



THE OLD CITY AND HERITAGE

PENÍSCOLA



Castle of Peñíscola

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OLD CHERSONESOS



North Beach

Peñíscola is a name which has been part of history since the times of the oldest civilisations. It is a fortress which due to its extraordinary natural conditions, a strategic location –a rocky headland completely surrounded by sea, except for a sandy strip of land– and its providential abundance of springs, has been a sought-after site for people who arrived at our peninsula.

An abundance of archaeological remains have been found in the environs of the tombolo and the sites of *Poaig* and *Els Barrancs*, which confirm both the colonization of these lands by Iberian people, and their relationship with the Phoenician merchants who arrived by sea (VII-VI AD).

Phoenicians from Tyro probably settled in Peñíscola, followed shortly by Greeks from Zacynthos. Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines and Arabs later arrived by sea.

However, the oldest and most credible written testimonies about the existence of Peñíscola in the old world may be found in the quotations of Hecateo (VI AD), Estrabón (I AD) and Rufo Festo Avieno (IV), who mention the city of Chersonesos in their descriptions of the coast. The Greeks gave the city this name, meaning peninsula.

Peñíscola, a Greek and Roman colony, was an important port where manufactured products arrived (ceramics, fabrics, weapons, etc.) and were exchanged by the colonisers for the valuable wine and olive oil of the Iberians, who lived in the coastal mountain ranges. It was the Romans who, by translating the Greek name of the city into Latin (the vulgar form of Latin according to prestigious philologists) – pene+iscola, “almost island”– gave rise to the present-day name of Peñíscola.

BANÁSKULA, THE ARAB CITY

From the year 718 (when Tarik brought the conquest to an end) until 1233, the city of Peñíscola was under Muslim rule.

Few details are known about this period. Arab geographers mention Peñíscola (which they call Banáskula or Baniskula due to them adapting the name to their alphabet) as an impregnable castle next to the sea with inhabitants, farmsteads, crops, an abundance of water and important salt works. From the fortress, which was the frontier area with Christianity, the Moors practised piracy on the coast and attacked the kingdom of Aragón. Peñíscola was the birthplace of such illustrious people as the Wolf King –Mohamed ben San, Aben Mardanis– (1124) who managed to maintain a Moor kingdom in the south-east of Spain against African invaders, and the writer Alí Albata who took part in negotiations with James I.

THE RECONQUEST

Although King James I had already tried for two months to besiege Peñíscola in 1225, it was not until 1233 that he took possession of the city and won back his control of the sea. It was a pacific conquest. After the fall of Burriana, which



left the Arab castles isolated in the north, the city was handed over without a fight and under certain agreements which respected the Saracen laws and customs.

On 28 January 1251, however, James I awarded the city the Foundational Charter according to the law of Valencia, by virtue of which the Moors were stripped of all their possessions and properties, which were handed over to the new Christian settlers. This favoured the demographic and economic consolidation of the city and marked the beginning of a period of prosperity.

THE RELIGIOUS-MILITARY ORDERS

In 1294, friar Berenguer de Cardona, Grand Master of the Temple Order in Aragón and Catalonia, agreed with James II of Aragón to exchange Tortosa and towns in the district (under the Order's control) for the castles and land of Peñíscola, Ares and other locations. It was during that period (1294-1307) that the Templar knights began to build the castle. The heraldic wainscot of the gate which was the only access to the fortress brings the Templar builders to mind: the central cross which was the emblem of the Order, the thistles of the Grand Master friar Berenguer de Cardona, and the bands of the Knight Commander of Peñíscola Arnaldo de Banyuls.

In 1307, Peñíscola was once again under the rule of the crown, the powerful Temple Order having been persecuted and abolished. The recently created military Order of Santa María de Montesa (Juan XXII, Avignon 1317) inherited the Templar possessions and governed the city from 1319, which marked the beginning of a thriving period. At this time lawsuits between Peñíscola and the farmsteads of Benicarló and Vinaròs were frequent, the latter seeking their independence. The crown ignored their complaints however, and repeatedly declared their



Benedict XIII (Pope Luna)

submission to Peñíscola castle. At the end of the XIV century, in the middle of the Great Western Split, Benedict XIII separated Peñíscola castle from the possessions of the Montesa Order. He took refuge there with his papal court in 1411, and changed the castle into a pontifical palace.

