

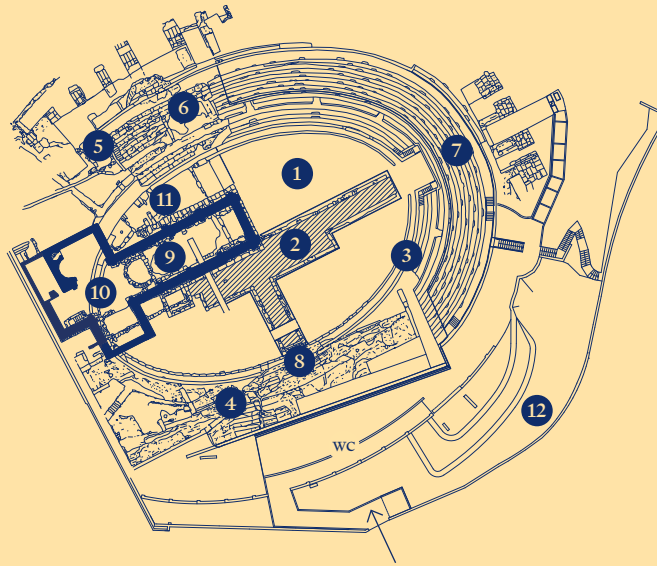
Amphitheatre

English

Museu d'Història
Tarragona

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1. Arena
2. *Fossae* (underground passageways)
3. Podium
4. *Cavea* or seating cut out of the rock
5. *Cavea d'opus caementicium* (Roman concrete)
6. Authorities' platform
7. Access to the arena
8. Chapel of the goddess Nemesis
9. Christian basilica (6th century)
10. Romanesque church dedicated to Saint Mary of the Miracle (12th century)
11. Late-period and medieval necropolis (6th and 8th century)
12. Remains of the exterior façade

The last building constructed in Tarraco to host spectacles was the Amphitheatre, which was built between the third quarter of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 2nd century AD. It was located outside the walls and near the sea. Amphitheatres were used for blood sports, such as gladiator fights (*munera gladiatoria*), fights with wild animals and hunting (*venationes*). They also featured athletics, juggling and other exhibitions.

The arena was the space where spectacles were developed. The moats were underneath the arena, originally covered with wooden plank. It was used for changing scenery and special effects of that time. The podium was the wall that separated the grandstand from the arena. In 221 AD, the emperor Heliogabalus installed an inscription on the podium, which is believed to be the longest in Roman Empire. The grandstand that has been preserved is *imma cavea* (inferior), *media cavea* (middle) and the first stands of the *summa cavea* (superior). There were two large gates at the longitudinal ends and on the side nearest the sea, there was a platform where the authorities presided over the games.

The amphitheatre was also used for public executions. In the context of the Valerian emperor persecution against the Christian church, on the 21st of January 259, the Bishop of Tarraco, Fructuós, and his disciples Auguri and Eulogi were martyred. In late antiquity, the Tarragona Saints were highly venerated, and around the 6th century, a basilica was built in the arena to honour them.

In the 12th century, a Romanesque church dedicated to Saint Mary of the Miracle, was built over the old basilica. In 1576, it became the convent of the Order of the Trinitarians, and it served as a prison for prisoners who were constructing the harbour until 1780.

