

G U I D E B O O K

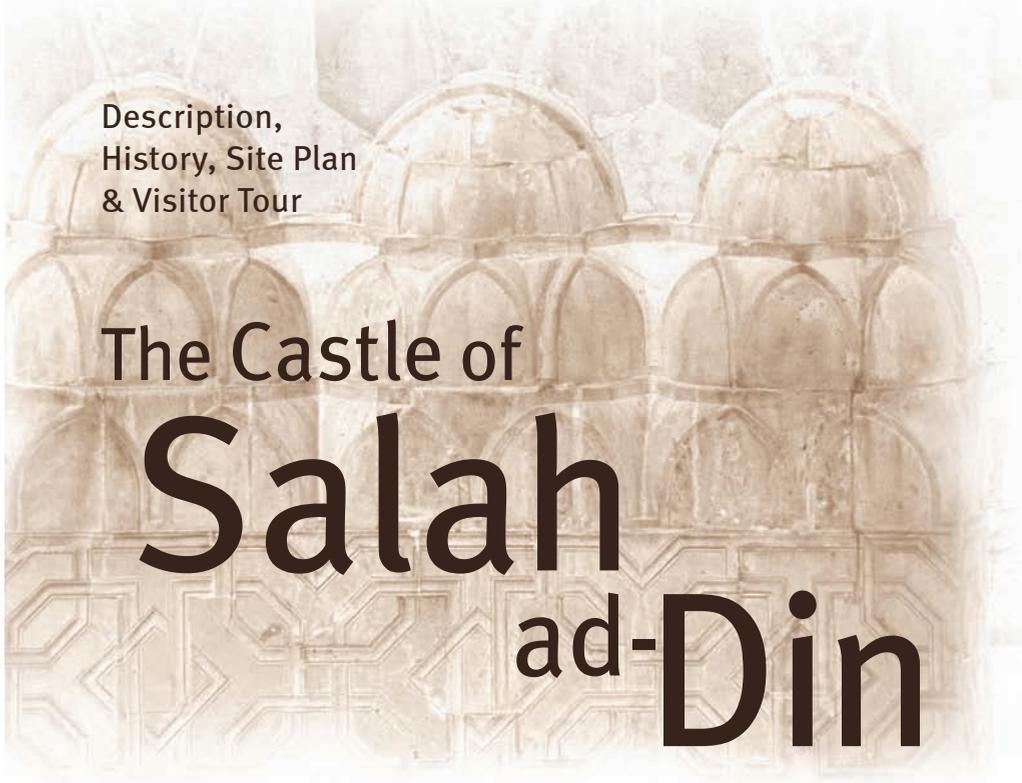


English version

The Castle of  
**Salah**  
ad-**Din**

Description, History, Site Plan & Visitor Tour





Description,  
History, Site Plan  
& Visitor Tour

# The Castle of Salah ad-Din

Text by Thierry Grandin

*The Aga Khan Trust for Culture  
is publishing this guidebook  
in cooperation with the Syrian Directorate  
General of Antiquities and Museums  
as part of a programme for the  
revitalisation of the Castle of Salah ad-Din.*

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**Frontispiece:** *The imposing monolithic pillar as shown in an engraving published in Etude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre by Baron G. Rey, published in 1864.*

**Opposite:** *Detail of the muqarnas of the Islamic Palace portal.*

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# The Castle of Salah ad-Din

The Castle of Salah ad-Din is a perfect example of a site fortified over a succession of eras in different architectural styles. The Byzantines, the Hamdanids, the Byzantines again, the Franks, the Ayyubids and, finally, the Mamluks successively occupied the Castle.

Rather than destroying existing structures, each conqueror restored and improved the defensive capacity of the existing buildings. Consequently, the Castle is a rich tapestry of styles and defensive techniques which illustrates the development of forts in Syria from the 5<sup>th</sup> until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Its moat of chasmic dimensions, cut out of solid bedrock, makes it one of the most spectacular mediaeval fortifications in the Middle East. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, several travellers visiting the Castle praise its impressive fortifications.

Located on the western slope of the Syrian coastal mountains at an altitude of 400 to 460 metres, the Castle perches on a long east-west rocky outcrop and is divided into two plateaus separated by a steep bluff. Its structures extend over five hectares and can be broken up into several areas. The primitive urban settlement known as the lower western town lies on the westernmost part of the promontory. The Byzantine fortress stands on the western section of the upper plateau.

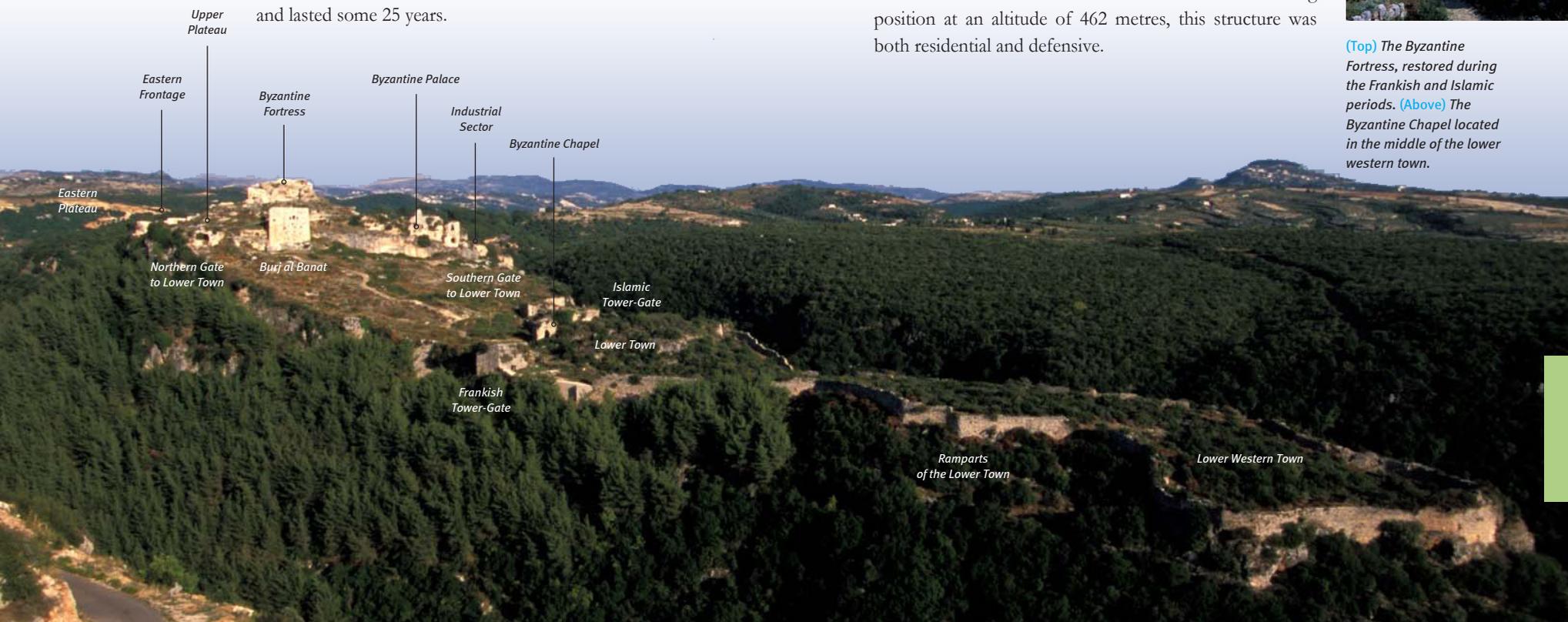


(Left) Aerial view of the Frankish fortifications, the Master Tower and the Moat.  
(Top) Southeastern frontage.

On the opposite end of the outcrop are the eastern plain, the eastern frontage and the great moat. The Greek historian Arrian described the site of Sigon as a fortified structure in the area, probably erected by the Phoenicians at the beginning of the first millennium BC.

It is possible that Sigon occupied the same site as the current Castle, well-suited for defence with its concealed location and proximity to fertile lands. The Byzantines are the first certain occupants of the Castle, and constructed a primitive settlement likely centred around the two posterns and church in the lower western town. The importance of securing this area led to the simultaneous seizure, in 948–949 AD, of the Castle of Burzay and the locality of Saône by the Hamdanids, a dynasty (944–1003 AD) based in Aleppo. This was the first Muslim occupation of the area and lasted some 25 years.

*(Below) Panoramic view from the north highlighting the main elements of the Castle from the Byzantine, Frankish and Islamic periods.*



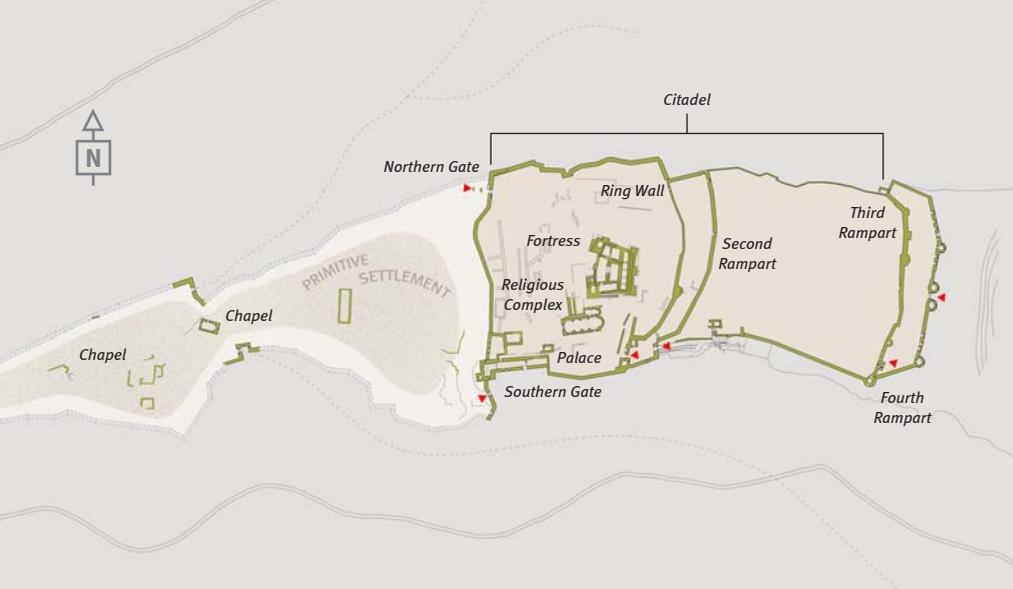
## – The Byzantines: 975-1100 AD –

Confronted with threats from both the Fatimids and the Turkmen, the Byzantine Basileus John Tzimisce captured the Castle site in 975 AD from the Hamdanids. By sharpening the natural differences in elevation, the Byzantines divided the Castle site into two sections capable of functioning independently. The lower town became the residential section and included two chapels. Proximity to farming activities and other services ensured the provision of supplies to the second section, the fortress on the upper plateau to the east.

During the first stage of settlement, the Byzantines chose not to use the buildings erected by their predecessors but to focus on construction of a fortress. From its commanding position at an altitude of 462 metres, this structure was both residential and defensive.



