

PARADOR de ÚBEDA

16th Century renaissance palace







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In the aristocratic, monumental city of Úbeda, in its purest Renaissance plaza and next to some of its most beautiful buildings, the Parador occupies a palace, built in the 16th century and remodeled in the 17th, which once belonged to the Dean of the Holy Chapel of El Salvador.

Behind the façade is a very beautiful inner courtyard, with a double gallery, the upper tier of which is glazed.

The comfortable and welcoming rooms are remarkable for the height of their ceilings. Particularly outstanding are the six looking onto the plaza, and the suite on the opposite corner, with panoramic views of the Plaza de Vázquez de Molina.

Andalusian details and ceramics decorate the dining room.

The creation of the Paradores Legend

The opening of the Parador de Úbeda on November 10, 1930 marked a milestone in the history of Spanish tourism. This Renaissance building and the palace of the Álvarez de Toledo family in Oropesa, opened a few months earlier, were the first historic Paradores. Together, they marked the beginning of a chain of lodgings located in castles, convents and monasteries which is considered unique in the world.

Today, Paradores is on its way to one hundred establishments. Half of these occupy historic buildings and many others are located in natural areas with great ecological value and cities which have been declared World Heritage Sites.

The mansion of Dean Ortega

This palace is part of the extraordinary Renaissance legacy which the architect Andrés de Vandelvira bequeathed upon Úbeda, today a World Heritage City. It was built in the mid-16th century by order of Hernando Ortega, dean of Malaga Cathedral and head chaplain of the Holy Chapel of El Salvador, who wanted to set up his private residence beside the temple he governed, following the tradition of locating the ecclesiastical house next to the church.

Although documents do not tell us precisely when work began, they do point to the decade of the 1540s, as there is a record of welding and carpentry work being done ten years later. It appears that Dean Ortega never actually lived in the mansion, as he died in 1571, shortly before work was completed.



Dean Ortega

Hernando Ortega Salido, the first owner of the palace, was born in this city around 1490 and died in 1571. His father, Bartolomé Ortega, came from noble stock and took part in the capture of Granada. Hernando, however, was a man of the church and became dean of Malaga Cathedral and head chaplain of the Holy Chapel of El Salvador. He was also administrator and executor for Francisco de los Cobos, whom he served for decades and whose influence enabled him to rise to the post of chaplain to the emperor.

It was De los Cobos who financed the work on the funerary chapel, but the dean supervised, managed and even made changes according to his aesthetic judgment. Cultured and with refined taste, Ortega contributed to the Renaissance dream that made Úbeda a unique city.



Vandelvira, the architect of Úbeda

Andrés de Vandelvira, to whom the design of the Palace of Dean Ortega is attributed, made Úbeda the most important Renaissance city in Andalusia. Vandelvira, who started as a stonemason, was born in 1505 into a Spanish family of stonemasons in the Albacete town of Alcaraz. He died in Jaén in 1575. His first major challenge was building the Holy Chapel of El Salvador, following the plans of Diego de Siloé. He was commissioned by Francisco de los Cobos, secretary to Emperor Charles V.

This gained Vandelvira the trust of Spain's most important patron of the time. His fame and contacts increased greatly and he was placed in charge of directing work on the most important buildings erected in Úbeda during this period.

Some of the city's historical palaces bear his stamp: Vázquez de Molina and Vela de los Cobos, as well as this building. He was also responsible for the noteworthy Santiago Hospital. Dean Ortega also commissioned him to build a chapel in San Nicolás Church and various studies for Málaga Cathedral.

Although he did much more work in the province, especially in Baeza, he undertook his most ambitious project in the 1550s, when he was made the master of Jaén Cathedral and commissioned to erect the Renaissance temple which is admired to this day. His aesthetic judgment influenced the entire country and even the New World, where the model of Jaén was followed for important cathedrals.

The emperor's secretary

Francisco de los Cobos y Molina (1477-1547) is the most notable figure in Úbeda's history. He was born into a noble family, but one which was experiencing financial problems. His father was a city councilman and his uncle accountant and secretary to Isabella the Catholic. The latter took him into his office, offering him the chance to learn about the bureaucratic structure and make a path for himself.

De los Cobos showed himself to have innate political skill, allowing him to rise through the ranks to become secretary to Emperor Charles V and his closest right-hand man. During his life, he received a number of grants and noble titles, enabling him to accumulate great wealth. In the private sphere, he became a knight of the Order of Santiago and was named grand commander of León. At the age of 40, he married María de Mendoza y Sarmiento, daughter of the Count of Rivadavia, one of Castile's most powerful families.

His position obligated him to accompany the king on his travel. In Italy, he discovered the Renaissance and forged friendships with renowned artists such as Titian. Back in Spain, he surrounded himself with intellectuals and creators, becoming one of the country's most important patrons. He assembled an impressive collection of art, which included exotic pieces from the New World presented to him by conquistadors Pizarro and Hernán Cortés. Some of these adorn the Holy Chapel of El Salvador, his finest bequest to Úbeda, whose crypt houses the remains of he and his wife.

During the reigns of Carlos V and Felipe II, Úbeda was flooded with the numerous palaces, homes of the nobility and many other important and unique buildings, most of which the visitor will no doubt have the opportunity to admire.





The Renaissance courtyard

The Renaissance courtyard is considered among the most elegant in all Andalusia. It occupies the center of the building, with the other rooms arranged around it. It is made up of a double gallery of semi-circular arches supported by slender Nasrid-inspired marble columns with Doric capitals and the thinnest shafts in the city. The simple mirrors which adorn the spandrels in the place of coats of arms are typical of Vandelvira's work.

The courtyard is positioned on an axis with entrance, connected by a narrow straight foyer in the Italian style. The staircase at the northeast corner is also noteworthy for its elegance.



Over time, the Parador re-adapted its spaces to meet new needs, giving it the 36 rooms it has today. One of them, the Unique Room, houses the palace's old chimney.





The décor in the guest rooms at the Parador de Úbeda is inspired by the magnificence of Spanish palaces.



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