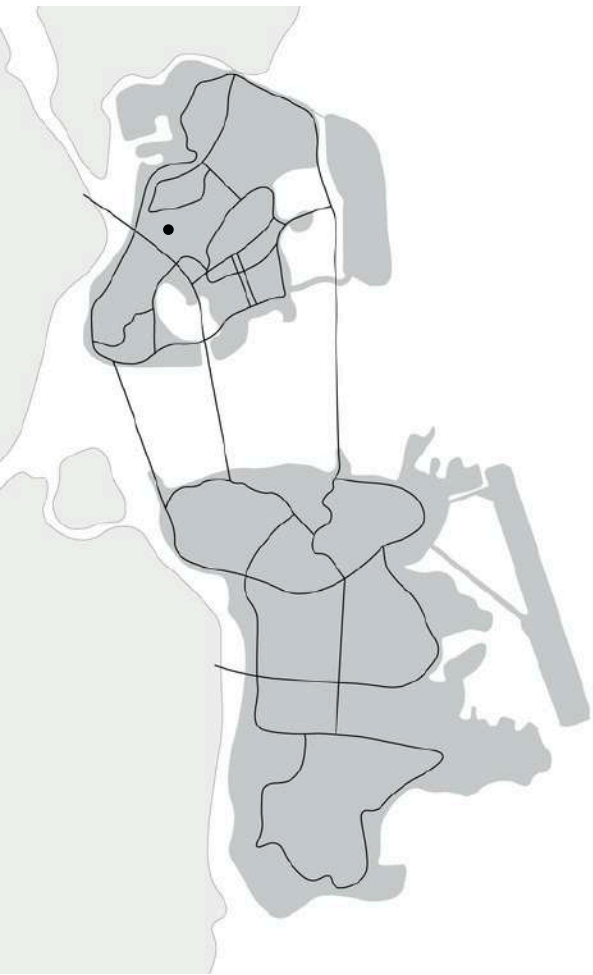


# RUÍNAS DO SÃO PAULO [RUINS OF SAINT PAUL]



## BUILDING

**Author:** -  
**Date:** 1602-1603  
**Location:** Calçada de São Paulo, Macau  
**Promoter / Owner:** The Macao Cultural Bureau  
**Contractor:** -  
**Funding / Cost:** -  
**Function:** Tourist Attraction  
**Area:** 2,800 square meters  
**Current state:** Restoration of the site's bronze statues is underway, along with the construction of a museum and crypt located beneath the façade. Additionally, concrete and steel buttressing are being employed to support the structure.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Ruins of St. Paul in Macau are the remnants of a grand church originally constructed between 1602 and 1640 by Jesuit missionaries aiming to spread Catholicism in the region. This important site, which included St. Paul's College and the Church of St. Paul (also known as "Mater Dei"), was once the largest church in Asia and was referred to as "The Vatican of the Far East." Designed by Italian Jesuit Carlo Spinola, the structure showcased a unique blend of European and Asian architectural styles. It was adorned with decorations crafted by Chinese and Japanese artisans, reflecting a cross-cultural dialogue. The church was celebrated for its ornate facade, featuring intricate stone carvings that included biblical images, Asian motifs, and symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In 1835, a devastating fire during a typhoon destroyed the wooden structure, leaving only the stunning granite facade and a grand staircase. Over the years, the ruins have been preserved and restored, with the facade buttressed to maintain its integrity. In 2005, the site was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, further solidifying its status as a symbol of Macau's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the Museum of Sacred Art and Crypt, established in 1996 at the base of the ruins, houses a variety of religious artifacts, further underscoring the site's historical significance. Today, the Ruins of St. Paul continue to attract visitors, serving as a poignant reminder of Macau's unique historical roots and cultural fusion.

## CONSTRUCTION

### MATERIALS & SYSTEMS

The construction of the Ruins of St. Paul in Macau began in 1602 and was completed in 1640. This Catholic church, originally known as St. Paul's Church, was built adjacent to the Jesuit College of St. Paul, which was the first Western college in the Far East. The church was designed to serve as a prominent symbol of Catholicism in the region.

The primary materials used in the construction included wood for the original structure, a common choice for buildings of that era. The facade, completed between 1620 and 1627, was crafted from carved stone by Japanese Christian artisans who were refugees fleeing persecution in Japan. Under the direction of Italian Jesuit Carlo Spinola, the facade showcased intricate designs that blended European and Asian artistic influences.

In terms of architectural systems, the facade features four colonnaded tiers adorned with detailed carvings and statues depicting various religious symbols. These include representations of the Virgin Mary, saints, and motifs like a Chinese dragon and a Japanese chrysanthemum. After the church suffered significant damage from a fire in 1835, the remaining facade was reinforced with steel to prevent collapse, ensuring its stability while preserving its aesthetic integrity.

Additionally, in 1995, a museum was established at the base of the ruins, which includes a crypt housing the remains of Japanese and Vietnamese martyrs, as well as a museum of sacred art that features various liturgical objects and artworks. Today, the Ruins of St. Paul stand as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Macau, showcasing the blend of European and Asian architectural influences.

## WORKERS & SKILLS

The construction of the Ruins of St. Paul involved skilled Japanese Christian artisans who fled persecution in Japan. These craftsmen were crucial in creating the church's ornate facade, showcasing their exceptional talent in stone carving and decorative work. Key skills included intricate stone carving, which produced detailed bas-reliefs and sculptures depicting religious figures. The architectural design reflected a blend of Western and Eastern influences, demonstrating the artisans' ability to integrate diverse styles. Their expertise in working with traditional materials, such as wood and stone, ensured the monument's structural integrity. These combined skills resulted in the unique features of the Ruins of St. Paul, making it a significant symbol of Macau's cultural heritage.



# Ruínas de São Paulo

[RUINS OF SAINT PAUL]

