

Khotyn Fortress

The **Khotyn Fortress** is a fortification complex located on the right bank of the Dniester River in Khotyn, Chernivtsi Oblast of western Ukraine. It is situated on a territory of the historical northern Bessarabia region which was split in 1940 between Ukraine and Moldova. The fortress is also located in a close proximity to another famous defensive structure, the Old Kam'yanets Castle of Kamianets-Podilskyi.

Construction on the current Khotyn fortress was started in 1325, while major improvements were made in the 1380s and in the 1460s.

The fortress is a large tourist attraction for the area and Ukraine. In 2007, the fortress was named one of the Seven Wonders of Ukraine.^[3] It is also a National Ukrainian Architectural Preserve as of 2000.

The Khotyn Fortress's beginning goes back to the Khotyn Fort, which was built in the 10th century by Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich as one of the border fortifications of southwestern Kievan Rus', after he added the land of present-day Bukovina into his control. The fort, which eventually was rebuilt into a fortress, was located on important transportation routes

The fortification was located on a rocky territory, created by the tall right hand shore of Dniester and the valley. At first it was just a huge mound of dirt with wooden walls and protective equipment. It was designed to protect the settlement of Khotyn across the river. The first stone construction was rather small. It was located exactly where the northern tower is located today. Throughout the centuries, this fortress underwent many reconstructions and expansions, and was damaged by new conquerors, who would later rebuild it.

At the end of the 11th century Khotyn fortress belonged to Terebovlia principality. During the 1140s the fortress became part of Halych Principality, and in 1199 was part of the Halych-Volhynian Kingdom.

In 1250-64, Prince Danylo of Halych and his son Lev, rebuilt the fortress. They added a half-meter (20 in) stone wall and a 6-meter (20 ft) wide moat around the fortress. In the northern part of the fortress, were added new military buildings as well. In the second half of the 13th century, it was rebuilt by the Genoese.

There are also many legends about the fortress, created over the hundreds of years of its existence. Some popular legends involve the origins of the large dark spot on the side of the wall of the fortress. One legend says that the spot was created by the tears of the Khotyn rebels against the Ottoman Turks that were killed inside fortress. Another legend has it that the spot was created from the tears of a girl named Oksana, whom the Turks buried alive in the walls of the fort.^[11]

Today Khotyn is a thriving city and an important cultural and tourist destination in the region. The Khotyn Fortress remains as a prominent landmark that has a long history and many legends attached to it. It is a popular setting for the film industry, with movies filmed at the Khotyn Fortress including the Russian movie Taras Bulba, Black Arrow The Three Musketeers Hadyuka, and Arrows of Robin Hood.

Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle

Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle is a former Ruthenian-Lithuanian^[5] castle and a later three-part Polish fortress^{[6][7][8]} located in the historic city of Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine, in the historic region of Podolia in the western part of the country. Its name is attributed to the root word *kamin'*, from the Slavic word for stone.

Historical accounts date Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle to the early 14th century, although recent archaeological evidence has proved human existence in the area back to the 12th or 13th century.^[9] Initially built to protect the bridge connecting the city with the mainland,^[10] the castle sits on top of a peninsula carved out by the Smotrych River, forming a natural defense system for Kamianets-Podilskyi's historic Old Town neighborhood.

From the beginning of the 18th century, Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle had lost its defensive role, and was used more as a military prison than a military fortification.^{[22][23]} Numerous people were executed or held captive in the prison, including Cossack starshynas (officers), haidamakas,^[nb 2] and even the three-year-old pretender to the Polish throne, Stanisław August Poniatowski.^[23]

Its location on a strategic transport crossroad in Podolia made the castle a prime target for foreign invaders, who rebuilt the castle to suit their own needs,^[11] adding to its multicultural architectural diversity. Specifically, the complex consists of the Old Town fortified by King Casimir IV, the Old Castle rebuilt by Kings Sigismund I and Stephen Báthory, and the New Castle founded by Kings Sigismund III and Władysław IV.^[6]

An important and large fortification complex, Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle had as many as 12 towers, some of which were added during later modernizations to the castle. Some of the towers were located on the peninsula on which the main castle sits; some of the other towers were located on the steep slopes across the Smotrych River. Of these towers, however, only a few remain unscathed today.

However, in spite of the many architectural and engineering changes to the original structure, the castle still forms a coherent architectural design,^{[12][13]} being one of the few medieval constructions in Ukraine that is relatively well preserved.^[14]

Along with the Old Town neighborhood, the castle is listed as part of the National Historical-Architectural Sanctuary "Kam'ianets" and the National Environmental Park "Podilski Tovtry". The complex is a candidate UNESCO World Heritage Site, nominated in 1989 by the Ukrainian representatives,^[15] and also one of the Seven Wonders of Ukraine.^[16] Today, Kamianets-Podilskyi Castle is the most recognized landmark of the city,^[17] serving as an important regional and national tourist attraction.^[18]