



ROMETTA

MESSINA – SICILY - ITALY



Tourist Itinerary of the Historic Centre



Entrance to the historic city center from "Porta Milazzo"



Piazzetta "Umberto 1°"



Piazza Cappuccini

Outdoor sporting grounds "Marco Simoncelli"



Passageways of the judaic zone



INFO e CONTACTS

Tourist Office located in the City Hall of Rometta

- tel. 0909925228 –
- Fax 0909924582 –
- Email : ufficioturistico@comunedirometta.it



Where to eat and points of relaxation

To acquire more helpful information we suggest you take a look at some of our websites.

www.comunedirometta.it

www.erimata.it

www.assomarduk.it

www.rometta.net

www.rometta.biz

www.inprimaclasse.it

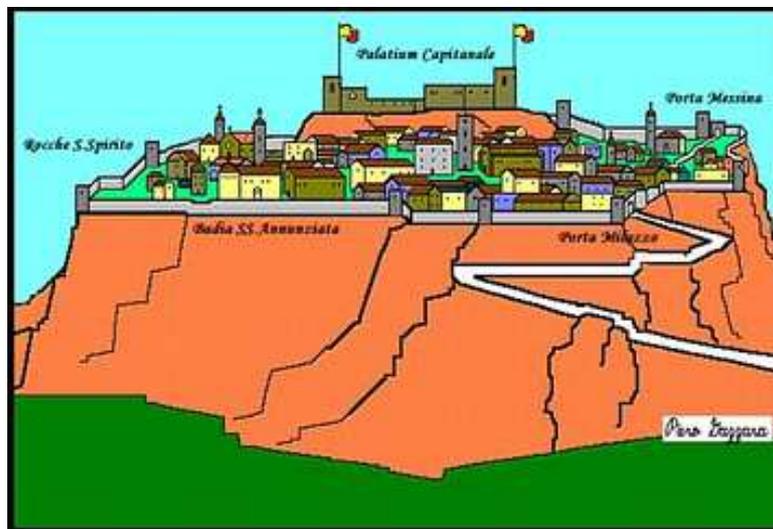
Structure	Type	Location	contacts
Donna Rosa	Trattoria	Torretta - Rometta	tel. 0909924104
Sottocastello	Trattoria	Sottocastello - Rometta	tel. 0909924081
U Catoju	Panificio e gastronomia	San Cono - Rometta	tel. 0909924079
Bar Mento	Bar	Rometta Centro Storico	tel. 0909924186
Bar Royal	Bar	Rometta Centro Storico	tel. 0909924377
Bar da Leo	Bar	San Cono - Rometta	tel. 0909924000

TOURIST ITINERARY

The Byzantines and Rometta

Urbs Munitissima- The Rich City

Found in some old official documents of The Kingdom of Sicily, the ancient state-owned city of Rometta was cited as Rametta.



Rometta in the Middle Ages (Reconstructed Design)

The interest in visiting Rometta can be represented not only by its landscapes and naturalistic ambience, but also for the fact that it resembles an open space museum. Like Messina, Milazzo, Tindari, and Taormina, Rometta was home to many great civilizations, which have their marks on the monuments that still stand today. Its unique position, on top of a steep hill, gave a visual advantage to watch over the ancient medieval streets, that made it an important military fortress. Throughout history we find civilizations such as: The Greeks, The Marmertines, and The Romans in the middle of barbaric invasions, during the presence of the Orientale Empire, The Islams, The Normans, and during the reign of Fredrick II of Svevia, The Spanish, this is what makes Rometta like an unread book filled with art and history. Maybe at one time, the inhabitants of Rometta were not aware of the great historic-artistic value which is Rometta, since they lived everyday with these symbols of the past. For the past ten years, thanks to the participation of many different local clubs and associations, the inhabitants of Rometta are always more aware of the significance of these historically important relics, which this tourist itinerary puts on display.

A cultural-historical landscape, journey through churches and fortresses, early Christian caves, and underground graves.



Information on Rometta(ME) and its Position

Rometta rises at 560 m.l.m. and overlooks the Gulf of Milazzo. From its high ancient center you can see the amazing view offered by Milazzo's highest point and by the scenery of the Aeolian Archipelago, the Pelorithan Mountains have a powerful mass taken from the Scuderi Mountain, which embraces it from the inland. It has a wide territory from the Tyrrhenian beach of Rometta Marea which stretches to the peak of the Pelorithan Mountains. There are lots of woods and many breath-taking landscapes from the mountain, rich in cultural and historical sites such as ancient Hermitages, churches and guided paths.

How to get here

The Artistic city of Rometta, neighbors with such towns as Saponara, Monforte San Giorgio, Spadafora, Venetico, and Roccavaldina, its accessible from the Rometta exit on highway A20 ME-PA, drive 11 Km on SP 56, from Rometta Marea, until arriving at the ancient city-castle of Rometta.

