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Amphitheatre



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Amphitheatre



Amphitheatres were for blood sports, like gladiator fights, fights with wild animals and hunting, although, depending on the time of day, there were athletics, juggling and other entertainment. Of the three Tàrraco arenas the amphitheatre was the last to be built, at the end of the I BC and the start of II BC, down from the walls and facing the sea. There is still part of a dedicatory inscription showing us that it is was promoted by a “flamen” one of the Emperor’s priests.

The amphitheatre is elliptic and the arena is in the middle, on open space for shows. The “backstage” was underneath the arena, originally covered with wooden planks, and used to changes scenery and special effects of the time. A archway led directly to the neighbouring beach. The arena was surrounded by the podium, a wall that separated stands from where the public watched the shows. Behind the podium there is a corridor with little doors with access to the arena. The stands were divided by social class, *imma cavea*, inferior; *media cavea*, middle and *summa cavea* or superior. The first two sections of the stand can still be seen as well as the first stand of the third level. On the west they used the natural land slope to make the stands and next to the sea they made arcs of Roman concrete where the presidential tribune was located. The rest of the building is founded on large areas filled with land. At both ends of the building there were two large doors that connected the outside of the building with the arena.

The amphitheatre was also used for public executions and, within the framework of the Valerià persecution against the Christian church, on the 21st of January 259, the Bishop of Tàrraco, Fructuós, and his disciples Auguri and Eulogi, were martyred. In late antiquity the Tarragona Saints were highly venerated, and in their memory, around the VI century, a basilica was built in the arena where tradition says martyrdom took place. Walled using material from the amphitheatre itself, it was made up of three naves separated by granite columns. There is a sanctuary in the centre with an altar, with no remains, and an area for the clergy. The last part of the building is a small chamber that was used for baptisms. A small cemetery was created around the basilica.

In the XII century a one floor, Latin cross Roman church was built dedicated to Saint Mary of the Miracle, and as beforehand, was used for some funerals. In 1576 it became the convent for the Order of the Trinity up till 1780 when it became a prison for prisoners who were constructing the port.

After closing the prison it was abandoned up to fifties of the XX century when work was started to recuperate the theatre thanks to donations made by the Bryant Foundation.



- 01** Arena. **02** Fossae (underground passageways). **03** Podium.
- 04** Seating cut out of the rock. **05** Chapel of the goddess Nemesis.
- 06** Stands. **07** Authorities' platform. **08** Access to the arena.
- 09** Christian basilica. **10** Romanesque church of the Blessed Virgin of the Miracle. **11** Late-period and mediaeval necropolis.
- 12** Remains of the exterior perimeter.