



# Aljafería



## The Aljafería Palace

The Aljafería in Zaragoza was declared a National Monument of Historical and Artistic Interest on the 4th June 1931. In 1947, however it still remained a *woeful sight in rags*, according to the architect Francisco Íñiguez Almech, who for over thirty years undertook a slow and thorough recovery task. After his death in 1982 this was continued by the architects Ángel Peropadre Muniesa, Luis Franco Lahoz and Mariano Pemán Gavín. The result of all these alterations, backed by several archaeological digs, has led to the present-day appearance of the building, in which the original remains can be distinguished from the reconstructed part.

Moreover the Regional Assembly of Aragon has its seat in one section of this collection of historical buildings. Work on the Assembly building was started in 1985 by the architects Franco and Pemán. This work is part of the aesthetic trends of contemporary architecture, and its authors have avoided including historical elements that could lead to possible mistaken interpretation.

In 2001, UNESCO declared the Mudejar architecture of Aragon a World Heritage site, and praised the Aljafería palace as one of the most representative and emblematic monuments of Aragonese Mudejar Architecture.

**Panoramic view of palace**





**Portico and Northern Side Arches**

## The islamic palace

This retains part of the primitive fortified enclosure on a quadrangular floor plan reinforced by great ultra-semicircular turrets, together with the prismatic volume of the Trobadour Tower, whose lower part, which dates from the IX century, is the most ancient part of the architectonic building.

This enclosure houses residential quarters in its central area which are similar to the typological model of the *omeya* influenced Islamic palaces, just like those that had developed in the Moslem palaces in the desert (which date back to the VIII century).

So, in contrast to the defensive spirit and the strength of its walls, the *taifal* palace, which is of





delicate ornamental beauty, presents a composite plan based on a great rectangular open air courtyard with a pool on its southern side. Next come two lateral porticoes with a polycusped mixed line series of arches that acts as visual screens and at the far end some tripartite rooms, which were originally intended for ceremonial and private use. There is also a small oratory in the northern portico, with a small octagonal floor plan, in whose interior fine and lavish plaster decorations can be seen (with typical *ataurique* motifs) as well as some brightly coloured well-contrasted pictorial fragments, which are of particular interest.

All of these artistic achievements correspond to the work carried out during the second half of the XI century under the command of Abū-Ŷā'far Aḥ-mad ibn Hūd al-Mūqtadir, and they serve to highlight the cultural importance and the rich virtuosity of his court. Furthermore, the Aljafería is thought to be one of the greatest pinnacles of Hispano-Moslem art, and its artistic contributions were later copied at the *Reales Alcazares* in Seville and at the *Alhambra* in Granada.

**Oratory:**  
**Niche of Mihrab**

## The medieval christian palace

After Zaragoza was reconquered by Alfonso I *El Batallador* (The Warrior), in 1118, the Christianisation of the Aljafería began. Thus, it became the Palace of the Aragonese monarchs, who also carried out successive expansion and restructuring work inside.

From this medieval period (XII- XIV centuries), it is worth mentioning Saint Martin's Church, the room called *Saint Isabel's Bedchamber*, Saint George's Chapel which no longer exists, the series of arches on the western side of Saint Isabel's courtyard, and above all, the halls of Pedro IV's Mudejar Palace, crowned by some splendid, recently restored, carved ceilings. Furthermore, these buildings are of vital importance having been the main focal point of the dissemination and influence of the formation of Mudejar Art in Aragon.



**Alfarje (detail)**





**Flight of stairs**

## **The palace of the Catholic King and Queen**

This palace was erected on top of the Moslem structure in around 1492, to symbolise the power and prestige of the Christian monarchs. However, the direction of the work fell to the Mudejar master, Faraig de Gali. The work blended the medieval artistic inheritance with the new Renaissance contributions. From this origin came some of the most significant examples of

the so-called *Reyes Catolicos* style (that of the Catholic King and Queen).

The palace comprises a flight of stairs, a gallery or corridor and a collection of rooms known as *The Lost Steps*, which lead to the Great Throne Room. Of these, the most interesting are, on the one hand, the paving, made up of small paving tiles and the tiles from Muel, and on the other, the gold and polychrome wooden ceilings among which the magnificent coffered ceiling in the Throne Room is especially remarkable.



