

FROM BARCINO TO BARCINONA

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN SEE AND THE CENTRE OF VISIGOTHIC POWER

The first official Christian see in Barcino began to be built in the northern corner of the city, where the 4th-century episcopal complex was erected, consisting of an early basilica and an early baptistery with a four-sided pool.

The Visigoths arrived in Hispania at the beginning of the 5th century. King Ataulf and his wife Galla Placidia, the daughter of the Roman emperor Theodosius I, visited Barcino in 415 and the city was chosen by the Visigoths as the seat of the royal court at various times during the 6th century. Barcino came to be called Barcinona and grew into a gathering place for monarchs and usurpers alike, a stage for the struggles for power of the era.

With the arrival of the Visigoths, who followed the teachings of Arianism, there were two forms of Christian worship in Barcino, with two bishops, one Arian and the other Catholic, and two episcopal complexes. The first Visigothic complex and centre of power in Barcino is open to visitors beneath Plaça del Rei. The 4th-century early Christian site was remodelled in the 5th century and was further expanded and made more monumental in the 6th. Surviving parts of the 5th-century complex include the baptistery with eight-sided pool, the bishop's reception room, also known as the episcopal hall, and his residence. The

buildings erected in the 6th century have also been preserved and consist of a new bishop's palace, the cruciform church and the residence of the Visigothic civilian authorities.

The Catholic episcopal complex, which dates from the 6th century, was situated where the Basilica of the Sants Màrtirs Just i Pastor stands today. The basilica, a baptistery in the shape of a cross, and a large tomb, undoubtedly belonging to a bishop, have survived. The architectural remains are inside the parish church and are open to visitors. The two episcopal structures continued in use until the Arians embraced Catholicism during the Council of Toledo synod of 589. The exhibition *Barcino in Late Antiquity. Christianity, the Visigoths and the City* in the museum's underground archaeological area features 120 items from the 5th to the 7th centuries and gives us insights into this period.



Ring with bronze seal in the shape of a horse with the inscription DICNO VIR (To the worthy man). Ceremonial piece linked to the bishop. 5th century



Burial cover. Mosaic. 5th century. Photograph: © Pep Parer - MUHBA



Baptistery discovered beneath the cathedral. 5th century. Photograph: © MUHBA



Computer graphic reconstruction of the bishop's reception hall. 5th century. Based on the hypothesis of C. Bonnet and J. Beltrán de Heredia. 3D drawing: Centum

BARCELONA: MEDIEVAL CENTRE OF TRADE AND A COUNTY AND ROYAL SEAT

Barcinona was known as *Medinat Baršhaluna* during the brief period of Arab control (711-801), which ended with the Carolingian conquest of the city, at which point it became a county under the rule of the Franks. The counts of Barcelona gradually annexed other counties and acquired ever greater power and independence. In 1150, the count of Barcelona, Ramon Berenguer IV, married Petronilla of Aragon and became the prince regent of the Crown of Aragon. As territories were conquered, Barcelona grew into a richer and more populous city.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, it became necessary to erect new defensive walls around the city. This was a period when buildings such as grand houses, churches, the cathedral and, of course, the palace of the count-kings, were also being constructed. The former residence of the Visigothic civilian authority (the *comes civitatis* or count of the city) gradually altered over time. The Carolingian counts expanded it before constructing a new one on the same site in the 12th century. This new building was later turned into the Palau Reial Major, the great royal palace.

In the museum, it is possible to see a sequence of this string of palaces of the county and royal authorities on the same site, from the Visigothic palace to that of the monarchy of the Crown of Aragon and Catalonia. In the 12th-century palace of the counts, there is a hall with a ceiling with two round arches that is part of the MUHBA. This hall houses a permanent display on Barcelona in the Middle Ages that features more than 200 items and abundant information that, between them reveal the urban, political, economic and social evolution of Barcelona from the 8th to the 13th century.

The Palau Reial Major

The palace of the counts of Barcelona was a Romanesque building that was transformed in the 14th and 15th centuries, turning it into a larger and more spectacular Gothic royal palace, the most important and symbolic edifice of the Aragonese and Catalan monarchy. The epithet 'Major' ('great') was added to its name when Peter the Ceremonious built another palace in Barcelona, known as the 'minor' or 'queen's palace' to make up for the loss of residential spaces that occurred when the main ceremonial hall was enlarged.

