

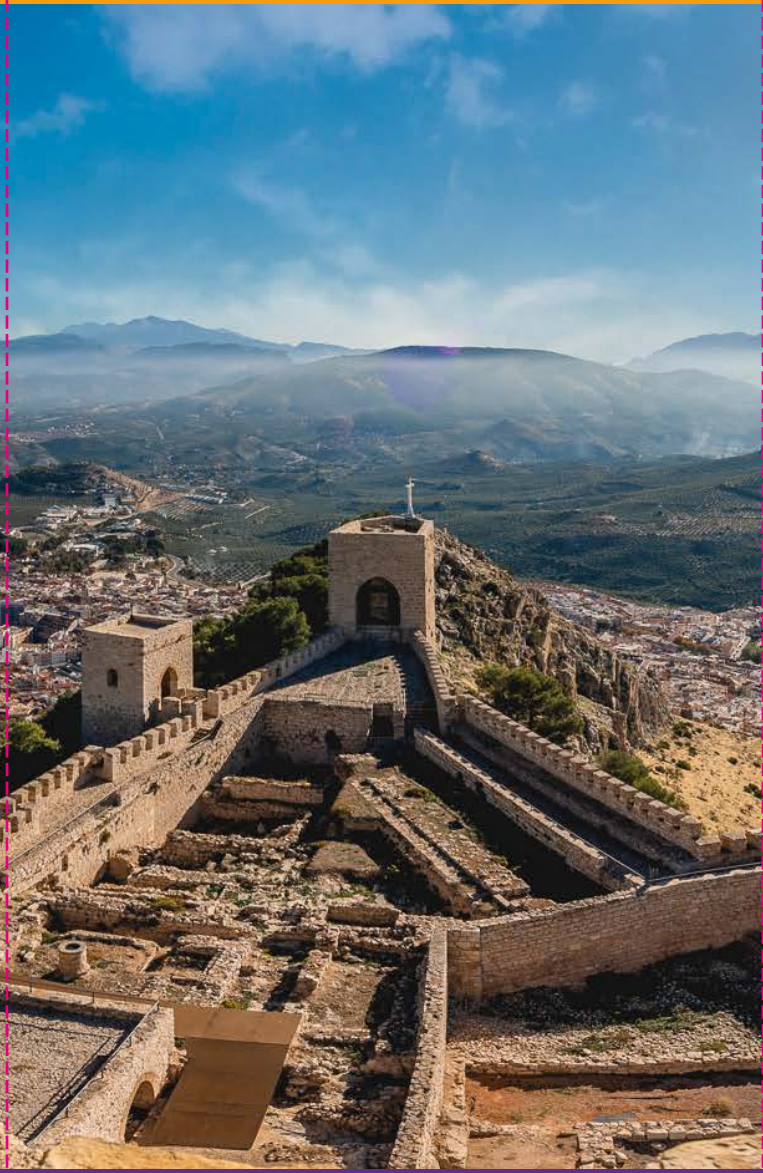
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Santa Catalina Castle, which currently houses an interpretation centre on the history of the city and the castle, is a monumental



icon of Jaén. Its privileged location on the top of Santa Catalina Hill has determined its important historical role. Currently, its towers offer



excellent panoramic views and the best sunsets in the city.

First constructions and the Muslim period

Iberians were the first settlers of Santa Catalina hill, who built a walled oppidum (village) on the northern side of the mountain from which the Romans and the Arabs later took materials to build their fortifications.

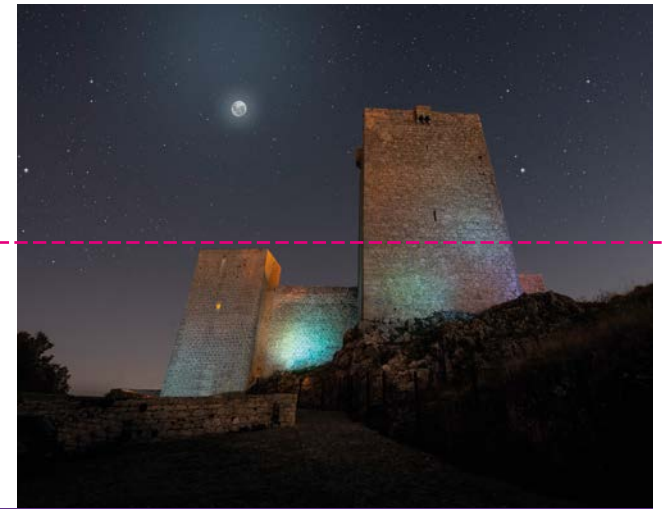
Between the VIII and IX centuries, under Muslim rule, the Iberian-Roman walls were reinforced and a citadel was built on the northern slope of the hill. This citadel with administrative and defensive functions was replaced by a large castle on the summit of the hill from the X century, known as the Old Castle. Later, between the XI and XIII centuries, the castle was expanded with the construction of Abrehui Castle.