Thanks to the presence of Pope Luna, Peñíscola acquired universal fame, as it was one of the three "Pontifical See" cities (together with Rome and Avignon) to exist.

Pope Luna (Benedict XIII) arrived at Peñíscola advanced in years. Practically abandoned by everyone, only his own conviction of his legitimacy kept him going. After recovering from an attempt to poison him in 1418, he died in 1423 after making sure that his cardinals would choose a successor. Clemente VIII, the new pope

of Peñíscola, abdicated in 1429 in favour of a new pope from the Constance Council, and was appointed bishop of Majorca, which brought the Great Western Split to an end.

In 1426 Peñíscola castle, which was bequeathed by Benedict XIII to the Holy See, returned to royal power after being donated by Pope Martín V to the Aragonese monarch Alfonso V The Magnanimous.

Once the Great Western Split (which had caused the segregation of the castle) had come to an end and disappeared, the Montesa Order reclaimed its possession. But this was not achieved until 1441 after paying 150,000 gold coins. Fernando the Catholic King recaptured the castle and fortress for the crown in 1488, and returned the money to the Order.

THE RENAISSANCE CITY

At the beginning of the XVI century, Charles I planned to reinforce and arm the fortress of Peñíscola, (as was the case with other strongholds such as Ibiza, Palma, Mahón and Melilla), due to the need to update defences and adapt them to the new military weapons. When he left

the peninsula on his way to Germany in 1543, where he was needed due to the Empire's serious problems, he left his son Phillip II as governor of the Spanish kingdoms. Phillip II made his deputy and field marshal Vespasiano Gonzaga and the engineer Bautista Antonelli, who drew up the plans, responsible for the new fortification of the stronghold.

Antonelli updated the defences of Peñíscola by building the Renaissance city wall just as we know it today, which gave the city a new façade facing the continent. The plans included the Artillery Store and a new access to the city, the *Portal Fosco* (Dark Gate).



Portal Fosco (Dark Gate)

THE WARS OF **SUCCESSION** AND **INDEPENDENCE**



Between December 1705 and May 1707, Peñíscola, which together with Alicante had been the only city (in the kingdom of Valencia) to remain loyal to the Bourbon cause, suffered a cruel siege from Anglo-Dutch troops defending archduke Carlos, and bravely resisted with its governor Don Sancho de Echevarría up front. Once the struggle was over, Phillip V rewarded Peñíscola by granting the titles of city and most illustrious city, the vote in Spanish courts, the payment of damages caused in the siege and two fleur-de-lys in its shield, amongst other privileges.

During the War of Independence or “War of the French”, Peñíscola (which together with Alicante remained under Spanish rule) was besieged again in 1812, this time by Napoleon troops of the Italian general Severoli.

The besiegers thought it was almost impossible that the stronghold (which they called petite Gibraltar) would be surrendered, but the betrayal of the temporary governor Pedro García made occupation possible. The betrayed population attempted a revolt which was crushed, and all men between 16 and 50 years of age had to leave the city and hide in the mountain ranges of Irta, San Antonio and neighbouring villages.

The city was recaptured in 1814 by Bourbon troops of the Spanish general Elio, after being besieged and its inhabitants wiped out by over 60,000 canon shots. The writer Leandro Fernández de Moratín was an exceptional witness of this event. He had taken refuge in Peñíscola, as he supported the French, while fleeing from the fall of Valencia. With the appearance of new weapons, Peñíscola lost its military importance and was dismantled as a stronghold in 1890. All its armaments were moved to the arsenal of Cartagena.

XX CENTURY

If the city's military importance had marked its development up until the XIX century, during the next century economic events (building the port, shooting films, tourism...) were to leave their mark and completely change the city's appearance.

In 1922, the first stone was laid in the construction of the present-day port. Three years later the eastern dyke measured 400 metres long and boats, which had been moored up until then to the north of the city in an area known as *La Porteta* (Little Door), could take refuge in her. In 1945, work began on the esplanade of the port. This completely changed the city's image as it involved extending the narrow strip of sand which joins the tombolo to the coast.

In 1956, the film "*Calabuch*" by García Berlanga was shot in Peñíscola, and in 1961 "*El Cid*" by Anthony Mann starring Charlton Heston.

