

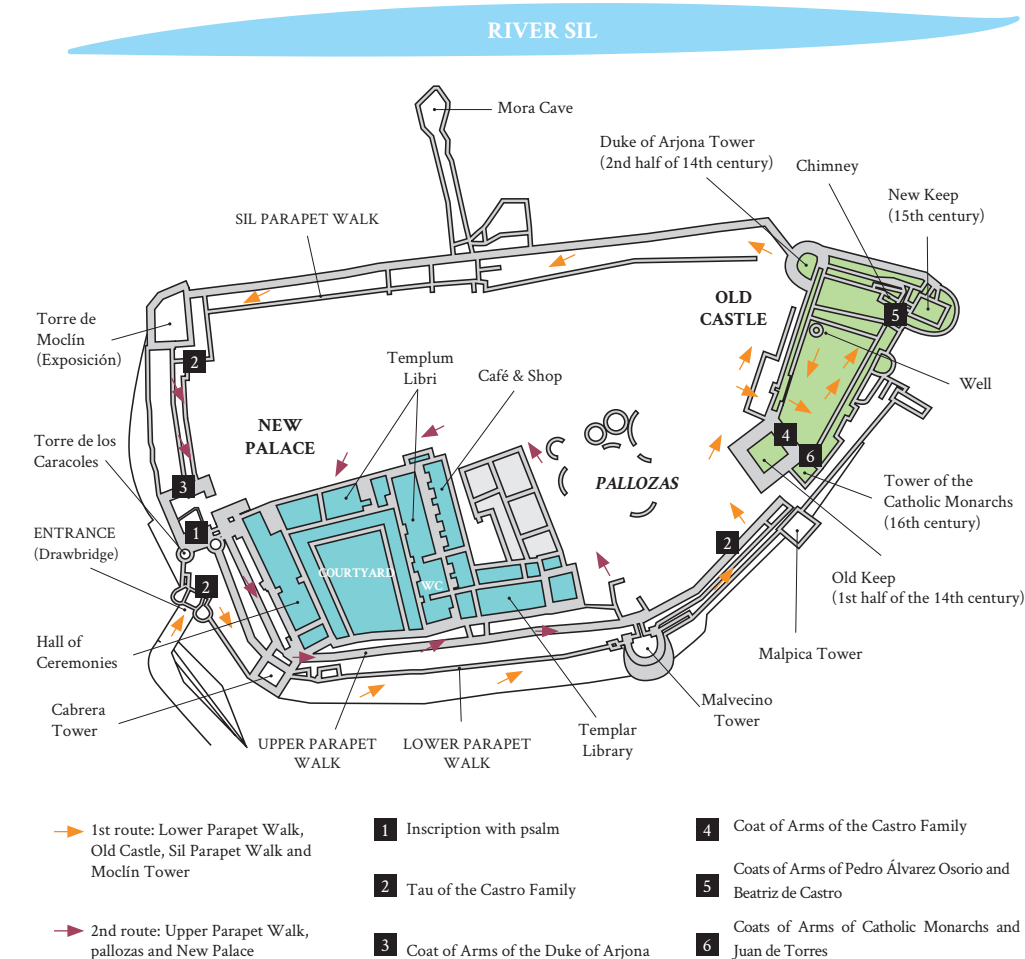
# VISITING THE CASTLE

We have before us **one of the most imposing and complex castles** of medieval military art in Spain. In short, we distinguish the walled zone with three parapet walks and five towers, the Old Castle with four towers, the New Palace and a large open-air space occupied initially by buildings in the form of circular pallozas, traditional regional dwellings.

A semi-circular arch, flanked by turrets, provides the entrance to the Castle. **The Upper, Lower and Sil parapet walks** provide us with a path round the walled zone and access to its towers. Arrow-holes, embrasures and machicolations are a defensive constant.

The **Old Castle** or *Castillo Viejo* is built from the 14th to the 16th centuries at the hands of different lords who leave their mark with their coats of arms. During the 15th century the 1st Count of Lemos erects the **New Palace** (*Palacio Nuevo*), where the interior courtyard and a number of different rooms on different levels are visible.

*Ronda Alta and Ronda Baja (upper and lower parapet walks) on the east flank of the fortress*



# TEMPLUM LIBRI

The permanent **Templum Libri** exhibition takes up two main rooms in the New Palace of the Castle of the Knights Templar. Divided according to subject matter, the first room houses codices and manuscripts with religious content. The second is home to specimens dedicated to the splendour of the sciences and humanities.

The facsimiles and original pieces have been generously provided by the bibliophile from El Bierzo, **Antonio Ovalle García**, who gives us the opportunity to enjoy, for the first time, a unique selection of over a hundred masterpieces that have remained hidden for centuries.

