

## Artistic Heritage

### Monastery of Fitero

Coveted by kings, bishops and lords, the monastery at Fitero was founded in 1140 and claims to be the first Cistercian monastery to be built in the Iberian peninsula. It was wartime and the first abbot of Fitero, San Raimundo, founded the Calatrava military order in 1158. At that time the village was set apart from the monastery near the thermal baths, but in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Fitero was repopulated to step up the defence of the territory and new houses were built around the abbey. Fitero thus became one of the few Cistercian monasteries that formed part of a village.

Both the village and the baths belonged to the monastery and this led to constant disputes and clashes between the villagers and the monastery. The abbot appointed the mayor, aldermen and other officials. The villagers tried to free themselves of this control and attempted to establish a new village called Villa Real in 1663. The monks prevented this, which led to rebellions and sackings until 1863, when Fitero finally freed itself of the monastery. Today, some parts of the monastery carry out a non-religious function: the old monastic hospice is occupied by the Town Hall, an old people's home in the cells, the town's Cultural Centre and a cinema are located in the refectory and the library and kitchen have been converted into a museum.

### The visit

This monastery was made a national monument in 1931. It is a treasure of medieval architecture and was extended in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The church and chapter house date back to medieval times (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), as do the remains of the **dormitory (7)** and the **refectory (5)**; the cloister, upper cloister, the **abbot's palace (3)**, convent, hospice, vestry, library and the chapel dedicated to La Virgen de la Barda were all added during the second phase of construction.

The **abbey church (1)** is one of the most important Cistercian churches in Europe. It is built in the form of the Latin cross with three naves and an ambulatory chancel with five chapels; it is the only Cistercian church of its kind in Spain. In 1905, the academic, Vicente Lampérez, wrote "There is no Cistercian architecture as magnificent in the whole of Spain".

Of the medieval structure, only the **chapter house**, built in 1247, remains. There are also medieval remains in the walls of the lower part of the library, and in the kitchen and cellars there are traces of the wall which surrounded the monastery in 1285.

The square renaissance **cloister (2)** and the upper cloister were built in the Herrerian style in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Other areas of interest include the new dormitory, which dates back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the library, built on the walls of the medieval refectory in about 1614. The Manneristic abbatial

palace was also built at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was extended during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The monastery's treasures**

Gold and silverware were kept in the vestry, together with crowns, lecterns, chalices, monstrances, lamps, and altar cruets, many of which no longer exist because they were melted down to make new pieces, or because they were sold by the Town Council in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the pieces that survive are the relic of San Raimundo's arm, the reliquary-monstrance of San Andres (18<sup>th</sup> century), 17<sup>th</sup>-century chalices, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Holy relic consisting of a piece of wood from Christ's cross, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century small jug and a monstrance dated at 1640. Other notable pieces include the 16<sup>th</sup>-century gilded silver and shell receptacle from northern European workshops and a 17<sup>th</sup>-century silver filigree pyx from Cuba.

Other treasures to be seen at the monastery are a small ivory chest that dates back to the year 966 and the era of the Caliphs, a Romanesque enamelled pyx, (dated at 1200) and three small ivory and wood veneer caskets from the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Juan de Palafox**

The viceroy and bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza was born in the old thermal baths of Fitero in 1600. He figures in the Spanish language Dictionary of Authorities and the Church granted him the title of Venerable. Palafox was an illegitimate child, and soon after he was born his mother ordered a servant to get rid of him. The maid was about to throw him into the River Alhama when she was surprised by the Mayor, who undertook to raise the child; when he was nine years old he was recognised by his real parents. Appointed a bishop, he was sent to Mexico, where he was also a viceroy and a captain. He later returned to the diocese of Burgo de Osma, where he dedicated his life to helping the poor.

### **Footpaths around Fitero**

There are several pleasant and picturesque walks that start in Fitero. The best-known paths are:

**Camino de la huerta:** 5.8 kilometres long with a 50-metre climb. It starts at the campsite in Cintruénigo, passes by a pond called La Estanca and then runs between poplars and river vegetation.

**La Cruz de Atalaya:** 7.7 km long, with a 220-metre climb. It starts at the highest point of the village, next to the football field.

**Circuito de Roscas:** 8.2 km long, with a 120-metre climb. It starts at the crossroads where the roads from Fitero lead to Cascante and Valverde. It runs

past a cave called the “cueva de la mora” (the Arab princess’ cave), “la nevera de los frailes” (the monks’ refrigerator), and past the ruins of Tudején castle.

## References

1. Abbatial church
2. Cloister
3. Abbatial palace
4. Bookshop
5. Refectory
6. Reception and offices
7. Dormitory
8. Secretary’s office

## The Spa

The thermal waters of the **Balneario de Fitero (9)** flow down the face of a crag called La Peña del Baño. The hot springs are good for the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis, gout, pharyngitis and asthma. Kings, bullfighters and even a cardinal who later became Pope (Benedict XV) have been cured by them. The poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer also enjoyed the beneficial qualities of the waters, and it was here that he wrote “El miserere”, “La fe salva” and “La cueva de la mora”. There is also a tale about a farmworker who went to bathe in the spring and was boiled alive because he did not rest on the feast day of the apostle.

## Mesa o mojón de los Tres Reyes - The table of the Three Kings

The place where the table of the Three Kings was erected is a reminder of the meetings held in the Middle Ages by the monarchs of the Christian kingdoms – Navarre, Castille and Aragon – during which they would eat and also negotiate and argue, each from their own land.

## Useful telephone numbers

### Buses

La Conda  
948 221026

### Taxis

689 04 69 90  
948 77 64 67

### Health Centre

San Raimundo, 11

948 77 64 33

## SOS Navarra

112

### Information

#### TOURIST OFFICE

TUDELA

Address:

C/. Juicio, 4

Telephone:

948 84 80 58

E-mail:

oit.tudela@cfnavarra.es

#### TOURIST OFFICE

Fitero

Address:

Iglesia, 8.

Telephone:

948 77 66 00

E-mail: turismo@fitero.es

### Refrigerator, castle and cave

There are some curious features in the area surrounding Fitero, such as:

**The Nevera de los frailes (the monks' refrigerator).** A huge covered stone well, which for centuries was used to store snow to quell the heat of the summer.

**Ruins of the Moorish Tudején castle.** Dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it is situated on a hilltop.

**Cueva de la mora – The Moorish Princess' Cave.** According to Bécquer's story, the inconsolable soul of a Moorish princess appears every night seeking water for her beloved Christian who lies wounded in the cave.

### Mass

Monday to Friday at 19:30; Saturday at 20:30; Sundays and Bank Holidays at 09:00 and 11:30.

### How to reach Fitero

**Distance from Pamplona:**

104.3 km

**How to get to Fitero from Pamplona:**

Leave Pamplona on the Avenida de Zaragoza and join the N-121 to Zaragoza and Madrid. At Los Abetos, take the N-113 and on arrival in Cintruénigo, take the NA-160 which leads to Fitero. An alternative route is to take the A-15 motorway to Corella and then the NA-161 and the NA-160.