

Methoni Castle

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The Castle of Methoni – covering an area of approximately 93 acres – consists of two parts. To the south stretches the city, enclosed by a simple wall with towers at regular intervals, while in the northern part, which is defensively reinforced, as it is the most vulnerable, the city fortress, seat of the military commander at times, is located. The two sections are separated by an intermediate low wall reinforced with five towers.

The walls of the fortress are protected by a wide moat and reinforced by two bastions that dominate the northern side of the castle. In the middle of the same side opens the central entrance gate, which is made of rectangularly carved poroliths and has elaborate decoration on its pilasters. The castle still has six gates, three of which are on the port side. Most of the gates open on the ground floor of the tower and are protected by barricades and lintels.

The castle walls are constructed of roughly hewn stones with a strong binding mortar, they have ramparts which are accessible from the promenade which is accessed from inside the two parts of the castle. The walls are reinforced at intervals with towers, most of which survive at a very low height. Depending on the needs and developments of the fortification architecture to meet the new requirements of the art of war, the walls are strengthened or reconstructed.

Various buildings are preserved within the castle. In its central part known as the "square of weapons" there is the Transfiguration Church of Sotiros, a one-room, wooden-roofed church that was probably built during the 2nd Venetian rule. Near it and in contact with the western wall there is a square building of small dimensions with a pyramidal cover which served as a gunpowder warehouse and dates back to the first Venetian period. Along the central route of the castle, two Ottoman baths are preserved which consist of several vaulted rooms, each of which had different uses (dressing room, warm room, hot room). They date from the first period of the Turkish occupation. Nearby, the base of the minaret is preserved from a now destroyed mosque. The mosque was built on the site of a three-aisled basilica, the outer walls of which were reinforced with buttresses. It is probably the church of Saint John the Theologian.

A characteristic architecture of Methoni is Bourtzi, a small seaside fort, built on a small islet to the south of the castle. It consists of an octagonal tower, which is surrounded by a low octagonal wall. The tower is

built on two levels and is covered with a semi-cylindrical dome. Its ground floor is occupied by a four-sided cistern. An inclined level leads both to the perimeter of the perimeter wall and to the floor of the tower, where a hall with cannon ports is formed around the perimeter. On the inner walls you can see the joists that would have supported four wooden floors, today destroyed. The construction of the fort began shortly before 1500 by the Venetians and was completed by the Ottomans in the 16th century. Bourtzi was part of the sea fortification of Methoni and served various purposes over the years: it was used as the headquarters of the guard for the control of the port, as a lighthouse, a prison, but also a refuge for the inhabitants during periods of siege.

Most of the testimonies about the castle of Methoni come mainly from the travelers and pilgrims who used its port as a necessary sea hub in their travels to record their impressions and from the painters and cartographers who thought to depict the castle, thus offering valuable knowledge about the way of developing its form.

Ioanna Angelopoulou, archaeologist

Overview

Purpose: Excursion	Type: Castle	Country: Greece
City: Methoni		