

SANTA CLARA CONVENT IN FUNCHAL

LIVING HERITAGE



Background

The Santa Clara Convent, in Funchal, is one of Madeira's most significant historical monuments. Between 2019 and 2023, the Regional Directorate of Culture carried out an extensive rehabilitation and restoration project, co-financed by European funds, aimed at safeguarding the building, conserving its artistic heritage, and improving the visitor experience through a new museographic approach.

Rehabilitation

The intervention included:

- Architectural rehabilitation of the convent complex
- Conservation and restoration of artistic and religious heritage
- Improvement of visitor circuits and accessibility
- Implementation of a new museography project
- Enhancement of interpretation and public access

Living Heritage Site

Heritage: Church, Cloister, Chapels, Exhibition rooms, Choirs

Religious Function: Active conventual community, Ongoing worship activities, Preservation of spiritual traditions

Social Function: Nursery school operating within the complex, Continuous service to the local community, Educational and social engagement



Multifunctionality

The coexistence of sacred, patrimonial and social functions makes it an exemplary model of integrated heritage management.

Visitors encounter: a historic monument, a living religious community, an educational and social institution. It's not a museum, the convent remains an active and evolving place where heritage conservation, community service and cultural tourism coexist naturally and respectfully.

Results and Impact

- Completion of rehabilitation and restoration works (2023)
- Improved conservation of built and artistic heritage
- Enhanced visitor experience and interpretation
- Continued religious and social use of the building
- Increased attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination
- Preservation of the site's authenticity as a living heritage monument

Conclusion

The Santa Clara Convent demonstrates how heritage conservation can successfully support living communities while ensuring public access and cultural valorisation. The integration of religious, social and heritage functions contributes to its authenticity, sustainability and attractiveness, making it one of Madeira's most visited cultural landmarks.

