

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE HIGH RENAISSANCE

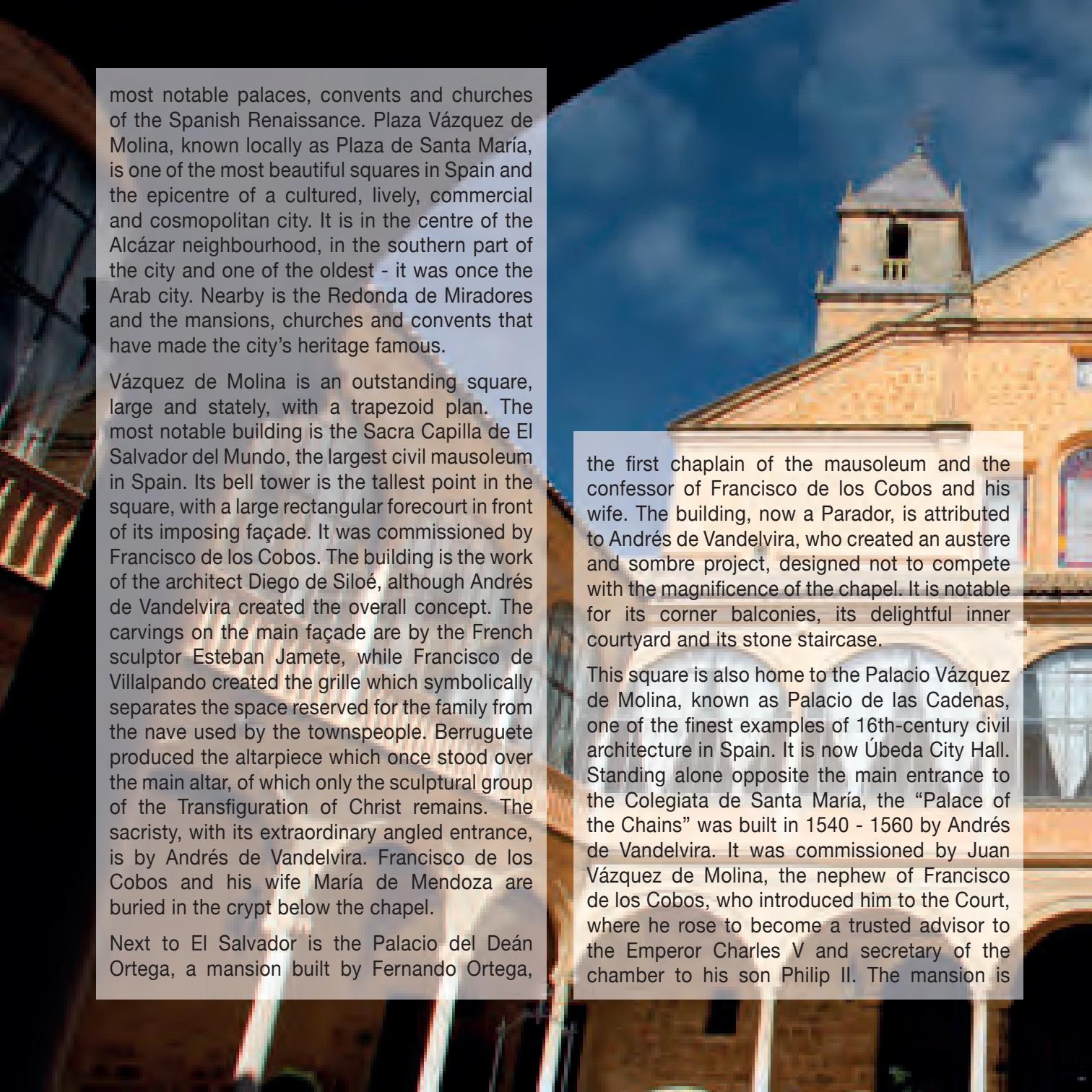




The Renaissance architectural complexes of Úbeda and Baeza, UNESCO World Heritage cities since 2003, are among the most desirable destinations for lovers of history, art and heritage. Along with the city of Jaén, these towns, home to the only two cathedrals of their kind in Spain and a wealth of mansions and churches, form the monumental triangle of southern Spain's Renaissance.

