



Rock of Gibraltar

Rock of Gibraltar

The Rock of Gibraltar, with its commanding presence rising 426 meters out of the narrow straits that separate the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, has always been a strategic prize. It controlled entrance to the Mediterranean and acted as a stepping stone between Europe and Africa. Occupation of the Rock was hotly contested back even to ancient times. Berber Chieftain Ariq ibn-Ziyad, Governor of Tangier, decided to fortify the Rock when he took possession around AD 711. The walls ibn-Ziyad constructed enclosed a large area and reached from the upper part of the Rock right down to the sea. Strife over the Rock continued and in 1068 the ruling Arab Governor ordered the building of a fort—from that time onwards, the changes to fortifications were the result of the pressing needs of the day. Over the years of their possession the British dug 54.71 kilometers of tunnels as cover for gun emplacements and built an air strip for WWII. Around the time of the War of 1812 when Spain and Britain were allies, the fortifications of the Rock ensured the flow of trade needed to supply the war against Napoleon continued. To this day, ownership of this small piece of real estate leads to debate about ownership. What is undisputable is that the Rock continues to be a fantastic naval and air staging location.