Christian era

After the Christian conquest of the city in 1246 by Ferdinand III, the Islamic walls were repaired and the construction of a new castle located in the most strategic part of the hill, the New Castle, currently Santa Catalina Castle, began. The works continued during the reigns of Alfonso X and Ferdinand IV.

It was during this period that the fortification experienced its moment of greatest splendour, as Jaén was the border between the Kingdom of Castile and the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada and was on the main communication route between the Castilian plateau, the valley of the Guadalquivir and the capital of Granada. In the XV century, the New Fortress became, for brief periods of time, the residence of the Constable of Castile, Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, and his family. Later, the decline of the fortress began and lasted until the XVIII century.



Spanish War of Independence

Between 1810 and 1812, the Napoleonic army turned the fortress of Jaén into the largest and most important base of the French army in the Upper Guadalquivir. During this period, the most profound changes that the fortress has undergone throughout history were witnessed.

In the New Fortress, the residence for officers and staff, kitchens and powder magazines were built in the lower courtyard, while in the upper courtyard the gallows were installed next to the prison and a hospital was built; the battlements were transformed into embrasures and the artillery parapet was extended. In the Old Fortress, stables and buildings for the troops were built.

When the French troops withdrew from Jaén, they blew up a large part of the buildings, leaving some parts of the fortress seriously damaged.

Cross Legend

Legend has it that when King Ferdinand III “the Saint” entered the city, he climbed up to the Islamic Castle with his troops and reached the end of Santa Catalina hill. One of the captains of his troops stuck his sword in the ground as a cross and as a symbol of the Christian victory. The king liked this and decided that from that moment on there would always be a large cross in that place to remember the Christian conquest and to proclaim the Castilian dominion of the old medina to the four winds.

From then on, the legend became a true tradition and

the nuns of Santa Clara Royal Monastery would be in charge of paying for a wooden cross that always had to remain there, replacing a new one every time it deteriorated over time. After centuries, the nuns abandoned this task and the bishop of the diocese of Jaén entrusted the privilege of maintaining the Cross of the Castle to Balguerías family from Jaén, who in 1951 installed the current reinforced concrete Cross that neither time nor wind have been able to knock down.

This point is the only place on the top of the hill from where you can see the majestic Cathedral.

Current events

Since the end of the XX century, restoration work, archaeological studies and its adaptation as a Tourist Interpretation Centre of the

Castle have been carried out in the New Palace or Santa Catalina Castle. While the Inn was built in the Old Palace during the 1960s.



Santa Catalina Castle



Jaén

Touring its Interior

1

Keep

With a height of 40 m, it is divided into three floors covered with brick vaults. On the ground floor the ceiling is divided into four vaults that start from a central pillar. This room, excavated in the rock itself, was an old food and water storehouse. The first floor is covered with a brick vault and pointed stone ribs, while the second floor is topped with a beautiful polygonal dome. These two rooms were the quarters of the warden or governor. It was the temporary residence of Constable Miguel Lucas de Iranzo and his wife Teresa de Torres, governors of the city during the second half of the XV century.

2

The Lady's Tower

This is the tower that controlled the entrance to the castle. Inside, covered by a brick vault, there is a

permanent exhibition where copies of archaeological remains from the old Islamic palace that were found during excavations stand out.

4

Defensive Towers

These two towers are separated from the main curtain wall and joined to it by a pointed brick arch, like a bridge. One of them was converted into a chapel in the XV century, for the occasion of the wedding of **Constable Iranzo's sister**. It is currently the chapel of the co-patron saint of Jaén: Saint Catherine of Alexandria, whose pilgrimage is celebrated every November 25.

