



Saint George's Castle

LA SPEZIA

Location: Saint George's Castle is situated on an elevated position within the town of La Spezia, called "Poggio", and guarded the late medieval village.

Type of castle: Fortress

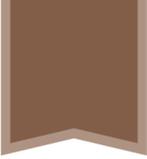
Construction period: 13th century

First appearance in historical sources: Records of the early phases of the castle go back to the 14th century.

Strategic role: Defence of the Gulf and the city of La Spezia.

Further use: When its military function ended, in the 19th century, the castle was restored by the Superintendency of Environmental and Architectural Heritage of the region Liguria between 1985 and 1999. The interior hosts the civic museum Ubaldo Fomentini, which is dedicated to archaeological collections.





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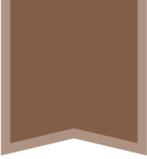
Current condition: Good state of preservation.

Viewing: The castle can be visited according to the opening times of the museum; further information is available on the website <http://museodelcastello.spezianet.it/>

History: The fortification that defended the village of La Spezia was recorded for the first time in the 13th century, when Nicolò Fieschi decided to build it in order to strengthen his own dominion in that area. In 1273 Genoese troops, led by Oberto Doria, conquered and sacked it, forcing the Fieschis to give up all their possessions to the Republic. The castle was rebuilt in the 14th century, when doge Simon Boccanegra chose La Spezia and Carpena as the seats of the new lands of the podestà. In this phase, the structures were situated in the higher section of the castle. They were rediscovered during the recent renovations and can be seen beneath the floor texture. In 1443, the castle went through a radical transformation with the addition of the lower section, which was built in order to use firearms. A century later, in 1554, a complete requalification of the higher part of the building and construction works for an important defensive support structure began; this dodecahedral plan building, called "Bastia", is completely isolated and is located a little higher than the other structures of the castle. Eventually, in 1607, the castle took its final shape, after the important reconstruction

of the Gulf's defensive system made by Genoa due to the possible Spanish counteroffensive. In the meantime the Torre di San Giovanni Battista (Tower of St. John the Baptist), also called Torre Scola (Scola Tower), was built in the Olivo inlet, not far from Porto Venere.

History: the castle's structure as we can see it today is the result of various construction phases, which began in the 14th century, when the medieval castle was adapted to the new military techniques. In the 15th century, the walls of the castle's lower part started showing a scarp profile. Between the two sides of the walls' polygonal shaped, south-facing base, was placed a circular fortified tower; two thirds were out of the curtains. A quadrangular bastion with a place for arquebuses in the inner angle of the 14th century walls defended the entrance side. Originally, this section of the castle consisted of the wall fence only, without any building or covered area. Between 1553 and 1554, the castle's structure was strengthened through curtain walls all around it with angular ramparts, casemates and embrasures. The goal was to transform a structure that was by then almost useless into a construction that could defend the inner part of the Gulf with the castles of Porto Venere and Lerici. In 1564, after a Turkish invasion, the inadequacy of the building was clear; consequently, it was decided to start new works. Starting from the first decade of the 17th century, the castle went through a new series of works, including the moat around the northern



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18th century, when the Gulf's defenses turned out to be too weak to respond to a possible attack from the hills. Essentially the works here were based on the decrease of the curtains' height and on the construction of additional parts, like rammed-earth battlements along the most exposed sides, counterscarps or polygonal shapes, as in the fort.