

Úbeda and Baeza

Legacies of Renaissance Art

Surrounded by olive trees and situated less than ten kilometres apart, the cities of Úbeda and Baeza boast some of southern Spain's finest examples of Renaissance art and, thanks to this, the cities were jointly declared World Heritage Sites in 2003. Baeza offers some of the finest examples of public architecture and religious institutions, whilst Úbeda is a city of private architecture and civic institutions that date back to the Renaissance period. Visitors are invited to embark on a journey through history, experience the culture of a region that has stopped in time, visit cities known for poetry, stone buildings, flavours of olive oil and ancient customs and traditions, two truly unique cities located in the La Loma region of the province of Jaén. Visitors are similarly invited to visit the nearby towns of Canena, Bejigar, Sabiote and Villacarrillo, which have also borne witness to the province of Jaén's Renaissance splendour.

Úbeda and Baeza are not exclusively Renaissance cities. Traces of human settlements date back to

Prehistoric times, although it was in the Roman period that the cities gained economic and administrative importance, which was later consolidated under Moorish occupation. However, the 16th Century is undoubtedly the most important moment in the history of these two cities, a period of great prosperity and cultural splendour, symbolised by the foundation of the University of Baeza.

Evidence of their Renaissance past can be seen in the streets and the many architecturally significant buildings, many of which have been well-conserved. The historical town centre of Úbeda is home to a number of outstanding monuments, such as the funerary chapel of El Salvador, the Santiago Hospital, the Church of Santa María de los Reales Alcázares, the Cadenas Palace and Casa de las Torres, whilst the most important buildings in Baeza are the University, the Cathedral, the Romanesque Church of Santa Cruz, the Jabalquinto Palace, the Town Hall and Plaza del Pópulo.

ÚBEDA



The beginnings of the city of Úbeda date back to the 16th Century when it experienced a period of rapid development in agriculture and farming accompanied by a booming craftwork industry. Various names are associated with that period of growth, including Francisco de los Cobos, who was born in the city and eventually became Secretary of State under Carlos I of Spain and V of Germany and political advisor to his son Felipe II, Andrés de Vandelvira, who was the architect responsible for designing the majority of the city's Renaissance buildings, as well as Diego de los Cobos and Juan Vázquez de Molina, who ordered the construction of the Santiago Hospital the Cadenas Palace, respectively.

In the south of the city lies the Juan Vázquez de Molina square, considered one of the most beautiful in the whole of Spain. The square is flanked by some of the city's most impressive Renaissance monuments: the Chapel of El Salvador del Mundo, the Palace of Deán Ortega, now a state-owned tourist hotel, or *parador*, the Palace of Marqués de Mancera, the Church of Santa María de los Reales Alcázares and the Palace of Juan Vázquez de Molina Palace, also known as the Palace of Cadenas.

The Chapel of El Salvador was commissioned by Francisco de los Cobos and is considered the city's most valuable and emblematic building in terms of private religious architecture from the Spanish Renaissance period. It is a true masterpiece. Architect Diego de Siloé was responsible for the initial project; however, it was Vandelvira who then took over and contracted work out to some of the most celebrated 16th Century

artists: Berruguete was responsible for the altarpiece set behind the main altar, sculptor Esteban Jamete was responsible for the carvings on the façade and in the sacristy, whilst writer, architect and sculptor Francisco de Villalpando was responsible for the grilles that symbolically separated the area reserved for the family from the nave for the general public. Francisco de los Cobos and his wife María de Mendoza are buried in the chapel's crypt and the chapel's sacristy houses some of Spain's most important works of Renaissance art.

To one side of the funerary chapel stands the Palace of Deán Ortega, the current state-owned tourist hotel, or *parador*, built in the middle of the 16th Century by Andrés Vandelvira under the orders of Fernando Ortega, the first senior chaplain of the El Salvador Chapel.

To the other side of Plaza Juan Vázquez de Molina stands the Santa María de los Reales Alcázares Collegiate Church, the city's most important place of worship, built on a site formerly occupied by a Moorish mosque and which contains rooms evoking Gothic, Mudejar, Renaissance and Baroque art. Opposite the Consolada portal stands the Palace of Marqués de Mancera, completed in the first third of the 17th Century.

