

THE PALACE OF THE GRAND MASTER

RHODES



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



World Heritage
Convention



The palace of the Grand Master, or Castello, is built at the highest point of the medieval city, to the north-west, and its volumes dominate the city and its harbour. It was a strong structure, indissolubly linked with the fortifications, and played an active role in the defence of the city, forming the last refuge of the population in the event of the city falling to the enemy.

The palace of the Grand Master is a roughly square building (dim: 80x75 m) designed around a large courtyard (dim: ca. 50x40 m). Built at the end of the 7th century, to act as the citadel of the Early Byzantine "fortress", it continued to play this role throughout the Byzantine period and the period of the Knights of St. John (1309-1522). The building was modified before the knights established themselves on the island; from the first quarter of the 14th century the knights began to repair the Byzantine citadel and convert it into the residence of the Grand Master and administrative centre of their state.

The main entrance is in the south facade, flanked by two imposing towers. The west facade is pierced by a gate, in front of which rises a tall, square tower, probably the work of the Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson (1476-1503).





On the north side there are underground rooms that served as storerooms; and it was probably in these that part of the civilian population took refuge in the event of an enemy attack. The ground floor was occupied by small and large vaulted rooms, set around a square courtyard, which were used as ancillary rooms.

In about the middle of the 19th century, the first floor collapsed completely, and very little of it survived until 1937, and the beginning of "restoration" work, which involved major and frequently arbitrary interventions in the structure. On the first floor were various official rooms, such as the "Great Council Chamber" and the dining room, as well as the private quarters of the Grand Master, which were commonly known as "Margaritae". During the period of Italian rule, a chapel was built to the right of the monumental marble staircase leading up to the first floor. In it was erected a

bronze statue of Saint Nicholas, a copy of the work of that name by Donatello, in Bari. Floor mosaics of late Hellenistic, Roman and Early Christian times have been laid in many of the rooms on the first floor, most of them taken from buildings on Kos.

During the period of Turkish rule, the palace was used as a prison, and it continued to have this function under the Italians, until the decision was taken to "restore" the building.

Two major permanent exhibitions may be visited in the ground-floor rooms: on the north side, the exhibition entitled "The city of Rhodes from its foundation (408/7 BC) to the Roman period" and on the south-west side, next to the chapel, the exhibition "Rhodes from the 4th c. AD to its capture by the Turks (1522)".

ANCIENT RHODES - 2,400 YEARS

The exhibition was inaugurated in 1993, as part of the celebrations of the 2,400th anniversary of the foundation of the city of Rhodes in 408/7 BC. In it are displayed finds that have come to light during rescue excavations from 1948 to the present.

ROOM I

The island of Rhodes from the Neolithic period to the merger (synoecism) of the three ancient cities. **Case 4:** General picture of the Late Minoan I city (1650-1450 BC) at Trianta. **Cases 7-11:** Geometric and Archaic pottery. Tomb groups from various parts of the island.

ROOM II

The merger of the three ancient cities (408/7 BC). Foundation and organisation of the new city. **Case 4:** Objects on which the official symbols of the Rhodian state are depicted. **Case 5:** Weapons and sling-shot.

ROOM III

Public buildings and sanctuaries. **Cases 1-2:** Dedications from the sanctuary of Demeter. **Case 6:** Clay head of Helios (the "Sun") (150-100 BC), and a fragment of a Rhodian amphora, offered as a prize in the Halieia, the festival in honour of Helios (4th c. BC). **Case 11:** Dedications from the storage pit in the sanctuary of Zeus Atabyrios.

ROOM IV

The Rhodian house. In the centre of the room is a floor mosaic with a representation of a New Comedy mask. **Cases 7 and 9:** Objects that reflect the convivial atmosphere of the symposium.

ROOM V

Household vessels.

ROOM VI

Cosmetics - daily life. **Case 1a:** Glass vases and alabastra for oils and perfumes. **Case 3:** Gold jewellery. **Case 5:** Exhibits connected with children and games.

ROOM VII

Artistic and cultural life. This room is dominated by a plaster cast of a statue depicting a child in an attitude of prayer, the original of which is attributed to the school of Lysippos (300 BC).

ROOM VIII

Rhodian pottery workshops. **Case 2:** Vases and moulds for making relief skyphoi (bowls).

ROOM IX

Figurines - bronzes - glassware. **Case 1:** Clay figurines and moulds. **Case 2:** Finds from bronze workshops, in which statues were cast by the "lost wax" (*cire perdue*) technique. Restorations of the Kolossos of Rhodes that have been suggested at various times.

ROOM X

Commerce - economy - coins. **Case 1:** Imported transport amphoras. **Case 2:** The evolution of the Rhodian amphora (middle of the 4th c.-200 BC). **Cases 4-5:** Rhodian and foreign coins, and three Rhodian "hoards".

ROOM XI

The cemetery. To the right of the entrance is a tombstone in the form of a small temple with late Hellenistic painted decoration. Cinerary urns and ossuaries.

