



Castle of Bagnone

BAGNONE

Location: The castle is located on a hill next to the Bagnone stream, a left tributary of the river Magra. It overlooks the point of confluence of the branches of the valley basin, flowing along the Apennine mountain chain and serving as an alternative to the busier routes of the Via Francigena.

Type of castle: Marquis's seat.

Construction period: Some similarities with the tower of the Castle of Treschietto trace the structures of the Castle of Bagnone back to the 15th- and 16th-century architecture; however, in the 14th century the site was certainly occupied by a military building.

First appearance in historical sources: Bagnone, the name of the place, was first mentioned in a sentence of 1124, which was pronounced by the consuls of Lucca in order to settle a controversy between the Bishop Andrea I of Luni and the noble Malaspina family. The bull of Pope Eugene III of 1148 mentions its parish church, although it was located in the hill country, around 3 km away from Bagnone.





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Strategic role: The castle watched over the internal routes leading to the Apennine passes. The attractiveness of the village lay also in its lively commercial activity, which was fueled by its closeness to important routes, such as the Via Francigena.

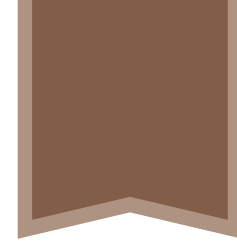
Further use: After its military use ended, the castle was turned into a residential palace surrounded by a large garden, which was built on the terraces and inside the walls around the old Malaspina fortress. Nowadays it is still inhabited by its owners.

Current condition: The tower is the last surviving structure of the original castle, while the rest was partly absorbed into the palace of the counts Ruschi-Noceti, which was built by restoring the former fortifications.

Around mid-15th century the Ruschi-Noceti family moved from Piacenza to Bagnone, where they could make their fortune. In 1530 Pier Francesco, lord of Rocca Sigillina (Sigillina Fortress), became Commissioner-General for Florence in Lunigiana.

Viewing: The castle is privately owned and not open to the public.

Dark events: In September 1471, the marquis Cristiano of Bagnone murdered Galeotto Fregoso of Virgoletta and hoisted the banners of the Republic of Florence on the castle battlements, causing a serious diplomatic incident with the Duchy of Milan. The armed intervention of the Republic of Florence brought about the final downfall of the Malaspina marquises of Bagnone.



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History: From the 13th century on, Bagnone was part of the fief of Filattiera, whose territory was dismembered in 1275. Bagnone was then assigned to Alberto Malaspina of Filattiera; a few years later it was made an independent fief. Antonio Malaspina, its first marquis, chose Bagnone as his leading-fief and he placed his seat there in 1351. In 1369, however, he died, leaving three young children and in 1385 the inhabitants decided to hand the village over to the Republic of Florence. As a result of their commitment, Florence respected the Malaspinas legitimate rights, but retained the high protectorate of the fief and established a good relationship with the population, thus indirectly reducing the power of the noble family. In the 15th century, the Malaspina first tried to sell the fief to Florence, but then backed away from the negotiation after receiving part of the money, probably because of the opposition of the Duke of Milan, who claimed his rights on those lands. In 1471, there was an armed conflict that brought about the final downfall of the Malaspina of Bagnone and the consequent loss of their privileges. On July 3rd, 1526, the Captain and Commissioner for the People of Castiglione del Terziere and the Republic of Florence appointed Pier Francesco Noceti as lord of Bagnone, due to a relationship of trust established during his control of the stronghold of Bagnone. He accepted the castle, both for himself and for his heirs, who nowadays are still its owners.

Structure: The Castle of Bagnone is surmounted by an imposing cylindrical stone tower decorated by brackets included in the plunging-defence system, embrasures and framed holes. The tower is the only structure from the original castle, while the rest was partly absorbed by the palace of the counts Ruschi-Noceti.

Thanks to the cadastral maps dating back to the 19th century, it is possible, however, to figure out the form of the castle, made up of the tower's round structure surrounded by a rectangular curtain wall. Apparently, the building was located on the top of the hill in order to protect the eastern side of the pass leading to the Tavarone Valley. During the 19th century, the tower was used as a part of the superior garden next to the large palace, which was provided with an open loggia facing west.