

Archeological and Monumental Sites of Andalusia



↑ View of the Site's central hall with the Islamic wall.

The Puerta de Almería archaeological site is located in the park named Nicolás Salmerón Park in the city of Almería, capital of the region of the same name. It belongs to the Junta de Andalucía and is currently managed by the Andalusian Agency for Cultural Institutions.

The site houses, on the one hand, the only Roman archaeological remains preserved in the city: a fish salting factory; and on the other, one of the gates of the Islamic wall that enclosed the city to the South.

Apart from its content, the importance of this site also lies in fact that it was the first time an urban archaeological excavation was conducted in Almería, which initiated a social debate regarding the conservation of these types of remains.

HISTORY

While building work was being carried out on a plot of land located between Calle de la Reina Street and the Parque Nicolás Salmerón Park, the backhoes unearthed several ancient structures and a vast amount of pottery dating back to the medieval period. The Provincial Department of Culture in Almería was informed of the discovery which, together with what was then the Directorate General of Fine Arts of the Regional Ministry of Culture, stopped the works and urgent archaeological excavation works began in 1984. During this intervention, six Roman vaults were documented, belonging to a fish-salting factory and section of the city Islamic wall dating back to the Caliphal period with one of its gates. The importance of the discovery led to a debate regarding the convenience of preserving the site, at a time when no specific regional legislation was in place in this regard. This debate, which had a significant social impact, together with the final decision to preserve the remains and modify the original construction project, would set a precedent in the treatment and conservation of archaeological ruins discovered in urban centres in the future. At first, the idea was to design an open-air museum, although finally, after a number of years, they were integrated into this Site, which opened to the public in 2006.



Agencia Andaluza de Instituciones Culturales
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA Y PATRIMONIO HISTÓRICO



← Fragment of the section of the Almería wall. ↓ Information panels about the Site referring to the fish salting factories.



THE WALL

The section of wall preserved in the Site belongs to the defensive that enclosed the city to the South, the side that faced the sea. The construction of this wall dates back to the mid-10th century however, given its location, it would be used throughout the Islamic period, until the 19th century, when part of it would be demolished to open the city up to the sea.

The surviving section also includes the ruins of a gate, which opened between two square towers that protected the entrance. This Gate, with only the foundations remaining, rose to a height of 6 meters and given the proximity to the area where boats were built, some authors believe it could have been the gate to the shipyards.



↑ Idealized reconstruction of the Southern city gate.

ADDRESS AND CONTACT

📍 Parque Nicolás Salmerón, 27 04002 · Almería
✉ puertadealmeria.aaicc@juntadeandalucia.es
☎ 697 953 445
🕒 Thursdays and Saturdays from 10:00 to 14:00.

🗺️ GUIDED TOURS (prior booking by email)
📅 THU. Guided tours for schoolchildren prior booking by email.
📅 SAT. Guided tours at 12:00.

Closed on public holidays 1 MAY, 25 DEC and 1 and 6 JAN.

FREE ADMISSION

SEE AND UNDERSTAND PUERTA DE ALMERÍA

The Site is distributed into various halls, each of which covers a different theme based on the archaeological remains on display.

1 Archaeology

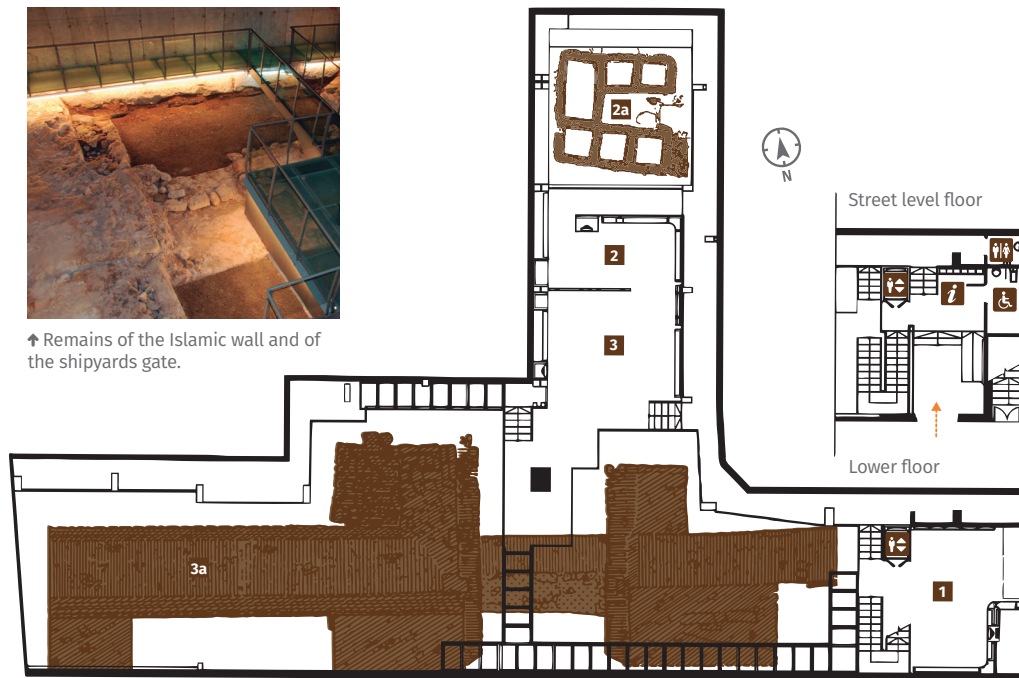
This hall offers a video about how an archaeological site is formed and later excavated. It also describes the social impact and public debate caused by the discovery of these archaeological remains in the city and reflected in local media at the time, and the need to preserve and showcase them.

