
Sé Catedral do Funchal

ABOUT

Built at the orders of King D. Manuel I in order to substitute the Church of Nossa Senhora do Calhau (the first parish established in the island). By that time the old church was too small to cater to the faithful. The “big Church”, as it was initially called, occupied a section of the historic centre formerly known as the Largo do Duque.

Inaugurated in 1514, this church was elevated to the status of Sé Cathedral by Pope Leo X who created the diocese of Funchal, at the time the largest diocese in the world, covering all territories discovered by the Portuguese, from Brazil to Japan.

The Sé Cathedral was the most emblematic work from the Manueline period built in the Island of Madeira. It was designed by the architect Pêro Anes, master of royal works. Practically unaltered since its initial foundation, the cathedral has a simple façade, with a gothic doorway composed by fine archivolts.

The church interior has a Gothic-style structure, of mendicant architecture, and a Latin cross layout. Key features include the remarkable “alfarge” ceiling, one of the finest in Portugal, made from Madeiran cedar wood and carved in Mudéjar style with gilded elements and ivory incrustations, together with the 16th century altarpieces and the 18th-century azulejo tiles. The Sé Cathedral has a set of beautiful treasures of great historic value, some of which are on display in the Museum of Sacred Art, including a large gilded silver processional cross offered by King D. Manuel I and attributed to Gil Vicente.

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Accessibility