

COMUNICACIÓN ■ RECOMIENDA VISITARLA

# La ciudad de Tarragona, a 'toda página' en The New York Times

Si Tarragona era, hasta ayer, una desconocida para algunos estadounidenses, puede que desde hoy deje de serlo. Todo gracias al The New York Times que dedica una página entera a la ciudad.

POR LAIA RIVEROLA

Increíble pero cierto. The New York Times recomienda visitar Tarragona en su página de viajes. En su edición del 5 de junio, el rotativo estadounidense publica una crónica escrita por Florence Fabricant quien, acompañada de su marido, visitó la ciudad a finales de abril. Como no podía ser de otro modo, la publicación recoge lo esencial del municipio y aporta datos como, por ejemplo, que «los españoles no consideran Tarragona como una de las principales destinaciones por conocer» y que «Tarragona ronda los 140.000 habitantes».

## La ciudad, por las nubes

Durante su visita, Fabricant y su esposo pasearon por la Rambla Nova, «donde tomamos unos gintonics y disfrutamos de las vistas hacia el Amfiteatre a lo largo de un atardecer».

La crónica destaca también que «en Tarragona todo está cerca. Puedes ir de un punto a otro en 15 minutos». Además, «los hoteles y oficinas de turismo ofrecen buenos mapas de la ciudad».

Fabricant detalla que «el circo es uno de los mejor conservados de Europa» e incluso habla del Sarcòfag d'Hipòlit. En una recomendación de viajes no podía faltar el apartado gastronómico. La pareja estadounidense cenó en el restaurante Degusta, situado en la Part Alta, «the Old City para Florence Fabricant». Tras su experiencia gustativa, la cronista advierte de que «en Tarragona no se come el tipo de comida por la que España se ha hecho famosa pero es fácil comer bien y disfrutar de los vinos de la zona».

Su 'paseo' gastronómico no acaba en el Casc Antic donde «también se pueden saborear unas tapas». Su ruta sigue en El Serrallo, «una zona de restaurantes de pescado situada en el puerto pesquero».

Fabricant y su marido visitaron también la Plaça del Pallol, el Aqüeducte de les Ferreres, más conocido como Pont del Diable, y saben de la existencia de la Vila de Centelles y de la Torre dels Escipions. La pareja se despidió de Tarragona «con la sensación de que nos han dejado entrar a conocer un gran secreto no sólo al alcance de los antiguos romanos. Y ahora nosotros queremos compartir ese secreto». La publicación finaliza con distintas recomendaciones de restaurantes, hoteles y lugares para visitar. En resumen; hacen una promoción inmejorable de Tarragona.

La página publicada en The New York Times hoy. FOTO: DT

OVERNIGHTER

## Near Barcelona, Gems From Ancient Rome

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

WHAT draws travelers to the northwest coast of Spain? Perhaps the food, of course. To Barcelona? Modernist architecture, perhaps. Along the coast, the beaches. And in Tarragona, a laid-back city about 60 miles north of Barcelona, the ancient ruins. On our first afternoon there, my husband and I headed from our hotel down the broad promenade of the Rambla Nova, the city's main artery. We stopped at one of the outdoor cafes along the way, meeting with a crowd that seemed more local than tourist and ordered gin-and-tonics.

The boulevard ends at a palm-fringed terrace overlooking the beach and the sea beyond. Right below was a second-century Roman amphitheater that had hosted up to 15,000 spectators. By now it was early evening, but the sun had not set and the site was still open. We descended a staircase to the entrance.

Despite the occasional aqueduct, vestiges of ancient Rome are rarely the primary reason for visitors to Spain, which means the wealth of ruins in Tarragona, a city of about 140,000, is exceptional.

