



Museu Casa d'Areny-Plandolit

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Govern d'Andorra

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Museus i
Monuments
Nacionals
d'Andorra

The ground floor

1. The ground floor hallway

The house of the Areny d'Ordino family dates from the 17th century, although it was gradually revamped over three centuries as the family's financial and social standing grew. During this period, it was one of the most distinguished houses in Andorra.

Originally dedicated to agriculture and livestock farming, its activity later extended to include metalworking and commerce. Over time the family acquired more prime real estate in Ordino, purchasing properties both in Andorra and Catalonia, as well as acquiring them through marriage.

By means of matrimony, their close ties with nobility, and the network of relations that was established, the Areny family began to gain prominent status and became renowned outside of the country. The family heirs played a key role in Andorran politics, holding important positions, which made the Areny family a cornerstone of the country's foreign affairs.

2. The wine cellar

At the entrance to the house we also find the cellars where produce for personal use was stored, such as wine and oil in this room. This floor also bore witness to one of Casa Areny's most important activities: the trading of goods, since it was home to the storehouse and the wine cellar, from where both Andorran and imported produce was dispatched.

In addition to these commercial premises, larger sites were located on either side of the Pyrenees, dealing in livestock, iron and wool. The work was supported by a network of mule drivers at the family's disposal.

The mule drivers

As there were no roads joining the country with neighbouring regions, mule drivers were the only link to the outside world. By using their mules to transport goods, they ensured that the valleys of Andorra were accessible and connected all year round.

Some worked on a casual basis, making use of the mules they used to work the fields to transport goods across short distances on a daily basis. By doing so they were able to supplement their earnings from livestock and farming work.

Some of the workers were salaried employees who were paid according to the load and the journey, while others worked for themselves. The latter were true merchants who did the longest routes, taking advantage of the return leg to import other products.

If possible, business was carried out across three levels. For example, the mule drivers transported iron and wool from Andorra to Catalan markets, where they then loaded up on oil and wine to take to France, before buying cloth, spices and salted fish to transport back to Andorra. They often joined forces in order to cover more ground and to make the journey safer.



3. The meat cellar

The driest part of the house is home to the larder, where basic food supplies, pork products—such as ham, sausages and bacon—cheese and bread were stored all year round.

First floor

4. The large hall

The house's rooms transport us back to the mid-19th century, a time of great splendour for the family and Don Guillem, Baron of Senaller, one of the most distinguished members of the family and its lineage.

The house's most significant renovations also took place during this period converting what was a manor house into a stately home to match their social and property-owning status.

The rooms give us insight into how the rich lived, a way of life that was vastly different to that of ordinary people, with rooms and features that were unnecessary in a rural setting, the large hall being one example. Here we can see objects that were a sign of a privileged class that was able to dedicate itself to leisure, such as music, fencing and boxing, among others. The rifles, as a symbol of war, allude to the civic militia. Formed of the heads of households, they were responsible for protecting the country in the event of conflict.

The civic militia

For centuries Andorra had little need to create a professional police force to maintain the order, protect inhabitants and ensure safety. These tasks were instead undertaken by a popular force: the civic militia.

The body was responsible for safeguarding public order and peace, if required, prior to the establishment, in 1931, of the Servei d'Ordre, the current police force.

These days the civic militia is formed of all Andorran men between 18 and 60 years of age. The last time they were drafted was in 1986 on the occasion of the visit of the French Co-Prince, François Mitterrand. These days they are only called up in exceptional circumstances, usually in the event of natural disasters.

5. The kitchen

The kitchen was the heart of mountain homes, especially during the long winters. To your left is the *escudeller*, a piece of furniture typical of the local region in which tin dinnerware and copper cutlery was kept. In the middle is the *escó*, formed of a table and bench decorated with *musicatures*, a type of traditional carved motif typical of Andorra.

In front of it is the hearth with its hanging chains, which show, together with the coal stove and the heat storage range cooker, the different ways that food was cooked. There are also unusual utensils, such as portable *brasers* (a type of coal-fired heater), a pan for frying chestnuts, cast-iron clothes irons, a coffee roaster and grinder, and hot chocolate makers. It was uncommon to find some of these utensils in other Andorran homes.

If you are interested in learning more about rural life, we recommend visiting Casa Rull, in Sispony, where you'll be able to journey back to the Andorra of yesteryear.

