

## Classics Trip to Spain: Emanuel School – Appendix A

This Easter, the Emanuel Classics department took 50 Y9-10 Latin/Classical Civilisation students on a stunning trip to sunny Spain. We visited the Andalusia and Extremadura regions, with stopping points highlighted below.

### Day One

On the first day, after landing in **Gibraltar** and narrowly avoiding its posse of passport-stealing monkeys, we enjoyed a walking tour of **Hispalis** (the Roman name for Seville) and settled into our lovely hotel, Catalonia Hispalis.



Figure 1: Seville Cathedral

Seville is one of the most beautiful places on earth, with its Roman architecture, orange trees, towering cathedrals and locations from opera. After a week of rain in Seville, we were extremely fortunate to enjoy blissful sunny weather throughout our visit. I would recommend the use of whisper guides to rally the students. The local guides knew lots of interesting spots (eg. the remains of some

Roman baths hidden away in a posh hotel).

### Day Two

We visited the vast amphitheatre at **Italica**, birthplace of the emperor Trajan and famous as a filming location from 'Game of Thrones'. It is the second largest amphitheatre in the world after the Colosseum. The hypogeum is particularly conspicuous and prompted good discussion. We explored its winding streets and luxurious houses containing a wide variety of beautiful mosaic floors, similar to Pompeii. The 'birds' mosaic was excellent, as well as the remarkable remains of some Roman latrines and an imposing statue of the emperor Trajan.



Figure 2: Italica Amphitheatre

We then ventured underground to explore the necropolis at **Carmona**, a collection of over 900 family tombs in subterranean chambers hewn from rock. We saw the famous elephant guarding one of the tombs and watched a riveting video on the site's history. This site definitely needs description and context to bring it to life, but we were lucky to have an excellent local guide on hand - the Sibyl to our Aeneas. Students about to study the 'Death and Burial' module for GCSE Classical Civilisation greatly benefitted from this visit.

### Day Three

On the third day, we visited **Mérida** which preserves more ancient Roman monuments than any other city in Spain. We visited its theatre, amphitheatre and circus. The Museum of Roman art was a particular highlight, bedecked with massive mosaics and being an amazing work of architecture in of itself. The tiered layout was excellent and very student-friendly. Highlights include the veiled head of a statue of Augustus, remains of a statue of Aeneas exiting Troy and several dynamic hunting mosaics. The theatre at Mérida is fabulous and reminded me of Taormina in Sicily.



Figure 3: Head of Augustus



Figure 4: Mérida Theatre

We had lunch in a local steakhouse and tapas bar where students enjoyed a three-course meal, featuring grilled sirloin steak and an assortment of local appetisers and desserts. In the evening, students enjoyed some free time in the hotel gym and played football in the park. We also managed to catch the Man City vs Aston Villa match!

## Day Four



Figure 5: Bridge over the Guadalquivir

The tour continued in Roman **Cordoba**, as we visited the Roman bridge across the Guadalquivir, and enjoyed a walking tour of the city. The Cordoba archaeological museum was replete with artefacts relating to the Year 10 Classical Civilisation modules and contained the original foundations of the city's theatre. We enjoyed spotting a statue of every GCSE student's favourite set-text author Seneca, who was born in Cordoba, and, as part of our walking tour, going to the basement of a department store which contained a hidden Roman *natatio*.

We then stopped on the way home to explore the **Plaza de España**, a city square of unparalleled beauty, and enjoyed some flamenco dancing and orange slushies. It felt almost too good to be true, like we were on a film set.



Figure 6: Plaza de España

## Day Five



Figure 7: The site of Baelo Claudia

The final day featured a visit to **Baelo Claudia** and its Roman theatre, temples, paved forum with a basilica and market, baths, and large fish-salting factory for the manufacture of *garum*. This is a beautiful location by the sea, with lots of space to roam free or to enjoy a guided tour. One student recognised it as a filming location from 'The Crown' when the royal family visit Capri(!) It is also likely the factory which created the *garum* 'ex Hispania', which Salvius uses to poison his henchman Belimicus at the end of Cambridge Latin

Course, Book III.

The trip concluded on the stunning beach at **Playa de Bolonia** where wild horses roamed free and the sun shone. One student channelled his inner Indiana Jones and uncovered the lip of an original Roman amphora on the beach. Lunch was round the corner at windswept Tarifa where there were lots of superb restaurants.

On the way home, we saw the north coast of Africa and stopped for a final group photo.



Figure 8: A wild horse at Playa de Bolonia

One Year 10 student commented, "This year's Classics and Latin trip to Seville has been the most incredible opportunity ever. Not only were the sites incredibly beautiful and the archaeological sites full of fascinating historical importance, but for the whole trip, everyone got along so well (including teachers) and that really made it ten times better!"

Though there were a number of stunning places we visited, I would have to say that my favourite was Mérida's Roman theatre. I was amazed at how well preserved it was and the history and myths behind it really surprised me... as someone who loves theatre, I know I would have loved it."

Overall, this was a superb trip, wonderfully blending contemporary and classical Spanish culture. Lots of students said that they never knew Spain had so many classical locations, and there were plenty of opportunities to use the sites or items at the museums as a springboard onto discussion of the Classical Civilisation GCSE/A-Level modules.

Thank you so much to Hellene for organising the trip. One of the best ever, and tangible proof of the 'imperium sine fine' of the Roman Empire.

Adiós,

Michael Morrison  
Emanuel School





*Figure 9: A hunting mosaic from Mérida*



*Figure 11: The Playa de Bolonia beach*



*Figure 12: Remains of the Temple of Diana in Mérida's Forum*



*Figure 10: The area behind Mérida Theatre*