

Archaeological and Monumental Sites of Andalusia



↑ Doña Blanca Tower.

HISTORY

The **Doña Blanca Archaeological Site** is a small hill of approximately 6.5 hectares at 31 metres above sea level. It is located in the municipality of El Puerto de Santa María, between the Sierra de San Cristobal and a large plain reclaimed from the sea by the sediments from the river Guadalete. Today it is occupied by crops, salt flats and marshes. The mountain range, with a maximum height of 129 metres above sea level, stands out over a predominantly flat terrain and from its top can be seen a large area of bay and countryside with an unquestionable strategic role, which must have been a landmark for the orientation of sailors in ancient times.

The site is just a small portion of the archaeological zone that has a protected area of about two million square metres, which includes other unique heritage assets, not visitable today, such as the **Township of La Dehesa**, the **Hypogeum of the Sun and the Moon**, and the **Site and Necropolis of the Summits and Quarries**, testimonies of the different relationships that throughout history man has established with the same physical environment.

The oldest remains found date from the late Copper Age, towards the end of the 3rd millennium BC. A few scattered remains of huts following the original relief of the land belong to this period. This is followed by a phase of disuse —during which the site remained uninhabited— until the middle of the eighth century BC when it was once again occupied. As far back as the 8th century B.C. it became a genuine city, endowed with a wall, which remained inhabited continuously until the end of the 3rd century B.C. During these five centuries of uninterrupted occupation, the city was remodelled several times and two more walls were built. It was abandoned again from the end of the 3rd century BC until the medieval Moorish period, when an Almohad farmstead was established (12th century).



← Remains of the barcida wall to the south of the city. ↓ Panoramic view of the site where you can see the area that in Phoenician times was covered by the sea (area with no vegetation), now filled by the sediment deposited by the River Guadalete.



ADDRESS AND CONTACT

📍 Carretera de El Portal, km. 3,2
11500 El Puerto de Sta. María (Cádiz)
☎ 600 14 30 17
✉ d.blanca.aaiicc@juntadeandalucia.es

FREE ADMISSION

THE LANDSCAPE

Over the centuries, the environment of the Sierra de San Cristóbal has lost its original characteristics and, therefore, its current appearance is very different from that seen by its first settlers.

One of the major changes has been the disappearance of the bay due to the build-up of sediment from the river Guadalete. All the plain that spreads out to the south of the site was covered by sea and the mouth of the river was in the area near El Portal, almost in the foothills at the borders of the municipalities of Jerez and El Puerto de Santa María.

The natural vegetation has adapted over the years to the changing climatic conditions, soil, relief and rainfall. But it has been man over the course of history that has changed the natural vegetation of his environment in a more pronounced and lasting way, mainly due to logging, grazing and agriculture, in such a way that today there is no trace of the dense primary forests of cork oaks, carob trees and pines that populated the mountains in ancient times.



↑ Location of the ancient city overlooking the sea.



Junta de Andalucía
Consejería de Cultura y Patrimonio Histórico
AGENCIA ANDALUZA DE INSTITUCIONES CULTURALES



SEE AND UNDERSTAND DOÑA BLANCA

1 Doña Blanca Tower

This is a small building with a Greek cross floor plan built in the late fifteenth century as a watchtower to control the bay and the lower course of the River Guadalete. The current building is the result of a reconstruction carried out in the second half of the 19th century, as the tower was severely damaged during the War of Independence. A modern historical investigation identified this tower as the place where Doña Blanca de Borbón (1361), wife of Pedro I, was imprisoned and died, hence the name by which we know it today. Other scholars identify the building as a chapel.



