

Historical Guide to Tavira



CREDITS

PUBLISHED BY

Câmara Municipal de Tavira

DESIGN

Nerve Atelier de Design

PHOTO CREDITS

Ana Carvalho (pages 36, 37, 49)

António Cunha (page 10)

Ricardo Silva Cordeiro (pages 11, 13, 26, 28, 29, 32, 42, 47, 48)

Nerve Atelier de Design (the other photos)

TRANSLATION

Inpokulis Traduções

PRINT

Jorge Fernandes, Lda.

No. OF COPIES

2000

YEAR

2019

Contents

2	Introduction
4	Timeline
6	Archaeological Tavira
8	Phoenician Ritual Wells
9	Phoenician Wall
10	Islamic Museum
12	Islamic Walls of Tavira
18	The Almohad Quarter
20	Visions of the Gothic and the Manueline
22	Gothic Doors in the Historic Centre
24	Church of Santa Maria do Castelo
26	Former Convent of São Francisco
27	16 th Century Chapel of the Church of Hospital do Espírito Santo (or of São José)
28	Portico of the former Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Piedade (or Bernardas)
30	The Renaissance of André Pilarte and the austere “Estilo Chão”
32	Church of Misericórdia
34	<i>Loggia</i> of Palácio da Galeria
36	Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Graça
38	Renaissance Window in the Irene Rolo House
39	Casa André Pilarte
40	Renaissance Window in Travessa D. Brites
42	Church of the Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda (or of São Paulo)
44	The Arrival of the Baroque
46	Chapel of São Sebastião
48	Church of the Hospital do Espírito Santo (or of São José)
49	Main Church of Santiago
50	Palácio da Galeria
51	Chapel of São Brás
52	Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo

Introduction

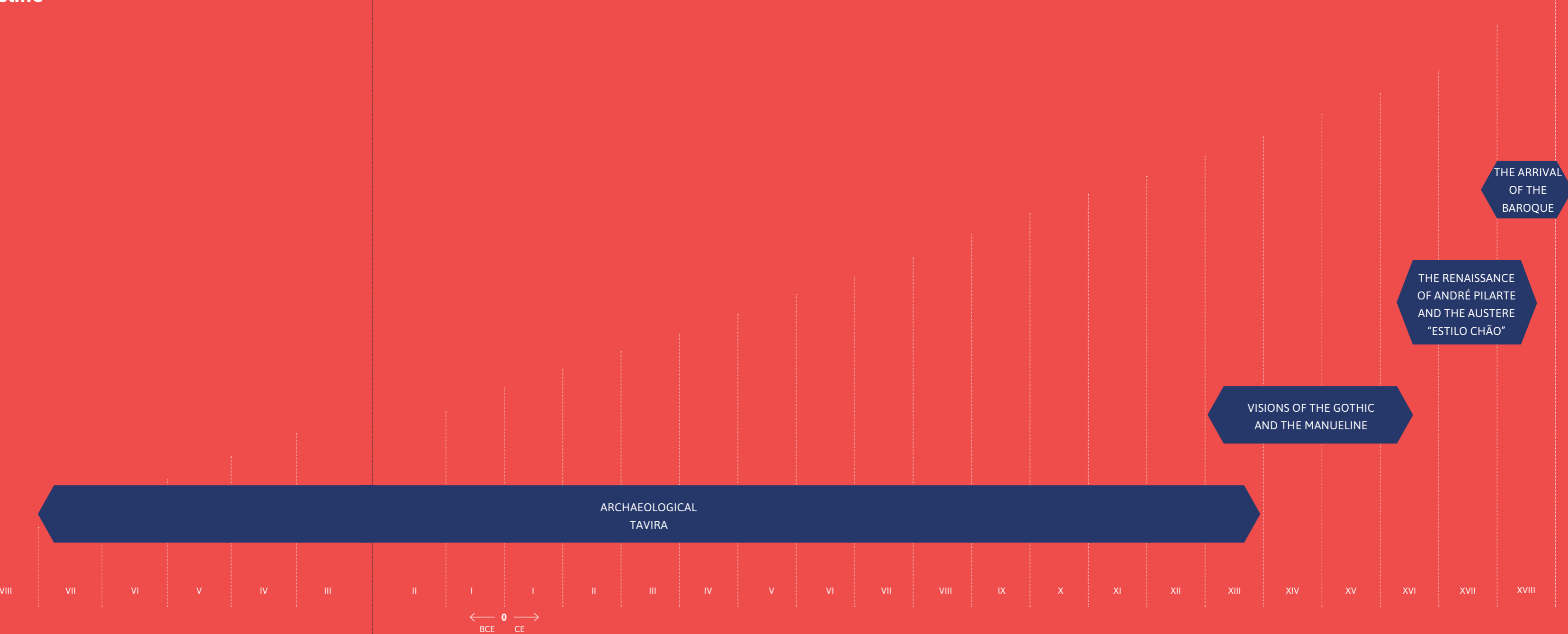
This guide highlights the main witnesses to the most significant eras in Tavira's history. The variety, timeline, and the diversity of building techniques and artistic styles enable valuable and worthwhile discoveries.