6. The dining room

The dining room embodies the spirit of an era, that of modernism, boasting a magnificent art deco floral-shaped lamp and a radio and gramophone, veritable symbols of modernity.

They sit alongside a striking sideboard made from fine hardwood by a workshop in Barcelona with the family initials engraved on the glass panels, topped off by their coat of arms, which also appears on the exquisite porcelain dinnerware: the blue Sèvres set and the white Limoges china adorned with gold leaf. It is said that the dinnerware was a gift from the Archduke of Austria, Franz Joseph, and the empress Elisabeth of Austria, known as Sissi.

7. The main hall

This room was used for social functions and to receive guests and was therefore more plushly decorated with the most exotic and sumptuous objects on display. The walls covered with painted wallpaper, official documents and singular photographs, a reliquary made from gold leaf, a butterfly wing chess board and various stuffed animals, among others, demonstrate the aristocratic character of the family lineage.

Another notable feature is the gallery of family portraits, which decorate the room in a bid to commemorate the most important members of the family, and is thus a perfect opportunity to introduce them to you. In the middle is Don Guillem d'Areny-Plandolit, Baron of Senaller i Gramenet, with his second wife, Carolina Plandolit i Pelatí, on the right, and some of the couple's children standing on either side. To the left of his father is Pau Xavier, who we will discuss shortly.

In accordance with family tradition, the baron played a key role in the country's politics: he was pivotal in the important political reforms instituted in 1866.

The New Reform

The political structure of Andorra was such that society was divided into two distinct social groups: *anfochs*, wealthy, noble families, and *casalers*, common people of lowly status. Only the head of the household of the former had the right to vote, forming part of the Communal Council and the General Council, the local and national governing bodies respectively. The latter, meanwhile, did not directly participate in political life in any way.

As the population began to grow, the inequality of the system was laid bare, since only 13 per cent of the population was represented. This discrimination, together with the emergence of a middle class excluded from political participation



and the financial abuse perpetrated by the authorities led to calls for political change from both ordinary citizens and a reformist faction of the General Council. Ministers were impelled by both 19th-century liberalism and a desire to pave the way for innovative projects in the country.

In May 1866 the New Reform was passed, granting all heads of households the right to vote, establishing incompatibility between those holding public office, and founding regulatory bodies, among others. Don Guillem was also named general syndic, the equivalent of president of the parliament.

8. The music room

We now enter the rooms of the baroness: her bedroom and the music room, whose decoration was inspired by the refinement of the Catalan bourgeoisie, as well as its penchant for orientalism. The rooms evoke moments of leisure and hobbies, which were a result of the active social life that the family enjoyed in Catalonia, where they were a part of Barcelona's high society. Over the years the family went from having close ties to the most influential livestock families in Andorra to choosing consorts from the ranks of the Catalan aristocracy.

Of particular note is the set of blinds covering some of the house's windows and balconies, such as the one in front of us. Made from fabric dating from the 19th century they are unique in Andorra, used for decorative purposes and to filter out the sunlight and give the different rooms a pleasant ambience.



Resting on top of the piano is a copy of the national anthem of Andorra.

The national anthem (The Great Charlemagne)

The national anthem of Andorra, *The Great Charlemagne*, was composed by the musician Enric Marfany, in collaboration with Bishop Joan Benlloch, who wrote the lyrics. It was played for the first time on 8 September, 1921, on the occasion of the feast day of Our Lady of Meritxell, the patron saint of Andorra.

9. The baron's bedroom

The bedroom was situated in an alcove in order to preserve heat and withstand the harsh cold of the long Andorran winters. On top of the bed is a bed warmer, a traditional household item that was filled with embers and placed between the bed sheets and the blankets.

The baron was named General Syndic of Andorra in May 1866 as a result of the passing of the New Reform, which he spearheaded. One year later he received recognition from the General Council of Andorra and the Spanish and French governments. He was honoured with the Cross of the Order of Isabel the Catholic and the Legion of Honour title when, during his term in power, he successfully brought negotiations to maintain customs privileges to a close, a major coup for the country's commerce.

Soon after, however, as a result of his armed confrontation with the General Council due to the construction of a casino, he was forced to step down. He moved to Seu d'Urgell in Catalonia and subsequently disappeared from the political arena. 10 years later he died in exile in Toulouse.