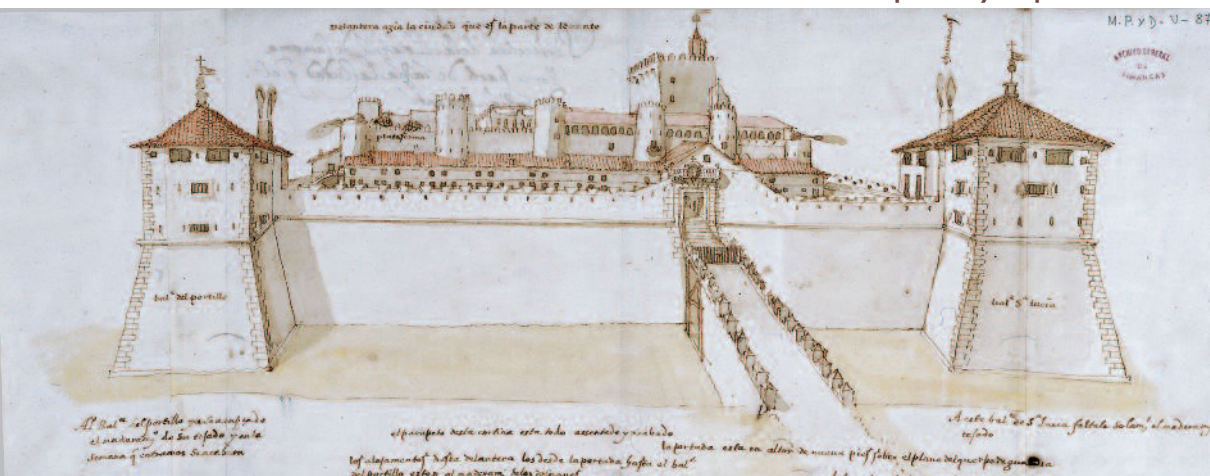
## Modern day and contemporary restoration

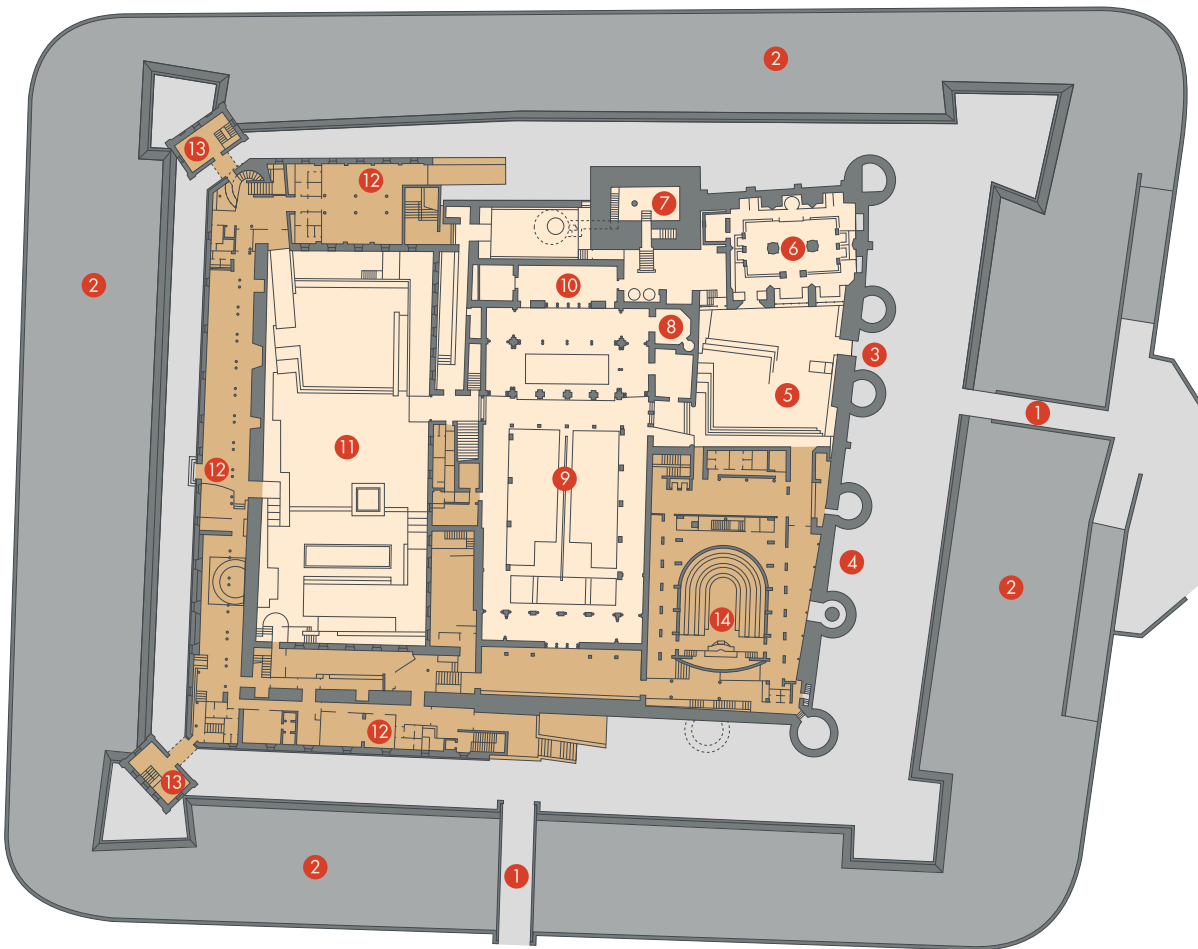
From 1593, by order of King Phillip II, the Siennese engineer Tiburcio Spanochi drew up plans to transform the Aljafería into a *modern* style fort or citadel. Consequently, he provided the buildings with an outer walled enclosure with pentagonal bastions at the corners and an imposing moat surrounding it all (with slightly sloping walls and corresponding drawbridges). However, the real reason for building this fort was none other than to show royal authority in the face of the Aragonese people's demands for their rights as well as the monarch's wish to curb pos-

sible revolts by the people of Zaragoza. After this first military renovation, throughout the XVIII and XIX centuries, extensive alterations were made to the building to adapt it for its use as barracks. To this day the blocks built during the reign of Charles III remain, along with two of the Neo-Gothic turrets added during the time of Isabel II.