The Palace of Juan Vázquez de Molina, or Palacio de las Cadenas, now the town hall, is the finest example of Renaissance palatial civil architecture. Vázquez de Molina commissioned Andrés de Vandelvira to build the palace in middle of the 15th Century. The architect drafted a plan consisting of three storeys and seven vertical bands on the façade and the building is now considered a showcase of exquisite taste. The façade, which opens up to a square presided over by statues of lions bearing the city's coat of arms, is covered in





inscriptions from different eras, written either to criticise, mock or commemorate an event.

Yet not everything in Úbeda is Renaissance art, there are also sites that date back to other periods in history. In Medieval times, Ubeda's Plaza Primero de Mayo, commonly known as Paseo del Mercado, was for various years the area where residents went about their day-to-day activities. The square houses the Church of San Pablo, on which construction began in the 13th Century, to be completed three hundred years later. It is principally a Late-Gothic style church, although the 'Carpenters' façade is Late-Romanesque and the main façade is Gothic-Isabelline. Close to Plaza Primero de Mayo, tourists are invited to visit the Convent of San Miguel and the oratory of San Juan de la Cruz, where this mystic poet died on the 14th of December 1591. Also nearby is Casa Mudéjar, which houses Úbeda's Archaeological Museum, Casa de los Salvajes, built in the first decade of the 16th Century, and the Palace of the Manueles, built at the beginning of the 17th Century.

Another one of the great symbolic monuments of Úbeda is the Santiago Hospital, which is now one of the most vibrant social and cultural centres in the whole of the province of Jaén. Diego de los Cobos, bishop of Jaén and nephew of Francisco de los Cobos, commissioned Vandelvira to construct the building, which was completed in 1575. The building features a staircase decorated with a mural painting, which can also be seen in the sumptuously decorated sacristy and the main chapel, which boasts a magnificent grille.



Gastronomy leisure and customs

When talking about the cuisine of Úbeda and Baeza it is impossible not to mention extra virgin olive oil, an ingredient is used in all dishes. Pulses, cereals, poultry, pork and lamb are found in most dishes, such as the delicious chick pea and chard or broad bean and aubergine casserole. On warm days, pipirrana salads and cold gazpacho soups are favourites amongst the people of Úbeda and Baeza. However, beyond the borders of the province, the cities are best known for their Baeza-style cod dish. This and the wide variety of other dishes that make up the region's cuisine are often accompanied by wines produced in Bailén, Torreperogil, Pozo Alcón and Frailes. And those with a sweet-tooth can sample the area's delicious milk bread (*pan de leche*), crisp aniseed wafers (*tortas de anís*), sponge cakes (*bizcocho*), olive oil bread (*ochíos*) and buns known as *hornazos*.

Visitors can also enjoy the extensive range of leisure activities, fiestas and shows that are on offer throughout the entire year in both World Heritage cities. After the carnival period, both cities prepare for Holy Week, an event declared to be of tourist interest at national level in both cities. During the International Music and Dance Festival, Úbeda's most important cultural event, critically-acclaimed orchestras, bands and soloists

perform throughout the months of May and June. During the Festival of Music of the Past, which takes place both in Úbeda and Baeza, distinguished bands perform Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music in the city churches throughout the month of December. Furthermore, during the months of August and September, Baeza hosts summer courses in the International University of Andalusia's Antonio Machado Centre, as well as masters courses and specialised workshops.

Úbeda's cultural customs are reflected in the tradition of clay work carried out in ceramics and pottery workshops in the district of San Millán, where earthenware jars, jugs and decorative plates are made following 16th Century traditions. In Baeza, cabinet makers have specialised in the crafting of classical Spanish Renaissance-style furniture. Furthermore, high-class professional blacksmiths and glass and lamp makers live and work in both cities.

To visit the cities of Úbeda and Baeza and to walk through the streets is to go back in time and embark on a journey to different eras. Lasting traces of over one century of plenitude and splendour can be seen in the streets and squares of these municipalities. Both cities are considered jewels of the Spanish Renaissance precisely because they both house magnificent palaces, convents, stately homes and city walls, and offer superb cuisine and craftwork.

BAEZA



If Úbeda stands out for the fine architecture of its private buildings and civil constructions, Baeza is known for the impressive architecture associated with religious and political power of the Renaissance period. Before the rise of Renaissance splendour, between 1266 and 1277, Baeza returned to Christian hands under the government of Fernando III. During the 14th Century, two influential families (the Benavides and the Carvajals) fought for political and economic control of the city in a conflict that came to an end when Isabel the Catholic ordered the demolition of the Alcazar (fortress). At the end of the 16th Century, eighteen thousand people lived in Baeza and income generated from the agriculturally based economy allowed the town to construct important civil and religious buildings.

