RELIGIOUS MINORCA
INTRODUCTION

The aim of the route is to explore Minorca’s religious heritage, which boasts considerable historic, architectural and artistic value, from the earliest traces dating back to the 5th-6th centuries right up to the modern era.

In the year 313 Emperor Constantine the Great signed the Milan Edict to legalise Christianity, which was later to become the official state religion. It was across the Mediterranean world that Christianity first spread. In Minorca it had a presence from the very earliest days of its expansion. The island was a crossroads on the seafaring routes of the Mediterranean, and Christianity may have been introduced by Roman soldiers or merchants, or by members of some Christian community exiled by the imperial authorities. As early as the 5th century we know, thanks to a letter from Bishop Severo written in the year 417, that Christianity was already very widespread, deeply rooted and firmly structured. The remains of Palaeo-Christian basilicas reveal the extent to which this early Christianity had taken hold, given their volume and quality.

The Muslims made their first inroads into Minorca in the year 707, although the island was not conquered and subsumed by the Omeya Emirate of Cordoba until the year 902. Ciudadela was known as Madīna al Jazira, the home to the Almojarife of Minorca and his court, as well as a large mosque. James I of Majorca made the Muslims on Minorca his vassals (Treaty of Capdepera, 1231), although the Catalan conquest in 1287 by Alfonso III the Liberal brought the Arabs’ presence on the island to an end. The only remains of a mosque reveal a square base with a steep ramp inside, corresponding to the bell tower of the cathedral which was built on the orders of the conquering king (Alfonso III) on the site of the former Muslim mosque. In 1301 James II signed the Pariatge agreement, which established the ecclesiastical division of the island, ordered the departure of the religious orders established by Alfonso III and defined the jurisdiction and parishes which were to exist, together with their endowments of land. Many churches date from this era.
MINORCA CATHEDRAL
MINORCA CATHEDRAL

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Plaça de la Catedral
Town: Ciutadella
Owned and managed by: Palace of the Bishop of Minorca
Telephone: (+34) 971 380 343
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

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40°00’02,64” N 3°50’06,06” E
This is a landmark architectural complex at the heart of the old town of Ciudadela, giving it huge potential as a focus of considerable cultural interest.

The Church of St Mary, consecrated as a cathedral in 1795, was built on the orders of King Alfonso III after the conquest of Minorca (1287). It belongs to the Catalan Gothic style with a single 14.5-metre-wide nave, covered by a cross-ribbed vault in six sections, 23 m in height. The chapels are separated by three-lobed pilasters topped by capitals decorated with floral motifs.

The Cathedral was severely pillaged on two occasions, the first being the Turkish assault of 1558, and this second during the Spanish Civil War. From the late 16th century onwards it underwent considerable refurbishment over the centuries. The Neoclassical gateway on the main facade, for example, conceals a particularly significant older Gothic gateway.
A comprehensive restoration process began in 1986, both outside and within, giving the cathedral a new appearance and highlighting its spaciousness while giving natural light pride of place. The restored choir seating reinstated the seats and episcopal throne belonging to the former choir dating from the 18th century.
Particular mention should be made of the Chapel of Souls, dating from the late 17th century, in the Baroque style, the Neoclassical Chapel of the Holy Virgin, from the 19th century, and the Chapel of the Most Holy, built at the end of the same century.
The bell tower reveals at the base the former minaret of the main mosque of the Moslem Medina.

In summer the Cathedral hosts organ concerts which make a visit all the more worthwhile. The organ, built in 1993 by Gabriel Blancafort i París, is positioned above the Clock Gateway (Gateway of Light). The Cathedral Museum likewise provides an insight into its treasures (liturgical vestments, works in precious metals, wood carvings, paintings and other exhibits of particular interest).
CHAPTER 2
CHURCHES
CHURCH SANT FRANCESC D'ASSÍS
CHURCH SANT FRANCESC D’ASSÍS

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Plaça del Born, 8
Town: Ciutadella
Telephone: (+34) 971 381 291
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

40º00’02,64” N 3º50’06,06” E
The parish church of Sant Francesc, positioned between the Late Gothic and Neoclassical eras, is the largest in Ciudadela after the Cathedral. In 1287 Alfonso III granted the friars the kitchen gardens of the Almojarife and the adjacent houses to build a church, a monastery and a cemetery. When the monastery premises were sacked in 1558 the site was left in almost complete ruins, and twelve of the friars were captured by the Turks. The church was rebuilt in two phases. The initial construction had four vaulted sections, while a second part with six was added eleven years later. The cloister, of which practically nothing now remains, was erected in 1626. In the centre of the courtyard was a well, which is now located in the courtyard of the episcopal palace. The current facade, facing the Born, was completed in 1808 and paid for by the Count of Torre Saura. The current organ was built in 1813 by Johan Kyburtz of Switzerland. The monastery was the most popular burial site (7641 burials are documented between 1558 and 1838). The whole nave of the church was cleared of earth between 1681 and 1684 to make tombs. Here the deceased of all social standings were buried, from governors to the most humbly born citizens. The cloister was likewise taken up by graves. In 1835 it was announced that the monastery was to close. The Falange established its base here in 1939. The place of worship was sacked, closed and used as a carpentry workshop and a store for construction materials. It has since 1962 been a Post Office building.
CHURCH OF THE MONASTERY OF SANT AGUSTÍ (EL SOCORS)
CHURCH OF THE MONASTERY OF SANT AGUSTÍ (EL SOCORS)
OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Seminari, 7
Town: Ciutadella
Telephone: (+34) 971 481 297
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

