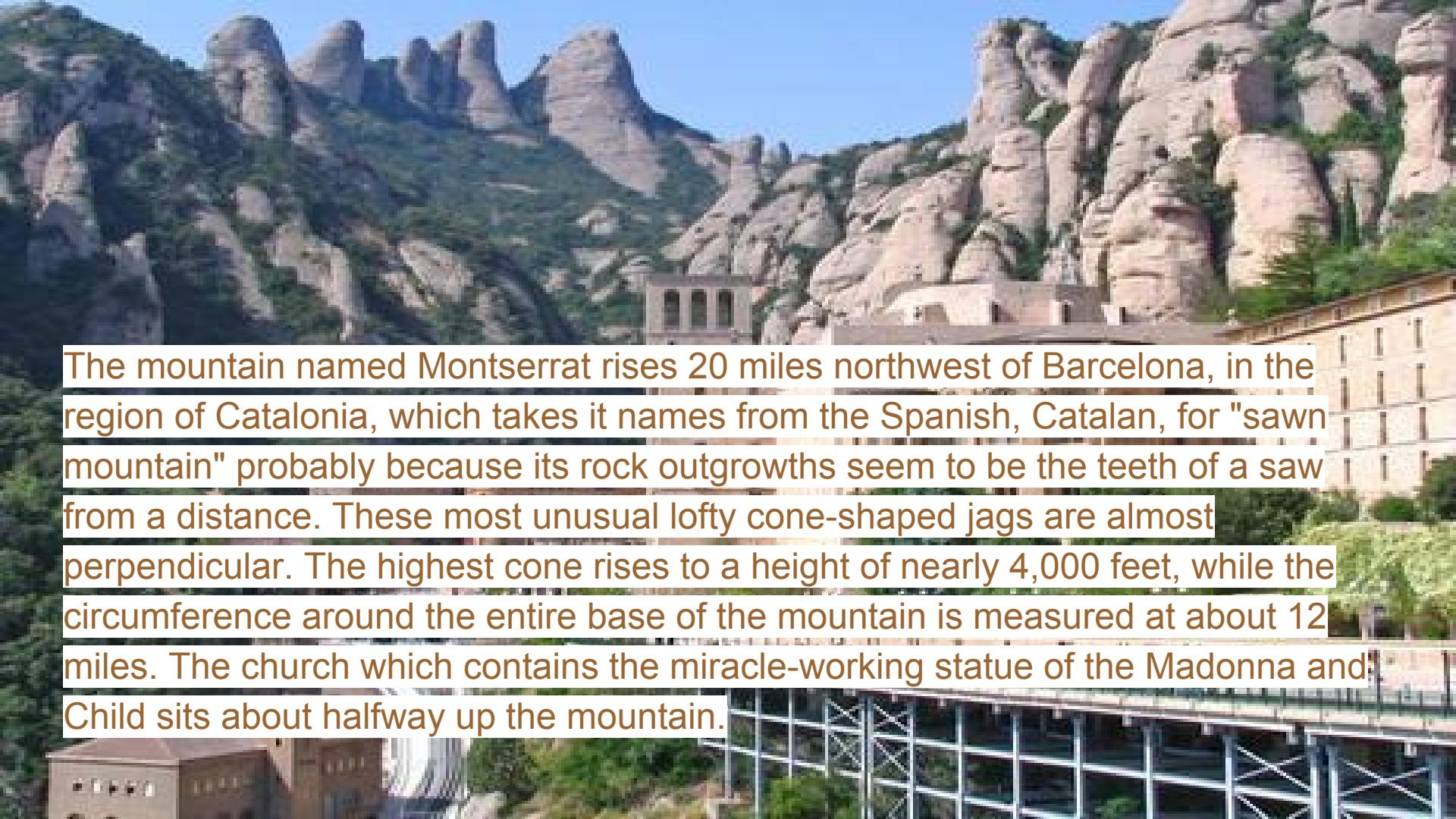


Virgin of Montserrat, Our Lady of Montserrat; Spain: 718

Catalan - *Mare de Déu de Montserrat*



The mountain named Montserrat rises 20 miles northwest of Barcelona, in the region of Catalonia, which takes it names from the Spanish, Catalan, for "sawn mountain" probably because its rock outgrowths seem to be the teeth of a saw from a distance. These most unusual lofty cone-shaped jags are almost perpendicular. The highest cone rises to a height of nearly 4,000 feet, while the circumference around the entire base of the mountain is measured at about 12 miles. The church which contains the miracle-working statue of the Madonna and Child sits about halfway up the mountain.