This impressive ceremonial hall, today known as the Tinell Hall though once as the Hall of Wall Hangings, was designed by Guillem Carbonell and constructed between 1359 and 1370. It is one of the finest examples of Catalan civil Gothic architecture, with large diaphragm arches that enable spacious rooms to be constructed without the need for columns. In the 16th century, it was converted into the Chamber of the Clerks of the Royal Court, all apart from the small southern area, which, together with much of the palatine complex, housed the Court of the Inquisi-



Apothecary jars from Syria. 13th century. Photograph: © Jordi Puig - MUHBA



Tinell Hall. Photograph: © Pere Vivas - MUHBA

tion. From 1722 to the start of the Civil War in 1936, the space housed the church of the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Clara. In 1937, the Tinell Hall was rediscovered following the demolition of the church and was later restored. As a result of the alterations made by Peter the Ceremonious and other subsequent work, as well as the demolition of the antechamber in the 19th century (the current antechamber is a reconstruction done in the 20th century in a historically accurate style), the only surviving remains of the early Gothic work done in the reign of James II is the Royal Chapel, currently known as the Chapel of Santa Àgata. The chapel was built on the Roman walls between 1302 and 1318 and is notable for its polychrome wooden ceiling and the Altarpiece of the Epiphany, painted in the 1460s by Alfonso of Cordoba and Jaume Huguet respectively at the request of the new king, Peter of Portugal. Closed to worshippers in 1835, it was the first building to be listed as a National Monument (1866) and between 1877 and 1932 housed the Provincial Museum of Antiquities.



Chapel of Santa Àgata in the Palau Reial Major. In the background, *Altarpiece of the Constable or of the Epiphany*, by Jaume Huguet (1450). Photograph: © P. Vivas - MUHBA



Ajuntament de
Barcelona

MUHBA
MUSEU D'HISTÒRIA
DE BARCELONA



THE MONUMENTAL SITE

The MUHBA Plaça del Rei site offers visitors an opportunity to look back over 1,400 years of the history of Barcelona, from Roman Barcino in the 1st century BC to Visigothic Barcinona in the 5th-7th centuries AD and medieval Barcelona in the 15th century. Its rooms hold an exhibition of more than 600 original items, panels, images, models and maps that explain this period of the history of Barcelona.

Between 1931 and the Civil War, archaeological excavations were carried out on the site to be occupied by the Gothic Casa Clariana-Padellàs (which houses the museum today), which was being moved to Plaça del Rei from Carrer de Mercaders due to the opening of Via Laietana. This work exposed the remains of a large part of the ancient Roman colony of Barcino. The Barcelona City History Museum opened in 1943, encompassing some of the underground archaeological site discovered in the 1930s, the Tinell Hall of the Palau Reial Major, rediscovered in 1936, and the Chapel of Santa Àgata. In 1944, part of the early episcopal see was discovered in Carrer dels Comtes, followed in 1968 by its baptistery.

The current tour begins on the ground floor of Casa Padellàs, where there is an explanation of the occupation of the Barcelona plain by Neolithic communities and, later on, the Iberians. The visit, which takes in 4,000 m² beneath the city today, enables visitors to get close to the Roman city's two defensive walls, one dating from the 1st century and the other from the 3rd, as well as the streets and *insulae* where numerous workshops were located.

It is also possible to visit the various parts of the episcopal complex, among them the bishop's palace, the cruciform church, the baptistery and the episcopal hall or the bishop's reception hall, the centre of power in Visigothic Barcino between the 6th and 7th centuries.

The museum also shows the evolution of medieval Barcelona in a permanent exhibition in the 12th-century palace of the counts. On the next level up, visitors can admire the Tinell Hall and the Chapel of Santa Àgata, both of which date from the 14th century and are part of the Palau Reial Major. This hall and chapel, together with the Padellàs Room, are used to display temporary exhibitions at the museum.



Excavations in Plaça del Rei, 1935. Photograph: © Old Excavations Archive - MUHBA

BARCINO: ROMAN BARCELONA

Barcelona was founded in the year 10 BC during the reign of Emperor Augustus. The new city was named Barcino and given the legal status of a colony. It was a small fortified city covering just ten hectares. Its road network was organised around two perpendicular thoroughfares, the *decumanus maximus* and the *cardo maximus*. At the junction between these two streets stood the forum, the city's public square and the centre of its religious, juridical and administrative life.