Úbeda and Baeza are fine examples of the splendour of the high Renaissance period. They are located in the centre of the province of Jaén, near the Natural Park of Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas, the country's largest nature reserve. Much of their architectural value is thanks to figures of the stature of Francisco de los Cobos, the secretary of State to Emperor Charles V, and architects such as Andrés de Vandelvira, who produced his best work in this province. Baeza has the finest examples of religious architecture and Úbeda of civil architecture, while Jaén is home to the finest Renaissance cathedral in Spain.

Úbeda is the commercial and administrative capital of La Loma, and its old neighbourhoods hold some of the



most notable palaces, convents and churches of the Spanish Renaissance. Plaza Vázquez de Molina, known locally as Plaza de Santa María, is one of the most beautiful squares in Spain and the epicentre of a cultured, lively, commercial and cosmopolitan city. It is in the centre of the Alcázar neighbourhood, in the southern part of the city and one of the oldest - it was once the Arab city. Nearby is the Redonda de Miradores and the mansions, churches and convents that have made the city's heritage famous.

Vázquez de Molina is an outstanding square, large and stately, with a trapezoid plan. The most notable building is the Sacra Capilla de El Salvador del Mundo, the largest civil mausoleum in Spain. Its bell tower is the tallest point in the square, with a large rectangular forecourt in front of its imposing façade. It was commissioned by Francisco de los Cobos. The building is the work of the architect Diego de Siloé, although Andrés de Vandelvira created the overall concept. The carvings on the main façade are by the French sculptor Esteban Jamete, while Francisco de Villalpando created the grille which symbolically separates the space reserved for the family from the nave used by the townspeople. Berruguete produced the altarpiece which once stood over the main altar, of which only the sculptural group of the Transfiguration of Christ remains. The sacristy, with its extraordinary angled entrance, is by Andrés de Vandelvira. Francisco de los Cobos and his wife María de Mendoza are buried in the crypt below the chapel.

Next to El Salvador is the Palacio del Deán Ortega, a mansion built by Fernando Ortega,

the first chaplain of the mausoleum and the confessor of Francisco de los Cobos and his wife. The building, now a Parador, is attributed to Andrés de Vandelvira, who created an austere and sombre project, designed not to compete with the magnificence of the chapel. It is notable for its corner balconies, its delightful inner courtyard and its stone staircase.

This square is also home to the Palacio Vázquez de Molina, known as Palacio de las Cadenas, one of the finest examples of 16th-century civil architecture in Spain. It is now Úbeda City Hall. Standing alone opposite the main entrance to the Colegiata de Santa María, the "Palace of the Chains" was built in 1540 - 1560 by Andrés de Vandelvira. It was commissioned by Juan Vázquez de Molina, the nephew of Francisco de los Cobos, who introduced him to the Court, where he rose to become a trusted advisor to the Emperor Charles V and secretary of the chamber to his son Philip II. The mansion is



on a square plan, and is modelled on the great Renaissance mansions of the major Castilian cities. An Italian influence can be seen in the architectural language of the façade, where Vandelvira daringly subverts the classical orders. The main façade is divided into three floors and seven sections, opening onto a large forecourt whose entrance is marked by two stone lions.

Plaza Vázquez de Molina is completed by the Colegiata de Santa María de los Reales Alcázares, the city's oldest church. It was built on the foundations of the original mosque. Traces

of Gothic, Mudéjar, Renaissance and Baroque styles can be found throughout. Both the church and Plaza Vázquez de Molina have often been the setting for films, such as *Alatriste*, based on the books by Pérez Reverte. The Palacio del Marqués de Mancera and the statue of Andrés de Vandelvira are other places of interest on this site.

In the hills of Úbeda

An old legend tells that one afternoon a knight serving the Castilian king Alfonso VIII met a beautiful Arab princess, with whom he had a tryst the same day that the King entered the city in his campaign of conquest. King Alfonso irritably asked the knight where he had disappeared to, and the love-addled man eventually replied: “In the hills of Úbeda, sire, in these hills...”

The San Pablo district is close to the viewpoints where tourists look for the city’s hills. For centuries, Plaza Primero de Mayo, also known as Plaza del Mercado, was the centre of the medieval city. Overlooking it is the church of San Pablo, a National Historic Site since 1926, in the late Gothic style. The so-called Carpenters’ door, at the foot of the church, is late Romanesque. The square is also home to the former city halls, the Antiguas Casas Consistoriales. Nearby is the Casa Mudéjar, home to the Archaeological Museum, and the Sinagoga del Agua, a former synagogue which is well worth the visit.





