

PAMPLONA CATHEDRAL

Known for its San Fermín festival that features the running of the bulls, Pamplona is steeped in rich archaeology, as **Jules Stewart** discovered in his visit to this historic capital of the former Kingdom of Navarre.

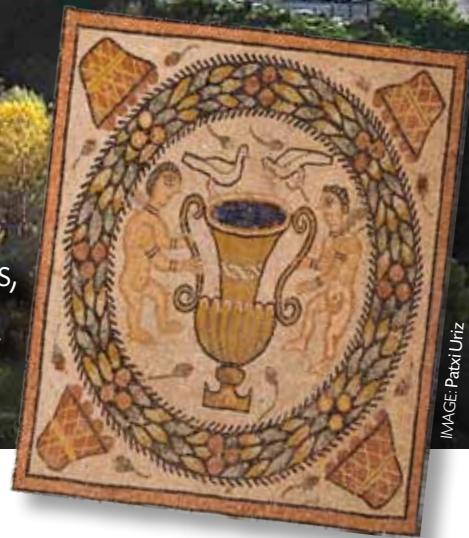


IMAGE: Patxi Uriz

In 1593, as the Huguenot king Henry IV of France converted to Roman Catholicism to secure for himself the French crown, he declared: 'Paris is well worth a Mass'. But, as Henry III of Navarre, he might well have added: 'and Pamplona is well worth a visit'.

The first French monarch of the Bourbon dynasty ruled over Upper Navarre, on the Spanish side of the border, from 1572 until his death in 1610. The French legacy is still very much in evidence in Pamplona, from its regional gastronomy to its cathedral architecture. Indeed,

the cathedral's design is the work of a monk from St Pons de Thomières in southern France, one Pedro de Roda, who was appointed Bishop of Pamplona by the 11th century King Sancho Ramírez of Navarre. Roda came with the intention of implementing the Gregorian Reform of the moral independence and integrity of the clergy, but then set about building what was in its day the second largest cathedral in Spain, after Santiago de Compostela.

BELOW LEFT Facade of Pamplona Cathedral.

BELOW MIDDLE The beautiful gate leading into the archaeological excavation in the Cathedral's cloisters.

BELOW RIGHT Excavation of a 4th century street in the cathedral cloister.



IMAGE: Tourism Department

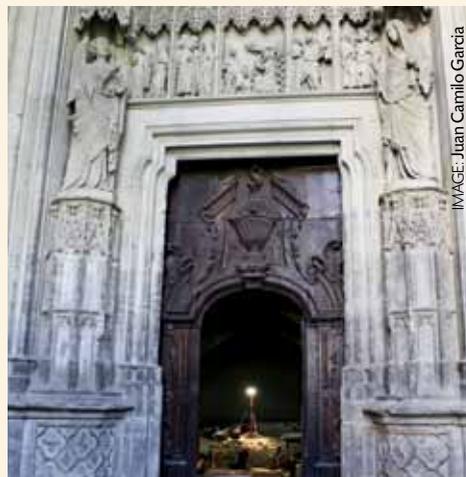


IMAGE: Juan Camilo Garcia

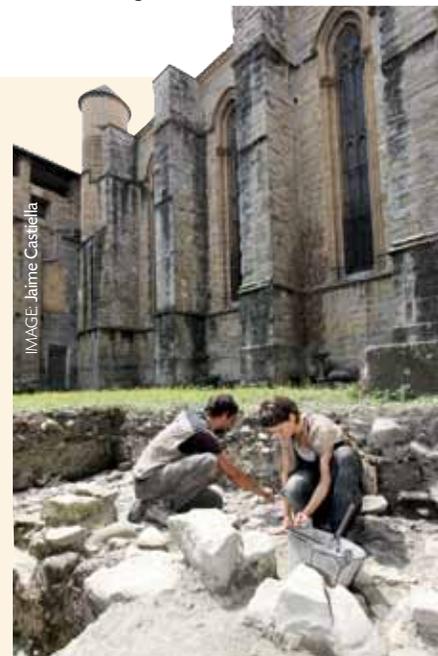


IMAGE: Jaime Castañela

LEFT Aerial view of Pamplona.
INSET LEFT One of the mosaics on display in the Cathedral museum in Pamplona.

