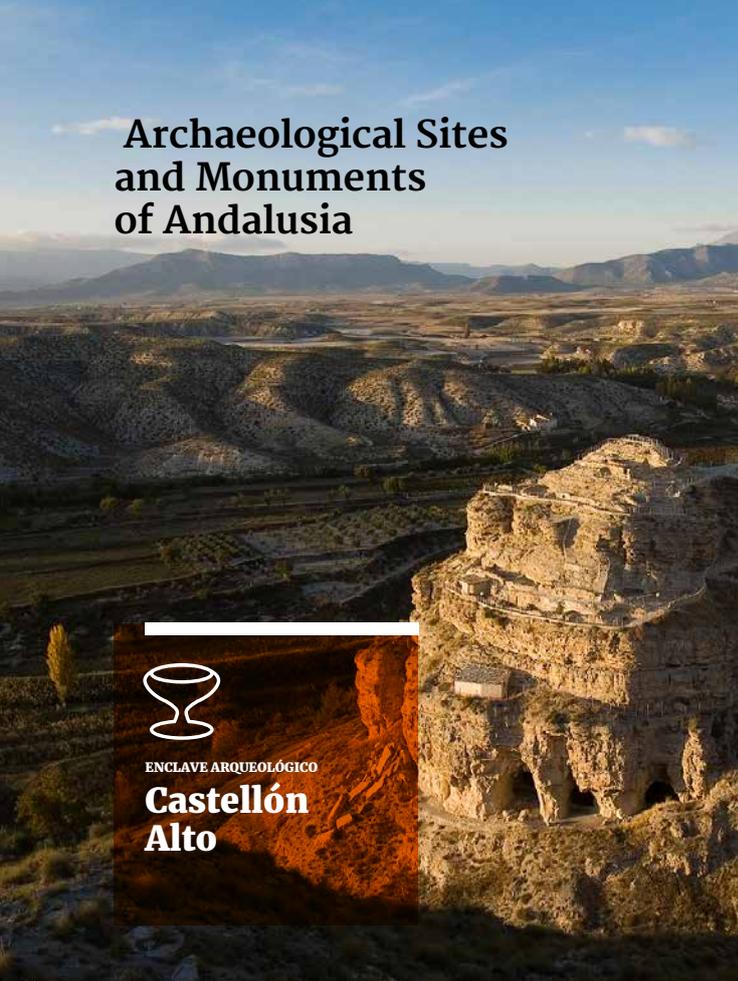


# Archaeological Sites and Monuments of Andalusia



ENCLAVE ARQUEOLÓGICO

**Castellón Alto**

↑ General view of the site.

## HISTORY

Discovered by looters in the early 1980s, the first scientific excavation of the site took place in 1983. Restoration work commenced in 1989.

The archaeological site of Castellón Alto belongs to the Argaric Culture, and was occupied towards the end of the Late Bronze Age. The timescale of the settlement is thought to be between 1900 and 1600 BCE. The site itself consists of a medium-sized farming settlement. The inhabited area was divided into two zones: a spur-shaped outcrop that extends into the valley and an adjacent slope. The dwellings were distributed along the natural terraces that were in turn divided into artificial ones, creating a fortified settlement that was easily defended thanks to the natural layout. The houses are distributed according to social differences, although in some other cases the layout appears to be the result of kinship patterns.

Castellón Alto formed part of a system of territorial control, along with other settlements designed on a similar pattern. They were located at points where they could control the valley, on the left side of the local rivers for protection against the wind and to benefit from the sun. One settlement (Cerro de la Virgen) was the main settlement of the area and the other ones depended on it. To ensure consistent exploitation of local resources and create an effective defence system, the settlements were distributed at the same distance from each other.

Castellón Alto was burnt down and rebuilt twice in the 300 years of its occupation, although only a small part of the settlement was rebuilt after the second fire.

The landscape you can see from Castellón Alto has not changed to any great extent, although there are some differences: the river would be larger and higher than it is now; the vegetation in the upper areas would be more abundant and would take the form of pine groves and more lush riverside vegetation. The cultivated areas would be confined to the floodable strip of the river, although the zone would not be completely cultivated or divided into fields as it is today.



