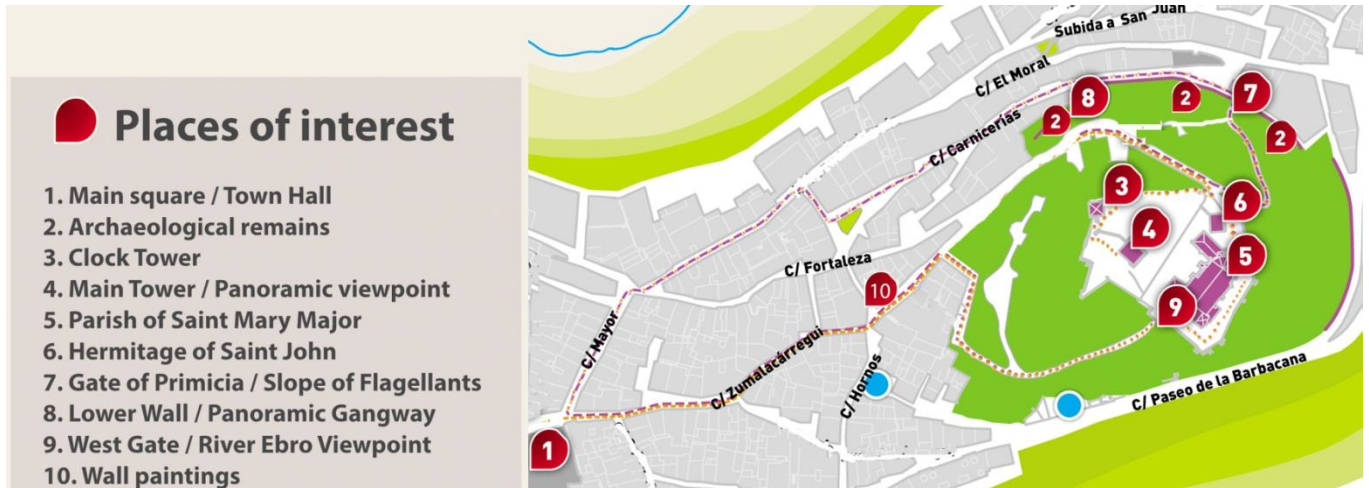


DISCOVER OUR CASTLE ON YOUR OWN WALK ALONG DE ITINERARY OF THE FLAGELLANTS

Take the route that the processions of the "Picaos" follow on Holy Thursday, you will enjoy the most representative buildings of the civil architecture of the village, and unmatched views of the surroundings of San Vicente Castle. It is a 1 km long walk around medieval streets where you will be able to discover old palaces, beautiful coats of arms, as well as the imposing walls of the fortified enclosure with the old constructions that are attached to them. Among the buildings, there are some remains of old cellars and an old winepress. The Parish Church, the Hermitage of San Juan de la Cerca, the Clock Tower, the panoramic walkway, the impressive viewpoint at Torre Mayor, ... See the route on the map.



Depart from the remodeled *Town Square (Plaza Mayor)* with a *distinctive fountain which dates back to 1882*, time when running water was first brought to the village. Have a look at the building of the Town Hall with stone arcades on the ground floor and a balcony on the first floor. Another imposing building made of stone is the Gil Aguiriano's Palace. Both constructions were built in the eighteenth century.



Fountain in the Town Square (Plaza Mayor)



Go along Major Street (Calle Mayor) and find interesting samples of the local architecture. There is a small palace with a peculiar cornered shield. When you look at it closely, you can distinguish the shields of four important families, the Agüero's palace, the Ramírez de la Piscina's

Fotography: Coat of arms of the Gil, Salazar, Ramírez de la Piscina and López de Arellano's families

After a few metres, turn right on Calle Carnicerías (Butchers' Street). Along this street there are old emblazoned houses (The Palace of Lopez Cano and the House of Davalillo). Go up this street until you come across the exterior of the lower wall, which delimited the great interior space or Bailey (late thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century)

Look at the map number 8, Height at this point 15



Nowadays the gateway to the medieval precinct does not exist, the current access road would be flanked by two defensive towers, one of them (the one on the right) might have been used as a tithing house. There is a hollow which probably housed the machinery that would allow dwellers to manipulate a portcullis that would close the entrance to the medieval castle

Photography: Inside view of the cube (not visible at present)



Archaeological Excavation



Rise of the Flagellants



Traditional stone wine press



Cellar



Aerial photograph (1929)

Taking the small ascending path we will see **the Clock Tower**. It was built in the seventeenth century on the remains of a medieval albarrana tower, the first construction of the castle. The town council decided to install the mechanical clock that regulated the daily life of the village, thanks to its height, its bells could be heard in the furthest corner of the town.

