

FOCUS ON CULTURE IN ANDORRA

According to legend, Charlemagne founded Andorra in the year 805, in recognition of the assistance provided by its inhabitants against the Saracens.

For many centuries, the Valleys of Andorra were isolated (and protected) due to climatic and infrastructural reasons, but the country began to be populated starting from the Bronze Age (the Iron Age), and the site of La Margineda was noted, for example, for a settlement nucleus between the 12th and 14th centuries.

Near the archaeological site of La Margineda is the Margineda Bridge: a medieval bridge built in the 16th century that is part of the historical and cultural heritage of the country, along with the Sant Antoni Bridge (built in the 11th century) and the Escalls Bridge, located on the Valira del Norte river, which served to cross the old path between Andorra la Vella and Escaldes.



In Andorra, there has been a significant expression of Culture reflected in emblematic buildings such as the Casa de la Vall, built at the end of the 16th century, which was the former seat of the Parliament of Andorra. Above the main door is the coat of arms of Andorra, and we honor the motto inscribed on our coat of arms VIRTUS UNITA FORTIOR ("united virtue is stronger"): the Casa de la Vall itself represents the expression of Culture and the values of the country.

Regarding the aforementioned historical and cultural heritage, we can mention the numerous churches in Andorra (particularly noteworthy are the Romanesque Church of Santa Coloma in the Parish of Andorra la Vella and the Church of Sant Joan de Caselles in the Parish of Canillo).

Other cultural expressions found in buildings in Andorra are the dovecotes and pigeon lofts (detailed by the Andorran writer Pere Canturri Montanya). A fine example of this type of construction, both aesthetic and functional, is the dovecote of Cal Pal de la Cortinada, which corresponds to a space for reflection on the natural and cultural heritage of Andorra.

The Ministry of Culture has emphasized the importance of preserving the country's cultural heritage, promoting various cross-cutting initiatives to disseminate Andorra's cultural treasures. For example, the National Library of Andorra is an institution responsible for the conservation, preservation, and dissemination of the national bibliographic heritage, in compliance with Law 9/2003, of June 12, on the cultural heritage of Andorra. The National Library is located in the Parish of Encamp at the Hotel Rosaleda, an emblematic building of granite architecture constructed in 1943.

The Hotel Rosaleda will also house the old postal museum collection, offering an educational window on the evolution of communication and transportation in a challenging territory at the beginning of the 20th century. This collection allows us to better understand the socio-economic history of Andorra, showing how the country has adapted to its geographical peculiarities. To complete this brief overview of cultural interest elements in Andorra, we can make a special mention of the Areny-Plandolit Museum in Ordino where we find magnificent everyday life objects (dishware, wooden items, such as salt shakers or "musicated"* furniture). The aforementioned museum is part of the network of Museums of the Principality (see www.museus.ad). It is noteworthy that Andorra is one of the countries in the world with the most museums per square meter.

It is an undeniable fact that cultural expression in Andorra began to develop significantly at the beginning of the 20th century and especially after the Second World War with writers such as Isabelle Sandy ("Andorra or the iron men"), artists like the sculptor Josep Viladomat, the sculptor, ceramist, painter, engraver, and writer Sergi Mas, the painter Francesc Galobardes, or the painter Carme Massana.

*The verb "to musicate" the wood corresponds "to the way it is called when carving it; especially, how the shepherds did it with their knife" (Sergi Mas Balaguer, "The Art of Musicate Wood". ANEM Editions).



The country has managed to create artistic spaces to spread knowledge and artistic expression, generating an artistic and creative ecosystem to promote art with practical and concrete initiatives (for example, with the creation of art spaces <https://www.cultura.ad/tallers-art> and artist directories <https://censart.ad>).

The Andorran law on copyright and neighboring rights, approved by the General Council on June 10, 1999, has provided legal support to fully promote and defend artistic and literary creation in the Principality.

Apart from the magnificent and extensive cultural heritage fund of the country, in a subsequent article, we will be able to explore the fascinating intangible cultural heritage that has developed in the country and that has been recognized by UNESCO.

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