covering an area of 3,600 square meters. The construction process was unique: old ships filled with stone from the island of Dia were sunk off the north side of the harbor mole, creating a breakwater and expanding the area for the fortress.

Overview

Purpose: Excursion	Type: Castle	Country: Greece
City: Irakleio	Zip code: 712 02	

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Greek Map