

Today, the Torre de Sant Vicent is one of the best preserved in the Valencian Community, upholding the imposing appearance it has had since its construction. In 2001, it was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest by the Spanish Historical Heritage Law.

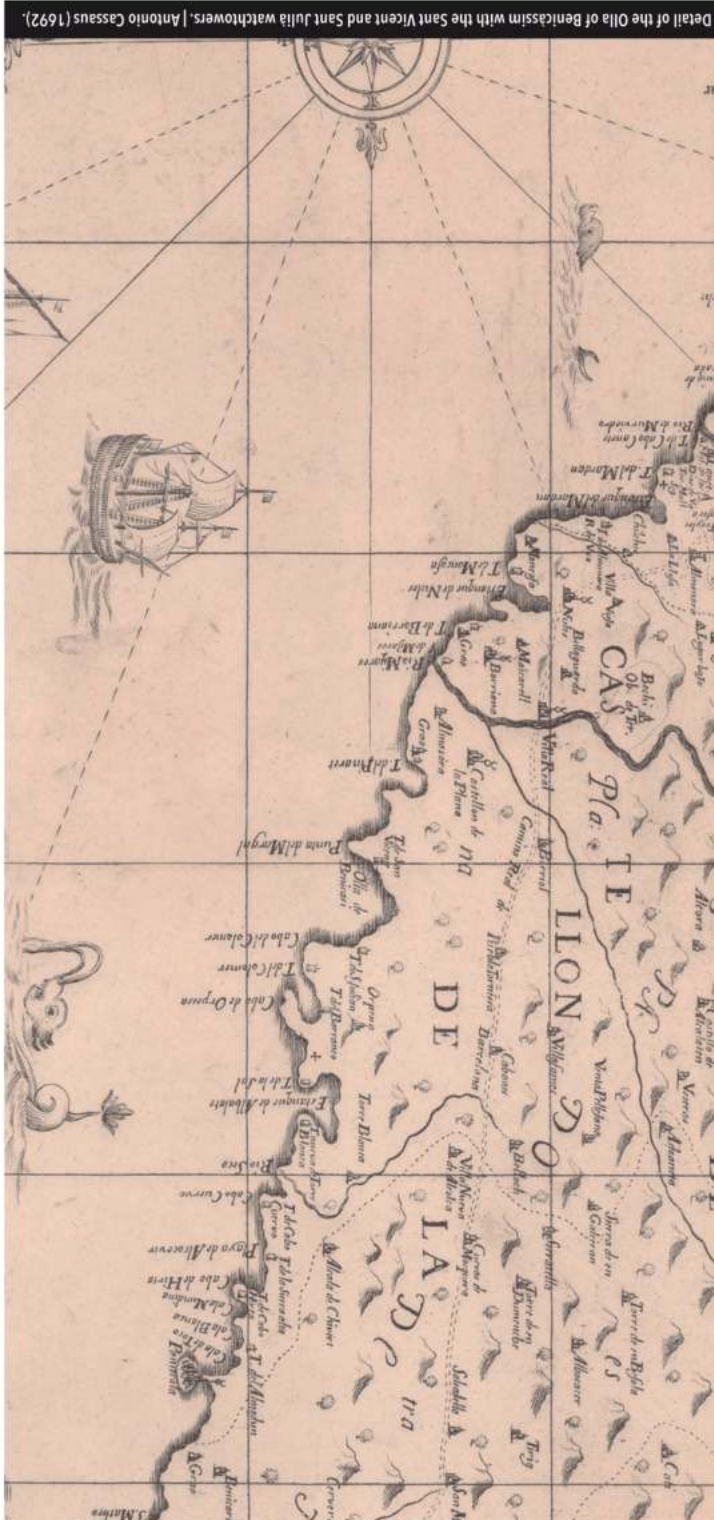


In 1850, with the disappearance of the Toreros de Costas corps, the Corps of Carabineros and, from 1939, by the Spanish Guardia Civil, or Civil Guard. Finally, in 2004, it was acquired by the Benicàssim Town Council and the barracks were demolished.

More than four centuries defending our coasts.

Evolution of the Torre de Sant Vicent

Ceramic altarpiece of Sant Vicent Ferrer located above the access door.



Detalle de la Olla de Benicàssim with the Sant Vicent and Sant Julià watchtowers. | Antonio Cassas (1692).



Virtual reconstruction of the original tower. | Benicàssim Town Council (2018).

With regard to the first section of the structure, it is a solid base to prevent the attackers from dismantling the masonry and entering the stronghold. As for the façades of the structure, they are made of stone masonry and mortar made of lime, sand and gravel. Limestone (grey in colour) was used for the corners, white rodono (local reddish sandstone) was mainly used for the walls. Some areas with larger stone chains can also be seen here.

