



The Historical Monuments of Castalla Castle

A door
to the
past



Tour Guide
Castalla Castle



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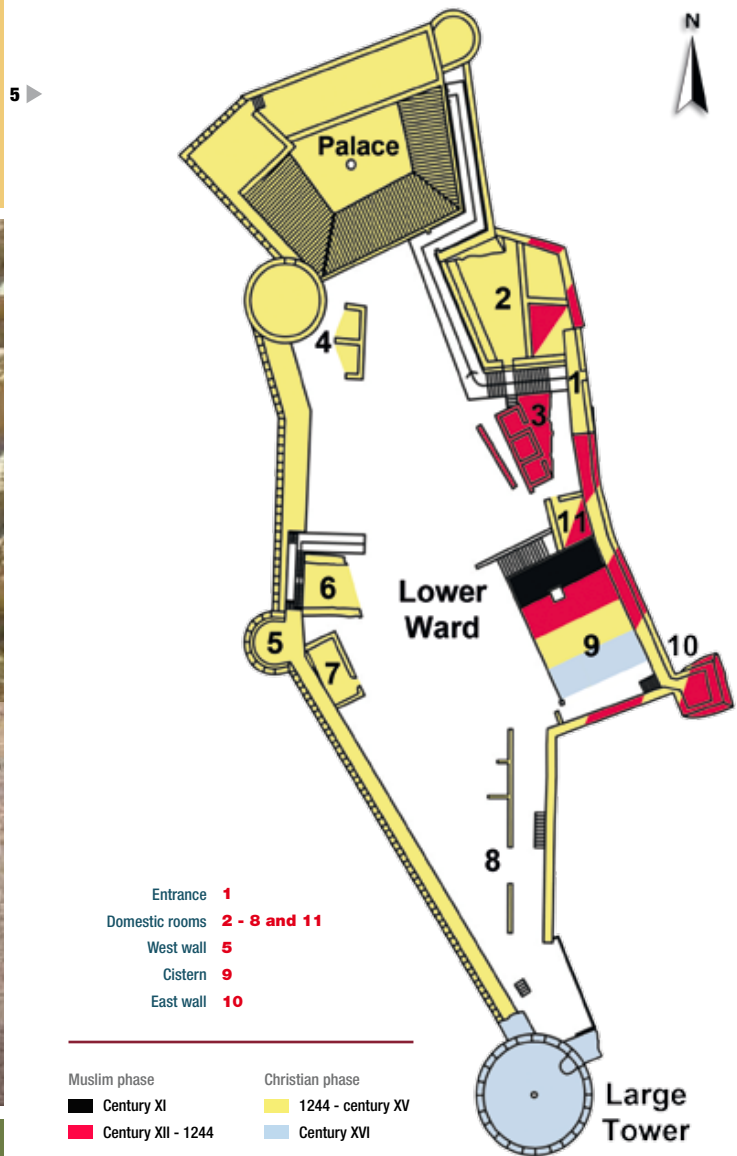
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Castalla Castle map

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...a door to the past



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Greetings and welcome to the **Historical Monuments of Castalla Castle**, an important landmark that you can discover through our cultural route.

With this guide you will see Castalla Castle, one of the most outstanding assets of historical heritage. Enter the Palace through its intricate defence system; walk around the Lower Ward; discover places such as the “escuela dels moros” (Moors school) or enjoy the views of the Foia de Castalla district from the heights of the Large Tower and imagine the hill’s first settlers and the beginnings and evolution of the castle. It really is a treat not to be missed!

Enjoy your trip whilst helping to preserve part of this area history, keeping to the sign-posted paths, using the bins provided and not damaging the fortification in anyway. Thank you for your collaboration.

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A history spun out over time



▲ 12



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◀ 10

Thanks to its strategic position the castle, as well as the hill upon which it sits, has been occupied by several civilisations who have all left their mark over time. Prehistoric people, Iberians, Romans, Muslims, Christians... and now you! Feel part of the history of this place as you set off on your journey through time.

This area was occupied during the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC) and the Iberian and Roman eras (2nd century BC - 5th century AD). After successive occupations and transformations of the hill, any remains of constructions erected by these cultures have been destroyed. However, a number of ceramic fragments have been preserved, including a remarkable piece depicting the legs of what may be an Iberian warrior, with boots and a falcata or sword (2nd century BC).

