

Day Trip, 21st June to Island of Tabarca, Alicante



History and Buildings of Tabarca When you step onto Tabarca Island it is very much like stepping back in time. There are buildings remaining from the 18th century and these tell the story of Tabarca Island.

The Pirates The island was a refuge for Barbary pirates up to the end of the 18th Century. Pirates used to hide away on the Island whilst using it as a base to plunder passing vessels which caused a problem for the then Spanish King - King Carlos III.

Spain had possession of an Island off the coast of Tunisia called Tabarqah (Tabarka). In 1741, the King of Tunisia invaded this Spanish Island and took the Genoese inhabitants as prisoners. King Carlos III was incensed at this and rescued these prisoners and they were returned to the port of Alicante. He then decided that he would put these Genoese prisoners on the Island of Tabarca. The result was that the pirates no longer had a hideout on Isla de Tabarca and were run off the island by these 300 or so prisoners.

The military engineer Fernando Méndez Ras was responsible for planning the new town and he planned a fortified town with walls, bulwarks, warehouses and houses. These buildings still remain today.

At the end of the 19th Century, the island had a population of around 1000 people mainly devoted to fishing. Now, the permanent population is around 50 during the winter months and even greater over the Summer months.

Buildings to Visit Walking around the Island takes about an hour and a half, so it is really quite small. The West of the Island is the part that is inhabited. Here there are small streets, the church, the walls and their gateways, the beach and the port.

The Nueva Tabarca Museum located in the Almadrba warehouse building.

Walls The defensive walls were built in stone on order from King Carlos III in 1769. The walls surrounding the town have been officially declared a Historical and Artistic Site and an Asset of Cultural Interest.

Gateways or Entrances The walls had entrances / gateways built into them and there were three points of entry:-

1. **Puerta de Alicante or San Miguel** Built from the north, has rough stone vaults and gives access to the old pier.
2. **Puerta de Levante o San Rafael** The first gate you will come across if coming from the sea-port. There is a plaque commemorating the twinning of the islands of San Pietro and New Tabarca MCMLXXV XXIX VI.
3. **Gate of Trance or San Gabriel** Built to the west and has a small dome, shield with real weapons and the inscription Carolus III HISPANIARUM REX, fecit, EDIFICAVIT.



Iglesia de San Pedro and San Pablo - The church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul The church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul has a rectangular nave, is divided into four sections and has side chapels. It has two doors, fortified appearance and is located right on the edge of the island overlooking the sea.

Governor's House Built in the center of the town and was originally designed to house the town hall. It has a main body with two adjoining wings which make an open courtyard.



Torre de San José - San Jose Tower Designed by Balthasar Ricoud and built in 1789 it stands alone on the northeastern side of the Island in an area known as Campo. Originally it was a lookout tower. It stands at 27.5 metres high and is in the form of a 'truncated pyramid' with a square base and three floors. It was used as the state prison in the 19th Century.



Lighthouse Located in the same area (unpopulated) as the San Jose Tower this lighthouse was designed by John Laurenti (1854).