A Short Historic Overview

The importance of Rometta derives from the fact of its position where it rises on a peak of a steep, flat hilltop, surrounded by cliffs and gorges. It was a good place to build a fortress. In some periods of history it was considered the Acropolis of the city of Messina, where the population took refuge during times of danger throughout the VIII century A.D., Rometta noted as Erimata, known historically as a Fortress-city populated and well defended. With the Byzantines, Rometta's centre became walled and it was the last populated Byzantine centre of Sicil conquered by the Arabs in May 965.

**MONUMENTS
AND
PLACES
OF INTEREST**

BYZANTINE CHURCH (II-X CENTURY)



It is the only sacred building of Byzantine age remained undamaged until today. Its construction dates back to the period between VI and X century b. C. It is called “Chiesa di Gesù e Maria”, or in the past, “Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Cerei” , called too “della Candelora o del San Salvatore”. It represents a charming example of Byzantine architecture, plain in its forms and solid in its structure from the Greek-cross plan, surmounted by a round crown. Owing to an epidemic broken out between 1400 and 1600, the interior fresco walls were covered by quicklime. However remain some scrubs as the Madonna with the child and Greek letters. Its solid and compact structure, have allowed it to arrive until us almost intact and saving by large and destructive earthquakes. In front of the three entrance doors, directed toward the rising sun were brought to light many Byzantine tombs. The church, rises in front of the solid mass of the Antennamare Mount, on which there was in 1038, a bloody battle among Arabs and Byzantines guided by the big general Giorgio Maniace.



PORTA MESSINA OR CASTLE WITH CRENELLATED WALLS



It was, once, one of the two access to the “fortified-city”, called also Porta Messina or Porta Castello. Recently, excavations had brought to light defensive works that raised to defend the access Door. Many caves open in the wall, built according to Saracen’s tradition during their sieges to fortified city. On its walls whole generations of Romettesi have fought against many invasions during the centuries. Here, 5th may 965, at the end of an hard siege lasted two years, fell last defenders. In fact, from 963 to 965, Rometta resisted to the continues sieges by the Saracen arm. At the end the surviving inhabitants were distinguished by an extreme act of heroism. Between 24th and 25th October 964, between the beach and the besieged stronghold, there was a bloody battle. The story of the battle lives again into the Arabs and Greeks pages that have passed us the war with a wealth of details.

Byzantine army, with 30.000 men sent in the island from Costantinopoli to break the Arab siege on Rometta and to retake Sicily, committed in the besieged stronghold the army with heat and charges of cavalry. But the Arabs, also if few ,were able to stop the rival advance and incited by their leader, ibn-Ammar, forced the Byzantines to escape. At the end of the battle, more than 10.000 soldiers of Bisanzio lied dead while the other ones were captured. According to the legend on the camp was found a sword belonged to the prophet of Islam Maometto, that had been caught by Byzantines in a previous battle.



The siege in Rometta continued until next May, when, defenders, without any hope to obtain further helps from Costantinopoli, exhausted by starvation and by constant attacks, sent outside the city women, kids and the surviving old people that were received in the enemy camp. At the break of day, the Arabs, after having offered, over and over, the surrender to the Romettesi soldiers and having had a refusal, attacked Rometta with all their power. Few defenders received them with weapons: all died, one by one, fighting. Rometta was sacked and burnt.



PORTA MILAZZO

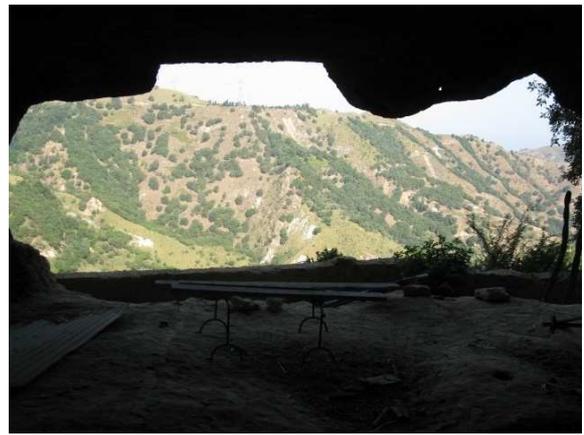
It is now the only access route to the "city",



and is also known as Porta Terra or Borbonica. From this to the threshold of the nineteenth century was started out the dirt Directed road that crosses the county and led to Milazzo. Its construction probably dates back to the period of Saracen domination, as suggest the remains of a tower called "dei Saraceni" visible once, near the Porta. It was rebuilt and reinforced at the time of Federico II of Swabia and further fortified by the Spanish military architects who renovated and reinforced the wall and towers placed around the perimeter of these. Of which the Porta Milazzo, with its circular tower, they were the most key-point of all the defenses set up in defense of the fortress city. In the twentieth century the Porta was expanded to allow access to the buses and, on this occasion, was disrupted in its architectural forms, similar to that of the other access, Porta Castello or Messina, of which , instead has reached us in its original forms.



