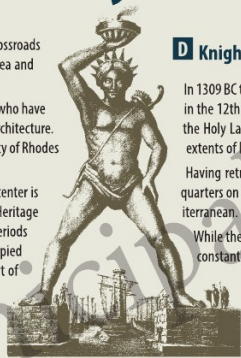


# The history of Rhodes

Rhodes is the largest island of the Dodecanese. It is situated at the crossroads of the two sea routes of the Mediterranean, between the Aegean Sea and the coasts of the Middle East. It has known many civilizations.

Throughout its long history Rhodes was inhabited by different peoples who have left their mark on all aspects of the island's culture: art, language and architecture. Its strategic location brought to the island great wealth and made the city of Rhodes one of the most prominent cities of ancient Greece.

The capital of Rhodes is located at the northern tip of the island. At its center is the Medieval City, which in 1988 was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It is a mixture of different architectures from various historical periods dominated by the period when The Order of St John of Jerusalem occupied Rhodes and the Ottoman period. Today the Medieval City is a living part of the modern city with many commercial, tourist and entertainment activities. Many Rhodesians have their permanent places of residence inside the Medieval City.



## D Knights' Period

In 1309 BC the city was sold to the Order of St John of Jerusalem. The Order was founded in the 12th century AD in Jerusalem to provide care for poor, sick or injured pilgrims to the Holy Land and Crusaders but soon evolved to a military unit which acquired large extents of land.

Having retreated from Jerusalem and then from Cyprus, the Order founded its Headquarters on Rhodes and at that specific time acquired a leading role in the Eastern Mediterranean.

While the Knights were in Rhodes, the fortifications were expanded, modernized and constantly reinforced. One hospital, one palace and many churches were some of

the many public buildings built during that time. These buildings are outstanding examples of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. Despite the hostilities with the Ottoman Empire, sea trade was a source of wealth and the markets of the city were thriving. During the occupation of the Knights, the island of Rhodes flourished and the relations between the Knights and locals were characterized by tolerance and often by close cooperation. Most of the streets of the Medieval City coincide with the streets of the ancient city and the division of the city into two zones was preserved. The Order in Rhodes kept very well organized archives which included documents published by the administrative authorities, correspondence, legal documents and many other such records.

These archives are an important source of information on this period and are preserved to this day at the National Library of Malta.

The city was divided into two zones by an inner wall. The Northern part, known as Chastel, Chateau, Castrum, Castellum or Conventus, was the site of the Grand Master's Palace, the Latin Cathedral, the Catholic Bishop's residence, the various "tongues" quarters, the Knights houses, a hospital etc. The Southern part, known as ville, burgus or burgum was the area where the laymen lived and included the market, synagogues, churches and public and commercial buildings

## E Ottoman Period

In 1522 AD the Ottoman Turks captured the city after a second long siege. New buildings were erected: mosques, public baths and residences for the new conquerors. The Greek were forced to leave the fortified city and move to areas outside the walls. During the Ottoman rule, Rhodes lost its international character. The city maintained its primary financial function as a market for agricultural products for the island's interior as well as for the smaller surrounding islands.

After the establishment of their sovereignty on the island, the Ottoman Turks repaired the damaged walls, converted most of the churches into mosques and transformed the larger houses into private mansions or



public buildings. This transformation was a long-term process that aimed to adapt the buildings to the Ottoman way of living.

The facades of the buildings from the Knights' Period with their sculptured decorations, the arched gates and stone walls were enriched with the random features of the Ottoman architecture adapted to the local climate and culture. During this process, most of the architectural features of the existing buildings were preserved. The most characteristic additions were the baths (usually in the back of the buildings) and the enclosed wooden balconies on the facades over the narrow streets. So, most buildings of the era of the Knights in the Medieval City were well preserved. The result was a mixture of oriental architecture with imposing western architectural elements and new buildings, which were built in the style of the local architecture of the time.

In the 19th century the decline of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the general neglect of the town and its buildings, which further deteriorated due to the strong earthquakes that often plague the area.

## F Italian Period

Italian troops captured the island as well as the rest of the Dodecanese in 1912 AD. In 1923 AD Italy established a colony, the Italian islands of the Aegean (Isole Italiane del Egeo).