There were public buildings in the city, among them baths, professional associations and guilds and, above all, the homes of the most important families (MUHBA Avinyó Domus and MUHBA Sant Honorat Domus). There were also shops, workshops and a number of places that produced manufactured goods, examples of which can be vis-



Cetaria. Salt fish and garum factory. 3rd century AD. Photograph: © P. Vivas - MUHBA

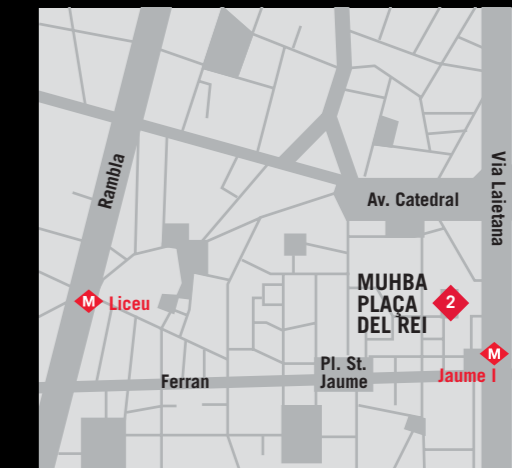
ited in the underground area beneath Plaça del Rei.

In this archaeological site beneath Plaça del Rei, visitors can stroll through the streets and part of a neighbourhood of workshops and factories situated abutting the walls and in the northern corner of Roman Barcino, very close to one of the entrance gates. Here visitors will find a laundry (*fullonica*) and a workshop where fabric and yarn dyeing was done (*tinctoria*), dating from the 2nd century, a factory where salt fish and related sauces were made, among them garum (*cetaria*), as well as a winery, both of which date from the 3rd century.

The various display spaces in the exhibition contain almost 300 pieces dating from the 1st to the 4th century.



Cella vinaria in the winery. 3rd century AD. Photograph: © L. Casals - MUHBA



2 MUHBA PLAÇA DEL REI

Plaça del Rei, s/n
08002 Barcelona
Tel. 93 256 21 00

Closed on 1 January, 1 May, 24 June and 25 December

Transport

Metro: Liceu (L3) and Jaume I (L4)
Bus: 120, V17 and 45
Barcelona Tourist Bus: South Route (red)

For further information:

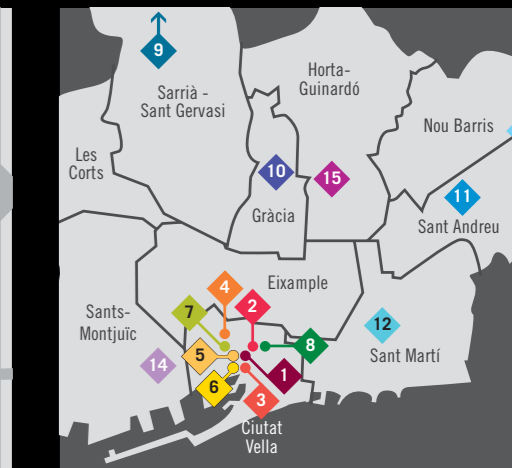
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Ticket sales:

Museum ticket offices and Tiquet Rambles:
Palau de la Virreina
(La Rambla, 99, Mon-Sun, from 10 am to 8.30 pm)
Tel. 93 316 10 00



Concept and production: Barcelona City History Museum. Texts: Tana Gomis. Translation: Sue Brownbridge. Graphic design: Roseta y Oihana



1 MUHBA TEMPLE OF AUGUSTUS

C. Paradís, 10
2 MUHBA PLAÇA DEL REI
Pl. del Rei, s/n

3 MUHBA SEA GATE

Centre Cívic Pati Llimona. C. Regomir, 7-9
4 MUHBA ROMAN FUNERARY WAY
Pl. Vila de Madrid

5 MUHBA AVINYÓ DOMUS

C. Avinyó, 15

6 MUHBA DOMUS SANT HONORAT

C. Fruita, 2

7 MUHBA THE JEWISH QUARTER

Plta. Manuel Ribé, s/n

8 MUHBA SANTA CATERINA

C. Joan Capri, s/n

9 MUHBA VIL·LA JOANA

Ctra. de l'Església, 104. Vil·la Joana. Vallvidrera

10 MUHBA PARK GÜELL

C. Olot, s/n

11 MUHBA AT FABRA I COATS

C. Sant Adrià, 20

12 MUHBA OLIVA ARTÉS

C. Espronceda, 142-146

13 MUHBA CASA DE L'AIGUA

Torrent de la Perera, s/n

14 MUHBA SHELTER 307

C. Nou de la Rambla, 175

15 MUHBA TURÓ DE LA ROVIRA

C. Marià Labèrnia, s/n

Epigraphic plaque inscribed with the name Barcino. White marble from Luni Carrara (Italy). 110-130 AD. Photograph: © J. Puig - MUHBA