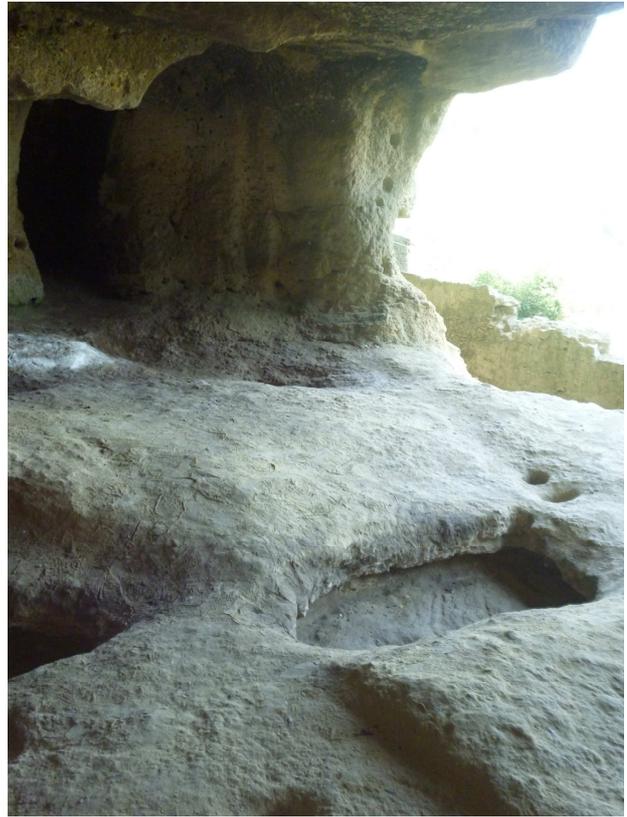
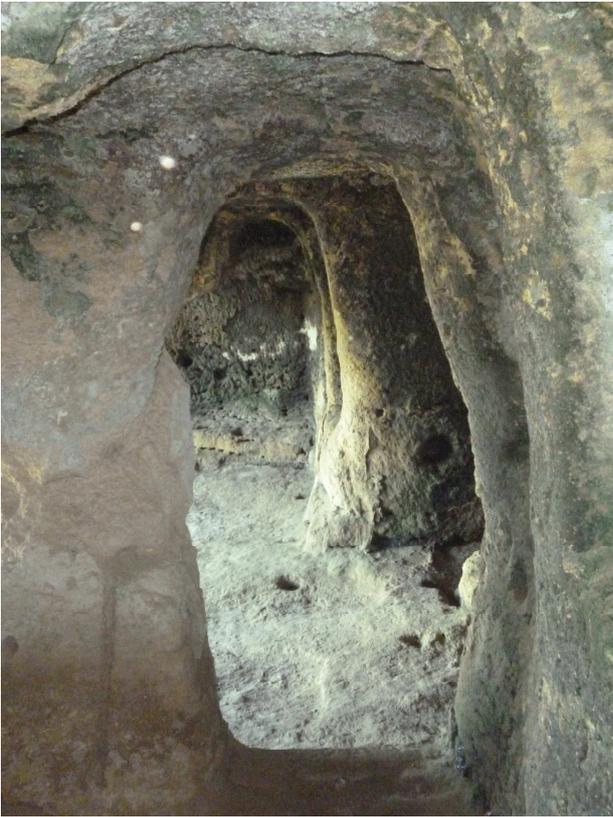
Early Christian basilica of "Sotto San Giovanni"



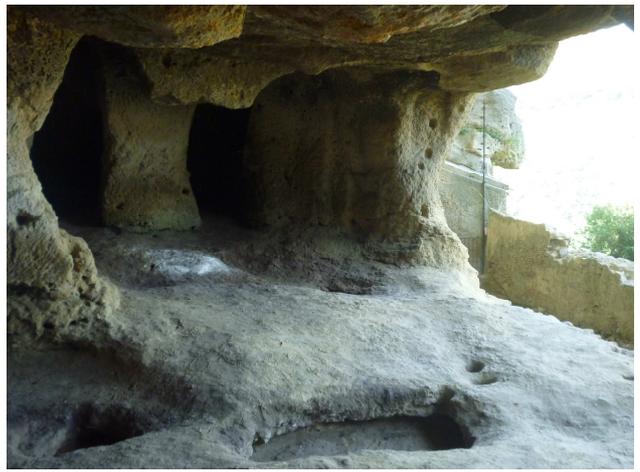
Sets at the foot of the hill of Rometta and is part of the largest hypogeal complex that extends over the entire surrounding area. Identified by Paolo Orsi as early Christian basilican structure, was detected and analyzed in depth by the archaeologist Giacomo Scibona that emphasized its original purpose as a place where you can perform liturgical functions as well as meeting and prayer. Rectangular in shape, the sacred underground had twelve sacred pillars of rectangular form, obtained during the excavation, divided into six orders dividing the interior space of seven small aisles. The central nave ended with an environment where the apse was placed, originally, the altar.