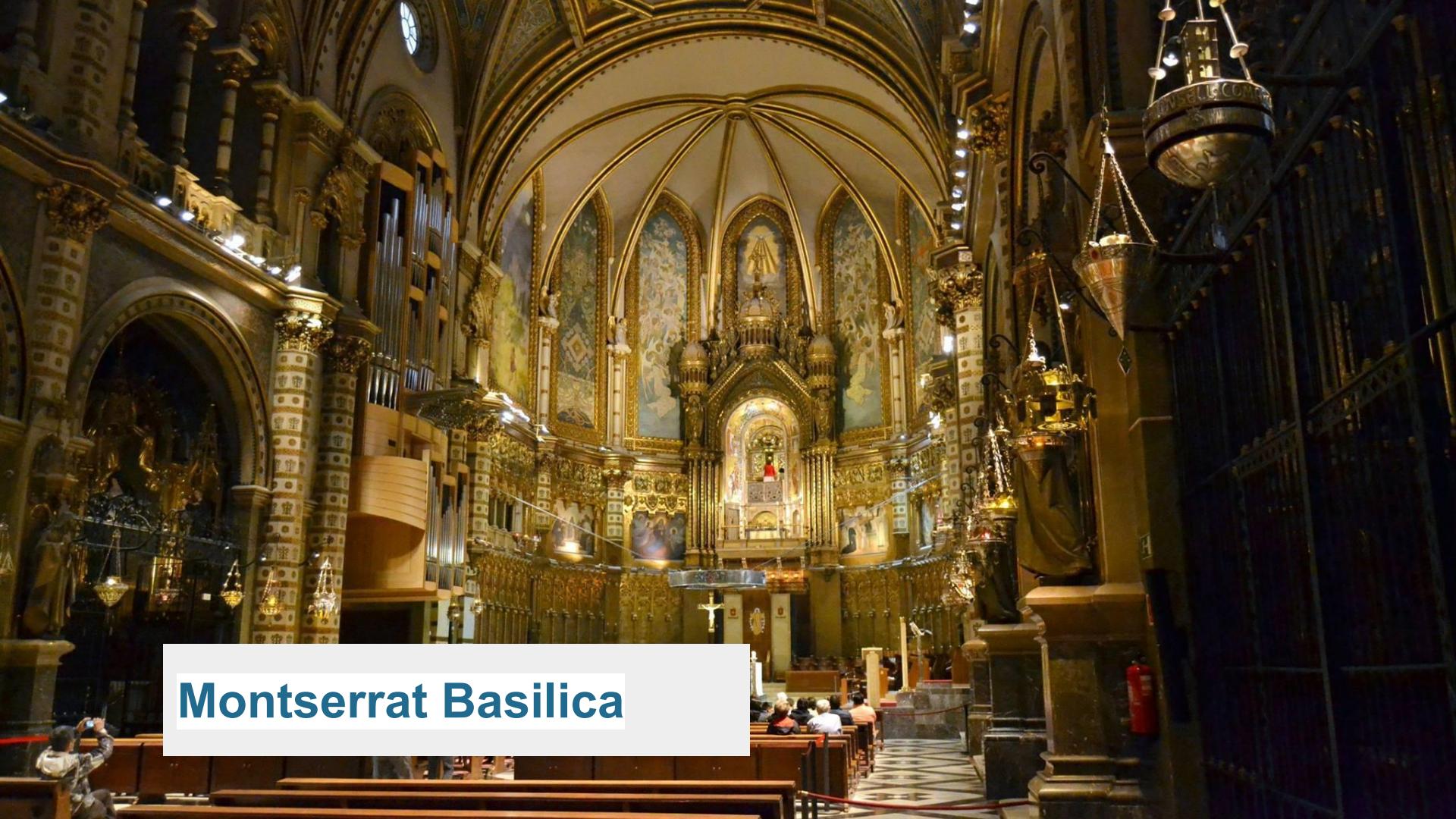
DESCRIPTION

The 95-cm (38-inch) statue shows evidence of Byzantine conventional and stylized form, and is painted in polychrome. The art historical designation for this type of pose is called "Throne of Wisdom". The body is thin, the face elongated.



Why is the Madonna Black?

One of the most common questions about the Black Madonna is why she is black. The dark colour of the Virgin's face is the reason why locals have nicknamed her 'La Moreneta' ("the little black lady"). Contrary to popular belief, she is not black due a portrayal of a Black African Madonna. The blackness also does not come from a dark colour in the wood or from earlier coverings in paint. It is known from historical descriptions of the Madonna that she has simply darkened over time.



Montserrat Basilica

SYMBOLS



Virgin of Montserrat holds an orb of the earth in her right hand. This is a symbol of universe,

The Child's hand is raised in a formalized and traditional Eastern blessing.

The statue sits behind a sheet of glass

It is one of the most famous Black Madonna statues in the world and in 1844 Pope Leo XIII declared the Virgin of Montserrat the patroness of Catalonia.

THE LEGEND

Legend has it that the Benedictine monks could not move the statue to construct their monastery, choosing to instead build around it. The statue's sanctuary is located at the rear of the chapel, where an altar of gold surrounds the icon, and is now a site of pilgrimage.



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