RIGHT Excavating part of the Roman structure beneath the cathedral.

BELOW LEFT The archaeology on view at the Occidens permanent exhibition.

BELOW RIGHT Site plan of the Cathedral at Pamplona showing the area of excavation.



IMAGE: Juan Camilo García

IMAGE: Helio Digital

Restoration work and archaeological digs since the 1950s have yielded finds dating as far back as the Bronze Age. This has made a major contribution to the knowledge of the origins and history of Pompelo - Pamplona - which was founded and named after the Roman General Pompey in 74 BC. Archaeologists have recovered finds in and around the cathedral that date from the pre-Roman settlement in the upper reaches of the city, to 2nd century AD parallel streets inside the building, as well as a nymphaeum, or monumental fountain consecrated to aquatic deities as guardians of water. Coins were ritually thrown in the pool, and more than 2,000 Imperial Roman coins of the 4th and 5th centuries have been recovered from the site. One of the most remarkable discoveries was recently unearthed inside the cathedral, as part of a programme initiated in 2012 by an international team of young archaeologists from Spanish, US, Canadian, and Polish universities, under the auspices of the local archaeological consultancy group Gabinete Trama and UNED, Spain's National University of Distance Learning.

Holy Visigoth

The archaeologists found the remains of a home, a child burial and tools beneath the cathedral, evidence of settlements belonging to the Vascones, a warlike tribe that occupied this region from the 7th to the 1st centuries BC, and believed to be the ancestors of the present-day Basques. In the 1st millennium BC, the Vascones inhabited the territory that roughly corresponds with present-day Navarre as well as some surrounding territories. They called their principal settlement Iruña, now incorporated into the city's official

name of Pamplona-Iruña. Further excavations uncovered structures and artefacts dating to the Roman and Medieval periods. But the Visigoth presence remained elusive.

Yet, it made sense for early Christians to choose this location on which to build a church: the cathedral sits rather unusually on a mound outside what was in once the town proper. It seemed probable to the archaeologists that earlier religious structures of the Vascones and Visigoths once stood on this site, yet the evidence remained elusive, until now.

'We have now unearthed the first tangible evidence of a Visigoth structure within the cathedral,' says Javier Aizpún, Canon of the Cathedral and Commissioner of the Occidens Exhibition. 'It is a large rectangular structure, measuring 7m x 27m, and looks to be the remains of a Visigoth basilica or a Visigoth Episcopal residence. If so, it would have been Pamplona's most important building.'

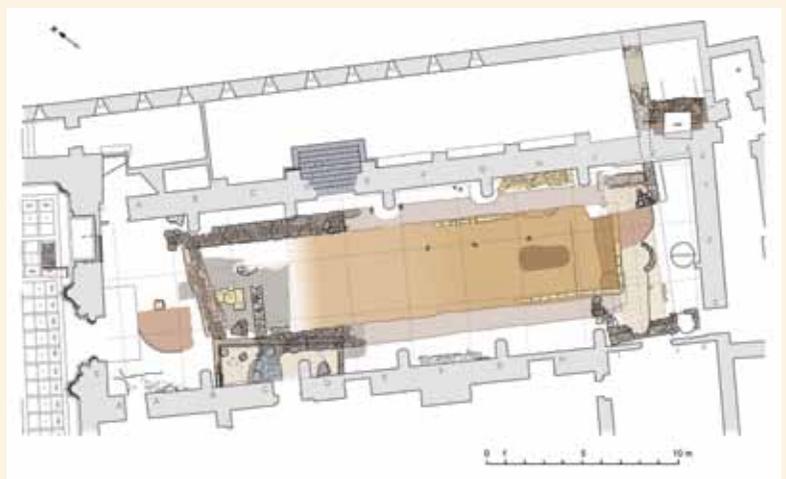
Tests so far confirm the find dates to between the 6th and 9th centuries AD, and may have been a Visigoth bishopric. Archaeologist María García Barberena, one of the directors of the excavation explains: 'The first bishop of Pamplona for whom we have records is Liliolo: he attended the III Toledo Council in 589, which means Pamplona was already an Episcopal see in the 6th century.'