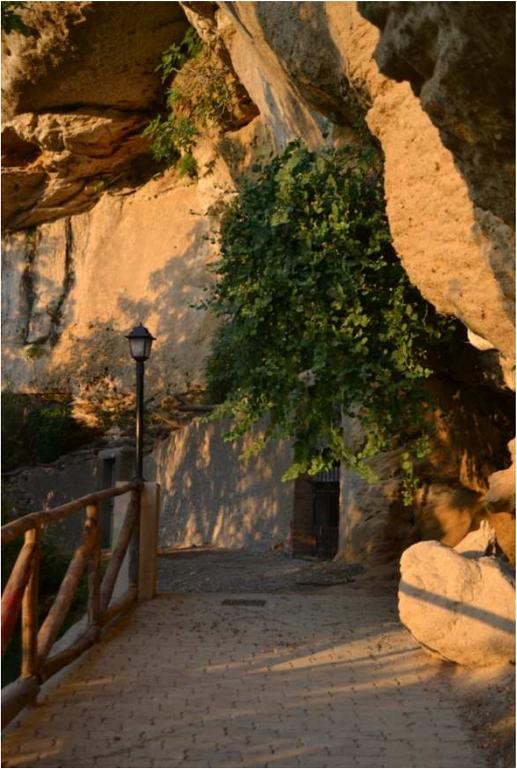
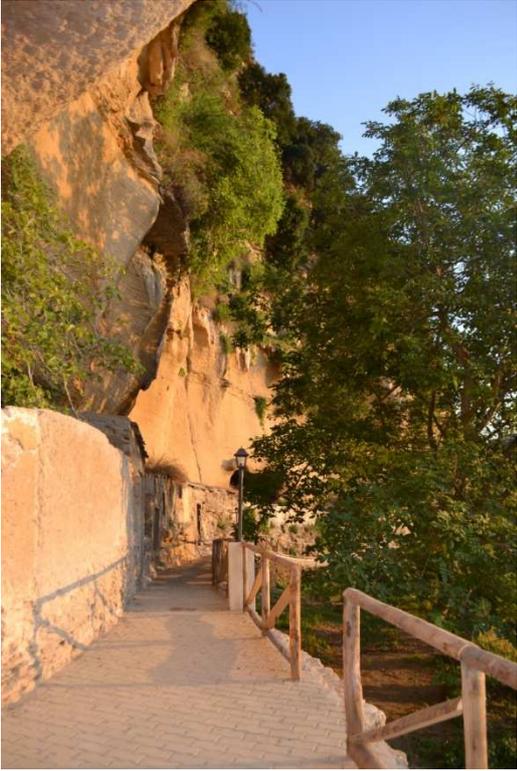
Only four pillars are left intact, while the remaining one can see only the sections that hang from the ceiling. From small traces of frescoes in the apse and places scattered almost everywhere, they did suggest that the crypt was to be entirely covered with frescoes. Recent studies do suggest that the church was used as a mosque by the Muslim population from 965 AD forward.



The whole area, visited by a pedestrian path recently enhanced with artificial lighting, has a natural interest and geological. In fact, all along the stretch of the underground complex, the rocky side, you can see beautiful examples of cross-laminated layers interspersed with deposits in fossil bivalves and molluscs. In some points it is possible to see different clay levels along which occur phenomena of solubilization and transport of carbonates that give rise to the particular layers (palatine veils) , and in some cases more than five meters long.

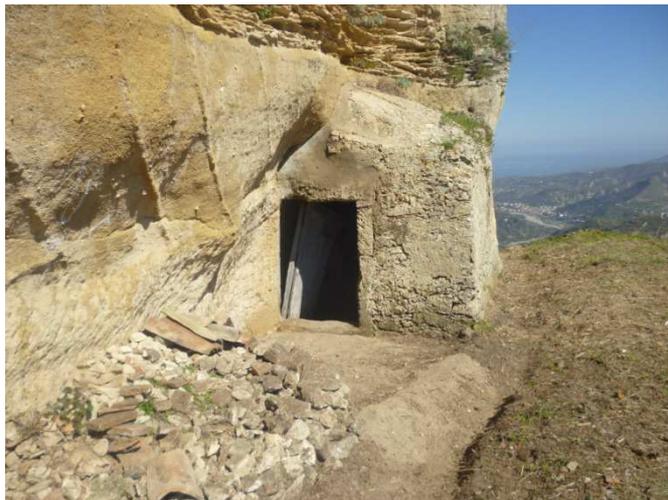


The Grotto's of "Sotto San Giovanni"