40°00’02,64” N 3°50’06,06” E
The Church of Socorro (Solace), alongside the cloister, is built in the Renaissance style, with one single nave and side chapels, covered by a barrel vault and a transept topped with a dome. The facade, defined by its two twin towers, reveals a late 18th-century gateway, with three gates opening onto a great atrium, decorated with the emblems of the Augustinian order and crowned by Our Lady of Perpetuo Socorro. It was heavily refurbished during that period, with the construction of the main reredoses, the organ and the interior decoration, which left the vaults, dome and walls covered with fresco murals.
The devastation suffered during the Civil War led to the destruction of the reredoses and the other liturgical furniture. Meanwhile, over the decades during which it was closed or used for a whole range of functions it suffered ever worsening deterioration, a process which has been arrested over the last 15 years by embarking on the costly and complex task of restoration and refurbishment now in progress. Nonetheless, only a few fragments remain. The Baroque organ was built in 1793 by the Catalan master craftsman Josep Casas i Soler, was destroyed in the Civil War, and recently rebuilt by the team of organ maker Albert Blancafort. The choir retains its beautiful walnut seating with marquetry ornamentation.
CHURCH SANT CRIST DES PARAÏRES
CHURCH SANT CRIST DES PARAIRES

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Seminari, 3
Town: Ciutadella
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

40º10’02,64” N 3º50’06,06” E
Ciudadela has always held a place in its heart for this little church built in the Baroque style, simple and tasteful, with its transept, dome with skylight and two side chapels. The precise proportions and decoration favour spiritual retreat, creating the perfect setting for prayer. In 1661 the miracle of the sweating figure of the crucified Jesus aroused considerable devotion to the sacred image. One year after the first such events construction began with considerable diligence of the Church of the Santo Cristo, which was completed in May 1667. The coat of arms of Philip IV sculpted in stone was placed above the gateway. A small niche was added in the mid 18th century, accessed from the sacristy, from which people could kiss the feet of the Holy Christ. The Baroque reredos, measuring some five metres in height, is watched over by the figure of the Holy Christ, with a bench with a stone relief, a central body housing the niche, and the upper body which has in the centre the painting of a veil with the holy visage of Christ. It would seem that this was in existence prior to the construction of the niche, and is dated to the late 17th century. The bench includes a multicoloured stone bas relief depicting an episode of the Passion of Christ. It is older, dating from the late 16th century, and must have been added to the reredos during construction.
CHURCH
SANT BARTOMEU
CHURCH SANT BARTOMEU

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Pla de l’Església, 8
Town: Ferreries
Telephone: (+34) 971 373 103
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°58’38”N 4°00’79”E
The village of Ferreries sprang up around the small church of San Bartomeu. It was used by the peasants who lived scattered around the countryside, as there was practically no centre of population here. There was no real urban settlement until the 17th century. A church and rector were documented as early as 1362. A new place of worship was erected in 1695, and completed around 1730-40. It is a very simple church, made from marés stone, with one single nave covered with a barrel vault and side chapels. The arrangement was originally the opposite of the current layout. The choir, then, is not located right at the end of the nave, but in a trapezoidal apse which opens onto the nave through a triumphal archway. In 1751 the rector requested permission to use alms money to relocate the larger chapel to the other side. It was apparently built on very weak foundations and just a few years later was in danger of falling into ruin, and so was undoubtedly rebuilt in 1798, the date on one of the keystones which must refer to the completion of the larger chapel.
It formerly had a pyramid structure with a clay figure at each of the four corners of the tower, representing the four evangelists. All of this was destroyed by a lightning strike which wrecked a part of the bell tower. The image of the patron saint stands above the main gateway. The church has modern decorations, as the images, reredoses, altars and choir were burned and destroyed during the Civil War.
CHURCH SANT MARTÍ
CHURCH SANT MARTÍ

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Pla de l’Església, 1
Town: Es Mercadal
Telephone: (+34) 971 375 180
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°59'14"N, 4°5'77"E
The Pariatge * of 1301, signed by King James II with the Bishop of Majorca, already contains a reference to a chapel dedicated to Sant Narcís, dependent on the parish of Santa Creu. This parish disappeared soon, by 1240. The establishment of a weekly market by the king in the village of Mercadal led to the development of the chapel of Sant Narcís, which then became the main parish church. In the mid-15th century it was rededicated from Sant Narcís to Sant Martí de Tours. In 1724 a lightning strike destroyed the church and killed several people. The current church was built in 1767 and expanded and reformed in 1807. During this refurbishment work the choir was installed.

