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Architecture: Gothic and Renaissance (Gothic and Renaissance Architecture - Illustrated)

T Roger Smith

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Gothic architecture is a style of architecture that flourished during the high and late medieval period. It evolved from Romanesque architecture and was succeeded by Renaissance architecture. Originating in 12th-century France and lasting into the 16th century, Gothic architecture was known during the period as Opus Francigenum ("French work") with the term Gothic first appearing during the latter part of the Renaissance. Its characteristics include the pointed arch, the ribbed vault and the flying buttress. Gothic architecture is most familiar as the architecture of many of the great cathedrals, abbeys and churches of Europe. It is also the architecture of many castles, palaces, town halls, guild halls, universities and to a less prominent extent, private dwellings. It is in the great churches and cathedrals and in a number of civic buildings that the Gothic style was expressed most powerfully, its characteristics lending themselves to appeals to the emotions, whether springing from faith or from civic pride. A great number of ecclesiastical buildings remain from this period, of which even the smallest are often structures of architectural distinction while many of the larger churches are considered priceless works of art and are listed with UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. For this reason a study of Gothic architecture is largely a study of cathedrals and churches. A series of Gothic revivals began in mid-18th-century England, spread through 19th-century Europe and continued, largely for ecclesiastical and university structures, into the 20th century.

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