The spaces mentioned here date from the most remote times to the mediaeval, Gothic and Manueline eras by way of Renaissance and "plain style" architecture, through to the awakening of the Early Modern Period and the noteworthy productions of Baroque Tavira. A synthetic but inviting vision of Tavira's historical and artistic evolution.

Discover our history and enjoy the experience!



Timeline





Archaeological Tavira

In the period running from the late eighth century to the sixth century BCE, a population from the easternmost part of the Mediterranean settled on the Santa Maria Hill.

Excellent sailors and traders, the Phoenicians colonised the westernmost part of the Mediterranean sometime around the ninth century BCE. Various vestiges from this period have been found in Tavira, including at the Palácio da Galeria, at the Antigo Solar dos Cortes Reais and at the Convento da Graça, where a Phoenician necropolis dating from the second half/late seventh century BCE was identified. The ashes of the bodies cremated here were placed in ceramic urns.

As the sixth century dawned, the strong Syrian/Carthaginian influences that had been in evidence since the eighth century gave rise to *Turdetania*, which stretched from the Pillars of Hercules (Strait of Gibraltar) to the Sacred Cape (Cape St. Vincent).

Vestiges from this period, identified in the present-day Islamic Museum, have made it possible to determine that fishing and preserving activities took place here: a mooring jetty, a storehouse for amphorae containing fish products and, believe it or not, the oldest tun fishing net currently known.

It is thought that, in the early third century BCE, the population of Tavira may have settled a kilometre upstream, on the Cerro do Cavaco (Cavaco Hill). After Romanisation, around 30 BCE, a new migration took place; this time it was to the coastal strip between Santa Luzia and Luz de Tavira, founding the “Opulent Balsa”. Little is known about the Roman occupation of what is now Tavira. Because of the place names in the area, some writers say that there was a Roman villa at Bela Fria. However, no such villa has ever been found. Furthermore, the ancient bridge that tradition stubbornly insists on calling “Roman” actually dates from the Middle Ages (twelfth century).

When the Muslims arrived, possibly in the eleventh century, Tavira was probably deserted or, at best, would have lost the dynamic economy and trade it had enjoyed in earlier times. Under Muslim rule, the city gained a new lease of life; it was the capital of a Taifa kingdom and, during the Almohad period, even became the capital of a district.

- 1 Phoenician Ritual Wells
- 2 Phoenician Wall
- 3 Islamic Museum
- 4 Islamic Walls of Tavira
- 5 The Almohad Quarter

1 Phoenician Ritual Wells

7TH TO 6TH CENTURIES B.C.

CALÇADA DA GALERIA / PALÁCIO DA GALERIA*

37.125970, -7.651398

At this site, current investigations suggest that there may have been cults related to Phoenician deities.

Excavations in the atrium of the Palácio da Galeria have allowed several “wells” dug out of the rock to be identified and interpreted as “Phoenician ritual wells”, dating from the seventh to the sixth centuries BCE and dedicated to the worship of the storm god, Baal. Since this god controlled the winds needed for sailing, sailors worshipped him in order to obtain favourable conditions for their journeys.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGES 34 AND 50



2 Phoenician Wall

8TH CENTURY B.C. (END)

CALÇADA D. PAIO PERES CORREIA

37.125558, -7.650811

One of the most emblematic vestiges from the Phoenician era is a solid wall that is as much as 9.5 metres thick. A 13-metre-long section has survived to the present day. This monument can be seen at the new Museological Hub of Tavira Municipal Museum, which is currently at the installation stage.

Other structures dating from the 7th century BCE to the 18th century CE were also identified at this site. Among many others, we would highlight a section of an Islamic road and a Gothic arch. These can be viewed at this site until such time as they are moved to the future museum facility.



3 Islamic Museum

11TH TO 13TH CENTURY

PRAÇA DA REPÚBLICA

37.125889, -7.650210

One of the most emblematic archaeological pieces from the Islamic period in Tavira, or perhaps even the Algarve, was found here: the Tavira vase.

This is a ceramic vase with representations of animals and people around the rim. It dates from the late eleventh or early twelfth century.



4 Islamic Walls of Tavira

Various parts of the wall that defended the city during the Muslim period in Tavira can be found throughout the historical city centre. There are parts of the walls that are not visible and cannot be visited.

Adobe Cyclops Wall

12TH CENTURY

INTERIOR OF THE ISLAMIC MUSEUM / PRAÇA DA REPÚBLICA

37.125889, -7.650210

Built with a robust amalgam of limestone, stone and sand, the wall was lined with stone to make it even stronger.

Adobe Military Tower

12TH CENTURY

INTERIOR OF THE ISLAMIC MUSEUM / PRAÇA DA REPÚBLICA

37.125889, -7.650210

This tower stands against the wall and was built of damp earth mixed with stones and limestone.