ROOM XII

Burial customs. **Cases 1-4:** Characteristic groups of grave offerings from tombs in the cemetery. **Case 5:** *Katadesmoi*, sheets of lead with incised inscriptions, usually of curses. These were mostly placed in graves of people who met with violent deaths.

RHODES FROM THE 4th CENTURY TO ITS CAPTURE BY THE TURKS (1522)

This exhibition was organised as part of the celebrations of the 2,400th anniversary of the foundation of the city of Rhodes. It is to be found on the south-west side of the ground floor of the palace of the Grand Master, where the walls of this building coincide with the 7th c. AD fortifications of the city. Chronologically, it covers the period from Christian times to the capture of Rhodes by the Ottoman Turks in 1522, and geographically it includes not only the city, but also the rest of the island.

The aim of the exhibition is to project some aspects of daily life on Rhodes through archaeological finds and visual aids.

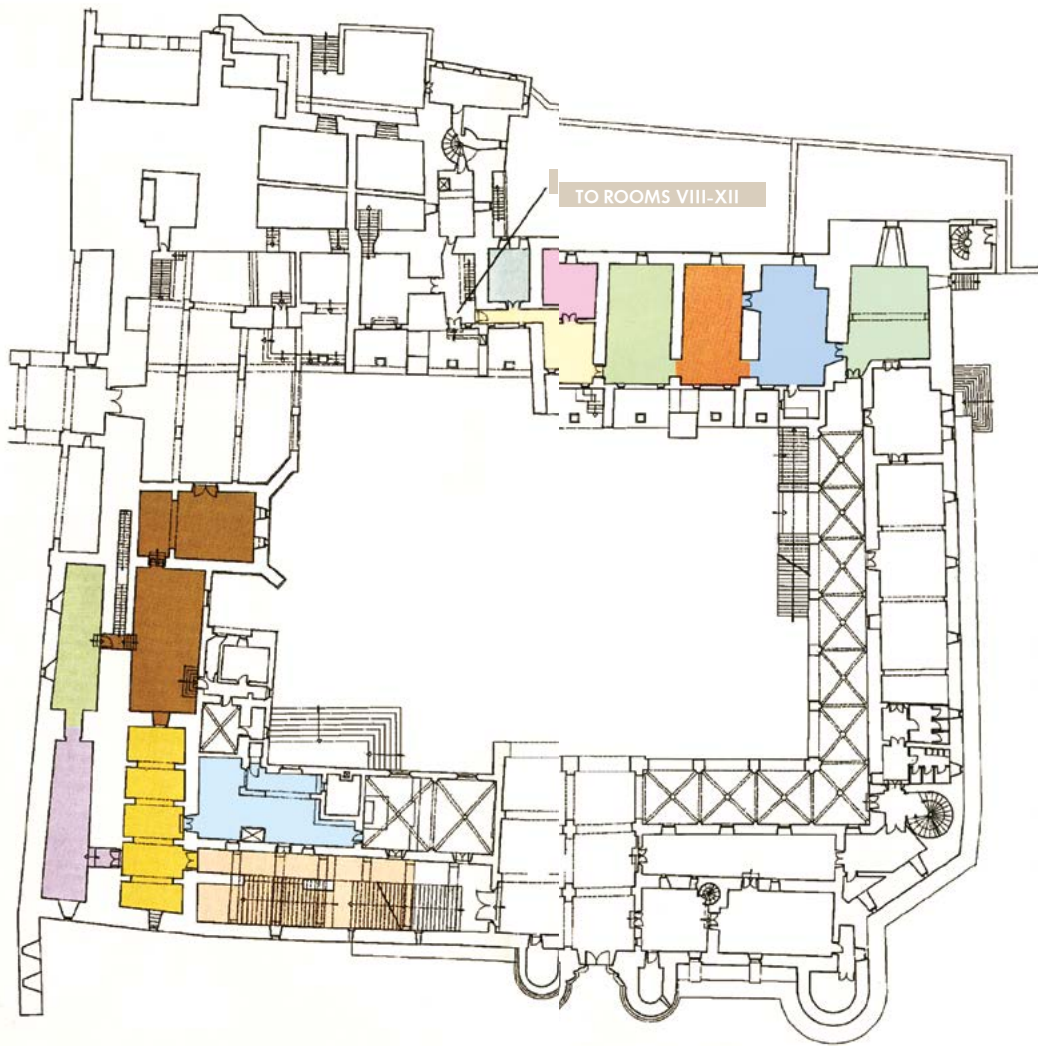
The subject units into which the exhibition is divided have been allocated to different rooms, where they are accompanied by sounds, music and speech. They are presented in the following order:

ROOM 1

Early Christian period - pagan religions and Christianity. Evolution of the urban design of Rhodes, density and extent of medieval monuments on the island.

ROOM 2

Economy. Farming, handicraft industry, commerce, imports, coin circulation.



ROOM 3

Daily life. Diet, clothing, leisure and entertainment, social welfare. Burial customs and cemeteries.

ROOM 4

Defence and administration. Weapons and defensive organisation, state and church administrative organisation.

ROOM 5

Cultural life.

ROOMS 6-7

Worship.



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