Rock tomb from the Byzantine period

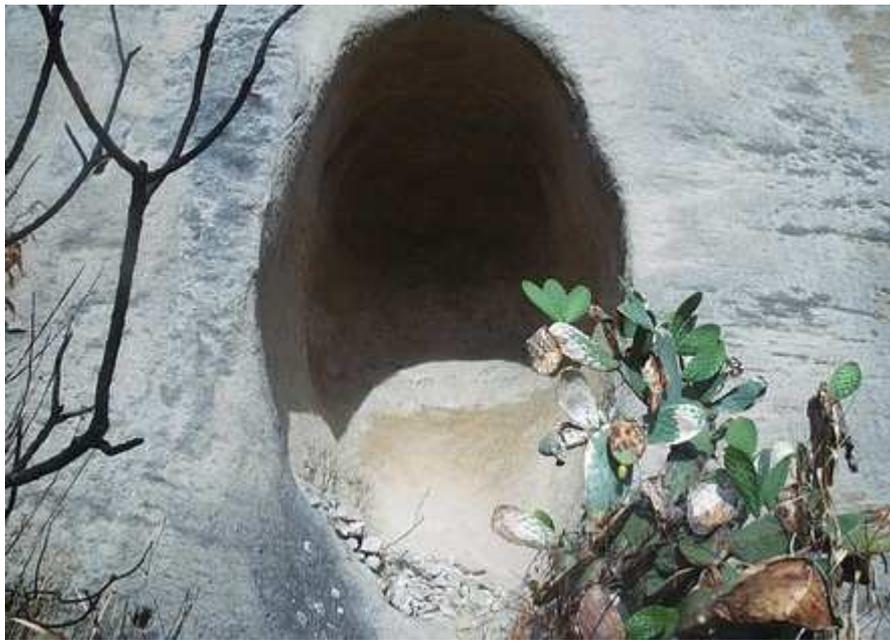


On the eastern ridge, almost sheer, near the fortifications of Porta Messina, is a burial underground probably of Byzantine age carved into the rock and altered in later periods up to be used as a shelter for animals as well as a small winery. It is reached by descending a steep path carved into the wall, interspersed with steep steps and paths. Inside is still visible, front entrance, the raised part, obtained in the excavation, where he had placed the body of the deceased.

Its use as a burial place is due to the period in which certainly Rometta, Erymata the Greek, was a thriving city-fortress of the Roman Empire from 535 to 965.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

San Leone Cave hermitage



In the eastern part of the crosswise on which stands Rometta, there is an ogival cave in which, according to local tradition, retired, between 745 and 780, a hermit, the Bishop of Catania, San Leone da Ravenna, said the Miracle Worker . The Bishop of Etna was opposed to the iconoclastic edicts of the Byzantine Emperors, and especially in 745 came into open conflict with the Emperor Constantine the Copronimo, arch-persecutor of the holy images. So Leone was forced to leave Catania and take refuge in the difficult region of Val Demona, where he lived as an hermit.

The opening of the hypogeum measuring over four meters in height, and nothing is known on the age of its excavation or its utilization. Certainly, given the difficult accessibility, overlooking a deep ravine, might have been used as a burial place in the early Christian era and later as a retreat, especially during the Byzantine period (535-965), when in the countryside around Rometta flourished monasteries and laurel.

Poor Clares Convent fourteenth century

Miracle of Our Lady of the Capuchins



In 1726 a continuous rain threatened the wheat harvest. To avoid the danger of starving, all the people led by the Mayor and Archpriest of time, preceded by a troop of boys and girls with unbound hair they went in procession to the church of the Capuchins to implore the Blessed Immaculate Virgin the stopping of rain. As soon as the picture of Madonna was taken to the middle of the square, miraculously the rain stopped falling almost continuously for about two months (June and July). Since then the gratitude and the devotion of Rometta people towards the Blessed Virgin Immaculate has been ever-living.



Santa Maria Assunta Mother Church

The construction of the Mother Church is traced back to Norman times (XI-XII century)



The site plan is a longitudinal plan of a basilica with three naves with a transept. The three aisles ending beyond the transept with three distinct areas, the central one, the choir, is different from the others by its greater size.

The current structural configuration seems to be the original one, on which are superimposed successive restructurings due to earthquakes (1693, 1783 and 1908).

The oldest part is the one that includes the three naves, divided by two rows of square columns, surmounted by capitals of the archaic style, and ending with a row of ogival arches

In the same order you have the bow and two triumphant arches of the aisles that lead into the transept. This environment, together with the external façade was completely rebuilt after the earthquake of 1693 according to the patterns and architectural styles of the time. Of the five revenue, only Porta Sud (Piazza Garibaldi) with a simple pointed archway, dates back to the original construction.

Also The high altar, in fine polychrome marble ,



was built at the end of 1700 and was given by Mr Bosurgi and Mrs Visalli buried in the beautiful funerary, in polychrome marble, situated in the aisle on the right. Within is taken the wooden statue of the Archbishop S. Leon, Rometta Patron, celebrated on 20th february every year.

The Choir takes the apse area with 21 inlaid and carving stalls .It is an huge handcraft wood work that can be put among the precious choirs made in Sicily between the end of XVI century and the first half of the next century.

The carving work of the side in the pews ends with winged sphinxes that wear a Spanish-like helmet.

In The remaining parts of the choir we can find, zoomorphic and grotesque portrayals, or sphinxes, carving made,



and caryatids with an human face and stylized body which scan vertically the stalls.

Since the first 900', in the Cathedral there was the desk of Saint Leon Prior and Abbot who supervised the wide Arcipretura of Rometta that included all the churches in Villafranca, Saponara, Spadafora, Venetico and Roccavaldina cities.

CHIESA MADRE GALLERY

Inside the Church are displayed different pictures coming from Rometta churches and monasteries.. Nowday only few religious buildings live on among the 22 churches and the 8 Monasteries existing until 1866. Here are some displayed works:



Tobiolo e l'Angelo Raffaele,
sec. XVIII.



Assunta in trono tra i Santi
Pietro e Paolo – Sec. XVI.



