

# TURÓ DE LA SEU VELLA

## HISTORICAL MONUMENTS COMPLEX

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LLEIDA



turóseuvella

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LLEIDA PATRIMONIMUNDIAL

# TURÓ DE LA SEU VELLA HISTORICAL MONUMENTS COMPLEX

The Seu Vella, the name by which the old cathedral of Lleida is known, is the most emblematic building in the city. It is also the name of the small elevation of terrain, or hill, where it is located. Above the Seu Vella stands the Castle of the King - La Suda. These two buildings are the only remaining testimony to the excellent Gothic Quarter that occupied the entire hill in medieval times, which was destroyed starting in the 17th century to erect a military fortress.

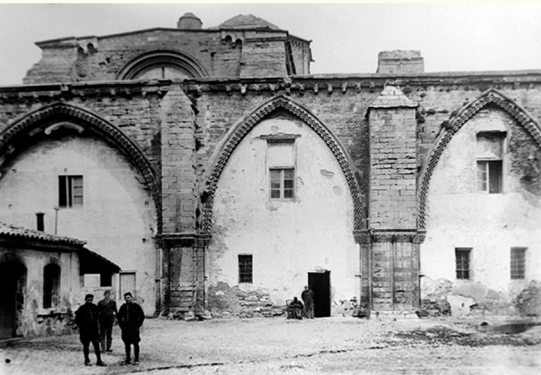
The cathedral, the castle and the fortress have been declared Cultural Assets of National Interest, forming a unique and singular complex of historical monuments.

# THE SEU VELLA

The cathedral, probably built over the remains of a mosque, was built from the end of the 12th century to the 15th century. Although it brought together the best artists and craftsmen in Southern Europe, currently, you will notice the lack of ornamentation and the monochrome tone of its walls, which is explained by it being transformed into military barracks during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1715). In addition to this military use, which lasted until 1948, it was also used as a concentration camp during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).



Pia Almoína paintings. 14th century. Museu de Lleida. (A. Benavente)



Cloister courtyard. Mid-20th century. (Ferrant archive, COAC, Lleida)



Northeast gallery of the cloister

# The Canonical House

Late 12th century-16th century



This area, currently the visitor reception, was the house of the canons. In the Middle Ages, it was also used for other purposes, such as the Chapter Room, Notary Archive, Library or the Pia Almoína.

The Canonical House can be visited at the beginning or end of the tour. However, don't miss visiting the **Pia Almoína (1)**, a charity that fed the poor and the pilgrims, thus making the cathedral a must stop on the way to Santiago de Compostela. Both the poor and the pilgrims are present in the murals (14th century-16th century) that decorated this charity institution. The originals are in the Museu de Lleida.

# The Cloister

Late 13th century-14th century

With spectacular measurements, it is considered one of Europe's largest Gothic cloisters. It has four very large and wide galleries and seventeen huge windows that are richly decorated. It was built atypically at the foot of the cathedral due to a lack of space, which made it a magnificent welcoming space, far from other cloisters that are called to mind.

This originality was reinforced with the south-east gallery, exceptionally open to the city by way of a spectacular **vantage point (2)**.



**DID YOU KNOW THAT....**

The square hole put in the middle of the paintings was actually a cupboard? There, the cathedral's most famous relic was kept: the Holy Cloth or the first nappy of the Child Jesus.