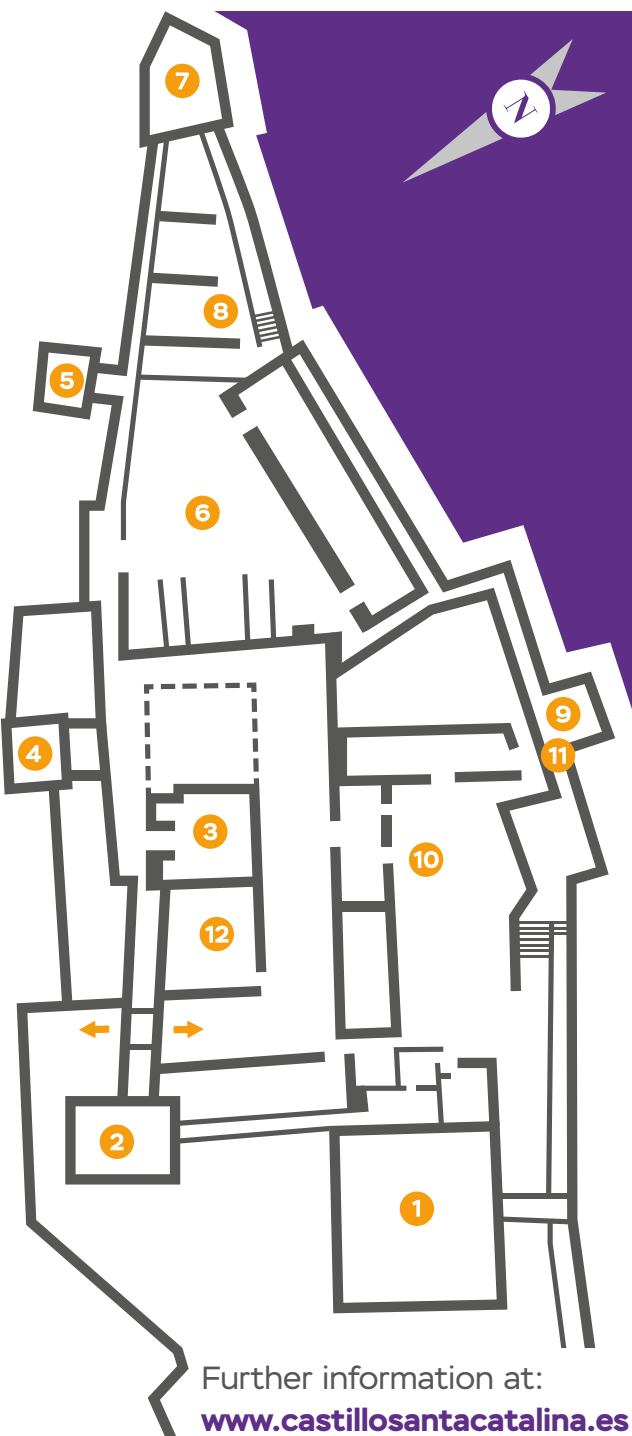
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Legend of Saint Catherine

While the Christian king Ferdinand III "the Saint" was besieging Jaén in the spring of 1246, the morning before the conquest of the city, Saint Catherine of Alexandria appeared to him in a dream, giving him the keys to Jaén. The king construed this fact as a premonition in which the saint was

revealing to him that the next day he was going to conquer the city, which at that time was in the hands of the Muslim king Alhamar, as it happened. In gratitude, the Christian king named her patron saint of the city, naming the fortress after the saint, and from then on November 25, the saint's name day, was a holiday in the municipality, with the pilgrimage being celebrated on the hill.



- 1 Keep
- 2 The Lady's Tower
- 3 Stables Viewpoint
- 4 Defensive Tower-Santa Catalina Chapel
- 5 Defensive Tower
- 6 Archaeological remains
- 7 Bell Tower
- 8 Prison
- 9 Parapet walk. Southern view point
- 10 Lower Patio
- 11 Embrasure Tower
- 12 Stables
- Entrance
- Exit

11

Embrasure Tower

It is accessed from the lower patio (10) and houses the **old latrines**, which were used as a toilet and rubbish dump in medieval times, as well as a place for washing and bathing during the Napoleonic occupation. The special ventilation system for bad odours on the sides is noteworthy.



9

Parapet walk

From the entire walled perimeter of the castle, fantastic views can be seen, which demonstrates the strategic importance of its location.

The castle is located on Santa Catalina hill, which together with the Neveral, Imora and Almendral mountains, make up the peri-urban Santa Catalina park.



8

Prison

What was once a grain storehouse in the Muslim and Christian era, became a prison during the French occupation.

Pedro del Alcalde

This character from the Spanish War of Independence was a fighter who fought against the French. He participated in the Battle of Bailén leading his men, and after the victory, he was named Lieutenant Captain of the Army of Burgos.

After the Spanish army was dismantled in 1810, he fled to the mountains with a group of fighters to continue the fight. Pursued relentlessly by Napoleonic troops, he was captured after one of his men betrayed him. After being tried, he was sentenced to death and shot at San Lorenzo Arch. Later, and to public ridicule, his body was hung Plaza de Santa María square.

