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I. CITADEL
1. Byzantine Gate
2. Mycenaean threshold
3. Cistern
4. Frankish building
5. Mycenaean wall
6. Apse of early byzantine church
7. Chapel of Virgin Mary
8. Temple of Athena Polias
9. Central tower
10. Citadel’s central gate

II. SOUTHERN COURT
11. Passageway - Entrance
12. Postern

III. EXTERNAL
13. Exit

IV. STAIRCASE TO THE MAIN GATE
V. PARKING

VI. PARKING
14. WC
THE CASTLE was named after the homonymous hill that rises above the city of Argos at 287m. Its strategic position, overlooking the most important city in the Argolis, as well as the maritime and terrestrial routes connecting the SE Peloponnese with Attica and the Aegean islands, was the reason for the fortification of the hill, already since the Prehistoric period. Remains of the Mycenaean fortification (13th c. BC) are preserved in the citadel, while huge monolithic architectural parts of the Mycenaean fortification were embedded - in second use - in the medieval fortification Walls. Although uninterrupted use of the area is testified from the Prehistoric times until World War II, the present form of the castle was established in the middle Ages, when the Byzantine and Frankish fortifications turned Larissa into one of the four best-defended castles in the Peloponnese, as cited in the Chronicle of Morea. The ancient fortification walls, parts of which are still visible nowadays incorporated in masonry of later times, constitute the main plan followed by medieval fortifications. Defensive works comprise the citadel at the hilltop and an outer enclosure.

THE CITADEL was the administrative, military and cult centre of Argos for many centuries. The Mycenaean Wall is built of large conglomerate blocks and follows a circular course. Its remains are located in the east and partially in the north part of the citadel. There is a large monolithic threshold at the south side, as well as parts of jamb. All these parts originally belonged to the Mycenaean gate. The lintel of that gate, made of conglomerate stone, is incorporated in the outer façade of the south wall of the citadel. During the Archaic period, the citadel was furnished with sanctuaries. A temple in the southwest was dedicated to Zeus of Larissa. To the north is visible a part of the base of the temple dedicated to Athena Polias. A large cistern occupies the center of the citadel, formed in a cavity of the bedrock. The enclosure of the ancient citadel was wider during that period, its form looked much similar to that seen today, without the later medieval additions superimposed on this original plan. The Byzantine masonry is best visible in the southeast part, near the Byzantine gate, which was walled up in late middle Ages when the south wall was reconstructed with cannon embrasures and a new gate was built on the west of the byzantine. A second Byzantine small gate was probably located on the eastern Wall. There is embedded a large limestone block, bearing an inscription with the names of Argive donors to the temple of Athena. The semi-circular central apse of a byzantine church built in the first millennium is still visible to the east of the ancient temple. A few centuries later, according to the donor’s inscription, a church dedicated to Virgin Mary was built in 1174 by Niketas, Bishop of Argos. This small church occupied the north part of the earlier, Byzantine church. To the northeast of the citadel there is a large two-storey building, which can be associated with the seat of the governor of the castle. It was probably constructed during the Frankish period (13th c. AD).

IN THE OUTER WARD existed the residential area, which still remains unexplored. There were large cisterns providing water to the residents, especially when the castle was under siege. During late medieval period a cross-wall was constructed in order to cut off the southern part of the outer enclosure. The exterior wall was reinforced with large cylindrical towers with cannon embrasures. When the south exterior enclosure was cut off by the cross-wall, the south side and the main gate of the citadel as well as the gate of the cross-wall to the east, at the edge of the cross-wall, led to the exterior enclosure, were exposed to attacks. In order to protect these two gates, an additional wall was constructed, connecting the main tower (donjon) of the citadel to the circular tower of the cross-wall, thus forming a small courtyard to the south, in front of the main gate of the citadel. The central exterior gate of the castle was therefore set up in this newly arranged area. The gate was furnished with double panels secured by bolts.

A vaulted, stone-paved passage led to the courtyard through another door at its end.

THE RESTORATION works started by the 25th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities and they were completed by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolis. During the works, extensive excavations took place, bringing to light the façades of the walls that had been covered by the debris of earlier destructions and excavations, as well as the interventions of the Ottomans. The level of the ground inside the citadel, which was disturbed due to old excavations, was restored. Important elements explaining the function of the castle were found such as the small gate of the cross wall, which was wrongly walled up during the restoration works in the early seventies. The gate of the cross wall was re-opened, the vaulted passage was restored and the fortification walls were reinforced and partially restored. All the restoration works were based on the evidence that were found during the field research; any reconstructions were documented by photographic archives from the beginning of the 20th century. The excavations revealed a large number of important findings; some of them are exhibited in the Byzantine Museum of Argolis.

New infrastructures were constructed for the visitors, such as the staircase that leads from the parking to the main gate of the castle, the peripheral path, a new small building with WC and a room for educational projects, information signs, benches and waste cans. New doors and railings were constructed for the protection of the archaeological site and the safety of the visitors.