

The religious monuments of the city of Rhodes

The expression "Rhodes, the crossroads of civilizations" is experienced literally by the visitor of the island's religious monuments, where churches, mosques and synagogues have managed to co-exist throughout the course of time. These sacred monuments make up the religious part of the image of Rhodes and give it its universal flavor.

A tour of the religious monuments of Rhodes will give to the visitor the opportunity to discover this universal dimension of the island and experience a different part of its history.

● The Medieval City

The Medieval City of Rhodes maintains to a large extent the architecture of the Knights' Period (1310-1522 AD). With the arrival of the order of St. John of Jerusalem on Rhodes in 1310 AD the city's architecture and art was enriched with Western influences.

Two trends are visible in the ecclesiastical architecture: The first one concerns the Roman Catholic churches where the Gothic architecture was applied as it was configured in the Holy Land and in Cyprus, where the Knights were prior to their arrival in Rhodes. It lent and borrowed many elements from the local architecture and the Byzantine tradition. It adapted to the local materials and the Rhodian limestone, which was used extensively, creating unique local decorative elements. During the last period of the Knights' stay on the island, the Renaissance art of the West did not leave untouched the local architecture and art in general.

The second ecclesiastical architectural trend concerns the Greek Orthodox churches that strictly adhered to the Byzantine tradition.

Today two of these churches are orthodox and operate as parishes.

These are:

- 1) The church of Agios Fanourios (13th century AD).
- 2) The church of Agios Panteleimon (1480 AD).

● Churches that were not turned into mosques

During the Ottoman Period it appears these churches were not used as Muslim mosques since they were most likely destroyed during the second siege in 1522 AD. These are:

- 1) Panagia tou Bourgou (Virgin Mary of Burgos) (first half of the 14th century AD).
- 2) Panagia tis Nikis (Virgin Mary of Victory) (15th century AD).

● Churches that were turned into mosques

All the churches of the Medieval city of Rhodes, after the occupation of the island by the Ottomans in 1522 AD were converted into Muslim mosques. The churches of the Medieval City are of particular interest since after the interventions to certain parts by the Archaeological Service, the image these churches had prior to the Ottoman occupation of the island in 1522 AD has been restored. The visitor is able to see the traces of the interventions which these churches sustained throughout the duration of the four centuries of Ottoman occupation and their conversion into mosques, mesgits (little mosques) and even residences. These particularities of the monuments of the Medieval City are a must for the visitor to see. Some of these monuments are:

- 1) Panagia tou Kastrou (Virgin Mary of the Castle) (11th century AD). This is the largest and most ancient church that has been preserved inside the Medieval City.
- 2) Agia Triada church on Ippoton street (Khan Zade Meschidi) (14th-15th century AD).
- 3) The ruins of Saint John's of the Knights Catholic church.
- 4) The monastery of Agios Georgios (Chourmali mosque) (14th-15th century AD).
- 5) The Holy Apostles and Old Mess complex (Imaret) (14th-15th century AD).
- 6) Agios Nikolaos or Saint Augustine's Monastery (14th-15th century AD).
- 7) Agia Kyriaki (Barasani mesgit) (second half of the 15th century to beginning of 16th century AD).
- 8) Agia Ekaterini (Ilk Michrab) (14th century AD).
- 9) Agia Triada in the Jewish district (Holy Trinity) – Dolapli Mosque (15th-16th century AD).



Panagia tou Kastrou

● Mosques

Besides turning Christian churches into mosques, the Ottomans also built some new mosques or mesgits (little mosques) that are considered excellent samples of the Islamic architecture such as:

- 1) Ibrahim Pasha Mosque (1540-1541 AD). This is the oldest mosque of Rhodes. The mosque of Ibrahim Pasha still operates as a mosque to this day.
- 2) Sultan Mustafa's Mosque (1764-1765 AD). Today the Muslim community of Rhodes still uses this mosque for ceremonies.
- 3) Suleiman's Mosque: According to local tradition the mosque was built in the 16th century AD by Suleiman.
- 4) Mehmet Aga Mosque (18th-19th century AD).
- 5) Sidriyan Mosque (1888 AD).
- 6) Retzep Pasha Mosque (1588 AD).
- 7) Murat Reis Mosque (outside the Medieval City). There are many tombs of famous people buried there while they were exiled in Rhodes as well as the tomb of Murat Reis.

● Kahal Shalom Synagogue

It's the oldest synagogue in Greece and the only one remaining out of the six synagogues that existed in the Jewish quarter "La Juderia" of the Medieval City. It was built in 1577 AD and is currently used for Jewish ceremonies, New Year's and Atonement Day.

● The City of Rhodes outside the walls

After the Ottoman occupation of the city in 1522 AD, the Christians settled outside the walls in neighborhoods called "Marasia". The areas that were given to them were actually gardens or mansions that had been destroyed by the siege. Each Marasi had its own church and took its name from the church.

The Marasia of Rhodes with their churches are:

- 1) The Metropolis.
- 2) Agios Ioannis.
- 3) Agia Anastasia.
- 4) Agioi Anargyroi.
- 5) Agios Georgios o Ano.
- 6) Agios Georgios o Kato or "Kamens" and
- 7) Agios Nikolaos.
- 8) A new Marasi was built later (Niochori) with its church, "The Presentation of the Virgin Mary", which is also the site of the tomb of the patron saint of Rhodes Town, Agios Constantinos o Ydreos.

Initially these churches were small and humbly built. Later on, at the beginning of the 18th century AD permission was granted for new churches to be built. This is when a new style appeared which is only encountered in the Dodecanese islands and the southeastern coasts of Asia Minor. This style was called "Dodecanese type basilica" and it imitates the Gothic domes of the Knights.

Other churches worth visiting are:

- 9) Evangelismos tis Theotokou (The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary) church: This is the former Catholic Cathedral of Saint John (Chiesa di San Giovanni) and is currently the orthodox Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. It was built to mimic the church of Saint John the Baptist of Kollakia during 1924-1925 AD. The frescoes were completed from 1951 to 1961 AD by the Byzantine hagiographer Fotis Kontoglou and his two assistants Ioannis Terzis and Pantelis Odambasis.
- 10) The Catholic church of Santa Maria or Panagia tis Nikis (1743 AD), and
- 11) The Catholic church of Saint Francis of Assisi (1939 AD). This is the official Parish Church of the Latin Church of Rhodes.
- 12) The cave Church of Agios Nikolaos. ■

Municipality of Rhodes
Department of Tourism

RHODES TOWN



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