

Archaeological heritage and the Costa Brava tourist destination

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Resum

Aquest article tracta de l'ús que s'ha efectuat del patrimoni arqueològic en un destí turístic molt conegut com el de la Costa Brava. En aquesta destinació hi ha registrat un volum molt elevat de jaciments arqueològics, una part dels quals ha estat museïtzats, especialment en èpoques recents. En aquest article s'analitza l'ús que s'ha fet del patrimoni arqueològic des de principis de segle XX i també, a partir d'un treball de camp efectuat entre els anys 2009 a 2011, les diferents modalitats de les actuals visites a aquests llocs i les seves característiques principals.

Paraules clau: patrimoni arqueològic, Costa Brava, Catalunya, turisme cultural

Abstract

This paper focuses on the use made of the archaeological heritage on the Costa Brava, a very known tourist destination. On this area there are a large number of registered archaeological sites. Some of them have been open to the public, especially in recent years. This article analyses the use made of this archaeological heritage from the beginning of the 20th Century. Also, from field work done between the years 2009 and 2011, it analyses, the different ways of visiting the sites and their most important characteristics.

Keywords: archaeological heritage, Costa Brava, Catalonia, cultural tourism

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From this time, one of the Board's concerns was to exhibit the archaeological items that were gradually discovered at the site. To achieve this, a first exhibition was set up at the site itself in 1917. Prior to this museum exhibition at Empúries, the town of L'Escala had created the *Museu Emporium*, promoted by some individuals with the participation of the town council. However, this museum was to be short-lived: it was opened in July 1910 and closed in 1914. In 1916, its collection was incorporated into what would become the new museum within the Empúries site.



Fig. 2. Family visiting Creu d'en Corbelleta (Roses). 1966.

In 1910, there was also an exhibition in L'Escala of archaeological items found by engineers working on stabilizing sand dunes on the coast in front of Empúries. This exhibition continued until 1936, when its collection was moved to the museum of Empúries.

Through continuing efforts to disseminate the results of excavations at Empúries to the general public, in 1913 the work *Guia de Ampúrias y de la Costa Brava catalana* –Guide to Empúries and the Catalan Costa Brava– was published in L'Escala, with text by Manuel Cazorro and illustrations by Josep Esquirol. Several years later, the *Comissió de Monuments* (Monuments Committee) agreed to “the production of postcards of objects in the provincial museum, to put on sale at reception for purchase by tourists and visitors” (Diario de Gerona, 20-5-1920). In the early 1930s, an information panel was put up at the entrance to the site, and various other panels were distributed around the site at different points. With the museum, organized visits to the excavations, the signposting, and the range of dissemination materials, Empúries progressively incorporated elements that promoted the “museumization” of the site and made it easier to understand and more accessible to society.

2.2 Stage 2 (1939-1975)

In 1947, the new facilities of the *Museu Monogràfic d'Empúries* were opened, and in 1950 the *Museu Arqueològic de Calonge* was inaugurated. A little later, in the 1960s, the *Museu Monogràfic d'Ullastret* was opened to the public. In this stage, Empúries published successive guides on the excavations and the museum: in 1951, 1963 and 1969. During the decades of the mid-twentieth century, foreign tourists gradually began to visit archaeological museums in the Costa Brava. In relation to society's interest and education in archaeological heritage –the “socialization” of heritage–, we should mention the activity of local study centres during this stage, including the *Centre d'Estudis Calongins Colònic* –founded in 1980– and the *Centre d'Estudis del Montgrí i el Baix Ter*. Their programmes included activities related to the research and dissemination of Girona province's archaeological heritage, through which they had an impact on their own members and on the general population.

Hence, there was a considerable increase in attention to archaeological heritage (Fig. 2). However, one aspect of the relationship between such heritage and society that could define this stage is that archaeological sites were still not widely considered of interest to society in general. This idea did not develop and spread until a later time. This can be seen in the case of the Ciutadella de Roses. From 1927 to 1961, when it was declared a historic-artistic complex, the citadel was threatened with

a plan to divide the land into plots and develop it, which would have destroyed the site. In fact, in 1961 a section of the citadel's wall was pulled down to construct new buildings (Riuró, 1965).



Fig. 3. Audiovisual of Empúries. MAC-Empúries, 1992

2.3 Stage 3 (1975-1995)

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, all museums and heritage centres in Catalonia experienced a major boost due to the new trends in museology that had reached Spain, and the impetus provided by the Catalan government's involvement in museums. This notable change also affected centres devoted to the dissemination of archaeological heritage. In the context of the promotion of Catalan museums, at this time –as in earlier and later periods–when we examine museum activity related to archaeological heritage we should consider not just institutions focused exclusively on this science, but also the work of many other museums in the region that analyse and disseminate archaeological heritage. Examples in the study area are the *Museu del Montgrí i el Baix Ter*, the *Museu de Tossa* and the *Museu d'Història de Sant Feliu*. New facilities established in this period include a local museum in Pals, and the opening of the Ciutadella de Roses to the public in 1991.

