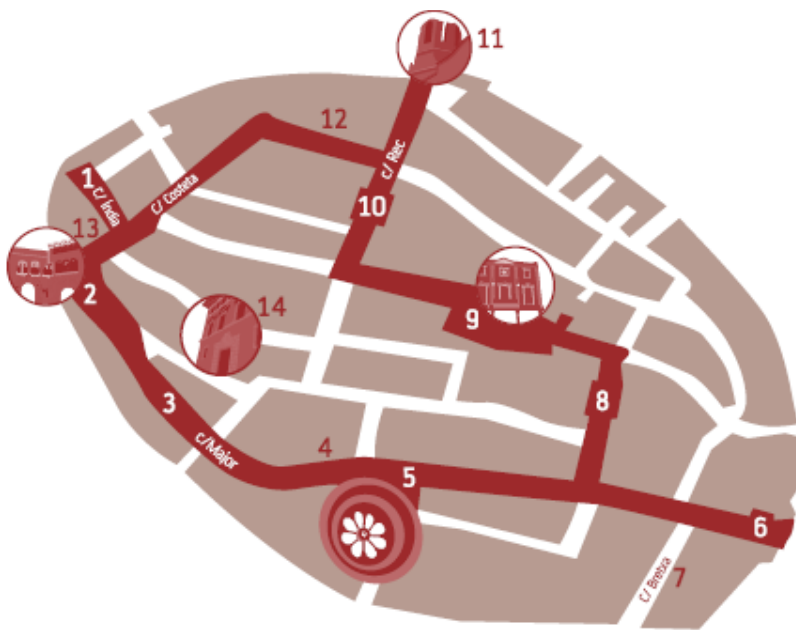


## THE URBAN ROUTE “A walk through time”

In its work of promoting the unique architectural heritage conserved in the town, Alcover Museum presents an urban route beginning and ending at the museum itself. This route, both educational and of interest to tourists, introduces visitors to outstanding moments in the history of Alcover and Catalonia, the monuments along the way teaching us particularly about the “golden age” that was the Renaissance here, when “houses sought to become palaces”. Alcover today is a friendly, active town with considerable architectural, cultural and natural heritage with deeply-rooted commercial traditions. The town also boasts a long history, beginning with Triassic fossils and leading right up to a prosperous present that views the future with confidence.



1. Street of the Índia
2. Portal of the Saura
3. Street Major
4. Fountain Vella
5. Church Vella
6. Portal of Sant Miquel
7. Street of the Bretxa
8. Square Vella
9. Square Nova
10. Street of the Rec
11. Church Nova
12. L'Abadia
13. Ca Batistó
14. Ca Cosme

### Portal Saura and India Street

The tour begins outside the Museum itself, entered from **Portal of the Saura (2)**, a medieval gate that once gave access to the town for those coming here from Reus. We can see some private houses were built using parts of the structure from the old town walls. According to the original town layout, we are now on the road from Reus to Montblanc, what is now Street Major, where we also find the parish church, dedicated to Our Lady, which we will come to later. Before starting our tour of Street Major, however, we shall retrace our steps to **Street of the Índia (1)** where, if it indeed ever existed, the old Jewish Quarter would have stood.

### Main Street, Old Church and St. Michael Portal

We now enter **Street Major (3)**, the nerve centre of the old medieval town, then surrounded by walls. Half-way along the street, we can stop before the old Church of Santa Maria, now known as the Església Vella or **Church Vella (5)** and **Fountain Vella (4)**. This Romanesque church, built with in the red sauló sandstone so characteristic of the style, was cataloged as an outstanding historic and artistic monument in 1931. Unfortunately, part of the building collapsed in 1937, leaving it as we see it now. It was around this central nerve point, and in Square Vella,

which we will come to later, that the main social and economic activities used to take part in the town. As we continue to make our way along Street Major, we can admire the old porticoes and observe the many buildings over whose threshold is a stone engraved with the date of construction or reform, a clear indication of past economic and urban development.

At the end of Street Major we find another gate from the old medieval walls, the **Portal of Sant Miquel (6)**, providing entrance for travellers along the road from Montblanc. On the way, we can pause for a moment in **Street of the Bretxa (7)**, whose name alludes to events during the Catalan Civil War in 1462, when Alcover suffered a cruel siege. It is said that this is the point where a cannon ball opened up a small breach, through which the troops of King John II were finally able to enter the town.

## Les Places / Squares

Retracing our steps a short way along Street Major, we take Street Estela to **Square Vella (8)**, the other important centre of life in the medieval town. This was where the market took place every week, and the old Town Hall (Casa del Comú) is thought to have been housed in the building on the left, supported by columns. Leaving medieval times behind we now delve into Alcover's golden age. Now we find ourselves in **Square Nova (9)**. Gradually, over the years, the nerve centre of the town moved north, and it was here that the new Town Hall was constructed, housed in the building we see on our right. Alcover enjoyed sustained population growth as it entered the 16th century, and increasing economic prosperity left its mark on architecture and art. This was when construction began outside the town walls. The driving force behind this expansion was the local textile industry, particularly the booming trade of the paraires (drapers).

## Carrer del Rec i Església Nova / Rec street and the New Church

We now continue to **Street of the Rec (10)**, where, at the top of the street, we shall be surprised by a large and impressive building: the **Church Nova (11)**. This huge building was completed between the years 1594 and 1630, the renowned names of those who worked on it including the architects Joan Munter, Oliveri Auqui and Pere Blai. The façade features many Renaissance-style elements, but what most surprises the visitor is the sight of the unfinished belltower. This collapsed on 29 January 1795 and was never rebuilt due to a dispute between the priest and the mayor in those times. We now descend Street of the Rec once more. Although this street is now the nerve centre of the town, where we find most of the local shops, in medieval times this was a secondary route, the site of the canal or rec that supplied Alcover with water.

## L'Abadia i Ca Cosme / The Abbey and Ca Cosme

We now find ourselves before **l'Abadia (12)**, one of the architectural jewels from Alcover's golden age, built by Pere Blai in 1618. The Renaissance-style façade transports us to the Florentine palaces of the Italian Renaissance. We now head towards the end of our route before returning to the museum. **Ca Batistó (13)** is a noble house built in 1661 by the Andreu family, and provides outstanding testimony to the economic vitality of the time. Opposite this house is Square of the Cosme Vidal and the building known as **Ca Cosme (14)**, our last illustration of the prosperity Alcover enjoyed during the Renaissance. The building stands in memory of Cosme Vidal, a local writer and illustrious personage who, with the poet Antoni Isern, were key figures in the literary Modernism in the early-20th century.