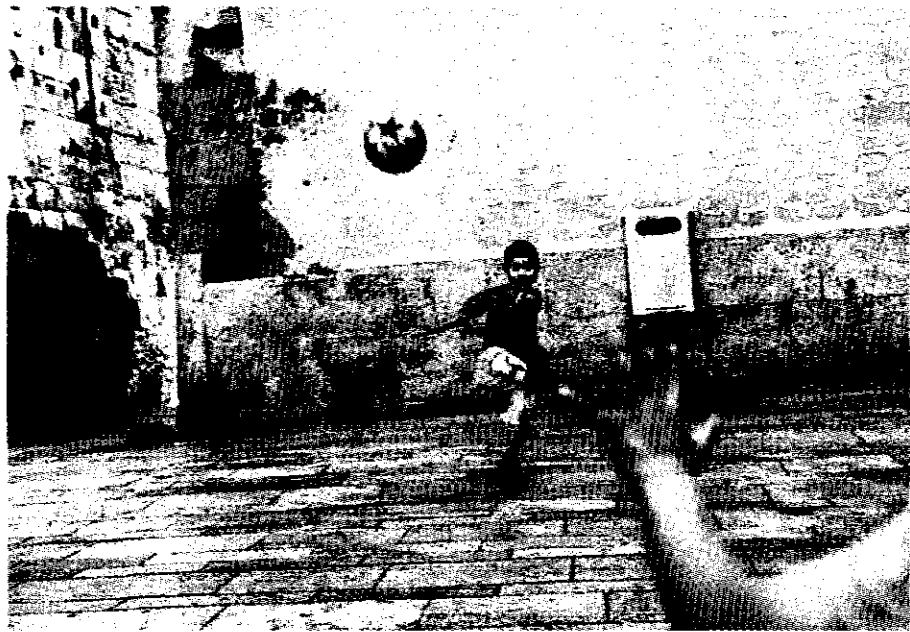
The New York Times has been involved with Tarragona's top rating for sightseeing — three stars — and was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. The Spanish don't consider it a top-shelf destination. "People travel north from Barcelona, not south," said Josep Andreu, the award-winning author who grew up near Barcelona and is now based in Washington, D.C., when I asked him about Tarragona.

"It's not a big destination, even for Spaniards," agreed Elizabeth Peja, who was behind the desk in one of the tourist offices where we asked for a brochure. She also added that the UNESCO designation has helped. During our visit, in late April, we encountered few American tourists.

And there's a shame: Tarragona's rich array of sights are all within about 15 minutes' walk from one another. Excellent maps are provided by hotels and tourist offices, and large burgundy signs labeled "Tarraco" — one of Tarragona's ancient Roman names — point the way, with maps and explanatory text in several languages.

The amphitheater, a minuscule structure of brick and stone built on a sloping hillside. By the third century A.D., Christians were martyred there and a commemorative basilica built. The basilica is now, because a church — Holy Mary of the Mount — lives a corner and a portion.

It was a vivid reminder of the richly layered history of Tarragona, most of which is situated above the amphitheater; within the Old City's ancient walls. Where the Roman ruins join the historic district, there is a stunning promenade and circus complex, built by the Emperor Trajan in the second century as part of the emperor's main forum of the city. The circus is said to have been the largest in Europe at the time. It is one of the best preserved in the world. (Even with a good map, though, navigating its confusing



TOP Soccer by ancient Roman city walls. ABOVE LEFT Sarcophagus in the praetorium. ABOVE RIGHT The amphitheater, which held up to 15,000.

### In Tarragona, city walls and a huge amphitheater survive

network of narrow and walkways was a challenge.) Within the circus is a massive tower from the first century B.C., that was turned into a Gothic-style palace during the Middle Ages. A sarcophagus with a relief of the legend of Hippolytus is on display in one of the visited rooms. Throughout are written explanations in several languages.

Of course, there's only so much history one can take in over the course of an evening. It was time for dinner.

We made our way to Degusta, a fairly high-end restaurant in the Old City; a 9 p.m. reservation made us early birds. The tasting menu was satisfying, with some inventive touches, like a paper cone of crisp dried cauliflower, and

restaurant," Ms. Peja said at the tourist office. "Our restaurants cater to the locals; if they had to depend on tourists they would go out of business."

In addition to restaurants and tapas bars in the lively historic district, some of them with ancient walls incorporated into their decor, there are others scattered throughout. El Serrallo, the city's modern neighborhood, and also a cluster of seafood spots at the fishing port, El Serrallo.

The next morning, we returned to our tour of the ruins, starting at a gate in the ancient walls. There at the Plaça del Pallol, there's a model of the city at its Roman heyday, starting in 218 B.C. It was then, during the Punic Wars against Carthage, that the

summit began building the walls and paving the forum to create a major provincial capital and their base of operations for conquering the Iberian peninsula. Around the first century A.D., the city had a population many times greater than the present; potentates, emperors like Augustus and Hadrian lingered there. It fell into decline in the fifth century. They fortified walls run along the perimeter of about a third of the historic district, with a park-like promenade on top.

Inside the Old City, the National Archaeological Museum of Tarragona is housed in an elegant building behind the circus and holds marble and bronze sculptures, a number of stunning

mosaics and other artifacts. For example, at the edge of the city, in the shadow of a big shopping mall and near a public park, is an early-era Christian necropolis featuring tombs and crypts from the Romans to the Visigoths, and parts of a Christian basilica. (Many of the finds from this dig are on display in an adjacent museum, the Museo Necropolita Paleocristiana.)