Madonna del Carmelo tra
S. Giuseppe e S. Francesco da Paola
Sec. XVIII.



Compianto sul Cristo – Sec. XVII



I santi Placido, Leone e
Benedetto – sec. XVII



Madonna delle Grazie con San
Marco Evangelista - Sec. XVIII



Sant'Agata – Sec. XVII



S. Giovanni Battista
Sec. XVII-XVIII



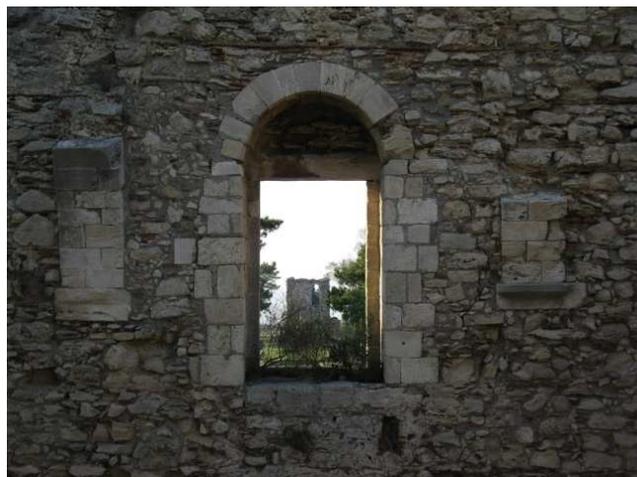
Sacra Famiglia col Padre e lo
Spirito Santo – sec. XVIII

Tower with Federico's Palatium Remains

Federico's Palatium

The importance of the castle comes from Rometta site on which it stands. In a few moments of History was considered the Acropolis of the city of Messina, where the population took refuge whenever the danger of an impending foreign attack.. Rometta stands as a natural bulwark isolated and surrounded by cliffs and steep valleys. In this way nature, with works of integration suggested by human trick could do the fortress of Rometta one of the most formidable resistance of Sicily. To the east of the castle was set a barrier, while on the clearing where stood the medieval village there is a cliff that formed the most elevated and fortified part of the castle, surrounded by strong walls. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines and Normans planned and inserted new defensive accomplishments, each on the basis of their knowledge and experiences gained from previous civilizations. It 's been in the history of the difficult conquest of the fortress by the Arabs, led by Ibn Ammar after a siege lasting over a year, in 925.

Until the end of the fourteenth century the castle was used as the residence of the Governor of the city. By some details found along the walls can be seen that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the fortress was surely equipped with pieces of artillery.





It is not sure in what date was built the "Palatium", but many scientists agree to suppose its birth in the XIII century. The ancient fortified building lies in the centre of the built-up area and all over the Middle Age, it represented the heart of Rometta's city-castle. This fortified Palace, besides to be considered a Mastio, offered spaces and comfort like a luxurious civilized house.



From the idealistic reconstruction it appears as military and residential building divided in two parts, separated by a courtil where in the centre laid a big tank of rain-water.

You could enter inside the Palace through a fortified door, which way is still lost among narrow lanes of the medieval village.

The whole was joined by a big town wall (thick m 1,60)



that held the landslides too, because they were a danger for the hillock.

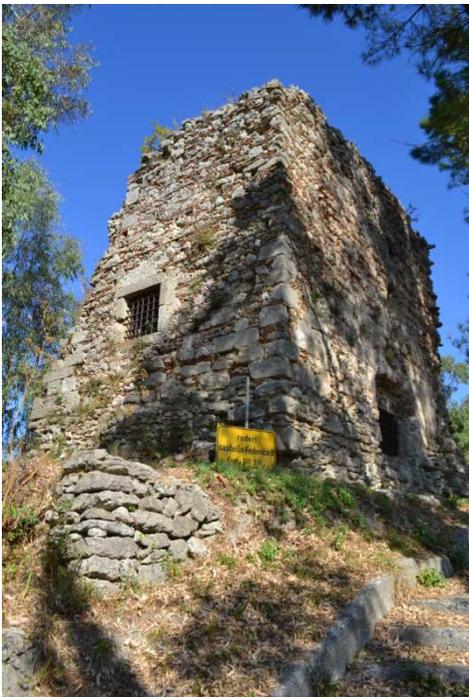


The local tradition says that emperor Federico II di Svevia often lived there, especially in summertime. According to the written sources, The Palatium, is considered a property of the Sicily Kingdom crown and, as such, was used like official residence of the city Captain who was the direct sovereign's representative in a public city.





At the present about the whole building remain only few ruins of a Palace part and the prison tower. This one is a solid construction in square stone and was considered the furthest part of the fortified group with functions of tower-lookout. Later on, it was designed for imprisonment place to the condemned people.





RUINS OF ST.ANTONINO'S CHURCH (XVIII century)

The remains of St.Antonino Church and Monastery



once called Church of St.Maria delle Grazie, are today left clearly the perimetrical walls of the Church and the sacristy. In the centre opens a stone portal



In the centre opens a stone portal overflowed by a temple that contains a tombstone with a Latin inscription, in turn surmounted by a gable. On the sides, the temple is lightened by two friezes in baroque style. The side walls have a dual order: the lower one marked by niches, whereas the upper one is drilled by windows.

