

## introduction

Itálica was the first Roman city founded on the Iberian Peninsula in the year 206 BC. We do not know a lot about that first Republican Itálica, since most of the traces of that period are found under the town of Santiponce. The main accessible area covers the remains of the expansion carried out in the high imperial period, under the rule of Hadrian (117-138 BC). With this new urbanisation, characterised by impressive public buildings, such as the *Traianeum*, a temple

) Fossa *bestiaria* of the amphitheatre



of imperial worship, and large houses, or *domus*, in which some of the richest patrician families of Itálica lived, our city becomes a real homage to the Dynasty.

After the Roman period and a few centuries of abandonment, the memory of Itálica started to recover in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries thanks to the poet and humanist Rodrigo Caro. Throughout the centuries following this recovery he continued with the first archaeological studies of the city, like those carried out by Fray Fernando de Zeballos, or by the excavations of Francisco de Bruna and the first important sculptural findings. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, romantic travellers worked on rescuing the past glories of this settlement, giving rise to the start of an awareness of protecting the site, which is especially materialised with Demetrio de los Ríos, of prime importance in the recovery of Itálica, and his successor, Amador de los Ríos, who condemned the continuous pillaging of the city. In 1912, the Roman city of Itálica was declared a National Monument. Since the mid-1980s, the protection, conservation, investigation and dissemination work of the Archaeological Ensemble correspond to the Regional Government of Andalusia.

) Mosaic of the Pygmies located in the latrine of the Exedra building



## itinerary

### Walls (1)

The walls of Itálica covered an area of more than 50 hectares and were constructed in different phases. The wall and doors through which the accessible Roman city is entered are dated from the period of the emperor Hadrian. This urban expansion is characterised by a network of streets perfectly ordered in right angles where there is a grid of rectangular plots equipped with porticoes on the pavements. These streets have unusual dimensions in a Roman city, the largest ones reaching sixteen metres wide. And all of this is reminiscent of the



) Access to the main street of the Hadrianic extension of the city

Hellenistic model that inspired the Hadrianic urbanisation.



) Exedra building arena

### Exedra building (2)

This is one of the largest buildings in Itálica, covering 4,000m<sup>2</sup> and it is configured around a central patio. Its most representative space is the arena (2.1), an open sports field, to the north of which runs a cryptoporticus (2.2), a domed, semi-basement wing for accessing the exedra without having to cross the open space. The exedra (2.3) was a room intended for meetings and banquets covered with a vault located at a great height and open to the arena. At the rear of the building, there is a thermal baths area (2.4), which is accessed from the main patio. The building also has an area destined for communal latrines,

its floor decorated with pygmy figures stands out (2.5). A unique floor: *opus sectile*. A mosaic made with pieces of marble that usually represents geometric motifs.



) Detail of the *opus sectile* flooring of the Exedra building

### Neptune building (3)

This property has a plot of 6,000m<sup>2</sup>, barely a quarter of which has been excavated. In it, a thermal area has been found (3.1), specifically, the remains of a hot room, *caldarium*, identifiable by the brick pillars of the double floor or *hypocaustum*, and another cold one, *frigidarium*, paved with the mosaic presided over by Neptune, the God of the sea, accompanied by an entourage of animals and other sea creatures. Surrounding the mosaic are pygmies, a trim represents scenes with pygmies and animals of the river. At the West end of this building, a domestic environment with several mosaic floors has been



) Hypocaustum of the thermal area of the Neptune building

documented (3.2) that represent the mythical cycle of Theseus, Ariadne and Dionysus. A unique floor: *opus tessellatum*. A mosaic made with marble, glass or ceramic cubic tesserae.

### Casa de los pájaros (House of the birds) (4)

It is the perfect example of the type of house that dominated in this sector of the city. The excavated *domus* occupy a minimum area of 1,500m<sup>2</sup>, surrounding a main garden patio, surrounded by a columned gallery, known as a peristyle (4.1).

