

Castle of Calice al Cornoviglio

CALICE AL CORNOVIGLIO

Location: The castle is situated atop a hill overlooking the village of Calice al Cornoviglio, in the middle and low Val di Vara (Vara Valley), in the province of La Spezia.

Type of castle: Private residence.

Construction period: 11th century

First appearance in historical sources: In 1206, an act stated that the bishop of Luni was to return the property of the castrum calisi (original name of the castle) to Guglielmo and Corrado Malaspina.

Strategic role: Manor house with the function of controlling the village and the valley below.





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Further use: In 1861, under the Kingdom of Italy, the castle became seat of the district judge, the station of the Carabinieri (the national military police of Italy) and later it hosted some municipal offices and a primary school.

After September 8th, 1943, it became seat of the National Republican Guard and, since the post-war period, the castle has been the seat of a cultural centre.

Current condition: Restored in successive stages, the castle now hosts some museums: Museo della Brigata Val di Vara, Museo dell'apicoltura (Museum of beekeeping), an art gallery and other similar institutions.

Viewing: It can be visited. For further information visit www.nuke.castellocalice.com

History: The castle had belonged to the Malaspina family from the 12th century on, but in the 13th century it was occupied by Gualtiero II, bishop of Luni; it was returned to its rightful owners in 1206.

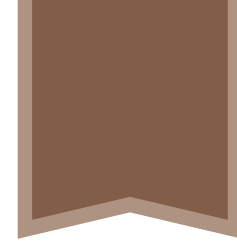
In the second half of the 13th century, the property of the castle was indirectly handed to the Fieschi family through the marriage between Agata Fieschi and Morello I, son of the ancestor of the Giovagallo family, already lords of Calice, Veppo and Madrignano.

For political reasons, already in 1276 the Fieschis were forced to transfer many of their properties – including the castle of Calice – to the Republic of Genoa, which allowed them to stay as feudal lords.

The property of the castle was then alternatively handed from the Malaspinas to the Republic of Genoa for a certain period. In 1547, the Republic donated the fief to the Doria family and an imperial gift by Charles V confirmed their property ownership of the estate.

Nevertheless, some bands connected to the Fieschi family tried an actual assault on the castle with the aim of abducting the marquise Placidia I Doria Spinola, lady of the estate in place of her husband. Anyway, the marquise and her children managed to avoid the assault by taking refuge, probably in the village of Veppo (Rocchetta di Vara), while the castle and the nearby abodes were set on fire. Another marquise, Placidia Doria, married with a member of the Del Carretto family, who was also a descendant of the well-known admiral, would turn the structure into a residential building.

In 1772, all the estates were handed to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the castle became the seat of the local podestà and of the Florentine garrison; later it was handed to the Duchy of Modena.



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Structure: The castle has a solid trapezoidal structure, with a circular tower at one corner. The unusual plan of the building is the result of many renovations and transfers of ownership over the centuries.

The castle has four floors: the underground floor now hosts the Museo dell'Apicoltura (Museum of beekeeping) and the Statua stele di Borseda (Borseda statue menhir); the first floor hosts the art gallery David Beghè; the second floor is the seat of the Centro di educazione ambientale (Environmental education centre), of a small museum dedicated to Pietro Rosa, of conference halls and temporary exhibitions; the third floor or attic is still to be sorted out in order to use it. Today the castle looks more like a manor house than like a building with defensive functions.