

The access door through **Portal de la Ribera (3)** is a great work of baroque carpentry. It was fashioned and carved in 1748 using pilasters panels, by the carver and assembler Pedro de Gama.

The **baptismal font (2)**, made of one piece, is of baroque style and dates from the middle of the XVII century.

The **sacristy (9)**, built at the same time as the temple, has neogothic furniture elaborated in 1908 by Alberdi, Bengoechea and Company.

This temple is where the people of Portugalete have historically celebrated all their religious ceremonies: from baptisms to funerals to weddings, confessions, rosaries, communions, novenas and retreats.

In 1996, at the initiative of the **Association of Friends of the Basilica of Portugalete**, the **Parish Museum (13)**, installed where the modern sacristy was, opened its doors. The museum heritage of the Basilica is composed of all those objects that were used in both the past and the present that are deemed to be of value, whether artistic, historical or sentimental: pictures, ornaments, objects of liturgical goldsmithery, missals, banners, crosses, etc.

Given the splendor of the temple and its significance as place of worship, Pope Pius XII granted it the title of **Basilica Minor** through a pontifical brief in 1951.

The Basque Government, in the collaboration of the Ministry for Culture, declared the Basilica to be a **Heritage Site of Cultural Interest** in 1984, in the category of Historical-Artistic Monument.

In 1987 and 1994, the Basilica underwent an integral restoration of both the architecture and the furniture. The works were carried out by the **Town-Planning Rehabilitation Society of Portugalete** (SUR-POSA), which restored this beautiful building to its former glory.



### ST. MARY'S BASILICA, PORTUGALETE

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## ST. MARY'S BASILICA

### PORTUGALETE

When Mrs Maria Diaz de Haro, Lady of Bizkaia, founded the Villa of Portugalete in 1322, it was granted a Carta Puebla in which the construction of a church was ordered under the advocacy of St. Mary. The inhabitants of this new villa, obeying the command, built a small church.

With the economic boom of the mid-fifteenth century, the population of Portugalete grew significantly so it was decided to improve and extend their parish church, which by now was small and insufficient for the growing population.

The work on the church started in 1492 and did not finish until 1590. It is unknown as to who the original designer was and who managed the original project, but we do know that Maestro Cantero Juan de Garita took charge of the work from 1530.

The main stone used in Portugalete's Basilica was sandstone of ashlar with warm tones. The stone is well preserved on the inside of the building but the outside shows clear signs of weather erosion.

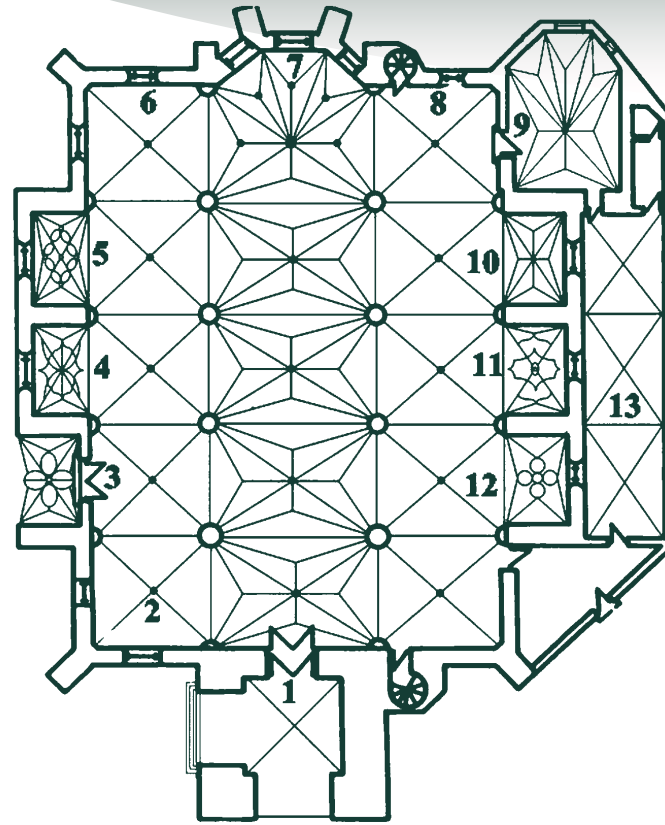
Conceived just as the gothic style was going out of fashion, the temple presents a basilica layout with three naves and five sections. The aisles reach two thirds of the height of the central nave so a flying buttress is required to support the pressure exerted at the beginning of the central vault and transmitted to a buttress.

The different heights of the naves, means that a narrow decorative corridor that runs through the central area is also necessary. This corridor is called Triforium. The structure of supports take the form of cylindrical pillars with adjoining columns on which settle downward arches that, in turn, generate the cross vaults.

The renaissance style is best appreciated in the Portal de la Ribera, the access to the sacristy, the windows in the choir area, the vegetable decoration of the capitals, the layout of the lateral chapels and on the sepulcher of the Chapel of Salazar.

The baroque style tower was designed by the architect Lucas de Longa in 1681 and was finished in the eighteenth century. During the Carlist Wars, the tower was weakened by the bombings so in 1894 the lantern and the cupula were re-designed under the stewardship of Francisco Berriozabal.

Under the tower is the **Main Gate (1)**, facing where the streets of the medieval quarter converge - a Renaissance style austere entry which gradually transitions to a Herrerian style.



The **Main Chapel (7)** is presided over by the Retablo Mayor, one of the most outstanding works of Renaissance sculpture of the Basque Country. It is due to the sculptor brothers Guyot and Juan de Beaugrant who, together with Juan de Ayala, who completed it between 1549 and 1555 and it was joined by Juan de Imberto. The polychromatic design of the central aisle was created in 1749 by Andres de Rada from Alava.

The carving of Our Lady (Andra Mari), enthroned in the altarpiece, dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century and is the only evidence of the primitive church. She is the head of the church and the patron saint of the town.

The church is bathed in natural light thanks to its double-glazed stained glass with flamenco tracery, typical of Basque Gothic.

Five chapels open off the buttresses. The **Salazar chapel (4)** contains an artistic Renaissance tomb. In the Adoration of the **Three Wise Kings (5)**, an altarpiece by the Beaugrant brothers, depicts the Kings adoring the Child. The **Inmaculada chapel (10)** houses a neogothic altarpiece with illustrations of Vicente Larrea Aldama. In the chapel of **San Antonio (11)** is the Christ of the Portal, a Spanish-Flemish carving of the fifteenth century. In the **Santiago chapel (12)**, enclosed in a Renaissance rail, there is also a Renaissance altarpiece. The **Portal de la Ribera (3)**, designed by Juan de Garita and made by the Beaugrant brothers, occupies the place of the other chapel.

Two excellent examples of Flemish painting dating from the first century are exhibited in the Basilica:

- The **Triptych of the Coronation (6)** is rich in color and detail, this is especially true regarding the costumes and characterizations of the characters represented.
- **The Virgin, Queen of Angels**, colloquially known as the **Virgen de la Pera (8)**, stands out for the richness of the garments, the faint colors and the floral complement.

Although the author of these paintings is unknown, it is certain that they were both painted by the same hand.

El Púlpito, the pulpit, is on a polygonal stone base, the sill of which was made by Vicente Larrea Aldama in 1898. Ascent to the pulpit is via a beautiful stairway surrounding the column.

The Romantic organ was built in 1901 by the French Henri Didier. The organ, with its tubular system, pneumatic framework, fine tubing and, above all, the richness of sound and timbre it produces, is a real feat of engineering.