

The Facade

The facade was built in the 15th century and polychromed in the 17th century (1682). The facade of Santa María has a precedent in the church of Santa María de los Reyes at Laguardia, in the province of Alava. It was built around the same time and in the same style as the churches in Elgoibar (Olaso), Gernika and Lekeitio. This suggests that they may have been the work of the same author, Juan de Acha.

Its iconography shows a frieze with the twelve Apostles, six on either side. The frieze supports a Gothic archivolt decorated with 38 sculptures of angels, virgins, and martyrs, separated by small canopies.

The tympanum is divided into three levels. The first one represents the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth and the Epiphany; the second, the Death and Assumption of the Virgin, and the third, the Coronation. The door is divided by a trumeau with a sculpture of the Christ Victorious.

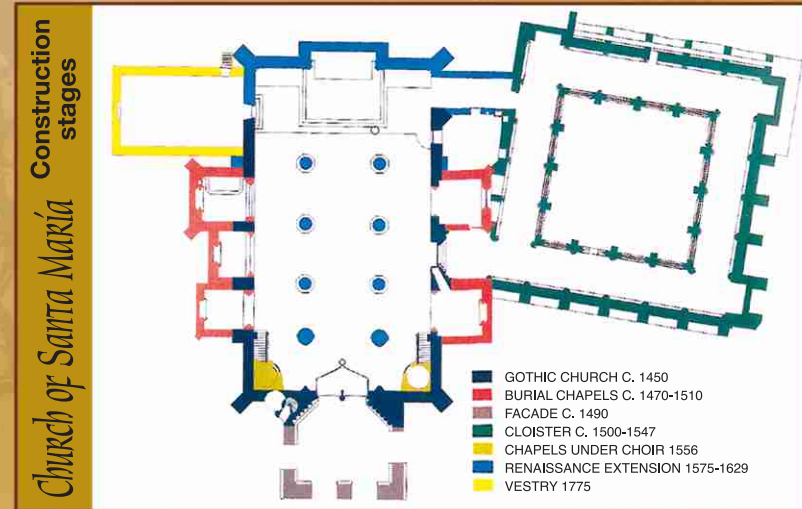


The Interior

Inside, the church consists of three wide Renaissance naves. The naves are separated by eight columns arranged in two rows of four columns. The bases of the columns are Attic and the capitals are Doric-Tuscan. They support the ribs that form starred cross vaults whose keystones, many of them polychrome, are crafted into geometric shapes and religious figures. The columns have the proportions that Renaissance manuals on architecture consider to be perfect.

Pending from the vault on a cable is a ship, a votive offering that, curiously, looks like an armed frigate for privateering, which may be related to a naval war.

On the upper part of the south wall, there are large leaded stained glass windows by the master Simon Bernaluce. They are decorated with motifs that represent various professional and religious labours.



CHURCH OF SANTA MARÍA VISITING HOURS: 10:00-13:00 h.
The Tourist Office organizes **guided tours** (ask for information).



OPENING HOURS:

- **LOW SEASON:** Working days: 10:00-14:00 • Fridays and Saturdays: 10:00-14:00 / 17:00-19:00 • Sundays and bank holidays: 10:00-14:00
- **MID SEASON:** Working days: 10:00-14:00 / 16:00-19:00 • Sundays and bank holidays: 10:00-14:00
- **HIGH SEASON:** Working days: 10:00-20:00 • Sundays and bank holidays: 10:00-14:00

www.deba.eus



Kaia



Santa María of Deba

A milestone on the Way of St. James

ENGLISH



The church of Santa María



The church of Santa María (a National Monument since 1931) is considered one of the most important works of Basque religious architecture.

Despite its size —it has the dimensions of a cathedral— its austere outside walls, similar to a sandstone tower, make it very unassuming. However, its rich interior comes as a surprise.

In the 15th century, reconstruction was begun on top of the foundations of the original 14th century church. It was extended in the 16th century and finished in the 17th century.

Construction began at the height of the town's splendour and was financed by the people. Around that time, Deba was one of the most important ports in the State, together with Santander and Bilbao. Taxes from trade in Castilian wool, exported from Deba to Flanders, England and other European countries, and the whaling expeditions to Newfoundland, had brought prosperity to the town.

From the Gothic period, the church conserves the facade, the side chapels, the cloister, and a small part of the triforium.

Between 1575 and 1629 the church was augmented in a traditional renaissance style. This work coincided with the defeat of the Invincible Navy (1588), a fact that led to the decline of the wool trade and, consequently, the delay in the augmentation of the church.

The Chapels

The nobles of the time, wealthy merchant families who rubbed shoulders with the nobles of Castile, ordered the construction of the chapels.

Each individual chapel is a monument in its own right. The chapels were not part of the original project and were added on at a later date.



Chapel of the lineage of Zubelzu, popularly known as "The Weaver's chapel". A closer look at one of its stained glass windows.

Three of the six existing chapels are on the side of the Epistle (to the right of the entrance), and three are on the side of the Gospel (to the left).

