

Origins of Évora to the 12th Century



Roman Temple

12th to 16th Centuries



Cathedral

Renaissance Évora



Renaissance Fountein



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Bibliography: Historical Itineraries
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Achaeological remains which predate the Roman period have yet to be found on the site of the “acropolis”, which corresponds to its original nucleus of the city, although other kinds of evidence, for example the name “EBORA”, and the town’s strategic location, suggest that origins go back further than this. Its integration into the Roman administrative framework, with the granting of “*municipium*” status and the adoption of the name of *Ebora Liberalitas Júlia*, only occurred when Julius Caesar led an expedition to the Iberian Peninsula. After two centuries of war, the Pax Romana finally enabled the Emperor Augustus to undertake a programme of wide-ranging administrative reform in the Peninsula. It was at this time that the pattern was established for the shape of the Roman town, then part of the Province of Lusitania, and its main public buildings were founded; however, with the exception of the Imperial Temple and the Public Baths, few vestiges survive to the present day. In the 3rd Century, instability in the Empire and the earliest Barbarian attacks led to the fortification of cities and Évora was no exception, the city receiving its first city walls (the so called “old city walls”). With the subsequent disintegration of the Empire, ravaged by new waves of Germanic invaders, the city seems to enter a long period of decline, and there are few archaeological remains providing evidence of the Visigothic era. Once again benefiting from its strategic location, Évora regained a degree of economic and political importance during the Islamic age. The city walls were reconstructed and a Moorish castle and mosque were built on the ruins of the public buildings of the Roman Acropolis. The urban fabric became denser, hiding the grid-iron pattern of the public buildings of the Roman Acropolis. The urban fabric became denser, hiding the grid-iron pattern of life in the city, and these features are conserved in the historic city centre even today. The Christian conquest of 1165 brought Évora into the kingdom of Portugal; the new Cathedral replaced the Mosque, and the Castle, sited on the ruins of the Roman Temple, now became a Christian stronghold.

12th to 16th Centuries

The origins of Évora go back to time immemorial, before the Roman occupation. However, it was only after the Christian conquest that the town began to grow and great buildings started to appear. Then, during the period of transition from the 15th to the 16th Century, Évora came to be regarded as the second city in the country, and became the habitual seat of the court and the favourite haunt of kings, nobles, artists, and thinkers. The newly conquered Christian city occupied exactly the same area as both Roman and Moslem Évora. It was from this ancient nucleus, initially the vital hub of the city, walls and new urban areas developed which were later integrated into the city, that Évora grew. It extended outside the ancient city walls and new urban areas developed which were later integrated into the city. However, it is in the vicinity of the old Roman forum and the Moslem fortress that we find some of the city’s most impressive buildings: the Cathedral, the original town hall, and the Roman temple (which was adapted for use as a *na abattoir*), as well as some of the oldest palaces in the city, which belonged to local nobles. In the medieval era, the area covered by the city was much more extensive than that of the ancient settlement, and evidence of this is provided by the building of a new ring of the walls in the 16th Century. Urban growth tended to fan out from the original gates. Meanwhile, other urban features appeared, with the establishment of the religious orders, for example. The Jewish Quarter grew up, occupying a privileged position deriving from its important economic role; likewise the Moorish Quarter, which was situated on the outskirts of the city, a location reflecting the low economic and social status enjoyed by the Moorish community. The Royal Palace of São Francisco, a symbol of the importance the kings attached to the city, was built in the vicinity of the Franciscan convent rather than in the old town, demonstrating the vitality of the new area of the city. At the turn of the 16th Century, the most salient feature of the city in urban terms was the counterpoint of temporal and spiritual power in terms of spatial location. What we find is a markedly religious town centre, with the Cathedral, the Bishop’s Palace and, in the second half of the 16th Century, the Palace of the Inquisition and the High Inquisitor. At the same time, there is a temporal power centre in the new city, with buildings occupied by the city hall, the jail, the Royal Pousada of the Estáus, and also the new slaughterhouses, situated in the Praça Grande - the Great Square.

Renaissance Évora

At the end of the Middle Ages Évora was a regional centre of importance, but within the space of just a few years it had become one of the most important centres in 16th Century Portugal for culture and the arts, thanks to the role played by its bishops and popular participation in the expansion process. The city played a leading role in the history of the nation for a century, and for a time was even the capital city of the country. King João II had previously shown royal favour by building São Francisco Church, and in the Renaissance period this trend was continued. A strategic decision was taken to make the city a virile power-centre, and this is evident from the monuments and the urban landscape we see today. Of note from the Manueline age are: buildings in *mudéjar* style; the aristocratic pantheon of the Hieronymite Espinheiro Convent; and the Palaces of the Hieronymite Espinheiro Convent; and the palaces of important of noble families (Cadaval, Castro, Vimioso, Gama, Cordovil, Garcia de Resende, etc.), who King Manuel (1495-1521) encouraged to settle in Évora, rather than in his native Beja - these palaces provide echoes of more civilised and elegant lifestyle. The king reserved for himself the Castelo Novo—New Castle (1518), of Renaissance inspiration, and attracted artists to Évora whose Works are now housed in the museum and the Cathedral. However, it was King João III (1521-57), with patronage channelled through the celebrated humanist André de Resende, who provided the decisive impulse for the regeneration of the Roman pseudo-colony. Just like New Rome, Évora was endowed with public Works fit for a capital city to receive Renaissance style (albeit primitive) constructions (one of them was initially earmarked as a royal pantheon), and the court was filled with Latin poets and vanguard artists, such as the sculptor Nicolau Chanterene and the theorist Francisco de Holanda. In this hot-house atmosphere the *High Renaissance* developed, with the work of the artists Gregório Lopes and Diogo de Contreiras (1550-60: the epic frescos of the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa) and there was a direct Italian influence on architecture in audacious geometric compositions such as those Manuel Pires. From 1537, however, the court abandoned the city, leaving it in the hands of the increasingly powerful archbishops and the Counter-Reformation. Cardinal Infante Henrique founded the University for the Jesuits (1559; M. Pires and Afonso Álvares), as well as the adjoining Espírito Santo (Holy Ghost) College and Church (1566) - these mark a reaction against free Humanism with the shorn and smooth “floor style”, which combines great intellectual sophistication with the rigour of dogma, while neo-medieval Philosophy is paramount, and art reduced to the status of a mere instrument; some notable works survive, making Évora the capital of floor style: from college buildings to the houses of the St Helen of Cavalry Convent (A. Álvaro and Mateus Neto, 1570) facade and fountain (1570) in Praça do Giraldo, where Afonso Álvares mercilessly demolished a beautiful Roman *pórtico* to show new creations. The adoption of a dry, hard, austere *Classicism* signified a change of direction, patent in the Carmelite convent of N^ª Sr^ª Remédios - Our Lady of Remedies (Francisco de Mora, 1605), which Spanish domination accentuated. However, the new movement did not prevent Mannerist liberties such as the profane and erotic frescos.