



# Castle of Fosdinovo

FOSDINOVO

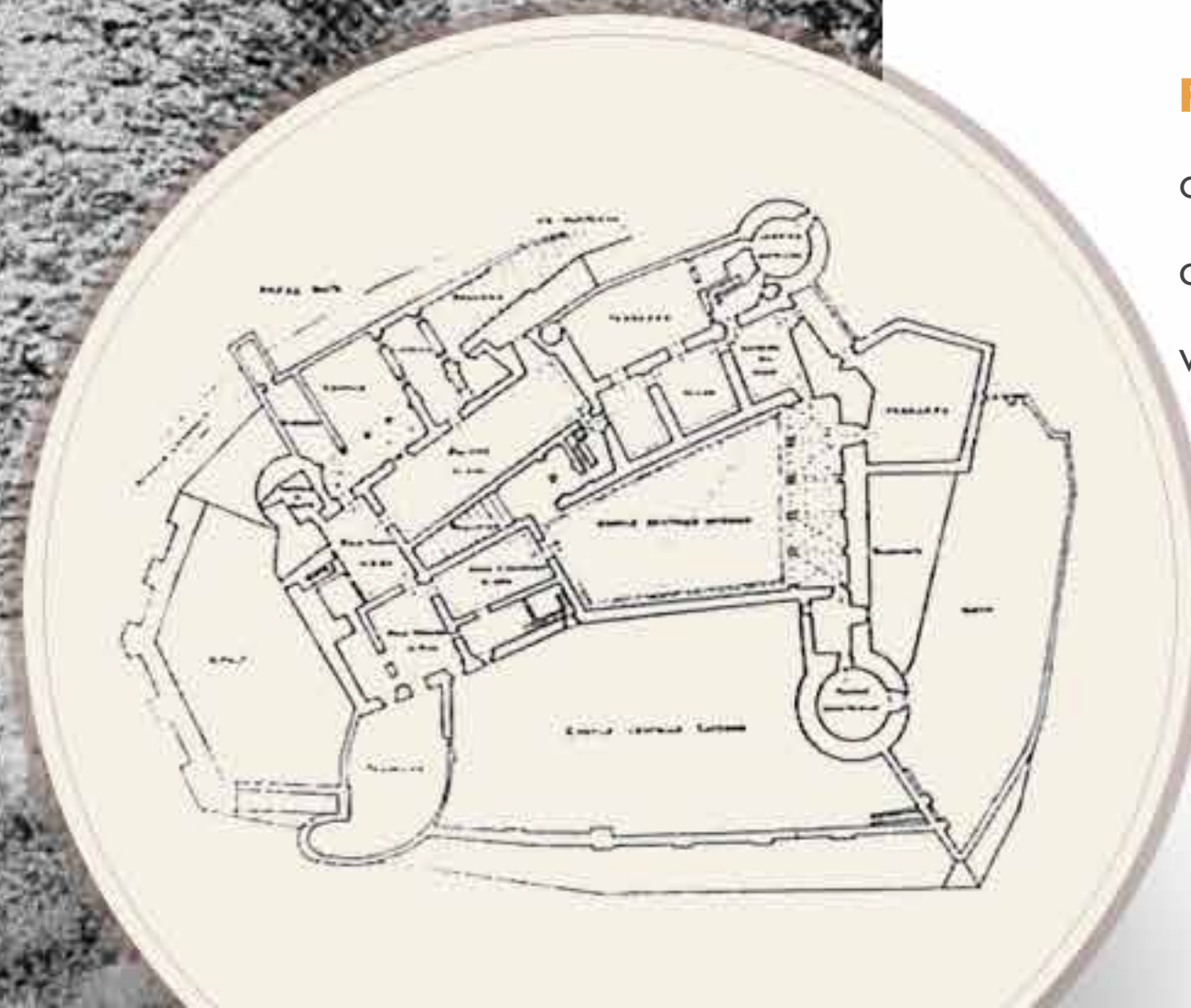
**Location:** The castle of Fosdinovo is located in the north of Tuscany, overlooking the plain of Luni and the Tyrrhenian coast, with views stretching from the islands of the Tuscan Archipelago and Porto Venere. The castle is situated atop a hill, together with the village of Fosdinovo, which is crossed by the roads leading to the Apennine passes between Tuscany and Emilia Romagna and to the Garfagnana.