On one side of Calle Horno del Contador is the Palacio de los Salvajes, a mansion with two large figures of wild men on the façade.

On Plaza del Carmen stands the Oratorio de San Juan de la Cruz, a place of worship and pilgrimage for devotees of the Carmelite St. John of the Cross. This mystic and poet died in one of the cells of the monastery on 14 December 1627. The building now houses the Museum of St. John of the Cross. On the other side of the Plaza del Mercado, on Calle Real, the street that runs from Plaza de Andalucía to Plaza Vázquez de Molina, are some of the most important mansions of Úbeda. Two are particularly notable: Palacio de los Condes de Gadiana and Palacio Vela de los Cobos. The former features a watchtower built in the first third of the 17th century. The latter is one of the most elegant and harmonious mansions designed by Vandelvira, with a notable arched gallery on the upper floor.

The church of San Pedro was built over a former mosque. Its main façade is Renaissance and the interior features chapels, originally Gothic, arranged around a single nave. Opposite the church is the 19th century



Palacio de los Orozco. Calle Antonio Medina leads to the Palacio de la Rambla, now a hotel, notable for its beautiful entrance and its ivy-covered Renaissance courtyard. Plaza de Andalucía, the 19th-century city centre, is dominated by the former meat market and the clock tower. Next to them is the church of La Santísima Trinidad. A few streets up is the church of San Nicolás de Bari, outside the city walls, an example of the local Gothic architecture. Inside there is an outstanding grille, Reja del Deán Ortega, a fine example of decorative ironwork.

The Hospital of Santiago, on the outskirts of the medieval city, is another of the iconic buildings of Úbeda. It was commissioned by Diego de los Cobos, nephew of Francisco de los Cobos, who followed in the family tradition of displaying their power with monumental buildings. Its notable architecture includes an imposing façade, flanked by two tall towers, the courtyard, the church and the staircase, decorated with painted murals. The building is now used for holding all types of event.

Baeza, the poetic city

There is a poetic feeling about Baeza, in its streets, squares and great buildings. This feeling is compounded by the verses of Antonio Machado, who taught French at the Santísima Trinidad School, in a quiet, private and silent city that should be explored slowly to really understand its history and legends.

Plaza de Santa María, the historic centre of Baeza, was built in an era when the clergy and the nobles vied for dominance over the city. The square slopes slightly to emphasise the power of the Cathedral, and the fountain of Santa María stands in the centre, commissioned by the Council in 1564 to commemorate the arrival of the water supply. Baeza Cathedral was built on the site of a former mosque. After the Christian conquest in the first half of the 13th century, the oratory was consecrated as a church and dedicated to the Birth of the Virgin. In 1529 work began on the Gothic cathedral. The original design was for three naves, the central one bigger, supported by pillars and a rib vault. Shortly afterwards, in 1567, the building was severely damaged and the project was revised in line with the new architectural style.

Andrés de Vandelvira, who was then working on the construction of Jaén Cathedral, was commissioned to rebuild it. Just a few elements at the end of the nave were retained, such as the Gothic rose window above the Puerta de la Luna, which is still one of the most iconic elements of the cathedral. With a team of prestigious master

stonemasons and famous sculptors, Vandelvira brought the new Cathedral firmly into the new Renaissance age. After his death the work was continued by Francisco del Castillo, Alonso de Barba, and the Jesuit Juan Bautista de Villalpando, who designed the main façade. On 16 December 1593, Bishop Francisco Sarmiento officiated the first mass at the main altar.

Inside, the Cathedral maintains the layout of three naves. The vaults of the first two parts are Gothic, and the rest are sail vaults. There are four medallions on the pendentives of the crossing, with wall paintings of the Evangelists. The naves are surrounded by chapels: the largest is by Manuel García del Álamo, in the Baroque style, and two of the most important, the Capilla Dorada and Capilla de las Ánimas, are at the end. The Capilla de las Ánimas is separated by a superb grille by Master Bartolomé, made in 1513. The Monstrance is one of the greatest treasures of the cathedral. It was created by Gaspar Núñez de Castro in 1714. Other spaces in the cathedral include the Gothic cloister, which leads into the Cathedral Museum, and the belltower, in the Baroque style, which looks out like a lighthouse over the province of Jaén.