*(Top) The Byzantine Fortress, restored during the Frankish and Islamic periods. (Above) The Byzantine Chapel located in the middle of the lower western town.*



*Hypothetical reconstruction of the Castle based on the Byzantine period remains, showing the location of the primitive settlement as it might have appeared around 1000 AD.*



*Fragment of a Frankish relief, found during archaeological excavations in the Castle.*

It included most of the buildings and key defensive towers at the time. Over the course of a century the lower town and the upper fortress grew to have a prominent position in the region. The Byzantines undertook the comprehensive fortification of the upper plateau. Their strategy focused on protection of the fortress, around which they erected a defensive shell made up of a series of ramparts. The northern and southern flanks of the fortress, which had natural protection, were given lower priority. Perhaps as a result of the relative political stability in the locality under the Byzantines, they did not make any significant changes to the defences of the lower plateau.

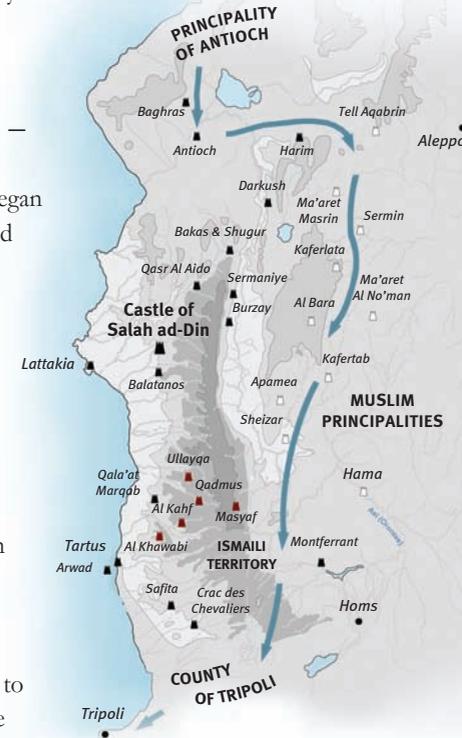
Wherever possible, walls were built on the natural gradient, such as the western surrounding wall of the upper plateau. To protect the eastern section of the fortress, the Byzantines erected a series of walls. After the realisation of a ring wall protecting the upper fortress, the eastern part was doubled by a new, curved north-south rampart. Later, another fortification was added 110 metres to the east of the second ring wall, extending the boundaries of the Castle. The risk

of an attack from the east encouraged the Byzantines to reinforce the eastern defences yet again and to build a fourth wall 15 metres in front of the preceding rampart, flanked by a semi-circular tower. The Byzantine fortifications provided a comprehensive defence until the arrival of the Franks.

– The Franks: 1108-1188 AD –

The Frankish presence on the site likely began around 1108 AD, and was first referred to in 1119 AD as the well-established possession of the nobleman Robert of Saône, son of Foulques and vassal of Roger, Prince of Antioch. The Lords of Saône owed their allegiance to the principality of Antioch, founded by the Crusaders in 1098 AD and a flourishing centre of commerce and culture. The House of Saône undertook construction in the Castle, and it became the largest Frankish edifice of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The site remained in the hands of this family for 80 years and was never entrusted to either of the main Crusader Orders, the Templars or the Hospitallers.

The new Lord of the Castle – now named Castle of Saône – immediately began to strengthen the fortifications and adapt them to the threats of the prevailing military situation. But the sheer extent of the work, which needed years to complete, was overwhelming and he could only accomplish a part of his ambitious plans. After transforming the Byzantine fortress into a lordly palace, Robert of Saône launched new construction works in the upper plateau.



*Map of the region during the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the route of the First Crusade: Frankish fortresses in black, Ismaili fortresses in red and Arab fortresses in white.*

He enlarged its perimeter by erecting new towers on the outside of the Byzantine citadel. The quadrangular towers on the eastern and southern façades mark an architectural break from the round towers of the Byzantine era. The majority of the work was probably carried out between 1108 and 1131 AD, or from the beginning of Robert's reign until just before the death of his heir William.

Enormous financial resources were required to implement an architectural enterprise of this magnitude. The extensive holdings of the family of Saône, stretching for more than 75 kilometres in length and reaching almost as far as Aleppo, gave a certain independence to the Lord of the Castle from the other Crusader Orders. A great number of builders were employed, and signs of their work are still visible.

The eastern and southern frontages of the upper plateau contain the most significant modifications and additions made by the Franks. The lower town also benefited with five quadrangular towers. In addition to defensive structures, the architectural design of the Castle of Saône includes buildings administering to the social life of the community, particularly residences for the families of the knights.

The southern frontage is topped by three quadrangular towers: the tower-gate, a square tower and a rectangular tower. The excavation of the southern rocky face repeats the defensive design of the eastern frontage and seems to have pre-dated the construction of these towers. The three towers show similar construction principles; they are set apart from the curtain walls and function independently. The number of arrow-slits and windows, formerly equipped with grills, and open to the interior of the Castle, are a reminder of the towers' dual residential and defensive function. The Byzantines equipped the upper plateau of the



*(Above) The Tower-Gate on the southern flank was the main access to the Castle during the Mediaeval period and is still the primary entrance today. (Below) The Frankish Rectangular Tower with two superimposed chambers, which integrated former Byzantine fortifications. Master Tower in the background.*



fortress with one outer gate fitted into the eastern frontage and two internal gates controlling access to and from the lower town. With the tower-gate, the Franks created an additional point of access to the southern flank.

The eastern front is the most heavily fortified. The Franks continued the excavation of the eastern moat, displaying great technical skills on the vertical flanks. Nowhere else has a comparable defence structure attained such dimensions: 158 metres long, 14–20 metres wide and 28 metres deep. When cutting the bedrock for the moat, the workers left a massive monolithic pillar, 28 metres high, to support a movable bridge to the new eastern entrance to the castle.

The master tower served both as a defensive structure and as a symbol of the power of the family of Saône. This type of 'prestige tower' had been present in Europe from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and was introduced by the Crusaders to the Middle East. Interestingly, chronicles

*The monolithic pillar was left during the excavation of the moat as a drawbridge support. The face of the rock still bears chisel-marks from the excavation of the moat.*



*'Builder marks' were signatures of the Frankish craftsmen. Common on walls throughout the Castle, they are typically Latin letters.*



(Top) Frankish Master Tower and the third Byzantine rampart in the foreground.  
(Above) Characteristic of the Frankish military architecture, the main towers and walls were built with large bossage stones.

written at the time of the Castle's seizure by the Arabs do not attach significance to this immense structure, perhaps because its significance was more symbolic than defensive.

The rough terrain effectively protected the northern side of the upper plateau and there was no need to protect the perimeter wall with towers. The facing hill, Jebel at-Tun, was too far away to permit a mangonel (catapult) attack on the Castle.

After their extensive work on the upper plateau, the Frankish builders turned their attention to strengthening the fortifications of the lower plateau. They partially restored the defensive wall before building five quadrangular towers similar to those on the upper plateau. These structures supplement the sixth round tower, probably of Byzantine origin, on the western side of the wall. The distance between these towers turned out to be too great. Later, the Muslim armies took advantage of the resulting vulnerability and launched their first attack here, before capturing the whole castle.

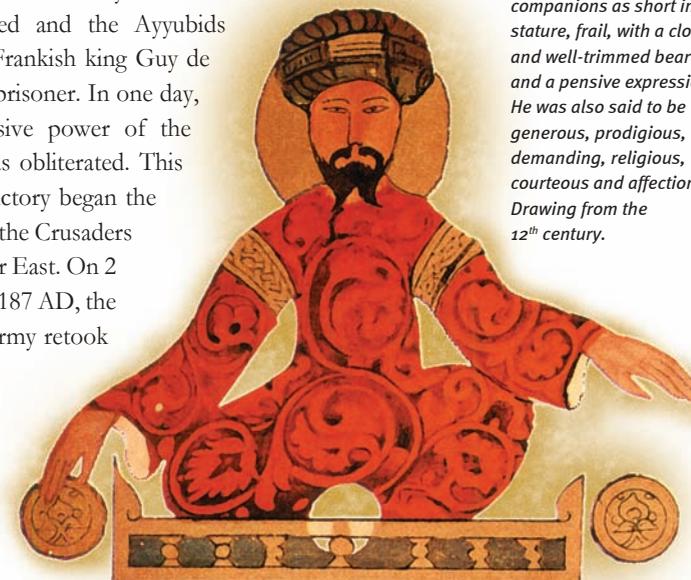
## – The Site after the Re-conquest – by Sultan Salah ad-Din

Carrying on the dream of his mentor Nur ad-Din, Salah ad-Din campaigned for Muslim unity and organised the first real response to the Crusades. After taking over the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, he began the re-conquest of Syria and the other territories under Frankish occupation, aware of the weakness of a Latin state made up of several different principalities.

In the summer of 1187 AD, Salah ad-Din led the Ayyubid army to re-conquer many important Frankish strongholds. After the fall of Shawbak and Kerak, on the other side of the River Jordan, he began in the southern coastal region, capturing Tiberiad in July. At Hattin, with more than sixty thousand soldiers, Salah ad-Din besieged the Franks. The whole Frankish army was killed or captured and the Ayyubids took the Frankish king Guy de Lusignan prisoner. In one day, the offensive power of the Franks was obliterated. This decisive victory began the decline of the Crusaders in the Near East. On 2 October 1187 AD, the Ayyubid army retook Jerusalem.