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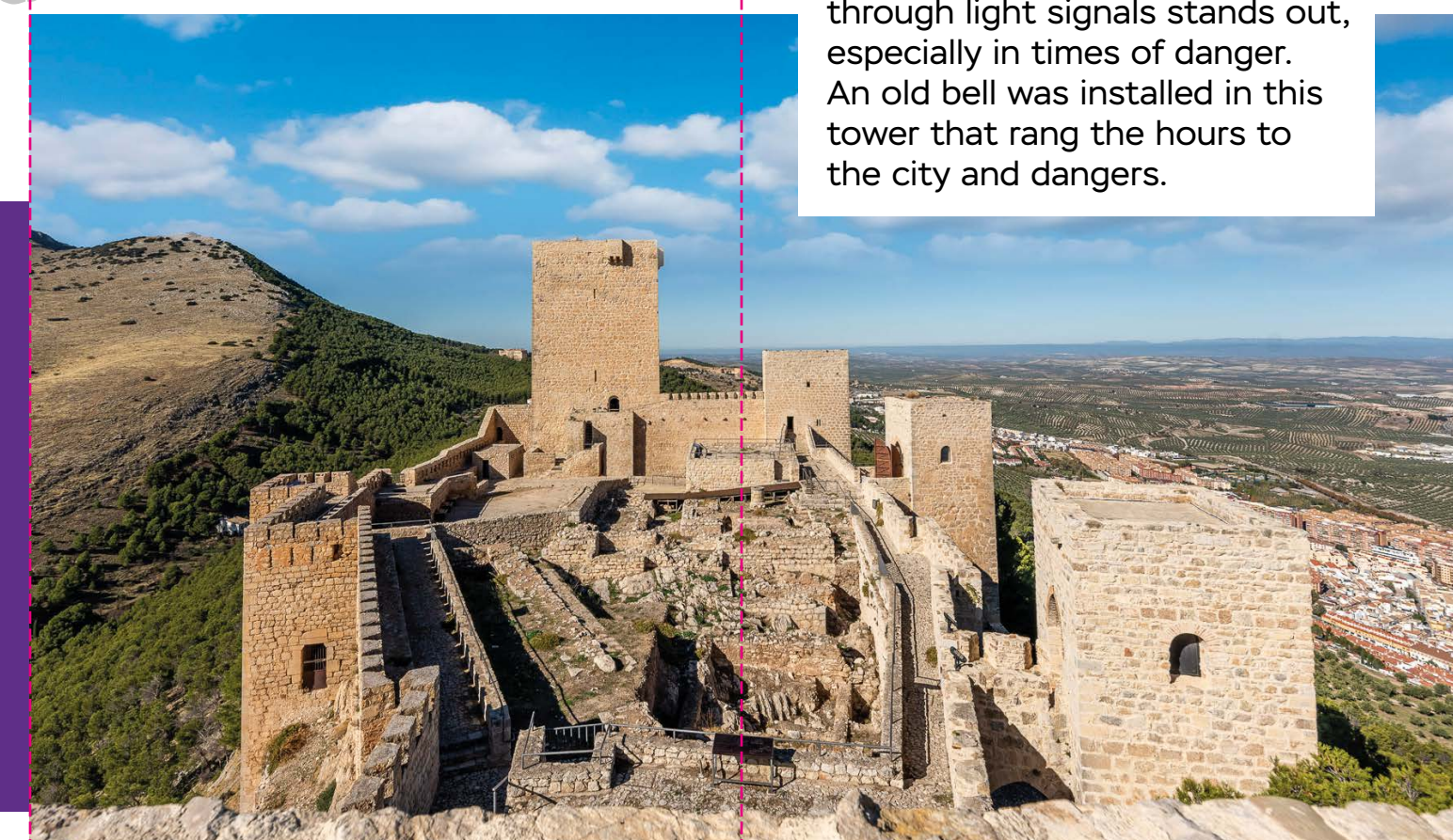
Archaeological remains

During the excavations carried out inside the castle, the foundations of an Arab palace from the XI century were found, equipped with warehouses, cellars and other services, as well as two cisterns from the same period, a mill from the XV century and the foundations of a hospital built during the French occupation in the XIX century.

7

Bell Tower

It is a pentagonal tower and the **main watchtower of the castle**. **The views from its terrace are spectacular**, encompassing the entire city, the walls, the mountains and some municipalities near the capital city. Related to this function and its position, the role it played as a communication point with other castles and watchtowers through light signals stands out, especially in times of danger. An old bell was installed in this tower that rang the hours to the city and dangers.



Further information at:
www.castillosantacatalina.es