Between 1994 and 1996, work on the dock platform recovered to some extent the historical image of the southern fortifications, with the creation of an artificial pool next to the city walls.



Port of Peñíscola



HERITAGE

Peñíscola was made an Historical Conservation Area in 1972. As well as making your visit more agreeable and instructive, the aim of this brief guide is to help you discover the often unknown hereditary and historical values of the city, (the city walls, springs, the settlement...), which form an important part of the history of this privileged enclave.





The wall

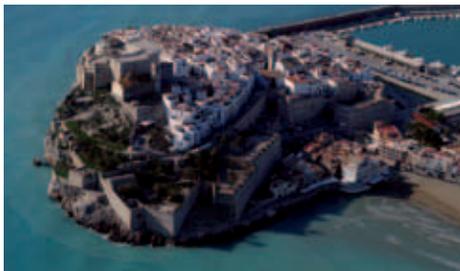
THE CITY WALLS, WITNESSES OF HISTORY

The fortress of Peñíscola consists on the castle and its city walls. The castle is situated on the highest part of the tombolo. The walls, or the castle's lower enclosure, were built over different periods, adapting to the uneven orography of the rocky crag and forming its powerful image of impregnable fortress. The city walls can be divided into three areas which are of different architectonic and military structures.

Fortifications on the east face. These are the defences on top of the cliff, formed by the city walls which are joined to the rocks. They consist of XVIII century work built on top of Medieval work, running from the low *Maset* battery to the *Bufador*.

Fortifications on the south face. These are formed by stretches of Medieval walls and shape the south-west façade, from the Fortín del Bonete to Saint Anne's battery.

Fortifications on the west and north faces-Renaissance fortification. This is the front of the fortification which faces the continent, from Saint Mary's bastion to the Artillery Store.



Aerial view of Peñíscola

THE MEDIEVAL FORTIFICATION

The urban development of the Medieval city is a great mystery, since the design of the Arab castle is unknown and no cartographic documentation has been found before the year 1578, nor material remains, for us to discover more about the Muslim fortified enclosure.

The Medieval work which has survived (that is the castle and walls on the south and east faces) was built between the XIII and XV centuries. The Medieval enclosure was smaller than it is at present, and from B. Antonelli's plans we know that during the XV century the fortifications ran from the Wall which is the boundary of the *Font de Dins* (Interior Fountain) spring, along the line of buildings overlooking *Les Caseres* Square, to the high and low *Maset* batteries.

The southern Medieval city walls stood some 9 metres above sea level, forming a polygonal-shaped wall on top of the rocky line on the sea's edge, with cubic turrets.

Sant Pere's (Saint Peter's) Gate, which was ordered to be built by Pope Luna in the XV century, gave the city a new access from the sea and changed the old line of city walls by creating a landing stage, which operated until the XVIII century when it was walled up and levelled off for military reasons. At the beginning of the last century the Gate was opened again, and on building the port it became an access to the enclosure over land. The Gate consists of a great arch lowered by masonry, where the shield of Pope Luna (carved by Filibert Bertalla) figures on its central wedge stone. Also from this period is the Fortín del Bonete and the first stretch of the Fountain's Wall next to the aforementioned Gate.

The Fountain's Wall runs from *Sant Pere's* Gate to Saint Anne's battery over the *Font de Dins* spring. It was probably built between the XIV and XV centuries. During the most recent restoration work (1997), the original night watch passage was discovered in the upper area of the battlemented parapet which runs between the three turrets. It was found buried beneath floor coverings from a later period. This out-

standing passage is 35 metres long and is formed by a walkway of lime concrete, crowned with flagstones and supported on masonry corbels. Remains of the Medieval city walls and a tower have also been discovered buried at Saint Anne's battery.



Sant Pere's Gate

THE RENAISSANCE FORTIFICATION

Peñíscola's Renaissance city wall was planned by B. Antonelli and built in the XVI century. It is an important example of military architecture of the peninsula. The planned fortification ran from the Artillery Store to *Sant Pere's* Gate, but the last stretch was not built and stopped short at Saint Mary's bastion.

