

LUCENTUM AND MARQ

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John Cleese, way back in Monty Python mode, asked, 'What have the Romans ever done for us?' as he tried to lead a revolt against the ruling Romans in a typically satirical sketch. His reluctant followers began listing the many advantages from the Romans including sanitation, roads, irrigation and wine. If you missed this Python sketch, see here <http://youtu.be/9foi342LXQE>.

The hilltop (*tossal*) location was of obvious strategic advantage against attackers and covers around 25,000 m². Very informative well-designed information boards are strategically placed around the site and include English translations. A free brochure in English is available from the office at the main entrance.

Lucentum has a complex history of development



The Romans arrived in what we now call Alicante around 215BC, took over a previously inhabited area, and renamed it Lucentum. The archaeological site in which the remains of this ancient settlement lie, at a place known as El Tossal de Manises, in the Albufereta zone, is just a few kilometres from the modern Alicante city centre.

Excavation began as early as the end of the 18th century creating a huge debate as to its origins. The serious excavation began in the 1930s and unearthed a huge range of historical artefacts and remains of buildings. It is open to the public but closed Monday (See *Information*). In 1961, the site was declared a Monument of Historic and Artistic Importance.

and abandonment with evidence of major building works over several centuries from BC through to 1AD and beyond. It is evident that at one time it was very prosperous with two public bathhouses, which would have had hot water, a sewerage system, and even shops. Therefore, the Romans had a very sophisticated life style for their epoch. Especially when you consider that 100s of years later the typical Spanish village (*and probably British as well*) had very inferior sanitary and sewerage arrangements.

You can follow the route around the remains and marvel at how ingenious these early invaders and then settlers were and how much they did in fact improve the local facilities and primitive living and farming

methods. Two of the most characteristic elements of Roman architecture were murals and mosaics, early interior design that must have made the houses of the rich people very comfortable as they enjoyed their empire.

Eventually the Roman Empire collapsed and so Lucentum was abandoned as the Romans fled. Later during the 8th century, the site was reused by the then latest arrivals in the form of the Muslims who created an Islamic style cemetery.

The pottery and other items recovered from Lucentum are on display close-by in the Alicante archaeological Museum, the MARQ (*Museo Arqueológico Provincial de*

men' as the trade routes were established around the Mediterranean. The Valencian region, having many ports, played a key part in this early import/export business.

Having visited Lucentum I was especially interested in the MARQ's Roman section and the videos helped make the whole experience 'come alive' and the impressive displays of relics, coins, mosaics etc are worth spending time on.

In the central areas the exhibitions explain the archaeological methods used, including many branches of science, to provide valuable information about the human race. Many aspects are analysed



Alicante) located in Plaza Doctor Gomez Ulla.

Exhibits are displayed by the main historical periods from the Spanish viewpoint: Prehistory, Iberians, Romans, Middle Ages, and Present age in large modern galleries.

Whilst the exhibits are well organised the English captions and explanations are very limited and in a difficult colour to read in the low lighting levels. However, there are also plenty of videos and interactive displays, which are available in English.

It is quite amazing how much history going back 1000s of years is in our local province, including inland areas. Iberians were great traders and acted as 'middle

Information

The Lucentum site is open Tuesday – Sunday but closes mid afternoons and all day on Monday.

Entrance Price from 2€. Easily accessible by the TRAM or buses 21/22. By car – located in the San Juan Playa area, look out for the pink indicator signs, parking in Calle Zeus.

The MARQ is open daily except Monday
Opening times vary by season check their web site for details: <http://www.marqalicante.com>

The TRAM stops at MARQ station. Buses 2,6,9,20 and 23. Entrance price is 3€.

If you purchase an admission for combined MARQ and Lucentum admission it is cheaper.

including land, vegetation, animals, time, human remains and objects.

The museum also has temporary exhibits and exhibitions included the admission price (see below) currently these feature Orihuela and public works.

There is an informative guidebook with colour photos available for only 1,80€ from the museum shop, which given the limited English is very useful to have with you to help understand the museum layout etc.

For anyone wishing to explore further there is also La Illeta at Campello (*accessible by TRAM*) and the archaeological museum in Orihuela.