

# Ruines de Poilvache

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### Contact

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The history of the castle of Poilvache, situated in Yvoir, 5km to the north of Dinant, goes back at least to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In turn, it was in the hands of the Counts of Namur, Counts of Luxembourg, Philip the Good, sovereigns of the Netherlands and Joseph II who sold it to a private individual. Then owners succeeded each other until the Belgian State bought it in 1968.

This fortress with a surface area of 2.5 hectares – the largest castle in the whole region – experienced a brilliant history in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century and as the administrative centre of a provosty covering 58 fiefs. It was even the office of a “mint”: 22 coin makers and 88 workers worked there in 1298.

The site chosen to build the castle was extremely wise: any assault was unthinkable by the west coast due to the cliff. To the north and south, the grounds have a such a steep slope that attacks would have been doomed to fail. The east side, less invulnerable, has therefore been protected by a moat hollowed out in the rock.

The defences of the castle of Poilvache did not suffer as it was abandoned from 1430, after its destruction by an army of Dinant and Huy inhabitants supported by the troops of the Prince Bishop of Liège. As was often the case, the people in the neighbourhood then started to use stones from the ruins to build their houses ...

The name “Poilvache” (in English “cattle skin”) would come from a ruse used by the inhabitants of Dinant who laid siege to the castle occupied by the people of Luxembourg: they sacrificed some cattle, covered themselves with the animals’ skin and succeeded in getting into the place!

Whatever may be, the ruins include three very distinct parts: the castle, the backyard and the “town” of Poilvache.

Protected by an original defensive moat and a drawbridge, the castle comprises a large room in the south east inner corner, several rooms and caves backed with curtain walls as well as a courtyard pierced by a well 54.5 metres deep. The castle’s curtain walls were flanked by at least five towers in a second stage of construction.

IN 1226, the castle of POILVACHE, THEN IN EXCELLENT state, was PROBABLY given as a MARRIAGE gift to WALERAN DE MONTJOIE, SON of ERMESINDE of NAMUR, AND HIS wife ISABELLE DE BAR, DAUGHTER of the COUNT of LUXEMBOURG.

45 min visit  
03.04 > 31.10: weekends  
01.07>31.08: every day 10:30>18:00  
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see [www.tourismegps.be](http://www.tourismegps.be)  
Not accessible for people  
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Parking  
Secure site