* Document governing the shared sovereignty of Minorca. It was a concordat agreed by the Bishop of Majorca and the King of Majorca, James II, reestablishing the parishes and the property of each church.
The church is located on a hill, the highest point in the village, and is a simple, solid block with a bell tower, a pitched roof and no visible buttresses.

The architectural interest in the building lies within. The church is in the Renaissance style with a layout comprising a single nave, topped by a barrel vault and interconnecting side chapels. The apse has a trapezoidal form and is linked to the nave by a great archway. On the right-hand side of the main altar stands the charming little chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament.

The current images and the main reredoses date from after the Civil War, as the originals, like the whole of Minorca, suffered the destruction of holy images.

A large organ was built in 2008, and this stands above the choir.
CHURCH
SANT ANTONI ABAD
CHURCH
SANT ANTONI ABAD

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Carrer de les Escoles, 2
Town: Fornells
Telephone: (+34) 971 375 180
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

40º03’26,07” N 4º07’58,56” E
This picturesque, whitewashed church has grown in pace with the fishing village where it stands. Its origins date back to the process of expansion of the settlement on the outskirts of the Castle of Sant Antoni. The foundation stones of the castle were laid in 1638. In order to speed up progress on the construction work, it was decreed that the workers should live close to the site, leading to the construction of the first five or six houses and the church. The facade includes an inscription stone which is not correct, as the foundations of the church are military. This small church was erected in the mid-17th century. As the village grew in the mid-18th century the church was expanded, and the presbytery completed in 1790.

The church has a single nave, topped with a barrel vault with three small chapels on each side and a small choir above the main entrance. The apse is square, and topped with a vault with four ribs. The building is very similar to all the churches of the villages in inland Minorca built over the course of the 18th century. It is, however, smaller in size and simpler in structure.
During the winter of 1997 the ceiling was cleaned, revealing the texture and arrangement of the stones of the barrel vault. Construction was slow, and dictated by the considerable effort involved in erecting the building in a village of so few inhabitants. The dark colour of the marès stone reveals the phases of the building's structure.

The only decorative elements to the church are the windows of the bell tower, crowned with cornices and a stone cross.
CHURCH
SANT CRISTÒFOL
CHURCH SANT CRISTÒFOL

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Pla de l`Església
Town: Es Migjorn Gran
Telephone: (+34) 971 370 020
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°56’00”N, 4°02’75”E
Construction of the church began in 1750, and it was consecrated in 1769. Towards the end of the 18th century it was expanded in order considerably to increase its capacity. A new choir was built, at the start of the nave, above the main gateway, while three arms of the transept were erected, topped with half-barrel vaulting. A hemispherical dome was built above the transept, to allow more light in. Around the 1850s the presbytery was expanded and a new sacristy built.

The interior is a very simple construction, unornamented and with considerable natural light. The layout features a single nave, with side chapels connected to a dome and large windows, and a rectangular apse rounded off by a semicircular apsidiole. This reveals the only ornamental feature of the construction, comprising concentric bands.
The Chapel of the Most Holy was completed in 1861 to the left of the altar, and finished off with an apse and a lantern dome. The church's images were destroyed during the Civil War. The rectangular bell tower stands above the main entrance gateway. The architectural form of the church is very similar to those in Mercadal and Ferreries.
CHURCH SANTA EULÀLIA

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Santa Eulàlia, 4
Town: Alaior
Telephone: (+34) 971 371 107
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°56’14”N, 4°08’23”E
The church in Alaior is built atop a hill. The village formed around it from the 14th century onwards. There was apparently an earlier church, of which the vaulted arches of the main facade and a part of the side wall may remain. The parish was founded in the early 14th century, and is mentioned as early as the Pariatge* of 1301 signed by James II of Majorca.

* Document governing the shared sovereignty of Minorca. It was a concordat agreed by the Bishop of Majorca and the King of Majorca, James II, reestablishing the parishes and the property of each church.

The current building was erected between approximately 1630 and 1690. The church has a number of Baroque elements, although it features are of a Renaissance church, with a clearly Mannerist influence. It is one of the most spacious churches on the island. The layout comprises a single nave with an arched barrel vault and six side chapels, interconnected by an open passage built in 1735. The parish church was also required to serve as a shelter for the village population in the event of invasion, hence its solid structure and the great size of the nave. The main facade is one of the most original on the island. The lower body contains simply the main gateway, and is reached via a ramp and stairway. The upper body, which is set back to leave a passageway connecting the two towers at each end, features a rose window.

