Visiting a castle

Many of Britain's castles are famous tourist attractions. ANNA HOCHSIEDER takes you to Beaumaris Castle in Wales.

Welcome to Beaumaris Castle!
Beaumaris is one of the finest examples of medieval architecture in Britain and is listed as a World Heritage Site. It is part of a ring of fortifications built by King Edward I along the coast of North Wales. Construction work began in 1295, but the king ran out of money. The castle was never completed and fell into ruin. Thanks to extensive restoration work, it is nevertheless well preserved today.

The castle is heavily fortified, with two sets of curtain walls, and was considered impregnable. The outer wall connects 12 turrets and is partly surrounded by a water-filled moat. A drawbridge offered extra protection. The inner wall is 11 metres high and nearly five metres thick. Visitors can explore its interior passageways, connecting six towers and two gatehouses. One of the towers contains the remains of the castle chapel, with pointed windows and a vaulted ceiling.

The huge bailey was meant to contain domestic buildings, so there would have been plenty of room for a lavish royal household.

VOCABULARY

1. moat [moʊt] - a wide, deep ditch
2. curtain wall ['kaːrən wɔːl] - a wall surrounding the outermost part of a castle
3. arrow slits ['eərəʊ slɪts] - small openings in a wall for shooting arrows
4. turret ['tɜːrət] - a small tower on top of a castle wall
5. battlements ['bætmənts] - parapets on a castle wall
6. walkway ['wɔːkweɪ] - a path along the top of a castle wall
7. buttress ['bʌtərəs] - a large masonry structure to support a wall
8. gatehouse ['geɪθəʊs] - a building forming part of a castle wall
9. murder hole ['mɜːdər həʊl] - a small opening in a wall, through which soldiers could shoot arrows
10. portcullis ['pɔːrtkaːlɪs] - a movable metal grille
11. drawbridge ['drɔːbrɪdʒ] - a bridge that can be lowered to block the entrance to a castle
12. bailey ['beɪli] - the inner court or area of a castle
13. keep ['kiːp] - the highest and most secure part of a castle, usually located at its centre
14. dungeon ['dʌndʒən] - a small tower on top of a castle or at the corner of the castle wall
15. vaulted ['vɔːltɪd] - shaped like a tunnel

Exercise 1
What are the parts of a castle called? Complete the definitions below with nouns from the opposite page.

A. The _______ is the deep wide ditch dug around a castle and usually filled with water.
B. The _______ is the courtyard within the castle walls.
C. A(n) _______ is an opening in a ceiling or wall. It was used to pour boiling liquid on to enemies.
D. The _______ is the highest and most secure part of the castle, usually located at its centre.
E. A(n) _______ is a narrow opening in a wall, through which soldiers could shoot arrows.
F. A(n) _______ is a small tower on top of a castle or at the corner of the castle wall.
G. The _______ are the structures along the top of the wall around a castle with spaces through which weapons can be fired.

Exercise 2
Match the sentence halves to complete the definitions of expressions from the text on the opposite page.

A. If a castle "falls into ruin",...
B. If a castle is "well preserved"...
C. If a castle is "heavily fortified"...
D. If a castle is considered "impregnable"...
E. If a castle is listed as a "World Heritage Site",...

Exercise 3
Underline the correct adjectives to complete the sentences below.

A. North Wales is the perfect travel destination for fans of medieval / middle-aged castles.
B. The thick castle walls contain internal / interior passageways that you can walk along and explore.
C. Pointed / Pointy windows and bending / vaulted ceilings are a typical feature of Gothic architecture.
D. The castle may have contained domestic / domesticated buildings at one time.
E. The castle was intended to provide accommodation for the regal / royal household.

Other words for “castle”

There are many English words that have a similar meaning to ‘castle’. Here are a few examples:

A. chateau (Schloss, Herrensitz) is a castle or a large country house in France.
B. citadel (Zitadelle, Hochburg) is a castle on high ground where people could go for safety if their city were attacked.
C. fort (Festung) is a strong, well-protected town or building that functions as a place of defence.
D. castle (Schloss, Palast) is a large and impressive building that is or used to be the official home of a ruler (such as a monarch, archbishop or head of state).

Answers

Exercise 1
A. moat
B. bailey
C. portcullis
D. keep
E. murder hole
F. turret
G. arrow slits

Exercise 2
A. it is thought to be so strongly built that it cannot be entered by force.
B. it is built with strong walls and other structures to protect it.
C. it becomes damaged because no one has been taking care of it.
D. it is not allowed to be changed or damaged.
E. it is old, but still in good condition.

Exercise 3
A. medieval
B. internal
C. Pointed
D. domestic
E. regal