

## Medieval Architecture Guide

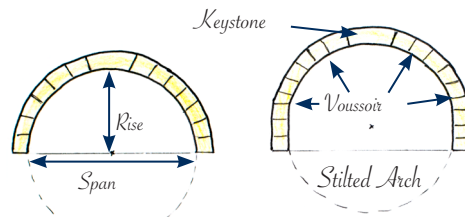
The Middle Ages or Medieval time was a period, in Western European history, from circa the 5th to the 16th century.

Medieval architecture is divided into 3 main styles: Pre-Romanesque (5th to 10th century), Romanesque (10th to 12th century) and Gothic (12th to 16th century).

This mini guide focuses on the Romanesque and Gothic architecture:

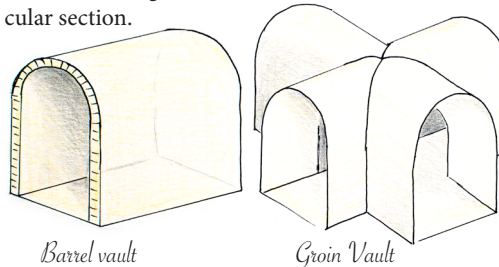
*Romanesque architecture* combines features from ancient Roman and Byzantine buildings like massive stone walls, round arches, sturdy pillars, groin vault, openings topped by semi-circular arches, small windows, large towers and decorative arcading. Romanesque architecture has an overall appearance of simplicity with very regular and symmetrical plans.

*Gothic architecture* evolved from the Romanesque architecture and combines features as pointed arches, rib vaults, flying buttresses, and large stained glass windows, rose windows, spires and pinnacles. Gothic architecture has an overall appearance of complexity. Gothic buildings often emphasizes verticality and light. They are bigger in overall size than the previous Romanesque buildings but feel lighter and somehow majestic.

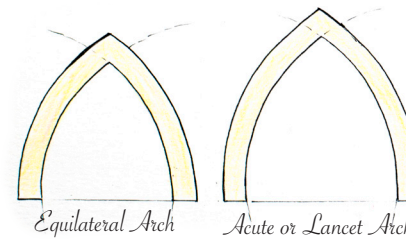


The *Round Arch* is the most typical element of Romanesque Architecture. It was used to create portals, windows, arcades and *Barrel Vault*.

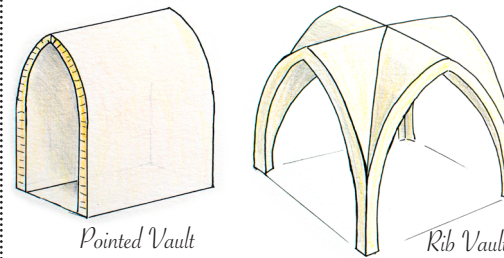
The *Barrel vault* or *Tunnel vault* is the simplest form of vault, consisting of a continuous surface of semicircular section.



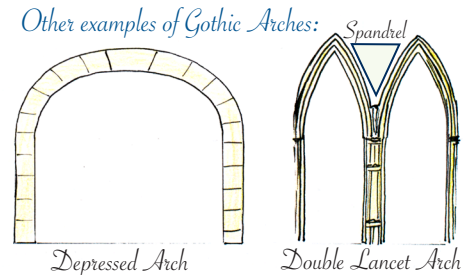
The intersection of 2 *Barrel Vaults* produces a *Groin Vault* (also sometimes known as a double barrel vault or cross vault).



The *Pointed Arch* or *Lancet Arch* is the most typical element of Gothic Architecture.



The intersection of 2 *Pointed Vaults* creates the other most important element of Gothic architecture: the *Rib Vault* or *Ribbed Vault*: A vault supported by arched diagonal ribs.



### Ornementation:

Decorations of arches and vaults in Romanesque Architecture are often simple and geometrical.

Decorations in Gothic Architecture are often more complex and refined with natural motifs, human like figures, fantastic monsters, and of course gargoyles.

Differentiating the 2 styles is generally easy, although a single building can combine features from both styles as its construction and reconstruction may have been done over the course of centuries.



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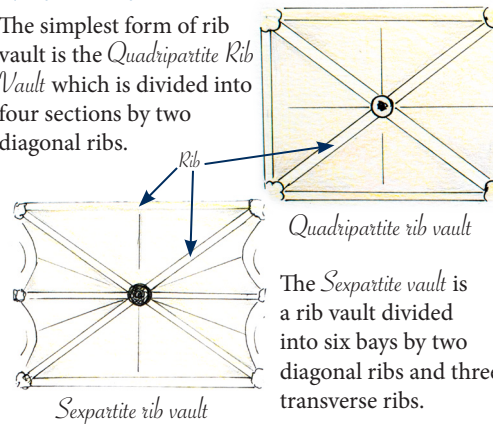
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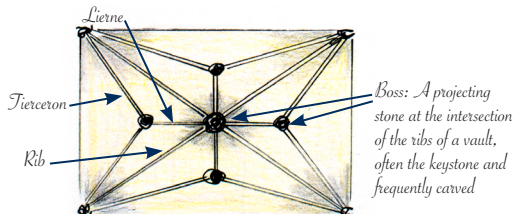
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### Specification of Rib Vaults:

The simplest form of rib vault is the *Quadripartite Rib Vault* which is divided into four sections by two diagonal ribs.