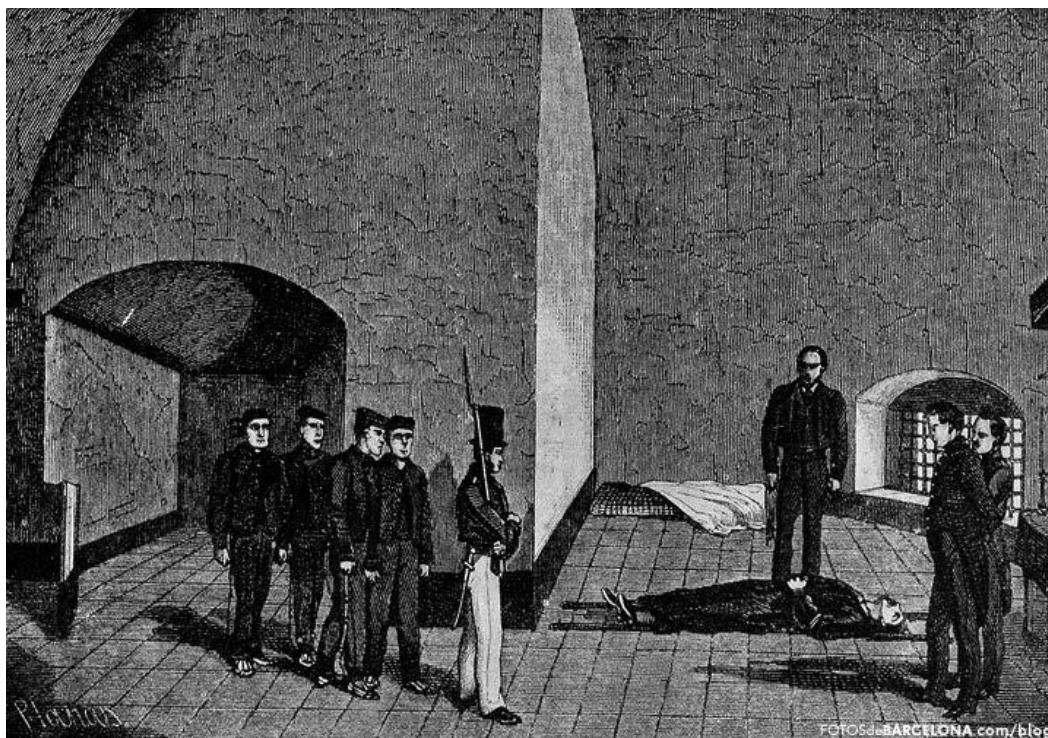


10. The murder of Maria Dolors

On 19 June, 1855, colonel Blas de Durana murdered the baron's first wife, Dolors Parrella i Fivaller, while she made her way to the Liceu to watch Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. For months the colonel had been hounding the noblewoman, who rejected his advances. After stabbing her, Durana handed himself in to the authorities.

He was sentenced to death, however to avoid the shame that came with a member of the military being executed by garrote, he committed suicide on the eve of his execution.

Nevertheless, due to pressure from the crowds who had come to witness the spectacle, his corpse was taken to the executioner and his punishment was performed on his dead body.



11. The chapel

We now enter the wing of the house that was added by Don Guillem, converting what was a fortified manor house into a stately home, with the chapel and library.

The family's private chapel, where they attended daily mass, is evidence of the family's deep religiosity. Dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, both documents and liturgical items, dispensations and papal bulls can be seen. The first-mentioned were ecclesiastical authorisations to circumvent religious rules, such as eating meat on Fridays. While the second consisted of permits from the Pope himself, such as those granting consent for the baron to marry his second wife even though they were first cousins.

Before entering the library, notice the painting above the door: a portrait of Saint Ermengol wearing a rich cope and holding a crosier, dating from the mid-17th century and created by the master painter Jeroni d'Herèdia, who hailed from Ansalonga.

12. The library

The library brings together veritable bibliographic treasures with highly-valuable works among its 5,000 publications, which date from the 16th to 20th centuries. The oldest preserved book is a canonical law treaty printed in 1522. The books are bound in either parchment or leather, as well as in the plateresque style.

One of the most unusual items is a volume titled *Japanese Pictures of Japanese Life*, published in Tokyo in 1895 and printed on crêpe paper, depicting scenes of daily life in Japanese society at the time.