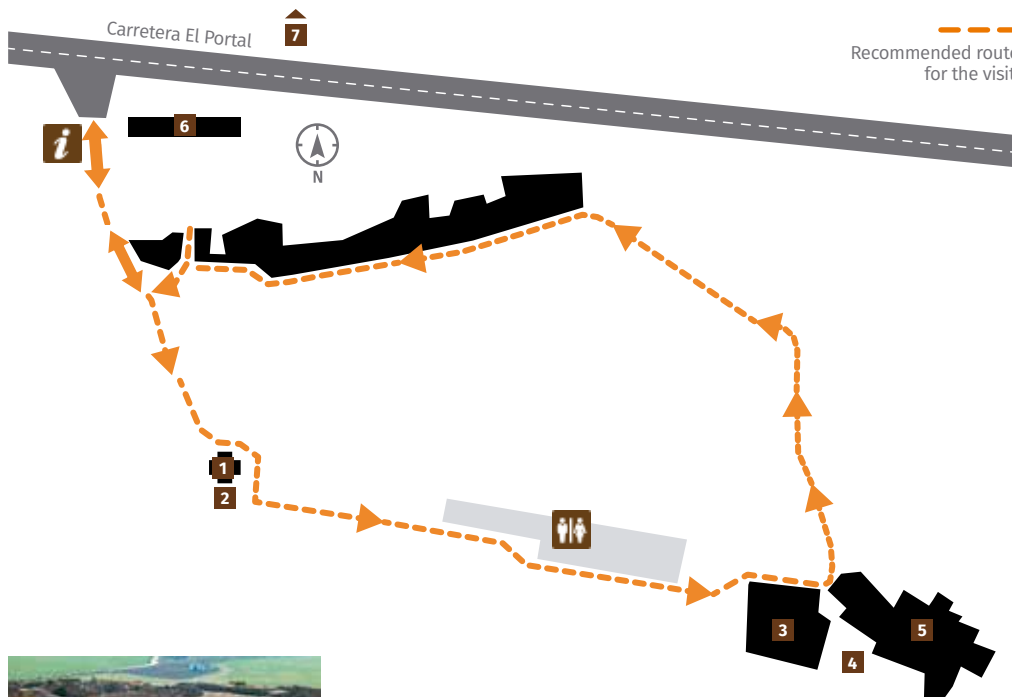
↑ Doña Blanca Tower.

2 Stratigraphic section

The first excavations took place in 1979, next to the Tower entrance, with the aim of determining the chronological sequence of the site. For this purpose, a deep cut was made in the subsoil until the bedrock was reached. During the work, information was recorded on each of the deposits found and any item that could be subsequently analysed for the interpretation and dating of the deposit was recovered. In this area, in the part excavated to a greater depth, the bedrock was reached 9 metres below the surface of the hill. This 9-metre layer consists of archaeological deposits that accumulated over the five centuries of the city's existence. Therefore, this artificial hill (tell) that forms the site has been created by the accumulation of sediments and architectural structures.



↑ Stratigraphic section.



Recommended route for the visit.



↑ Dwellings from the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.

3 Dwellings from the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.

Walking along the southern slope you come to a large excavated area with a surface area of around 1,000 m². Here you can see a group of dwellings and buildings dating from the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, which give us an insight into the town planning of this period. The houses are arranged in fairly regular blocks built along the sides of wide straight streets. The 4 m wide street discovered, of which 36 m have been excavated, runs parallel to the wall. The surface consists of compacted clay, ceramic fragments and small stones. The house walls consist of a stonework base, while in the corners and doors calcarenite ashlar were sometimes used for greater durability. The floors of the rooms are made of clay, while some areas, identified as courtyards, are paved with stone. Next to the houses there are other rooms with sinks and ovens, which are believed to have been used for wine production.

4 Barcida Wall

To the south of this excavation site, the remains of the wall are visible. The structure consists of two parallel walls interlaced with lower perpendicular walls to create small quadrangular spaces or casemates. Following the proposed route, further

south you can see another section of this same wall, made with calcarenite ashlar arranged to fit together perfectly. This type of building is common in other Punic defensive constructions such as the walls of Cartagena and Carteia (San Roque), dating from the Barcida period.

5 Dwellings from the 8th century B.C.

The architectural remains from the 8th century B.C. are generally covered by a thick layer of sediment from later periods, making it necessary to excavate between 7 and 9m deep to find them. However, an extensive area has been discovered, outside the archaic city walls, in which no subsequent constructions have been superimposed, which has allowed the extensive excavation of a large area of dwellings from this period. The houses are arranged on artificial terraces taking advantage of the natural slope of the terrain. They consist of 3 or 4 quadrangular rooms, with stonework-based adobe walls covered with clay and plastered with lime. The floors are made of compacted red clay and the roof is flat or single-gabled, formed by wooden beams and covered by thatch. Most of the houses had a bread oven consisting of a vaulted clay structure of approximately one metre in diameter at the base.

6 Archaic wall

As early as the 8th century, the city was endowed with a strong wall of which a small

part remains today. It rises directly from the natural terrain and is built with irregular masonry interspersed with red clay; in the areas excavated a height of 3 m is preserved. Just in front of the wall, a 20 m wide, 4 m deep, V-section moat was built. This wall was in use until the 6th century B.C. In the 5th century B.C. the city was provided with a new wall that only partly reused the former one. Finally, the last fortified enclosure was built in the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.



↑ Archaic wall.

7 Necropolis

On the other side of the El Portal road, at the foot of the Sierra de San Cristóbal, is the Necropolis. A tumulus of about 20 m in diameter and with a maximum height of 1.80 m has been excavated. The central area was occupied by the ustrinum, where the bodies were cremated. Around it were arranged 63 burial sites of assorted types ranging from urns of various kinds containing the ashes to simple hollows excavated in the surface of the ground for the same purpose.