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 rearranged or exist throughout the course of time. Some of these monuments make up the religious part of the image of Rhodes and give its universal flavor.

A tour of the religious monuments of Rhodes will give to the visitor an 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 (1098-1522 AD). With the arrival of the order of St. John of Jerusalem on Rhodes in 1309 AD, the city's architecture and art was enriched with Western influences. Two trends are visible in the ecclesiastical architecture: The first concerns the Roman Catholic churches where the architectural style of the time was configured in the Italian style and in Greece, where the French were prior to their arrival in Rhodes. It lent and borrowed many elements from the local architecture and the Byzantine tradition, adapting 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 adhere to the Byzantine tradition.

Today, few of these churches are orthodox and operate as parishes.

These are:
1. The church of Agios Fanourios (17th century AD).
2. The church of Agios Nikolaos (18th century AD).
3. The church of Agios Ioannis (18th century AD).
4. The church of Agios Konstantinos (17th century AD).

Churches that were not turned into mosques

During the Ottoman Period it appears that these churches were sold as Muslim mosques since they were most likely destroyed during the second siege in 1522 AD. These are:
1. Panagia tou Kastrou (Virgin Mary of the Castle) (17th century AD).
2. Paraportiani church (Virgin Mary of the Gate) (17th 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, one can see the church buildings that were prior to the Ottoman occupation of the island in 1522 AD. 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, mosques (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) (16th century AD).
2. Agia Triada church or Panagia tou Kastrou (17th century AD).
3. The triumphantal arch of Saint John the Baptist church.
4. The monastery of Agios Georgios (17th century AD).
5. The Holy Apostles' Old Monastery Church (16th-17th century AD).
6. Agia Paraskevi or St. Paraskevi Monastery (17th-18th century AD).
7. Agia Paraskevi (17th century AD).
8. Agia Eleftheria (17th century AD).
9. Agia Triada church (18th century AD).
10. Church of the Holy Trinity - Dolapia Mosque (17th-18th century AD).

Mosques

Besides turning some churches into mosques, the Ottomans also built some new mosques or maqams (little mosques) that are considered excellent examples of the Islamic architecture, such as:
1. Ibrahim Pasha Mosque (1598-1591 AD). This is the oldest mosque of Rhodes. The mosque of Ibrahim Pasha still operates as a mosque to this day.
2. Siyam Asli Mosche (1641-1653 AD). Today, the Muslim community of Rhodes still uses this mosque for ceremonies.
3. Saltamaki Mosque (17th century AD).
4. Mehmert Aga Mosque (18th century AD).
5. Zaimi Mosque (16th century AD).
7. Murti Reis Mosque (17th century AD).

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 1572 AD and is currently used for Jewish ceremonies, New Year’s and Rosh Hashanah.

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 “Muras”. The areas that were given to them were actually gardens or mansions that had been destroyed by the siege. Each Muras had its own church and took its name from the church. The Muras of Rhodes with their churches are:

The religious monuments of Rhodes
Religious tours on the island of Rhodes

The forty-five villages of Rhodes maintain to a large extent the form they had during the Medieval Period. This is why these magnificent churches of Paleo-Christian and Early Christian years found in villages near one another. The main square of each village hosts one church called by the locals “the Catholicon,” with elaborate wood carvings and icons from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine era. Aside from the church of the village chapels of the island there are also many chapels scattered around the countryside.

1) The Monastery of Panaghia F newSize="347,8" size="347,8">metros. It was built at the end of the 19th century. The monastery is located in the village of Panaghia Fmetros.
2) The Monastery of the Three Archangels.
3) The Monastery of Panaghia Fmetros. The site was from ancient times particularly appealing. The exact same location near the holy tree of the city of lalysos and the ancient temple of Ilios Phallas, which in the 5th century AD was converted to a three-aisle Paleo-Christian basilica of which only the cross-shaped baptistery remains. Passing through the east gate and climbing the stone steps with the tall cypress trees to the right and left, one is in front of the Monastery of Panaghia Fmetros, dedicated to the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Right next to the church is the former monastery of the three Archangels. The site is the oldest monastery of Rhodes with significant religious and cultural foundation.

4) The Church of Agios Panteleimon. This church is a masterpiece of 17th century AD. The church has been restored and is now a major tourist attraction.

5) The Monastery of Panaghia Triada. It is one of the most significant in the island.

6) The Church of Agios Nicholas. This is a magnificent church of the 11th century AD. The church has been restored and is now a major tourist attraction.