During the Civil War the church was sacked, and the organ, altars, paintings and Baroque reredoses of the main altar and other ornamental elements destroyed. During the current restoration, the most significant ever performed, the original masonry of unclad marès sandstone has been reinstated.
CHURCH SANTA MARIA

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Plaça de la Constitució
Town: Maó
Telephone: 971 363 949
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com
In 1294 James II of Aragon, the brother and heir of Alfonso III, granted land on which to build a Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. As the town grew, the parish church had to be expanded, and in 1420 two chapels were added alongside the defensive wall, which served as the side wall, while also making use of a tower located at the corner of the wall as a belltower. The church had a similar layout to today, although the building was narrower and shorter. A number of its structures came to light during excavations in 2010, taking advantage of work to replace the roadway.

The church was sacked by the Turk Redbeard in 1535 and suffered substantial damage, and so was restored but also expanded.
The considerable population growth in the 18th century and the danger that a part of the choir would fall into ruins, as it had been built above caves dug by private individuals, meant that a new building had to be designed. The plans were commissioned in 1747 from the painter Giuseppe Chiesa, with work beginning the next year. It was completed in 1788. Despite having been built in the mid-18th century, the church employed the ogival arch and cross-ribbed vaulting of mediaeval tradition. It has one single nave of considerable size, with side chapels between the buttresses. The apse is semicircular, with the Chapel of the Communion to one side. The side chapels, topped with barrel vaulting, open onto the nave through rounded arches, above each of which is a tribune divided into two three-lobed arches, which were given a Neo-Gothic decoration in the 19th century. From the outside, the building is excessively block-like in appearance, lacking in grace. The magnificent organ built by Johan Kyburz and inaugurated in 1810 is one key feature. Unlike the other liturgical furniture, the organ was saved from destruction during the Civil War. This thus served to salvage an instrument of international reputation.
CHURCH NOSTRA SENYORA DEL CARME
CHURCH NOSTRA SENYORA DEL CARME

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Plaça del Príncep, 2
Town: Maó
Telephone: 971 362 402
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°53'14” N, 4°15’35” E
When work first began on the church, in 1726, the climate was one of a fierce struggle between the Carmelite and Franciscan Friars. The latter did not wish to see a new religious order established in the town, and so only allowed a small part of the building to be built, leading to the suspension of work until 1750. Construction began over the following four years as far as the transept, which was finished in 1802, along with the dome, the presbytery, the chapel of the Most Holy and the sacristy.
The layout is a Latin cross with side chapels topped with barrel vaulting. The ribbed vaulting of the nave allows a large window to open above the chapels, letting considerable light into the inside. The transept is crowned with a dome with four rose windows and a skylight. It was the first church in Maó to adopt Neoclassicism as the containment for its ornamentation. Proportions and clarity are in evidence in all its spaces. The sense of volume when one strolls beneath the arches separating the chapels is to be found in no other church. The main facade was left unfinished while the side wall reveals the buttresses on the right-hand side of the transept in a very simple sequence, with volumes of hugely effective composition. With the dissolution of church properties implemented by Mendizabal in 1835, the friars were expelled. The monastery over the years served as a prison, a law court and a school. The sculpted beams on the ground floor are a particularly noteworthy feature. It was restored in 1941.
CHURCH SANT FRANCESC D’ASSÍS
CHURCH SANT FRANCESC D’ASSÍS

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Pla des Monestir.
Town: Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 362 555
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39º53’14”N, 4º15’35” E
The former Monastery of Jesus was the first to be established in Maó. It was founded in 1459 by Brother Bartholomew and another twelve members of his order on the cliffs by the port. No trace remains today of the former 15th- and 16th-century monastery, as the oldest section still standing is the cloister, which is now on the south wing of the church and houses the Minorca Museum.

Construction of the church began in 1719. The roof is in the Late Gothic style, with a cross-ribbed vault with ogival arches. The single nave ends in a rectangular chapel under a lower ogival arch containing the altar. Other key features include the Neoclassical gateways connecting the sacristies. The side chapels between the buttresses were opened from 1736 onwards, with barrel vaulting and arches, and columns with spiral and zigzag decorations. Particular mention should be made of the Chapel of the Concepción. This octagonal chapel was built between 1745 and 1752.
Floral decorations fill the columns which separate the eight small chapels with superimposed tribunes. The hemispherical dome contrasts in its simplicity with the overladen decorations below. Although the author is unknown, the influence of the works of the master craftsman of the Amorós family (transept and niche of Gràcia, Chapel of Ànimes de la Catedral, Roser, Socors, the Saura Palace) can clearly be seen. The facade and the bell tower were built in 1775. The gateway, with its flared arches, is seemingly inspired by the Romanesque, while the lintel of the door is Renaissance. Other decorative motifs to be found in the church date from the start of the century, such as the mural paintings (in black staining) decorating the presbytery, and representing scenes from the life of San Francisco.
CHURCH OF THE CONCEPCIÓ
CHURCH OF THE CONCEPCIÓ

