





## PLACES OF INTEREST

*History continued*

pire 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 dissension inside the ruling dynasty, combined with wide spread famine and disease to dangerously weaken Visigoth rule.

There was little that could be done when the Arab, Islamic Moors crossed the Straits of Gibraltar out of North Africa in 711 and began their conquest of Iberia (al-Andalus to the Moors). The Muslims would rule much of Spain for nearly seven centuries. This would become Spain's "Golden Age" as the Moors made great contributions to improving agriculture, literature, art and astoundingly beautiful architecture. The Moors would also expand the boundaries of mathematics, the sciences and medicine.

By mid 1,000 AD Moorish rule was being overthrown in some parts of Spain. This became known in Spanish history as the Reconquista. Ro-

man Catholic Castilian and Argon Kings fought among themselves for control of newly reconquered regions. In 1492 Islamic rule in Spain was completely overthrown.

There was a continually growing threat coming from the sea, however. Islamic Barbary pirates sailing out of North Africa were getting more brazen and dangerous as they attacked thousands of merchant ships and plundered countless coastal towns and villages of Catholic Italy, Portugal and Spain. During this period the Muslims captured over one million European Christians and sold them in the slave markets of Morocco, Alger and far away Istanbul. Much of the abandoned and depopulated coastal regions of southeast Spain fell into steep decline.

In the 20th century, after years of tension, in July, 1936 civil war broke out in Spain. Those that supported the government of Spain's Second Republic were opposed by rebel military forces under the leadership of General Francisco Franco. It was a horrible war, a prelude by proxy to World War II, and as usual innocent civilians paid the price. Cartagena and much of the surrounding region supported the Republic against the General Franco's Nazi and Italian backed fascists. General Francisco

Franco died in 1975. This led to the establishment of the constitutional monarchy of the popular King Juan Carlos I. Since that time the port city and region of Cartagena has slowly grown and prospered.

### CARTAGENA POINTS OF INTEREST

**1 Concepcion Castle** is the ruins of a fortress that formed part of the city's defenses. The castle is set in beautiful Torres Park and overlooks the city and harbor.

**2 The sea wall of Cartagena** is a very popular site in the city. This is a great place to stroll along the waterfront. The wall was built in the 1700s at the direction of King Carlos III.

**3 The Naval Museum** is contains an interesting collection of charts and maps, model ships, celestial navigation instruments together with numerous other objects used in the maritime profession.

**4 The National Museum for Underwater Archeology** is one of the few in Spain that undertakes aquatic research to learn more about the tools, ships and methods used by ancient seafarers.

**5 The Palacio Consistorial** (the old Town Hall) has recently been carefully restored to its original beauty after being closed and neglected for many years. Construction began on the intricately designed building in 1900 and was dedicated by King Alfonso XIII and Queen Victoria Eugenia in 1907. The Town Hall is near the waterfront and open to the public.

**6 The Roman Theater** was long forgotten and buried under nearly 2,000 years of construction until finally discovered in 1987. Cut into the hillside in one of the city's old neighborhoods, the 6,000 seat theater is undergoing careful archeological excavation. Sculptures and bas-reliefs recovered from the site can be viewed in the Municipal Archaeological Museum. Great care is being taken to develop the site and surrounding area into one of the city's most treasured features.

**7 The Museo Arqueológico Municipal** (Municipal Archaeological Museum) has on display an interesting selection of artifacts that range from the Paleolithic era and the Bronze Age through the Carthaginians and Romans and completing the city's historic timeline with the Ottoman Moors.

**8 The Plaza de Toros** (The Bull Ring) is a very interesting structure with a great deal of history. The bull ring was built in the 1850s upon the foundation of a Roman gladiatorial arena. Visitors can only view the arena from outside where it is possible to look into the subterranean entrance through which gladiators passed on their way to prepare for battle.

### Beyond Cartagena

**Murcia** is the capital city of the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia. The city is north of Cartagena set along the banks of the Segura River. The city was founded in the 800s (a latecomer compared to Cartagena) on the orders of Abd-al-Rahman II, the Muslim emir of Córdoba. There are a number of beautiful sites in Murcia including Cardinal Belluga Square, the city's cathedral from the late 1300s, The Monastery of the Virgin of Fuensanta and the Episcopal Palace which was built in the 1700s.

**Elche**, on the coast northeast of Cartagena, is a great little town known for its huge palm tree garden. The scent of flowers combined with waterfalls and small lakes all make for a serene setting in which

to unwind. This is a wonderful place to walk and explore.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Cartagena and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of the organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, passengers are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables.

**LOCAL CUSTOMS** Bargaining: Prices are usually fixed.

Tipping: If a service charge is not included, 10% is a good guideline.

Local Cuisine: The region's cuisine is based upon its proximity to the Mediterranean. Rice (arroz) is an important staple. Some favorite dishes include: Arroz de mero y gambas, prawns, grouper and rice. Arroz a la alicantina, chicken, shellfish and rice. Arroz de magro, fresh vegetables, meat and rice. Arroz Negro, calamari and assorted seafood with rice. Touron nougat is a popular desert in the region. It is an almond, sugar and honey bar (sometimes with cinnamon and lemon).

Drink Specialties: It is no secret that this region of Spain produces some fine wines with denomination of origin - Jumilla, Yecla and Bullas. However, there is a popular local drink of which you might not have heard... an after-dessert coffee called asiático. The drink combines layers of condensed milk, espresso, brandy, cream and cinnamon.

**SHOPPING** The best shopping is to be found in the city center, a short walk from the terminal. Espacio Mediterráneo Shopping Center and El Corte Inglés Department Store are also popular.

Value added Tax (VAT), is added to most purchases. Visitors who spend over a certain amount may be entitled to re-claim some or all of the tax paid, however, regulations and conditions governing the refund of VAT are subject to change and RCI cannot guarantee the cooperation of local authorities.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** The unit of currency in Spain is the Euro. ATMs are plentiful. Major credit cards are usually welcomed.

**POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The Main Post Office is located at Plaza San Francisco.

Calls using a personal calling card may be dialed using the following access numbers:

AT&T: 900.99.0011

MCI: 800.099.357

**TRANSPORTATION** Taxis are generally available near the Pier. There are few English speaking drivers and it is advisable to negotiate a fare prior to departing. Car Rental: Drivers must be 21 and have held their license for 1 year.

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The Tourist Information Center is located at the Town Hall, Plaza del Ayuntamiento.