Design triumph

Without a doubt the jewel in the cathedral's crown is Occidens, the award-winning permanent exhibition of Western culture. Occidens opened in 2013 and has already been selected as the best exhibition in the world by Core77 Design Award in New York. It also won the ▶



IMAGE: Juan Camilo García





IMAGES: Juan Camilo Garcia



LEFT A coin of Constantine the Great and a bell discovered beneath the pavement of the Late Antique structure.

ABOVE Roman coins dating to the 4th century AD, with the portrait of Constantine the Great and his sons.

RIGHT The author and friends enjoy award-winning pre-dinner pintxos at the Bar Gaucho in Pamplona.



PHOTO: Daniel Campanero

FX International Interior Design Award 2013, and was selected at the XII Biennial of Spanish Architecture and Urbanism and received a special mention the European Museum of the Year Award for 2014.

Occidens takes as its premise the challenges faced by the West of a new civilisation born of global cultural amalgamation. The message is that our culture has a crucial role to play in this process: in its architecture, music, market economy, democratic institutions and its concept of the individual.

‘The focus of Occidens is on Western values in the modern world,’ says Javier Aizpún, who is Commissioner of the exhibition as well as the cathedral’s Canon. ‘It traces the development of the West through the history of Navarre, starting with the Vascones. We are working together with other cathedrals in Spain and abroad with the aim of creating similar exhibitions. The idea is that in each place the

cathedral would tell its own story of Western values. In that sense, Occidens is a living exhibition.’

The exhibition takes the visitor on a tour of Pamplona’s Cathedral and the roots of the West, tracing this through the history of Navarre. ‘In so doing,’ says Javier Aizpún, ‘we may discover who we are. Through our past, we gain a greater understanding of our present, which stands us in better stead to face the future.’

The story told by Occidens begins in October AD 312, when Constantine granted religious freedom throughout the Roman Empire, ratified the following year by the Edict of Milan. The exhibition then treads a path through three periods: from Antiquity to the Christian Middle Ages; 1512 and the coalescence of Athens, Rome, Jerusalem and the Germanic spirit; and finally, the process by which the West reached maturity, ending with the Second Vatican Council of 1962.



PHOTO: Larrion and Pimoulier

LEFT Aerial view of Pamplona’s Ciudadela (citadel).

BELOW Pamplona’s defensive walls that encircle the old city with its cobbled streets.



PHOTO: Antonio Olza

IMAGE: Jaime Castiella



ABOVE On going excavation and research is revealing life in Late Antiquity below the floor of the Cathedral's cloisters.

The archaeological excavations start in the Antiquity Room, with four rock strata of the Vascones, Early and Late Roman Empire, and the Middle Ages. Archaeological finds in and around the cathedral are linked to each of these periods, up to the invasion of Navarre by the Muslims in 712, marking the end of Antiquity not only in the Pamplona district, but also across the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Here, then, was the choice, Occidens tells us: accept Islam or rally to the defence of Christendom. It was nearly 800 years before the matter was decided.

The last great achievement of these centuries is shown in the Modern and Contemporary Room, which describes the liberal and democratic reforms that have shaped the Western world. Finally, a symbolic rose-tinted room calls our attention to the threat facing the world today: relativism. 'A contemporary age not based on the values of the West is under construction,' says Javier Aizpún. 'This relativist modernity is an artificial world, without mystery and without depth, in which the tragic side of human life and its spiritual vocation have been relegated to silence, or even systematically denied.'