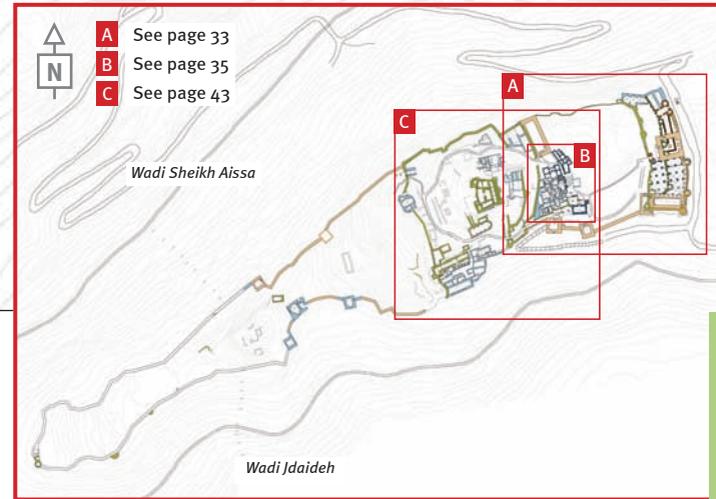
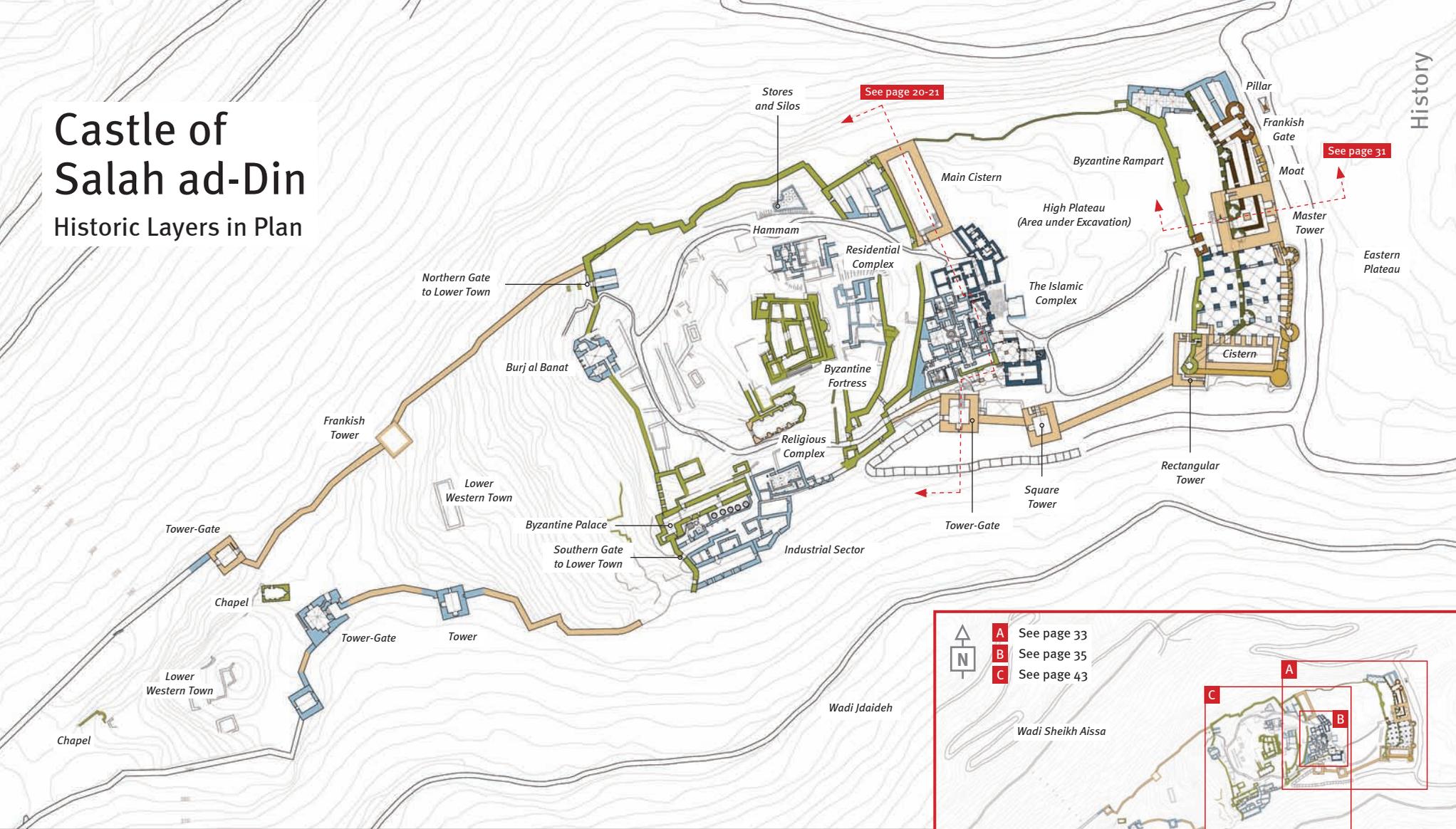


(Top) A copper helmet engraved with decorations and Arabic writings. The upright band in the middle was used to protect the soldier's nose. 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, Persian style.  
(Left) Salah ad-Din was described by his companions as short in stature, frail, with a close and well-trimmed beard and a pensive expression. He was also said to be generous, prodigious, demanding, religious, courteous and affectionate. Drawing from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

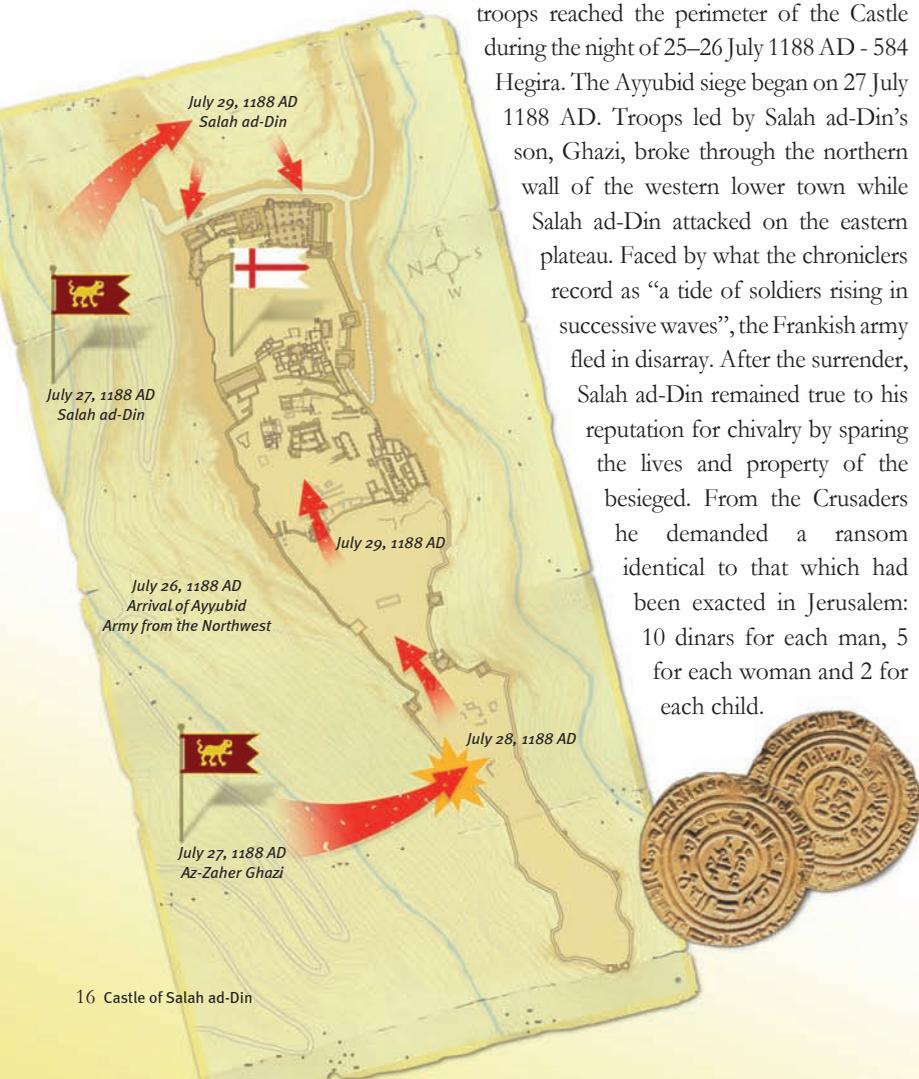


# Castle of Salah ad-Din

## Historic Layers in Plan



*Map of the Castle showing location of the phases of the seizure of the Castle by Salah ad-Din in 1188 AD, according to the chronicler al Isfahani.*



16 Castle of Salah ad-Din

The capture of the Holy City did not, however, lead to the anticipated peace, and Salah ad-Din continued with his campaign of re-conquest. After the falls of Beirut, Jaffa and Ascalon, the Ayyubid army advanced along the coast in the direction of Antioch, capturing the ports of Tartus, Jeleh and Latakia in a lightning military campaign.

Unknown to Matthew, the last Lord of Saône, Ayyubid troops reached the perimeter of the Castle during the night of 25–26 July 1188 AD - 584 Hegira. The Ayyubid siege began on 27 July 1188 AD. Troops led by Salah ad-Din's son, Ghazi, broke through the northern wall of the western lower town while Salah ad-Din attacked on the eastern plateau. Faced by what the chroniclers record as "a tide of soldiers rising in successive waves", the Frankish army fled in disarray. After the surrender, Salah ad-Din remained true to his reputation for chivalry by sparing the lives and property of the besieged. From the Crusaders he demanded a ransom identical to that which had been exacted in Jerusalem: 10 dinars for each man, 5 for each woman and 2 for each child.

## – Qala'at Sahyun – the New Islamic Stronghold

The buildings constructed by the Ayyubid and later by the Mamluk dynasties stand primarily on the plain on the upper plateau, east of the second Byzantine ring wall. This positioning was no doubt prompted by the proximity to the great Frankish cistern, but it could also have been influenced by the strategic advantages of the fortress, which offered better protection to the new inhabitants. Three large structures have survived from the mediaeval Muslim period: the mosque, its facilities and its minaret (dated 1287 AD by a Mamluk inscription); the bath-houses, dating from the same year; and the Ayyubid palace, probably begun in 1188 AD (with later additions after 1272 AD). Arab chroniclers record that before setting off in pursuit of new conquests, Salah ad-Din summoned his son, Ghazi, and instructed him to restore the defensive walls and build a palace, which would symbolise the power of the new Ayyubid dynasty. Probable Arab additions in other areas of the castle are badly damaged.



(Above) The mosque and its minaret. (Below) Mamluk entrance, with remarkable muqarnas, or honeycomb vaulting, to the Islamic Palace Complex.



Control of the Castle was given to one of Salah ad-Din's most faithful lieutenants, Nasir ad-Din Mankuwirs, of a noble family from the region. At that time Mankuwirs was governor of Abu Qubays citadel in the Ghab valley. The new governor controlled the Castle for more than 40 years and was responsible for much of the restoration work. The reconstruction of the defensive wall destroyed by Salah ad-Din's mangonels was one of the first projects carried out. Salah ad-Din's biographers refer also to a re-occupation of the Frankish village on the lower plateau. However, no traces of a mosque have been found to corroborate this statement.



*(Top) Detail of the decorated window frame of the changing and resting room in the Hammam of Qala'un. (Above) The Ayyubid Tower, Burj al Banat, on the western wall of the upper plateau. On a clear day the sea can be glimpsed on the horizon. (Right) The lower western town as seen from Burj al Banat, with the Ayyubid Tower-Gate (left), the Byzantine Chapel (centre) and the Frankish Tower-Gate (right).*

On the edge separating the upper and lower plateau, modifications were made by the Ayyubids and later by the Mamluks. A tower, known as Burj al Banat, shows features characteristic of Ayyubid defensive designs. It could well have been here that the Ayyubids breached the defences of the upper plateau. Byzantine structures on the upper plateau were strengthened, and the section in the southwest, given over to various industries and economic



activities, was redeveloped. The existing structures such as the warehouses, the oven and the silos were taken over by the Ayyubids and subsequently by the Mamluks.

Once defence work on the Castle had been completed, the Ayyubids used the space between the present-day entrance tower and the northern great cistern to lay the foundations for the Ayyubid palace complex. After the re-occupation of the lower town, the colonisation of the plateau to the east of the Castle was initiated.

