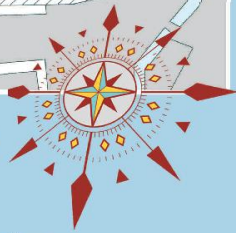


**The church of  
St. Joseph**



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**CENTRO CULTURALE  
SAN GIUSEPPE**  
O. N. L. U. S.

# The church of St. Joseph

*with its archaeological  
roman path  
under the church  
and the visit to  
the bell tower,  
viewpoint over  
the town of Alba*

**Open:**  
*Monday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday  
Saturday  
Sunday  
from 14.30  
to 19 pm.*

**Closed**  
*on Tuesdays*

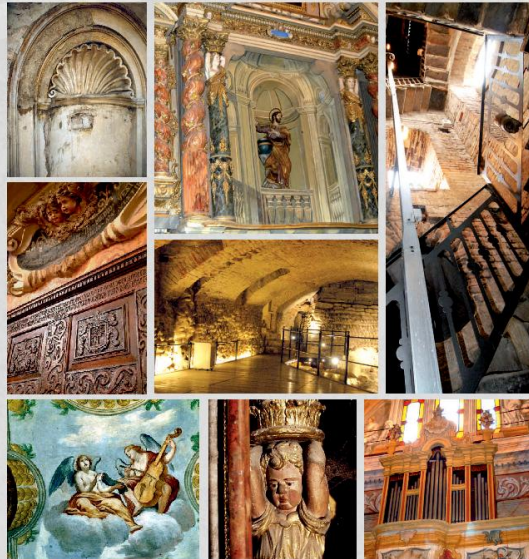


**ENGLISH**



## The church of St. Joseph

The church of St. Joseph is located in the neighborhood that was once called Borgo San Lorenzo, at the confluence of the Manzoni Street and Vernazza Street, where there is a small square called St. Joseph. The church consists of a large rectangular volume, covered with a gabled roof, developed longitudinally along the Manzoni Street. The first part of the wall towards the road takes upon itself the secondary volume of the side chapels while, on the opposite side, it is barely visible, at the level of the roofs, the short overhang of the chapel of the Crucifix, which rises slightly above the level of the eaves. The façade, more elaborated and covered with plaster, differs from the side walls composed by square bricks plasters to reinforce the corners, wainscot and shell moulding so called "gussazza" (in Italian). The complex of buildings was built at various times between 1642 and the mid 18th century: between 1640 and 1642 are dated the first acts of the Confraternity and of the specialized future workers. In 1642 the permission requests were addressed to the bishop, among which emerges the promise to build the church "following the Holy Synodal Constitutions and the Council of Trent" This was followed by the payment of a drawing and an estimate of expenses (that has been lost) performed by Master Angelo Giovanni Finale. In the same year the negotiations for the construction of the bell tower began. Only on May 14th, 1645, the bishop Brizio allowed "to build a tower and keep inside a bell" which, it is specified, "will serve only to summon the believers". In 1653, the construction of the main body of the church and sacristy were probably completed; the construction of the side chapels began only in the 80s of the 17th century, thanks to the will of the major leaders of the local nobility. The pentagonal chapel of the Crucifix was built later, as evidenced by the documents written between 1710 and 1720, while the construction of the tower began in 1689, following a design project "received from Turin", and ended just in 1830.



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The church is a multifunctional laboratory for cultural and educational activities conducted by the Centro Culturale San Giuseppe onlus, in order to stimulate the growth and the promotion aimed at the protection and enhancement of the historical, artistic and archaeological heritage through the work of volunteers.

## The archaeological path under the church

The visit of the archaeological remains found during the archaeological excavations carried out under the Church of St. Joseph foresees a path, inside the cellar of the building, which is going from the 17th century walls until to the roman and medieval ruins on which the church has actually been built. In the area of the town that is now occupied by the church, it was built, in the 1st century A. D., the theater of Alba Pompeia, one of the most important public places in the Roman world, in which citizens used to play games and to do political activities. In the mentality of the ancient Romans the theater was a symbol of the Imperial power and characterized the life of the citizens and, therefore, it was usually built close to other public buildings, such as the Foro, built at the present Piazza Risorgimento, the Basilica (where now is located the Cathedral of San Lorenzo) and the sacred area (at the present Mario Palace). The theater was restored during the 2nd century A. D. with the insertion of a floor in marble fragments (in part preserved in the Museum Eusebio of Alba) cut to make an inlaid decoration, in this case with lozenges, circles and squares, according to the roman technique called Opus Sectile. Here it is possible to recognize some of the walls of the scene corner (the background within which the actors used to move) and the related service spaces, while the structure of the auditorium that housed the theater steps are partly conserved in the basements of the buildings built next to the church. During the 4th century A.D. the theater was gradually abandoned and in its place modest private homes were installed. In the beginning (4th - 7th century A. D.) these dwellings were built reusing the outer roman walls of the theater, adding just elements in wood for the floors and tiles for the roof while, at a later time, (8th - 9th century A. D.) they were built entirely of wood, with earthen floors, similarly to the huts. In the Romanesque period (11th - 14th century A. D.) a new building phase began with the construction of a square tower stone made whose two corner of the walls and the foundation are still well visible. This tower, like many others built in the same period in the city of Alba, did not have a housing purpose but a defensive and symbolic function. During the same period two houses were built, separated by a rectangular quintana which is a narrow passageway (0.70 cm) recognizable today between the two parallel walls placed at the entrance of the cellar, on the right. The last building transformation before the construction of the church foresaw the excavation for the construction of a house and its related cellar and the dismantling of the walls of the tower whose only the foundations remained. The new cellar, built almost entirely of brick, was covered with a barrel vault; several basement windows allowing light and fresh air to enter are still well visible. During the 17th century the house was bought and demolished by the Confraternity of Pilgrims in order to make room for the foundations of the church; fortunately the cellar was left intact, allowing the preservation until today of the remains of layers of over two thousand years.