On the right are the chapels of Saint Peter, which belongs to the Aguirre family; the chapel of Saint Anthony, belonging to the Sasiola family -inside there is a fine 16th century Flemish triptych-and the Holy Burial, which was once the vestry.

On the right are the chapels of Santo Domingo, which belonged to the knight commander Juan de Andonaegui; the chapel of Saint John, which belongs to the Zubelzu family, known as the "La Hilandera" chapel; and the chapel of Our Lady of Mercy, which belongs to the powerful Irazabal family.

Altarpiece of the Sasiola chapel. Thanks to this family's commercial relations with the ports of the Netherlands, we have received this marvellous triptych from the end of the 15th century which presides over the altarpiece.



The Cloister

Construction on the cloister probably began around 1500. It is the oldest cloister in Gipuzkoa. The door, located at the southern end of the temple, was the former access to the church from the south. Despite the chapels, the cloister is of harmonious proportions, in keeping with the medieval tradition of considering cloisters as a representation of Celestial Paradise. Thus, the proportions between the exterior and interior quadrilaterals give a coefficient of 1.618, which is known as the "Golden Ratio" or the "Divine Ratio".

The cloister consists of four ogival vaulted corridors. Sixteen Gothic windows with tracery work on their points open onto the interior patio. Construction was slow and sporadic, as the windows at the northwestern corner of the cloister show. There, Flemish tracery from the start of the 16th century alternates with the Renaissance tracery of 1547. The rhomboid tiercenon vaults of the eastern gallery and the ornamentation of the scotias of the arches are reminiscent of those made by Juan Guas (King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's favourite architect) in the cathedral of Segovia, and in San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo. This leads us to believe that the work may have been directed by a Basque stonemason trained at the Guas workshop.

The Vestry

The Baroque vestry was the last substantial architectural enterprise undertaken at Santa María of Deba. The purpose was to provide a space large enough to hold the plenary meetings of the community of priests (16 priests).

The project was considered at the start of the 18th century. It was executed by Lázaro de Lizardi in 1713-14. The furniture was designed by Francisco de Ibero in 1770 and is considered to be a masterpiece of Rococo woodwork in Gipuzkoa.



Partial view of the sacristy.

The Altarpieces

The main altarpiece was executed in 1663-1671 by Pedro de Aloitz. Miguel de Brevilla was commissioned to do the gilding and painting. The style is Renaissance, although the decoration is completely Baroque. The outline is that of a bench, or lower part on which three sections and three lanes are placed. On either side of the bench, the Prayer in the Garden and the Last Supper are represented.



The first section shows, on one side, a relief of the Immaculate Virgin surrounded by rays of light, and on the other side, the Nativity of Mary. The second section shows the Annunciation, the Assumption, and the Visitation. The third section is dedicated to the Flee to Egypt, the Coronation, and a seated Virgin presenting the Child. The three lanes are separated by sculptures of San Pedro and Saint Peter and Saint Paul; San Ignacio and Saint Ignatius and Saint Roch; and Saint Domingo and Saint Francis.

The side altarpieces were made between 1683-1686 by Pedro de Aloitz and Matheo de Azpiazu. The altarpiece next to the Gospel is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. It is presided by image of the said Virgin, flanked by Saint Rose of Lima and Saint Rita of Norcia. On the second level appear Saint John the Baptist, Saint Agustin, and Saint Bartholomew; and on the top level, Saint Anthony of Padua.

The altarpiece next to the Epistle is presided by the image of Saint Michael the Archangel, flanked by Saint Bonaventure and Santa Saint Theresa of Avila. The images in the remaining spaces can be recognised as Saint Catherine, Saint Thomas, and in the highest part, probably Saint Isabella, the Queen.

The Choir

The choir is supported by a vaulted area, with three surbaced arches supported by two large columns that give onto the three naves. The gallery is flanked by two flights of stairs that lead to the choir.

Part of the former triforium that once surrounded the temple is embedded in the choir's wall. The triforium disappeared in the 17th century when the church was extended.

The lower choir, located near the entrance doors, were made in the 16th century. At each end of the choir there are two small, circular sector twin chambers. Until recently, the choir to the right of the entrance was the Baptistry. The choir to the right has always been used as a chapel, and is known as the chapel of the Virgin of Itziar.



The Organ

Built in 2009 in the Catalonian workshops owned by Gerhard Grenzing, it is considered to be a reference in the field of organ building in the 21st century. The parameters on which its building was based were modernity, a unique personality and a design and aesthetic appearance in consonance with the majesty of the temple of Saint Mary.

The instrument is made up of four bodies, three manuals and a pedal. The disposition of the organ stops synthesises the rich structure of the great organs built in the Iberian tradition with an extensive development of the three keyboard families: fluted, twelfths and tabs.

The design of the organ case is closely linked to the church and to the population. Its lines are inspired by the Gothic altarpiece of one of the chapels in the temple: the chapel of the Sasiolas and its decoration (coat of arms, distaff, bells and the hues of aquamarines) shows elements referring to heraldry, legends, and the history of the church and of the seafaring village of Deba.