

Fortezza di Radicofani

Val d'Orcia - Siena - Toscana

HISTORICAL DATA

The building of the castle of Radicofani is to be attributed to the Carolingians in the IX century. In 978 the abbot of S.Salvatore bought the castle and in 1153 Pope Adriano IV enlarged and reinforced the castle that was situated in a strategic position, dominating on the Francigena route, with the intent to stop the advance of Federic Barbarossa. In the following centuries the fortress remained the property of the papal state up to 1297 when it was occupied by the "gentleman/bandit" Ghino di Tacco, a sort of local Robin Hood, that was even mentioned by Dante in the Divine Comedy and by Boccaccio in the Decamerone. In the '300 the fortress returned under the papal state and underwent continuous attempts of conquest by Siena. In 1411, Siena took possession of the castle, and immediately it was restructured and fortified. In the 1458 the fortress was finally given to Siena by Pope Pio II and since then there was a long period of stability and welfare. During the war between Florence and Siena the fortress played a primary role in the war and indeed it was the last defensive bulwark of the Republic of Siena. After long years of siege the flag of Siena was lowered on the 17 of August 1559. Cosimo the First, grand duke of Toscana elevated the defensive role of the old castle: the task of building an imposing fortress was given to architect Baldassarre Lanci in the 1735 the fortress was finally abandoned after the arson of the powder magazine that destroyed it extensively. In the 1989 the FIO granted substantial funds for restoring the castle to its ancient splendor.

GUIDE TO THE VISIT

The basic principle that guided the restoration of the fortress was to point out the evolution of the defensive strategy through the centuries, from the steel weapons to the fire arms. The fortress, as we see it now, shows accurately the defensive principles of the sixteenth century which means lower towers and walls and earth ramparts to withstand the shots of large calibre fire arms. Let us start our way from the fortified door near the St. Andrea firing rampart. The door is located beside the "curtain", that is to say the long wall connecting the two ramparts, and you can notice the variety of the repairs. In fact the stones which have accumulated at the base of the walls have been put back to their original position, but slightly backward. Climbing then along the tunnel, on the left of the sentry post, one reaches the firing post of St. Andrea rampart, whereas, following on the right the ancient covered steps, one comes to the square known as the "uncovered". On the left, one can see the ancient defensive walls from 1400: going on through these walls called "the princers". One comes to the "curtain"; a real terrace on the southern side overlooking Radicofani. On the left, one finds the St. Rocco rampart with its firing post, whilst on the right one comes to the St. Peter firing post; the only post with double loop-holes for the arquebuses and the guns. Proceeding along this post, on the left, you reach the St. John rampart with other inside firing post. From which the ascent to the old fortress called "Il Mastio" begins. After watching the water cistern and the prisons, one begins the climb of the tower with the museum exhibiting the archaeological finds from the excavations and panels illustrating the restorations. From the top, through the merlons of the tower, you can enjoy a beautiful view. In the end, one finds the St. Mary rampart and along tunnel you arrived to the exit.

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