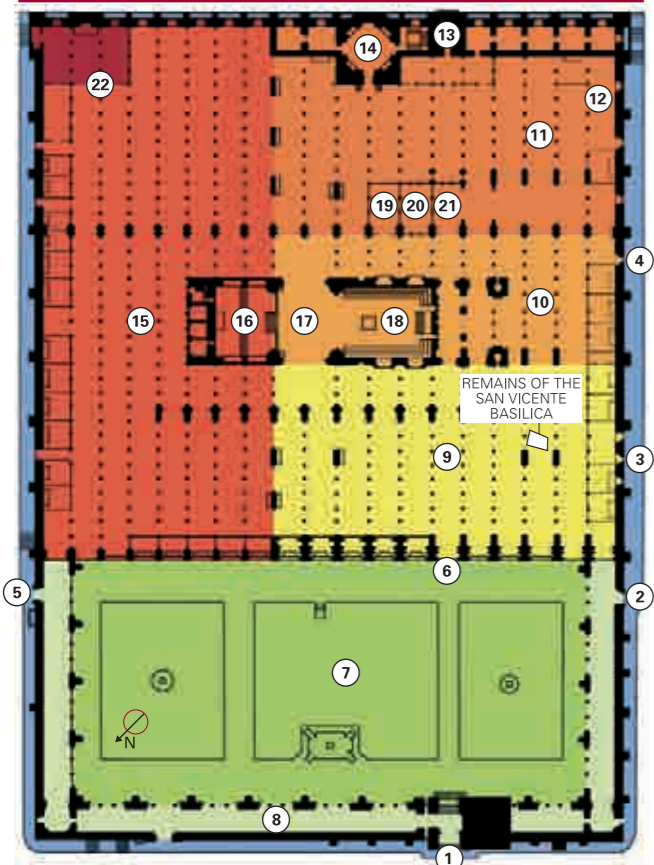
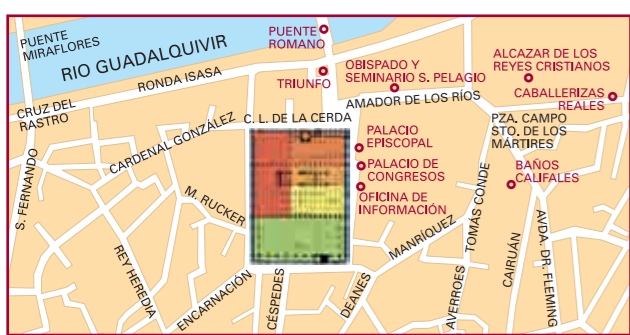
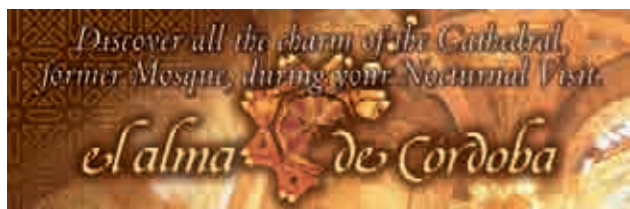


LOCALIZATION AND MAP OF THE CATHEDRAL



1. DOOR OF FORGIVENESS. 2. DOOR OF THE DEANS. 3. DOOR OF SAINT STEPHEN.
4. DOOR OF SAINT MICHAEL. 5. DOOR OF SAINT CATHERINE. 6. DOOR OF THE PALMS. 7. ORANGE TREE COURTYARD. 8. CLOISTER. 9. NAVES OF ABD-AR-RAHMAN I.
10. EXPANSION BY ABD-AR-RAHMAN II. 11. EXPANSION BY AL HAKAM II. 12. MUSEUM.
13. MIHRAB. 14. CHAPEL OF SANIT THERESA AND TREASURE. 15. NAVES OF AL-MANSUR. 16. MAIN CHAPEL. 17. TRANSEPT. 18. CHOIR. 19. CHAPEL OF SAINT PAUL.
20. ROYAL CHAPEL. 21. CHAPEL OF VILLAVICIOSA. 22. PARISH OF THE TABERNACLE.



THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THE DIOCESE

The cathedral Chapter welcomes you to Córdoba's Holy Cathedral Church. The entire grounds of this outstanding building that you are going to visit was consecrated as the mother church of the Diocese in the year 1236. Since then, every day with no exception, the Chapter solemnly worships in this fine and magnificent church and the Christian community gathers to listen to the Word of God and to participate in the Sacraments.

The Cathedral is the main church in the Diocese, the mother of the rest of the churches and the centre of activity for the diocese's liturgical life. It is here that you'll find the Bishop's cathedra, a symbol of magisterium and authority of the particular Church's minister, and a symbol of unity among believers in the faith, that the Bishop proclaims as shepherd of the whole Diocese.

On welcoming you to the Cathedral, the cathedral's Chapter asks that, during your visit, you show the appropriate respect to the identity of this Christian church, the Cathedral of Córdoba, a living witness to our history.

THE ORIGINS

Beneath every cathedral is always a layer of hidden cathedrals. In the case of Córdoba, tradition traces back to its Visigoth origins. This fact has been confirmed by archaeological excavations, whose remains can be found at the Museum of San Vicente (Saint Vincent) and in the pits where the remains of mosaics from the ancient Christian temple can be observed on site.

It is an historical fact that the San Vicente Basilica was destroyed during the Islamic period in order to build the subsequent Mosque. Originally it was the city's main church, a martyrs basilica from the 6th Century that continued to be remembered and worshiped by the Christians, centuries after its disappearance.