A town with Cathedral and University

The Palacio de Jabalquinto, the home in Baeza of the International University of Andalusia, is one of the most superb examples of Isabelline Gothic architecture in the province of Jaén. It

was commissioned by Juan Alfonso de Benavides, a member of the family of King Ferdinand the Catholic. His son married Luisa, the daughter of the poet Jorge Manrique. The façade of the mansion looks over the Plaza de Santa Cruz and the late Romanesque church of the same name, and is a display of the stonemasons' skill, decorated with diamond shapes, garlands, bows and finials. Calle Beato Juan de Ávila leads to the former university or Antigua Universidad, a Mannerist building, opened in 1595 and closed in 1824. Today it is a secondary school, and also conserves the classroom where the poet Antonio Machado taught French grammar from 1912 to 1919.

The great arch, Arco del Barbudo, leads down to Plaza de la Constitución, but we recommend continuing until Plaza del Pópulo and the stone statue of Himilce, Princess of Castulo and wife of the Carthaginian general Hannibal. Next to it are the buildings of the former meat market - Antiguas Carnicerías - and public scribes - Escribanías Públicas. On one side of the Jaén road stands the former Hospital of San Antonio Abad, now the municipal archive and public library. Plaza de la Constitución, also known as Plaza del Mercado, features pillars in the Castilian style, where in past centuries the city's artisans sold their wares. The trade of the past is reflected in the Alhóndiga, built in 1554. Facing it on the other side of the square is the balcony of the City Council, where the authorities presided over festivals and official events.

At the start of Calle San Pablo stands the tower of Aliatares. Nearby are the ruins of the convent of San Francisco, now a public auditorium. The convent was commissioned by the Valencia de Benavides families, which in the mid-16th century wanted to emulate the wealth of Francisco de los Cobos. Vandelvira designed the church, but an earthquake in the early 19th century meant most of the main chapel had to be demolished, and its height is now marked by iron structures. Vandelvira also worked on the church of San Andrés, which was originally Gothic but then incorporated the new ideas of the Renaissance.

Flavours with history

There is no better extra virgin olive oil than Jaén's. The iconic product of the province is also its best ambassador, and the basis for a delicious and healthy cuisine. In Úbeda and Baeza, cooking is a succulent art, combining technique, tradition, and the finest ingredients. Vegetables, cereals, pulses, poultry, small game, pork and lamb are the foundation of Southern Renaissance cuisine. They are used to create stews, casseroles and soups, rich in chickpeas and spinach, chard, broad beans and aubergines. Pipirrana, gazpacho, salads and cold soups are enjoyed in hot weather. And in winter, traditional kitchens turn to stews such as guiñapos, andrajos and garbanzos mareados or "ropavieja".

A delicious meal might consist of roast potatoes with lomo de orza (pork loin preserved in oil) or cod in Baeza style as a first course, followed by oven-roast kid. The desserts traditionally made by the nuns of the three great Renaissance cities include milk-based breads and cakes, anise cakes, borrachuelos and ochíos. They can be found in gourmet shops, or bought directly from the convents in the three cities.

Living the Renaissance

Sleep in a Renaissance mansion, in an authentic period bedroom, or in a castle with views over the battlefields of the past. Jaén has unique hotels for the most exacting visitors, lovers of art, relaxation, fine food and the good life. The villages and towns on the Renaissance routes offer fabulous establishments which invite you to relax and enjoy the wealth of art and history. Most of these hotels are in Úbeda, Baeza and Jaén, in stately mansions remodelled to offer all the necessities and luxuries modern travellers require.

They make an excellent base, for example, if you are visiting the most important cultural event in Úbeda, the International Festival of Music and Dance, held in late spring in several locations in the city, especially the Hospital de Santiago. In summer, Baeza offers courses on the Antonio Machado Campus of the International University of Andalusia. Both cities share a Festival of Ancient Music and well-known fairs. Úbeda holds its annual festival of San Miguel in September. Baeza's main festival is in August, the Virgen del Alcázar. There are famous romerías or processions in honour of the Virgen de Guadalupe in Úbeda and the Virgen del Rosel, in La Yedra (Baeza).

Festivals, food, architecture, history, culture... Visit the cities of Úbeda and Baeza and explore their streets to become a time-traveller and experience other eras. Their illustrious history has left its mark on the streets and squares of these cities, which still recall the splendour they enjoyed for over a century. Mansions, convents, city walls, stately homes, fine food and artisan goods make these two cities the jewels of the Spanish Renaissance.

