

Herodion (Herodium)

Located 7.5 miles south of Jerusalem
The Herodion is a 197 foot high artificial mountain shaped like a cone to hold a 98 foot high fortress/palace 7 stories high 2,500 feet above sea level built 23-20 BC. An administrative center called Lower Herodion is set at its base. Upper Herodion included: 1) a circular fortress, 2) an elaborate palace, 3) two walls 8 feet apart



with 4 towers, 4) two stories underground with barrel-vaulted ceilings, 5) Cisterns filled with rainwater, 6) Herod's palace with colored tiles and mosaics on the floor, 7) a garden surrounded by porticos with columns with Corinthian capitals, 8) a bathhouse with earliest domed roof built in Israel. Of the four towers the eastern tower was the largest (60 ft. diameter). Lower Herodion was below on a 38 acre plain to the north built around the center piece of a large pool (230 by 150 ft. and 10 ft. deep) used for swimming and boating and filled with water from an aqueduct coming from Solomon's pools to the west near Bethlehem (Artas). The pool had a 50 ft. diameter circular colonnaded pavilion in the center and was surrounded by 1) buildings, 2) gardens, 3) porticos with Ionic capitals, 4) large reception halls with pilasters and frescos. Josephus wrote that there were 200 white marble steps up the side of the Herodion. Jewish zealots built a synagogue and ritual baths in 66 BC and Jewish rebels of the Bar Kochba revolt cut tunnels and hidden openings for sneak attacks in 132 AD. Byzantine monks built churches here. In 1962 excavation began on Upper Herodion and Ehud Netzer began to excavate Lower Herodion in 1972 until recently when a protective railing gave way at Herodion and Netzer fell to his death in 2010. Josephus records that Herod the Great was buried here, and in 2007 Ehud Netzer found Herod's tomb.



The sides of Herodium where covered with flat stone like armor all the way around from the bottom to the top.



Above: Herodium; Below: Pool

