
Sé Catedral da Guarda

ABOUT



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Sé Cathedral in Guarda

Although Guarda has been the seat of the diocese since its foundation, the building that we currently see in the centre of the city was built from 1390 onwards on the initiative of D. João I, in substitution of the ancient Sé cathedrals, which had been built outside the city walls.

The construction process was very slow and only terminated in 1517, during the reign of D. João III while D. Jorge de Melo was Bishop. The building is habitually classified within the Gothic style, with influences from the construction yard of the Monastery of Batalha, with great exterior sobriety marked by two massive octagonal towers that give it the appearance of a Church-Fortress, appropriate to a period in which Portugal's great cathedrals also represented an affirmation of nationality. This sobriety is interrupted by the elegant decoration or the doorways - in Gothic style in the main entrance and Renaissance style in the lateral entrance. Several renowned artists of the period worked on the cathedral: Huguet, Diogo de Boitaca, Marcos Pires and Pedro and Filipe Henriques, sons of Mateus Fernandes.

The layout follows a typical mediaeval typology - a Latin cross with three naves (the central nave has a higher elevation), a wide transept and the top of the church with three communicating chapels.

Key elements of the interior include the grandiose altarpiece of the main chapel, sculpted in Ançã stone. Accompanying the semi-circular form of the apse, the altarpiece has four hierarchal levels. The Apostles are represented on the first level, Moses, Ezequiel, Elias, Daniel, the Annunciation and the Nativity, on the second level, the Virgin of the Assumption on the third level, and finally scenes from the Passion of Christ on the fourth level. The altarpiece is a Renaissance work by João de Ruão, and has great doctrinal importance - exceptional within the context of the city. It was commissioned by the Bishop D. Cristovão de Castro, Master of Monsanto and Principal Alcayde of Covilhã, where he was born and died. A humanist, he served as D. Manuel I's ambassador to Rome, in the court of Pope Alexandre VI, where he came into contact with the new artistic programmes that he wanted to apply within his diocese.

Contacts

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Timetable

Summer - June / September: 10am - 1.30pm / 3pm - 6.30pm; Winter - October / May: 9am - 12.20pm / 2pm -

5.30pm

Accessibility