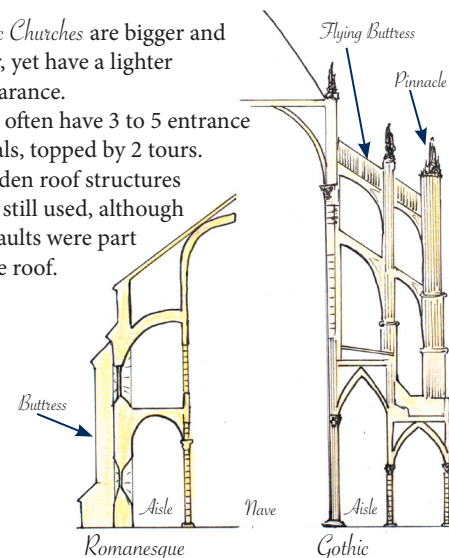
Many other forms of Rib Vaults were created including diamonds, stars and fan shapes.



### Religious Architecture:

*Romanesque Churches* have a massive appearance. They often have one or 2 towers and an arched entrance portal richly decorated. Most Romanesque churches have wooden roof structure and tiled roof.

*Gothic Churches* are bigger and taller, yet have a lighter appearance. They often have 3 to 5 entrance portals, topped by 2 towers. Wooden roof structures were still used, although rib vaults were part of the roof.



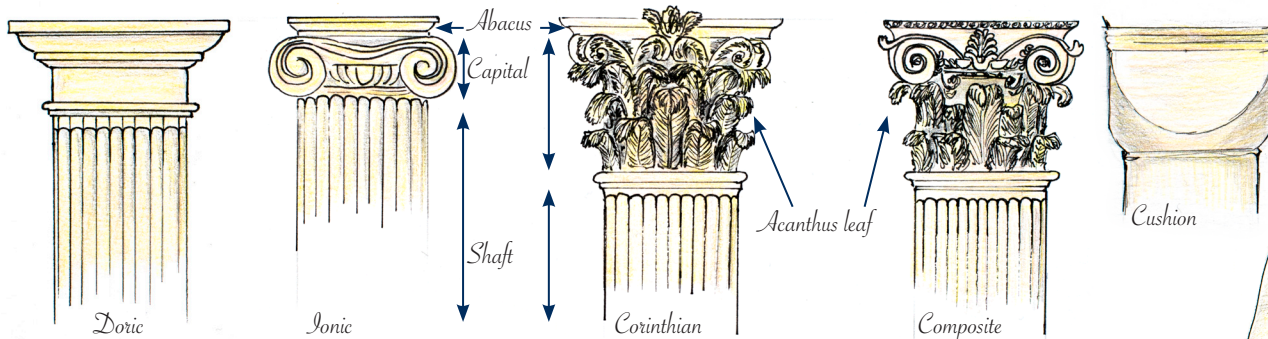
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## Other Architectural Features & Additional Useful Information

The local availability of materials, regional influence as well as political & religious influences means that the Romanesque and Gothic style can vary greatly from one region to another. Additionally, reconstructions and upgrades of existing castles or churches were very common. Elements from one period & style are therefore often mixed with the ones from another period.



*Columns* are an essential part of both Romanesque and Gothic Architectures.

In Romanesque Architecture, *Columns* were usually massive, as they supported thick upper walls and heavy vaults.

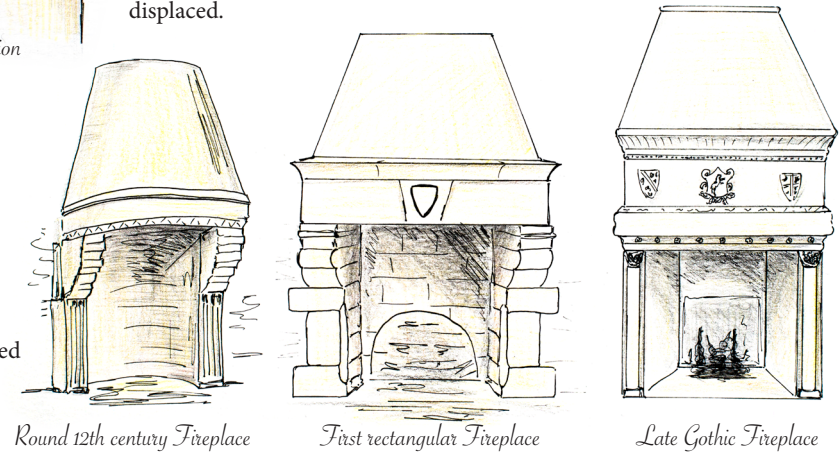
They often alternated with Piers. Massive hollow columns were filled with rubble.

