# Seville Cathedral

Construction and history

### **Almohad mosque (1172–1248)**

The mosque was built by a Morrocan Muslim berbers movement founded in the 12th century.

Caliph Abu Yaqub Yusuf built a new mosque in 1172 south of the city. The new mosque was consecrated in 1182 but the construction was not finished until 1198.

It replaces the one built between 829 and 830 by Umar Ibn Adabbas.

Being closer to the city of Alcazar, the mosque was designed by a renowned architect "Ahmad ben Basso".

The building has an area of more than 15,000 m² including the courtyard and minarets.

The prayer hall, unlike the old mosque, has the same characteristics as the mosques of Al Andalus:

The 17 south-facing corridors that are perpendicular to the qibla wall.

In the splendid days of Arab rule decided to build the mosque "al-Moharrem" (Sacred) between 1172 and 1198, in order to complete the long process of building the southern part of Seville.

### **"Christianized mosque" (1248–1434)**

Shortly after the conquest of Seville by Ferdinand II, the Abu Yaqub Yusuf Mosque was converted into a Christian cathedral.

The interior is divided into different chapels by building walls in the bays along the north and south walls.

Almost half of the eastern part of the cathedral was occupied by the royal chapels that cared for the bodies of Ferdinand, his wife and Alfonso.

In 1420, one of the largest international building sites of the 15th century was opened in Seville, where the most illustrious Spanish, Flemish and German architects and sculptors succeeded each other.

### **Gothic cathedral (1434–1506, 1511–1517)**

The Cathedral of Seville was built to show the richness of the city, it then became an important centre of exchange after the Reconquista which took place in 1248.

In July 1401 the city leaders decided to build a new cathedral to replace the large mosque that had served as a cathedral until then.

According to local traditions, the members of the canons' chapter would have said "Hagamos una Iglesia tan hermosa y tan grandiosa que los que la vieren labrada nos tengan por locos"

("Let us build a church so pretty and big that when it is finished, the people who see it will think we are crazy")

The actual entry of July 8, 1401, recorded among others by Juan Cean Bermuda in 1801 but now lost, proposed the following construction: "una tal y tan buena, que no haya otra su igual" ("One so well that none of them could reach the ankle")

Construction continued until 1506 when Parish clergy offered half of their allowances to pay architects, stained glass artists, masons, sculptors, craftsmen and labourers and other types of expenses.

Several factors such as royal resistance or the temporary relocation of the royal chapel delayed construction until 1434.

This year, King John II of Castile authorizes the movement of royal bodies (deceased bodies of the royal family) to the cathedral's cloister for storage

5 years after the end of the construction in 1511, the crossing lanterns or cimborrio collapsed and the construction began again.

In 1888 the intercept collapsed again, construction was resumed until 1903.

The demolition of the old mosque and the construction of a new Gothic Cathedral began in 1401 and was completed around 1530.

Seville's prosperity after the discovery of the New World further strengthened the considerable financial resources used to build and beautify the Cathedral, which in the 16th century received an incomparable set of stained glass windows, altarpieces, grids and stalls.

### **17th century :**

In the 17th century, the Cathedral still received very rich donations, covered with baroque sculptures and paintings of the greats Sevillian painters Murillo and Valdes Leal.

### **Icomos :**

The Cathedral, one of the largest and most ornate religious buildings in the world, summarizes in its complex structure the vicissitudes of a troubled history: it incorporates into the chapel of Granada some visigothic capitals, the last remains of the primitive cathedral that the Arab conquest of 712 condemned to destruction; but it is above all one of the major witnesses of the Almohad apogee.

### **Registration to ICOMOS:**

The main cultural characteristics of the Cathedral are:

1)It is the largest Gothic building in Europe, the passage of centuries has accumulated magnificent masterpieces of art, reflecting seven hundred years of Andalusian culture.

2) There are still very important parts of the most important mosque in Western Islam, such as the tower, which was the highest and largest of the Muslim minarets.

3) The Renaissance works embrace Europe's first elliptical space (Cabildo), which consecrated (with the Giralda) Hernan Ruiz, one of the most important architects of the 16th century.