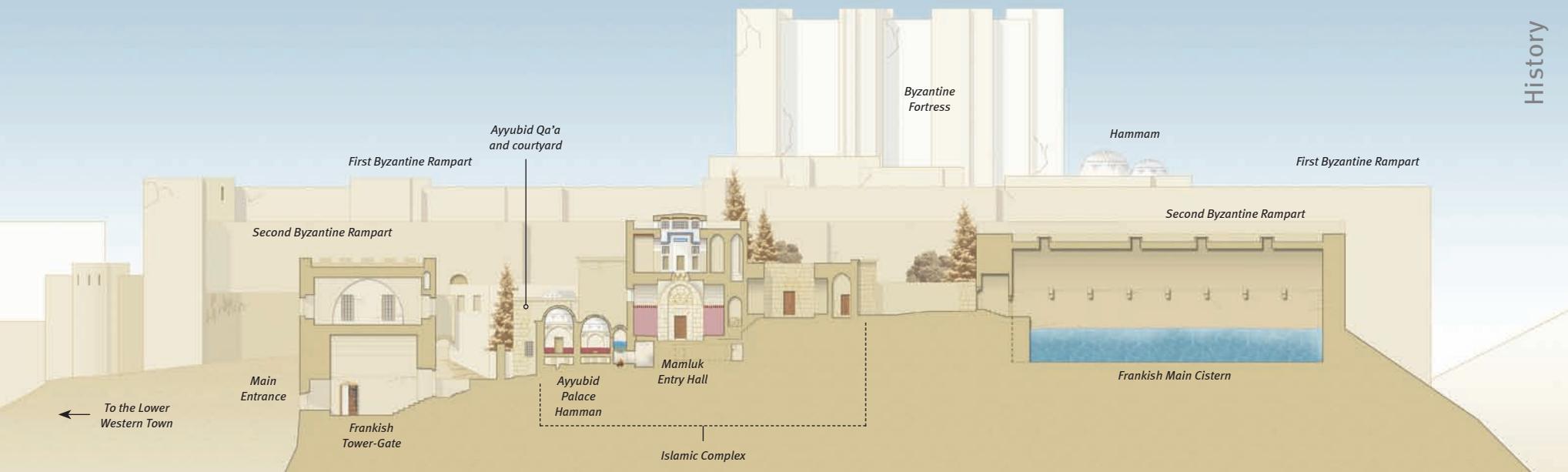
*(Above) The Pillared Hall with remains of the fourth Byzantine Rampart. (Below) View and detail of a copper bowl with decorations and an Arabic inscription, found in Burj al Banat.*



### History of the Castle – under the Ayyubids and Mamluks –

Upon the death of Salah ad-Din in 1193 AD - 589 Hegira, his son al Afdal inherited the vast Ayyubid kingdom but the Castle remained under the governorship of the same local family, the Mankuwirs. Semi-independent economically and politically, they made many additions and improvements to the Castle. The Ayyubid dynasty ruled Northern Syria until the Mongol invasion of 1260 AD. The Mongol invasion was halted by





*(Below) Fragments of a decorated Ayyubid ceramic plate, one of many pieces excavated from the tunnel under the palace.*



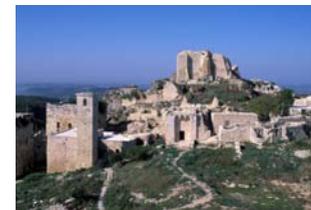
the Egyptian Mamluks under Sultan Baybars. He asserted his authority over all the Syrian fortresses and appointed a Mankuwirs heir, Sayf ad-Din Ahmad, governor of the Castle, who, in 1272 AD, joined forces with the Mamluks in the siege of Crac des Chevaliers. He died in the same year, and his two sons were given administrative posts in Damascus in exchange for the control of the Castle. Ten years later, Baybars recalled one of the sons to resume governorship of the Castle.

A few years later Sunqur al Ashqar, the Mamluk Emir of Damascus, mounted his rebellion against Sultan Qala'un of Cairo. Al Ashqar declared his independence and sent emissaries to the governors of all the Syrian fortresses to gain support. Afraid of a violent reprisal from Egypt, the rebellious emir took refuge in the Castle until a truce with Qala'un. Under the truce, al Ashqar retained control of the site until 1287 AD, when he nominated Hisham ad-Din Tarantay to the post of Governor of the Castle.

The climate of defiance fostered by Qala'un's attempts to take over the Castle probably compelled al Ashqar to undertake restoration work on the defences of the upper courtyard. These events demonstrate the general political instability and the briefness of the reigns of the successive Mamluk governors (1260-1516 AD), which meant a slowing down in the architectural evolution of the Castle.

### – Post-Mamluk (1300s-present) –

After the reign of Qala'un, the Castle lost its power over the region. The lower town was abandoned, probably after the end of the Ayyubid era, although a few inhabitants lingered on in the upper courtyard. In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the famous traveller, Ibn Battuta, refers to the location as “a town defended by a fortress”. The chronicles record nothing of interest in the region until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During the Ottoman era the Castle fell into obscurity.



*(Top) North-south section of a hypothetical reconstruction of the Castle as it might have stood in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. (Above) View from the east of the central section of the Castle with the mosque and its minaret (left), the Palace Complex (centre), and the remains of the Hamam of Qala'un (right), as well as the remains of the Byzantine Fortress rising in the background.*



*General view from the west of the Castle and its mountainous site, c. 1920. During the French Mandate the area was reforested.*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ibrahim Pasha's Egyptian army besieged the Ottoman troops who were entrenched within. He later decided to restore the Castle, but it never regained its erstwhile glory. The site was occupied one last time, under the French Mandate, before being opened to the public. At least two restoration missions took place during the Mandate. In 1957, in commemoration of the seizure of the fortress in 1188 AD by Salah ad-Din, the site was officially named Qala'at Salah ad-Din.



*Perched on a natural outcrop, overlooking a vast area, the Crac des Chevaliers as seen from the southwest.*

Apart from its romantic allure, aesthetic qualities and strategic interest, the Castle of Salah ad-Din is a rare example of a mélange of architectural styles – Byzantine, Frankish and Muslim. Recent conservation work and archaeological excavations have clarified the formerly little-known Ayyubid and Mamluk restorations and additions and the ways in which these later architectural elements were integrated into the former fortifications. In 2006, the Castle of Salah ad-Din, along with the Crac des Chevaliers, was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

## – Historic and Archaeological Research –

The Castle of Salah ad-Din has long been an attraction for many travellers. In 1870, Baron G. Rey wrote a paper on the fortress entitled, “Study on Crusader Architecture.” He declared that the castle was among “the most important feudal fortresses of the East.” In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fortress became a place of increased interest for researchers.

In 1909, T.E. Lawrence described the site as “the most beautiful example of military architecture in Syria”. During the French Mandate, Paul Deschamps studied the site, followed by Max Van Berchen. Later, François Anus drew up a plan of the fortress. Michel Ecochard started restoration work on the façade of the Ayyubid palace in 1937. In 1940, Pierre Coupel restored the church and several towers. Apart from these occasional repair efforts, the Castle of Salah ad-Din did not benefit from comprehensive research and conservation initiatives until the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



*(Above) Photograph of Ecochard's conservation work on the portal of the Islamic Palace at the end of the 1930s. (Below) View of the south-eastern corner of the Castle of Salah ad-Din, as drawn in 1909 by T.E. Lawrence.*



# Castle of Salah ad-Din

## Visitor Site Plan and Facilities



- (1) Eastern Frontage
- (2) Tower-Gate
- (3) Mosque
- (4) Square Tower
- (5) Rectangular Tower
- (6) Southeastern Cistern
- (7) Pillared Hall
- (8) Master Tower
- (9) Courtyard of the Master Tower
- (10) Entrance Complex
- (11) Northeastern Rooms
- (12) Ayyubid Palace
- (13) Hammam of Qala'un
- (14) Main Cistern
- (15) Byzantine Ramparts
- (16) Stores and Silos
- A1 Alternate Route 1  
Option to visit the Islamic Residential Complex and the Hammam
- A2 Alternative Route 2  
Option to visit the Byzantine Fortress
- (17) Western Rampart of the Upper Plateau
- (18) Arab Tower, Burj al Banat

- A3 Alternative Route 3  
Option to visit the Lower Western Town:
  - Northern Gate to Lower Town
  - Western Rampart of the Upper Town
  - Ramparts of the Lower Town
  - Tower-Gate
  - Chapel
  - Tower-Gate
  - Tower
  - Southern Gate to Lower Town
- (19) Religious Complex
- A4 Alternative Route 4  
Option to visit the Industrial Sector and The Byzantine Palace
- (20) Byzantine Ramparts



– Contribution of –  
the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



In 1999, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) became involved in a major programme to rehabilitate three historic citadels in Syria, in cooperation with the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums. Within this framework, an extensive programme of surveying, conservation and restoration work has been carried out on the Islamic-era remains of the Castle, as well as the completion of tourism facilities. The conservation work has concentrated on the Islamic Complex, with a special focus on the Ayyubid-Mamluk Palace. The Trust has also financed archaeological excavations to gain a better understanding of the complex, and to explore the evolution of its spaces over time, and their functions within the palace system.



*View of the courtyard of the Islamic Palace before and after the conservation process. Important non-exposed structural reinforcements have been integrated to support the remains of the first floor.*

From 2000 to 2004, the archaeological excavations and conservation process were led by a multi-disciplinary team of Syrian and international specialists. The conservation work has been performed by local craftsmen under the supervision of AKTC. As a result of this partnership, a deeper understanding was reached on the origins and the components of the Islamic Complex. The main building, buried in debris and previously thought to be a hammam, was in fact a full-fledged palace with attached bath facilities, commissioned by the son of Salah ad-Din. Along with the process of conservation of the palace, the mosque and the adjacent building were rehabilitated as the Visitor Centre.

The General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, through its Lattakia Department, is continuing this project with the restoration of certain Byzantine, Frankish and Islamic structures.

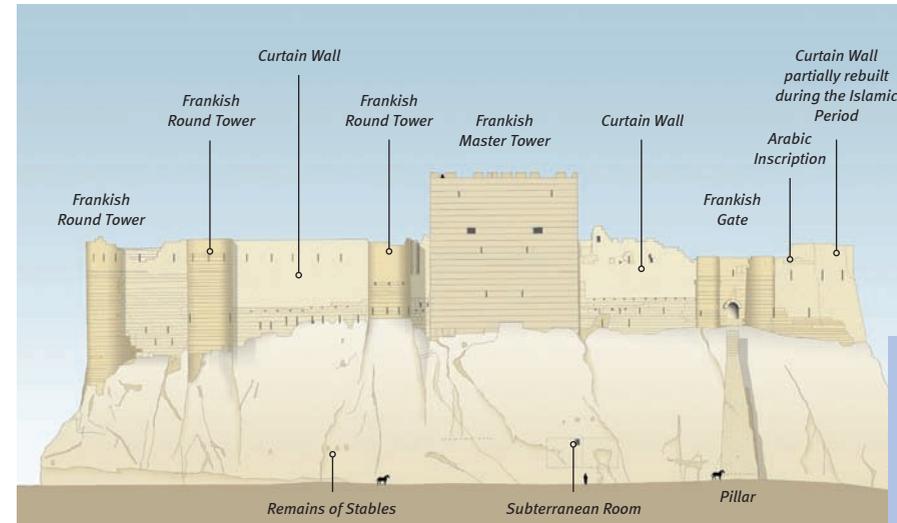
- ① The Eastern Frontage -

The spectacular eastern frontage is the most heavily fortified. While intended to be austere and menacing, the architecture is exquisite. Excavation of the great moat, likely begun in the Byzantine era, was achieved in several stages: the moat was deepened and widened by the Franks, and perhaps modified during the Islamic period. Nowhere else has a moat been excavated to such dimensions: 158 metres long, 14–20 metres wide and 28 metres deep. Excavation of the moat was done at the same time as the construction of the upper fortifications, which were built with stones from the excavation.