Lastly, we must point out that very few Aragonese monuments have as many excellent architectonic examples as those at the Aljafería in Zaragoza, summing up ten centuries of daily life as well as historic and artistic events in Aragon.

### Elevation of the Aljafería by T. Spanochi







- 1 Bridge
- 2 Moat
- 3 Entrance
- 4 Moslem Walls
- 5 Saint Martin's Courtyard
- 6 Saint Martin's Chapel
- 7 The Troubadour Tower
- 8 Oratory
- 9 Saint Isabel's Courtyard
- 10 Ground Floor: Rooms of the Islamic Palace;  
Intermediate Floor: Rooms of the Catholic King and Queen; Upper Floor: Rooms of the Medieval Christian Palace.
- 11 Weapon's Courtyard
- 12 Quarters of Charles III
- 13 Neo-Gothic Turrets, 1868
- 14 Chamber
- Historical monument area
- Area fitted out for the seat of the Regional Assembly of Aragon

**Northern face seen  
from the moat**





## The Regional Assembly of Aragón

Since 1987 the Aljafería palace, a witness to centuries of important events, has again occupied its corresponding place in history. It has regained its dignity and welcomed within its old walls the institution that represents all the Aragonese people: The Regional Assembly of Aragon.

Before 1987, the Spanish Constitution had been ratified in 1978, and the Autonomy Statute of Aragon in 1982, with the first autonomous elections soon afterwards. These led to the beginning of the Aragonese Parliament, which represents over 1 300 000 people living in Aragon's spacious, expansive 47 669 km<sup>2</sup>, almost 10% of the total area of Spain, although over half these people live in Zaragoza.

The Regional Assembly of Aragon is a single-chamber assembly, made up of delegates elected every four years in these regular elections by universal, free, equal, direct and secret vote. There

are currently 67 delegates in the Parliament: 14 from Teruel, 18 from Huesca, and 35 from Zaragoza.

The Regional Assembly of Aragon has many functions, although making laws and promoting and controlling the actions of the government of the Autonomous Region are two of the main ones.

The Regional Assembly of Aragon consists of a series of managerial and representative bodies (President, the Assembly Board and House Business Committee) and some operational bodies (Plenary, Commissions and The Standing Committee). The Plenary, which is the chamber's highest body, gathers together all the delegates, and is where the most important decisions are taken. Its sessions are held in the Plenary Chamber, which is in a contemporary building, separate from the walls and the *taifal* palace but perfectly integrated within the monument, opposite Saint Martin's Chapel.

### Plenary Chamber

**OPENING TIMES** **MORNINGS**  
(except Thursdays and Fridays\*)

**Throughout the year**

From 10am to 2pm  
Guided Tours:  
10.30am, 11.30am, 12.30am.

**AFTERNOONS**

(except Thursdays\*)

**From November to March**

From 4pm to 6.30pm  
Sunday afternoons closed  
Guided Tours: 4.30pm, 5.30pm

**From April to October**

From 4.30pm to 8pm  
Guided Tours:  
4.30pm, 5.30pm, 6.30pm

\*Due to the activity of The Regional Assembly of Aragón, on **Thursdays** (all day) and **Fridays** (mornings) the Palace cannot be visited except by pre-arranged groups.

The palace can be visited everyday during the month of **August**, at the times indicated.

**Access to the Palace ends 30 minutes before closing time.**

**GROUPS** Organised group visits from Monday to Saturday.

**Reservations:**

Tel. 976 28 96 85  
aljaferia@cortesaragon.es

**PRICE LIST** **GENERAL:** Adults: 5€

**REDUCED:** Pensioners: 1€

Students: 1€

Holders of youth cards: 1€

Groups (more than 20 people): 4€

**FREE:**

Sundays.

Children under 12 years.

Holders in possession of the card of demand for employment.

People with disability equal to or above 33%.

**DISABLED** Access for the physically handicapped.

**PERSONS** There is a model and explanatory guide of the Palace written in Braille.

**PHOTOS** Using a flash is not allowed  
**AND VIDEOS** inside the Palace.

**SMOKING** Smoking is not allowed inside the Palace.

**SHOP** Books, brochures, postcards and other items  
**BOOKSHOP** related to the Aljaferia Palace are available.

**TELEPHONES** Information: **976 28 96 83/84**

**ADDRESS** Palacio de la Aljafería  
Calle de los Diputados, s/n  
50004 Zaragoza

**WEB PAGE** **www.cortesaragon.es**