4) The architectural solutions that have necessarily reached the entire Cathedral have allowed us to get to know other figures in Spanish and South American architecture.

### **Some Informations :**

The Gothic church is the largest in Europe. It is divided into five naves, of very high height, composition and construction united, surrounded by chapels. The vaults are very simple warheads, except in the transept. The numerous stained glass windows, magnificent from the Middle Ages and in Renaissance style, stand out on the walls.

Of the nine doors that give access to the Cathedral, those that are the least interesting from an artistic point of view are the portals with notable reliefs of the tympanums and sculptures of angels and prophets.

It is devoid of cai "girola", leaning against the head of the temple, is the Royal Chapel.

The outbuildings on the south side are those of the Chapter Hall ("Cabildo") and those of the two sacristies, in Renaissance style. While the current offices date back to the first years of the 20th century.

The cloister is a vast "courtyard" (sahn) of a large Almohad mosque to which the Giralda belonged, the lower part of which is Arabic. The bell tower dates from the Renaissance; this tower is 91.70 m high.

The Parish of the Cathedral or Tabernacle ("Parroquia del Sagrario") is located on the western side of the "Patio de los Naranjos". It is a temple with a single nave, which has one of the chapels between the buttresses and whose overall dimensions form a perfect rectangle.

The Cathedral is directly and materially associated to an event of universal significance: Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492-1493.

From this period are: the Sacristy of the "Calices", the Major Sacristy, the Royal Chapel, the "house of accounts", the Chapter Hall.

The style of these dependencies varies from plateresque to mannerism.

It is in the Cathedral that the tomb of Christopher Colombus is located. It's in the Hall of Admirals

that were prepared for some of the greatest explorations, including the circumnavigation of the world by Magellan and S. del Cano (1519-1522).

**The Alcazar**

The Alcazar and its gardens are no less representative than the Cathedral of the essential phases of Seville's history. This fortress-palace was built in 712 by the Arab conquerors to control the Guadalquivir and preserves a crenellated Almohad period enclosure, as well as several interior spaces dating from before the Reconquest (Patio de las Muñecas, Patio del Yeso).

After 1248, it became the royal residence and was redeveloped during the reign of Peter the Cruel (1350-1369): the palace built inside the Alcazar from 1364 to 1366 illustrates the syncretism inherent in the art of Mudéjar, which borrows its techniques and decorative vocabulary from the Arab art of Andalusia.

More than any other space and despite the over-reporting suffered in the 16th century, the Patio de las Doncellas (Ladies' Patio) is evocative of a captivating aesthetic that survived Christianization with finely crafted stuccoes, artesonados ceilings, azulejos in the galleries, the deaf fountain in the centre of the courtyard.

The works undertaken from the 15th to the 17th centuries partially respected the palace of Peter the Cruel (of which the Ambassadors' Lounge is a prestigious witness) and above all the general provisions of the Alcazar and its gardens: if each century has imposed its mark on the decoration of apartments, fountains or pavilions, the refined tradition of an Andalusian palace has remained intact.

The Seville Alcazar bears an exceptional testimony to the Almohad civilization and Christian Andalusia, all imbued with Moorish influences from the reconquest of 1248 to the 16th century.

The Alcazar is directly and materially associated to an event of universal significance: Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492-1493.

**The Lonja**

The influence of the Giralda has been exerted on many tours in Spain and, after that

the conquest, in America. It is in Lonja that the most precious archives of the American colonies are kept. The former Lonja, now Archivo de Indias, holds the most precious of the archives relating to the colonies of America. The Lonja is directly and materially associated

to an event of universal significance : Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492-1493.

**The Giralda**

Giralda, former minaret of the Great Mosque built from 1172 to 1198 by the Emir Yaqoub al Mansour, competes in size and elegance of its decoration with the Koutoubia of Marrakech and the Hassan Tower of Rabat, the other two major monuments of the time. Become a bell tower after the reconquest of Seville (1248), the minaret escaped destruction and was crowned in the 16th century by the bronze statue of the Faith which acts as a weather vane (Giraldillo) at 97.52m altitude.