

Across the road from the entrance to the New Archaeological Museum is the **Old Natural History Museum** (map p. 504, C2; open daily except Mon, 10–2; free). The main collection has been moved to Sígri (see p. 522). The permanent exhibition is on the history and cultivation of olives and the production of olive oil, including a 60,000-year-old volcanic fossil from Santorini bearing the clear impression of olive leaves.

THE CASTLE OF MYTILENE

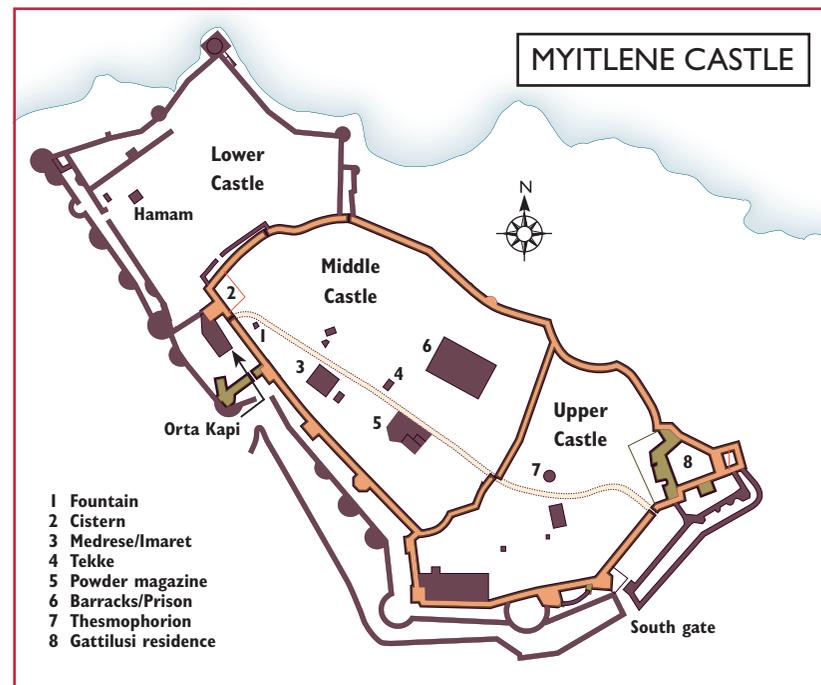
There are two entrances to the castle (map p. 504, C1; open daily except Mon, 8–3), one from the south and another from the west by the Orta Kapi, 150m north of the New Archaeological Museum. The description below assumes entry by the latter.

HISTORY OF THE CASTLE

The impressive quantity of spolia incorporated in the castle walls gives an idea of the extent of the destruction wreaked on the ancient town when the castle was first built. The first post-antique fortress here is said to have been erected in the 6th century AD, under the Emperor Justinian: the innermost of the three successive gates on the west side is Byzantine, and it marks the northwestern limit of the Byzantine castle. The enceinte was strengthened and further fortified to the south and west by the Genoese Gattilusi overlords, between their coming into possession of the castle in 1355 and a catastrophic earthquake in 1384 that wrought considerable damage to the structure and killed all of the ruling family save for a single son, Francesco II. What was rebuilt was considerably damaged again by the Turkish assault of 1462. In 1501, under Sultan Beyazit II, the Lower Castle, protected by a circular bastion at the northernmost point, was added to protect the north harbour. The interior was densely inhabited in Ottoman times; many of the ruined buildings still visible inside date from the 16th–19th centuries.

The Orta Kapi and Lower Castle

The Ottoman **Orta Kapi** ('Middle Gate') is virtually invisible from the outside, and protected by a circular bastion to the left as you approach. It leads into a passage and thence through a second (medieval) gate into an enclosed area between the Ottoman and the original Byzantine/Gattilusi walls. From here a third (Byzantine) gate, with a massive ancient marble block as its lintel, leads into the wide open interior, scattered with ancient spolia. To the right is an **Ottoman fountain (1)** and to the left a deep and well-preserved **cistern (2)**, whose design is both elegant and functional. Opposite are the remains of a square Ottoman house of the 17th century. To the north, visible from stairs which give access to the top of the intermediate wall to the left, lies the **Lower Castle**, which extended the fortifications as far as the northern shore and the harbour. It was protected by a circular bastion at its northern extremity and enclosed a large



area with a great many houses, a hamam, a fountain, a Turkish oracle-shrine, and the Christian cave-church and sacred spring of the Panaghía Galatoussa, all of which can be reached from the road which circles the castle on the seaward side and breaches the lower walls in the north.

The Middle and Upper Castle

A paved path leads uphill to the south from the Byzantine gateway, passing the many-domed block of the **Ottoman medrese (3)** above and the **imaret** below. Immediately beyond the medrese was the hamam, and to the left of the path is a small, domed **tekke (4)**, or living quarters for dervishes, with its fireplace still intact. The three buildings together formed a complete religious unit.

The military buildings are further up: a massively-built **gunpowder magazine (5)** to the right of the path, and a large 17th-century **barracks and prison (6)**, arranged around a courtyard, to the left. Steps up to the top of the walls in the southwestern corner provide excellent views of the sharper lines of the final 17th-century Ottoman additions, the outermost walls and bastions, designed with emplacements for artillery. Below this area is an extensive undercroft of vaulted, subterranean spaces, endowed with a well-head and sanitary facilities; these were used for protecting and housing the populace during times of siege.