

## S 5.1 THE OLD CITIES



### S5.1.3

Important notes about the Ċittadella.

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The Ċittadella is found in the centre of the capital city of Gozo, Rabat (Victoria).

This is a very small city, with many narrow roads surrounded by bastions. It is built on a hill and from the top of the bastions you can see the whole of Gozo. From the top of the bastions the Gozitans used to guard Gozo from attacks by the Turks and the pirates.



The Ċittadella used to serve as:

The Gozitans used to shelter inside it when attacked by pirates however, they guarded the island from on top of this high place.

From the center of Rabat known as the Tokk, we go up the long hill which brings us to this hill where we find the Ċittadella. This road leads to a long stone bridge. To enter there used to be a drawbridge which could be raised and lowered.

During Roman rule, the hill looked like an Acropolis with a temple dedicated to the God Juno dominating the centre. After there were many peoples amongst which the Romans, Aragonese, Byzantians and the Knights of Saint John who continues to build and beautify this hill with buildings as we know it today.

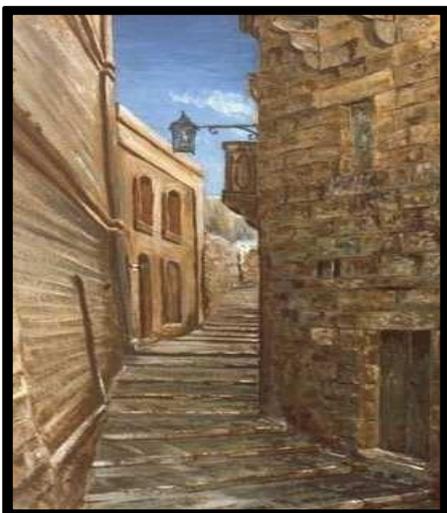
The Ċittadella resembles a lot Imdina in



Malta. It is surrounded by high bastions which prior to the Great Siege (a war between the Maltese together with the Knights against the Turks) in 1565, were weak (not strong). The Ċittadella, known as the Grand Castle, passed through the toughest time in 1551, when a big fleet of Turkish galleys led by Dragut set sail for Malta. After they escaped thanks to the intercession of Saint Agatha, they proceeded to Gozo where they caused complete havoc on the people. The Turks attacked the Ċittadella, they managed to enter and they captured around 6,000 people and took them as slaves, meaning all the Gozitans. They left only around 40 people (old people and the sick who could not serve as slaves). During this attack the bastions as well as the buildings suffered tremendous damage. The Ċittadella had suffered a lot and it was only 50 years later that it took the shape we know today. The bastions which had been damaged were re-built on the plan of Francesco Laparelli, the architect of the Pope.

Until 1637 there was a law that at sunset all the Gozitans had to enter behind the bastions for protection due to the fear from some other attack by the Turks or the pirates.

Like the other old cities which we have seen already the streets of the Ċittadella are very narrow.



Nowadays there are not a lot of people who still live in the Ċittadella.

During the time of the British they built roads, which are there to this day, which are better and through which cars can pass. As soon as you enter into the Ċittadella you see a square and in front of you, you see the Cathedral. This is dedicated to



Saint Mary. This was built on the design of the architect Lorenzo Gafà. Do you remember students that this clever architect had also designed the Cathedral of Imdina and the Church of Birgu.

The feast of Saint Mary (the ascension of Mary) is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August.

This Cathedral is special because it does not have a dome, however when you enter inside you think that it has, because it's ceiling was painted in such a way as to make you see a dome. This is a unique painting in the Maltese Islands.

In the Ċittadella there are a number of places of interest, amongst which:

The Cathedral of Saint Mary

The Archbishop's Palace

The Court Building in Gozo

High Bastions

Narrow roads

The Cathedral Museum

The Archaeology Museum

The Folklore Museum

The Clock Tower

The Armoury (a place where old armaments are kept)

The Old Prison



Nowadays hundreds of tourists visit the Ċittadella to see this very beautiful place.



On the bastions of the Ċittadella some wild plants grow, amongst which the chamomile of the castle. Amongst the many birds we find the National Bird of Malta, which is the Merill.

**A. Fill in the blanks with the following words.**

Natural ; Medieval ; Rabat ; pirates ; bastions ;  
Saint John ; Imdina; Folklore; interest ; the  
Cathedral Museum; Grand Castle.

1. The Ċittadella is found in \_\_\_\_\_ and it is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. This City was built in the time \_\_\_\_\_ but the knights of \_\_\_\_\_  
Continued to fortify this city by high \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. They did this because during those times many attacks were carried out by  
- \_\_\_\_\_ on the island.
4. The way the Ċittadella is built resembles a lot that of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Cathedral of the Ċittadella, \_\_\_\_\_, the History Museum  
\_\_\_\_\_ and the Museum of \_\_\_\_\_ are historical places and  
of \_\_\_\_\_ which we find behind the bastions of the Ċittadella.

**B. Choose the right answer.**

1. The Ċittadella is built on a (hill, valley, cliff).
2. The Ċittadella is also known as (Paola, Gran Castello, Fort Ricasoli)
3. (The Romans, the British, the Americans) built the first bastions around the Ċittadella.