

= Fortezza of Rethymno =

The Fortezza ( Greek : ????????? , from Italian for " fortress " ) is the citadel of the city of Rethymno in Crete , Greece . It was built by the Venetians in the 16th century , and was captured by the Ottomans in 1646 . By the early 20th century , many houses were built within the citadel . These were demolished after World War II , leaving only a few historic buildings within the Fortezza . Today , the citadel is in good condition and is open to the public .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

The Fortezza is built on a hill called Paleokastro ( meaning " Old Castle " ) , which was the site of ancient Rhithymna 's acropolis . Between the 10th and 13th centuries , the Byzantines established a fortified settlement to the east of the hill . It was called Castrum Rethemi , and it had square towers and two gates . The fortifications were repaired by Enrico Pescatore in the beginning of the 13th century . After Crete fell to the Republic of Venice , the settlement became known as the Castel Vecchio or Antico Castello , which both mean " old castle . "

Under Venetian rule , a small harbour was built in Rethymno , which became the third most important city on Crete after Heraklion and Chania . On 8 April 1540 , a line of fortifications began to be built around the city . The walls were designed by the architect Michele Sanmicheli , and were completed in around 1570 . These fortifications were not strong enough to withstand a large assault , and when Uluç Ali Reis attacked in 1571 , the Ottomans captured and sacked the city .

= = = Construction and later Venetian rule = = =

Following the fall of Cyprus to the Ottomans in 1571 , Crete became the largest remaining Venetian overseas possession . Since Rethymno had been sacked , it was decided that new fortifications needed to be built to protect the city and its harbour . The new fortress , which was built on the Paleokastro hill , was designed by the military engineer Sforza Pallavicini according to the Italian bastioned system .

Construction began on 13 September 1573 , and it was complete by 1580 . The fortress was built under the master builder Giannis Skordilis , and a total of 107 @, @ 142 Cretans and 40 @, @ 205 animals took part in its construction .

Although the original plan had been to demolish the old fortifications of Rethymno and move the inhabitants into the Fortezza , it was too small to house the entire city . The walls along the landward approach to the city were left intact , and the Fortezza became a citadel housing the Venetian administration of the city . It was only to be used by the inhabitants of the city in the case of an Ottoman invasion . Over the years , a number of modifications were made to the fortress . Nonetheless , it was never truly secure as it lacked a ditch and outworks , and the ramparts were rather low .

= = = Ottoman rule and recent history = = =

On 29 September 1646 , during the Fifth Ottoman ? Venetian War , an Ottoman force besieged Rethymno , and the city 's population took refuge in the Fortezza . Conditions within the citadel deteriorated , due to disease and a lack of food and ammunition . The Venetians surrendered under favourable terms on 13 November .

The Ottomans did not make any major changes to the Fortezza , except the construction of a ravelin outside the main gate . They also built some houses for the garrison and the city 's administration , and they converted the cathedral into a mosque . The fort remained in use until the early 20th century .

By the early 20th century , many residential buildings were located in the Fortezza . Following the end of World War II , the city began to expand and many of the inhabitants moved elsewhere in the city . Rethymno 's landward fortifications and many houses within the Fortezza were demolished at this point , but the walls of the Fortezza were left intact . At one point , the local prison was housed within the Fortezza .

Large @-@ scale restoration work has been under way since the early 1990s . The Fortezza is managed by the Ministry of Culture and Sports , and it is open to the public . The Ottoman ravelin now houses the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno .

= = Layout = =

The Fortezza of Rethymno has an irregular plan , and its walls have a total length of 1 @,@ 307 m ( 4 @,@ 288 ft ) . The walls contain the following demi @-@ bastions :

St Nicolas Bastion ? the demi @-@ bastion at the east end of the fortress . It contains a Venetian @-@ era building which was possibly originally a storehouse or laboratory .

St Paul Bastion ? the demi @-@ bastion at the southeast end of the fortress . It is also known as Santa Maria Bastion .

St Elias Bastion ? the demi @-@ bastion at the south end of the fortress . It contains the Erofyli open @-@ air theatre , which was opened in 1993 .

St Lucas Bastion ? the demi @-@ bastion at the southwest end of the fortress .

The fort 's main gate is located on the east side , between St Nicolas and St Paul Bastions . It is protected by an Ottoman @-@ era ravelin , which now serves as the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno . Two smaller gates are located in the west and north sides of the fortress .

A number of buildings are located within the Fortezza , including :

the Mosque of Sultan Ibrahim , which was formerly the Cathedral of St Nicolas .

a building near the mosque , which was possibly the Bishop 's residence .

the House of the Rector , which was the residence of the governor of the province of Rethymno . Only its prisons have survived .

the Council Building , which housed part of the Venetian administration of Rethymno .

the churches of St Theodore and St Catherine , which were both built in the late 19th century .

The fortress also contains an armoury , two gunpowder magazines , storage rooms and several cisterns .