Plastered Wall

12TH CENTURY

CORNER OF RUA GONÇALO VELHO AND PRAÇA DA REPÚBLICA

37.126289, -7.650241

At the corner where Rua Gonçalo Velho and Praça da República meet, we can see how structures of this type would have looked when they still played an important role in the defence of the city, since they would have been coated in ochre-coloured plaster. The Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade (Our Lady of Piety), located in this street, also made use of a part of the wall.



Military Towers in Adobe

12TH CENTURY

RUA DETRÁS DOS MUROS

37.126355, -7.652286

Like the tower located inside the Islamic Museum, these were built in military taipa (a mixture of mud, stones and lime).

Albarrã Tower Bridge

12TH CENTURY

RUA DA BELA FRIA

37.125350, -7.653797

These towers stand back from the wall and are connected to it by a solid walkway, allowing the defensive enclosure to be protected from an advanced position.

Military Adobe Wall

12TH CENTURY

RUA ANTÓNIO VIEGAS AND RUA DA PORTA DO POSTIGO

37.124797, -7.653460 AND 37.124427, -7.652947

Built during the Almohad period, this section of wall denotes an innovation brought by this dynasty to construction in taipa; the addition of limestone, giving the structure greater solidity and making it harder.



Castle of Tavira

11TH CENTURY

LARGO ABU OTMANE

37.125389, -7.651425

The Castle of Tavira was built to protect the river crossing prior to the bridge being built in the twelfth century. We suggest a wander around the castle, which will give you a chance to admire not only the magnificent view over the city and the ria, but also the original octagonal watchtower.



5 The Almohad Quarter

13TH CENTURY

LARGO DR. JORGE CORREIA / CONVENTO DA GRAÇA*

37.125048, -7.652973

During the Almohad period (late twelfth century to early thirteenth century) the population grew because of the number of people fleeing from the advance of Christianity.

This demographic growth led to the construction of a residential quarter inside the walls and to a suburb extending from Bela Fria to the present-day Youth Hostel.

When work was underway to convert the old Convento da Graça into the current-day pousada, an Almohad quarter dating from the late twelfth century was discovered. Part of this quarter has been preserved and a small exhibition hub was created that comprises the dwelling structures and some of the objects found at the site.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGE 36





Visions of the Gothic and the Manueline

On the Hill of Santa Maria, encircled by the castle walls, the Christian conquerors of the Order of St. James of the Sword consolidated their civil, military and religious presence. Here, the first churches were built, some of them reusing the remains of the earlier Arab mosques. This is probably the case of the Main Church of Santa Maria, built on the orders of the Order of St. James of the Sword and the most important building in the mediaeval city.

In the years to follow, noblemen, clergy and rich bourgeois sought to safeguard their memory for posterity by founding chapels with masses and paying for generous amounts of religious architecture. In this context, the Gothic style – recognised in architecture by the widespread use of pointed arches and ribs in the vaults – marked the constructions in the town during the Late Middle Ages (thirteen to fifteenth centuries). However, its history today consists of fragments, i.e. some vestiges that have survived the passing of time, natural disasters, changing tastes and the transformations of the city's built landscape. The last phase of the Gothic in Portugal is known as the Manueline period.

The style was at its height during the reign of King D. Manuel I (1495-1521) and this was probably due in part to the monarch's interest in dignifying the kingdom with constructions that were worthy of the glory achieved by the Portuguese expansion throughout the world. The primary trait for which the Manueline style became known was architectural decoration. The exuberant and eclectic embellishment could be seen on porticos or interior pillars, while complex webs of ribbing appeared on the vaults. The Gothic pointed arches were replaced by multifoiled, horseshoe and ogee arches, in various combinations, affirming the taste for extensive decoration, for the exotic and for the fabulous. At this time, Tavira, which was granted its city charter in 1520, was the most prosperous urban centre in the Algarve. It benefited from its strategic position in the context of Portuguese expansion and provided support for the defence and maintenance of the North African conquests. The Manueline left marks here and this was certainly due in part to the influence of the many important artists who passed through on their way to the sites in Morocco where they developed their artistic work in the service of the Crown.

- 1 Gothic Doors of the Historic Centre
- 2 Church of Santa Maria do Castelo
- 3 Former Convent of São Francisco
- 4 16th Century Chapel of the Church of Hospital do Espírito Santo (or of São José)
- 5 Portico of the former Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Piedade (or Bernardas)

1 Gothic Doors of the Historic Centre

14TH CENTURY

RUA GONÇALO VELHO, CALÇADA D. ANA AND CALÇADA ST.ª MARIA
37.126631, -7.651143, 37.126183, -7.651766 AND 37.125589, -7.652509

Vestiges of Gothic architecture can be found all over the historical city centre of Tavira, especially old doors with pointed arches, an indication of how old the original buildings are.

Many of these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century houses were successively modified in line with the fashions of the times and the different functional necessities, with the result that the only Gothic part still remaining is the old stonework.

Examples of this are the two doors that have survived to the present day, one near the old fountain, and the other on the Calçada de Dona Ana, in the rear façade of the Palácio da Galeria.