The Church, built in the area called “judaic”, has only a nave and it is without transept.



At the end of the nave you can see still the apse wall, and ahead, an arch with marble pillars overhanging richly decorated by capital and baroque friezes.

All the decorative elements dates back to 1696, when the Church was restored thank to a rich romettese, Francesco Rubba, as one read in the marble slab over the portal.



The Church and the Cloister (situated in the right side) was founded in 1574 by the Convent Monks who left it soon after in 1586. It was restructured and opened again in 1639 by people motion and Rometta Jurymen who used a donation in money, given by a romettese Paolino Zuccarato , franciscan in Assisi Monastery.

In 1757, The Church wasn't more S.Maria delle Grazie, but it was known as the Immaculate Conception and commonly S. Antonino. In the 1783 owing to the earthquake the sacred building was damaged and rebuilt. But during that one in 1908, the Church was destroyed and it wasn't never rebuilt.

BASILIANI SQUARE



VILLA CASTLE



THE BYZANTINE INCHOATIVE GRAVES

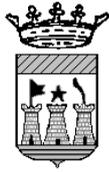
They are accesible through a below path and next to the Castle Villa out of the ancient walls, which enclosed the whole judaic centre, on the East side.



THE BYZANTINE GRAVES HOLE

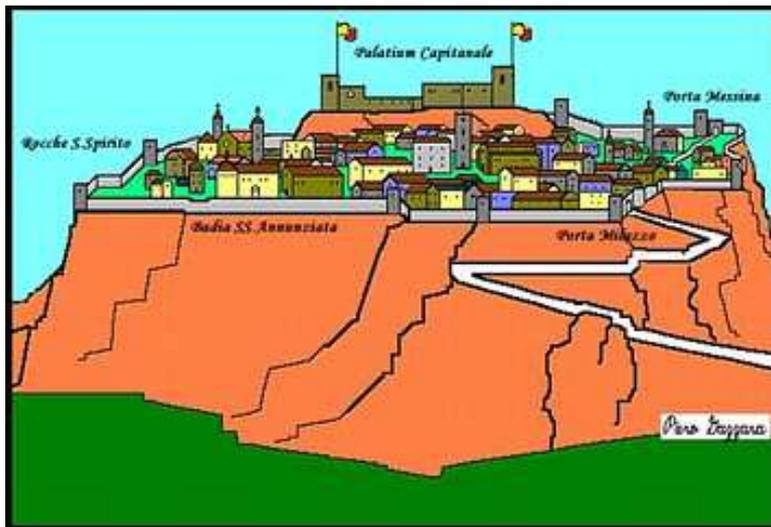
They are situated inside a catacomb-cave and the same are accessible through a restructured path that begins, on the West side, from Castle Villa and continues to outside the ancient walls that, like said above, enclosed the whole judaic centre.





Rometta Town

Messina District



Rometta in the middle Age (Rebuilt design)

**COME BACK SOME TESTIMONIES
FORGOTTEN
IN THE YEARS**

The discovered remains of the votive aedicule about "Madonna della Scala".



In the northern side, near the fortifications of "Porta Castello" there are the traces of an alcove derived in the rocky wall. It's a votive aedicule, with an altar dedicated to the "Madonna della Scala". Dug in the rock, it was situated along the ancient way, Via Messina. The age of the realization is uncertain. The place, like it has been orally handed down in Rometta, was famous for a miracle event.

The place of the aedicule discovered near "Porta Castello" in Messina.



According to the legend a big merchant ship, while it was sailing, seaward of Milazzo's Bay, was in the middle of a sudden hurricane. Tossed around huge waves, the men on board couldn't orient themselves anymore. They were scared because the ship could break on the rocks, so they prayed the Madonna to save them. Suddenly a light splattered the darkness: without thinking, the sailors laboriously controlled the ship towards the little light. After different attempts, finally they sighted the sandy coast where the ship was run bringing in safe the whole crew.

After the end of the storm the sun returned to shine, so the sailors walked into the hinterland searching the place where was the light that guided them towards safety. At the end, they were also helped by the inhabitants telling them accounts of the others similar cases happened to others sailors, they reached the place where the saviour light came from. Here they found the aedicule with the effigy of the "Madonna della Scala". It was exactly from this sacred place that was emitted the light which guided them in the darkness of the storm and so making them land on the seashore. On the right side, they made their reason of their ex-vote with small scenes which were made to show the miraculous intervention.

Later (maybe in the end of XVII century), because of a landslide, the old street which ended just near the fortified "Porta", was left for the benefit of another way, that was larger and safer, the Holy place wasn't used anymore also because, not far way of the votive aedicule, along the new street board, was built a small church dedicated to the "Madonna della Scala" still opened to the cult.

Madonna Image rebuilt in the votive aedicule.



Madonna Image rebuilt in the votive aedicule

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the frescos of the votive aedicule with the effigy of the "Madonna della Scala", was lost and since the old street wasn't used anymore, the site was forgotten in the sink of the ages.