2 Salting factory *Mare Nostrum*

The hall on the north side of the archaeological site contains 6 Roman vats **2a** that once belonged to a fish-salting factory, in operation from the 1st century BCE to the 4th century CE. At that time, Almería was not a city or even a substantial settlement. The ruins found here are related to the fish-salting industries typical of coastal areas, which abounded along the shores of the southern Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. These factories were a major pillar of the economy and trading activity of coastal settlements. We must remember that, in those days, salting was the best way to preserve fish and transport it to inland regions. Salting factories varied widely in size, shape and structure, but they all had one thing in common: the presence of large vats to either salt the fish or to make the garum paste. For the salting, the fish would be cleaned and cut up, and deposited in the vats, with alternating layers of fish and salt. It was left to macerate under the sun for approximately 20 days and, once the process had finished, it was placed in amphorae and stored to be transported. The famous and highly sought-after garum paste or sauce was made in the smaller tanks, using the fish entrails and unwanted parts of the fish. Sometimes wine, vinegar, honey and other ingredients would be added. It was used as a condiment for all types of dishes, served with meat, soups, etc. It was also famed for its medicinal properties, used to stimulate sluggish appetites, help wounds to heal faster, and other healing purposes. Garum was reserved for the wealthy given its prohibitive price, since the process of making it was slower and less product was obtained.



↑ Remains of the Islamic wall and of the shipyards gate.



↑ Salting vats.

3 Almería during the Islamic medieval times. *Madinat al-Mariyya*
The main hall of the center contains what is left of the medieval Islamic wall **2a** that defended the southern flank of the city of Al-Mariyya. Almería was founded as the port of Bayyana, an important city in the 9th century located approximately 8 km inland, where the modern-day town of Pechina now stands. Bayyana's economy was based on agriculture, silk weaving and the slave trade. All of these commercial activities needed access to the sea, a requirement that Almería fulfilled, although in that century it was nothing more than a shipping outpost. During the 10th century it would be the base of the caliphate's fleet. All naval expeditions to North Africa and the Atlantic to halt the advancing Norman vessels were launched from here. Halfway through that century, in the year 955, it was attacked by a Fatimid fleet,

which destroyed the shipyards and a considerable part of its naval infrastructures. This led Caliph Abd al-Rahman III to decide to encircle the hitherto unfortified port with defensive walls and grant it madina or city status. The preserved wall section dates back to this period, although it continued to be used throughout the entire medieval period. Al-Mariyya would continue to grow, to become an important commercial area which, during the 11th and 12th centuries, would reach the height of its splendor, even eclipsing the

city of Bayyana, which would gradually be abandoned. It held trade relations with all the points of the Mediterranean, exporting fabrics, known all over the world, funerary stelae carved from Macael marble, slaves, etc. It was known as the Gateway to the Mediterranean. Its commercial importance caught the attention of the major trading emporiums of the Mediterranean, which saw it as a rival. In 1147, it would be taken by Alfonso VII of Castile, supported by forces from Genoa and Pisa, and would remain in Christian hands for ten years. These would be the years of looting and destruction. In 1157, the Almohads conquered the city, carrying out numerous reconstructions with the aim of returning the city its former glory. During the years and those in which it would form part of the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, it would continue to be used as a port, but it would never have the importance it had during the taifa and Almoravid period. In 1489, it would finally be conquered by the Catholic Monarchs.

↓ Location of the Puerta de Almería in the idealized map of the city drawn up to commemorate the Millennium of the Kingdom of Almería.