2 Church of Santa Maria do Castelo

13TH AND 14TH CENTURIES
LARGO DR. JORGE CORREIA
37.125346, -7.651747

Tradition has it that this temple was built on the site of the old and main Muslim mosque, shortly after the capture of Tavira (1242) by the Order of St. James of the Sword, to whom it was donated and belonged until the mid-sixteenth century. The church as we know it today has a neoclassical profile due to the reconstruction work carried out in the aftermath of the 1755 earthquake, which probably destroyed the vaults of the chancel and the naves.

Still surviving from the early Gothic, we have the two secondary chapels that stand either side of the chancel, as well as the main portico. The former are covered by a pointed rib vault and lit by windows with a pointed arch. The ribs of the vaults rest on capitals decorated with motifs representing regional flora.

Outside, the main portico, with four archivolts with pointed arches and respective capitals with plant motifs, was built during work carried out in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

The side nave of the church contains the Chapel of Senhor dos Passos, architectural evidence of the Manueline phase. Built in the second decade of the sixteenth century, it was sponsored by Lançarote de Melo, commander of the Order of St. James of the Sword. A highlight is the dynamic multi-ribbed vault with decorative features representing heraldic pieces associated with the sponsor's lineage. Also worthy of mention is the decoration of the ends of the ribs in the vault, where two dragons facing up to one another are depicted on one side and, on the other, a belt and buckle, expressions of the fantastic and the mundane, which are common themes in Manueline art.



3 Former Convent of São Francisco

13TH AND 14TH CENTURIES

PRAÇA ZACARIAS GUERREIRO

37.123053, -7.650862

Outside the ancient enclosure of the walls, on the hill next to that of Santa Maria, stand the remains of Tavira's old Franciscan convent, an imposing mediaeval construction dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Not much of the building now survives, due to part of the church collapsing in 1840 and to a big fire caused by a lightning strike in 1881. The present-day church is the result of reconstruction work carried out in the 1800s, which changed its original orientation.

Parts of the old Gothic construction still exist, including the current sacristy and two chapels that now open on to the municipal garden. The former still has an admirable sexpartite Gothic vault, with its keystones and vegetal capitals, as well as a large window with a pointed arch. This structure corresponded to a secondary chapel alongside the apse of the church.

In turn, the two chapels, which open on to the municipal garden, are delimited at the entrance by the traditional pointed arches, and are covered by pointed rib vaults resting on vegetal capitals. Connected to the nave of the old convent church, of which no traces now remain, they served as side chapels.



4 Sixteenth Century Chapel of the Church of Hospital do Espírito Santo

(or of São José)*

16TH CENTURY (FIRST HALF)

PRAÇA ZACARIAS GUERREIRO

37.123414, -7.650725

The Espírito Santo Hospital was built on the same hill as the Convent of São Francisco in 1454, with King D. Afonso V as its patron. Its mission was to take in the wounded from military or overseas expeditions. Of particular interest in the church of this old hospice is a sixteenth-century side chapel, located on the Gospel side, which was kept unaltered even after the reconstruction of the temple in 1752. It features a star vault finished with five keystones portraying coats-of-arms of the Melo and the Costa families. Another of the decorative elements from this same period is an interesting grid or air hole, crafted in stone, of the same type as the one that can be admired in the Chapel of Senhor dos Passos, in the Church of Santa Maria do Castelo.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGE 38





5 Portico of the former Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Piedade

(or Bernardas)