THE ISLAMIC INTERVENTION

Following the Islamic invasion of Córdoba, the dominating Muslims proceeded to the demolition of the martyr's church of San Vicente and, in the year 785, began the construction of the Mosque, a building that would come to be considered the most important sanctuary of Western Islam, in a time when Córdoba was the capital of Al-Andalus (a territory extending as far as the Duero River). This impressive creation, the site of not only religious but also social, cultural, and political manifestations, went through four stages of construction:

Abd-ar-Rahman I: Inspired by the Mosque of Damascus, with the traditional distribution of *sahn* (ablution courtyard) and *zullah* (hall of prayer). Yet a strong hispanic-roman influence is perceived, not only from the use of materials that came from the demolished church of San Vicente, but also because the orientation of the nave was set towards (and not parallel to) the wall of the *qibla*, as was the case in Visigoth churches. Moreover, the overlapping arches and the alternating brick and stone (red and beige) in the cross-section of the arches were modelled on the hispanic-roman tradition.

Abd-ar-Rahman II: During this prosperous stage of the Independent Emirate (though also a time of Christian persecution), the first addition to the Mosque was carried out, maintaining the scheme of the preceding ruler and prolonging the courtyard and the aisles of the prayer hall. In this courtyard, the Omayyan caliph Abd-ar-Rahman III ordered the construction of the minaret that is now embedded in the tower of the Cathedral.

Al Hakam II: In the full splendour of the caliphate, the Aljama Mosque was so richly expanded that Córdoba would come to substitute Damascus as a reference model. It is a unique work, not only due to the materials specifically made for that purpose (not re-used materials) but above all due to the presence of Byzantine artists and architects sent by the Christian emperor Niceforo Foca, who also contributed with the beautiful mosaics that they used in building the *mihrab* (sacred place beside which the imam leads the prayer). There is another Christian contribution: the cross-like design of the ensemble formed by the skylights and the *mihrab*, presenting the Latin cross plan and reaffirming the influence of the basilica structure found in the initial structure.



Al-Mansur: Carried out the final expansion, adding eight aisles along the east side of the building, including the courtyard. This was the most extensive part of all the work carried out. Its intention was an ostentatious display of power, though it was not very original, as it merely copied the existing structure, keeping cost low. The alternating colours of the arches, for example, are not produced with brick and stone, but paint.



THE CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATION

King Ferdinand III, called El Santo (the Saint), reconquered Córdoba in 1236. It was his will, that in the entrance to the city, the royal banner would be preceded by the Cross, symbolizing the importance of the recuperation of Christian faith above that of the territorial conquest. He also preferred to be absent during the purification ritual of the mosque, making the Eternal King the sole protagonist of the ceremony that would turn each stone of the edifice into a site consecrated to Christ.

It is evident that the Christians were eager to proclaim the Gospel which many had given their lives for. It was a matter of recuperating a sacred space that had suffered the imposition of a faith that was foreign and distant from the Christian experience. The Main Chapel of Villaviciosa was erected below the Al-Hakam II skylight, where the first Eucharistic ceremony of the Dedication of the Cathedral was celebrated in 1236. Thus, the reforms of the Cathedral were motivated by the need to restore the cult that had been interrupted by Islamic domination, and they were a response to the desire of contemplating Christian symbols, or the inconvenience of celebrating the Liturgy amid a sea of columns.

Main Chapel, Transept, and Choir. The works, surrounded by controversy, began in 1523. The architects were Hernán Ruiz I, II, and III, Diego de Praves, and Juan de Ochoa. The result was a Latin cross shaped design, an ingenious integration of the caliph structures within the gothic, renaissance, and baroque creations. The main altar piece was the work of Alonso Matías. The choir is covered by a vault inspired by the Sixtine Chapel, with an extraordinary set of stalls made by Duque Cornejo.

The Chapels. They are the result of the desire of believers to be buried at the cathedral and to furnish its walls with images expressing the Mystery of Christ. The Capilla Real (Royal Chapel) stands out for its Mudejar plasterworks and holds the remains of Kings Ferdinand IV and Alfonso XI. Also noteworthy are the Capilla de la Purísima Concepción (Chapel of the Immaculate Conception), once baptistery and now home to the monstrance of the body of Christ, and the baroque Capilla de San Pablo (Chapel of Saint Paul), as well as many other chapels and altars found in the cathedral, displaying a rich artistic legacy, fruit of the faith



and devotion of the Christian people. Especially striking is the Parroquia del Sagrario (Parish of the Tabernacle), for its mural paintings of the Martyrs of Córdoba invited to the Eucharist, by Cesar Arbasia, encouraging believers to remain firm in their faith.

The Cathedral Treasury. Composed of pieces used for cathedral cult as well as for chapter and Episcopal usage. The outstanding Corpus Christi monstrance by Enrique de Arfe is still used in modern-day processions, giving testimony to the devotion of the people of Córdoba towards Eucharist.

The orange tree courtyard and the tower. The Muslim courtyard was remodelled with the construction of the cloisters. In the 15th century the original palm trees were substituted by the orange trees that now give its name. The present-day tower was built over the minaret of Abd-ar-Rahman III, its belfry being the work of Hernán Ruiz III. It is crowned by a sculpture of San Rafael (Saint Raphael), the archangel guardian of the city. Below the tower is the Puerta del Perdón (Door of Forgiveness), the main entrance to the precincts.

A REFLECTION

The Church, through the Chapter, has ensured that this Cathedral, an old Western Caliphate Mosque, and World Heritage Site, is not in a pile of ruins today. In fact, this has always been one of the missions of the Church, to safeguard and inspire culture and art.

The visit to the Cathedral of Córdoba may awake the demand and the quest for a greater Beauty that will not wither with time. Because beauty, as truth and righteousness, are an antidote for pessimism, and an invitation to take pleasure in life, a shaking of the soul that provokes the longing for God.

