

## Mytilene Castle



Located in the northeastern part of town, amidst a pine-forested hillock which overlooks the harbor below, the remains of the Mytilene Castle are formidable and grand. It has been fairly well preserved and is one of the largest castles in the Mediterranean/Aegean area.

Still standing within its walls are the remains of a Roman or Byzantine cistern (right), made of waterproof material, as well as the Gatelouzi House, a shelter, a Turkish café, a Byzantine reservoir, and some Turkish prison cells.



What is remarkable about the hillock is that, up until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, it was itself a separate island. In time, the channel separating it from the town of Mytilene known as the Mytilene Euripus, was filled in by soil deposits which formed banks, making the town expand westward. Evidence has shown that the isle of Mytilene was connected to the opposite coasts by bridges during classical times. A channel below the castle, the opening of which was found in the nearby Epano Skala district, linked the northern and southern ports.

The old port, with its crumbling pier and ruins from the past, is no longer used. However, the area is being renovated, and there are several wonderful open air tavernas along its waterfront, from which you have a great view of the graphic Epano Skala district to the left and the castle to the right.

The blazonry of the Paleologus and Gatelouzos families can still be seen on the



gates and various other locations. Long arcades, which served as a gathering area for women and children while the castle was under attack, still run underneath the castle. Legend has it that those arcades had an exit that stretched quite a distance

away from the castle. Its walls are well-preserved, and are excellent examples of the high-quality fortifying architecture of the time.

There is a nominal entrance fee, which includes displays of some fine Roman sculptures and mosaics, as well as a jewelry collection. In May, the grounds seem to explode in an abundance of brilliant red poppies, surrounded by blankets of yellow and white wildflowers and green grass, with the deep, brilliant blue of the Aegean for a backdrop. It's truly a feast for the eyes!