Photography Clock Tower: Look at the map number 3



The Gate of Primicia or of Navarre was restored in 2014 and dates back to 1898, it was built when the medieval gate collapsed a year earlier. The medieval gateway was lower, next to the main access gate (flanked by the two defensive towers)

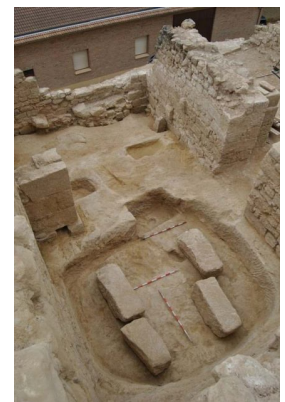
When you go through the Gate of Primicia, you have two options: turn left and ascend the Rise of the Flagellants (part of the Easter Processions tour); visit the **archaeological excavations (2008/2010)**. Some remains of medieval houses were discovered during the restoration works of two stretches of the wall,. The houses were attached to the inner face of the wall, and they were built in 1367, when the Navarrese King Carlos II *the Bad* put on sale the existing lots inside the enclosure.

Or you can turn right towards the original street of the Fortress, and find the archaeological excavations carried out in the years 2016 and 2017. During the excavation works a stone wine press and a cellar were discovered under the debris of the collapsed walls of the houses. These constructions are similar to the profuse rupestrian stone wine presses in the open fields around the Sonsierra area. However, there is an added value, the stone wine press found in the castle was sealed by sediments that go back to the twelfth and thirteen centuries).

For centuries, many neighbours of San Vicente de la Sonsierra lived inside the enclosure (some until the beginning of the XX century). After the collapse of part of the wall and of several houses in December 1897, the area was quickly abandoned. The ground might then have been used as a dump



The Gate of Primicia



Torre Mayor (Major Tower) is located in the upper enclosure. It was designed as an exempt tower that would serve as a watchtower and shelter for a small garrison, and its construction was in charge of Ferrant Moro, the tower's tenant, in representation of Sancho VI. The tower was reused in the 19th century; first, as burial place, when the local cemetery was installed in the upper enclosure (1814-1890); later, it was turned into the seat of a garrison during the Carlist Wars.

The restoration of this tower was carried out along with the southern section of the lower wall in the years 2008-2010. Urgent intervention was indicated because it was at risk of collapse.

A large scale infrastructure project was necessary to build a spiral staircase in 2016-2017 to turn the tower into a lookout point. Have a look at the stunning landscape, the tower itself and the fortified enclosure.

The Major Tower (Torre Mayor) can be visited on your own, its interior has a limited capacity for 25 people. The access has several flights of stairs, and the railing at the top is made of glass, so it is not recommended for people who are afraid of heights..



View from Torre Mayor (Major Tower)

The archaeological excavation undertaken at the upper enclosure in 2012 revealed the different interventions that the fortification underwent throughout the centuries, after the construction of the Torre Mayor in the 12th century. Two main changes became evident:

The first extension of the medieval fortress built in the 13th century consisted of the construction of the triangular floor enclosure that left the main tower at its southern apex.

The reconstruction carried out in the 19th century during the last Carlist War in which the walls delimiting the enclosure were built with embrasures



At the foot of the Torre Mayor we find an *underground space known as the Moorish Room*. It would be the cistern of the medieval castle, in which rainwater was collected from the roofs of the fortress according to 14th century documents. At some point the soil of the cistern was dug and a well was built. Currently, we do not know why or how far its builders dug, not even if the workers were successful at all. The reason might have been the lack of rain; or following our traditional tales, they might have built a tunnel to reach the river Ebro.

In the nineteenth century, with the presence of the liberal troops, the Moorish Room might have been used as a dungeon or a warehouse; and it was divided into two rooms. (Free access, interior lighting)

This castle has been occupied in warfare since its construction in the 9th century until the Carlist wars in the 19th century. Each occupation involved some modification of the enclosure. An example is the Bastion of the Carlist wars; this terraced structure was built on the old door of Salas during the Carlist Wars, and might have been used to position artillery guns. It was rebuilt within the restoration works of the upper enclosure in 2012.





Look at the map number 6

Retrace your steps and turn left towards **the 2010 archaeological excavation** exposed the fourteenth century settlement. In 2014 a fully reversible, as well as easily removable gangway was installed. This airy gangway allows the visitor to see the excavation and even the exterior face of the Wall. It also helps the viewer appreciate this striking defensive place.

One of the qualities of this castle is its breathtaking location in the territory: on a hill overlooking the valley. The newly built gangway is meant to recover its landmark-territory relationship

Thanks to this new structure we can get an idea of how imposing the castle was for the enemies who tried to attack its walls, being 15 metres high at that point.

We go back to the hermitage of San Juan de la Cerca. It is one of the earliest Gothic constructions in La Rioja. Its construction is attributed to Don Diego López de Ábalos, Governor of the castle and San Vicente in 1385, he asked to be buried here. The architectural features of the temple refer to an earlier context, to the beginning of the thirteenth century. Observing its size, it must have been the chapel of the castle and the original parish until the sixteenth century, when the present hermitage was built.