This work reflects the evolution of military architecture due to the appearance of new defence weapons in the XVI century. The narrowness of the Medieval night watch passages and the small platforms of the towers prompted an evolution towards the type of fortification which has bastions. Towers are flatter and wider, and can become bastions, making it easier to manoeuvre artillery.

In this work, B. Antonelli included the complete repertoire of the period which is also evident in other contemporary fortifications (Majorca, Ibiza, Tabarca and Palma), planned by the Italian engineers (El Fratin, Calvi, Espanochi, etc.) in the service of Phillip II. The characteristic elements of these constructions which can be seen at Peñíscola are the following, amongst others: bastions with star-shaped floors, built with hollow internal vaults or highly resistant casemates where it was possible to establish arsenals, water stores and gunpowder magazines, upper terraced areas or batteries, exterior walls with sloped masonry and a continuous cordon to solve the changes in level, and sentry boxes in the corners to offer quick shelter (such as Pilate's Balcony).

The *Portal Fosc* (Dark Gate) forms part of the Renaissance work carried out. It is a rocky gate, decorated with coarse vermiculate white stone and military motifs. It contains an internal vault

at an angle of 90° from which the Guards' Corps can be accessed. On the Gate is a shield and commemorative corbel of Phillip II. This was the city's main gate until the XVIII century, and it has been attributed by some to Juan de Herrera.

The Artillery Store also stands out from amongst the work of B. Antonelli. It consists of a group of military structures (with ramps, tunnels and entrenchments) of unmistakable architectonic interest.

XVIII CENTURY WORK

During the XVIII century the fortified enclosure would have had practically the same form as it has today, but the lack of space suffered by the military garrison which occupied the castle caused constant conditioning work to be carried out on the fortress. From this period we can point out the construction of the *Magatzem* (gunpowder store) which is situated next to the lighthouse, Prince's Bastion, the gunpowder magazine in the Artillery Store, and the opening of the city's third gate, that of Saint Mary. The latter was built in 1754 at the bastion of the same name by order of Fernando VI, who met the inhabitants' needs by authorising the fortification to be perforated so that harvest carts would find it easier to enter. Until then they had entered the fortification through the steep *Portal Fosc*.

THE CASTLE

Situated on the highest part of the rock, it rises 64 m above sea level. Its perimeter measures 230m and it has an average height of 20 m.

The Templars built this Romanic construction between 1294 and 1307, on top of the remains of the old Arab citadel. It has similar characteristics to constructions built by the same knights in the Holy Land and Catalonia, and it bears a striking resemblance to Miravet castle which was built 150 years before.

Benedict XIII made slight alterations during his stay in this castle, converting it into a papal palace.

The walls are made of worked stone and all rooms have barrel vaults (slightly pointed at times), which rise from very simple ashlars formed by a moulded cordon. The door recesses are formed by arches with large wide wedge stones.

Throughout the entire building the moderation and solidity of the construction is outstanding, both in the Templar rooms and the strategic and complicated papal rooms which were built at a later date by Benedict XIII (where one of the best libraries in the world was installed). But perhaps the most interesting architectonic features in the castle are the vaulted Guards'



Castle of Peñíscola

Corps, and the austerity and size of the Templar basilica.

The basilica was used by Benedict XIII and Clemente VIII as a papal basilica, and construction characteristics of the presbytery can be added to those of other rooms. It has the shape of a semicircular apse and is covered by an egg-shaped half dome on top of an arch, with a small window in the centre of the apse which tensely illuminates the area. The Pope's remains lay for some time in this basilica.

Modifications made by Phillip II to arm the fortress with artillery, as well as bombings suffered during the numerous wars and sieges, did not fundamentally alter the shape of the castle, which was declared a national listed building in 1931. In 1957, the management of the castle was handed over by ministerial order to Castellón council, which began to carry out restoration work.



Parish Church

PARISH CHURCH

The parish church is a building of great interest although it is not well known. It must have been built after the Reconquest, and it has one nave with a wooden ceiling resting on pointed transverse arches. A Romanic door remains from this period. The church was rebuilt following a bad fire during the first half of the XV century, and this time the ceiling took the form

of ribbed vaults. The ribs are propped on ashlars carved with busts and musical angels, and covered with keystones which represent the Virgin with the child, the crucifix, Saint Peter and Saint James.