More to explore

Lest you emerge from the cathedral in too ponderous a state of mind, Pamplona is a city brimming with the cheer. Often, when I tell friends I'm off to Pamplona, they reply with the remark, 'Oh, yes, isn't that where they run the bulls through the streets?' It is true, but it is worth bearing in mind that this early morning event accounts for less than half an hour of a week-long festival that is celebrated with regional dances and music, nightly international fireworks competitions, Basque sports (stone lifting, wood chopping), and endless children's events.

The Museum of Navarre is a 10-minute walk from the cathedral. It houses a remarkable array of Medieval art and artefacts, with outstanding Gothic sculptures, paintings, and silverwork. The museum also has one of Spain's largest collections of Gothic murals, as well as several rooms of Renaissance and Baroque works of art and architecture.

Pamplona, which lies on the Pilgrim's Route to Santiago, boasts one of Europe's best preserved Medieval wall enclosures, along almost the entire circumference of the historic old town with its

FURTHER INFORMATION

Cathedral and Occidens Exhibition

Calle Curia, s/n, 31001 Pamplona

Exhibition open daily (except Sunday) 11.00am to 6pm

Tickets: €5.00 adults, €4.00 children and concessions.

www.catedraldepamplona.com

The bell tower can be visited at 11.30am by prior booking. This is included in the price of the ticket, but be at the gate by 11.00am to secure a place. Visitors have the opportunity to stand below the great bell María, forged in 1584. At about 10,060kg, María is the largest bell in use in Spain, and can be heard almost 10 miles across the valley.

Museo de Pamplona (Pamplona Museum)

Santo Domingo, 47, 31001 Pamplona

Opening Times: Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am-2pm and 5pm-7pm

Sunday and Public Holidays 11am-2pm, Closed on Mondays

Free entry

www.cfnavarra.es/cultura/museo

For more information about the excavation work is available on www.archaeoccidens.com.

cobbled streets. The 16th century citadel, known as the Ciudadela, extends over 280,000 m² and as such ranks as one of the largest city fortifications in Europe.

And, as mentioned above, gastronomy ranks as part of Pamplona's French heritage – up to a point, that is. The region has developed its own indigenous cuisine, called Cocina Vasco-Navarra, which is heavily influenced by Basque culinary tradition from both sides of the border. Navarre is landlocked, yet the emphasis is on seafood, delivered daily from the Cantabrian ports which are less than an hour away by motorway. Navarre is the orchard of Spain, and the exaltation of vegetables by the locals approaches cult status. Indeed, monthly fairs celebrate the new crops of artichokes, strawberries, white asparagus, and red peppers. And bars in Pamplona take part in an annual competition for the best pintxo, an elaborate haute cuisine version of the tapas.

Visitors seeking a place to savour local delicacies are spoilt for choice. Pamplona, with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants, is one of the most prosperous cities in Spain, if not in Europe, and boasts a profusion of top-class restaurants. They range in style from traditional local dishes, such as San Ignacio, to imaginative Michelin-starred haute-cuisine, as at Rodero, with everything in between. The award-winning pintxos of the Bar Gaucho are worth the struggle to find space at the bar. And, there is good news for visitors unaccustomed to Spain's late dinner hours: in Pamplona you will not feel lonely if you book a table for 9.00pm. ■

Jules Stewart is an historian and author. His latest book *The Kaiser's Mission to Kabul: A secret expedition to Afghanistan in World War I* is published by I B Tauris.

GETTING THERE

There are no direct flights from the UK to Pamplona. The best options are Iberia subsidiary Vueling (from Heathrow and Gatwick) or EasyJet (from Gatwick and Stansted) to Bilbao, or any of the major airlines to Madrid. From Bilbao it is a two-hour coach journey to Pamplona. There are frequent trains from Madrid to Pamplona, with a journey time of three hours. Iberia operates domestic flights from Madrid.