Amongst others, we highlight the “Libro de Kells” (11th century), the collection of “Beatos” and different works illustrated by great 20th century artists such as Chillida, Dalí and Picasso. Without doubt, a unique walk through the **most beautiful pages of knowledge**.



# FOR THE SAKE OF KNOWLEDGE

Templum Libre exhibits a tenth of the collection of Antonio Ovalle, while the rest, over a thousand pieces, are held in the Templar Library and Centre for Historical Studies in the Castle. Both rooms are located in the **old Sala de los Azulejos of the New Palace**.

The **Templar Library** is open to visitors through a completely restored space dedicated to the world of books. The space between these walls keeps alive pleasure for reading, the art of printing and illustrations.

The **Centre of Historical Studies** of the Castle is a space conditioned for the study and research of books and documents, which opens the doors for us to centuries of knowledge.

> Centre of Historical Studies







## A SYMBOLIC PLACE

Emblem of the city, the *Castillo de los Templarios* (Castle of the Knights Templar) offers us centuries of history and legends. This guardian of the Camino de Santiago, abode of knights templar and lords and an example of medieval architecture in the northeast peninsular, has been declared a **National Monument** (1924) and an **Asset of Cultural Interest** or *BIC* (*Bien de Interés Cultural*).

Successive works have been planned over its **8,000 m<sup>2</sup> of surface area**, making it one of the most complex and mystical medieval constructions, and it has been the source of inspiration for writers such as Enrique Gil y Carrasco (author of “*The Lord of Bemibre*”, a 19th century romantic novel).

Prehistoric remains have been found that date from the **first Iron Age**. The strategic location of this settlement, on a promontory over the banks of the River Sil, was used for centuries by different settlers.



## ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

The knights templar arrive at the Castle in 1178 to protect the Camino de Santiago and its route across the iron bridge (**Pons Ferrata**). They remain for over a century, extending their power to the Castle of Cornatel. **Guido de Garda**, Knight Commander, is one of the first and most important tenants of the Castle.

As part of their task they reinforce the exterior wall of the Castle and build different sections for their needs: a templar convent, *pallozas* (traditional round dwellings in northwest Spain), wineries, breadstores and vegetable gardens, of which there are scarcely any remains.

With the dissolution of the Order in 1312, they abandon the Castle, **leaving a number of legends behind them**: the existence of a passageway to the Castle of Cornatel and the discovery of a sculpture of the Virgin in the inside of a holm-oak trunk (*Virgin de la Encina*).

*New Palace and archaeological remains of the Castle* <



## COUNT OF LEMOS

During the 15th century, **Pedro Álvarez Osorio**, first *Conde* (Count) of Lemos, takes possession of the Castle and carries out its most significant works: the construction of the main entrance and the five towers of the wall; the creation of the parapet walks and an underground mine for accessing the river and the cave, Cueva la Mora; the *Torre del Homenaje* (the keep) in the Old Castle and the New Palace.

The history of this unique character is full of intrigue. His first wife, **Beatriz de Castro**, gave birth to one son. His wife and son die, and the Count marries María de Bazán, with whom he has four daughters, the eldest betrothed to the son of one of his biggest enemies, the Count of Benavente. Following a long and complex feud over succession, Rodrigo, the illegitimate grandson of the Count of Lemos, will be the successor and lord of the Castle until agreeing the sale of the villa to the Catholic Monarchs at the beginning of the 16th century. The counts of Lemos used the **Tau Cross** as a emblem for their house of nobility, sometimes confused with the red cross pattée of the Order of the Knights Templar.

## TO ENJOY

After centuries of abandonment, the Castle begins its recovery. In 1924 it is declared a National Monument and 1994 sees the development of the **Management Plan** for studying and restoring the fortress.

Ponferrada Council and the funding of a restoration project from the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area (EEA Grants) through contributions from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, has made it possible to restore the fortress and progressively create spaces for culture and leisure, amongst which we highlight:

Exhibitions in the Moclin Tower and the New Palace (Templum Libri), event and concert hall, Templar Library and Centre for Historical Studies, the holding of professional congresses, the **Via Crucis of Holy Week** (declared National Tourist Interest), and **Templar Night**.

*Order of Knights Templar in the New Palace Courtyard* <



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Histórico y Turismo

Information

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## CASTLE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

/ **LOCATION:** Avda. del Castillo, s/n  
24401 Ponferrada (León)  
/ **ERA:** 12th century extensions 14th - 16th centuries  
/ **STYLE:** Military architecture  
/ **ASSET OF CULTURAL INTEREST (BIC)**  
/ **NATIONAL MONUMENT SINCE 1924**  
/ **PERMANENT EXPO.:** Templum Libri  
/ **FURTHER INFORMATION:** 987 402 244