In the 10th century, there was a Muslim settlement here, which became a *hishn*, or a fortification, in the 11th century. Renovated in the 13th century, this fortification was the administrative headquarters of the Foia de Castalla district, which in turn was answerable to the taifa de Dénia. After being peacefully incorporated into the Crown of Aragon in 1244, the castle became a key part of the south Aragon border's defence against the Crown of Castille.



15



16



17

The castle gradually deteriorated and, in 1362, King Pere IV decided to donate it to Ramon de Vilanova i Lladró, Baron of Castalla, whose barony included the towns of Castalla, Onil and Tibi, so that he could restore it to defend the area against possible attacks from Castille. From that moment on, and throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, the castle underwent significant changes shown in planning and construction of the Palace and the Lower Ward.

The Large Tower, 1529, was the last important construction to be built within the castle grounds. In the 17th century, when it ceased to be used for military purposes, the tower fell, deteriorated and became a silent witness to the visits made by the people of Castalla and the surrounding region.

In the 1930's, the castle was looted by people from Castalla in search of treasures. The social recovery, which began in 1984, was carried out by the council and has been decisive in guaranteeing its preservation. You can see the results. Enjoy it!

The social recovery of a frontier fortification

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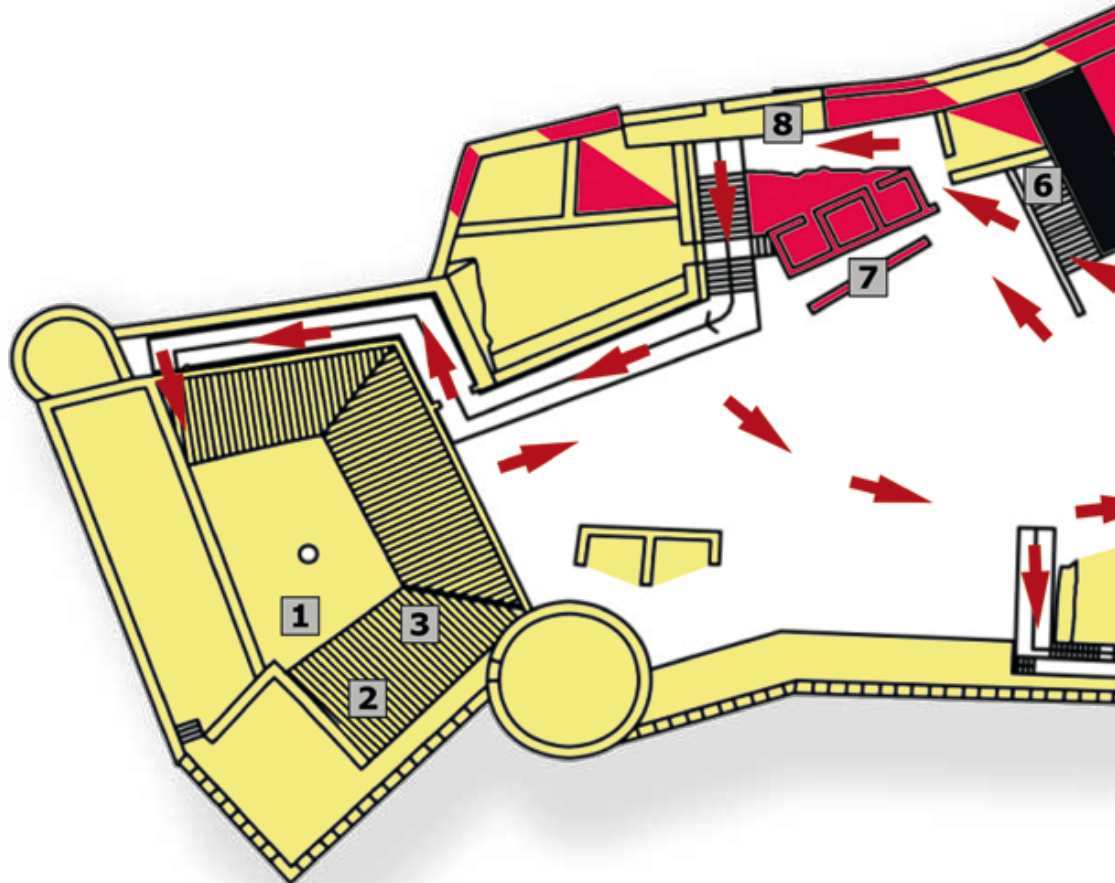
Nevertheless, it wasn't until four years later that the recovery of the castle began. In 1984, a cross-disciplinary study began –archaeological, architectural and historical– in order to lay the basis for this recovery. Years later, between 1997 and 1999, archaeological excavations in the Palace and the Lower Ward helped to provide more information about the castle and the people who had lived there.

