



Castle of Ponzanello

FOSDINOVO

Location: The castle of Ponzanello is located on the western side of a hill and the village of the same name is located at its base. This fortress is an important stronghold together with Fosdinovo, on the ridge of Lunigiana leading to the coastline of Luni.

Type of castle: Castle and residence of the Bishops of Luni.

Construction period: 12th century. It was enlarged in the 13th century.

First appearance in literary sources: In 1185 Frederick Barbarossa approved the investiture of the bishops of Lunigiana giving them a court, a district and a hunting reserve. The paper is part of the Codice Pelavicino, a collection of parchments dating back to the 13th century, which is stored in the Archives of Sarzana. You can find information about this paper in the room n° 5 of this museum.

Strategic role: Control of access to the plain of Luni and to the heart of the valley.





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Further use: from the 18th century.

Current condition: Ruin at risk of collapse, hidden by vegetation.

Viewing: The village of Ponzanello can be reached by car, but the castle can't be visited because of the tangled vegetation.

History: Since its inception it was the favourite location of several bishops of Luni, who turned the castle into their archive, library and stronghold. Later, it was the property of the Malaspina from Fosdinovo, Verrucola and Gragnola. The emperor Frederick II conquered the castle during the wars in Lombardy and promised to return it to the bishop Guglielmo after the end of the war.

His successor, the bishop Enrico da Fucecchio, in the addenda to the code Pelaicino states that he ordered the building and restoration of many houses in the village, as well as the construction of the Palatinum magnum.

The area was then occupied by Castruccio Castracani, after whom it passed under the Malaspina from Fosdinovo's rule, and then under the rule of Verrucola and Gragnola. In 1481 it was finally returned to the marquis of Fosdinovo, who kept it until 1797.

Structure: From an architectural point of view, the structure forms a very unusual and exquisite shape. The extraordinary size of the pseudo-triangular castle is perfectly balanced with the landscape. The evocative ambience links two angled curtains with the monumental gate, on top of which there are some machicolations. Its huge presence defines the background of the village, which can be accessed by means of an arched entrance and which reveals the presence of an ancient drawbridge.

The inner defensive walls date back to the 14th century and they are equipped with walkways. These walls protected a more ancient defensive core, which was probably equipped with a tower whose presence is attested by documents from the 13th century.