



# The Castle of Lerici

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LERICI

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**Location:** the castle of Lerici is located on the promontory of Lerici Bay, which is a part of the larger promontory of Caprione.

**Type of castle:** Castle and fortress

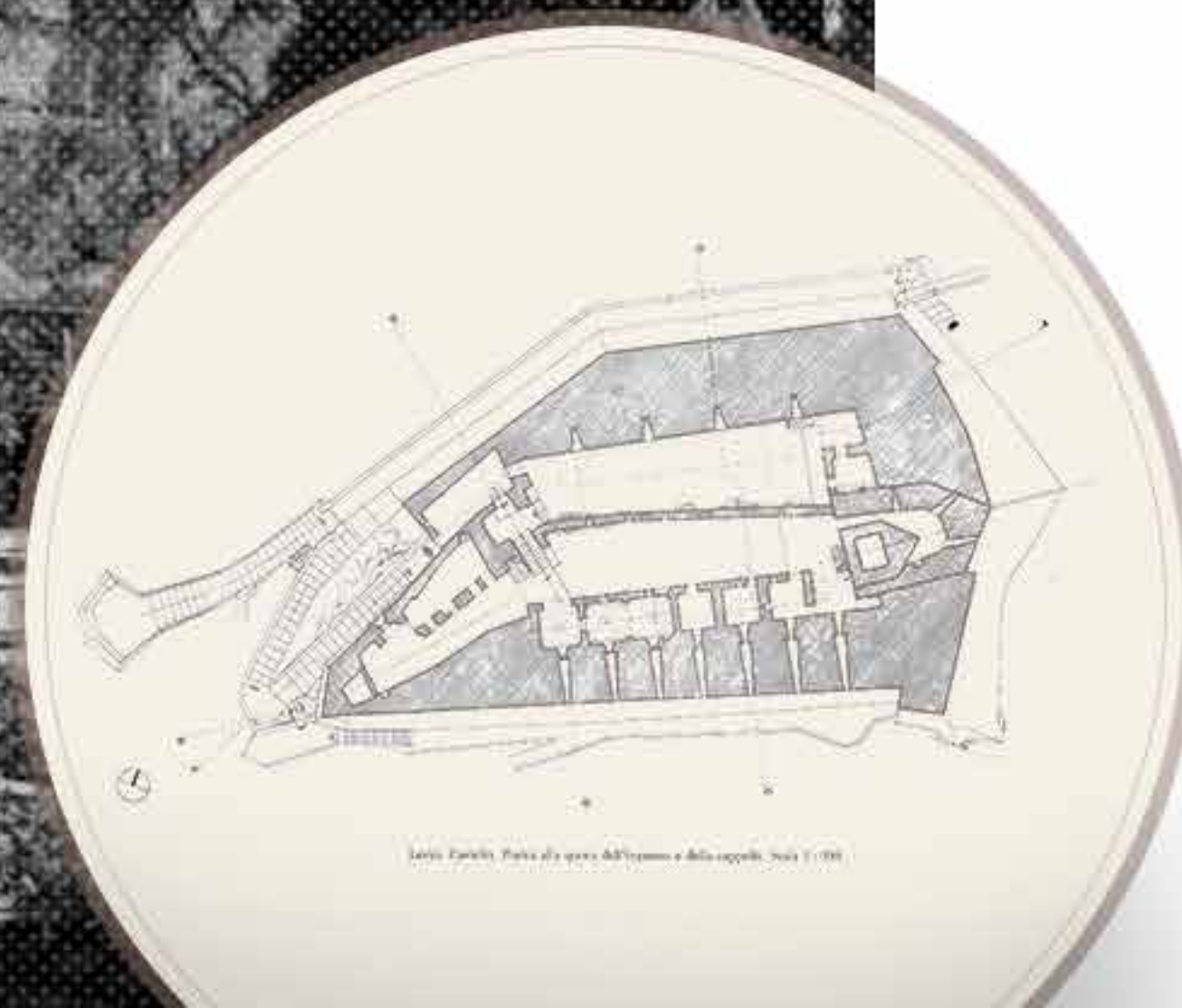
**Construction period:** 13th century

**First appearance in historical sources:** The first document mentioning Lerici was written in Porto Venere in 1152. It concerns the sale of Lerici to Lucca for 29 and 10 Lire.

**Strategic role:** At the eastern border of Liguria, Lerici Castle had an important protection and control function for entrance to the Gulf of La Spezia from Levant.

**Current condition:** The site is well preserved.

**Viewing:** The castle is open to the public as it hosts the Geopaleontological Museum  
For further information please visit [www.castellodilerici.it](http://www.castellodilerici.it)











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**History:** At the time of the first document mentioning Lerici, there is no evidence of an actual castle but there was certainly a watchtower to protect the territory. Due to political agreements with Lucca, the castle became part of the Malaspina's territories but it was then annexed to the Genoese properties.

The Republic of Genoa, who already owned Porto Venere, then defeated the Malaspina in 1174 and forced them to destroy their three castles, among which was that of Lerici. In the 13th century, Lerici was continuously threatened by the conflicts between Genoa and Pisa which lasted until 1256, when Pisa was defeated by an alliance of Genoa, Florence and Lucca which compelled Pisa to assign the village to Genoa.

Lerici was a Genoese outpost and suffered damage caused by the wars between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, who set fire to the area between 1320 and 1326. Life in the village and castle was characterised by bloody military and political events. Simone Boccanegra bought the castle in 1340, paying 5000 Genoese Lire for it. In 1348, it was given to Captain Fra Monreale. Later on, the Viscounts protected it strenuously from Boccanegra's assaults. Then the French conquered the area (1396-1491) and Lerici became a royal seat. However, the event that provoked the rage of the Genoese was the sale of Lerici by the French to the Florentines. This resulted in another war led by Genoa to recover its territories and fortresses. When Lerici returned to the Genoese, ten-year tax exemption enabled the resumption of

commercial activities. However, in 1426 there was a new and profound change: Lerici and Porto Venere were assigned to Alfonso of Aragon, who brought in military troops to protect the castle. After this event, other battles and conflicts were unavoidable. At this point, Lerici's inhabitants led a violent insurrection which led to the departure of the Spanish. From 1479, Lerici had a long period of peace under the rule of the Banco di San Giorgio.

**Structure:** The structure of the castle reveals three main construction phases. The first one dates back to the rule of Pisa, when the tower, the underlying rectangular structure and the defensive walls were built. The second construction phase dates back to the 13th century, when the Genoese strengthened the tower by adding a structure that included the pre-existing tower and other defensive walls around those on the north-western side. The last phase dates back to the 16th century. During this period the fortification works were completed and the castle took on its current appearance.