In one of the rooms that opens on to this patio, the mosaic of the birds is situated (4.2), which gives the house its name. Thanks to its naturalism we can distinguish more than thirty species, particularly a peacock, an eagle, a rooster, a dove, a grey heron and a parrot. The emblem or central painting could represent a scene of the myth of Orpheus, decorated with musical and theatrical elements.

At the bottom of this peristyle, we found two interior patios (4.3) with the most private rooms: one summer one with a pond; and another more sunny one, for the winter. Between both private areas we have the *triclinium*, the main dining room of the house where luxurious meals took place.

The *lararium*, opening onto the main peristyle, is a small domestic altar where the *Lares*, protective gods of the home, family and businesses are located.

Surrounding the house towards the street, we find the *tabernae*, commercial premises that the owner of the house rented as food houses or shops (4.4).



) Private domestic rooms of the House of the birds



) Detail of the mosaic of the birds

### Casa del Planetario (House of the planetarium) (6)

This is one of the main houses of Itálica due to hosting some of the most notable mosaics.

The planetarium mosaic (6.1) stands out, which represents the seven stars of the solar system known to the Romans. Each planet is personified by a god who, in turn, symbolises a day of the week. Therefore, the Roman names for the days of the week were based on astrological observation and, in part, they have been inherited until the present day.

Another especially relevant floor is the Baco mosaic which represents Baco and Ariadna embracing. Ariadna, after helping Theseus to escape from the labyrinth of the Minotaur, was abandoned by her lover on the beach of Naxos. Then the god Baco appears, who is fascinated by her beauty and takes her as his wife.

The structures discovered belong to its central part. The predominant features are the large pool, *natatio* (7.1), in the shape of a T, which leads to the *frigidarium* or room without heating, which has two baths at either end, and the *caldarium*, or heated room, which has an apse-shaped structure after which the ovens are situated (7.2). Some service corridors and channels of surplus water were also detected.

Just beside the thermal bath building, the arena has been identified, the place where open air sports were played (7.3).

The spa ensemble occupied an area greater than 30,000 metres squared and its structure is similar to that of the gymnasiums of the Hellenistic world.

### Lake (8)

To the west of the amphitheatre, there is a lake populated with a rich variety of birds. Its origin dates back to the 1970s, with the construction of the dam that safeguards the amphitheatre from flooding although, for certain, there was a similar solution in the Roman period to prevent streams from flooding this building.

### Traianeum (5)

This is the most representative building of the city, a public and religious space dedicated to the worship of the emperor Trajan, visible from kilometres away.

It was composed of a large quadrangular enclosure, with a surface area of almost ten thousand metres, with an interior square surrounded by a porticoed gallery with one hundred marble columns. In the centre of the square stood an octastyle temple, accessed through a large staircase, inside of which there was a monumental sculpture of the divinised emperor, presumably Trajan.

Due to the benefits of the materials employed in its construction,

it has been subjected to intense pillaging since ancient times.



) Foundation of a monumental exedra of the Traianeum

### Main thermal baths (7)

The thermal baths were not only a place to bathe, massages were also given, sport was played, they had a library and *solarium*; they were a real social and cultural meeting area, where men and women of all social classes had the right to enter, always separately.



) Underground infrastructures of the Main thermal baths

### Amphitheatre (9)

This amphitheatre is considered one of the biggest of the Empire, with a capacity for 25,000 spectators. Since the estimated population of Itálica was around 10,000 people, it is believed that during the games the amphitheatre accommodated inhabitants from the nearby cities. In Rome, there were many holidays in which big parties, theatrical performances and games were held. The games took place in the amphitheatre which got its name from its being formed of two theatres facing each other. The most important games were the *ludi gladiatorii*, or gladiator fights, fundamentally played by the slaves,



) Copy of the Gladiator Law





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prisoners of war or those convicted of murder, some games that have their origin in the combats that took place in ancient times in honour of the illustrious deceased.

The show started with a big parade of the gladiators those who started saluting the 'editor', the person who had defrayed the games and was seated in one of the main balconies. The amphitheatre controlled the entrance and had ushers. The audience sat in the stands according to their social class: the patricians, in the part closest to the arena (*ima cavea*); the plebeians in the middle part (*media cavea*); and slaves and foreigners in the highest part (*summa cavea*).

