

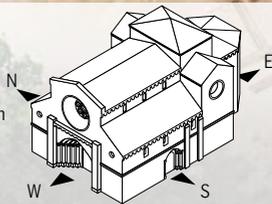
Route of the Romanesque

The Romanesque monuments located in northern Portugal, in the Sousa, Douro and Tâmega valleys, are stone legacies of an identity that was built approximately between the 12th and 14th centuries. In this illustration, we reconstitute the construction stages of a 13th-century Romanesque church.



Orientation

The chevets of the temples face east, towards Jerusalem, the holy city and the target of several Christian crusades. This orientation also allowed the first light of the day to shine upon the main altar, thus drawing the devotees' attention to that element.



Location

The selection of the location on which to build a temple was not arbitrary; on the contrary, it had symbolic and cultural meaning. The Romanesque churches are inseparable from their habitat and consecrate the communities that wish them close. The Romanesque temples are extraordinary testimonies of civilization.

Building method

The generalization of the Romanesque techniques led to their application in all religious buildings, castles, towers and bridges. The Romanesque architecture is characterized by double-sided walls made of well-carved stone blocks, by round arches and by the use of vaulted spaces supported by columns.

Materials

Stone is the most commonly used material in Portuguese medieval architecture. In northern Portugal, including the territory of the Route of the Romanesque, granite was the most commonly used stone, but there are also buildings made of limestone (e.g., in Coimbra or Lisbon) or even brick (e.g., in Bragança).

Commissioners

A Romanesque building was a time-consuming and expensive work. Its construction implied a dialogue between the commissioners, the donors and the master builders. The project was often changed. The nobility and the religious orders were the ones who influenced the construction of the monuments of the Route of the Romanesque.