**Junta de Andalucía**

Consejería de Cultura y Patrimonio Histórico

AGENCIA ANDALUZA DE INSTITUCIONES CULTURALES



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Mondays and Tuesdays closed except for pre-arranged group tours.

### 1 October to 30 April

Morning: guided visits at 11.00 and 12.00.

Afternoon: guided visits at 16.00 and 17.00.

### 1 May to 30 September

Morning: guided visits at 10.00 and 11.00.

Evening: guided visits at 19.00 and 20.00.

### Prices:

General: 2 €

Reduced: 1 € (Groups and children under 10 years)

NOTE: ALL VISITS TO THE SITE ARE GUIDED.

## AN EXCEPTIONAL FIND, BURIAL SITE 121

A grave dug into in the slope of the Lower Terrace was discovered during the excavation season in November 2002. Thanks to a process of partial mummification, the two bodies inside the grave were found in an exceptional state of conservation. It is the 121st grave to be found on the site.

The tomb consists of a small artificial cave of a type commonly used in the settlement, which was sealed off with squared panels of black pine covered by a layer of clay and a masonry wall.

This type of closure created a hermetic seal that lasted for centuries without letting soil or water filter in, which when combined with the extremely arid local conditions led to mummification by dehydration.

The human remains consist of an adult male of between 27 and 29 years of age and a child. The adult was about 1.60 metres tall and of average build. The body still has traces of body tissue and locks of long dark hair on the head, which were combed into two braids on the side and a central pigtail. There are also remains of a beard and body hair, still stuck to pieces of skin. Several fragments of flax and woollen cloth were recovered, and marks of flax on some bones such as the phalanges can be seen.

The child, of about 4 years of age, had died previously and was taken out of his original tomb for burial alongside the adult, which explains why his bones form a disordered pile placed at the front right hand side of the grave. It was already partially mummified when it was taken out of the first tomb and there are still traces of soft tissue and dark hair, cut and combed forward to form a fringe. Fragments of flax cloth and what may have been a leather-covered woollen cap were also found.

The grave goods consisted of four ceramic pots, including a goblet, copper bracelets, silver rings, a copper dagger with remains of a leather scabbard and a copper axe with a complete oak handle, which still has remains of the fibres used for hafting. The way the axe was fixed to the handle suggests that it was used as an adze for woodworking. The child had a bronze bracelet on each forearm and three necklace beads were also found. The remains of a young sheep were found next to the bones.

The tomb is now conserved and on display in an oxygen-free case at the Galera Museum.



## SEE AND UNDERSTAND CASTELLÓN ALTO

### 1 The acropolis.

The highest part of the hill is occupied by an enclosed area that could only be accessed by a passageway on the south side. The existence of a cistern in this area would indicate that the water supply was controlled by the higher-ranking families that lived here. The larger size of the houses and the rich grave goods found within the enclosure confirm that it was occupied by the social elite of the settlement.



↑ View of the hill with the three natural terraces.

### 2 The cistern.

The cistern inside the acropolis was built by cutting out a layer of hard stone and digging out the shape of the tank from the softer material. The walls were then covered with clay to make them waterproof and a roof of wooden panels was placed on top. Use of the cistern stopped at some point before the settlement was abandoned. There was a fire, after which the cistern was filled with soil and stones and a house was built on top.