The tower has a square floor plan and an almost cubic volume, with a width of approximately 11.5 metres. These dimensions, including the slope, correspond to 54 Valencian palms, the measure used in the 16th century. Its height stands at 13.5 metres.

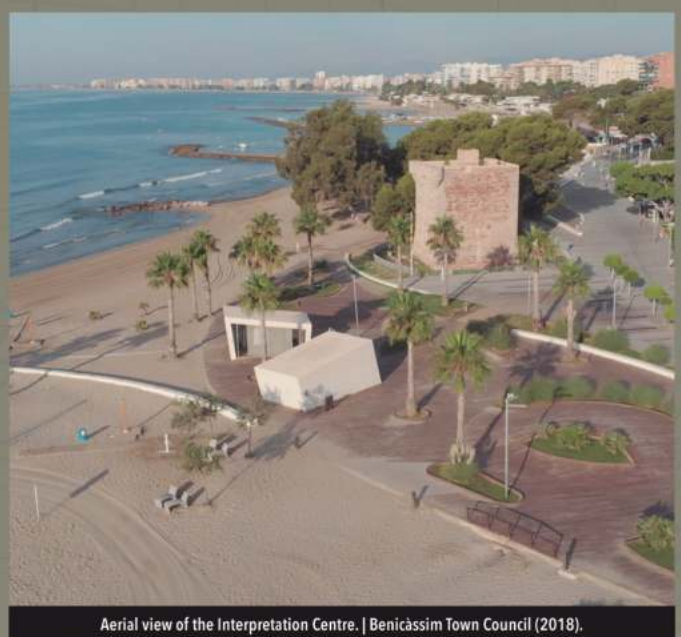
Main characteristics of the structure.

At an architectural level, the tower features construction elements typical of Renaissance fortifications: an exterior slope, embrasures, loopholes, turrets and a machicolation above an elevated door. However, from the time it was built to the present day, the watchtower has undergone numerous renovations that have led to a whole series of transformations, both in the layout of its floors and on the outside.

Interpretation Centre

A journey through history.

The watchtower was completely restored in 2017. With its refurbishment, this small fort has become the centrepiece of the so-called Torre de Sant Vicent Interpretation Centre, an interactive exhibition space dedicated to explaining the historical context in which the Sant Vicent and Sant Julià watchtowers were built, showing various aspects related to piracy and the Kingdom of Valencia coast defence system between the 16th and 19th centuries.



Aerial view of the Interpretation Centre. | Benicàssim Town Council (2018).

Outside, the Interpretation Centre displays general information, a model for visually impaired visitors with Braille text and the possibility of finding out further information using an augmented reality platform (app). At the same time, inside the tower, the visit also features audio guides, a video documentary, touch-sensitive tables, information panels, explanatory leaflets and a unique experience through virtual reality glasses. Finally, on the rooftop, we can see a replica of an 18th-century 6-pound cannon, as well as an incredible panoramic view of the Benicàssim coastline.



Detail of a nautical chart. Atlas Marítimo de España. | Vicente Tofiño (1787).

The other tower...

History of the Torre de Sant Julià

The Torre de Sant Julià was located at the boundary of the municipality of Benicàssim, next to today's Via Verda del Mar and about 2 km north-east of the Torre de Sant Vicent. Like its older sister, its purpose was to protect the Olla de Benicàssim and provide a visual link with the Torre de la Colomera (Oropesa del Mar). Its construction is already mentioned in the Cortes de Monzón in 1547 and is also documented in Antonelli's Speech in 1563. And although the exact date of its construction is unknown, it is possible that it was built between 1553 and 1558. However, in 1850, it was in ruins and disappeared completely in the middle of the 20th century.



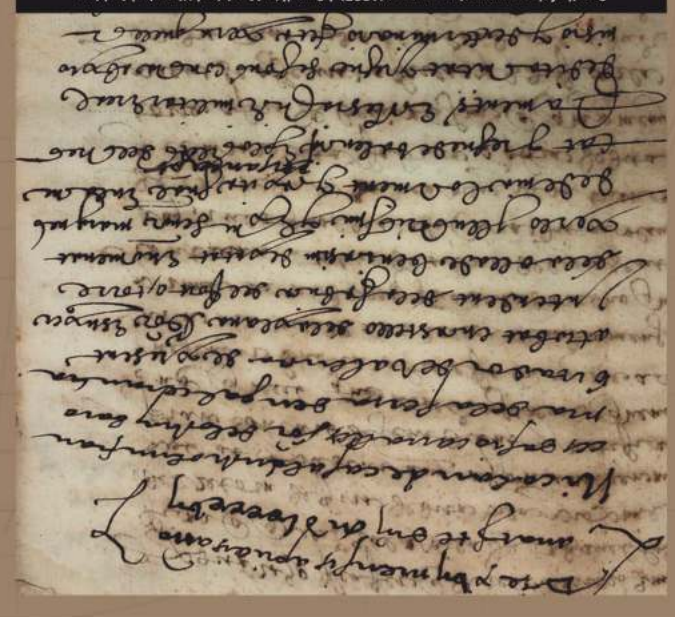
Virtual reconstruction of the two watchtowers. | Benicàssim Town Council (2018).

