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## Crusader Hospital Unveiled in Jerusalem



A huge building which during the Crusader period was the largest hospital in the Middle East has been discovered in the heart of Jerusalem, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced on Monday. Located in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, the 1,000-year-old hospital was identified following a decade-long reconstruction operation. According to Renee Forestany and Amit Re'em, the IAA excavation directors, the structure, only a small part of which was unearthed in the excavation, spread out over more than 150,000 square feet. Similar in size and shape to the Knights' Halls in Acre, the hospital's main hall, which was brought to light by the excavation, will be integrated with a restaurant which will open to the public by the end of the year.

It features massive pillars, ribbed vaults, large rooms, smaller halls and ceilings as high as 20 feet. The hospital was established between 1099 and 1291, with permission from the Muslim authorities, by the Knights Hospitalier, whose members vowed to care for pilgrims who came to

Jerusalem to die. Examples of their treatment, which survives in crosses carved into skulls, include removing evil spirits, curing headaches, and amputating legs just because of small infected wounds.

In the earthquake of 1457, the building collapsed. During the Ottoman Empire, what remained was used as a fruit and vegetable market that operated until 2000.

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