

come in

The colourful enaidic bestiary, depicted in the hall on the ground and first floor, repeats itself on the walls, while the vaults seem to entice stunningly beautiful work of art. What is the mysterious reason - which surely lied outside of simple aesthetic decoration - that prompted the creation of such frescoes in a noble mansion nestled among scolding towers? Maybe the noble families' coats of arms, the architectural decorations themselves, the flowers and the floral patterns narrate a tale without words, even the mottoes written on the cartouche are enigmas which subtextual stories of virtue, political choices, military ventures and ancient devotion. The fascinating chance of comprehending what is communicated by the frescoes in the rooms and the Chapel of the fortress, the fortress abolished. All the feudal lords' goods, the fortress included, are initially returned to them after several years.

The frescoes in the rooms and the Chapel of the fortress are discovered in 1906. After the First World War, Prince Boncompagni-Ludovisi starts the first renovations that would go on until the 1930s. A year before, the fortress has been declared a national monument.

The Cassa di Risparmio transfers the ownership of the castle to the Fondazione di Vignola, a no profit organisation with a vocation for a better management and valorisation of the Castle of Vignola.

President of the Vignola Foundation



"True happiness finds its deep roots in a past period that lives again in a day-dream of an ancient manor, as the one you are about to step into, its endless corners and innumerable views hold and guard time like a tiny treasure chest, where you can walk through memories with marvel, history and culture fuse together in the fortress here in Vignola, but visiting the rooms decorated with six-century old frescoes, climbing the steep stairways of the towers, strolling back and forth the walkways and lingering in the soldiers' bare billets will not only make you feel an actual historian but also an inspired poet, as anyone is always keen on giving heed to emotions."

design: it

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# ROCCA di VIGNOLA

Piazza dei Contrari, 4  
41058 Vignola (MO)



FONDAZIONE DI VIGNOLA



# ROCCA di VIGNOLA

hidden worlds

**1575** ● **THE MARQUISATE**

Afonso II d'Este, duke of Ferrara, gives the shire of Vignola the title of Marquisate. Ercole Contrari the Young is the first Marquis of Vignola. In a few months, after Ercole being assassinated, the title of Vignola goes back to the domain of the Este family for two years.

**1796** ● **THE NAPOLEONIC GOVERNMENT**

With the arrival of the French the Boncompagni-Ludovisi family loses all their feudal rights and the Marquisate is abolished. All the feudal lords' goods, the fortress included, are initially consecrated but would be returned to them after several years.

**1907** ● **THE RESTORATION OF THE FRESCOES**

The frescoes in the rooms and the Chapel of the fortress are discovered in 1906. After the First World War, Prince Boncompagni-Ludovisi starts the first renovations that would go on until the 1930s. A year before, the fortress has been declared a national monument.

**1965** ● **THE TRANSFER OF THE CASTLE**

The family Boncompagni-Ludovisi transfers the castle to the Cassa di Risparmio di Vignola (the Bank of Vignola) which acquires the property of the fortress.

**1998** ● **TODAY**

*Welcome*

TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE FORTRESS OF VIGNOLA

**1453** ● **THE SHIRE**

Borso d'Este, duke of Ferrara, gives the title of county, Nicolò and Ambrògio Contrari, sons of Uguccione, who died in 1448, obtain the title of Counts.

**1420** ● **THE NEW PAINTED FORTRESS**

In 1420 ends the work to enlarge the fortress, started by Uguccione Contrari. The castle, painted on the outside, hosts the feudal lord. His rooms are finely decorated and the Chapel is elegantly painted with a cycle of frescoes illustrating the story of Christ and the Virgin.

**1401** ● **THE CONTRARI AGE BEGINS**

Nicolò III d'Este gives the fortress to Uguccione Contrari, a noble from Ferrara. In 1409 Uguccione obtains the status of landlord of Monticino and Savignano (two castles near Vignola).

**1396** ● **THE RETURN OF THE ESTE**

Giovanni da Barbano, with the support of the Grassano family, gains control of the castle and the fortress. In 1399 the army of the Este family reconquers Vignola.

**1336** ● **THE SIGNORIA OF OBIZZO III**

Obizzo III d'Este, Sir of Ferrara, becomes Sir of Modena as well, and he extends his domain over the fortress of Vignola.



**VIII cen. A.D.** ● **THE ORIGINS**

According to tradition, in this period a first fortress is built by the side of Panaro river. Around this building flourishes today the town of Vignola.

**IX cen. A.D.** ● **THE BISHOP DOMINATION**

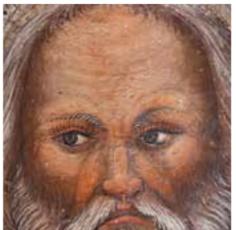
The castle of Vignola, along with the castle of Savignano, is under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Modena.

