

## Ricky's Afterthought:



### *Cartagena, a City Steeped in History*

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We were all aware that holding the 3GCMEA at Cartagena was a special venue, but I never envisaged it held a unique place in Spanish history.

Cartagena is an ancient city on the shores of the Mediterranean and its old name, Carthage Nova, derives from the old city of Carthage in Tunis where Scipio the African, a Roman general, fought and defeated in 202 BC the Carthaginian Hannibal at the battle of Zama some 130 km from Tunis despite the superior forces of the latter.

An impressive theatre built during the 1st century BC is a mere hundred metres way from the modern Plaza del Ayuntamiento (the Town Hall Square) and approached via an attractive refurbished (Fig. 1) Stucco style house turned into a museum where priceless artifacts and other excavated pieces are displayed. Meandering through the various corridors of the museum one then enters the theatre which on first sight strikes the visitor with its geometrical balance and the partial restoration of the scenic façade and stage with the remains of a few imposing columns. The theatre could seat around 6000 spectators and it blends beautifully around modern buildings of the present Cartagena and the old St. Maria La Vieja church.

Walking along Cuatro Santos and Duque roads one finds the Casa de la Fortuna which is a complete roman house of the Carthage Nova in the 1st century. Its walls, various rooms and decorations carefully excavated and superbly presented gives the visitor an insight of the old life styles of its inhabitants.

From The Casa de la Fortuna walking along calle Gisbert towards the port comes to the Castillo de la Concepción. This castle was built at the top of a hill in the 13th century over the remains of the Muslim fortress. The views over the city from different directions and the open sea are amazing. The site has been an important

strategic location for centuries in defence of the old city. The cisterns of the castle are steeped in history of the medieval fortress. Walking down from the hill through a number of quaint alleys one ends up at the impressive Roman theatre. Accessing the castle through a robust lift at the top allows one to disembark at the first stop, at the heart of the hill, and visit an air raid shelter constructed during the Spanish Civil War in order to protect the city from the relentless bombardment of the Stukas supporting Franco's forces. Cartagena was the last bastion of the Republican movement and the last city to surrender.

Cartagena is an active naval port which houses its many ships and submarines defending its shores. The impressive Museo Naval forms the lower part of the Business School of the Politécnica where the 3GCMEA was staged while the whole building was formerly a prison. Suitably restored, The Museo Naval starts with early history of the navy through to modern ships, submarines, armoury and attire. Finally, a quick visit to the modern and the archaeological museums adds a unique insight of this magnificent city.



**Figure 1.** 3GCMEA attendants visiting the Roman Theatre in Cartagena