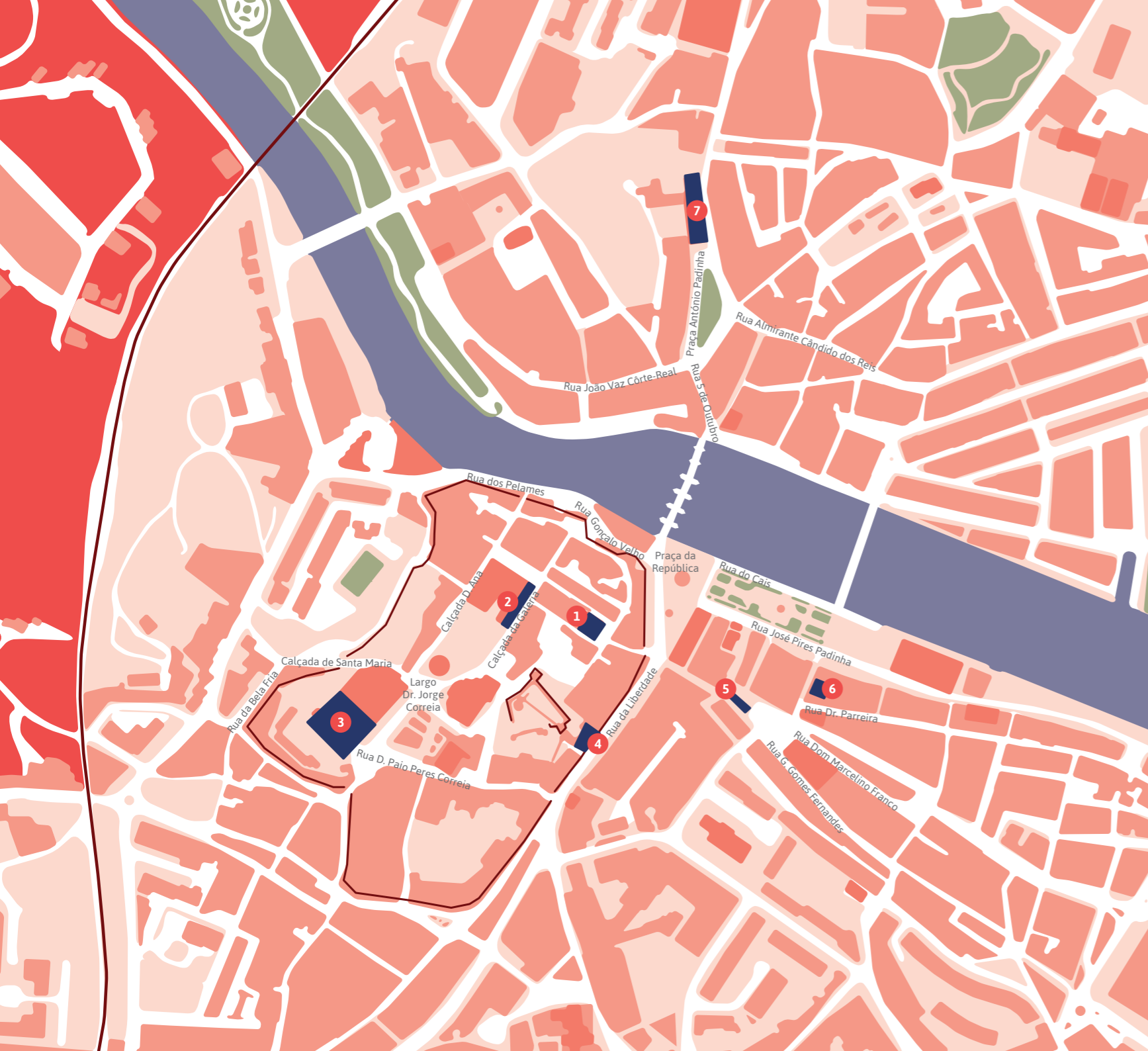
16TH CENTURY (FIRST HALF)
RUA ARQ.º SOUTO MOURA
37.121843, -7.645745

As a monastic building, the Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Piedade (Our Lady of Piety) was the biggest in the Algarve and the only one belonging to the Cistercian Order in the south of the country.

The monastery was founded in 1509 by King D. Manuel I, as a gesture of gratitude for the lifting of a siege imposed by the Moors on Asilah. In 1530, with the building practically complete – and built in line with the Manueline artistic fashion –, it was handed over to the Cistercian nuns, who remained there until the nineteenth century.

The north façade features a Gothic/Manueline portal, defined by a round arch and two archivolts resting on pillars with a star-shaped base, cylindrical shaft and capitals decorated with plant motifs. In keeping with the custom at female convents, this public door to the old church is located on the side of the building. This is justified by decorum and the strict cloistered discipline. The faithful, thus guided towards the altar, were forced to avoid visual contact with the nuns accommodated in the choir, located at the rear of the temple.





The Renaissance of André Pilarte and the Austere “Estilo Chão”

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the society of the Algarve’s most prosperous city had enough resources to be able to build and embellish new temples and palaces with works of artistic merit.

Very early on, Tavira had become a busy architectural hub marked by the acceptance of the new Italian Renaissance fashion. This could be seen from the many documents commissioning works with descriptions such as “in Roman-style”, “Roman stone” and “Modern Roman”. Unrivalled at this time in the context of constructive landscaping, not only in Tavira but in the whole eastern Algarve, was undoubtedly the figure of local architect André Pilarte. Highly-acclaimed in Tavira, the artist came from the workshops of the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon, where he had worked. Around 1530, he was living and working in his native city of Tavira, where he designed and directed the building of the Misericórdia Church (1541-51) as well as other important Renaissance works.

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, it was clear to see that the city was falling into decline both economically and strategically. The situation was worsened by the abandonment of several possessions in North Africa, by the Spanish domination and by the progressive silting of the River Gilão, which contributed to a fall in trading at Tavira’s port. Despite the city’s loss of importance, new constructions were still being built, although now in the austere “estilo chão” (plain style), characterised by its formal austerity and lack of decorative features, values which would be hugely successful in architecture until the Baroque style made its appearance in the eighteenth century.

