

# SPAIN

## Old Town of Ávila with its Extra-Muros Churches

### Brief description

Founded in the 11th century to protect the Spanish territories from the Moors, this 'City of Saints and Stones', the birthplace of St. Teresa and the burial place of the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada, has kept its medieval austerity. This purity of form can still be seen in the Gothic cathedral and the fortifications which, with their 82 semicircular towers and nine gates, are the most complete in Spain.

### 1. Introduction

**Year of Inscription** 1985

**Agency responsible for site management**

Exmo.Ayuntamiento de Ávila

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** C (iii), (iv)

### Justification provided by the State Party

(Révision): La cité d'Avila, avec sa muraille, sa Cathédrale, ses églises intra et extra-muros et ses maisons nobles constitue un exemple remarquable de la civilisation médiévale. Sa situation frontalière face aux musulmans au temps de la Reconquête marque les traits fondamentaux de son caractère: militaire et religieux. Ainsi, la ville d'Avila représente l'idée du bastion du monde chrétien face à l'Islam.

Le caractère militaire d'Avila est défini par les deux mille cinq cent mètres de muraille avec des donjons qui fixent matériellement les limites du territoire, pour faire face à l'insécurité produite par la proximité de l'ennemi. La muraille est un véritable chef-d'œuvre de l'art militaire du Moyen Age et en plus elle présente dans sa structure, ses matériaux, et dans la disposition de ses portes, des allusions constantes à des principes urbanistiques romains dont elle est redevable.

Le caractère religieux est représenté par la Cathédrale et par un grand nombre d'ermitages, paroisses, couvents et monastères qui traduisent la conception théocratique de la société médiévale, avec plus d'emphase même que dans d'autres villes européennes, parce qu'Avila est placée dans

un territoire instable où s'opposent deux religions différentes. La Cathédrale, monument religieux par excellence, acquiert à Avila une qualité singulière, car elle ajoute à sa signification religieuse d'autres contenus qui l'associent à l'art laïc. Ceux-ci sont déterminés par la situation de la Cathédrale dans la muraille. Son abside est un donjon qui se détache de la muraille dans sa partie orientale et son architecture est plutôt celle d'une forteresse que celle d'un temple.

L'ensemble de ces bâtiments, plus que leur intérêt artistique individuel, fait de la ville un témoignage exceptionnel d'une civilisation disparue qui répond de plein droit aux critères (i) (réalisation artistique unique, chef-d'œuvre de l'esprit créateur de l'homme); (iv) (exemple éminent d'un type de structure, illustrant une situation historique significative); (vi) (directement et matériellement associé à des événements, des idées ou des croyances ayant une signification historique universelle).

Grâce à sa conservation presque miraculeuse la ville a gardé son authenticité originelle pour ce qui est de sa conception, ses matériaux, son exécution et sa situation. D'autre part, les dispositions de la Loi du Patrimoine Artistique assurent la subsistance des critères d'authenticité, spécialement l'article numéro 19, qui dit: « On proscrie toute tentative de reconstruction des monuments; on aura soin, avec tous les moyens techniques, de sa conservation et sa consolidation; on limitera la restauration à ces travaux qui soient absolument indispensables; on fera toujours reconnaissables les additions ».

### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(July 1985): Though ICOMOS is in favour of including this proposed cultural property on the World Heritage List, it would like to make the following comments:

1) it is impossible to disassociate in an abstract way the city's walls from the overall urban context of Avila, as is demonstrated by the example of the Cathedral which with its crenulated Romanesque choir linked to the curtain wall is part of the system of fortifications,

2) it would therefore be preferable to nominate "the old town of Avila with its walls" for inclusion on the World Heritage List by adding to the proposal the Romanesque churches of San Segundo, San Vicente, San Andres and San Pedro which, built extra muros, are a characteristic historical feature of Castile.

(November 1985): Avila should be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III and IV.

*Criterion (iii).* Avila is an outstanding example of a fortified city of the Middle Ages the surrounding walls of which are fully intact. The density of religious and secular monuments, both intra and extra muros, makes it an urban ensemble of exceptional value.

*Criterion (iv).* Avila is the best known example of a fortified city resulting from the "repoblaciones" policy of the Kingdom of Castilla on the morrow of the reconquest of Toledo.

#### **Committee Decision**

Bureau (1985): The Bureau recommended the property for inscription on condition that it is redefined so as to include at the same time the old town intra-muros, and the extra-muros Romanesque churches of San Segundo, San Vicente, San Andres and San Pedro.

- UNESCO official description of site should be improved: State Party has provided suggestion

#### **Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate. State Party has provided suggestion for a more comprehensive area
- Buffer zone: adequate with proposal for enlargement proposed by State Party

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- Not provided

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- National, regional and local legislation and Plan Special de Protection de l'Ensemble Historique Artistique
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- Urban centre, religious use

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- No formal steering group. Functions have been integrated in a coordinating commission in the historic city management group
- Site coordinator on full-time basis

- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

### **5. Management Plan**

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 01/2000
- Adequately effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Municipal technical services including engineers, architects, lawyers, archaeologists

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- Several funding sources; Local and regional funds and subventions. Tourism funds by Direction du Tourisme et des Villes Patrimoine de l'Humanité
- Funding is considered as insufficient

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 10

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: visitor management
- Good: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education

### **8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques**

- Professional competence
- Training needs: continuous training in WH management

### **9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: 1,100,000 (Observatoire du tourisme), 2004
- Visitor facilities: visitor centre, two tourist offices
- Tourism management plan  
[www.avilaturismo.com](http://www.avilaturismo.com)

### 10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies relate to the values of the site, condition surveys, impact of WH designation, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies

- Weaknesses of management: financial constraints

**Future actions:** Increased awareness by the public, fundraising, participation in conferences and meetings about the heritage management

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Many number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- International and national exhibitions, museums,
- Web site available

### 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

#### Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 18th (1994)
- World Heritage Committee sessions: 17th (1993); 27th (2003); 28th (2004); 29th (2005); 30th (2006)

#### Conservation interventions

- Restoration works, archaeological interventions, public areas rehabilitation
- Present state of conservation: adequate

#### Threats and Risks to site

- Development, Environmental, number of inhabitants
- Financial constraints
- Emergency measures taken: search for funding, creation of the university of mysticism or exhibition facilities

### 13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme, condition and tourism surveys

### 14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic
- Strengths of management: increased awareness of heritage and the history of the city, tourism increase