



The Castle of Carrara

CARRARA

Location: The medieval historical centre of Carrara is the last great coastal centre of northwestern Tuscany, at the foot of the Apuan Alps. It was important for the control of marble caves and an intersection point between the Carriona Roman road – which was used to carry arms towards the coast – and the Lombardy road that linked Lucca and the Po plains, as an alternative to the Francigena road.

Type of castle: Military stronghold turned into residential structure.

Construction period: 13th century.

First appearance in historical sources: Carrara was mentioned for the first time in the imperial dipoma of 963 and was under the rule of the Bishop of Luni. The castle's origins are uncertain; its construction seems to date back to the 13th century. There are no scripts to support this theory and a quote of 1187 is unreliable.

Strategic role: Control of the roads and the marble bed valleys.

Further use: In 1815 it became the location for the art academy, *Ducale Accademia d'arte di Carrara*.





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Current condition: Central headquarters of Carrara's art academy.

Viewing: It is open to the public and can be visited for free upon request.

History: Carrara has always been disputed by the lay power of the Malaspina and the Bishop-Counts of Luni. During the 13th century, the fortress was built by the Marquis Guglielmo Malaspina, who fortified the village of Carrara with the first, complete defensive walls.

Further enlargement of the castle took place during the 14th century, in particular thanks to Marquis Giacomo Malaspina di Fosdinovo in 1473. Between 1540 and 1549 it became the residence of Cardinal Innocenzo Cybo, governor of Carrara. The castle was then later restored in the style of Ferrara, with sculptures, Roman finds, paintings and frescoes by the painter Antonio Ghirlanda di Fivizzano. It was surrounded by a wonderful garden adorned with marble fountains and a rich library.

During the second half of the 16th century, the palace Palazzo del Principe was built by the Marquis Alberico Cybo Malaspina next to the castle, which had previously been built by Cardinal Innocenzo Cybo. The fortress did not suffer any particular sieges, except that by Giulio Cybo Malaspina in 1545, endangering his mother Ricciarda, who saved her life by hiding in the fortified building of the castle after having been assaulted by 50 soldiers.

After the loss of its military function, the Castle of Carrara remained a symbol of ducal power until 1796, when it was conquered, destroyed and plundered for its works of art by Napoleon's troops.

In 1806, the Duchess of Lucca and Massa Elisa Bonaparte-Baciocchi - who was also Princess of Carrara and Piombino - dedicated the palace to the Ducal Academy of Art of Carrara, while the castle, which was unrecognisable due to the several architectural changes, was used as a leper hospital and a prison.

Nowadays, the castle still hosts the Royal Academy of Arts, having survived the 19th century trend of destroying fortresses built in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.

Since the earthquake of 1920, the original structure of the medieval fortress has been brought to light. In 1954 the Ministry of Arts of Pisa approved new intervention on the castle.

Structure: The whole structure comprises two distinct units that are close to one another: the medieval castle - towards Gramsci Square - and Palazzo del Principe, the construction of which was started by Alberico Cybo Malaspina.

The castle has an independent, defensive structure: a fortified palace dating back to 1385, which leans against the quadrilateral perimeter walls, made up of stones and pieces of marble.