

The Castle of Massa

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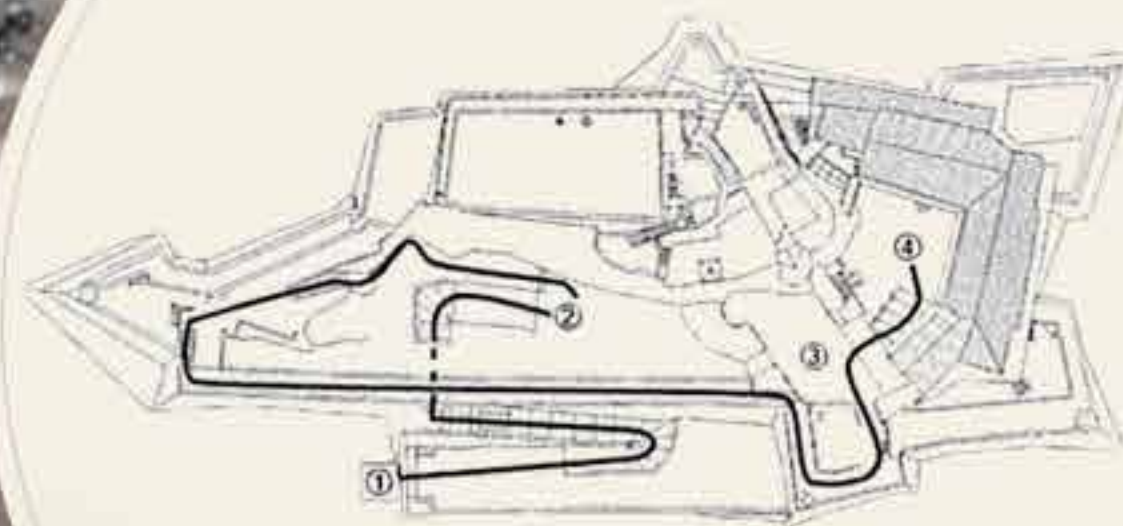
Location: Located on the hill overlooking the built-up area of Massa, it was a base to control the Pedemontana route below which had substituted the ancient Roman route, Aemilia Scauri, due to the progressive flooding from the coast and which, in the 11th century, was a communication channel between the several parish churches of the Diocese of Luni, from Pietrasanta to Sarzana.

Type of castle: It once was a control tower, then a castle for residential purposes.

Construction period: The first core was built in the 12th century and the second in the 15th century.

First appearance in historical sources: In 1164, when Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa assigned a part of the castle to Obizzo Spinola.

Strategic role: Its function was to watch over the plain and the coast. The tower was probably linked to others located in nearby hills, so they formed a sort of sighting chain up to the tower of Montignoso.







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Further use: It had a military purpose until the second half of the 17th century and then it became a prison until 1946.

Current condition: The restoration works started by the Superintendent of Monuments of Pisa in the 1950s returned the castle to the city.

Viewing: Open to the public, visiting hours depend on the municipality of Massa.

History: The castle - siege of the Marquis of Massa - had a particular involvement with the coast and the sea. These marquis, who fought against the pirates, made themselves feudal lords of Corsica as well, taking the title of Marquis of Massa-Corsica. In the 13th century the castle was destroyed by Lucca.

As the Marquis of Massa lost their power, the area passed to the Malaspina, who assigned the castle to Castruccio Castracani at the beginning of the 14th century.

Until the middle of the 15th century the castle depended on Lucca, Pisa and Florence, and then became the property of the Malaspina di Fosdinovo.

Thanks to this family, the castle was turned into a residence and the palace was built between the 15th and the 17th centuries.

After the second half of the 17th century, the main function of the castle remained military,

but after the unification of Italy it was just a prison until 1946.

In 1554, with Alberico I Cybo Malaspina, the siege of the Marquis was moved to the square of the new town of Massa, close to the parish church of San Pietro. The Cybo dynasty died out in the 18th century after the marriage between Maria Teresa – daughter of the last Marquis Alderano – and Ercole Rinaldo d’Este. The Duchy of Massa was annexed to that of Modena under the rule of Francesco IV.

Structure: The castle is composed of three units: the strong defensive walls, the residence and the fortified tower. In the 12th century, the castle is thought to have had only one high tower surrounded by walls. From 1442, the transformation of the castle from military fortress into an elegant marquis residence started. During the centuries other strongholds have been added. On top of the hill there is the fortified tower, the last defence that could protect both the Marquis’ troops and the inhabitants of the castle and the village. The defensive walls on the north-western side include a large courtyard characterised by a long walkway linking the bastions on the northern and the southern extremities.

The L-shaped palace has a fine Renaissance style.

Around the first half of the 16th century, the building was extended and the part facing the courtyard was added, including the columned porch, the veranda with the typical windows of the 16th century and the loggias.