

No. 51 Sanctuary of Our Lady of Andikona

**Town:**

Berriz.

Location:

Barrio (district) of Andikona.

Access:

Leaving Berriz on the road to Markina, take the left turning marked "Andikona Auza" just past the San Lorenzo hermitage on the right.

Other places of interest nearby:

Church of St. John the Evangelist.
Berriz.

Curate's house.
Berriz.

Berrizbeitia and Isuntze farmsteads.
Berriz.



Set high in the foothills of Mt. Oiz, the Sanctuary of Andikona is a sort of country congregation of farmsteads gathered around the parish church, in this case a small local Marian sanctuary. The beauty of the setting and the charm of the building are two pressing reasons for a visit.

Building

This is a Gothic church with a single nave distributed in three sections. The chevet boasts a sacristy and the southern flank a porch. Like most country churches, it has a steeple rather than a tower for the bells, here set in the southern side wall rather than at the end.

Done in well-proportioned, harmonious Gothic style, the church's golden ashlar walls are dotted with windows to illuminate the interior. Entrance and windows are in the same style. The entrance is pointed, as are some of the windows; others are rounded, while some are skylights with the tracery typical of such designs.

The first of the three vaulted sections is slightly narrower than the other two, and is a simple two diagonal rib and keystone affair. The basic design of the others is a four-pointed star with straight ribs and five keystones, where the ribs generally spring from brackets or prominent sills fixed to the walls which, like the keystones, are decorated in the Gothic style, i.e. with episodes narrated in stone.

At the end opposite the chevet is a high choir which, despite some rather more modest decorative features, is a worthy replica of the one to be found at St. John the Evangelist in Berriz. It rests on two arches with column and has a parapet adorned by smaller columns. Two medallions set into the angles of the arches date the choir to 1598.

An original work in the Gothic style, the Sanctuary clearly dates from c. 1520, and is linked to the Basque urban and rural Gothic that was in vogue in the early 16th century. Judging by a stele found in the area, this had most likely been a place of worship for some time before, in all likelihood at least since the 11th century. However, no record of this remote age survives at Andikona.

After a number of setbacks, the steeple was finally built in 1789 and is the work of Gabriel de Capelastegui, a master mason from nearby Elorrio. The sacristy is slightly earlier, from 1774, the finishing touches being put into place by Domingo de Abaitua for the princely sum of 1,685 reales.

The church owes its present spruce appearance to restoration work carried out in 1949, by which time the Sanctuary of Andikona was fully appreciated as a minor gem in the region's heritage.

Furniture

Of particular interest is the polychromed wood reredos, set into the head wall, which belongs to the Churrigueresque phase of the Baroque, although some features point to the arrival of the Rococo. The main niche boasts a carving of Andra Mari (Our Lady), typical of Bizkaia, dating from the first half of the 14th century. A number of surviving documents attribute this 1735 reredos to Agustín de Quintana and Domingo de Soano, specialist craftsmen from the neighbouring province of Cantabria. The gilt was executed by Luis Fontcueva in 1763.



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