Buildings that were once part of the city. If you head about five miles outside Tarragona to the Aqüeducte de les Ferreres, nicknamed the Pont del Diable, you'll quickly forget that you just passed the entrance to the auto-routes that lead to the city; the aqueduct is a knockout. Some sections of this marvel of Roman engineering that once stretched for 25 miles are wrenched in scaffolding. Really doing it justice means spending a few hours hiking along nearby marshy trails.

Another excursion, southwest on the road to Valencia, is the remains of the so-called Roman Villa de Centelles, actually a neo-pagan temple dating from the early Christian era. It's not in great shape, but offers an impressive sense and fragments of twenty centuries depicting some biblical and hunting scenes.

Yet another side trip, back toward Barcelona along the coast, leads to the Torre de les Escipions. Another maze or so miles further along on what was once the Via Augusta, is a triumphal arch from the first century A.D.

We left Tarragona feeling as though we had been let in on a wonderful secret that had not only of the reach of ancient Rome, but of other historic periods, layered within and around the city. And that the secret was meant to be shared.

### ROMAN ANTIQUITIES AND SPANISH CLASSICS

GETTING THERE By car, Tarragona is a little over an hour's trip from Barcelona on the A-7 Autovía, or slower on the more picturesque coastal road, the E-60. Another option is to take the train from Barcelona — about 30 minutes by fast train, about 90 minutes on the slower train — with drives from about 14 to 16 euros per person (10 to 13€ to 15€ to the euro), round trip, depending on the train, day, time and class of service. There are also regular bus services, about 30 minutes, for 12 euros round trip.

GETTING AROUND Tarragona, laid out as a grid, is easy enough to make for a sightseeing trip and from all tourist areas, even outside the Old City. The Tarragona Card, 25 euros, good for 48 hours, offers admission to the Roman sites and to guided tours, as well as discounts for taxis, more than a dozen restaurants and many shops. It is sold at most hotels, the tourist offices and at tarragonacard.com. To use the Roman sites, there is also a pass for 10 euros that allows free admission to all but the necropolis and the museums. Buy it at the first one you visit.

WHERE TO STAY The sleek, modern AC Tarragona hotel (Avinguda de Roma 8; 34-977-247-102; ac-tarragona.com) is in the new part of the city, easy to reach from the highway, steps from the bus station, and is a 15- to 20-minute stroll down the Rambla Nova

to the Old City. Service is excellent and there is a parking garage. Rates are 64.90 to 129.90 euros (includes free breakfast, minibar, fitness center and Wi-Fi; parking is extra).

The venerable Hotel Lluvia (Rambla Nova 26; 34-977-236-712; hotel-luvia.com) is just a couple of blocks from the Old City. Rates start at 46 euros, depending on the day and season, but it pays to

book one of the renovated "executive" rooms for about 20 additional euros. There is a swimming pool and parking.

WHERE TO EAT Tarragona's restaurants are varied, morphoses seafood and are reasonably priced. And there is a wealth of wines from nearby regions — Priorat, Penedès, Terra Alta and Tarragona itself — on their lists.



In the Old City of Tarragona.

In the Old City, on a square filled with restaurants, Serralló (Plaça de la Font 25; 34-977-22-26-26) is one of the best choices for tapas. There are tables inside and out. The menu features classics like anchovies on tomato bread, baby cells with garlic, and seared green prawns on the plate. About 40 euros for two, with wine.

The most creative food we found in Tarragona was at Degusta (Cavallera 5; 34-977-24-24-24; degusta.com), a sophisticated formal restaurant, with various dining rooms and vestiges of ancient walls. A five-course menu might include crispy cauliflower, grains of wheat with lentils, and roast lamb. About 100 euros for two, with wine.

The fishing port area, El Serrallo, is dotted with restaurants specializing in seafood, the most desirable of them on Trafalgar, with shaded tables spilling onto the street scenes, in the docks. Lluvia (Trafalgar 25; 34-977-24-24-24) has a vast menu and dishes of high quality. About 85 euros for two, with wine.

Not far from the Marçà Central, the Roman Theater and Forum in Barçac (Caasastre 11; 34-977-24-00-23; romantheaterbarçac.com), where the chef and owner, David Solà, interprets the local, specially, romesco sauce (made with nuts, tomatoes, chiles and olive oil), in various dishes, even whisking it into fish sauce. There are six menus for 29 to 46 euros. An à la carte menu is about 70 euros for two, with wine.

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**Diari**

Cada mes, el Diari sorteja un cuadro donado a sus lectores por los pintores de Tarragona. Rellene el boletín adjunto y hágalo llegar a: Diari de Tarragona C/ Domènec Guansé, 2 43005 TARRAGONA. Delegación de Reus: C/Llovera, 53, 4º 2º 43201 REUS. Indique en el sobre (si lo manda por correo): **SORTEO DE ARTE**

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**Autor:** Fermí Carré

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