Plaza de Santa María with its admirable fountain houses Baeza's most significant



religious building: the Cathedral, on which construction began in 1529. After practically the whole building collapsed in 1567, architect Andrés de Vandelvira was commissioned to build a new place of worship. On his death, works continued under Francisco del Castillo “el Mozo”, who was assisted by Vandelvira’s disciple, Alonso de Barba, and the Jesuit, Juan Bautista Villalpando, who was in charge of designing the main façade. The most remarkable features of the exterior of the cathedral are two of the portals, Puerta del Perdón and Puerta de la Luna, built at the end of the 13th Century with a marked Gothic-Mudejar influence, and the façade designed by Villalpando with its high relief of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. In the interior of the cathedral, the main chapel features a Baroque-style golden altarpiece. The Dorada and Ánimas chapels can be found at the foot of the cathedral behind the choir grille.

Baeza is also home to other monuments such as the Casas Consistoriales Altas, a Gothic-style building which was the seat of the Council at the end of the 15th Century and which displays a number of coats of arms, including that of Carlos V and that of his parents, Juana la Loca and Felipe el Hermoso. Next to Casas Consistoriales Altas stands the San Felipe Neri Seminary, founded in 1660 by the bishop of Jaén, Fernando de Andrade y Castro, now the International University of Andalusia’s “Antonio Machado” Centre. Close by, Plaza de la Santa Cruz houses three extraordinary buildings, the Palace of Jabalquinto, the Church of Santa Cruz and the Old University, where classes were delivered from 1595 until its closure in 1824. The Palace of Jabalquinto, commissioned by Juan Alfonso de Benavides, a relative of King Fernando the Catholic, is one of the most impressive examples of Flamboyant Gothic architecture



in Andalusia. Attention should be drawn to the façade, the Renaissance-style interior courtyard and the Baroque staircase. Opposite this building stands the Late-Romanesque Church of Santa Cruz, which dates back to the end of the 13th Century and is one of the few examples of this style of architecture in Andalusia.

Another important site in Baeza is Plaza del Pópulo, which lies next to the Paseo de la Constitución pedestrian promenade. It is a lovely square featuring a fountain in its centre, Fuente de los Leones. It is thought that the statues of the lions that surround the fountain were brought to Baeza from the Roman city of Cástulo, close by Linares. In the same square stands one of the finest examples of civil architecture in Baeza, the building that houses the Civil Court and the Public Notary's Office, which are located on the first and ground floors, respectively. On the other side of the square stands the building known as Antiguas Carnicerías, built in 1547 in Calle Atarazanas and moved many years later, in 1962, brick by brick to Plaza del Pópulo. Close to this building lies Plaza de la Constitución, a square flanked by impressive buildings such as Balcón del Concejo, a Baroque-style building ordered to be built at the end of the 17th Century, and the Alhóndiga building, which dates back to 1554 and reflects the commercial activity carried out in the past in this part of the city. A little further away, in Calle Cardenal Benavides, stands Baeza's Town Hall building, which before 1867 housed the law courts and the old jail and which boasts a façade featuring some of the most impressive Plateresque art to be found in the province of Jaén.



The municipalities situated in the surroundings of the World Heritage sites of Úbeda and Baeza also boast a rich cultural heritage, especially the town of Sabiote, declared a historical and artistic complex. The most prized monument in Sabiote is the town's castle. The interior of the palatial section is attributed to architect Andrés de Vandelvira, who also constructed in another one of the municipalities in the La Loma region, Villacarrillo, the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, one of the most beautiful religious buildings to be built by this architect. Other municipalities worth a visit are Canena, with its remarkable castle which Francisco de los Cobos commissioned Vandelvira to construct, declared a

National Monument in 1931, and Begíjar, with its parish church of Santiago Apóstol, on which construction began in the 13th Century to be completed in the 17th Century. The church's Baroque room housing the jewels and attire of the Cristo de la Vera Cruz bears mention. Travellers are also encouraged to visit the capital of the province, Jaén, and visit the building considered Andrés de Vandelvira's masterpiece: the Cathedral. Furthermore, nature enthusiasts can enjoy the Sierras of Cazorla, Segura and Las Villas Nature Park, the largest protected natural area in Spain and the second largest in Europe, located only 50 kilometres away.