Religious tours on the island’s west side

Church of the Assumption

Monastery of Panaghia Fmetros

Monastery of Panaghia Triada

The Katholikon of the Church of Panaghia Skadini

Monastery of Panaghia Tzoumbaka

Religious tour on the south side of Rhodes

1) The Church of the Assumption at Asklipeion. Built in 1040 AD, this Byzantine style church is full of knick-knacks adorning with cross-arches from the 4th century AD. Its 17th century frescoes are also remarkable. The old oil mill in the church yard is now a religious folk art museum.

2) The Church of the Transfiguration. It is located in Kardamili. Its construction is dated to the 15th century AD while its architecture includes many inscriptions and marble parts of columns of an older temple.

3) The Church of Agios Georgios in Lambri.

4) The Church of Agios Neokostis. This church is on the site of the ancient Asklipeion Thami. It is a poly-chromatic church with beautiful doors and Gothic arches, occupying only part of the middle aisle of the Sanctuary of the Holy Temple. It has frescoes dated to the 14th and 15th century AD.

5) The Church of Agios Pantokrator. There are five churches in this eastern Monastery.

6) The Church of Agios Nikolaos in Fournou. (14th century AD).

7) The Monastery of Panaghia Lambiri. It consists of the upper and lower Monastery. The upper Monastery is situated high on the hill of Rhodes Linde main road, overlooking one of the most beautiful bays. To reach the upper Monastery, walk up a winding path, and then, at the top, turn left into a forest of cypress trees. From the hilltop, you will get a view of the surrounding area. The lower Monastery, where the icons of the Virgin Mary and St. Luke is kept, is located on the west of Rhodes Lend main road. Beside the church there is a Museum with important religious exhibits.

8) The Church of Agios Kosmas. It is the oldest Monastery of the island. In fact, it has been restored.

9) The Church of Panaghia in Lindos. This church is a cruciform church of the 14th century AD with an apsidal altar, beamed walls and wooden slab roof. In 1814, an earthquake in the region of the island destroyed the church. In 1840, the interior floor is made of marble and white mosaics, and the frescoes of the 13th century AD were painted by George from Smirne. Beside the church there is a Museum with important religious exhibits.

10) The Church of Agios Paul. According to tradition, the church was built on the site where the Apostle preached the word of Christ during his visit to the island. The fact that the Faith of Christ was introduced to Rhodes since these apostolic times is given to by local traditions and is confirmed by the Acts of the Apostles (21, 11-17). According to these, upon their arrival in Rhodes the Apostles are said to have received a large number of converts who wanted to hear their message at this beautiful spot.

11) The Church of Agios Nikolaos “Paltis” (15th century AD).

12) The Monastery of Assumption in Intiopi. A women’s Monastery with seven nuns currently resides here. It is located on a small hill that overlooks the village of Intiopi at the beginning of the 16th century in place of the Old Monastery. The monastery is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and today houses a relics of the Virgin Mary that is dated to the 13th century AD and depicts her victorious face and the scar on her right cheek. An icon of the Virgin Mary is taken out from village to village, week after week. Today three are Monks living in the Monastery.

13) The Church of Agios Georgios “Kalamos.”

14) The Church of Agios Nikolaos “Vardas.” (1290 AD with Byzantine marble.

15) The Monastery of Agios Philemonos. It is a post-Byzantine monastery of “Dodecanese style,” built over an older Byzantine, where there formerly stood an ancient temple dedicated to Apollo, with many architectural pieces and marble columns preserved till today. Part of a relic and the seal of Saint Philemon is preserved at the Monastery.

16) The Church of Agios Nikolaos of “remembrance”.


18) The Church of Agios Mercurios (17th century AD, “Kalos”.

19) The Church of Agios Georgios (14th century AD, Panaghia). This is a beautiful folk art frescoes. One of the deities depicted is the Virgin Mary spinning wool and singing to the baby Jesus in the cot.

20) The Church of Agios Ioannis “Myronos”.

21) The Church of Panaghia Galatas. A rare 14th century icon is kept for security reasons in the church in the village of Lali. This icon shows the Virgin Mary nursing the baby Jesus.

22) The Church of Archangel Michael “Paramarthinos.” This “Dodecanese style” church was built over an older Byzantine church.

23) The Church of Agios Georgios. The church in the village of Lali has magnificent folk art murals. The visitor, upon completing his tour of the island’s religious monuments, concludes that Rhodes, an island so blessed by its geographical position and natural beauty, has experienced greatness and primitivism, success and disaster. The religious monuments of the island demonstrate this at times in a very dramatic way. The religious monuments of Rhodes that never ceased to influence humanity and the universal realm of religious art are an island full of historical memories, legends and events. It is a place whose existence reflects a strong religious conscience, an element that has shaped their character, advertised their morals and put banners in the thoughts and passions of its people. A tour of the religious monuments of Rhodes will give the visitor the opportunity to discover another dimension of the island and experience a different part of its history.

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