

Round 100 to 154

Site IP_Anastasian Wall_5thCE
Anastasian Wall

Also known as the Long Wall, this was a defensive barrier built 65 kilometers outside of the city of Constantinople, stretching in length from the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea (Luttwak, 76-77).

Date

The wall is accredited to the emperor Anastasios I (r. 491-518), but it is possible that he only completed, repaired, and/or enhanced a structure that had begun being built during the reign of Leo I (r. 457-474). The wall was then abandoned in the early 7th century because it required too many troops to guard and maintain.

Location

There is no exact latitude/longitude coordinate for the wall as it is simply too long a structure. The wall's southern tip lay on the Sea of Marmara at a point slightly west of Selymbria, and ran all the way north to end at the peninsula of Thrace on the Black Sea. (Croke, 60).

Commentary

While we know the start and end points of the wall, its exact length is only guesswork, as the extent to which it curved around natural impediments is not known for sure. Scholarly estimates range from 45 to 77 kilometers. The wall had a thickness of 3.3 m (11 ft) and a height over 5 m (16 ft). In terms of similar structures of this era, [here](#) is a photo of Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans in what is today Northern England.

The wall was created as a first line of defense for the city of Constantinople and the immediate area, designed to force out barbarians, bandits, and other enemies of the empire. Says Edward Luttwak, "it was the great virtue of the Long Wall that it formed a defensive perimeter 65 kilometers beyond the Theodosian Wall, giving depth to the defense of Constantinople". The one great flaw came from the same source as its strength. The length of the wall made it very difficult to defend. While "if properly manned by sentries and patrols, the Long Wall could stop bandits", Luttwak mentions that this rarely was achieved. To provide an adequate number of sentries, patrols, and reaction units, the wall required an active garrison of at least ten thousand soldiers (Luttwak, 77).

It seems to be the case that the wall was in practice not very effective, because it did take so many troops to properly be used, and possibly because it was constructed in haste. It was for this reason that it was abandoned in the 7th century, only some two hundred years since it had been erected at assumingly great expense.

The wall, since being vacated in the 7th century, was left to fall into a state of unchecked disrepair. While most of the defensive structure has not lasted to the modern day, some remnants are found in the area. Remains of the wall are visible in Karacaköy, Yalıköy, and İhsaniye. For a photo of the wall as it remains today, almost completely overgrown, click [here](#). For digital 3d reconstructions, click [here](#)

For more information on the Anastasian Long wall, see [this article](#) in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium.

Bibliography

Croke, Brian. "The Date of the 'Anastasian Long Wall' in Thrace" *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 23 no. 1. Durham: Duke University Press, 1982.

Luttwak, Edward N. *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

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- (3) Digital reconstruction done by Richard Bayliss, 1997

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N. Krieger