1203 commemorative stone plaque



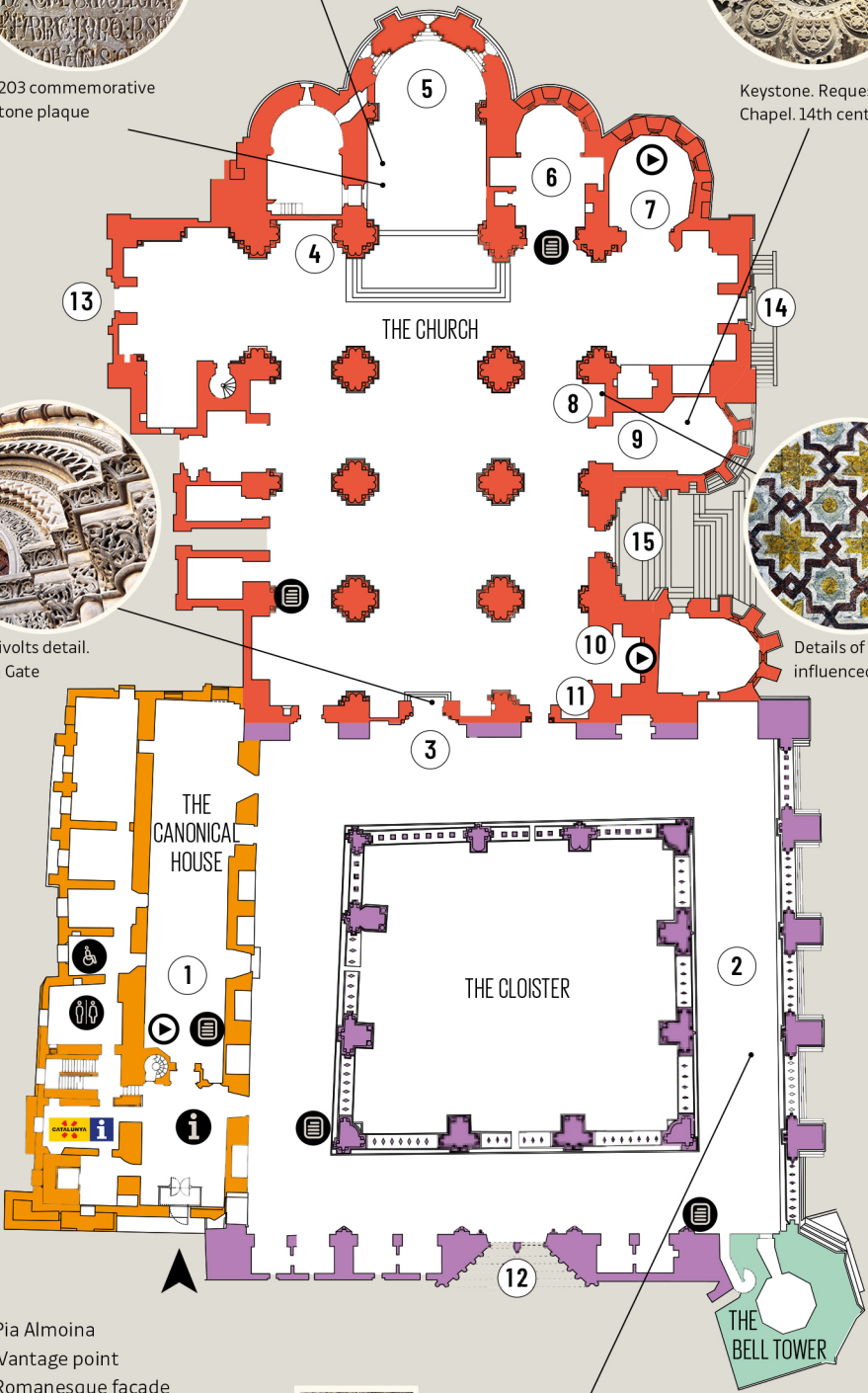
Keystone. Requesens Chapel. 14th century



Archivolts detail. Main Gate



Details of Islamic influenced paintings



- 1. Pia Almoina
- 2. Vantage point
- 3. Romanesque facade
- 4. Capitals of St. James
- 5. Main apse
- 6. Montcada Family Chapel
- 7. Bishop Colom Chapel
- 8. Sant Tomàs Chapel
- 9. Bishop Requesens Chapel
- 10. Sant Joan Baptista Chapel
- 11. Santa Margarida Chapel
- 12. Apostles' Gate
- 13. Sant Berenguer Gate
- 14. Anunciata Gate
- 15. Fillols Gate



**DID YOU KNOW THAT....**

In the cloister there are games engraved on the stones? They are known as Alquerque, which enable playing an old version of draughts or tic-tac-toe.

**LEARN MORE!**

Of the seventeen windows in the cloister, fifteen are different. Only two are repeated, one in front of the other. They are located in the southeast gallery, that is, the gallery open to the city.

# The Bell Tower

## Mid 14th century-mid 15th century

It is the undisputed symbol of the city and a visual landmark from afar. It has a height of 60.60 meters and a spiral staircase with 238 steps that you can climb to enjoy the panoramic views. We recommend not leaving it for the end of the tour, since the bell tower closes to the public half an hour before the rest of the complex.



Bell tower and Apostles' Gate

# The Church

## 13th century

The church is accessed from the cloister through the doors of the **Romanesque facade (3)**. Its bareness is surprising when entering, because many of its ornaments were mutilated, burned and profaned when the cathedral was a military barracks. A good collection of images from this period can be seen in the **Sant Joan Baptista Chapel (10)**.