In this period, archaeological heritage dissemination activities continued in Empúries: new editions of various guides were published by different authors in 1976, 1980 and 1988, to disseminate information about this element of heritage. In 1992, towards the end of this stage and as part of the promotion of Empúries resulting from the Barcelona Olympics and the arrival of the Olympic torch at this Greek settlement, a multi-view audiovisual display was installed at Empúries, adding to the dissemination of archaeological heritage (fig. 3). This advanced museum technology was to mark the beginning of a new stage in the development of the relationship between society and archaeological heritage in the north east of the Iberian Peninsula.



Fig. 4. Pla de Palol (Platja d'Aro). Institut Català de Recerca en Patrimoni Cultural, 2002.

2.4 Stage 4 (from 1995 to the current day)

At the end of the twentieth century there was a widespread upturn in interest in archaeological heritage, which reflected the rising interest in heritage in general. This process was far-reaching and also occurred in the study area. It was a boom that we can associate – to a great extent – with tourism, and with the fact that many towns wanted to add heritage resources to their tourism offering.

The “museumization” of archaeological sites and the creation of centres specifically

for the dissemination of archaeological heritage increased during this period as never before –Puig Castellet in Lloret de Mar, Pla de Palol in Platja d’Aro (), Castell in Palamós, Sant Sebastià de la Guarda in Palafrugell, the Ametllers in Tossa de Mar (fig.5). In addition to these centres, numerous routes and itineraries were created that are linked to archaeological heritage.



Fig. 5. Ametllers (Tossa de Mar). Rosa Sureda, 2004.

In the framework of more recreational activities, some fairs, markets and other popular events have been based around archaeological heritage. Exam-

ples are the *Triumvirat Mediterrani*, which is a Greco-Roman historical recreation organized by the *Unió de Botiguers i Empresaris Turístics de l’Escala* that was first held in 1996; the *Mercat Romà de Llagostera* Roman market, which has been organized by Llagostera town council since 2008; the *Caminada Popular* walk along the Roman road of Capçacosta, organized since 1994; and the megalithic festival of Roses, which held its fourteenth edition in 2011.

An increasing number of methods are used to disseminate archaeological heritage, and proposals have been designed to promote society’s relationship with this heritage. Some formulas that have become more widespread in recent years are visits outside of normal opening hours, and theatrical tours of sites (fig. 6), which have been introduced and developed in the study region. Theatrical tours have been available at Empúries since 1993 and at Ullastret since 2002.

Interest in archaeological heritage has increased dramatically. This can be seen in the town of L’Escala, for example. In the 1960s, some social groups bemoaned the existence of the archaeological site as it meant that part of the town could not be developed –it was considered that “the ruins of Empúries were the ruin of L’Escala” (Fernández de la Reguera, 2001). However, in 1997, L’Escala town council proposed changing the name of the town to “L’Escala i Empúries”, and various local associations incorporated the name of the archaeological site, which reveals the popular acceptance of this archaeological element –examples are the *Club Ciclista L’Escala-Empúries*, *Motor Club L’Escala-Empúries* and the *Fòrum L’Escala-Empúries*.

These changes have also been reflected in the employment and business sector. During this period, various companies have been founded that have centred on archaeological heritage in particular, in the framework of educational activities. For some of these companies, dissemination of archaeological heritage is the main focus of their work.



Fig. 6. Theatrical tour of Empúries. MAC-Empúries.



Fig. 7. Castell (Palamós). Institut Català de Recerca en Patrimoni Cultural

Therefore, we can see that the possibilities of a relationship between archaeological heritage and society have increased dramatically, both in terms of the number of cases and the diversification in potential ways of relating (Pardo, 1996, 27-31).

We end this analysis of the evolution of the relationship between society and archaeological heritage with a reference to civil society's concerns about threats to the preservation of the region. These concerns have led to the creation of platforms, some of which also address the conservation of archaeological heritage. Examples are the Salvem Castell (1992-

2004) platform, which fought to protect this place in Palamós from a major urban development, using the Iberian settlement of Castell (fig. 7) as an asset that should be considered. Another example is the Salvem Vilanera (2000-2003) platform, which was opposed to the construction of a golf course and the urban development of this part of L'Escala, on the basis of the value of its heritage, environment and landscape. The archaeological heritage of the place was cited as one of its main assets.

From the start of the nineteenth century to today, extraordinary changes have taken place in the relationship between archaeological heritage and society. Naturally, these changes are associated with, and reflect, the economic, social and political changes that occurred in this period.