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Carrer Cós de Gràcia, 115
Town: Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 361 172
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°53'14"N, 4°15'35" E
Construction began in 1748 thanks to the Greek colony of traders based in Maó at that time. It was dedicated to Sant Nicolau de Bari, particularly revered in Greece and the Orient, above all by seafarers. It is a unique specimen among Minorca’s religious architecture, its layout a Greek cross with typical Byzantine decoration. Four columns define the central nave, topped by a dome above four ogival arches, while the side naves have cross-rib vaulting. The proportion of the height of the ceiling and the floorspace, together with the effect of the natural light on the shaded areas created by the central pillars, make it one of the finest interiors on Minorca.
The floor houses a sepulchre with an inscription in three languages (Latin, Greek and Russian). This is the resting place of Spiridov, a young nobleman who fell ill and died in Maó at the age of nineteen when the Russian squadron to which he belonged was in the port. He was buried here, as he belonged to the Greek Orthodox faith. Following the Spanish conquest the church was closed and used as a warehouse, among other functions, before being given to the Catholic Church in the mid-19th century to become a parish church. The current facade, dating from the mid-19th century, was finished off with two towers, of which only one was ultimately constructed.
The earliest record of the existence of a small settlement in Llucmaçanes dates from the 16th and 17th centuries, with references to a group of small properties where grapes were grown and wine produced.

The church was founded in 1885, dedicated to Sant Gaietà. The church has undergone a number of refurbishments.
CHURCH SANT CLIMENT

Location: Carrer Sant Climent, 10
Town: Sant Climent, Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 153 074
Web:  www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°52’00” N, 4°12’00” E
The Pariatge* of 1301 makes mention of a chapel at Mussuptà, dependent on the Parish of Maó.

In the mid-17th century the owners of the various "mussuptàs" into which the original property had been divided grouped together to build a new church. The church was dedicated to St Clement, the first-century pope and martyr.

The current church is in the Neo-Gothic style, and was built between 1819 and 1877. It has a simple roof, and around 1951 was given a cross-ribbed vault and presbytery.

* Document governing the shared sovereignty of Minorca. It was a concordat agreed by the Bishop of Majorca and the King of Majorca, James II, reestablishing the parishes and the property of each church.
CHURCH SANT LLUÍS
CHURCH SANT LLUÍS

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Sant Lluís, 81
Town: Sant Lluís, Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 150 111
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39º50’13”N, 4º15’21” E
The French authorities instigated the construction of the church in order to group together the various small-scale rural settlements. Construction of the church began in 1760 to plans by the architect Antoine de Allemand, and it was dedicated to St Louis. When the French troops were forced to leave the island in 1763 following the Treaty of Paris, the presbytery, sacristy and the bell tower had not been finished. The church was completed in 1783, while the bell tower was not finished until 1793.
The French architect applied classical principles and the spirit of Neoclassicism to the design. He planned a building with natural light and restrained decoration. The interior layout has a single nave and rectangular apse opening directly onto the nave, with a rounded arch intended as a triumphal arch. There are six open side chapels with rounded arches, separated by pilasters. The vault is a simple, cross-ribbed and arched design.
The facade of the church has three horizontal bodies, the lower for the atrium (removed in 1806 so as to lengthen the nave, build two chapels and install the choir above the entrance), comprising three semi-circular arches and six pilasters. The second body is likewise defined by the pilasters, with a large window in the centre. The upper body is a gable bearing the arms of France. The secondary access points to the nave are at the rear. The bell tower has different moulded bodies with an overhang, and is topped by a simple dome.
CHURCH NOSTRA SENYORA DEL ROSER
CHURCH NOSTRA SENYORA DEL ROSER

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Plaça S´Arraval Vella, 1
Town: Es Castell, Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 365 345
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39º52’48”N, 4º17’20” E
In Arraval del Castell, which was home to the relatives of the soldiers from the fortress at St Philip’s Castle, a church dedicated to Nuestra Señora de Rosa. During the first British occupation (1712-1756), the church was demolished when the settlement was abolished. The English built a new village, Arraval Nova, further removed from the castle. Work began in 1719 to build the new church, which was completed in 1722. Those liturgical ornaments and pieces which could be used were relocated, of which there remain the baptismal font, the silver lindum crucis and the reredoses of the chapel dedicated to Saint Peter (and now to the Holy Resurrected Christ).
The most unusual feature of the church of Our Lady of the Rosary is its location, at the far end of the town. It has a Latin cross layout with a single nave and five side chapels interconnected by arches which cross through the buttresses. The succession of windows running the length of the barrel vault is particularly distinctive. The main facade, in the Neoclassical style, is set back from the street to create a small square in front of the church. The side facade reveals the buttresses jutting out above the side chapels, an approach traditionally adopted by the churches of Minorca. Finally in 1805, when the bell tower was completed, the church was entirely finished, although it lacks one tower which apparently was to have been built in the same style the bell tower itself.
CHAPTER 3
HERMITAGES AND SHRINES
HERMITAGE SANT JOAN DE MISSA
HERMITAGE SANT JOAN DE MISSA

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Camí Sant Joan de Missa. Ronda Sur de Ciutadella (Southern Ring Road).
Town: Ciutadella
Telephone: (+34) 971 380 343
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°52’48”N, 4°17’20” E
It is documented in the *Pariatge* of James II from 1301 is one of the seven parishes into which Minorca was divided. The king's intention was to establish a new town in this area, although this idea was not put into practice as the chapel was transformed over the course of the 14th century, and placed under the authority of the parish of Ciutadella.