Look at the map number 6

From the mid seventeen hundreds the hermitage has been the place where the members of the *Cofradía de la Vera-Cruz de los Disciplinantes* (a local Brotherhood) gather



The *Conjuratorios* have openings to the four winds, they were used to hold religious ceremonies in order to bless the fields and to fend off storms. The wall and the buttresses that contain the terrace around the church of Santa María the Major, were rebuilt at the end of the 17th century. In 1693 there was another intervention to build the present doors and windows of the new *conjuratorios*.

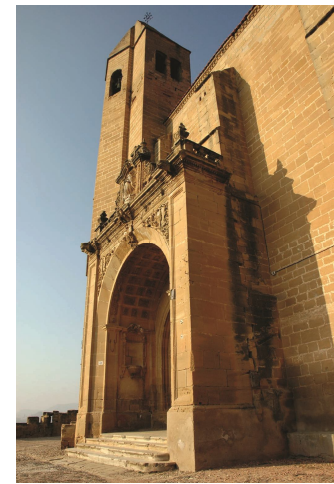
The parish church of Santa María la Mayor was built at the beginning of the 16th century inside the walled enclosure of the castle. Its style evolved from the Romanesque and the High Gothic, it is Late Gothic style. It has been listed as a National Monument since 1933. Its main treasure is the 13th century baptismal font, we think this font comes from an earlier temple which was placed at the same site. The baptismal font is ancient and Gothic. The main altarpiece dates back to the years 1550-1560, and it is renaissance-mannerist style. It is attributed to the Beaugrant workshop, with Juan de Rojas and Juan de Salazar polychromy. (The visit to the parish church is free, making an appointment with the parish priest on the phone 686 387 526 or you can arrange a guided tour with the local tourist guide 941334004 guiasonsierra@hotmail.com)



Major altarpiece



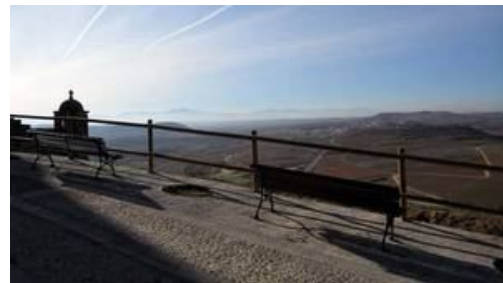
Baptismal font



Access door

Leave the walled enclosure by the northern access and get to the *Mirador del Ebro*. This viewpoint is a privileged point for landscape observation at any time of the year; but especially in autumn after the harvest, when the vineyards turn ochre and reddish. The vineyard cultural landscape of La Rioja is candidate to be listed as Cultural World Heritage Site by Unesco.

Look at the map number 9



From here we contemplate a beautiful panorama of the 13th century medieval bridge over the river Ebro, passage way and border between Navarre and Castile. The original fortified river bridge had two towers, later reduced to one. This tower was used to collect taxes on tolls for using the bridge, a way to control this point of entry to the village



At this point, one might decide to make their way down towards the Plaza Mayor or to, with just a little effort, climb the stairs on the right towards the watchtower.

We do recommend this slight extension to your stroll, as it affords yet another beautiful viewpoint of the area.



To finish our tour of the Atalaya, follow the path gently downhill until it joins the panoramic runway. There, you can refresh yourself by the fountain before continuing on to the Plaza Mayor.

On your decent towards the Plaza along the Zumalacarregrui Road, you will come to find three murals by the Riojan artist, José Uriszar.



These murals have been hand-painted in artisanal style with organic acrylic paint (following a careful priming of the wall), QR codes and night-time illumination – to ensure that this authentic, open-air gallery can be enjoyed night and day. (“A”B”y”C”)



You can imagine what it was like to stand on the other side of the river Ebro 600 hundred years ago. You can get an idea of what a traveler saw when they tried to get access from the Kingdom of Castile to the Kingdom of Navarre. Crossing over the bridge of the river Ebro, that was heavily guarded, and going up the Royal road to the Gate of the Primicia by which we have entered the fortification



You can download this text with de QR code (in the Main Square)



Notes:

* Up to 2017, four interventions have been carried out on the walls. The works have been financed by different Spanish Ministries, thanks to two programmes called *1%-1.5%* and *LEADER*. Twelve other interventions have been financed by the Village and different public administrations and entities. The total budget of the works carried out between the years 2004 and 2017 amounts to €3,232,654.83, being €2,945,357.60 fund subsidies

* The Village Council of San Vicente de la Sonsierra was awarded a silver medal of the *Spanish Association of Friends of the Castles* in 2014. An award for the best works and projects developed in the fortresses of Spain. The *Spanish Association of Friends of the Castles* valued "the continuous work over 11 years of successive interventions supported by the Village Council, which has managed to involve all administrations: European, State, Regional and Local. The Council has done exemplary work, not only in restoration, but also in previous archaeological research. There is a disproportion in size between this great fortress and its village, so that makes the effort more valuable"

* The murals of the Flagellants and of *Santa María de la Piscina* have been subsidized by ADRA with Leader funds.