The Torre de Sant Vicent was part of the group of 18 watchtowers that the coast of Castellón came to have. It was built between 1597 and 1599 to strengthen the defence system of the so-called Olla de Benicàssim, which already had the Torre de Sant Julià to the north-east, as it was an easy landing area for corsairs and Berber pirates.

A defence system against piracy.

History of the Torre de Sant Vicent

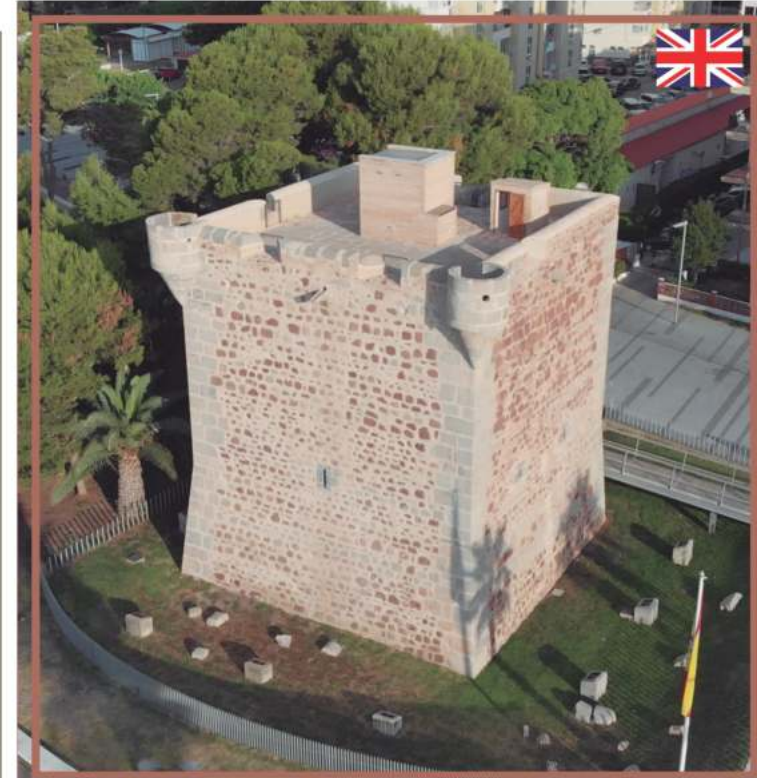
Detail of the construction contract (1597). | Castellón Municipal Historical Archive.



The construction of this small fort ended the depopulation of the town caused by the insecurity derived from the attacks and made its tower, whose name of *Sant Vicent* has been documented since at least 1607, came to be guarded by a garrison of five men (a warden, two tower soldiers and two scouts), and had firearms and an artillery piece.



Red Beard. | Charles Motte.



Interpretation Centre

Torre de Sant Vicent



www.turismobenicassim.com

Torre de Sant Vicent | Avinguda Ferrandis Salvador, 1 (Benicàssim).

TORRE DE SANT VICENT OPENING TIMES

HIGH SEASON (Easter and from May to September):
Open every day from Tuesday to Sunday.
Mornings from 10 am to 1 pm.
June, July and August: Afternoons from 6 pm to 9 pm.
Easter, May and September: Afternoons from 4 pm to 7 pm.

LOW SEASON (From October to April, except Easter):
Fridays and Saturdays: mornings from 10 am to 1 pm and afternoons from 4 pm to 6 pm.
Sundays and public holidays: mornings from 10 am to 2 pm (afternoons closed).

(Last entry 30 minutes before closing).
CLOSED: 1, 6 and 17 January, 22 September and 25 December.

VIRTUAL REALITY GUIDED TOUR OPENING TIMES

HIGH SEASON (Easter and from May to September):
Tours on Saturdays and Sundays.

LOW SEASON (From October to April, except Easter):
Tours on Sunday mornings.

BENICÀSSIM TOWN COUNCIL | Tourism Department.

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Constructive elements



(C) Four openings or embrasures to direct shots from the artillery pieces when defending the watchtower.

(A) Gargoyles or spillways, the upper part of which was built on a slope to prevent attackers from anchoring their ropes and gaining access to the tower.

(B) Machicolation loopholes or parapet for the vertical defence of the door of the tower. It has a sliding floor with boards to open or close it.



(D) Covered warehouse that was built in the 18th century to store weapons and cannon rigging.

(E) Two circular turrets with loopholes facing the sea. They were covered in the 18th century.

(F) 1.80 metre-thick walls to resist attacks and artillery blows.

(G) Chimney for cooking, topped with a large lowered stone arch and located next to the stairwell.



(g) / (i)

(H) Walls built at the beginning of the 17th century to support the weight of the cannon installed on the roof.



(h) / (j)

(I) Spiral staircase to access the roof, located at one end to take away as little width from the walls as possible.

(J) Barrel vault. On it, traces of the reeds that were used for its construction can still be seen.

(K) Five loopholes for firearms through which soldiers defended the tower from the inside

(L) Door more than two metres high that allowed access to the inside of the tower by means of a ladder.

(M) The old Civil Guard barracks were erected in this square, originally built by the Corps of Carabineros.

(N) Stables covered with a roof in the 17th century. The first barracks for the Carabineros were built over them.



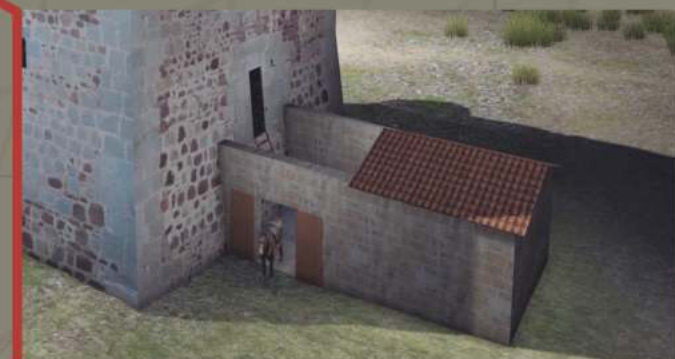
(m)

(n)

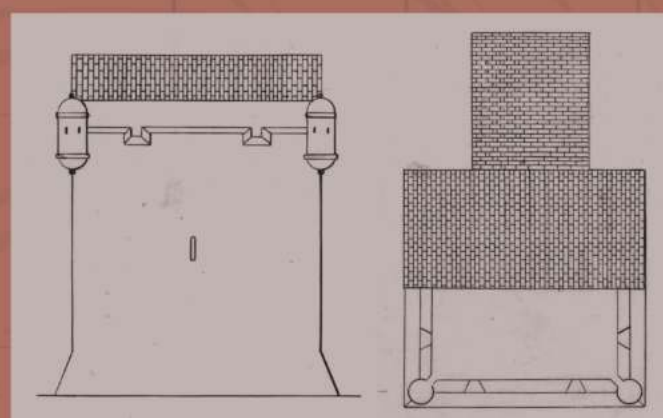
(O) Solid lower section, filled with cement and stone to prevent attackers from wearing down its walls. In addition, it is a sloped structure. This means that its walls are ramped up to prevent easy climbing.

(o)

DO YOU WANT TO DISCOVER WHAT THE TOWER WAS LIKE IN THE 17TH CENTURY? Download the "Torre de Sant Vicent" app and focus on the image to see it in augmented reality.



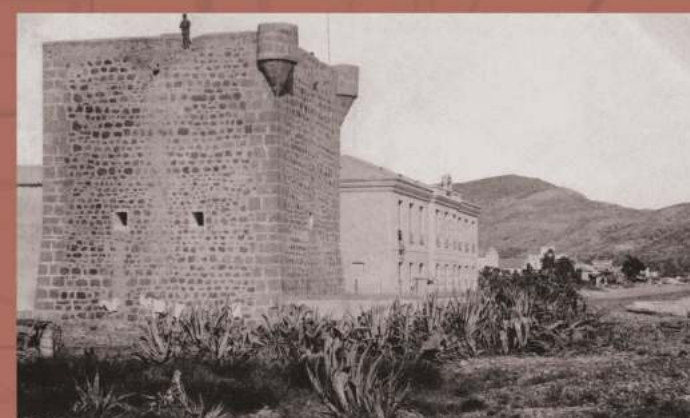
The tower in images



In this drawing from 1870, the covered turrets and the powder magazine on the roof stand out, as well as the small barracks building that occupies the space of the old stables.



Photograph from the end of the 19th. In the picture, we can still see the powder magazine on the roof and the small barracks. However, the roof of the turrets had already been removed.



Postcard from 1917. The new barracks built by the Corps of Carabineros, as well as the removal of the powder magazine and the conversion of the loopholes into windows is a striking development.



In 1940, the barracks passed into the hands of the Civil Guard, which expanded its premises. At the beginning of 2004, the Town Council acquired the tower and the barracks were demolished.