When the workers cut the bedrock for the moat, they left in place a massive monolithic pillar, 28 metres high, to support a movable bridge to the entrance of the Castle. In doing so, the workers probably followed the contours of the earlier stonework bridge support, likely constructed in the Byzantine era. The abundance of herring-bone patterns on the walls demonstrates the high quality of the workmanship used to quarry the rocks from the moat. The technique to deepen the moat, common in



*The Eastern Frontage and the moat: the fortifications on top of the cut bedrock and the pillar.*



northern Syria since antiquity, derives from the introduction of the chisel (an ideal tool for cutting rock) first by the Byzantines, then continued by the Franks.



*(Top) Mangers were carved out of the rock along with small apertures to support canopies of stables.*

*(Above) Entrance to the subterranean room entirely carved out of the bedrock.*

The steep walls are punctured by rows of small holes. Some were fitted with beams which supported lightweight structures rising from the bottom of the moat. These must have been used as stables. The row of larger holes, which are relatively close to the ground, seem to have been mangers and troughs for animals. In the event of an imminent siege, the horses could be brought inside the Castle. A second line of holes, located about 20 metres above ground level, were used to support scaffolding during the moat excavation and wall building.

Below the impressive master tower, an opening rises six metres above the present ground level. It accesses a large subterranean room through a corridor. This room, with niches, benches and a pillar, all carved out of the bedrock, could have once served as a dungeon. The upper part of the Frankish fortifications dominating the moat was restored during the Islamic period. The entire wall, to the north of the entrance, destroyed during the siege of 1188, was rebuilt soon after, and carries an illegible Islamic inscription.

## - 2 The Tower-Gate -

**i** The huge tower-gate (which today still serves as the entrance to the Castle) is made of rustic bossage stones. This tower is a good example of Frankish military construction skills. Almost invisible and not exposed to the projectiles of the mangonels, the gate is recessed and surmounted by an arch. An upper postern strengthens the defences of the gate. Entry was through a rectangular vaulted chamber. A staircase, partially cut from the bedrock, set into the entrance's northern wall, gives access to the interior of the Castle. A second staircase, located on the external eastern façade of the tower-gate, leads to a second rectangular chamber. The walls of the upper chamber are equipped with arched niches containing slits and two windows opening on to the interior of the Castle; a third staircase, set into the northern wall, leads to the terrace of the tower.



*Access to the Frankish Tower-Gate is by a long stone staircase which winds through the shadows of old pine trees.*

## - 3 The Mosque -

**M** A rectangular mosque occupies part of the Byzantine rampart. The stonework of the walls, identical to that of the Byzantine defensive walls, shows that the mosque has been restored on different occasions. The northeastern corner of the mosque is flanked by a minaret, a free-standing square tower built of re-used stones. The entrance to the minaret, which is over three metres above the threshold of the mosque, is topped by a lintel engraved with an inscription commemorating the name of the Mamluk Sultan Qala'un, and connects to a spiral staircase. The niche between the minaret and the entrance to the mosque suggests a former place of worship, probably Ayyubid. A vaulted room, which re-used a Frankish gallery, was walled during the Islamic period, and became part of the religious complex. This room and the prayer hall now constitute the newly created Visitor Centre.



*(Top) The Religious Complex from the east. (Middle) The vaulted prayer hall and the mihrab indicating the direction of Mecca. (Bottom) The Rectangular Tower.*

## - 4 The Square Tower -

**✕** The second tower built by the Crusaders has no structural connection to the curtain walls. It consists of two floors: a room whose walls are pierced with arrow-slits and a terrace accessible by a staircase set into the thick northern wall. The use of bossage stone inside the chamber suggests post-Frankish restoration, probably performed by the Ayyubids.

## - 5 The Rectangular Tower -

The third tower on the southern frontage of the Castle is located in the former southeastern corner of the Byzantine Castle. This structure is the largest tower on the southern frontage. Two doors are set into its northern façade. The first opens on to a staircase leading to the upper chamber, ensuring that it functions as an entirely independent space. The second door leads to an underground chamber where we find part of the third Byzantine ring wall: a postern protected by an arrow-slit and a fall trap, a wall section and a circular tower which probably

served as a dungeon. This underground chamber has access to the outside by means of a postern located in the southeastern corner of the tower, providing an effective escape-route in the event of siege. As with the square tower, the extensive use of bossage stone on the inside indicates a later restoration.



- 6 The Southeastern Cistern -

One of two at the Castle, this cistern runs along the southern frontage between the southeast corner tower and the third tower on the southern front, and is accessed by a narrow passage. Built by the Franks, the carefully laid stonework of this rectangular barrel-vaulted chamber (27 x 8 metres), is of a more recent date than that of the eastern ramparts. Vestiges of ceramic drains designed to catch rainwater are visible at the entrance. The existence of this water system points to the possible residential function of the adjacent rectangular tower. This cistern still collects water.



- 7 The Pillared Hall -

Like the adjacent cistern, the pillared hall can be reached by the small passage near the third rectangular tower on the southern front. A second and wider entrance is in the opposite corner, near the Frankish master tower. The hall was used as a stable, a munitions warehouse and for other functions. Its space is divided into five groin-vaulted naves constructed in two phases during the Islamic period and supported by 35 columns (see also page 19). As suggested by the traces in the floor of the fourth and final Byzantine wall, the construction of this hall necessitated the destruction of a part of this rampart. Remains of other structures, perhaps of Frankish origin, are also visible. This hall accesses a firing gallery, facing the eastern plateau, which contains three circular towers and as many as twenty arrow-slits. The first tower, located in the southeastern corner, is accessible from the parapet walk. Another tower 20 metres to the north has two arrow-slits and is accessible from the hall. The third, located at the northeastern corner of the hall, consists of two chambers; the lower one, with particularly fine

*(Top) Interior of the lower level of the round tower at the northeastern corner of the Pillared Hall. This Frankish Tower is an example of high-quality complex stonemasonry. Arrow slots provide views of the moat. (Above) Remains of the fourth Byzantine rampart on the Eastern Frontage with the base of a semicircular tower inside the Pillared Hall.*

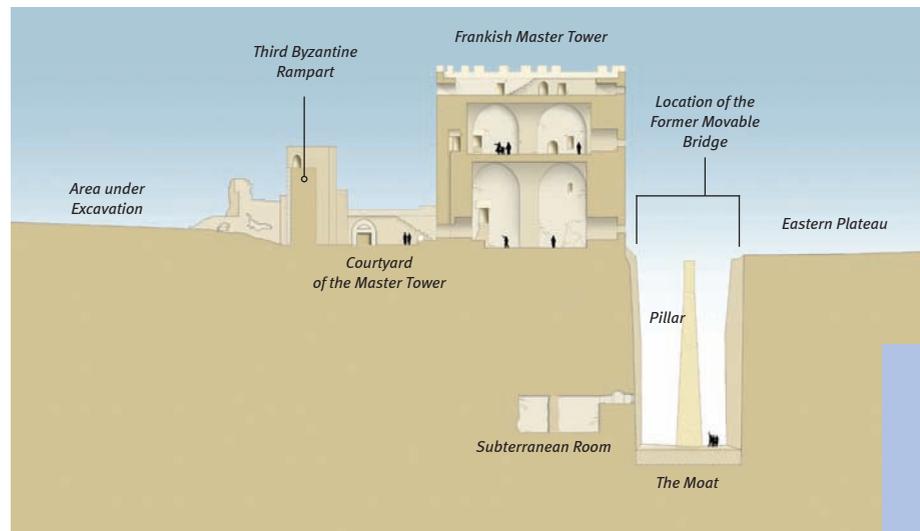
Frankish masonry, has seven arrow-slits. A staircase set into the northeastern corner leads to the curtain wall above the hall, also fitted with arrow-slits. The rampart walk of this curtain wall, much higher than the terrace of the hall, shows that this terrace could have accommodated a second, similar hall, whose construction was probably cut short, as only few traces of masonry remain.

- 8 The Master Tower -

 **VIEW POINT** / The master tower had a dual function as a defensive structure and as a symbol of the power of the family of Saône. Magnificently constructed of massive bossage stones, it is the largest such tower in the region. This tower rises from the middle of the eastern frontage and has three levels: two chambers and a terrace. The massive walls are five metres thick in some places. The tower stands on the site of a former Byzantine gate, that of the fourth ring wall, which was flanked by two circular towers. The raised entrance to the master tower contains the remains of a barbican. The entrance is surmounted by a large lintel, behind which is a fall trap. The gate opens onto



*(Above) The imposing Master Tower was the seat of Frankish power. The older third Byzantine rampart is in the foreground. (Below) Section of the Eastern Frontage of the Castle showing the massive Master Tower, the excavated moat and the eastern plateau.*



a very high, barrel-vaulted hall with two recessed arrow-slits which are the only source of light. In the middle of the hall there is a massive, finely constructed, square central pillar, which supports the vaults. Access to the second chamber is given by a vaulted stairway, lit by an arrow-slit set into the northern wall. Openings in the western and southern walls, however, greatly improve the lighting of this chamber, and suggest that it was probably intended for residential use. The openings also enable us to appraise the workmanship of the vaulting, in particular the keystones, which are cut in the form of a cross.



A utility room, accommodating the latrines, is located in the northern wall of the chamber, while on the western side there is a small room serving the fall-trap. A second stairway, built into the northern wall of this chamber, connects with the terrace. Surrounding the terrace is a row of arrow-slits and windows surmounted by a row of crenellations, accessible by a small stone staircase. The terrace faces the eastern plateau where vestiges of a mediaeval settlement can still be seen.



