

# Historic Alcúdia

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Ajuntament d'Alcúdia  
Àrea de Turisme

# ALCÚDIA

## PRESENTATION

The first views to be seen on arriving in Alcúdia show only a small part of everything there is to admire here, revealed further as we venture into the walled enclosure that surrounds the town and which give it its present-day appearance.

The first traces of human presence in the municipality date back to around 6000 BCE.

The greatest legacy that former settlers including Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and finally Catalonians have left behind are the invaluable heritage sites that can be seen all around the island.

This booklet is intended as a guide for anyone who wants to get to know - to a greater or lesser extent - the fascinating legacy that over the passing of centuries has assigned a unique identity to each and every one of our historical monuments.

## HISTORICAL CENTRE

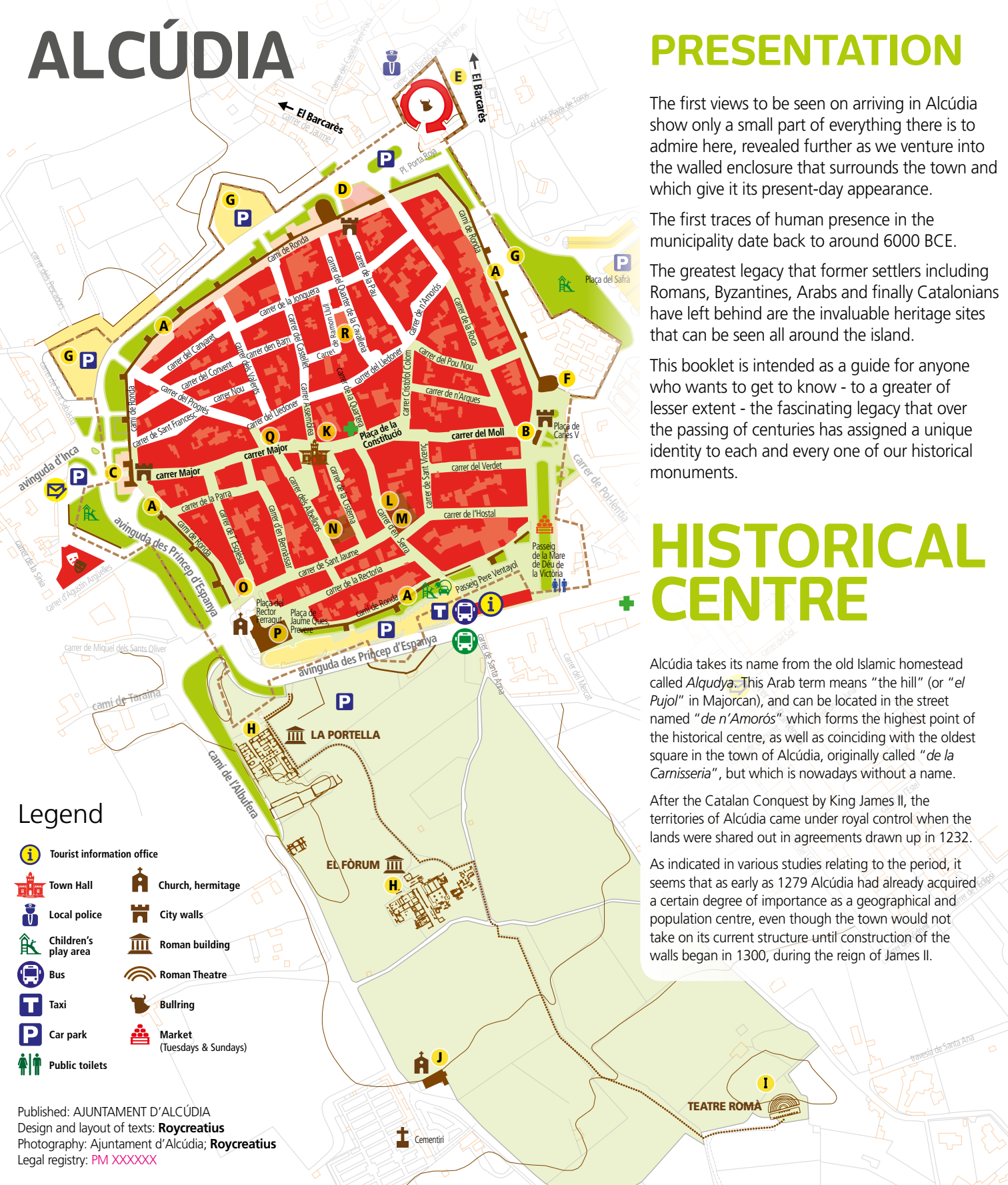
Alcúdia takes its name from the old Islamic homestead called *Alqudyā*. This Arab term means "the hill" (or "el Pujol" in Majorcan), and can be located in the street named "de n'Amorós" which forms the highest point of the historical centre, as well as coinciding with the oldest square in the town of Alcúdia, originally called "de la Carnisseria", but which is nowadays without a name.

