

[www.turjaen.org](#)
oficinaturismo@aytojaen.es
Tel. 953 190 455
Calle Carrera de Jesús, 2
Oficina de Turismo

[www.turjaen.org](#)
oficinaturismo@aytojaen.es
Tel. 953 190 455
Calle Carrera de Jesús, 2
Oficina de Turismo

[www.turjaen.es](#)
Tel. 953 219 275
Calle Bernardo López, s/n
Patrimonio Histórico
Turismo, Fiestas y Patrimonio Histórico

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Artisplendore

The surprising and impressive cathedral of Jaén dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, reflects all the splendour that the diocese of Jaén experienced from the XVI to the XVIII century. Its first and main architect was Andrés de Vandelvira.

During the two and a half centuries that its construction lasted, his successors continued the original project, which has determined that it is the most harmonious cathedral of the Andalusian Renaissance and possibly of the Spanish Renaissance.

Jaén Cathedral was a point of reference for the construction of cathedrals in the New World, including those of Cuzco in Peru, Puebla de los Ángeles in Mexico.

Origin

The cathedral stands on the site of the city's main mosque. After the Christian conquest of the city by Ferdinand III in 1246, the bishop of Córdoba, D. Gutierre, consecrated the mosque to Christian worship under the patronage of the Assumption of the Virgin. During the XIV and XV centuries, two new Gothic cathedrals were built.

But it was the cardinal bishop Esteban Gabriel Merino, who at the beginning of the XVI century, decided to build the Renaissance cathedral as a reliquary of the Holy Face, whose presence in Jaén dates back to the XIV century.

Merino obtained from Pope Clement VII the bull "Salvatoris Domini" with which indulgences were granted to those who contributed alms for the construction of the cathedral or visited it, and created a brotherhood of 20,000 men and 20,000 women, who annually contributed one silver real. All this allowed the construction of the cathedral to begin under the direction of the architect Andrés de Vandelvira,



who was succeeded by his disciple Alonso Barba. He is responsible for the respect and continuity of Vandelvira's idea.

When the construction of the cathedral began at the apse, next to the wall and Alcotán's Tower, the work slowed down and Vandelvira only saw the completion



Jaén Cathedral Ground Plan

of the south-east block made up of the sacristy, chapter house, ante-sacristy, pantheon of canons and the side chapels on that side.

In the first half of the XVII century, the architect from Jaén, Juan de Aranda Salazar, was in charge of building from the apse to the transept: the chapels of the apse and the nave of the gospel; the presbytery and the nave of the transept, the dome and the north facade. The dome, an innovative design by Juan de Aranda, is raised on pendentives decorated with Saint Michael, Saint James, Saint Euphrasius and Saint Catherine.

Sagrario Church

After the earthquake of 1755, the construction of a new Sagrario church was proposed to reinforce the northeast side of the cathedral. This is a project by Ventura Rodríguez from 1764, composed of the upper part of the church covered with a beautiful elliptical vault decorated with hexagonal coffers and the crypt with a lowered vault and solid pillars in the lower part.

The ground plan of the **cathedral of Jaén** responds to a type of solemn hall plan of elegant proportions. The three naves that make up the church are divided by fairly separate Corinthian cruciform pillars, which, together with the use of slender semicircular arches with a wide span and the systematic use of lowered vaults, suggest a majestic calm resulting from the succession of sections, like suspended canopies.

The main façade

Built under the direction of Eufrasio López de Rojas, from 1667 onwards, it stands out for its theatricality and the staging of a whole iconographic display of the Church: Fathers of the Church, Evangelists, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the Assumption of the Virgin and local devotions: Saint Ferdinand, Saint Catherine and, above all, the Holy Face. Most of the sculptures were made by Pedro Roldán.

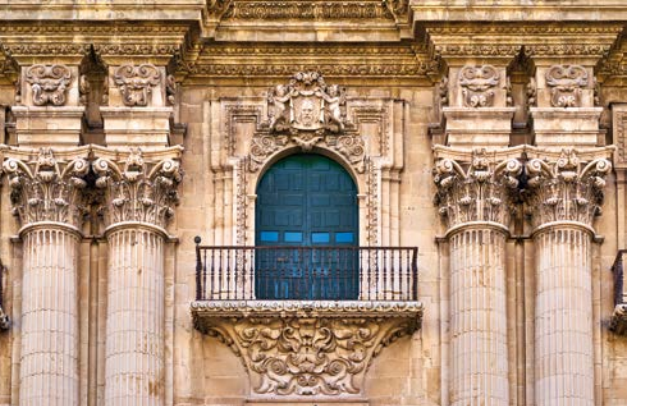
The sanctuary character of the temple justifies the importance of the balconies, especially the central one, from where the fields and the population are blessed with the relic on the day of the Assumption and Good Friday.

The monumentality of the façade is reinforced by the two twin towers, perhaps the elements with the most Renaissance tradition.

Upper galleries

Located above the wide side chapels, they can be gone all over. Thinking about the functionality of the cathedral, spacious rooms were created in the galleries that house the Chapter and Diocesan Archive and the Library.

The open gallery in the corner above the door of the transept stands out, from where the beautiful landscapes of the city can be seen.



Chapter house or San Pedro de Osma chapel

Elegant rectangular room where the construction of the Renaissance temple began. It is accessed through Santiago's Chapel or from the Sacristy. Its sober decoration based on niches with Ionic pilasters is closed with a half-barrel vault. This beautiful space is presided over by the altarpiece made by Pedro Machuca.