- 1 Church of Misericórdia
- 2 Loggia of Palácio da Galeria
- 3 Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Graça
- 4 Renaissance Window in the Irene Rolo House
- 5 Casa André Pilarte
- 6 Renaissance Window in Travessa D. Brites
- 7 Church of the Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda (or of São Paulo)

1 Church of Misericórdia

1541-1551

LARGO DA MISERICÓRDIA

37.125854, -7.650611

Architect André Pilarte designed this church for the Sisterhood of the Misericórdia de Tavira. The main façade is considered to be one of the best examples of Portuguese Renaissance in the Algarve. It features an imposing portico with a round arch and a considerable amount of *all' antico* embellishment from Italian engravings; above it, there is a *Senhora da Misericórdia* (Our Lady of Mercy), shaded by a dossal and bounded by two fluttering angels, in between the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. Inside, there are three naves and four bays, a layout that would be replicated in other André Pilarte churches in the eastern Algarve (Moncarapacho, Luz de Tavira, Santa Catarina da Fonte do Bispo, Conceição de Tavira, Cacela-a-Velha and Alcoutim). The pillars are finished off with admirable Renaissance capitals.



2 Loggia of Palácio da Galeria

C. 1530-1560

CALÇADA DA GALERIA / PALÁCIO DA GALERIA *

37.125970, -7.651398

In the city's biggest palace – the Palácio da Galeria – various sixteenth-century features can still be seen, one of which is the splendid loggia or Renaissance gallery at the top of the main staircase. It is formed by a noteworthy small archway which is still identifiably sixteenth-century despite the signs of stones having been substituted.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGES 8 AND 50



3 Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Graça*

1569

LARGO DR. JORGE CORREIA

37.125048, -7.652973

One of the first buildings to evidence the transition from the Renaissance to “plain style” architecture was this old convent for Augustine monks, which began to be built in 1569 on the site of Tavira’s old Jewish quarter.

The affirmation of the new and austere taste in architecture is very clear in the singular bareness of the old church’s main façade, where the portico is devoid of any and all embellishment. There is a stark contrast between it and the rest of the convent’s façade, corresponding to the old dormitory, which features more dynamic decorative forms, in keeping with the newer eighteenth-century Baroque taste. The inner cloister is formed by arches supported by Tuscan columns resting on pedestals, clearly reflecting the classic austerity that took over the building during its construction.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGE 18



4 Renaissance Window in the Irene Rolo House

ABOUT 1530-1550
RUA DA LIBERDADE
37.124979, -7.650725

On the third floor of this building, there is an old Renaissance window. Simple in design, it is edged by a roundish profile resting on two elegant bulbous corbels. Visible in low relief on the lintel is part of the coat-of-arms of the kingdom, indicating that, in its time, the building was used for some sort of public service.



5 Casa André Pilarte

ABOUT 1520-1540
RUA ALEXANDRE HERCULANO
37.125361, -7.649523

This sixteenth-century house was probably designed by the famous architect André Pilarte, who was responsible for the construction of the Misericórdia Church. The house is located at the top of Rua Alexandre Herculano and, despite successive restorations, has not lost its sixteenth-century character. Part of a Manueline span still survives on the ground floor, with expressive stonework that formed an ogee arch.

The second floor features an elegant Renaissance French window, with a jutting cornice and rollover clasp with acanthus detail, of magnificent quality.



6 Renaissance Window in Travessa D. Brites

C. 1520-1540

TRAVESSA D. BRITES

37.125457, -7.648741

This delicate window was part of a sixteenth-century manor house in the waterfront area. A handrail divides the span, while the mouldings are framed by small pillars with finely-crafted capitals and corbels supported by little angels. Appearing in the centre of the composition is the face of a man wearing a cap, a motif which is found on many church portals in the Algarve.





7 Church of the Former Convent of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda

(or of São Paulo)