Fig. 8. Ciutadella (Roses). Institut Català de Recerca en Patrimoni Cultural

3. The Costa Brava and the museumization of archaeological sites

Until the 1950s and 1960s, the Costa Brava was inhabited by small communities of fishermen and farmers. From then on, large numbers of tourists started to arrive. The influx of tourism rapidly affected the lifestyles of the region's inhabitants, and the old economy of this coast began to be replaced by one based almost exclusively on tourism development.

the tourism-related urban growth and competition with other regions, led at the end of the last century to a debate on the ideal model of tourism for the Costa Brava. In this context, public institutions sought tourism attractions to complement the traditional "sun and beach" tourism.

However, various factors, such as the impact on the landscape of

For several years, it has been stated that the use of cultural heritage is a factor that could contribute to economic development. Consequently, in the wake of the aforementioned debate at the end of the last century, the Costa Brava strengthened its focus on cultural heritage through the museumization of archaeological sites.



Fig. 9. The Forum of Empúries. Institut Català de Recerca en Patrimoni Cultural, 2009.

In addition to interventions at megalithic monuments, places that have been made into museums in the last 20 years on the Costa Brava are: the Neolithic settlement of Ca n'Isach in Palau Savardera; the Hellenistic quarter of the Ciutadella de Roses (Fig. 8), the Iberian settlements of Sant Sebastià de la Guarda in Palafrugell, Puig Castell in Palamós and Puig Castellet in Lloret de Mar; the Roman forum in the city of Empúries (fig. 9) in L'Escala, and the Roman villas of Pla de Palol at Platja d'Aro and the Ametllers at Tossa de Mar (Aquilué, Tremoleda, 2011, 47-57).

Of these places, only the Ciutadella de Roses and Empúries have museums specifically dedicated to the site. At Tossa de Mar, there is a close relationship between a local museum that covers various subjects, and the Roman villa of the Ametllers. Another aspect to consider is the accessibility of the sites after works to ready them for visitors. In fact, most sites have limited access. Access is only free and unrestricted in a few cases –the Iberian settlements of Castell and Sant Sebastià de la Guarda (fig. 10) and the Roman villas Pla de Palol and the Ametllers. Finally, the *Museu d'Història de Sant Feliu de Guíxols* has its archaeological collection as a permanent exhibit, but the museum is not associated with any archaeological site in particular.

Another important aspect of most of the museumization processes is that they have been undertaken and are operated by local administrations. Of all of the sites discussed here, only the Roman forum at Empúries and the Iberian town of Castell in Palamos have been promoted by the Government of Catalonia, through the *Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya*.

4. Visits to archaeological sites in the Costa Brava

Out of all the aforementioned sites, we only have long series of visitor numbers for the Empúries and Ullastret museums, as efforts and interest in gathering these data are relatively recent. Apart from a lack of data, the main difficulty lies in the fact that the criteria used to collect visitor information are not always standard. Therefore, it is difficult to analyse different periods at the same centre, and even harder to compare different centres. Despite these difficulties, and taking into account that available data on visitor numbers cannot be considered absolute figures, changes in visitor numbers over time can provide general information on the use of archaeological heritage.



Fig. 10. Sant Sebastià de la Guarda (Palafrugell). Institut Català de Recerca en Patrimoni Cultural, 2010.

Data on Empúries show a gradual increase in the number of visitors between 1960 and 1980, with figures that are much higher than the only reference we have for previous periods, specifically for the mid-1940s, when the centre still did not have the museum characteristics that it would obtain after the opening of the facilities in 1947. From 1980 to the current time, the visitor numbers have stabilized to a certain extent, with periodic fluctuations. However, in recent years there has been a clear drop in numbers.

After this, there was a gradual drop in the number of visitors until the mid-1990s. From this time, which coincides with improvements to the museum's permanent exhibition, the figures began to increase again until they reached a peak in 2001. After that, there was a slow drop in visitor numbers, with some fluctuations, until their current stabilization.

The data available on Ullastret show an initial period of growth from the start of the 1980s to the middle of the same decade. Af-

According to data provided by the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Culture, visitor numbers in 2013 were as follows: *Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya Empúries*: 142,768; *Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya-Ullastret*: 28,886; *Ciutadella de Roses*: 41,793; *Museu d'Història de Sant Feliu de Guíxols*: 41,119; and *Museu Municipal de Tossa de Mar*: 7,195. Data from the Costa Brava-Pyrenees Tourism Board indicate that the province of Girona received 4.5 million tourists in 2013.

On the basis of a study carried out by the authors between 2010 and 2011 and visitor information from the museums (Alcalde *et al.* 2011, 129-139), we can state that visits to archaeological sites in the Costa Brava tend to be made by individuals rather than organized groups. For example, individual visits in 2011 represented 73% of the total in Empúries, and 83% of the total in Ullastret.