**1178** ● **THE FIRST EVIDENCE**

The first known document that certifies the presence of a fortress in the castle of Vignola is dated 1178.

**1227** ● **KING ENZO FIRES THE FORTRESS**

During the conflict between the Guelphs from Bologna and the Ghibellines from Modena, the fortress of Vignola is set on fire by King Enzo, son of the Emperor Frederick II. Gherardo Grassano builds the castle again and decides to live there with other exiled Ghibellines.



# THE fine OF THE time

Opening hours (winter time period):  
 Working days 9 - 12 14:30 - 18  
 Festives 10:30 - 12:30 14:30 - 18

Opening hours (summer time period):  
 Working days 9 - 12 15:30 - 19  
 Festives 10:30 - 13 15:30 - 19

Closing day: Monday

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 www.roccadivignola.it

Guided tours:  
 Etcetera  
 mob 328 84.58.574 - 329 82.16.103

**free entrance**

The entrance to the Fortress is open to anyone, but everyone under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult. The visit is allowed in any open place of the Fortress, but it is advisable to be careful when climbing steep stairs, walking on bumpy floors and entering low doors. It is highly recommended to use proper shoes. Stairs and paths are equipped with handrails, where possible.

- bookshop
- audio guide (English, French, German, Spanish)
- toilets
- only ground floor accessible for disabled people
- public car parks available nearby

15

**The clock Tower**

This tower was the main entrance to Vignola in the Early Middle Ages (Castelvecchio) and it had two drawbridges. The automated clock was placed on the tower in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

14

**The ancient market loggia  
 in the Contrari square**

The loggia, built during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, hosted the chestnut markets coming from the Apennines - meant for the Padanian cities - and the silkworms cocoons, processed by the silken industries in Bologna. Under the colonnade there was a sundial dating back to 1852.

13

**Barozzi Palace**

Around 1560, by the will of Ercole Contrari *the Elder* and following the project of a great architect from Vignola, Giacomo Barozzi (called *il Vignola*) an entire medieval block was demolished to make room for the palace, new residence of the lords.

1

**Entrances and Ravelin**

The fortress has got **two sequential entrances**, which originally had a drawbridge. Between these ones stands the **Ravelin** and behind the second archway stands a second fortified tower used to defend the vault that faces the courtyard.

2

**Contrari Chapel  
 (first floor)**

Among the rooms of the lord's apartment, a late-gothic Italian jewel is nestled inside the walls: the Chapel of Uguccione Contrari. It is adorned with precious 15<sup>th</sup>-century frescoes, dedicated to the History of Christ and of the Virgin Mary.

3

**Rocchetta**

This place was used to stock pieces of artillery, war machines, crossbows, bows and arrows and food supplies (corned beef, wheat, wine, olive oil) for the garrison guarding the Fortress.

4

**Nonantolana Tower**

Built around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was elevated and enlarged during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the first years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it started looking like the way we now know it, that is, with the upper part entirely built with bricks. It was the dungeon of the Fortress, the last defence, hosting **Uguccione Contrari's study** and the prisons, among which the one anciently called of the mill, because of its proximity to the underlying mill of Pusterla.

5

**Women's Tower**

Built in the first two decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century upon ancient fortifications, it derives its name from the presence of prisons only used for women.

6

**Soldiers rooms  
 and the walkways**

The rustic rooms, near the walkways, hosted the garrison's soldiers.

7

**Frescoed Halls (1<sup>st</sup> floor)  
 (Dames, Pavilion, Dogs, Coats of Arms,  
 Tree Trunks)**

The rooms on the main floor hosted the lords' private lives, whose family affairs inspired the decorations of the halls.

8

**Frescoed Halls (ground floor)  
 (Lions and Leopards, Doves, Rings)**

Here, the public life of the feudal court took place. The painted coats of arms and the symbols (Lion, Leopard, Dove and Rings) belong to the noble families that owned the Fortress between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Contrari, Estensi, Boncompagni and Boncompagni-Ludovisi).

9

**The Half Tower**

The remains of the tower prove that the first Fortress dates back the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

10

**Pusterla**

The defences, formed by a small entrance (pusterla, from the latin "narrow door") protected by a small advanced tower, was used till the 17<sup>th</sup> century as emergency exit and entrance in case of siege.

12

**The Moat**

The excavating started around 1416, while the **bastion** was built after. The entire structure incorporated some of the buildings of the medieval village built around the first Fortress.

11

**Brush Tower**

Built between 1415 and 1419, it derives its name from the presence - until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - of a sentry box placed on the top of the roof. During the Risorgimento (first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) it was used as **jail for political prisoners** and as the house of their keeper.