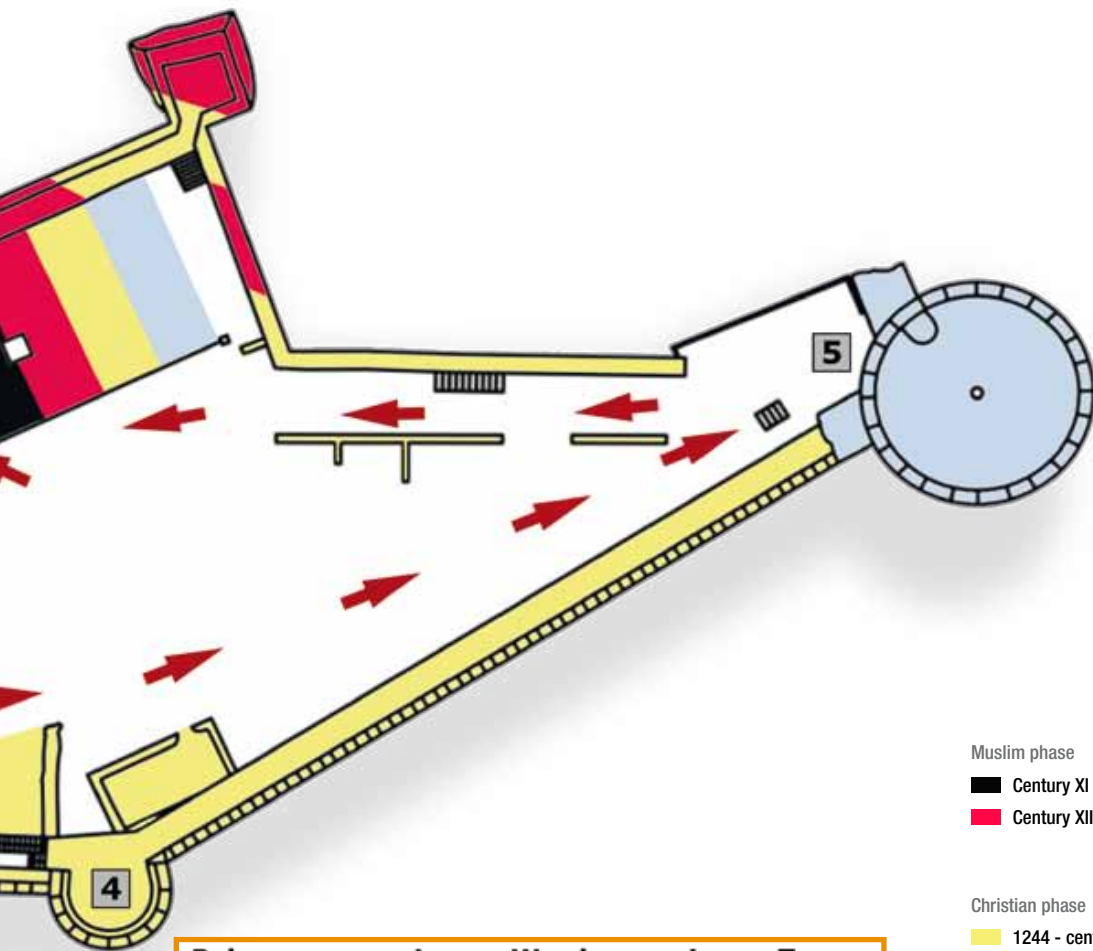
However, the recovery work that has had the most visible effect is undoubtedly the architectural project carried out between 2003 and 2006, which has transformed the fortification's traditional image and turned the castle into a place for holding a host of social events. This project has been executed respecting certain basic principles, such as the reversibility of the work carried out, the integration of and distinction between new and original materials and the non-reconstruction of any parts about which little or no information is known.