Subjects cover highly varied fields thanks to the different professions and personal interests of family members, with topics as diverse as religion, medicine, industry and literature, among others. Some books, such as the various treaties on magic and prestidigitation were written by family members themselves, namely Pau Xavier and his son.

Second floor

13. The play room

We enter the upper part of the house through the play room, created in the first half of the 20th century, from where we then move into the girls' bedroom. Both the furniture and the objects in these rooms, as well as those that we have seen along the course of the tour, were collected by the family over the centuries. Highly different eras and styles converge, together with items related to the mountains and those from life in the city. Other objects were added while the museum was being created to enhance the museum's discourse.

14. The attic

The house was lived in until 1953, although for long periods it was only used as a summer residence. It was acquired by the General Council 20 years later and after substantial restoration work, both on the exterior and interior of the building, the Andorran government opened the house as a museum in 1986.

This floor is a prime example of the work undertaken during said period: the partitions that divided the attic were taken down to open up the space, in addition to the installation of dormer windows. All that remains are the niches that were part of an interior dovecote.

15. The doctor's surgery

The surgery is a tribute to Pau Xavier. Here we can see a collection of objects representing the wide range of roles he performed: doctor, dentist, gynaecologist, taxidermist and magician, as well as the founder of the Museum of Natural Science, situated in what is now the National Auditorium, which can be seen upon exiting the house.

16. The photographic laboratory

The photographic laboratory testifies to the passion for this new medium with equipment dating from the first half of the 20th century. Some of the images from the Plandolit archives preserved in the National Archives of Andorra come from this studio.

The collection is composed of 4,000 negatives, dating from between 1920 and 1945. Common subjects include the family, Andorran customs (especially those of Ordino), landscapes, hiking and travelling, as well as numerous passport photos.



17. The guest room

The original study was transformed into the guest room, calling to mind a romantic world of social relations, celebrations, travelling...

Despite leading a life that was uncommon in Andorra, the evolution of both the family and the house reveals a great deal about the country's development.

The exteriors

18. The garden

The gardens of Areny house were unique in Andorra, since they were the first to have a purely decorative purpose, the vegetable gardens having been converted into a space of leisure. Most of the garden's species were native, however the London planetrees were imported.



19. The auditorium

The original architectural project included the construction of a hotel at the bottom of the boxwood garden. However, the Pau Xavier Museum of Natural Science was instead built.

The museum housed an important collection bringing together domestic animals, European species and numerous exotic specimens. The collection, which also boasted plants and minerals, was exhibited from the early 1930s. Twenty years later, following the death of Pau Xavier, the family decided to close the museum and the collection was sold to Barcelona's Museum of Zoology. Subsequently, the building was used as a grain storehouse and tobacco barn before being transformed, in 1991, into the National Auditorium of Andorra.



20. The boxwood garden

The boxwood garden, a long and narrow plot of land behind the former Museum of Natural Science, is over one hundred years old. It is decorated with various boxwood hedgerows trimmed geometrically in order to mark the boundaries of the paths, which we invite you to stroll along. The garden is enriched by various features, such as terraces, stone benches and water channels, which in addition to helping to irrigate the garden, create a relaxing atmosphere.

In the upper part of this bucolic space is the house's dovecote tower, which was used for pigeon breeding and for collecting their droppings to be used as fertiliser for the fields.

21. The main façade of the house

A particularly notable feature of the front of the house are the magnificent wrought iron railings, which hark back to the heyday of the forges. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, Andorra was an iron-producing region, representing one of the most important economic activities for the country and the Areny family, who owned forges throughout the period.

If you would like to learn more about the forges and the mineral extraction process, the transformation of iron ingot and its subsequent sale to Catalan markets, as well as finding out more about miners, mule drivers and blacksmiths, and seeing one of their two mallets in actions, you can visit the Farga Rossell, in La Massana, one of the best-preserved forges in the Pyrenees.

Notice on the right-hand side of the main façade the extension dating from the mid-19th century, together with the gallery housing the chapel, which connects the house with the building in which the library is situated. At a later date, the left side was also extended: the entrance ways were remodelled and the large balcony was installed. The end result was a magnificent main façade that closed off access to the property and the garden. And thus the Areny manor house became the Areny-Plandolit stately home.