* Document governing the shared sovereignty of Minorca. It was a concordat agreed by the Bishop of Majorca and the King of Majorca, James II, reestablishing the parishes and the property of each church.
The hermitage is particularly associated with the San Juan’s Day festivities. The members of the former Fellowship of San Joan would ride on horseback from the Born Square down San Joan’s Street to the countryside hermitage. This is the origin of the Caragol del Born during the Festival of Sant Joan.

It is a very simple hermitage, with one single nave of two cross-ribbed sections and two chapels. The current arch is from 1749. This is an architectural element superimposed above the facade, similar to that of the Hermitage of Gràcia. The castellations on the arcade are particularly noteworthy, being an unusual feature in Minorcan architecture.

In the late 19th century Bishop Mercader undertook a major reform programme giving it its current appearance. The Chapel of Our Lady of Providence was built in 1884, while the facade was reformed and the bell tower rebuilt in 1886. The diocese performed substantial restoration in the late 20th century, uncovering the marès stonework of the porch and removing the church’s characteristic whitewashing.
SHRINE OF
LA MADRE DE DÉU DEL TORO
SHRINE OF LA MADRE DE DÉU DEL TORO

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: El Toro
Town: Es Mercadal
Telephone: (+34) 971 375 060 / (+34) 971 154 313
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°59'56”N, 4°05'37” E
El Toro, the highest peak on Minorca, has been home to a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary since shortly after the Christian conquest in 1287. A bull issued in 1291 makes mention of property held by the Order of Mercy on Minorca as Santa Maria de Podio de Toro, although the place name dates back further than this. An ancient legend tells how the Brothers of Mercy miraculously discovered the image of the Virgin, guided by a bull ('toro') which showed them the way. Records of the church during the Middle Ages are scant and scattered. The shrine was a site of pilgrimage, and there was an inn to house the pilgrims. It was administered by a committee with representatives from throughout the island. Augustinian friars occupied it in 1595. The mountain was also of military importance at that time, and the governor therefore ordered the construction of the square tower (which remains to this day) and the wall. The friars reformed and expanded the church and the other buildings. Work continued until well into the 17th century. The layout of the church features a single nave, with three chapels on each side which open onto the nave through semicircular arches, with a barrel vaulted roof. The reredos features an image of the Virgin. The gateway in the Mannerist style leading to the far end of the arcade is the key feature of the facade.
The Dissolution Act of 1835 forced the Augustinian friars to abandon the monastery. In 1936 the church was sacked and desecrated, although the image of the Virgin Mary was placed in hiding and saved. At the end of the war the shrine underwent extensive restoration. One of the chapels depicts the cave where the image was found, along with the amphora where it was buried underground between 1936 and 1939, having been saved from the fire by a villager from Es Mercadal.
HERMITAGE SANT PERE NOU
ERMITA SANT PERE NOU

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Sant Pere
Town: Alaior
Telephone: (+34) 971 371 107
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39°56’14”N, 4°08’23”E
This beautiful hermitage stands on the outskirts of Alaior. It today forms part of the urban layout, although it was originally set outside the village boundaries. It was built between 1723 and 1731. It is known as Sant Pere Nou, because it served as the replacement for an earlier building located at the basin of Sant Pere (on a site which is now on Ses Cuatro Bocas Street on Alaior’s industrial estate). The main festival in Alaior was dedicated to Sant Pere. The change in location was probably for reasons of public health.

The church has a rectangular layout with a single nave topped by a barrel vault, with three side chapels and a trapezoidal apse. Natural light enters only through a rose window above the door. The gateway is a particularly elaborate work of craftsmanship. It features a relief of an episode in the life of Sant Pere surrounded by intricate decoration with wreaths and grotesques, framed by lower concentric ogival arches. The remaining walls are plain and painted in white. The bell tower has the form of a turret.
HERMITAGE SANT LLORENÇ DE
HERMITAGE SANT LLORENÇ DE BINIXEMS

VISITABLE OUTSIDE
Location: Camí d’en Kane. Camí de Binixems
Town: Alaior
Telephone: (+34) 971 37 11 07
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

39º56’14”N, 4º08’23”E
This parish, founded in 1301 by James II, celebrated the feast of Saint Lawrence up until 1832.

It is a small church with a basilica layout, an adjoining sacristy on the right and a vicarage on the left, which was the site of the rural school from 1957 up until the early 1980s.