VISITORS' ITINERARY

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Muslim phase

■ Century XI

■ Century XII - 1244

Christian phase

■ 1244 - century XV

■ Century XVI

Palace

- 1 Ground floor
- 2 First floor
- 3 Second floor

Lower Ward

- 4 Semicircular tower
- 6 Cistern
- 7 Muslim rooms
- 8 Entrance

Large Tower

- 5 Large Tower

PALACE

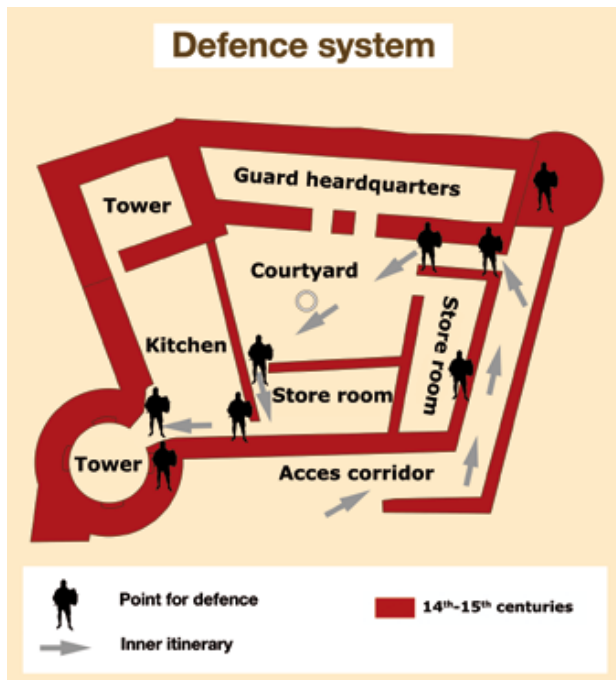
Ground floor

INFORMATION POINT

1



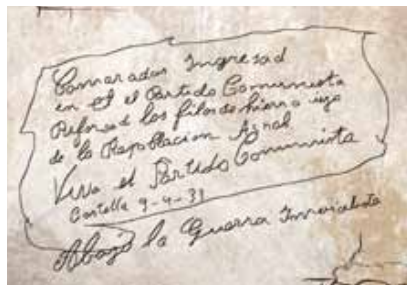
You may have visited other castles, but what you might not know is that this 3-storey building, raised in the 14th and 15th centuries, is a *domus maior* or a feudal lord's residence. Its defence system is particularly good as access can only be gained through narrow passages and also the layout is organised in such a way that defence is compartmentalised and independent for each floor. So,



it must have been extremely difficult to conquer, don't you think?

These rooms are all set out around a courtyard with a cistern, locally known as the "comú de la reina" or "Queen's commode", so-called because the people of Castalla believed that the "Queen of the Castle" used the cistern as a toilet. A funny nickname, isn't it? The mouth of the cistern holds the remains of the well-curb, the stone placed at the mouth of a well to stop people from falling in.

Next stop: First floor of the Palace (2)



27



28

PALACE

First floor

INFORMATION POINT

2

This floor would have housed the castle's noble rooms, which were, probably, connected to the kitchen via a staircase that has not been preserved. In the rectangular tower, you can see that the remains of the brick vault are in a state of consolidated ruin. This prevents the original remains from deteriorating whilst allowing the new structure to be observed and compared with the original.

Next stop: Second floor of the Palace (3)

29 ▼



30 ►


14th-15th centuries


▲ 31

PALACE

Second floor

INFORMATION POINT

3

On the way to the second floor, elements of the Palace's defence system can be observed in the circular tower, such as the cross and orb-shaped loopholes, which were used to shoot portable firearms; or the arrow slits. On the second floor, which was used as the servants' quarters, the remains of the original pine wooden beams can be seen. And from here you can access to the Palace roof, which provides marvellous views over the whole region.

