

ERBIL CITADEL

One of the Oldest Inhabited Settlements in the World

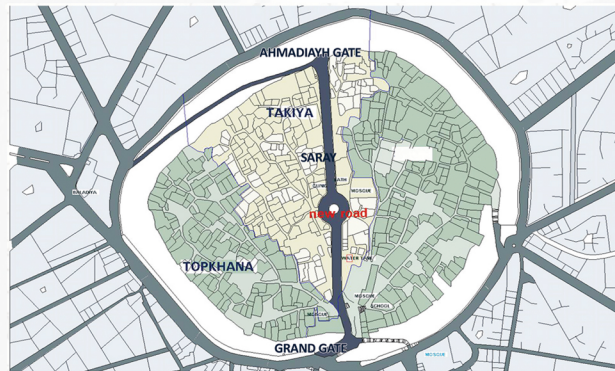


Erbil Citadel Revitalization Project

In order to ensure the protection of authenticity and preservation of the historic Citadel site, The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) established the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR), to supervise and manage the **Erbil Citadel Revitalization Project**. The project was developed to revitalize the citadel throughout preparing the **Conservation Master Plan and Management Plan** of the Citadel, to incorporate with international standards for conservation, restoration and rehabilitation of heritage sites, in close cooperation with UNESCO.

Main Objectives of the Project

- Revitalization and rehabilitation of the Citadel for visitation and re-use making it available for the community and ensuring its transmission to future generations
- Establishing management and operational procedures that will ensure the sustainable management and conservation of the Citadel.
- Reinforcing local capacities to ensure sustainability and their involvement in the management, conservation and rehabilitation of the Citadel.
- Stabilizing the Structures of the buildings that are at high risk of collapse and undertake urgent remedial works to minimise further deterioration and instability of structures at the Citadel, in addition to protecting the site as a whole.
- Undertaking archaeological investigation and excavation and related research and studies.
- Raising awareness, public outreach and enhancing community involvement in the process of revitalization.
- Developing interpretation and tourism tools and facilities in order to present the significance and the values of the site.
- Promoting the cultural heritage significance and the Outstanding Universal Value of the Citadel as a World Heritage Site.



•**The Urban Fabric and the Architectural Values of the Citadel**
Historically, the citadel was divided into three traditional quarters; **Saray**: Occupied the Eastern side of the citadel, so-called because it included the administrative governmental offices, It was largely occupied by the rich and notables families and government officials houses. **Takiya**: Occupied the central and northern part of the citadel and so-called because it contained several takiyas (buildings utilized for religious rituals). **Topkhana**: Occupied the western side and inhabited largely by craftsmen and farming families. Its name suggests that it contained cannon to defend the town against attackers. It is said that this cannon was made around 1820 by Usta Rijab of Rawanduz.

•**The Perimeter Wall** of the citadel is considered one of the most impressive features which gives the citadel its fortified look and dominates the modern city of Erbil, the wall is a continuous ring of houses of various ages. These houses provided dramatic views of the town below and beyond.



•**The Citadel Gates; The Southern Grand Gate**, is the main and symbolic entrance to the Citadel and has an iconic status in local society. It was a huge brick structure with a massive pointed vault and contained a courtyard, government offices, guest house, prison and stables. It witnessed several stages of additions and alternations, the last one was carried out in 1860 by Wasta Ismail Al Sinayi. It was demolished in late 1950's, and replaced by a modern structure in 1979. The HCECR has undertaken the reinstatement project of the Grand Gate in 2015 based on detailed studies on its history and form. **The Northern Gate**, well known as Ahmadiyah Gate, so-called because it was constructed in 1924 during the reign of Ahmad Afandi Othman the first Governor of Erbil.



Public Buildings

The citadel incorporated important **public buildings** which had great influence and played major role in the social life of the inhabitants of the citadel, these buildings were;

-**Mosques**; Historical records show that there were several mosques in the citadel, such as the Grand Mosque of the citadel, well known as Mulla Afandi Mosque, which remains today as the main Friday mosque, was probably built on an earlier mosque in 1720. In addition to The Shekhani Mosque, well known as Mulla Ibrahim Dogramachi Mosque, built in 1920.



The Hammam, the public bath of the Citadel; was built in 1700 AD, by Abdullah Agha, and was restored in 1775, by his son, Qasim Agha, a civil governor of Erbil and the father of the well-known poet and civil Governor of Erbil, Yaqub Agha. The Hammam, which still survives today in the center of the Citadel, was typically designed along traditional Islamic principles of public baths, and provided hot baths and opportunities for social contacts and other daily affairs for men and women, at separate times. Water for the Hammam was obtained from an adjacent well, around 50 m depth, which was fed from underground water.



-**Diwakhanas**; Rich and notable families had their own "Diwakhanas" or guest-houses at the citadel that served as places for social interaction and offered generous hospitality, such as the Diwakhanas of; Yaqub Agha, Rashid Agha, Muhammad Karim Agha, Abdullah Pasha, Ali Pasha al-Dogh-ramachi.



-**Takiyas**; There were two takiyas at the citadel for providing meeting places to practice religious recital. The oldest belonged to Sheikh Sherif, and the other belonged to Haj Mullah Khidir al-Telafari. Both Takiyas followed the "Qadiriya Tariqa" and held their activities every Monday and Friday.

Traditional Houses

The citadel is largely occupied by traditional inward looking courtyard houses, each house is a private enclosure which is isolated from its surroundings, most of the houses are one-to-two storey height, constructed by thick mud brick walls, short span timber joists ceilings, mud roofing and brick vaults for roofing of basements and semi-basements. The important heritage houses of the notable families, integrated distinctive architectural characteristics which made them remarkably valuable, starting from the inner open **courtyards**, incorporated with crafted wooden columns with unique capitals or with distinctive raised terraces enriched with marble columns and arches, to the **interior walls** decorated with numerous shelves and niches. The **ceilings** were often paneled with wooden flat timber and painted in bright colors and floral decorations. Inner **doors** were usually framed in stone or marble, and decorated with rich carved floral patterns. As for **windows**, they were usually made of wood, provided with colored glass and wrought-iron screens.



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Erbil Citadel History

Erbil Citadel represents a distinct urban entity that is visually dominating the expansive modern city of Erbil, it has maintained its overall urban form and architectural character over the past several millennia, and it is believed to have been in continuous existence for 6000 years or even more. Thus, it may be regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world, holding evidence of successive layers of civilizations, including; Sumerian, Acadian, Babylonian, Assyrians, Persian, Greek, Islamic and Ottoman. Although, like most other historic towns, there have been some rebuilding and new additions over the years but, nevertheless, it kept its essential physical elements, such as its perimeter wall, urban pattern and overall aesthetic and architectural qualities.



Erbil Citadel Description

Basically, the Citadel is situated on top of a 28-32-meters high earthen mound, it is an elliptical shaped town, with long diameter of about 430 meters and short diameter of about 340 meters, covering 11 hectares (110,000 square meters) of dense fabric built in ochre-colored bricks, composed mainly of traditional courtyard houses, several important public buildings and open urban spaces. The residential quarters are reached by a labyrinthine network of narrow pedestrian alleyways which spread out in a tree-like pattern from the main Southern Gate. The existing fabric, however, goes back to several hundred years but still of extreme vernacular architectural and urban interest.

Erbil Citadel on the World Heritage List of UNESCO

Erbil Citadel has been inscribed upon the World Heritage List of the "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" in June 2014. Inscription on the List confirms the Outstanding Universal Value of a cultural or natural property which deserves protection for the benefit of all humanity.



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