1606

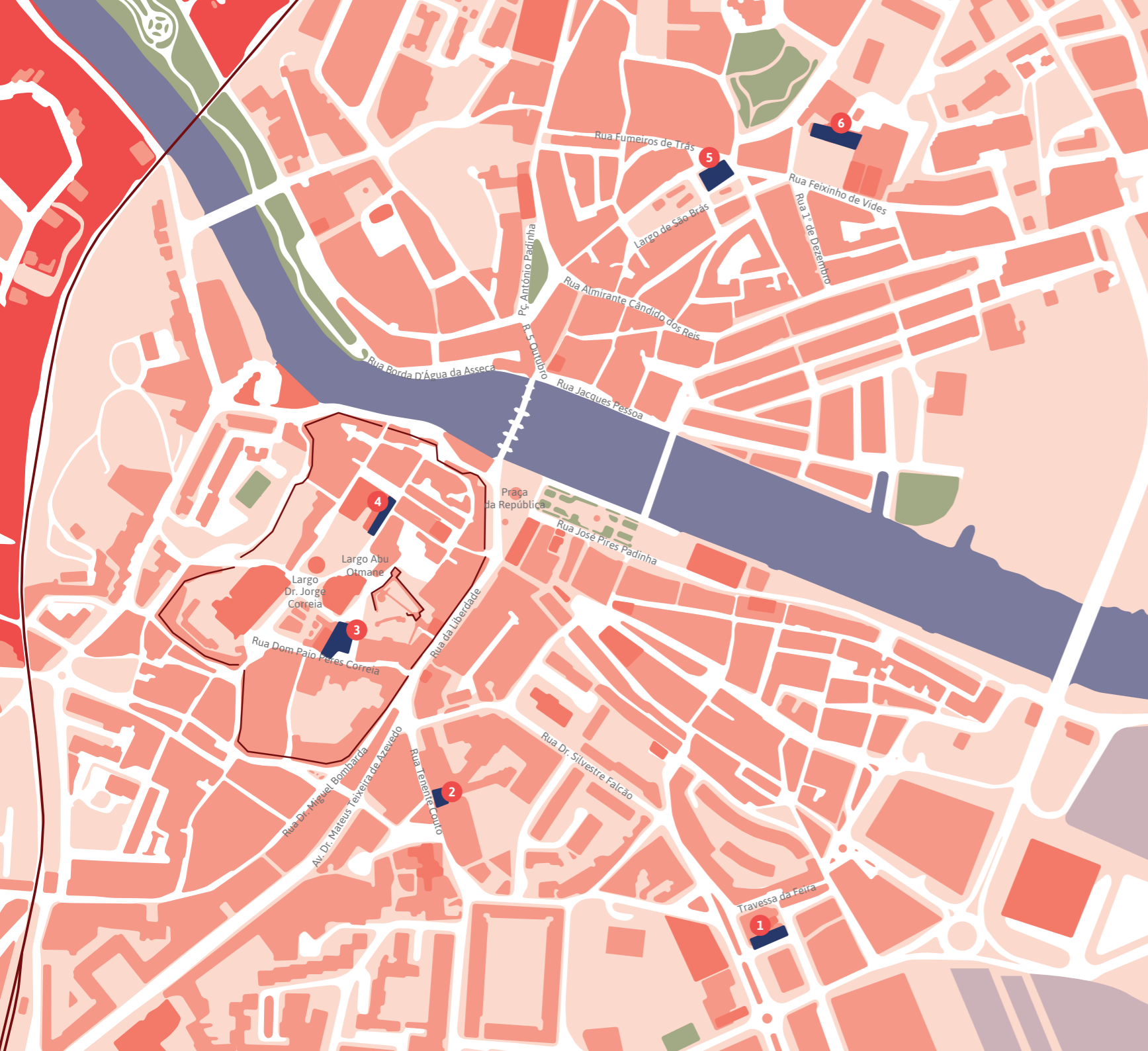
PRAÇA DR. ANTÓNIO PADINHA

37.128737, -7.649798

A former convent church belonging to the monks of the hermits of St. Paul, it was built in accordance with the austere “plain style” of architecture. It features an unembellished façade that was modified in the eighteenth century with the addition of three windows with straight lintels. Inside, it has a Latin-cross floor plan comprising a chancel, transept and a single nave.

It contains an interesting collection of paintings, carvings and religious imagery dating from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of them originally belonged to other temples and convents in the city that now no longer exist. Particularly worthy of note is the retablo of Nossa Senhora do Carmo, crafted by carver Gaspar Martins in 1730.





The Arrival of the Baroque

Dramatic constructions, monumental shapes and forms, and rapture of the senses are the formulas of the Baroque. Under the cultural and religious impulse of the Counter-Reformation, and after a long period during which the “estilo chão” (plain style) was popular, constructions now became very dramatic, the aim being to make those who saw them marvel at them, and affirm the spiritual or earthly domain. In the Algarve, and in Távira in particular, the years of stability under King D. Pedro II and King D. João V, appear to have been marked by some development

in the activity of the Third Orders, brotherhoods or sisterhoods fostering the proliferation and splendour of the churches and chapels that were built on their orders. In this context, artistic displays began to play an important role and their instrumental value in the service of religious ideals was consciously admitted.

Távira has an abundance of Baroque architecture, especially due to the works of Diogo Tavares e Ataíde (1711-1765), considered to be the Algarve’s greatest Baroque architect.

- 1 Chapel of São Sebastião
- 2 Church of the Hospital do Espírito Santo (or of São José)
- 3 Main Church of Santiago
- 4 Palácio da Galeria
- 5 Chapel of São Brás
- 6 Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo

1 Chapel of São Sebastião

17TH CENTURY. RECONSTRUCTED IN 1745

RUA DA COMUNIDADE LUSÍADA

37.122244, -7.647210

The brotherhood of São Sebastião (St. Sebastian) was already established in Tavira in 1682; it is not known, however, when its original church was built. Dedicated to the worship of the Roman saint and martyr who was considered an advocate against epidemics and infections, the temple was rebuilt in 1745, probably designed by, and under the direction of, architect Diogo Tavares e Ataíde. Small in size, the temple features a simple, single-nave floor plan and a chancel and sacristy that are both rectangular, in consonance with the “plain style”. It is mainly through the interior decoration of the temple that the Baroque is expressed in greater exuberance, complementing and dynamising the walls of the building. When the rebuilding work had been completed, the exuberant painting inside was carried out by Diogo de Mangino, a rather well-reputed local painter.

