

White Tower of Thessaloniki

40.62638415, 22.94834159454



The White Tower was built in the 15th century, after the conquest of Thessaloniki by the Ottomans in 1430. In its place there was an older tower of the Byzantine fortification of Thessaloniki, at the point where the eastern wall met the sea wall. The Tower formed the eastern end of the sea wall, there was another at the western end and a third in between.

In the course of time it is referred to by various names; Tower of Leo in the 16th century and Tower of Kalamaria in the 18th century; in the 19th century. we find it with two names, depending on the use it had; Tower of the Janissaries, and Tower of blood (Kanli Koule), when it became a prison and place of execution of convicts. The historian Michail Hatziloannou in 1888, in his book on the monuments of the city, calls it the Bastille of Thessaloniki, where the death row inmates were slaughtered on its balcony, with the blood staining its walls, while a cannon shot from the west of the city meant the execution of the death penalty. In 1883, by order of Sultan Abdul Hamit II, the Tower was whitewashed and given the name Lefkos (Beyaz Koule). We are in the second half of the 19th century, a time when the wind of reform is blowing in the Ottoman Empire, following the pressures of England, and a tower with the name "of blood" does not suit the new physiognomy of the empire. And it was the convict Nathan Gwelendi, who in exchange for his freedom, whitewashed the Tower. Since then, the current name has remained. Over time it became the symbol of Thessaloniki, since it remained standing alone on the beach since 1911, after the demolition of the sea and eastern walls and its enclosure.

After the liberation of the city in 1912 and its incorporation into the Greek state, the Tower had various uses. During the First World War, one floor was used to store the antiquities from the excavations made by the archaeological service of the Army of the East. The air defense of the city, the meteorology laboratory of the Aristotle University and sea scout systems were hosted on its premises.

In 1983 the Tower was granted to the Ministry of Culture.

Overview

Purpose: Excursion

Type: Archaeological site

Country: Greece

City: Thessaloniki

Agent info

marketing@greekmap.eu – Agent

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