Dome

Juan de Aranda Salazar was in charge of building from the head to the transept: chapels of the head and the nave of the gospel; the presbytery and the nave of the transept, the dome and the north door. The dome, an innovative design by Juan de Aranda, rises on pendentives decorated with saints related to the cathedral, the diocese and the city: Saint Michael, Saint James, Saint Euphrasius and Saint Catherine.



Side and end chapels

The side chapels begin at the height of the retrochoir. The ones on the Gospel side correspond to those of Saint Joseph, Virgin of the Belt, Saint Peter Pascual, Saint Michael, Child Jesus, Immaculate and Saint Euphrasius.

The flat end wall of the apse consists of three large chapels. From left to right they belong to San Fernando, the one of the Holy Face or main

chapel is of greater architectural ornamental wealth located in the centre, where the relic of the "Holy Face" is preserved, and on the right that of Saint James which connects with the Chapter House.

In the nave on the epistle side, starting from the apse, there appear those of Saint Benedict, Saint Teresa, the Virgin of Angustias, the Virgin of Dolores, Saint Jerome, Saint Sebastian and, finally, that of Saint Domingo de Guzmán.



Holy Face

It is an image of deep-rooted popular devotion in Jaén. The first data of the presence of said relic in Jaén, dates back to the XIV century. XIV. There is evidence that it was kept in the cathedral's sanctuary and was only shown to the faithful twice a year, on the day of the Assumption and on Good Friday, to bless the fields from the four cardinal points.

There are three versions about the existence of the relic in Jaén, out of which, the third one is the most popular. Saint Euphrasius brought it to Jaén, later due to the Muslim invasion, the relic was hidden. When Ferdinand III the Saint conquered Jaén in 1246, the relic reappeared and the king took it as a protector for his army to conquer Seville, where it would remain.

Bishop Mr. Nicolás de Biedma, when visiting the Seville diocese, thanks to the powers granted by the Pope, recovered the relic of the Holy Face and returned it to Jaén Cathedral.

Choir

It is the work of Churriguera's disciple, José Gallego, and is too long and high for the dimensions of the temple, being one of the few elements that alter the Renaissance architecture of the cathedral. It is composed of 53 woden low chairs and 69 high ones to accommodate the members of the ecclesiastical and municipal council.

These occupied the section of continuous benches. Two styles can be perceived in the ensemble: on the one hand, the Flemish style of Gutierre

Gothic frieze

The east façade of the cathedral is one of the remains that are preserved from the primitive Gothic cathedral. This part corresponds to the head wall and is crossed by a Gothic frieze, decorated with plant, zoomorphic and human figures carved at the beginning of the XVI century. Its interpretation is complicated, however it seems to indicate that it is an allegorical discourse of the Salvation of the world through the intercession of the death and resurrection of Christ, in accordance with the representations of pomegranates, ears of wheat and pelican. The gargoyles and an enigmatic figurine known as "La Mona" stand out, which has given rise to different interpretations and the name of the alley.

Did you know that...

the organ pipes were installed in the towers of Santa Catalina Castle and in those of the cathedral during the Spanish Civil War, after the bombing of Jaén in 1937, to simulate artillery pieces, as a deterrent measure against possible subsequent attacks.

Museum

Located in the former pantheon of the canons, it is divided into three rooms: sacristy, chapel and former pantheon. The sacristy is accessed by stairs through a large arch supported by a triple arch, the central one larger than the two lateral ones. The old chapel has a spectacular lowered vault. An important collection of works makes up this museum, where painting is the best-represented chapter in terms of quantity, out of which works such as the "Virgen de la Cinta" by Pedro Machuca or the "Virgen de la O" and "Crucificado" by Sebastián Martínez stand out. The paintings are dated between the end of the XV century and the XIX century, although the largest number of works are from Baroque.

The sculpture, unlike the painting, is more prolific in Renaissance than Baroque works, generally of great quality and, in some cases, of great interest, such as the Christ of Corpus Christi from the XVI century, Saint Lawrence on the grills, of clear mannerism, reminiscent of Berruguete's art, a masterpiece of the

final years of the XVI century; and baroque carving has its best example in Saint John of the Cross, of life-size and excellent polychromy.

The Museum has a great representation, in quality and quantity, of the so-called minor arts, with works made in alabaster, coral, bronze, wrought iron and goldsmithing.



Andrés de Vandelvira

Born in Alcaraz, Albacete in 1505, he belonged to a family of builders, although everything indicates that it was with Francisco de Luna, a renowned builder from La Mancha, with whom he trained and whom he worked during his early years for.

Around 1530 Andrés de Vandelvira settled in the province of Jaén, from 1537 his prestige began to grow in the lands of Jaén where he worked on various works in Úbeda, Villacarrillo, Sabiote,... all closely linked to Francisco de los Cobos, Secretary of Emperor Charles I of Spain.

Around 1550, when he was already recognized as Master of Úbeda, Vandelvira came to Jaén summoned together with Jerónimo Quijano and Pedro Machuca by bishop Esteban Gabriel Merino, great Humanist and promoter of a new Renaissance cathedral, to select the builder of the new cathedral. In 1553 he was hired as the Master of the Cathedral, with functions that could be extended to Baeza Cathedral and the rest of the diocese.

His work in Jaén Cathedral did not prevent him from carrying numerous civil and religious works out, both in the city and in the province, as well as Cuenca Cathedral. His great capacity for work and creativity are proof of his Renaissance spirit.

*Andrés de
San Vandelvira*