Only today, thanks to the works made by the **city of Rometta**, the testimonies of our past have been brought to the light, as the "prodigious" votive aedicule.

Medieval Ruins

Information on Byzantine art taken from old Byzantine documents

In our territory there have been found many sediments and ruins dating back to medieval times. The presence of manufactures is given to geological and morfological configuration of the territory non the least under the findings of an accurate decoration of spontaneous vegetation and then the elimination of decrepiting materials that time has deposited over the years on the rock surface



Since ancient times, living in grottos consisted of constant danger of the area, and place of divine sacredness. During the middle ages, man would begin to layout the excavation of underground places and its existence

To realize a more rustic experience, the place in question has to be presented with such characteristics as easy access, exposure and illumination



*Medieval rock formation
More information on Byzantine art*

The remains of this medieval rock formation were found during a cleaning of the rock surface, the inhabitants of the city probably used it for storing grain

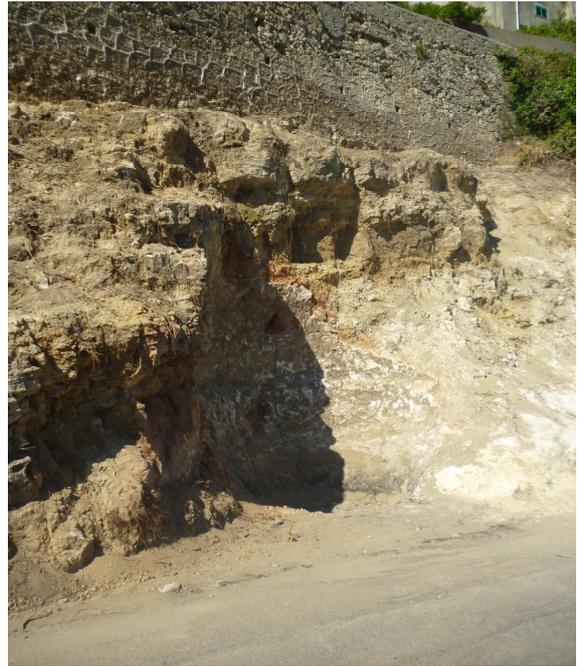


Photo Gallery

More characteristic aspects of the historic city center at night!

Porta Messina



Piazza S. Antonino



Ruins of the Church of Saint Anthony

Judaic Zone – Merlate Wall -



Judaic Zone - Villa Castello -



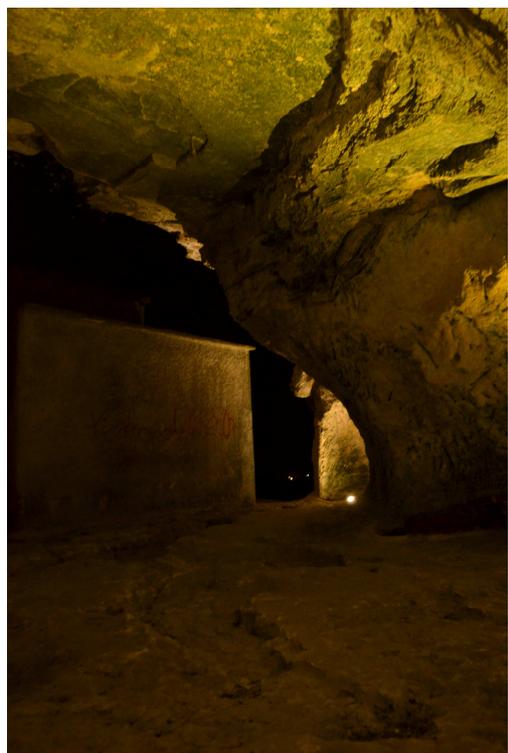
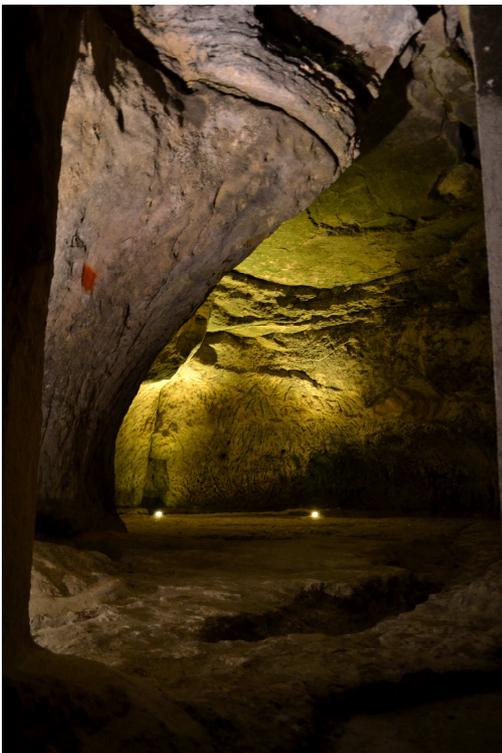
Byzantine Church



Porta Milazzo



The Grotto's and the Church of the "Madonna della Scala"



Formation left during the medieval times