Most people who visit the Costa Brava sites are from Catalonia, followed by people from outside Spain, and finally by people from the rest of Spain, excluding Catalonia. However, these figures vary considerably depending on the site. In Empúries, foreigners make up the largest group of visitors, followed by Catalans and, with similar percentages, visitors from the rest of Spain –except Catalonia– and from Girona province –excluding the rest of Catalonia. Unlike the other sites, the largest group of visitors to the Ciutadella de Roses is that of Spanish residents –excluding Catalan residents. At smaller sites, this situation differs substantially. At the Iberian settlements of Castell and Sant Sebastià de la Guarda, the majority of visitors come from Catalonia, followed by foreigners, residents of the province of Girona, and visitors from the rest of Spain –excluding Catalonia. These data indicate that places with a long-established archaeological tradition, such as Empúries or the Ciutadella de Roses, tend to have higher numbers of visitors from outside of Catalonia.

At sites with high numbers of visitors from outside of Catalonia, such as Roses or Empúries, the majority of Spanish visitors are from Madrid. These are followed in much lower numbers by visitors from other autonomous communities. The number of visitors from autonomous communities such as the Balearic Islands, Astúries or Andalusia is negligible. Non-Spanish visitors are mainly from France.

Half of visitors to the archaeological sites are aged between 30 and 50 years. The number of visitors below 30 years old is under 20%, and the number of over 50s is around 30%.

In the case of non-local visitors, most do not spend the night in the town adjacent to the archaeological site after their visit. However, visitors to sites that have a less extensive archaeological tradition, such as the Iberian settlements of Castell or Sant Sebastià de la Guarda, stay in nearby towns. In contrast, visitors to places with a long-established archaeological tradition, such as Empúries or the Ciutadella de Roses, come from around the province of Girona, which shows the sites' powers of attraction.

Almost a third of visitors stated that they had specifically wanted to visit the archaeological site in question. However, the majority did not consider that it was the main reason for their excursion. Most of the visitors who stated that the main reason for their trip was to see the archaeological site were visiting Empúries. Other reasons people gave for their excursions were to go out on a day trip, go to the beach, and to eat out.

Visits to sites often lasted no longer than half an hour. The archaeological sites are therefore places that are taken in as part of a wider excursion, as stated above. The exceptions are Empúries and Ciutadella de Roses, where the time spent at the site is much longer, and even reaches two hours in many cases.

As part of the process of characterizing visits to archaeological sites in the Costa Brava, we tried to determine where and when users had found out about the sites that they visited. At the time of the study, it was the first occasion that most of the visitors had visited the site. Variations in the average depended on the number of years that a site had been "museumized". Therefore, a well-established archaeological tradition and the length of time that a site has been open to the public play an important role in visitor loyalty.

Visitors from outside the study area were most likely to state that they were visiting the site for the first time. In contrast, visitors who lived close to the sites most frequently stated that they had visited the site before.

Of the first-time visitors to the site, a fifth had found out about it by word of mouth. Others stated that they had heard about the site through tourist offices, the internet and tourist guides. Much lower percentages had found out at their accommodation or from signposts. Although not a majority, the number of people who located and visited the site by chance was not inconsiderable.

5. Interest of tourists in archaeological heritage

In 2009, a study was carried out in five tourist offices of the Costa Brava, to assess the amount of information that tourists using the offices had about archaeological heritage sites that are open to the public (Alcalde *et al.* 2011b, 204-218). It was found that over half of tourist office users did not know anything about archaeological sites that are open to the public in the Costa Brava. This percentage stood at almost 100% among visitors from the rest of Spain –excluding Catalonia.

One of the other objectives of the study was to check tourist office users' intentions to visit archaeological sites. Over half of tourist office users, in fact almost two thirds, had no intention

of visiting a site. The percentage was higher at the offices of Palamós, Lloret, Llança and Palamós, and lower at the L'Escala tourist office, in the town adjacent to the Empúries site.

Final considerations

In the last 20 years, archaeological heritage has been valued for its potential as a tourist resource. This has led directly to the museumization of archaeological sites, an activity that has been carried out in particular by local administrations. The adaptation of sites to receive visitors has made them into a tourist attraction to complement the traditional sun and beach tourism, and sites have been used in the promotion of tourism in the region. However, as shown in the aforementioned studies, the use of archaeological sites by tourists once they arrive at their destination is still low. Nevertheless, in many of the cases studied, only a few years have passed since the museumization of the site, and we need to assess in the future whether the consolidation of a site increases its impact. Sites that have been open to the public for longer are used to a much greater extent. However, the visitor numbers can still be considered low in comparison to the high number of tourists who visit the Costa Brava.

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