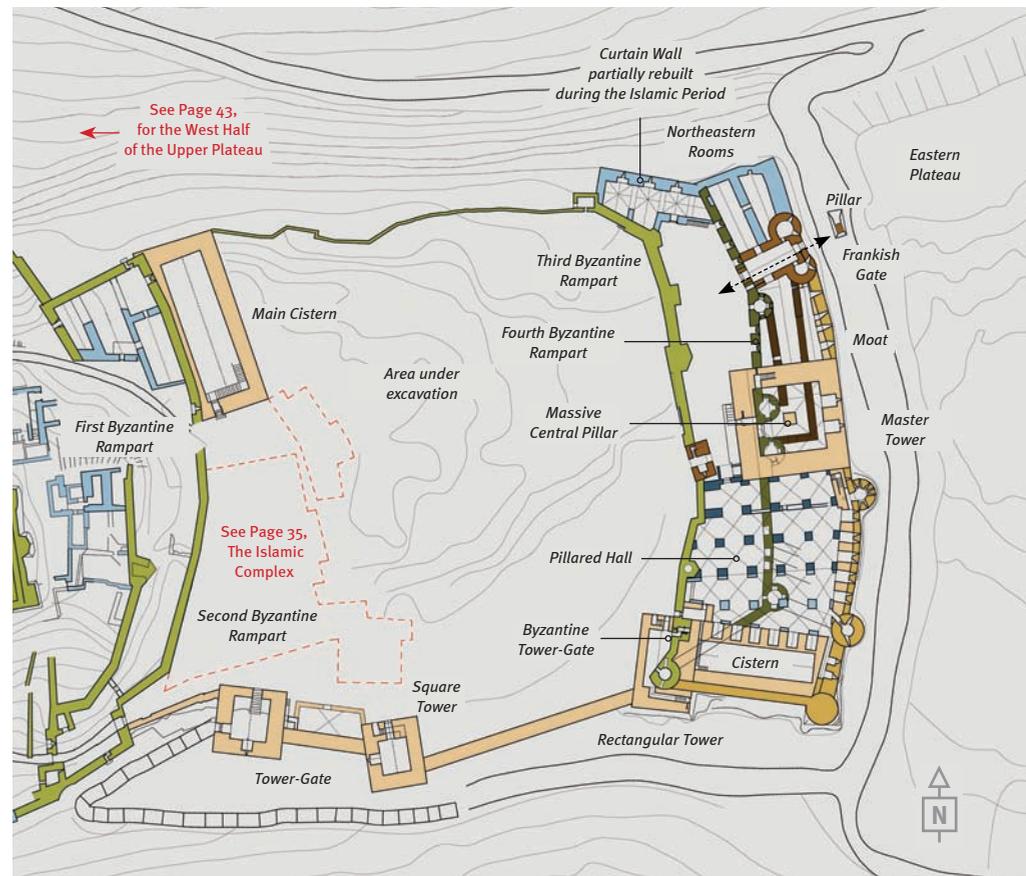
*(Top) Interior of the upper chamber in the Master Tower, likely used as a residential space as indicated by well-conserved latrines in a small side-room.*

*(Above) External face of the third rampart which extended the boundaries of the Byzantine Citadel 110 metres to the east of the second curtain wall. Lozenge-shaped decorations adorn some of its towers.*

## 9 The Courtyard of the Master Tower -

The courtyard is located between the third and fourth Byzantine ring walls. The third defensive wall to the west was built with handsomely cut stone, arranged in a decorative diamond-shaped composition on some of its towers. It is flanked by six polygonal towers and a rectangular tower-gate set in the middle of the defensive wall.

A steep and narrow stairway leads to an observation post. The insignificant position of this third defensive wall and the almost complete absence of arrow-slits suggest that it must have been built before the eastern moat was excavated. To the east, the fourth Byzantine ring wall was entirely flanked by semi-circular towers equipped with arches with double arrow-slits. Only traces of the northern part of this wall are still visible. The rest, including the former entrance to the Castle on the site of the master tower, was destroyed by the Franks during their work on the eastern frontage.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span> Byzantine Period 1 | <span style="color: #ADD8E6;">■</span> Islamic Period 1 |
| <span style="color: #800000;">■</span> Byzantine Period 2 | <span style="color: #000080;">■</span> Islamic Period 2 |
| <span style="color: #8B4513;">■</span> Frankish Period 1  | <span style="color: #ADD8E6;">■</span> Islamic Period 3 |
| <span style="color: #D2691E;">■</span> Frankish Period 2  |   |
| <span style="color: #FFD700;">■</span> Frankish Period 3  |   |
| <span style="color: #FFA500;">■</span> Frankish Period 4  |   |

*Historical chronology of the buildings on the Upper Plateau to the east of the Byzantine Fortress. This plan shows the well-integrated fortifications of the Byzantines and Franks.*

- 10 The Entrance Complex -

**VIEW POINT** / The fourth and fifth towers, which flank the northern section of the eastern frontage of the Castle, are part of the entrance used by the Franks. The existence of a movable bridge, supported by a pillar, marked a change in the way the Castle was accessed. A rectangular vaulted chamber in front of the entrance accesses the two towers. Between the entrance complex and the master tower are the remains of walls of a barbican which probably dates from the Byzantine era or the beginning of the Frankish period.



The Frankish Entry Gate flanked by two round towers, and the monolithic pillar. The temporary bridge could be withdrawn or destroyed in case of attack. The third Byzantine rampart is in the background.

- 11 The Northeastern Rooms -

This section of the defensive walls and rooms was mostly destroyed by Salah ad-Din's mangonels in 1188. The restoration of these three large vaulted rooms was surely one of the first projects carried out on the fortifications by the Ayyubids.

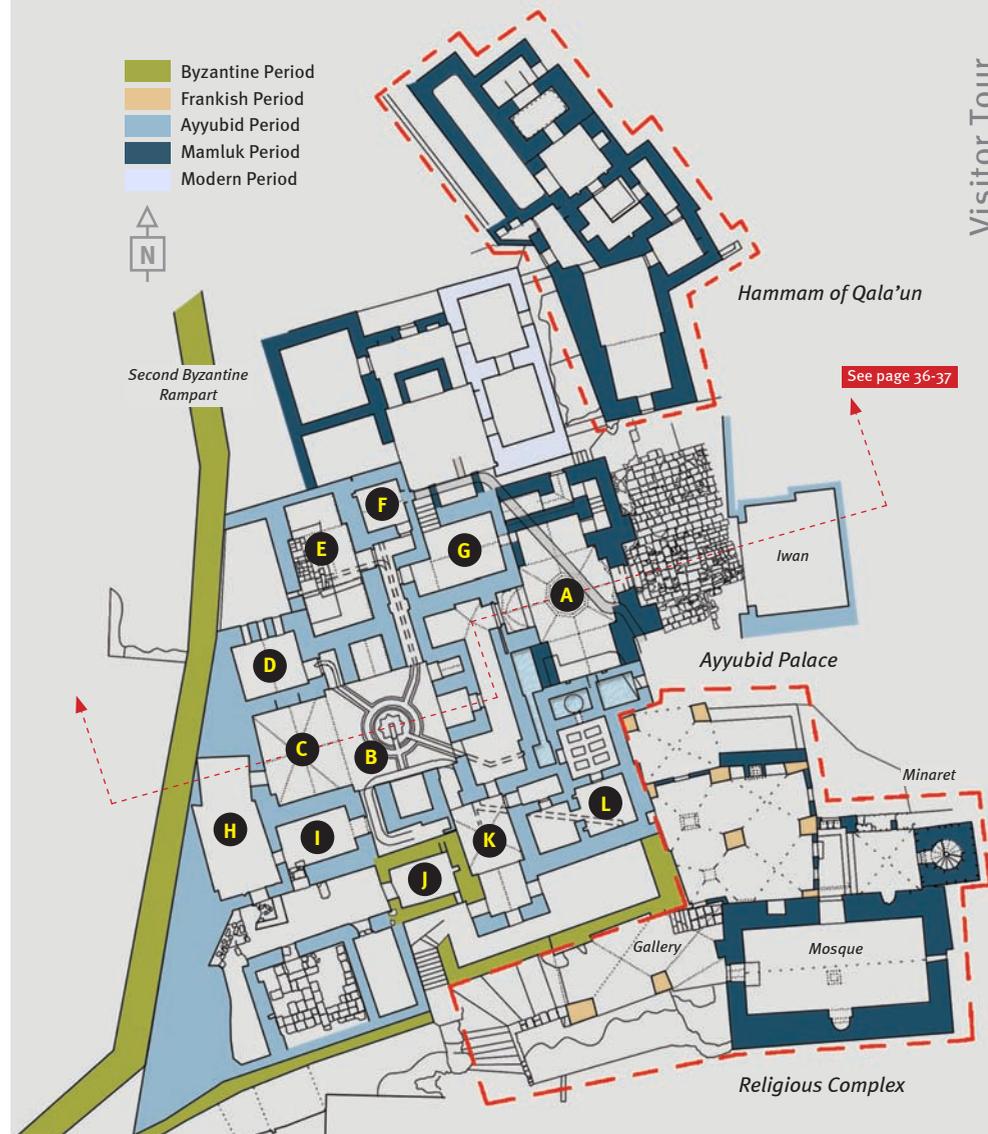
- 12 The Ayyubid Palace -

The Islamic complex is composed of the mosque, the palace complex and the hammam of Qala'un. The palace complex, begun after the conquest of the Castle by Salah ad-Din in 1188, is accessed through an entry hall (A) with a muqarnas gateway which was probably added to the Ayyubid palace after the recapture by Qala'un after 1272. The entry hall features two lateral iwans; the northern one contains the access to a stair which leads to the upper floor. Through the Ayyubid portal is a narrow vaulted passage. Control of this critical access was ensured by a guard iwan and a round opening placed in the top of the vault.

This passage leads to the qa'a and its central courtyard (B), the heart of the palace. The courtyard of the qa'a was adorned with a basin, the base of which is carved into the bedrock. Archaeological findings suggest that the basin featured an octagonal decorative pattern, built of stone on a brick base and



The Mamluk portal to the Palace Complex, notable for its muqarnas and symbolising the power of the new occupants.



- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| (A) Entry hall        | (G) Vaulted room   |
| (B) Central courtyard | (H) Room with iwan |
| (C) Western iwan      | (I) Southern qubba |
| (D) Northern qubba    | (J) Cesspool       |
| (E) Rectangular room  | (K) Changing hall  |
| (F) Service room      | (L) Hammam section |

Plan of the Islamic Complex. In the tradition of Syrian residences, Ayyubid and Mamluk palaces are composed around a qa'a, a central space surrounded by iwans and rooms.

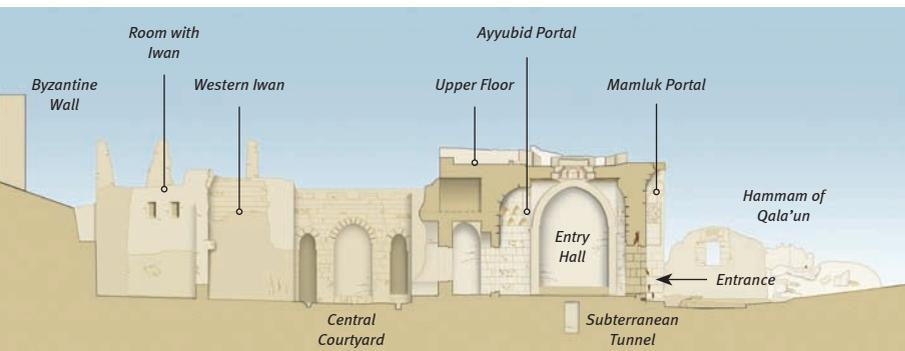
See page 36-37

covered with coloured marble mosaic, while the entire floor of the courtyard must have been paved with marble slabs. The central courtyard of the qa'a was enclosed by four iwans, one on each side. The western iwan (C) is the largest and still features a remnant of the ribbed vaulting that has collapsed. On the three other elevations, each iwan is flanked by two symmetrical doors which give access to interior corridors leading into various sections of the palace. Facing the eastern iwan, the corridor entrance is to the right and a little store room is to the left.

