



# Origins

The origins of the Icart Castle-Palace of Torredembarra date back to the mid-16th century, when baron Lluís of Icart and of Agustí saw fit to build a new residence in line with the power and social standing that the barony had reached.

*The Castle was designed as a residence/fortress to dominate the populace*

The Castle, the only newly constructed Renaissance-style civil building still remaining in Catalonia, was designed as a residence/fortress to dominate the populace, which is why it was built at the highest part of the town, flanked by four bastions in the corners (of which two are still standing).

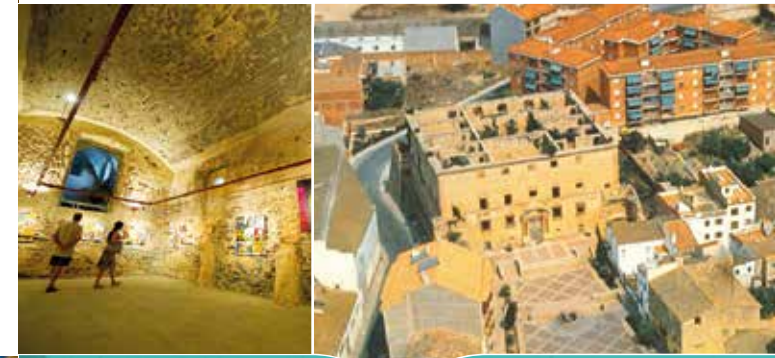
*It's the only newly constructed Renaissance-style civil building still remaining in Catalonia*

The work began in around 1565 and was completed—at least the most important parts— in around 1581. The designer of the work is unknown, but it is known that some of the architects from the so-called “School of the Region of Tarragona” (Escola del Camp de Tarragona) were involved, including Pere Blai who took part in the construction of the vaults located between the main door and the castle’s courtyard.

Declared a Cultural Heritage of National Interest, it enjoys the maximum legal protection conferred to the most relevant assets of Catalan cultural heritage.



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# The Icart Castle of Torredembarra

English



## Description

### Façade<sup>1</sup>

The façade consists of two parts: **the first built using chipped stone and the second with mortar and stone formwork walls.** Large ashlar made of cut stone can be seen in the corners.

Five windows on the first floor are decorated with circular and triangular pediments.

**The entrance door<sup>2</sup>** is dated later than the building and has **baroque-style features.** It is framed by **two pairs of columns with floral motifs,** a frieze and a circular pediment, which stand on very high podiums.

### Interior

On entering the castle, a large, **considerably high hall<sup>3</sup> is accessed.** The byzantine-style rowlock vaults are especially interested, attributed to Pere Blai.

In the centre of the building is the square courtyard, porticoed at three of its corners **and with the old well remaining.**

**At the back is the chapel<sup>4</sup> devoted to Saint John Baptist,** with just one entrance door crowned by the coat of arms of the Icart lineage. The chapel has a rectangular layout and the annular vault that covers it is exquisitely decorated with coffer.

On a lower level is the service area, which was accessed through a much simpler door located in the street known as Camí de l'Era and **that nowadays leads to the Lluís of Icart<sup>5</sup> Exhibition Hall** (inaugurated in 2011). This space is split into two wings, where different rooms such as the storerooms and kitchen are located. The latter houses the remains of the fireplace hood and a stairway that led down to a tank. This led to the belief that a network of underground tunnels began at the castle, with an exit at La Roca Foradada

in the cliffs of El Roquer. **The prison was also in this area, in the basement the rear tower,** and several crosses can still be seen inside, engraved<sup>6</sup> into the ashlar framing the door.

**Only four steps<sup>7</sup> remain of the main stairway that led up from the courtyard to the mezzanine,** and which have a unique geometric decoration. On the first floor, on each side of the landing, are doors with frames decorated with different motifs and the coat of arms on the lintel. The rooms on this floor are yet to be refurbished.

*On 17th September 1998, refurbishment work began on the building so that it could be used as the headquarters of Torredembarra Local Council.*

Given that the building was not the main residence of the aristocrats, it began to deteriorate<sup>8</sup> and fell into the hands of different owners who used it as a farmyard or an earthenware and pottery workshop<sup>9</sup>, among others.

**On 17th September 1998, refurbishment<sup>10</sup> work began on the building so that it could be used as the headquarters of Torredembarra Local Council.** It was inaugurated on 25th March 2000. At present, the ground floor houses the public attention services and the municipal archive. **On the second floor are the Mayor's office, the debate chamber, the committee chamber and the offices of a large part of the general administrative services.** On the third floor are the secretary's office, the technical services and the political party offices.

## Names

### ➤ The Icart Family

**They controlled the barony of Torredembarra from 1391, when Pere of Icart bought it from the Olzinelles family.**

They played an active role in the wars of Italy, especially in Naples, and were rewarded with different lordships and other privileges. **They were particularly known for being senior royal servants** and, for a large part of the 16th century, were given the honour to hold the post of general mayor of Catalonia.

With the death of the last of the Icart in 1658, the lordship of Torredembarra began to lose importance, reaching its end with the grandson, Andreu of Reart and of Icart, also great-grandson of a member of the Queralt family. When Andreu of Reart and of Icart inherited the Queralt family home in 1683, **he changed his name to Andreu of Queralt and was named Count of Santa Coloma.** With this, **the title of baron of Torredembarra and everything concerning the lordship became subject to a much more important title,** that of Count of Santa Coloma de Queralt.

### ➤ Escuela del Campo

Significant examples of architecture were relatively scarce during the Renaissance period. However, the **archbishop and humanist Antoni Agustí mentored the creation of the so-called "School of the Region of Tarragona"** (Escola del Camp de Tarragona). Jaume Amigó and Pere Blai were its main representatives. Blai was also **responsible for building the main façade of the palace of the Generalitat of Catalonia in Barcelona.**

### ➤ Lluís of Icart and of Agustí (1530-1580) —

**The lord behind the construction of the castle.** Son of Cristòfol of Icart and Isabel of Agustí. At the age of 16 he married Dionisia of Carcassonne and of Queralt, lady of Almenar.

He held the titles of **baron of Torredembarra, lord of Vespella, of Almenar, of Cunit castle and of Farell country house of the district of Segur, and lord of the castle of Cubelles and lord of Barberà and Geltrú.** Carlos V named him general mayor of Catalonia, a post that he held from 1552 and that he exercised with diligence.

He is considered one of the most noteworthy members of the saga and established the family's role on the social and political scene. **He died in Tarragona and was buried at the chapel of Saint George in Torredembarra church,** also known as the "chapel of the lords".

Map of Torredembarra...drawn up in the 17th century by the Knight of Beaulieu, a military engineer under the orders of Louis XIV of France. The castle took up the corner of the wall and was the main bastion.



Torredembarra Castle. Print of the skyline of Torredembarra, also drawn by knight Beaulieu. The castle was in a preeminent place, standing over all the other buildings, including the church.