The church has a Latin cross basilica floor plan with three naves, a pronounced transept and a steep chevet. Here Romanesque and Gothic forms coexist, although Romanesque dominates, especially in the capitals and gates. It is worth stopping at the **capitals dedicated to Saint James (4)**, which in addition to explaining the legendary acts of this apostle, they remind us that the cathedral was —and is—part of the Way of Saint James.

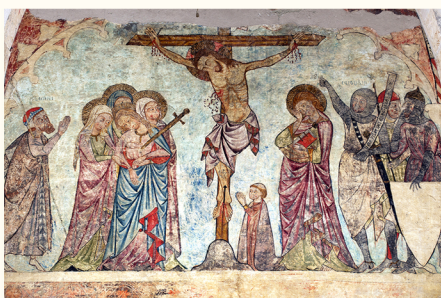
In the **main apse (5)** the commemorative stone plaque of the laying of the first stone is located (22 July, 1203) and some mural paintings (first third of the 14th century) with scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary.



Central nave



Capital dedicated to Saint James



Crucifixion. Santa Margarida Chapel. 14th century

The interior of the cathedral brings together different chapels (13th-16th century) built as solemn spaces for private burial. A special mention is deserved by the **Sant Tomàs Chapel (8)**, where the central representation of the Virgin Mary with the Child is combined with a interlocking decoration of Islamic influence, a testimony to the Andalusian past of Lleida, as well as the **Requesens Chapel (9)**, the restoration of which has highlighted its delicate sculptural finishes.

Touring the cathedral is rounded off with a walk outside, which starts at the **Gothic Apostles' Gate (12)**, the main facade of the cathedral, and continues through the gates of the church, all of them Romanesque. The simplest is **Sant Berenguer Gate (13)**. Richer examples include the **Anunciata Gate (14)**, and **Fillois Gate (15)**, with great architectural development and abundant decoration in the archivolt, friezes and crowning cornice.





Castle of the King - La Suda from the drawbridge

## CASTLE OF THE KING- LA SUDA

### Late 12th century-late 14th century

It was one of the touring residences that the various monarchs of the Crown of Aragon used during their visits to the city. It is popularly known as the Suda, given that it sits on top of an Andalusian fortified site or *sudda* from the 9th century.

With a completely defensive look, it was the most remarkable civil building in the city and a very important centre for political decisions. It had a rectangular floor plan and four buildings located around a central courtyard, where they would have different areas for meetings, residence, worship and defence. Only the former Hall of *Corts* exists today.

Converted into a military barracks during the Catalan Revolt (1640-1652), it lost a good part of its volumes as a result of the subsequent explosions of the arsenal located in the interior. Soldiers were present there until 1948.

### DID YOU KNOW THAT....

In 1214, a 6-year-old boy was crowned king in the Hall of *Corts*? It was James I the Conqueror (1214-1276), the architect of the territorial expansion of the Crown of Aragon and an important legislator. Lleida still holds two privileges granted by this king: the Sant Miquel Fair in 1232 and the Paeria (or City Hall) in 1264.

### LEARN MORE!

The Hall of *Corts* has an upper terrace that is accessible to everyone and considered the best vantage point in the city, from which you can see the entire landscape both near and far.



North façade of the former Corts Hall



Lleida, 1525 Jaume Morera Art Museum, Lleida (Enric Garsaball)

## THE MILITARY FORTIFICATION

### 17th century-19th century

The main fortification is located at the top of the hill and framed by four powerful defensive bastions that coincide with the four cardinal directions: to the north, the **Louvigny Bastion (1)**; to the south, the **Assumption Bastion (2)**; to the east, the **Queen's Bastion (3)**, and to the west, the **King's Bastion (4)**. **Access to the main fortification (5)** is preceded by the **Half Moon Ravelin (6)** and other defensive structures that complete one of the most important fortresses in Catalonia: **Diamond Point (7)**, **Tongue of the Serpent (8)**, and **Lion's Gate (9)**.

The construction of this citadel brought about the disappearance of the old Gothic Quarter, the district that was known as the Suda. The district, primarily ecclesiastical, noble and academic, brought together the best buildings in a city from which small archaeological remains have been recovered.

### LEARN MORE!

The new defences built on the hill from the 17th century feature sloping walls, which have a broken rhythm, with recesses and projections, the purpose of which is to create a set of points and angles designed to protect the entire surrounding space.



Lion's Gate. 19th century