The transept is a key feature. Four sturdy columns support the dome. Half-way up the stem of the columns is a ring of acanthus leaves and a zigzag decoration. The four semicircular arches have the same decoration as the columns. The lantern has four rectangular openings which allow light into the church.

Following the relocation of the festival to Alaior, and the end of religious services in 1853, the building was abandoned and by the late 20th century was in a state of ruin. Reconstruction work began in 1898 and was completed in 1899. The cross in the courtyard is a terminus cross which was destroyed during the Civil War and rebuilt in 1961.

The hermitage today serves as a dormitory for youth camps in the summer.
HERMITAGE NOSTRA SENYORA DE
HERMITAGE NOSTRA SENYORA DE FÀTIMA

VISITABLE OUTSIDE *

Location: Maó – Fornells Road (Me-7), kilometre 10

Town: Maó

Telephone: (+34) 971 362 555

Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

* It is opened on rare occasions, for such festivals as San Isidro, and for weddings and other events.
The Hermitage of Fàtima was erected in 1956 atop a hill. It was built in order to allow the local farmers to attend mass without having to go down into Maó. During the 1960s and 1970s the hermitage was particularly active.

The layout of the building comprises a single, longitudinal nave with a semicircular apse. It is built from local red stone and mortar, with the corners, doors and windows reinforced with cut stone. The hermitage has an austere appearance both inside and out. The altar is made from unadorned stone.

The building itself is adjoined by an arcade at the western end.
HERMITAGE SANT JOAN DELS VERGERS
HERMITAGE SANT JOAN DELS VERGERS

VISITABLE OUTSIDE *

Location: Port of Maó
Town: Maó
Telephone: (+34) 971 362 555
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com

* It is opened on only a very few special occasions, such as the Festival of San Juan.
According to the Chronicle of Minorca, King Alfonso III, following a bloody battle against the Moors, ordered his army to rest on the pains of Pla del Verger and had two masses sung: one in honour of the Virgin Mary, and the other for the souls of those who had fallen in battle. Over time, the hermitage of San Juan Buatista was built on this same site. It was constructed during the 14th and 15th centuries, as the architectural style is Levantine Gothic.

In the mid-16th century Maó was home to a Fellowship of San Juan which each year organised a horseback parade as far as the hermitage to celebrate the Festival of the Baptist. This was staged until well into the 19th century. The hermitage underwent considerable reforms over the course of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. According to Archduke Lluís Salvador, the current church is the result of restoration work in 1712. It is a small building, with a single nave topped by a simple cross-ribbed vault, divided into two sections by an ogival arch. It has no side chapels, and the vault is supported by the two exterior buttresses. The decoration inside is highly austere. The 19th-century facade is a body added to the nave with a slightly pointed arch giving onto a small portico topped by a pointed vault. This is in turn crowned by a small bell gable. Above the entrance gateway is a small window with a Maltese cross cut out.
HERMITAGE NOSTRA SENYORA DE
HERMITAGE NOSTRA SENYORA DE GRÀCIA

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Carrer Camí de Trepucó
Town: Maó
Telephone: 639 632 956
Web: www.bisbatdemenorca.com
Alongside Maó cemetery stands the hermitage of "la Mare de Deu de Gracia", the city's patron saint. It was built between 1436 and 1461, and comprised what is now the nave of the church.

In 1535 a squadron commanded by the Turkish pirate Redbeard disembarked in Maó, forced its surrender and carried off numerous captives. The hermitage was desecrated, and subsequently restored with alms money thanks to the huge devotion of the faithful, and despite the devastating condition in which Maó had been left. The presbytery, the adjoining chapels and the niche were expanded between 1697 and 1705. Steps lead up to the presbytery, heavily ornamented with floral motifs in the native style and featuring a large Baroque reredos (this was destroyed during the Civil War, with only four reliefs being salvaged).
The two kneeling angels supporting the Virgin were also sculpted. The niche of the Virgin is an octagonal space topped by a dome with lantern. The Virgin stands in the central niche. The copious decoration on the walls is true to the traditional "horror vacui" of the Baroque style. The sculpted images on the beams and the keystones of the vault in the nave and portico are particularly noteworthy. The walls of the hermitage are crowded with paintings of ships. Many seafarers called on the Virgin for assistance when the fierce "tramontana" wind blew, promising in return to leave an image of their ships.

In 1733 the Neoclassical facade with its elegant bell gable was completed. During the Civil War the church was used as a morgue, while the presbytery served as an autopsy room.
BASILICA DES FORNÀS DE TORELLÓ
BASILICA DES FORNÀS DE TORELLÓ

OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Camí de Torelló, Sant Climent – Maó Road

Town: Maó

Ownership: Ministry of Culture

Management: Minorca Island Council

40º01’15” N 4º07’49” E
Paleo-Christiana basilica with a regular layout, the central nave paved with a magnificent mosaic which can still be seen. It dates from the 6th century A.D., when the Byzantine army of Justinian (the Eastern Roman Emperor who aspired to rebuild the Western Roman Empire) had conquered the Balearic Islands.