Next stop: Lower Ward (4)



33

14th-15th centuries

34



LOWER WARD

Semicircular tower

INFORMATION POINT

4

A large open space that connects the Palace to the Large Tower and is bordered by two straight lengths of wall. When this tower was built in 1529, the original appearance of the Lower Ward changed completely. On the other hand, this was one of the parts to be most affected by the pillaging that took place during the 1930's, although it still preserves remains of the different domestic quarters it once housed.

The east and west walls are new but do not look alike. The west wall, where you are standing now, has merlons and battlements, whilst the east wall does not. Do you know why? As some of the original merlons and battlements remained on this wall, they could be used in order to reconstruct the others. However, both the merlons and the battlements had totally disappeared from the east wall and could therefore not be rebuilt. Although it



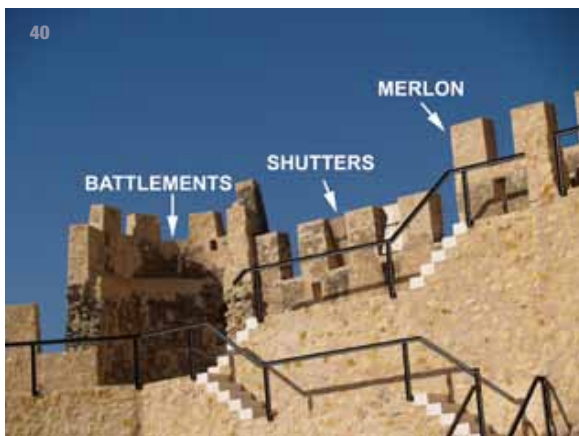
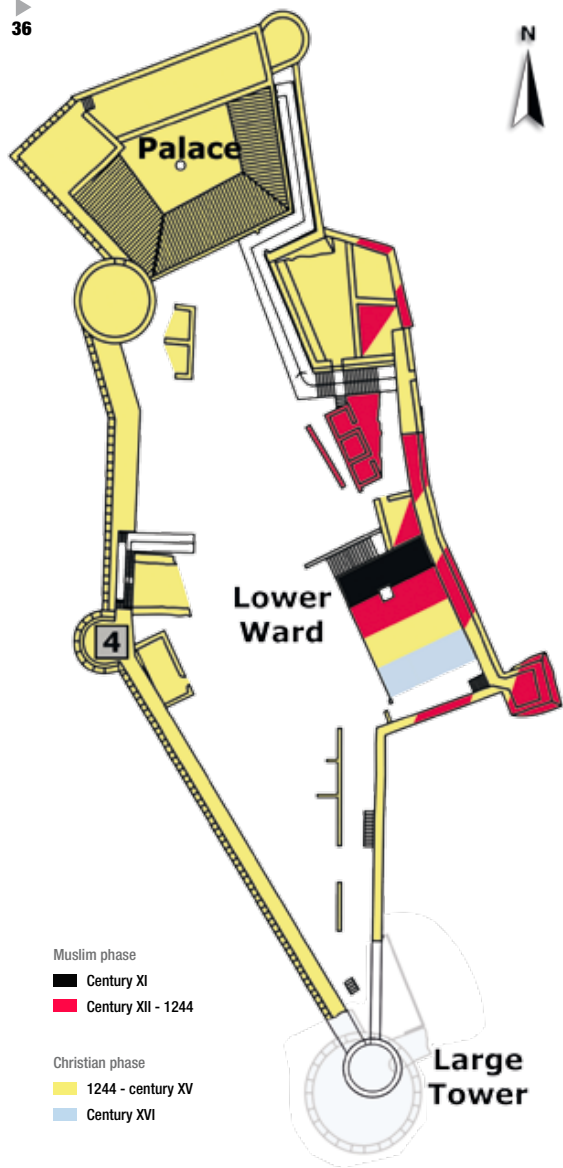
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may seem strange, this type of decision is taken so as not to give a false impression of the castle, by not recreating something about which little or nothing is known.

On the west wall, five shutters have been reproduced based on the marks preserved on two of the original merlons. The shutters are the pieces of wood used to cover the battlements for defence purposes.