**Type of castle:** Fortress-residence and State building.

**Construction period:** 12th century

**First appearance in historical sources:** Fosdinovo was first mentioned in a document of the Archivio Capitolare di Lucca (Chapter Archive of Lucca) of 1084, reporting “prope castello Fosdenova”, but its origins date back to the Erberia family, which in the 12th century was attracted to the temporal power of the bishop of Luni.

**Strategic role:** Professor Tiziano Mannoni called Filattiera “the Apennine door on the Via Francigena” because of its position in the upper area of the river Magra, which allows the roads that come from the Cisa pass and the Cirone pass (avoiding Pontremoli), as well as those that come from Liguria through the Casoni pass, to join.











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**Further in use:** As for the other territories of the Malaspina family, the decline of the Fosdinovo fief started during the French Revolution, which ideas were welcomed also by Carlo Emanuele, its last marquis. After being handed to the Duke of Modena and to the Congregazione di Carità ("Charity Congregation") of Fosdinovo, it was reacquired and brought back to its heyday by Alfonso Malaspina.

**Current condition:** The Malaspina castle is one of the most interesting and better preserved fortresses in Lunigiana.

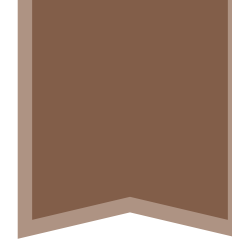
**Viewing:** Today the castle is a museum, a cultural centre dedicated to the performance and exhibition of contemporary art and a venue for artists and writers. There is also a small but lovely bed and breakfast. For further information, visit: [www.castellodifosdinovo.it](http://www.castellodifosdinovo.it)

**History:** The castle of Fosdinovo was the main residence of the marquis Malaspina, who ruled over the fief of Fosdinovo from the 14th to the 18th century, and one of the favourite castles of Spinetta the Great, who acquired it from the Nobili family of Fosdinovo in 1340. The castles, which were made administrative centres of independent fiefs through imperial concessions, besides having a residential function, represented the seat of the State. A

lot of them had a special room (in Fosdinovo it was called "throne hall") in which the marquises imparted justice from their "marquis' pulpit" and had consultations. In this castle, in 1352, Spinetta the Great dictated his last will, passing his fief on his nephews Galeotto, Gabriele and Guglielmo, since he had no sons and wanted to avoid disputes. These were the marquises that became forefathers of the Malaspina dynasty of Fosdinovo and governed until 1797. Their descendants reacquired and restored the house of the ancestors by giving some of its rooms a neo-gothic appearance. Today they are still the owners of the castle, together with the Torrigiani family from Florence.

Fosdinovo, besides the usual rights, could also mint coins: in the museum you can see the press, the mint and the casts.

In the 16th century, Ippolito Malaspina, one of the most famous marquises of Fosdinovo, was captain of the galleys in the Battle of Lepanto against the Turks. He was prior of the Order of the Knights of Saint John (the Knights of Malta) in Naples and his coat of arms appears on the right corner of the writing desk in the "Saint Jerome Writing" by Caravaggio, a painting housed in Valletta, seat of this powerful order.



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**Structure:** The construction of the majestic fortress, which was built to control and defend the original castrum of Fosdinovo, started in the second half of the 12th century. Today the castle is quadrangular, with two round-angle towers, a semicircular bastion, enclosing two central wards (a main ward enclosed by three sides of the building), wall-walks on the roofs, roof-gardens, open porticos and terraces. Formerly protected by a drawbridge, the entrance shows a small courtyard where the cannons were placed, with a Romanesque marble column that supports the upper open porticos. From there, a wide flight of stairs (conceived to allow the horses to enter) leads to the big central ward.

The elegant stone portico of the Renaissance marks the entrance to the castle rooms, furnished and frescoed in 1880, which evoke the 14th-century style: the main lobby, the dining hall with the big 18th-century fireplace and the apothecary vases of 1600, the throne hall, Dante's room, the big hall with the adjoining sitting rooms and the "camera del trabocchetto" (trap room) with a torture room lying below.

From the throne hall, small stairs lead to the wall-walks on the roofs and to the crenellated tower.