In 1759, he undertook to do the paintings in the chancel, including ten panels depicting the life of Saint Sebastian, the imitation marble on the walls and the clothing of two sculptures of torch-bearing angels. The series of ten canvases about Saint Sebastian is considered to be the most complete pictorial recreation of the saint's life in Portuguese art. Other local masters later completed the painting work, including in the body of the church.



2 Church of the Hospital do Espírito Santo (or of São José)*

15TH CENTURY. RECONSTRUCTED BETWEEN 1752 AND 1768

PRAÇA ZACARIAS GUERREIRO

37.123414, -7.650725

In 1746, King D. João V decreed that the Royal Espírito Santo Hospital in Tavira was to be rebuilt in light of the need to remedy the old building's conservation problems. The work began at a good pace in 1752, under the guidance of architect Diogo Tavares e Ataíde. However, the 1755 earthquake affected the reconstruction process, destroying the church and causing a lot of other damage, as a result of which the building work dragged on until 1768.

The current church, with a single nave and chancel, is unusual in that its floor plan is in the shape of an uneven octagon. It is one of a number of churches based on the design of the Menino Deus Church in Lisbon. The octagonal floor plan, a common feature of these churches, should be seen as an attempt to conciliate the Portuguese taste for "estilo chão" (plain style) with the Italianising Baroque aesthetic. On the outside, the main portico is worthy of mention.

It was built in Rococo style and the tympanum bears the royal coat-of-arms and the dove of the Espírito Santo (Holy Spirit).

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGE 27



3 Main Church of Santiago

13TH CENTURY. RECONSTRUCTED ABOUT 1763

RUA D. PAIO PERES CORREIA

37.124843, -7.652029

Its origins date back to the thirteenth century. The original construction was probably badly damaged in the 1755 earthquake, and King D. José I ordered the revenue of the brotherhoods based in the temple to be used to fund its reconstruction, sometime around 1763. Standing out on the austere main façade is an exuberant medallion in plasterwork with an image of São Tiago (Saint James) the Moor-slayer.

The southern façade comprises a set of buildings made up of the side chapels, the sacristy and annexes, with their small domes and skylights, which make the building very dynamic and particularly appealing. Inside carved retables, images and sacred paintings from various eras are on display, some of which came from other churches in the city.



4 Palácio da Galeria*

15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES. RECONSTRUCTED ABOUT 1750

CALÇADA DA GALERIA

37.125970, -7.651398

The palace is mediaeval or sixteenth-century in origin. Judge João Leal da Gama Ataíde, an influential magistrate and owner of the palace in 1746, commissioned the major remodelling work that took place in the following years, ensuring that his prestige and social status were effectively promoted.

To carry out the ambitious work that gave the building its current exterior appearance, the owner recruited Diogo Tavares e Ataíde, the most important architect and master builder in the Algarve in the eighteenth century. The most inspiring aspect of the building is its lofty presence, making a strong impact on the city's skyline. The architect's trademark style is evident in the composition of the main façade, especially on the main floor, where he applied a series of mouldings around the windows, with decorative embellishments consisting of a curved frontispiece, side volutes and a small rocaille table. The large main portal is noteworthy, with geometric motifs on the mouldings and an architrave lintel. The French window above it is identical in shape to the others but it is special in that the jambs are decorated with rollover clasps with acanthus details, as though made of carved stone.

* BUILDING ALSO SHOWN ON PAGES 8 AND 34



5 Chapel of São Brás

15TH CENTURY (?). RECONSTRUCTED ABOUT 1755

LARGO DE SÃO BRÁS

37.129065, -7.647507

Once situated outside the city, this small mediaeval temple was administered by the brotherhood of São Brás (St. Blaise). The chapel has a single nave and chancel and the hermit's house is adjacent.

Major building work in the second half of the eighteenth century modified its appearance, especially the main façade. Here, the portal and the large window with expressive stone mouldings from the Rococo period stand out. So too does a graceful oculus, influenced by a style used in Mafra, on one of the exterior walls of the chancel.



6 Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo

1747

LARGO DO CARMO

37.129366, -7.646308

The year 1747 marked the beginning of the work to build the Church of the Ordem Terceira do Carmo (Third Order of Mount Carmel) on land adjacent to the recently-founded Carmelite convent of Tavira.

The building work continued until 1789. The floor plan adopted was that of a Latin cross, an uncommon type in the Algarve. The work to embellish the interior of some of the chapels began in the 1770s. The carving in the chancel is the most significant example of Rococo style in the Algarve.

The painting in illusionist perspective on the ceiling of the chancel is especially worthy of mention. It was done by Joaquim José Rasquinho and is a portrayal of *Our Lady of Mount Carmel* handing over the scapular to Saint Simon Stock. Visitors should also make a point of seeing the storm door and the six side retables, in Rococo style.





More information:

www.tavira.pt



DESCUBRA **TAVIRA**



Free distribution

CO-FUNDED BY:

