



Villa Elisa

*From its Arab origins to the bustling atmosphere of its modernist villas. Be amazed by the history of Benicàssim.*

# Benicàssim



Tourist Info Benicàssim  
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Edition 1/2025



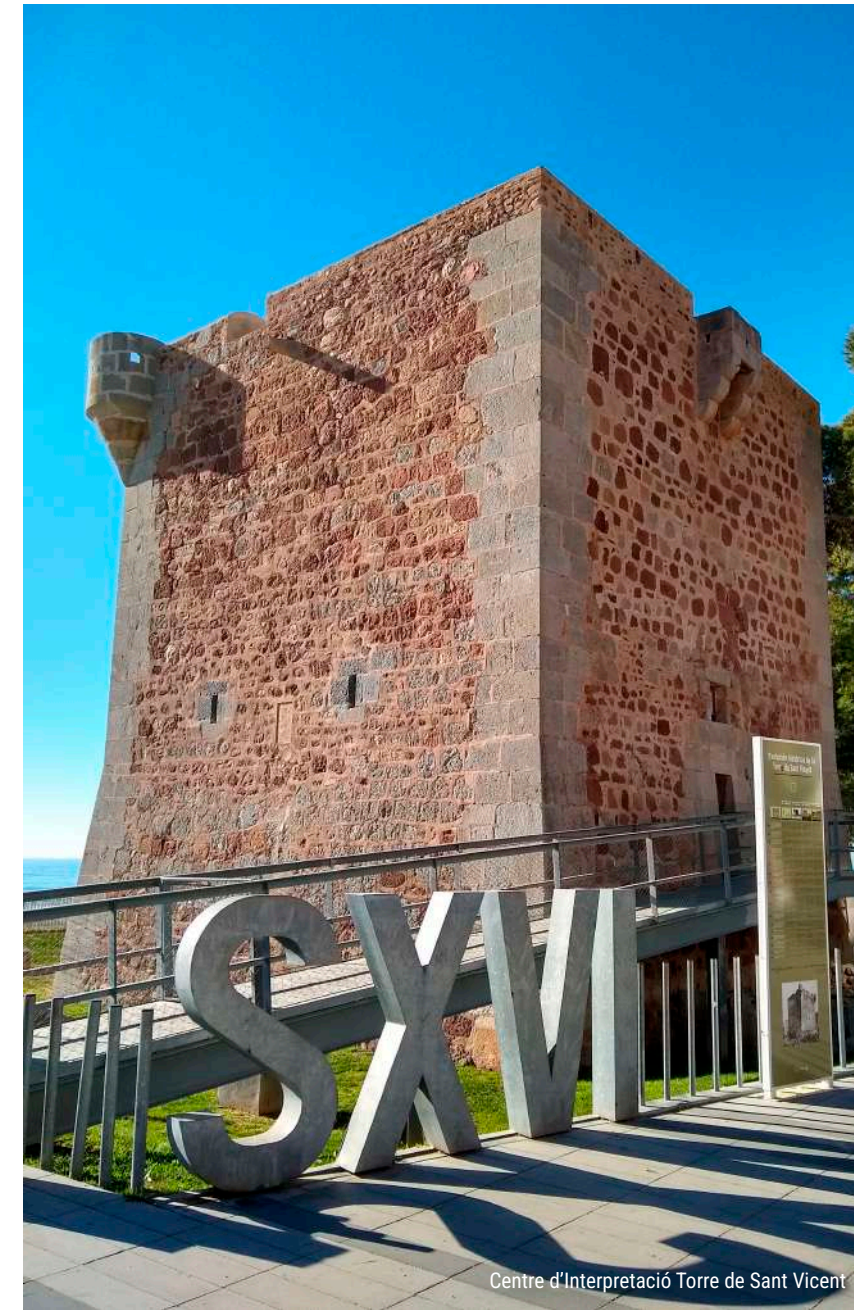
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Benicàssim

# History and Culture

A journey back in time in a town with roots

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Centre d'Interpretació Torre de Sant Vicent

*Discover our city's most iconic places. The best way to travel back in time and delve into its fascinating past.*

# BENICÀSSIM HISTORICAL ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Benicàssim boasts a wealth of historical and artistic heritage. It has the architectural grouping of the Town Hall buildings, St. Thomas' Church, the Modernist houses in its old town, the El Señor Fountain, the early twentieth-century villas and the Torre de Sant Vicent.

The blend of the old and the new, of tradition and modernity, all bathed in the rays of the Mediterranean sun, is a delight for the senses.

## TORRE DE SANT VICENT

Built in the 16th century and located to the far south of the Bernat Artola seafront promenade, it was once one of eighteen such look-out posts that guarded the coast of the entire Castellon province.

In its past, this region has lived through troubled times with incessant pirate raids. In particular, Olla de Benicàssim cove was one of the preferred anchoring spots of pirates

and Berbers, which is why Torre de Sant Vicent was built here, on the order of the courts of Monzón.

In 1850, the tower was guarded by the Carabinieri corps and, from 1939, by the Spanish civil guard. Finally, in 2004, it was acquired by the Benicàssim Town Council and the barracks were demolished. Today, the Torre de Sant Vicent is one of the best preserved in the Valencian Community and has been declared an asset of Cultural Interest by the Spanish Historical Heritage Law in 2001.

The Torre de Sant Vicent Interpretation Centre currently has an interactive exhibition space dedicated to explaining the historical context in which the Sant Vincent and Sant Julià watchtowers were built, showing various aspects related to piracy and the Kingdom of Valencia coastal defense system between the 16th and 19th centuries.



Torre de Sant Vicent

## SANTO TOMÁS DE VILLANUEVA CHURCH

The parish church was built under the auspices of the valencian erudited Don Francisco Pérez Bayer. The neoclassical style of the period embodied the principles of architectural rationalism, which can be seen in the straight lines, balance, and lack of baroque ornamentation typical of other Valencian churches. Its columns and capitals are typical of the Enlightenment period, as is its architectural layout. Construction began in 1769 and ended towards the end of 1776. It was dedicated to Santo Tomás of Villanueva in November 1781.

Inside, besides its purely formal ornamentation, we find paintings by Camarón, a painter born in Segorbe. Its layout is rectangular with just one nave in the form of a Latin cross, but without any side chapels. The nave is divided into three sections, with transept, presbytery and alter end. At the foot of the church in the first section is the high choir, which shares access with the bell tower. Outside stands out its rectangular facade.

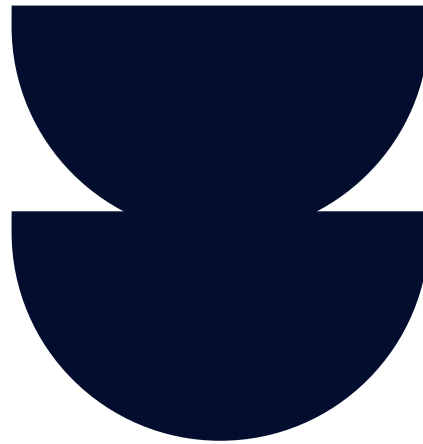


Santo Tomás de Villanueva's Church

## CARMELITE WINE CELLAR MUSEUM

A distillery and wine cellar where the typical Carmelite Muscatel liqueur and wine are still made today using traditional methods, as well as a large variety of other liqueurs and table wines. The visit begins in the "Bottle Museum", where all the different bottles that have been used over the ages are on display.

This is followed by a collection of the old utensils and machinery used by the Carmelite monks to make the liqueur.



Carmelitano's Wineries and Distilleries

# CARMELITE MONASTERY

## OLD MONASTERY

The old Desert de les Palmes monastery is located on a flat bit of land between two ravines, some 500 metres from where the current monastery stands today. It was built between 1697 and 1733. In 1783 a series of torrential rains and landslides severely compromised the structure of the building. The Discalced Carmelite monks were forced to abandon it in search of a more secure site.

Today, while visiting its ruins, the visitor can enjoy one of the most charming and evocative sites in the entire Desert de les Palmes natural park. Against the backdrop of the Mediterranean sea, these reminders of times gone by reveal a serene beauty that captivates those who enter it.

## NEW MONASTERY

After the old rooms were abandoned, work began on the new monastery between 1784 and 1791, where it stands today.

The sober and elegant structure of the monastery was determined by the Order of the Carmelite Monks and St. Teresa of Jesus; the different rooms are arranged around the church, found at the physical centre and heart of the architectural ensemble. Positioned around the temple are the rooms and common areas,



Old Carmelitano's Monastery

including both the Religious Community and the Spirituality Centre. Immersed in a landscape full of orange groves and gardens, backed by the Monte Bartolo and dominating the valley that descends down to Benicàssim, the Desert becomes a privileged viewpoint surrounded by peace and beauty.

Among the religious figures who lived there is Brother Antonio de Jesús María, a Carmelite monk who, among other things, is remembered for his study of aromatic herbs, which led to his distilling and selling the well-known Carmelite Liqueur.

## MUSEUM OF SACRED ART

The archive, the library and the Museum of Sacred Art are three of the most outstanding cultural assets of the Desert de les Palmes Natural Park. It was built in 1971 and we can admire all kinds of pieces of pottery, paintings, sculptures and gold and silver works, selected from different parts of Spain, France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands among others.

A unique testimony of art that includes works such as the ceramic altarpiece from the 18th century with the prayer of the Carmelite, possibly one of the largest from the Royal Factory of the Count of Aranda in L'Alcora.

# VESTIGES OF THE PAST

## MONTORNÉS CASTLE

Former Muslim defensive system built in the 11th century. This fort was conquered by The Cid in 1094, but later recovered by the Muslims to be definitively incorporated to Christianity by Jaime I in 1233.

At the moment it is possible to contemplate its ruins integrated in the Desert de les Palmes natural park.



Montornés Castle



Villa Elisa, Municipal Palace

## THE ROUTE OF THE VILLAS

The famous Route of the Villas is a tour through the town's modernist past. A quiet area with an elegant promenade that takes us back to the origins of Benicàssim, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

In the times of the Belle Époque, a select group of wealthy families from Castellón and Valencia chose Benicàssim as their summer residence, creating what is nowadays known as the "Valencian Biarritz", a group of villas of great architectural richness that will take you back in time.