### 3 Houses in the eastern sector of the Upper Terrace.

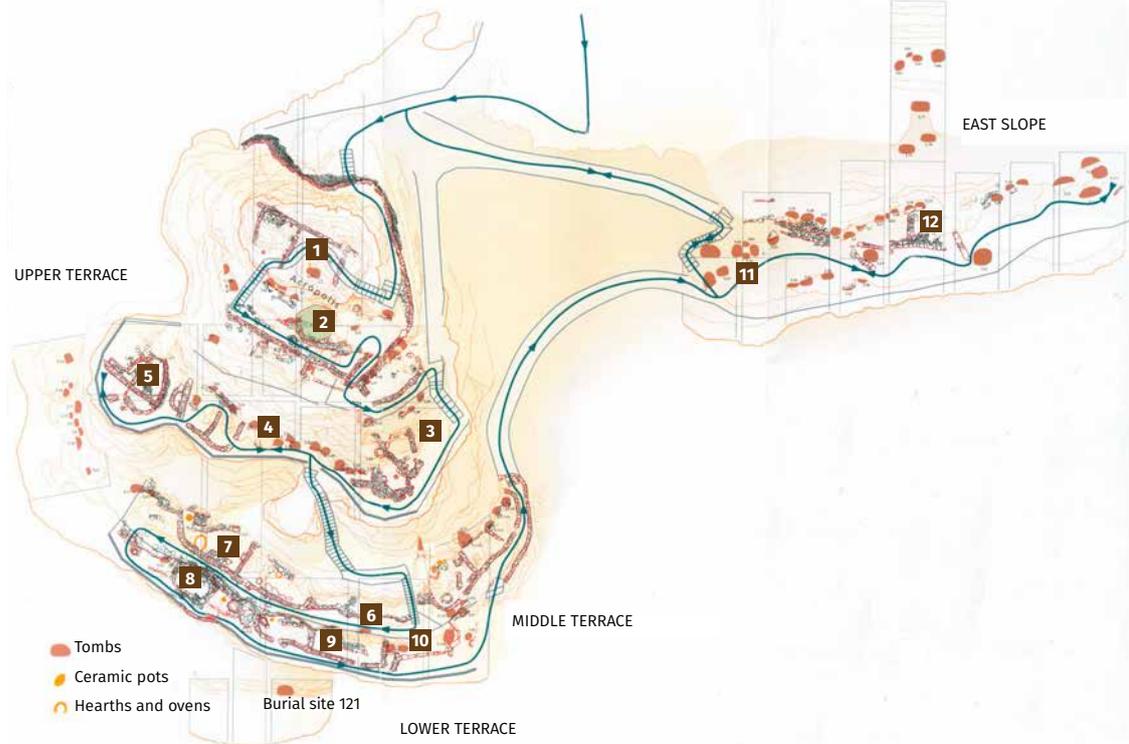
Here there are a number of houses that were adapted to the uneven terrain, the irregularly shaped rooms still contain features such as hearths or mills.

### 4 Burial site 7.

The site consists of a tomb holding a 40 year old male and a woman of 25 years, who were probably buried at the same time because both skeletons maintain their original foetal position.



↑ Houses on the Middle Terrace.



### 5 Houses in the western sector of the Upper Terrace.

There are walls from two different periods in this sector. The circular structures are from an earlier period while the straight walls belong to the houses built in the second phase. The house at the western end held several large storage jars. The other house contained a child entombed in a ceramic urn.

### 6 Street in the Middle Terrace.

Original street in the Middle Terrace, runs between two lines of houses at different heights.

### 7 Houses CE 16.

This is a large house with two rooms. The room at the western end was not covered by a roof and contained a large oven. The covered room contained several millstones, wall benches and a fireplace.

### 8 Reconstructed house.

A room has been reconstructed in this house using evidence from the archaeological excavations. It has a masonry base, a structure of pine beams, and walls and ceiling of wattle and daub (mud and reeds). The floor makes use of the original system of medium sized stones with a beaten earth finish. It has the original stone bench next to the wall, a bench for milling cereals and a fireplace.

### 9 House of the loom.

Several clay loom weights were found inside this house. These were used to tighten the fabric



↑ Interior of the reconstructed house.

and their presence in the house would indicate that a loom was used here to weave flax.

### 10 Stable.

This consists of a small space, demarcated by large vertical slabs, where goats and sheep were kept. The evidence for this hypothesis comes from the layer of dung still conserved in the area. The layer was found on top of several tombs, which would indicate that it was used for this purpose at a later stage.

### 11 Tombs on the East Slope.

The group of tombs in this area are of a type not found in other parts of the hill, and consist of pits in which an small artificial cave or covacha has been dug out on one side to place the body. The cave was closed with a stone slab and the pit was filled up with soil and stones.



↑ Valley of the river Galera.



↑ Tombs 18 and 19 on the slope.

### 12 Tomb of the beheaded man.

Tomb 19 contained a male of between 20 and 25 years of age, who was beheaded and his head and the first three cervical vertebrae was placed between his hands. The decapitation took place a few hours after his death, as there are no anatomical changes.

↓ Virtual reconstruction of the acropolis.