**THE NORTHERN PALACE SECTIONS /** Facing the northern iwan, the doorway to the left leads to a vaulted square room, one of the qubbas (D) which typically accompany major iwans. Most of the space is quarried from the rock, as is a drainage canal for the room. The doorway to the right leads into a long corridor giving access to three rooms, the function of which is difficult to define. Recessed stone doorframes in the corridor suggest that this whole section could be functionally separated from the central courtyard if needed. A rectangular vaulted room (G) presents the remains of a stone slab paving, as well as a water basin carved into the rock, below the base of a mural fountain. The basin (which was covered with marble mosaic) touches a mastaba, or raised platform, of a later iwan. A second mastaba of an iwan to the north confirmed the residential function of this space, which must have been quite refined, as evidenced by the fragments of marble, mother-of-pearl and coloured or gilded glass which were part of a rich mosaic covering the raised floor of the mastaba. This section, largely cut into the rock, intersects



(Above) Interior of the entrance vestibule to the palace, showing the former Ayyubid entrance.  
(Below) East-west section of the palace in its current condition.



with earlier Byzantine structures. From a little service room (F), a long underground tunnel leads close to the mosque. The wealth of archaeological material found in this tunnel, such as highly decorated ceramics (page 19), fragments of gilded glassware, old coins, ivory chess pieces and inscribed bronze vessels, indicates that the passage was fully used during the Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods. The vaulted room (G), with a staircase to a second qa'a, completes this section. This qa'a is partly concealed by a modern construction put up in the late 1950s. Under the stairs to the upper floor are latrines.

**THE WESTERN AND SOUTHERN SECTIONS OF THE PALACE /** A room (H) framed by two iwans sits behind the grand western iwan (C) facing the courtyard. The northern of these two small iwans is cut into the rock, while the other is made of rubble stone. The complete structure was originally covered with a smooth plaster. Fragments of brick and marble found on the floor resemble those found in the basin of the central courtyard and suggest that this back room had an important function within the palace. Several findings suggest that parts of this section were renovated and rebuilt using earlier Byzantine structures. In fact, the Ayyubid palace touches the foot of the second Byzantine ring wall which enclosed the old Byzantine fortress immediately above. Access to the southwest section of the palace was through the southern qubba (I) of the principal iwan (C). This area was in very bad condition, and for conservation purposes was re-covered after archaeological excavation. A group of rooms including a former cooking space was arranged along a common passageway which



(Above) View of the courtyard of the qa'a with remains of the central octagonal basin and drainage carved into the bedrock.  
(Below) Hypothetical reconstruction of an east-west section showing how the palace might have appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.



was remodelled from an earlier defensive gallery connected to the Byzantine fortification. Interesting archaeological finds were made in this area. Traces of charcoal and ancient pottery fragments were found in a cooking corner, while the passageway revealed layers of two subsequent occupations, separated by a layer of ashes indicating a fire at the site. Several Byzantine coins were found, as well as pottery and glass fragments from the Mamluk period. The top layer of the passage was partly paved with stone slabs, under which Mamluk coins were found. Remains of Byzantine walls with arrow-slits were also uncovered during the excavations.



**(Top)** The Palace Hammam. **(Middle)** The changing room with the remains of a Frankish space. **(Bottom)** Access to the furnace was separate.

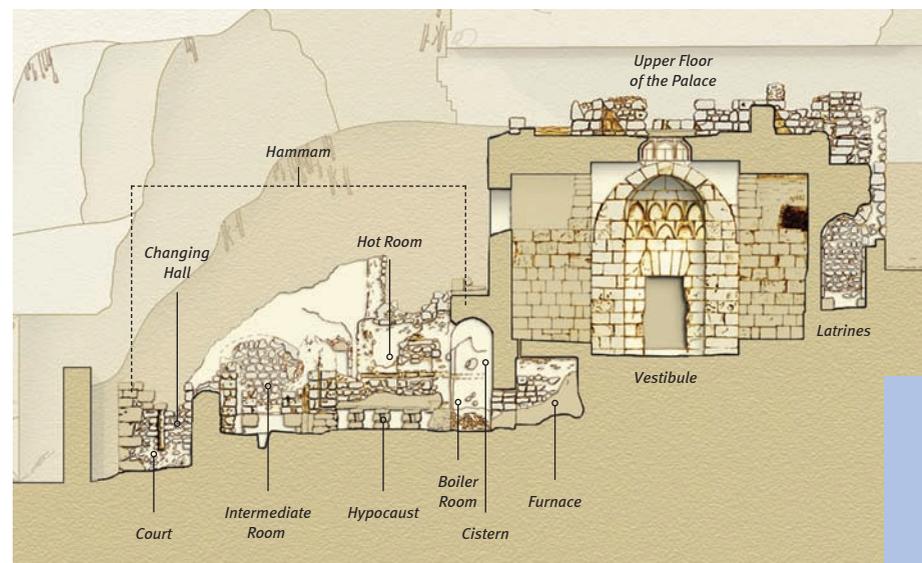
**THE SOUTHERN SECTIONS OF THE PALACE** / The section behind the southern iwan is mainly composed of the palace hammam. Looking from the courtyard to the iwan, the doorway to the right of the iwan leads to a small qubba (I) through a passageway, giving access to latrines which used a former Byzantine room as a cesspool (J). The doorway to the left leads to the changing/resting hall (K), which acts as a transition between the qa'a and the hammam (L). Its rectangular space re-uses a former Byzantine room, and its walls are a mixture of rubble stone and dressed stone. Beyond its eastern wall and through a little corridor are the cold room, the intermediate room and the hot room, typical spaces of an Oriental hammam. Each of these three small square rooms was covered by a dome with small star-like light apertures.

The floor of the hot room is composed of thin stone slabs resting on six supports, which form the hollow hypocaust system. Smoke from a fire circulated under the hot room and the intermediate room, heating the two spaces before escaping through two chimneys still present in the intermediate room. Hot water was generated in a well-conserved circular brick furnace located in a stove behind the northern wall of the hot room. Horizontal channels running above the floor moved water into basins. The storage room for firewood stands below the southern iwan of the entry hall and is directly accessible through an opening in the southeastern front of the palace, left of the main gateway. The cisterns feed both the hammam and the basin in the courtyard of the qa'a.

**THE UPPER FLOOR OF THE PALACE** / For safety reasons, visits to the upper floor (of which only traces remain) are limited. Entrance to the upper floor was by a small stairway, now destroyed, located in the northern iwan of the palace's entry hall (A). On the top of this entry hall, traces of a qa'a were found, with its central space organised around the opening of the skylight of the entry hall below. To the south of this space, opening to the north, was the main iwan with a little attached room (qubba). Another smaller iwan existed on the northern side of the central space, flanked by two passages: one leading to stairways accessing the ground floor and upper level or terrace, and the other, to the north, leading to a small service room. On the eastern side of the central space, a doorway opens into an oblong room, on top of the entry portal, which may well have been an open veranda, judging from the support structures projecting above the portal's muqarnas. On the opposite side of the central space, to the west, another doorway leads into a formerly vaulted room which must have possessed a richly decorated floor, as indicated by a few fragments discovered there. Apart from these residential or private reception spaces, the upper floor seems to be used for services and the water supply.



**(Above)** Over the entry hall with the muqarnas gateway is another qa'a composed of a central courtyard and a northern-oriented iwan. **(Below)** North-south section of the Ayyubid Palace and Hammam.



- 13 The Hammam of Qala'un -



*Façade of the cold room of the hammam with its decorated framed window. As an important element of an Islamic Town, the hammam's construction could have begun just after the capture of the Castle.*

One of the Castle's public bathhouses is known as the Hammam of Qala'un, even though the origin of this building could be Ayyubid. The entry hall of the hammam, now in an advanced state of ruin, led to a passage to the usual sequence of the cold/ changing room followed by the intermediate and hot rooms. Some fragments of marble floors are still visible, and more have been discovered during the archaeological missions. Two 13<sup>th</sup>-century inscriptions have been conserved at the base of the arch of the iwan of the large, cold, resting and changing room. The inscriptions, from rival Mamluk leaders, confirm that there were at least two consecutive construction stages. On the arch support to the east is the name of Sunqur al Ashqar and the second, on the facing side, is the name of the son of Qala'un. In the middle of the back wall is a window with a decorative frame. The furnace, the stove and the cold and hot water cisterns can be seen through a separate entrance. The cold water cistern stretched more than ten metres in length.

- 14 The Main Cistern -



*Openings in the vault and cantilevered supports for the vault form are visible in the cistern. Note the man standing in the centre.*

Taking advantage of the more than ten-metre change in level at the northern end of the second Byzantine ring wall, the Franks built a second water storage structure adjacent to the Byzantine rampart, obstructing the wall's arrow-slots. This immense barrel-vaulted cistern, rectangular in shape (32x10 metres), is much larger than the cistern on the eastern façade. The stonework is of exceptional quality and rests on large blocks of smooth stone, some bearing lapidary marks. The whole barrel-vaulted room is covered by a terrace and fitted with four openings which provide both light and air to the cistern. Cantilevered stones at the top of the walls perhaps supported a form during the construction of the vault. Proximity to this cistern could have justified the decision to locate the Ayyubid palace and hammam downhill to the south. Even today the cistern contains a certain amount of water. Because of its size, however, and in spite of the abundant rainfall in the area, it cannot be filled by rainwater alone. It seems likely that there once was a freshwater spring nearby.

- 15 Byzantine Ramparts -

To the east of the upper fortress, two curved ring walls running north to south formed a bulwark protecting the western part of the upper plateau and the Byzantine fortress. The first wall was flanked by polygonal towers and the second is now in an advanced state of dilapidation.

- 16 Stores and Silos -

The existence of the cistern in this area probably encouraged a certain amount of economic activity. The site contains remains of substantial vaulted halls, as well as some ten or more grain silos. The quality of construction of these silos is remarkable.

**A1. FIRST ALTERNATIVE ROUTE** / To the northeast of the Byzantine fortress, an imposing hammam was built; to the east of the fortress, an Islamic residential complex was erected using elements of former structures.

**A2. SECOND ALTERNATIVE ROUTE** / The remains of the Byzantine fortress stand on the highest point of the site. Its complex structure, originally an enclosed courtyard and four towers, shows several phases of construction. During the Frankish and Islamic periods, renovations to strengthen the fortress were undertaken.

- 17 Western Rampart of the Upper Plateau -

 **VIEW POINT** / The western wall of the upper plateau was built along the natural gradient, and is made up of stones gained by cutting away the bluff. Built directly over the natural drop in elevation, this wall was strategically designed to improve the Castle's defences and strengthen the separation between the upper plateau and the lower town. Access to the lower town was possible through two gates, connecting the domestic activities with the centre of power in the upper plateau.



*Interior of partially destroyed silo, exposing its perfect masonry work.*



*The western wall of the Upper Plateau as seen from the Lower Town with, from left to right, the northern gate, Burj al Banat, the Byzantine Palace and southern gate.*

## - 18 The Arab Tower - Burj al Banat



 Burj al Banat, “Tower of the Girls”, overhangs the bluff and has features characteristic of Ayyubid architecture. The vaulted hall has two small side rooms, and the whole complex is located over a defence room accessible by a staircase, and a Byzantine or Frankish cistern. It could well have been here that the Ayyubids breached the western ramparts and penetrated the upper plateau of the Castle in 1188.

### A3. THIRD ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

**NORTHERN GATE TO LOWER TOWN** / Northern access to the lower town was possible through a gate and a wooden bridge resting on two monolithic piles. A vaulted hall was added, as an extension of the gate, probably during the Islamic period.