It was extended between 1725 and 1739, when the nave was lengthened and counter-oriented by means of a higher construction with a barrel vault and lunettes.

THE PARISH TREASURE. THE JEWELS OF BENEDICT XIII

The collection of the jewels belonging to Benedict XIII can be seen in the parish church, which- as they come from the castle -are still kept in Peñíscola. The rest of the jewels ended up in Tortosa (font), the county of Foix and Rome. The main pieces of the collection are the following: Benedict XIII's gothic processional cross with a glass rock centre and silver framework, with worked images and the arms of Don Pedro de Luna, of Valencia and the Devotion, work of Saint Matthew's silversmiths school; Pope Luna's gold-plated silver chalice (gothic, XV century) with limousin enamels representing the Pope's coat of arms; the reliquary Lignum Crucis belonging to Clemente VIII (gothic, XV century) and Phillip II's silver processional cross with a punch or stamp of Valencia dating back to 1587.



Hermitage of the Virgin of the Hermit

HERMITAGE OF THE VIRGIN OF THE HERMIT

This is the centre of a popular devotion of Medieval origin. It is situated next to the castle on the site of another religious building dating back to the VI century. The present-day sanctuary was built between 1708 and 1714 at the request of the then governor of the town Don Sancho de Echevarría, in an unbeatable masonry factory which perfectly carved the decorations, shields and mouldings. The design of the façade integrates the bell tower to the gable end with a moderate composite elegance which was not very common within the Valencian baroque style.

SPRINGS AND FOUNTAINS

The abundance of fresh water (together with its natural condition of impregnable fortress) have

marked the future of Peñíscola as an important coastal location from the most remote times.

There are references to at least 12 springs which rise in different points around the rock. The following springs stand out for their singularity and historical importance: the *Font de Dins* spring which has a larger volume of water than the others, and which springs up from several points at the foot of the Fountain's Wall and Saint Anne's battery, and the *Font de Sant Pere* (Saint Peter's Fountain) at the foot of the *Bufador* battery.

Water from the *Font de Dins* spring is channelled to the *Font de la Petxina* (Fountain of the Shell) and the washing place at the foot of Saint Mary's bastion, through a domed conduit which runs beneath Saint Anne's battery. Many hypotheses have been suggested about its Roman origins, but no material evidence has been found to date to support these ideas.

The strategic importance of the *Font de Dins* spring has meant that numerous defensive structures of the city have been built on top of each other over the ages, and these have been discovered during recent restoration work.

Up until the 1960s, when the spring was used to capture water to supply the town and a building was constructed (the basement of which leant against the city wall), there was access to a small square next to Saint Anne's chapel where

there was a washing place and a water tap (the *Font de Dins*) for human consumption.

At present, the building used for capturing the water has been restructured and pulled away from the city wall. From the rear courtyard of the building, one of the main points of water from the spring can be seen through a glass skylight, as well as an open arch in the wall which connects this area to the domed conduit running beneath Saint Anne's battery. Not open to visitors at the moment.



Lighthouse of Peñíscola

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The present-day building dates from 1892. Its signal, which was a warning and night guide for sailors, reaches a distance of 35 miles (65 km) and its sequence is one and two flashes every 15 seconds. Before electric light, the signal was produced using bonfires, giving rise to the

name which still exists in the adjoining street (*Farons*) and which alludes to the lights or sanctuary lamps which shone from here.

MARITIME MUSEUM

The museum building can be found at Prince's Bastion, the city Wall situated furthest east from the headland of Peñíscola. It possibly has Medieval origins, but it was shaped during the XVIII century when artillery quarters were installed. From 1912 onwards, this building has been known as *Les Costures* (The Schools) as the old rooms were fitted out as classrooms for the town's schools. The building was abandoned when the schools were moved in 1969. In 1993, the School Workshop of Peñíscola began restoration work on the building and the bastion, and during 1996 conditioning work was carried out on the museum.

The fundamental aim of the Maritime Museum is the conservation, diffusion and safeguard of the seafaring cultural heritage of Peñíscola. It is structured thematically into three sections: history and archaeology, fishing, and marine life. The permanent exhibition at the museum is made up of exhibits (archaeological and ethnological pieces), models of vessels, graphical documents, audio-visual aids (CD-ROM, video...) and three aquariums with Mediterranean marine species.

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