The Italians demolished the houses that had been built on and beside the walls during the Ottoman era and converted the Jewish and Ottoman cemetery to a "green zone" which included the Medieval City. They preserved the remains of the Knights' period and removed all the Ottoman additions. They also re-built the Grand Master's Palace. In addition, they established an Institute for the study of the History and Culture of the region.

The Italians completed extensive infrastructure works (roads, electricity, port, etc.) and radically transformed the town of Rhodes, which was supplied with a new urban plan, building regulations and many new public and private buildings.

## G Modern Period

The English bombs that fell on the Medieval City in 1944 claimed many human lives and destroyed a great number of buildings, leaving large gaps in the urban grid. One of the first Decrees of the Greek Government - Administration designated those areas as "reserved for future excavations" and a large number of buildings as "landmark buildings".

In 1957, a new city plan was approved by a Decree and in 1960 the entire Medieval City was designated as a "protected monument" by the Ministry of Culture. In 1961 and 1963 new Decrees were issued concerning the new city plan. These Decrees provided for the widening of existing streets and the opening of new ones. These decisions were not implemented in the Medieval City however, due to the resistance of the Archaeological Service. In 1988, the Medieval City of Rhodes was designated as a World Heritage City by UNESCO. ■

## A Classical Period

The island was inhabited at the end of the Neolithic period (4000 BC). The city of Rhodes was formed by the cities of Ialysos, Kamiros and Lindos in 408 BC, and prospered for three centuries during its Golden Age, when sea trade, skilled shipbuilders, and open-minded political and diplomatic moves kept the city strong and prosperous until Roman times.

Rhodes produced exceptional art during this period. The most renowned creation was the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, built by the Lindian sculptor Chares between 304 and 293 BC. The construction of the Colossus took twelve years and was completed in 282 BC. For many years, the statue was possibly situated at the harbour entrance and represented the sun god Helios, until a great earthquake struck Rhodes in 226 BC. The city sustained severe damage and the statue of the Colossus fell.

The urban plan of the ancient city of Rhodes was based on the urban design and philosophical ideas of the famous ancient Greek urban planner Hippodamos of Miletus. Decades of archaeological excavations brought to light the street plan of the ancient city. The blocks (insulae) had the dimensions 47.70 x 26.50 m and all had the same size. Each of these included two houses surrounded by streets measuring 5-6 meters in width. Larger neighborhoods formed areas which were surrounded by larger streets measuring 8-11 meters in width. Each such area included 36 insulae or 108 houses. The ancient city had a well-constructed sewage system as well as a water supply network.

## B Roman Period

The city lost its independence in 164 BC when Rhodes became a province of the Roman Empire. However, until the 1st century AD, Rhodes was able to keep its beauty and develop into a leading center of learning for arts and science. Aside from the written sources preserved to this day, the archaeological excavations that still continue give us a clear picture of the civilization that prospered during this period.

## C Byzantine Period

During the early Christian Period (330-650 AD), Rhodes was part of the Christianized Roman Empire, which is widely known as the Byzantine Empire.

Though less significant and prosperous than in the past, the city of Rhodes was an Episcopal see and had a significant number of churches, among which there were some basilicas of impressive dimensions. At the same time it was an important military base.

The Arabs, who first appeared in the Mediterranean in the 7th century AD, attacked Rhodes and occupied it for several decades.

In the centuries to follow, the city shrank in size and was fortified with new walls. It was then divided into two zones: one was for the political and military leadership and the other for the «people». This zone reflects the social reality of the medieval times. Due to the absence of written sources there is lack of consolidated information on this era. The restoration works performed by the Italians later on, ignored and/or caused damage to the existing buildings of that time.

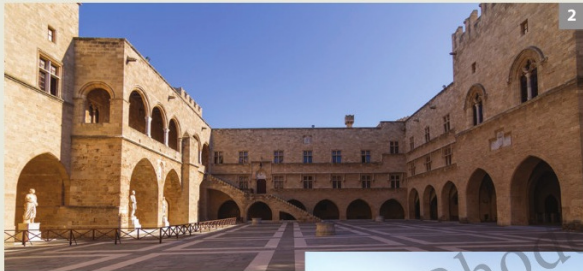


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## The sites of Rhodes



### 1. Medieval City

This is an integral part of the modern city which in 1988 was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, since it is a mixture of various historical periods, dominated by the Knights' Period and the Ottoman Period.