The pit, *fossa bestiarum* (9.1), is the place where the wild animals were, in cages, covered by decking. At certain points, to make the fight more exciting, the animals were freed into the arena.

On triumphant avenue, the entrance gallery to the arena at the Western end, a sanctuary dedicated to Dea Caelestis and Nemesis Augusta, goddesses which the votive plaques embedded in the ground with representations of feet correspond to (9.2).



) Votive plaque dedicated to Dea Caelestis/Nemesis



) Interior view of the amphitheatre

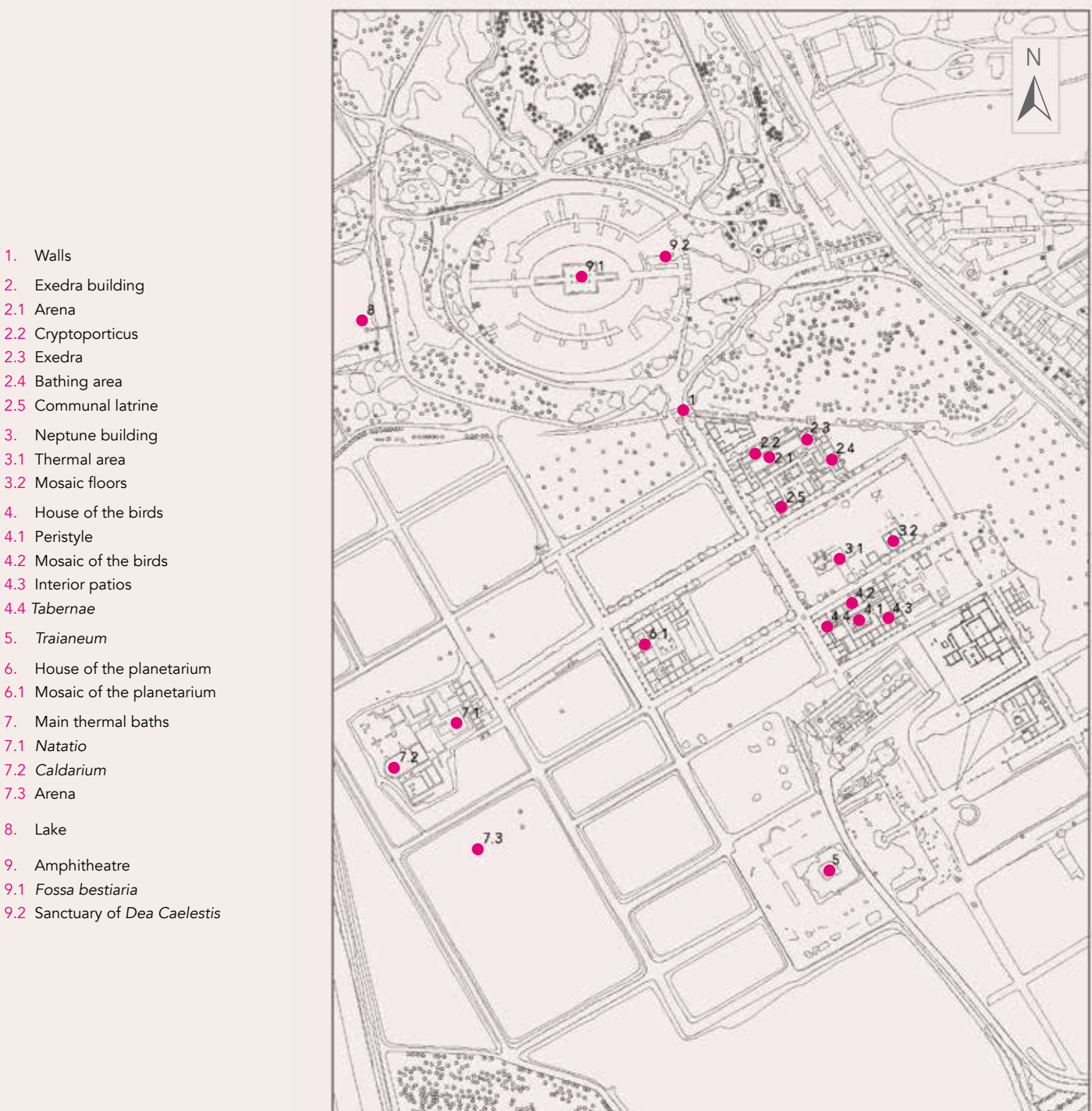
### Roman theatre (10)

This is one of the oldest conserved buildings of Itálica, and it is located in what we know as the original urban centre, underneath present-day Santiponce. It was built in the era of the emperor Augustus and reformed in later eras.