With Gothic Architecture was introduced clustered *Columns* as well as compound Piers to support Rib vaults.

*Columns* are usually cylindrical & structural although they can also be decorative. A Column can stand alone or be attached to a wall in which case it is called an applied or engaged column.

*Piers* are upright support, generally square, rectangular, or composite.

*Pilasters* are element of vertical masonry which projects only slightly from the wall and have both a capital and a base.



*Fireplaces* were invented during the 12th century and became common in Medieval Castles during the 13th century. The first fireplaces were round and were soon replaced by the rectangular shape ones, which were more efficient. Both were massive in size enabling people to walk inside. Fireplaces were often decorated and their mantel would usually display the coats of arms of the owner.

*Fireplaces* soon became works of art. They can give a good indication of the time of construction of a castle although they have often been displaced.

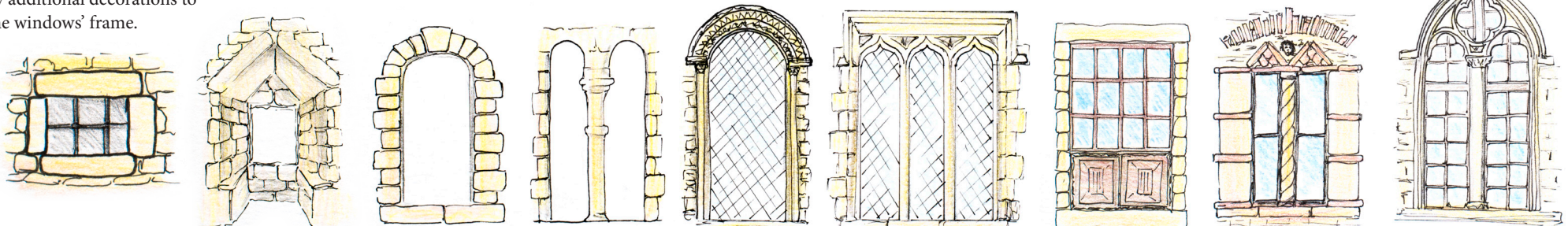
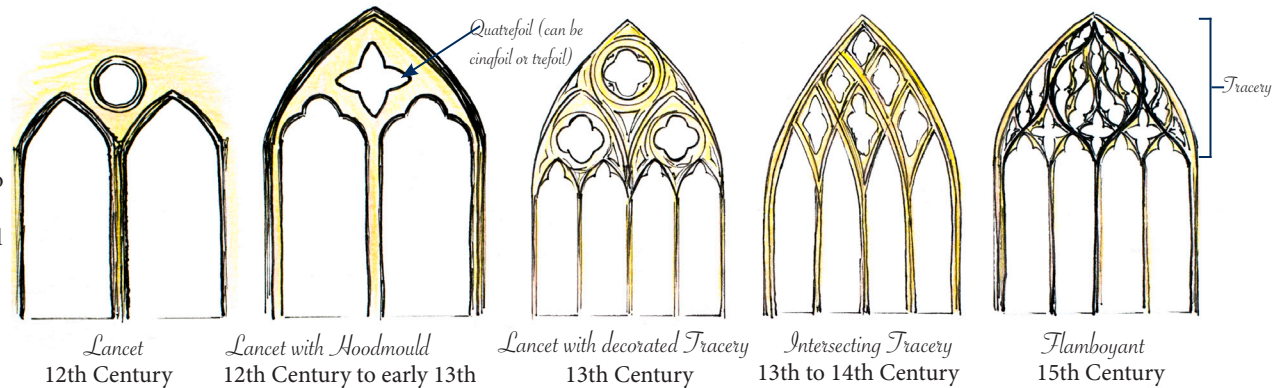
The *Arch* which started as an essential architectural structural element, soon became an important decoration element. As centuries passed, the Tracery was adorned with more and more intricate designs.

*Windows* in Castle and Monasteries, were usually very small, at least until the 14th century. Glassmaking can be tracked back to 3500 BC but window glazing was not common until the 12th century and only used, at that time, to create stained glass for churches.

Before glass, larger windows were covered with parchment made from animal skin.

By the 13th century, some wealthy castle owners had a few glazed windows but it only became common the next century.

Because of this, windows were first small and were later often enlarged to bring in more light. Such modifications were usually accompanied by additional decorations to the windows' frame.



Examples of different styles of windows - depending on the period, regional influence, craftsmanship and the wealth of owner