### 2. Palace of the Grand Master

This is one of the most important monuments of the Knights' Order. The ground floor houses two large permanent exhibits on the City of Rhodes. The first floor houses the collection from the Byzantine Museum which is currently under renovation (Lady of the Castle Cathedral). ♦ Address: Ippoton Street, Medieval City, 85 100 Rhodes. Tel.: 22413 65270.

### 3. Archaeological Museum of Rhodes

This is housed at the Hospital of Knights of the 15th century. Many archaeological findings are exhibited here, originating from different sites of Rhodes and the surrounding islands. ♦ Address: Ippoton Street, Medieval City, 85 100 Rhodes. Tel.: 22413 65256.

### 4. Museum of Modern Greek Art

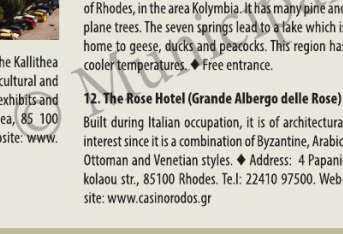
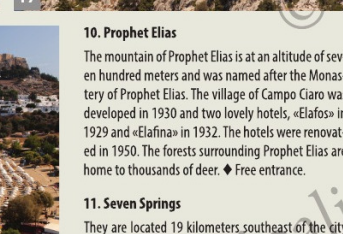
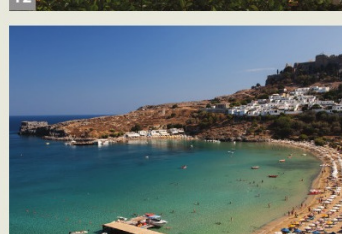
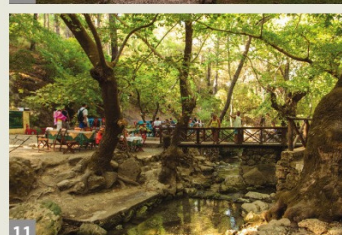
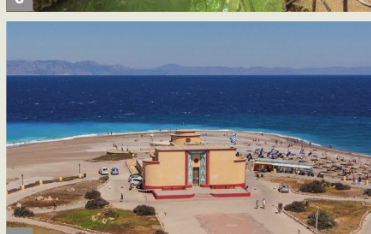
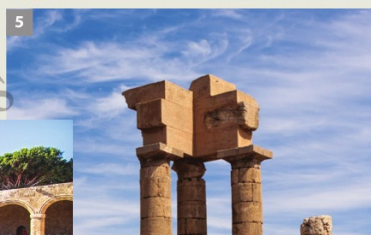
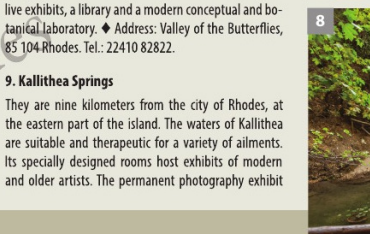
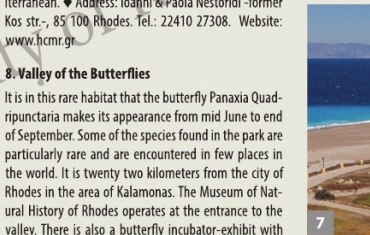
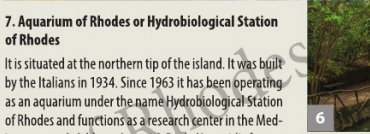
Its exhibits include painting and engraving collections representative of modern Greek art of the 20th century, many sculptures, drawings and documents of historical value. ♦ It extends into 4 buildings: a) Nestoridio Melathron (Palace) (G. Charitou sq. - «Ekato Chourmadies» 85 100 Rhodes; tel: 22410 43780-82), b) New building of Nestoridio Melathron (Ioanni & Paola Nestoridi str., 85 100 Rhodes; tel: 22410 25780), c) Municipal Gallery of Rhodes (2 Symis sq. - Entrance of the Medieval City, 85 100 Rhodes; tel: 22410 23766-36646) and d) Center of Modern Art - (Palaio Sissitio - 179 Sokratous str., Medieval City, 85 100 Rhodes; tel: 22410 36646).

### 5. Acropolis of Rhodes (Monte Smith Hill or St Stephens Hill)

Preserved in the ruins of the ancient Acropolis of Rhodes are important antiquities, such as the restored ancient Stadium of Diagoras and the small marble theater which today hosts musical and theatrical performances. On the hilltop dominates the Acropolis of the ancient city of Rhodes and the ruins of the Temple of Apollo. ♦ Free entrance.

