

SPAIN

Archaeological Ensemble of Mérida

Brief description

The colony of Augusta Emerita, which became present-day Mérida in Extremadura, was founded in 25 B.C. at the end of the Spanish Campaign and was the capital of Lusitania. The well-preserved remains of the old city include, in particular, a large bridge over the Guadiana, an amphitheatre, a theatre, a vast circus and an exceptional water-supply system. It is an excellent example of a provincial Roman capital during the empire and in the years afterwards.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1993

Agency responsible for site management

Consortio de la Ciudad Monumental, Histórico-Artística y Arqueológica de Mérida
Mailing Address(es)
E-mail:
Website:

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (iii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

La Colonie Augusta Emerita a été fondée sur les limites occidentales de l'Empire, dans l'ancienne région de la Lusitanie, qui n'avait jamais connu, excepté quelques cas isolés, de planification urbaine. C'est pour cette raison qu'elle fut désignée ville emblématique de la romanisation dans la zone, sur un carrefour vital pour les intérêts économiques de Rome, et qu'elle fut généreusement dotée de tout ce dont elle avait besoin. On essaya même de refléter la métropole dans son ensemble monumental.

Plus tard, une fois son statut de capitale de la province de la Lusitanie assumé en l'an 15 A.C., au quatrième siècle, elle fut promue en tant que siège du vicaire du diocèse des Hispanies, et par conséquent elle fut désignée capitale politique de la Péninsule ibérique. Cette situation se prolongea durant la période wisigothe, au cours de laquelle,

grâce à l'impulsion de ses prélats, la ville devient un empire commercial et culturel de première importance, qui permet la création de l'art hispanique de l'époque wisigothe.

La décadence de la ville, à partir de 713 plonge le territoire urbain dans un abandon prolongé, qui a cependant permis la conservation d'un ensemble archéologique exceptionnel.

En ce qui concerne les édifices pour spectacles, en plus d'y important théâtre et d'un amphithéâtre, il existe un cirque considéré comme un des meilleurs de l'Empire.

Pour ce qui est des travaux publics, on distingue : le pont, le plus long de ceux que l'on a conservés de l'époque romaine dans le monde; un système complet de conduites hydrauliques (jusqu'à trois) avec ses bassins, ses aqueducs, etc., ainsi qu'un barrage de retenue des eaux du Guadiana, qui constitue un cas exceptionnel pour le monde romain.

Certaines parties de la ville sont très bien conservées, notamment les forums, avec temples et portiques, ainsi que certains exemples d'architecture domestique qui offrent des mosaïques exceptionnelles parmi lesquelles se distingue la mosaïque COSMOGONIQUE, probablement une des plus significatives de l'époque romaine et la pièce archéologique la plus importante de celles que l'on a découvertes en Espagne.

La valeur exceptionnelle de l'ENSEMBLE ARCHEOLOGIQUE DE MERIDA est présentée dans un musée unique d'architecture qui est devenue la vitrine la plus complète du phénomène de la romanisation de l'Espagne.

Enfin, on compte les vestiges de l'époque wisigothe, les plus complets dans leur genre, et qui d'eux-mêmes, à notre avis, méritent la catégorie de Patrimoine de l'Humanité.

Tout ce qui précède justifie notre initiative visant à ce que l'ENSEMBLE ARCHEOLOGIQUE DE MERIDA soit déclaré PATRIMOINE DE L'HUMANITE.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Qualities: Mérida is an outstanding example of a Roman town implanted upon a conquered territory and conforming to all the precepts of Roman urban design. It is especially noteworthy in that its role during the Empire was an important one in political and economic terms. Despite local opposition a sustained campaign of dedicated scientific

excavation, conservation, and presentation has been established.

Additional comments: [...] it was pointed out that the sites included within the nomination are not clearly defined on the maps supplied with the nomination dossier. The authorities subsequently provided new maps with the proposed properties precisely delineated; details were also supplied of the buffer zones, which confirm with the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines*. In the case of those monuments within the modern town, these are in fact provided by the protection under Spanish antiquities legislation of the ensemble. The remarkable Roman dams are equally covered by means of other forms of protection, such as inclusion in a designated natural park in the case of the Cornalvo dam.

Recommendation: That this property be inscribed on the List on the basis of criteria iii and iv:

- **Criteria (iii) and (iv):** The monuments of Mérida are outstanding examples of the public buildings of a major Roman provincial capital, both in its Imperial heyday and in its subsequent history.

Committee Decision

Session (1993): The Committee inscribed the site on the World Heritage List under criteria (iii) and (iv).

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined. Protective legislation is applied

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- National and regional heritage legislation; municipal planning legislation
- Patronage of the Monumental, Historic-Artistic and Archaeological City of Mérida for the Consortium of the Monumental, Historic-Artistic and Archaeological City of Mérida
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, urban centre

Management /Administrative Body

- No formal steering group: Consortium of the Monumental, Historic-Artistic and Archaeological City of Mérida has coordinator responsibility
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; regional; provincial; local. The Consortium of four administrations (on national, regional, provincial and local level)
- The current management system is highly effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 1996
- Plan of Action
- The current management system is considered very effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: The Chef Executive Council forms the superior management and administration institution of the Consortium of the Monumental City of Mérida

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- The incomes originate basically from the ticket sale from the monuments (44%), contributions of the administrations of the Consortium (18%), other incomes (5%), projects (33%). With reference to the expenses they focus above all on the staff (60%), running charges and maintenance charges (9%), own activities (4%), courses etc., external activities (23%) and financial and fiscal expenses (4%)

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 110

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management
- Average: promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- The Consortium possesses professional conservation and restoration competency; collaboration with Universities, Institute of Technology, companies specialised in archaeology, protection and restoration
- Needs: more specialists in conservation and restoration areas

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 322,027 (number of admission tickets to the museums)
- Visitor facilities: tourism offices, reception areas, recreation areas, leaflets, publications
- www.turismoextremadura.com

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies
- An extensive list of publications, didactical and public relation projects, educational and investigation projects
- Other

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Many signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local authorities
- Public relation projects, databases, exhibitions
- Web site available: www.consorciomerida.org
- Local participation cultural activities related to the use of the monuments

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- An extensive list of conservation, restoration works, re-evaluation projects etc
- Present state of conservation: good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures
- Specific issues if mentioned: urban pressure
- Emergency actions taken: Special Protection Plan of PGOU of Mérida, activities that contribute to the integration of the archaeology in to the actual city, social conscience-raising reinforcement of monitoring; awareness raising

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme by the Chef executive Council of the Monumental City of Mérida

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management
- Strengths of management: respect and national/international promotion, legal protection, institutional respect with major control of administrative competencies, conscience raising, civic participation, rise in visitor numbers
- Weaknesses of management: management of urban pressure

Future actions:

- Annual conservation, estimation and promulgation activities