This building is destined for theatrical performance although it was not only used for performing, it was also the place where religious rituals and political events were held. It highlighted on its portico the temple dedicated to the worship of Isis, practically identical, in its dimensions and in its shapes, to the one preserved in Pompeii.



) Sculpture of the goddess Diana



- 1. Walls
- 2. Exedra building
- 2.1 Arena
- 2.2 Cryptoporticus
- 2.3 Exedra
- 2.4 Bathing area
- 2.5 Communal latrine
- 3. Neptune building
- 3.1 Thermal area
- 3.2 Mosaic floors
- 4. House of the birds
- 4.1 Peristyle
- 4.2 Mosaic of the birds
- 4.3 Interior patios
- 4.4 Tabernae
- 5. Traianum
- 6. House of the planetarium
- 6.1 Mosaic of the planetarium
- 7. Main thermal baths
- 7.1 Natatio
- 7.2 Caldarium
- 7.3 Arena
- 8. Lake
- 9. Amphitheatre
- 9.1 Fossa bestiarum
- 9.2 Sanctuary of Dea Caelestis

## welcome

For years, the Ministry of Culture of the Regional Government of Andalusia has endeavoured to modernise the Andalusian museums in order to make them centres capable of tackling new cultural and social challenges, with the aim of achieving the best and maximum access of citizens to the collections.

The museums of Andalusia managed by the Ministry of Culture form a network composed of 24 institutions, very different to each other. The Museum of Almería, Monumental Ensemble of the Alcazaba of Almería, Museum of Cádiz, Archaeological Ensemble of Baelo Claudia, Archaeological Museum of Córdoba, Fine Arts Museum of Córdoba, Madinat al-Zahra Archaeological Ensemble, Archaeological and Ethnological Museum of Granada, Casa de los Tiros Museum, Fine Arts Museum of Granada, Museum of Huelva,

Museum of Jaén, Archaeological Museum of Úbeda, Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions of High Guadalquivir, Archaeological Ensemble of Cástulo, Iberian Museum, Museum of Málaga, Archaeological Ensemble of Antequera Dolmens, Archaeological Museum of Seville, Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions of Seville, Fine Arts Museum of Seville, Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art, Archaeological Ensemble of Carmona and Archaeological Ensemble of Itálica.

At these museums, anyone is welcome who wishes to learn more about our region and our heritage with their resources and the activities that are carried out there. This artistic, archaeological and ethnographic heritage reflects what we were like and how we have come to be what we are now. The institutions, through their exhibitions and activities, show what we long to be in the future.

We want to welcome you to this museum, hoping that you enjoy your visit. We encourage you to visit all the museums in Andalusia and we thank you for the tie that you have created, from now on permanently, with Andalusian heritage.

Ministry of Culture

## visit us

### How to get there?

**Public transport**  
 M-170A and M-170B buses (Damas company): Seville-Santiponce. Departure in the Seville-Santiponce direction: Plaza de Armas Station. Departure in the Seville-Santiponce direction: stop at the entrance to the Ensemble.

**Private transport**  
 Departure from Seville in the direction of Mérida, taking the N-630 motorway.  
 Car park in front of the entrance to the Ensemble.  
 Location for GPS: 37.444386, -6.044575

For information about opening hours, group tours and prices, visit [www.museosdeandalucia.es](http://www.museosdeandalucia.es)

**Remember**  
 For the proper use of these facilities and for the enjoyment of all, it is necessary to comply with the rules established by the centre and to adhere to the instructions of the security staff.



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