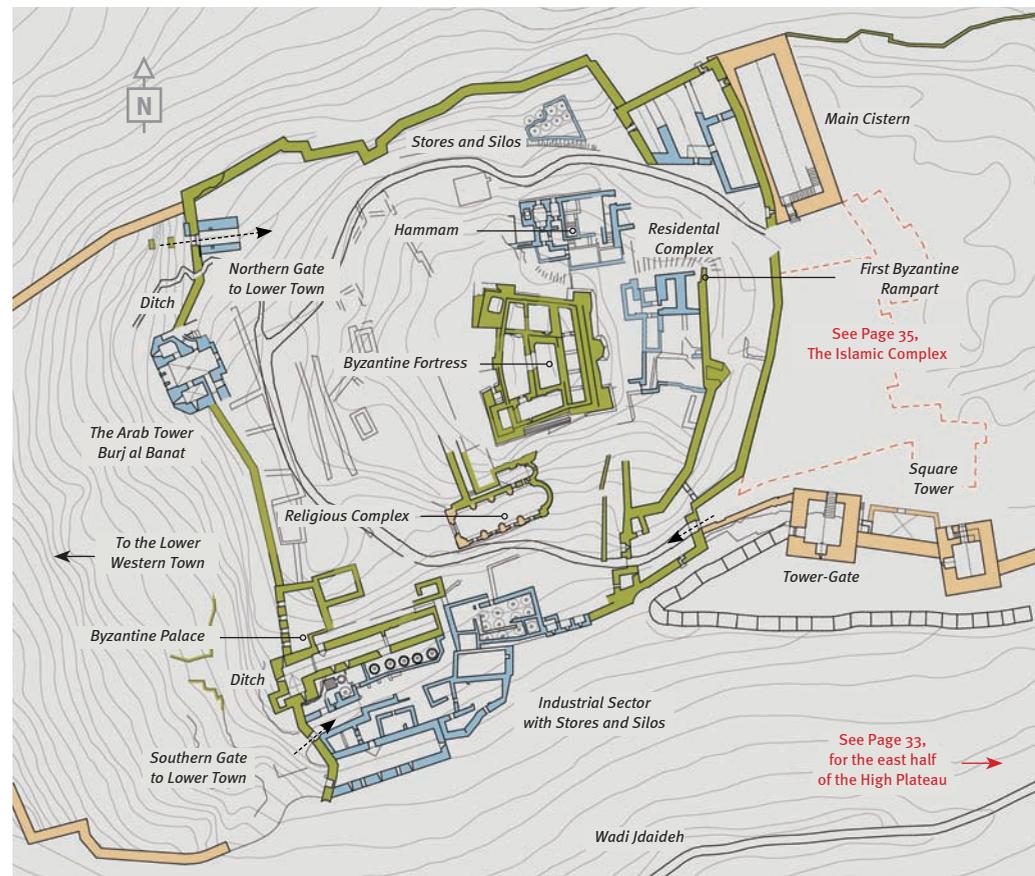
**WESTERN RAMPART OF THE UPPER PLATEAU** / To enhance the fortifications separating the lower town from the upper plateau, the Byzantines began a ditch along the bottom of bluff. It appears to have not been finished, and only traces are visible in the south. The remains of the rampart are visible to the north and the south, while the middle section has completely collapsed.

**RAMPARTS OF THE LOWER TOWN** / The defensive wall of the lower town, which would have been built on the ancient Hamdanid ramparts, is from a later date. The Franks partially restored the defensive wall before building quadrangular towers similar to those on the upper plateau. The first of these, a square tower, is largely embedded in the ground and can be reached through an entrance located on the western wall. The second tower provided one of the two access points to the lower town. Between these two towers are some precariously overhanging stones, the remains of a curtain wall. The northern wall was destroyed, probably as a consequence of attacks by Muslim armies in 1188, and was later restored. The remains of a Byzantine round tower, similar to those on the upper plateau, survived at the western end of the Castle. It contains a cistern in the lower level and a secret passage.



(Top) Burj al Banat was built on a former defence hall and a cistern.

(Above) The Northern Gate from the upper plateau to the lower town. Two stone pillars supported a wooden structure.



- |   |                    |   |                  |
|---|--------------------|---|------------------|
|  | Byzantine Period 1 |  | Islamic Period 1 |
|  | Byzantine Period 2 |  | Islamic Period 2 |
|  | Frankish Period 1  |  | Islamic Period 3 |
|  | Frankish Period 2  |   |                  |
|  | Frankish Period 3  |   |                  |
|  | Frankish Period 4  |   |                  |

*The western part of the upper plateau was the heart of Byzantine power and contained the Palace, the Religious Complex and the Fortress overlooking the entire site.*

**TOWER-GATE** / The second Frankish tower on the northern wall acts as a lookout point towards the roads from Jebel at-Tun. Its entrance is identical to that of the upper plateau. The tower contains many mason marks. Between the two Frankish towers is a curtain wall with cantilevered stones.



*The Frankish Tower-Gate inside the lower town is similar in plan and construction to the main tower-gate to the Castle. From the gate the mediaeval path is still recognisable.*

**CHAPEL** / The existence of two chapels confirms the residential function of the lower town. The first chapel is located in the centre of the lower plateau, where the surrounding walls are at their narrowest. It consists of a rectangular chamber with two entrances, one on the north wall and the other on the western façade, facing the semi-circular, cul-de-four apse fitted into the eastern wall. A second chapel, 80 metres to the west of the first, is a more modest building and consists of a slightly more elongated rectangular hall.

**TOWER-GATE** / A second rectangular tower-gate tops the southern side of the lower town. Protected by arrow-slits in its southern and western walls, it serves as the second point of access to the lower town, through a winding entrance guarded by more slits. As this design is reminiscent of Ayyubid military architecture, it seems probable that this tower was rebuilt by the Ayyubids. The terrace can be reached by two stairways.



*The quality of the Byzantine Chapel's construction provides an idea of the importance and the number of inhabitants in the lower town.*

**TOWER** / This tower, rectangular in form, accessible from the northern façade, consists of a single chamber and a terrace which can be reached by a staircase situated on the perimeter wall. This defensive structure appears to have been almost entirely rebuilt in the Islamic period.

**SOUTHERN GATE TO LOWER TOWN** / This gate, a postern and a wooden bridge, in an advanced stage of dilapidation, provided southern access to the lower town from the upper plateau.

**INDUSTRIAL SECTOR** / As the centre of a small fiefdom, the Castle received and processed agricultural products of the region, and had an evident economic and industrial importance. A section in the south was partially given over to various industries. There is evidence of an oven, storage spaces, two millstones in a large vaulted room which probably were dedicated to olive and grape pressing, and several well-constructed grain silos.

**BYZANTINE PALACE** / The ruins of a residential complex exist to the southwest of the upper plateau, near the southern gate to the lower town. This complex was perhaps the palace of the Byzantine lord, made up of several levels of arched chambers. One of these chambers still contains four openings overlooking the lower western town. Unfortunately, these remains are very fragmented and it is no longer possible to reconstruct their exact original function and layout. The palace is located at the southwestern corner of the Byzantine fortress. From here, commanding views of the mountains and the sea ensured control of the region.



*(Top) The apse of the small chapel adjacent to the church. Some restoration works were done in the 1940s during the French Mandate. (Above) On the continuation of the western ramparts of the upper plateau are remains of an important structure, presumably a Byzantine palace.*

## - 19 The Religious Complex -

The religious complex, consisting of a church and a chapel, is adjacent to the southern façade of the Byzantine fortress, and is in a very poor state of conservation. The church has a large rectangular nave and was probably the primary place of public worship on the upper plateau. It was bordered on the east by a semicircular apse, which was surmounted by a vault in the form of a cul-de-four made entirely from dressed stone. In contrast with the majority of the buildings from the Byzantine period, the excellent quality of the stone work in the church signals a desire to construct a long-term monument. This space connects with a chapel through its northeastern corner. This small, rectangular chapel consists of a nave with a semicircular apse connected directly to the fortress by a staircase on the western side. The incumbent lord could therefore gain access to the place of worship directly from his residence. These two churches of Byzantine origin were partially rebuilt under the Franks, as can be seen by the two phases of construction evident in the gate. Some important restorations took place here during the French Mandate.

**A4. FOURTH ALTERNATIVE ROUTE** / For those who haven't taken the third alternative route, it is recommended to continue to the southwestern corner of the upper plateau and visit the Byzantine palace and the industrial sector up to the southern gate of the lower town (see above). From here there is an impressive view of the western part of the Castle, the walls, the chapel and the two tower-gates.

## - 20 Byzantine Ramparts -

The southern part of the two north/south Byzantine ring walls east of the fortress protected the western part of the upper plateau. The first rampart gate was equipped by two defence rooms with arrow-slits. The second rampart gate was likely modified during the Frankish period. Between the two gates are the remains of a path between the two ring walls to the north and latrines along the ramparts to the south. Two vaults of an uncertain period covered the route to the entrance of the Castle. Steps carved from the rock are polished from centuries of use.



*(Top) The partially-covered mediaeval trail leads tourists to the Tower-Gate.*

*(Above) Al Azhar Park and related programmes in the adjacent Darb al Ahmar district of Cairo are examples of other Aga Khan Trust for Culture initiatives in the region.*

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) implements cultural initiatives aimed at revitalising the heritage of Islamic communities and contributing to their social and economic development. Its programmes include: the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which recognises examples of architectural excellence; the Historic Cities Programme undertakes the conservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and urban spaces in ways that act as catalysts for social, economic and cultural development in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, India, Mali, Syria, Pakistan and Zanzibar; the Music Initiative works to ensure the preservation of Central Asia's musical heritage and its transmission to a new generation of artists and audiences; the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, based at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is an endowed centre of excellence. ArchNet.org, based at MIT, is a comprehensive archive of materials on architecture. The Museums Project, which is creating museums in Toronto, Cairo and Zanzibar, also provides support services for museums in the developing world.

The assembly of this book represents a collective effort of The Aga Khan Trust for Culture and its staff and consultants, as well as external contributors: Anmar Adra, Jeff Allen, Leila Assil, Bernadette Baird-Zars, Stephen Battle, Karim Beddek, Mamoun Dayoub, Christopher English, Thierry Grandin, Zeina Hirbli, Housam Moudares, Bill O'Reilly, Gary Otte, Adli Qudsi and André Yacoubian. AKTC would like to express its gratitude to the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums for its cooperation and assistance in this publication.



Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006, the Castle of Salah ad-Din bears witness to over 1000 years of history through a series of fortifications built by Byzantines, Franks, Ayyubids and Mamluks. Unusually, the successive occupants of the Castle did not destroy the work of their predecessors; instead, they strengthened existing structures and expanded the site's defenses to the point at which it became the largest enclosed fortification in the Middle East. Today the Castle offers a rare perspective on the building styles and construction techniques of its successive occupants. The site's iconic history is brought to life by its dramatic mountain setting and the massive engineering works – much of them still in excellent condition – carried out to make the most of the site's natural defenses.

In 1999, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, in cooperation with the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, began conservation work at the citadels of Aleppo, Masyaf and the Castle of Salah ad-Din. The objective was not only to restore the monuments, but to create conditions in which the citadels could become catalysts for social and economic development. As part of the programme, this book is intended to provide visitors with a fresh look at the Castle, the nation of Syria, the Middle East and – more broadly – the rich architectural traditions of the Muslim world.

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