Next stop: Large Tower (5)

Possible layout of the Lower Ward before the Large Tower was built



LARGE TOWER

INFORMATION POINT

5

This tower is the most important part of the castle for the people of Castalla and they christened it as Large Tower. Built in 1529, it has two floors and is the most modern construction. It probably formed part of a more ambitious project which, for some unknown reason, was left unfinished, but which included new walls, as the ruins besides the tower reveal.

The tower has some interesting artistic elements such as the remains of a gargoyle with no head (possibly a type of animal with wings). This gargoyle had another function, taking the rainwater away from its terrace. There is also an interesting mark: it is the IHS monogram, known as *ihesus* in reference to Jesus of Nazareth. You can find it in the west window, on the outer wall which is on the first floor of the tower.

Next stop: Cistern (6)

Ihesus from the Large Tower



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CISTERN

INFORMATION POINT

6

This is one of the castle's most unique elements, built in the 11th century, with its ashlar triple arch and barrel vault. This cistern collected external rainwater through a piped channelling system laid out in the Lower Ward, the remains of which have been preserved. This is known by the locals as the “escola dels moros” or Moors school, and conjures up images from an historical past turned into legend by the people of Castalla.

Inside you will see a series of graphites, one of the most important being in Valencian language (47). It tells you the cisterns were cleaned on the 24th November 1706, during the War of Spanish Succession.

Next stop: Muslim rooms (7)

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47

LA NETE XAT EN 24 DE NO^e DE 1706

MUSLIM ROOMS

INFORMATION POINT

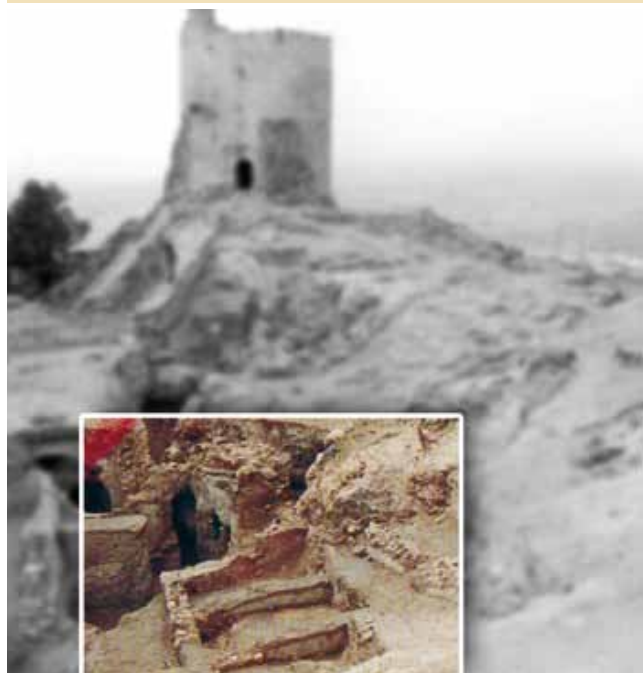
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These three rooms were used for domestic purposes, possibly as small store rooms, and they are one of the castle's most ancient architectural remains. Built by the Muslims between the 12th century and 1244, before the arrival of the Christians, these rooms form part of a renovation process carried out on the fortification and disappeared during the great transformations the castle underwent during the 14th and 15th centuries. Here you can see (48) an hypothetical reconstruction of these rooms.

Next stop: Entrance (8)



48 ▲



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ENTRANCE

INFORMATION POINT

8

In order to discover the deepest secrets of this historic castle, you must pass through here. During its construction in the 14th and 15th centuries, ashlar were used. If you look closely, you will be able to see some engravings - Do you know what they are? These are the marks the stonemasons who carved the ashlar for the gateway made in order to identify their work. On the outer face, two features overhang the entrance. This is a machicolation which was used to defend the entrance from attacks.

End of the tour

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The marks of stonemasons

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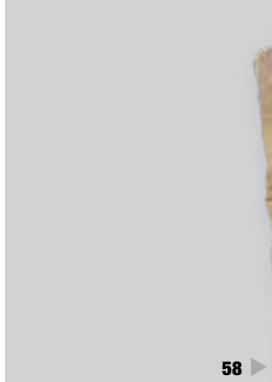
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The Historical Monuments of Castalla Castle



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