NOTES

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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Cartagena

SPAIN

GENERAL INFORMATION Cartagena is a historic port city located on the southeast Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula. As it has been from ages past, Cartagena remains an important outlet to the Mediterranean. When sailing into port it is easy to imagine that this is the exact same sight that awaited the ships of the early Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Moors, Barbary Coast pirates, the Spanish Armada and ships from France and Great Britain. From as far back as the 1500s up through today, Cartagena functions as the Mediterranean home port for Spain's navy. Always linked with the sea, whether through trade, the military, fishing or recreation, Cartagena provides a safe anchorage for all.

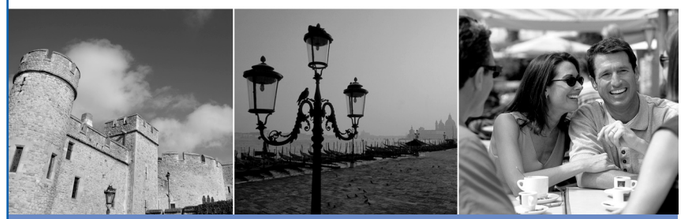
Cartagena is in the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia, one of the seventeen Autonomous Communities that make up Spain. The capital of the region is in the city of Murcia while the Regional Assembly meets in Cartagena. The southern coast of Spain is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Europe. But this is also a working city with a history stretching back well over 2,000 years.

The mines, just outside the city, have been worked from the time of antiquity. In fact, a locale boy used the silver from the mines of Cartagena to buy some elephants way back in 218 BC … more on that later. The region also produces a large quantity of flowers, fruits and vegetables as well as wine and olive oil for domestic consumption and export throughout the European Union. Cartagena is an easy city to walk. The sites tend to be in relatively close proximity to each other. There a plenty of small cafes, especially near the waterfront, where guests can get a cool drink and order up some delicious seafood. But perhaps the best feature that Cartagena has to offer a visitor is the genuine warmth and friendliness of her people. You won't have to look deep to find it.

HISTORY Archeological evidence of human habitation along the southeast coast of the Iberian Peninsula dates back to the Bronze Age, 3,000 years BC. Artifacts from this period have been discovered throughout this part of Spain. As they had done throughout much of the Mediterranean, by the 1st millennium BC intrepid Phoenician sailors, soon followed by the Greeks, established numerous trading posts all along the Iberian coast. By the early 200s BC, Carthaginians were spreading colonies throughout the coastal regions of North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. According to some historical records the Carthaginians reached a commercial and defense cooperation treaty with a port city named Mastia. That city would become Cartagena, meaning "New Carthage".

Having grown up in the city, it would be from Cartagena, in the spring of 218 BC, that the great General Hannibal would lead his 60,000 man army, with his famous 37 war-elephants, off of the Iberian Peninsula, across southern Gaul and over the Alps into Italy. For the next fifteen years Hannibal would fight the Romans on their own soil. Meanwhile Cartagena the center of Carthaginian power in Iberia would fall to the Romans under the command of General Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major in 210 BC. The town and the entire region would grow and prosper for centuries. As the Roman Empire continued its slow decline, in the early 400s AD, Germanic tribes known as the Vandals swept south onto the Iberian Peninsula.

They would be followed a century later by another Germanic tribe, the much feared Visigoths. During two centuries of occupation the Visigoths, resting upon Roman cultural laurels, contributed virtually nothing of their own to the peninsula. Strife and dissention inside the ruling dynasty, combined with wide spread famine and disease to dangerously weaken Visigoth rule.



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