It faces from east to west, and on the northern side retains a small hemispherical baptismal font built in stone and mortar, with a waterproof lining.
There are three separate sections:

The rectangular apse with the base of an altar, surrounded by bunches of grapes, the central motif being a classical wine bowl and two peacocks. The grapes represent life, while the peacocks facing one another represent the resurrection.

Between the nave and the head, two lions face a palm tree. They have been interpreted as a reference to Jewish tradition, which was particularly important at that time in Maó. The lions represent the power of death, while the palm is the tree of life.

The nave for the congregation reveals geometric figures and depictions of birds, in a clear reference to Paradise.
BASILICA OF ILLA DEL REI
BASILICA OF ILLA DEL REI

VISITABLE OUTSIDE

Location: Illa del Rei. (King’s Island). Port of Maó
Town: Maó

Owned and managed by: Minorca Island Council

39°53’09,05” N 4°17’15,57” E
The Port of Maó contains a number of small islets, one of which is known as the King’s Island. Here there stand the remains of a hospital built by the English. Outside the hospital walls, in the east of the island, are the archaeological remains of a Palaeo-Christian basilica, discovered by chance in 1888 while the land was being ploughed. The site was excavated for the first time in the 1960s by Maria Lluisa Serra. The basilica was built between the end of the 5th century and the 6th century. The building has a single head with three mosaic-paved naves, separated by pillars or columns, at least on the northern side. The head faces towards the east. The central nave is divided into three separate sections, distinguished by the design of the mosaic flooring and the different levels of the floor: the area at the foot for the congregation, the choir, and a higher section where the altar stood, possibly a martyrrium (sepulchre). The northern nave still houses the remains of a baptismal font, and is currently the only section with original traces of the mosaic flooring.
The mosaics in the central nave were removed in 1950, and are now on display in the Minorca Museum. along with the remains of a Roman villa, with a circular dining room (stibadium), and on the southern side the remains of two water tanks (lacus), in a fairly delicate state of conservation.
BASILICA OF SON BOU

OPEN TO VISITORS
Location: Beach of Son Bou
Town: Alaier
Owned and managed by: Minorca Island Council

39°53’09,12” N 4°04’45” E
A letter written by Bishop Severo and the correspondence of Conscenci reveal the maturity and degree of organisation of the Christian community on Minorca in the early 5th century. The intense Christian activity on the island, from at least the 4th century onwards, is reflected by the discovery to date of 5 Palaeo-Christian architectural sites: a small church which has not yet been excavated in Sanitja, and a further four basilicas on the King’s Island, Son Bou, Es Fornàs de Torelló and Es Cap des Port de Fornells.
The basilica, located at the eastern end of Son Bou Beach, dates from the 5th century A.D., and faces the southeast, with a layout featuring three naves separated by pillars, a three-part head and a small vestibule or nartex from which those who had not yet been baptised (catechumens) could take part in liturgical services. The straight wall of the head, which does not jut out, is one of the major similarities between this layout and those found in Northern Syria in the mid-6th century. The baptismal font, comprising a monolith which is cylindrical on the outside and has the form of a cross on the inside (a rather unusual feature for a Minorcan basilica) must originally have been at the foot, but is now sited in the compartment on the left of the head, in the North. The basilica has mortar flooring. The whole building is marked out in a rectangular form.

Outside the basilica there are very simple burials and other constructions, probably monastic.
BASILICA OF CAP DES PORT
BASILICA OF CAP DES PORT
OPEN TO VISITORS

Location: Turning on the right from the Mahó-Fornells (Me-7) highway, shortly before the junction (roundabout) with the Es Mercadal-Fornells (Me-15) highway

Town: Es Mercadal

Owned and managed by: Minorca Island Council

40º01’15” N 4º07’49” E
This basilica made use of the sloping ground to install a crypt with a Greek cross layout within and apse which has a rectangular form on the outside. The upper level of the crypt is accessed via a set of steps. It would seem logical to presume that the sanctuary and choir were positioned above this. The elevated choir, topped with a dome and built with large, rough-hewn quarried stones, had sunk inside the nave when it was found. The double walls on both sides of the nave would perhaps be explained by the need to support this heavy structure. The baptistery is located at the north-eastern end of the building, with a stepped, cross-shaped font and solid rendering. The chamber is paved with opus signinum, while the walls are rendered and painted. It proved possible to restore some of these paintings, revealing that most of them are covered in Latin and Greek graffiti.
Five funeral chambers with tombs covered over with opus signinum slabs were found inside the church. A considerable quantity of architectural remains were uncovered: pilasters, columns, capitals and bases. Of the liturgical furniture, two fragments of the same marble table were recovered, possibly the altar. The other objects found include in particular a stone cross, a bronze cross which must have hung from a chain or some other suspending element, and two glass paste gems. A Roman stone sarcophagus was also found, and this is now held at the Minorca Museum.