### 6. Rodini Park

The park is three kilometers from the city of Rhodes, along the Rhodes-Lindos road. It is distinguished for its rich and diverse flora, and for its rare plants. It also houses a small zoo. The park also has a refreshment stand. ♦ Free entrance. Address: Rhodes - Lindos Road, Rodini, 85 100 Rhodes. Tel.: 22410 73077.



### 13. Lindos

Lindos is fifty five kilometers from the city of Rhodes, at the northeastern side of the island. Standing on a top of a one hundred and sixteen meter high cliff, over the landmark settlement of Lindos is the Acropolis of Lindos with the Temple of Athena Lindia from the 4th century, the Propylaea [gates], the great Hellenistic Stoa, The Byzantine church of Saint John and the headquarters of the Knights' Period. There is a second century BC trireme bas relief carved at the base of the cliff. ♦ Address: Lindos, 85 107 Rhodes. Tel.: 22440 31258 (For the house of captain Papakonstanti, contact number 22440 31613).

### 14. Monastery of Panagia Filerimos

The ancient city of Ialysos extends around the hill Filerimos, where the acropolis is located with many monuments of the Ancient, Byzantine, and Knight's Period. This is where the Monastery of Panagia of Filerimos is located. The monastery was built by the Knights in the 14th century AD at the ruins of the Byzantine church which had been built on the foundations of the Temple of Athena of Ialysos, a portion of which is still preserved to this day. ♦ Address: Filerimos Hill, 85 101 Ialysos, Rhodes. Tel.: 22410 92202.

### 15. Ancient Kamiros

It is located thirty kilometers northeast of the city of Rhodes. Ancient Kamiros was, together with Lindos and Ialysos, one of the three ancient cities of the island. It is built amphitheatrically on a hillside with a view to the sea, without fortification walls and without an acropolis. Ruins of the Hellenistic-Roman city of Kamiros are preserved on the site. ♦ Address: Ancient Kamiros, 85 106 Rhodes. Tel.: 22410 40037

### 16. Prasonisi

Prasonisi is at the northern tip of the island, ninety kilometers from the city of Rhodes. It is a small peninsula in the summer and an island in the winter and is a surfers' paradise. ♦ Free entrance.

### 17. The castle of Monolith

It is situated at the top of a huge solitary rock near the coast. It was built in the 14th century by the Knights of Saint John in order to control the sea and protect the residents from pirate raids. Preserved inside the castle are cisterns and the partially ruined white chapel of Saint Panteleimonas. ♦ Free entrance.

### 18. The medieval castle of Kritinia

It is two kilometers northwest of the village of Kritinia and fifty five kilometers from the city of Rhodes. It is a mixture of Byzantine and Medieval styles, also known as Kastellos. ♦ Free entrance.

### 19. The Knights Castle of Asklepio

Situated on a hill two hundred and fifty meters high near the village of Asklepio, it was built in the 15th century. It is surrounded by an exterior wall measuring 1.30-1.50 meters thick. Inside the fortification there are cisterns and ruins of unknown buildings. ♦ Free entrance.

### 10. Prophet Elias

The mountain of Prophet Elias is at an altitude of seven hundred meters and was named after the Monastery of Prophet Elias. The village of Campo Claro was developed in 1930 and two lovely hotels, «Elafos» in 1929 and «Elafina» in 1932. The hotels were renovated in 1950. The forests surrounding Prophet Elias are home to thousands of deer. ♦ Free entrance.

### 11. Seven Springs

They are located 19 kilometers southeast of the city of Rhodes, in the area Kolymbia. It has many pine and plane trees. The seven springs lead to a lake which is home to geese, ducks and peacocks. This region has cooler temperatures. ♦ Free entrance.

### 12. The Rose Hotel (Grande Albergo delle Rose)

Built during Italian occupation, it is of architectural interest since it is a combination of Byzantine, Arabic, Ottoman and Venetian styles. ♦ Address: 4 Papanikolaou str., 85100 Rhodes. Tel.: 22410 97500. Website: www.casinarodos.gr

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presents the yesterday and the today of the Kallithea Springs, while the space is host to many cultural and artistic functions, festivals, concerts, art exhibits and many other events. ♦ Address: Kallithea, 85 100 Rhodes. Tel.: 22410 37090 - 65691. Website: www.kallitheasprings.gr.