After the Catalan Conquest by King James II, the territories of Alcúdia came under royal control when the lands were shared out in agreements drawn up in 1232.

As indicated in various studies relating to the period, it seems that as early as 1279 Alcúdia had already acquired a certain degree of importance as a geographical and population centre, even though the town would not take on its current structure until construction of the walls began in 1300, during the reign of James II.

### Legend

-  Tourist information office
-  Town Hall
-  Local police
-  Children's play area
-  Bus
-  Taxi
-  Car park
-  Public toilets
-  Church, hermitage
-  City walls
-  Roman building
-  Roman Theatre
-  Bullring
-  Market (Tuesdays & Sundays)





**A** External view of defensive wall



**C** Mallorca or Saint Sebastian Gate



**A** Walkway inside defensive wall



### Medieval wall (A)

The strategic location of the town of Alcúdia, which had been clearly appreciated since Roman times, brought with it a high level of risk for its inhabitants, something typical of towns of the period that were situated along the coast, owing to constant raids by pirates sailing nearby. In light of this, James II devised a system of protection with town walls that would serve a double purpose, acting both as a defensive element for use by the population and also to provide a place of safety in the event of attacks from outside.

Construction began at the turn of the 14th century, and would continue until the end of that same century.

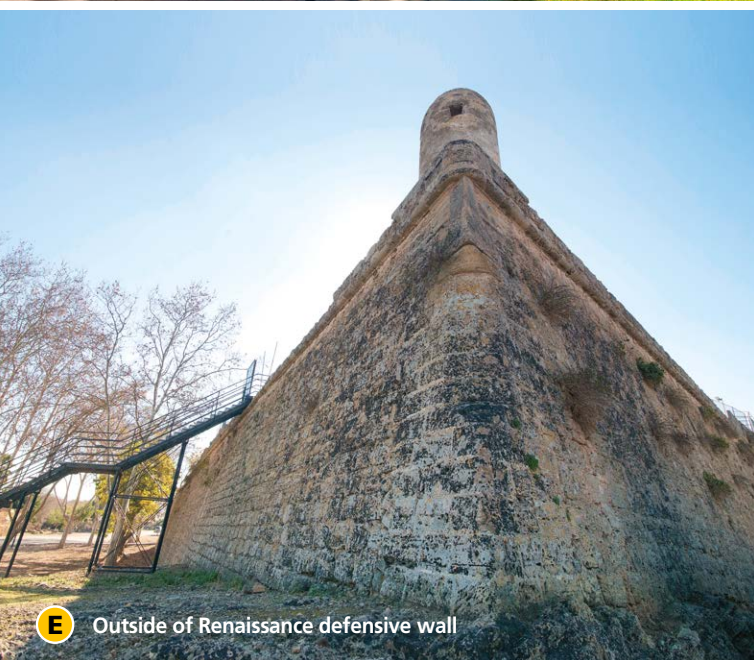
This square structure reinforced by 26 towers distributed along its perimeter and measuring 1.5 km in length with an average height of 6 m, as well as a moat, is still conserved to this day and forms the boundary of the historical centre of Alcúdia, declared a Historic-Artistic Conservation Site in 1974 together with the ruins of the Roman city of Pol·lèntia.



**D** Bastion and 'Vila Roja' Gate (18th-19th centuries) - Theatre



**B** 'Moll' or 'Xara' Gate



**E** Outside of Renaissance defensive wall

## Wall gates

One of the greatest attractions of the medieval wall are its gates of entry. There were originally three: the **"Porta del Moll"** or **"Porta de Xara"** (B), the **"Porta de Mallorca"** or **"Porta de Sant Sebastià"** (C) and the **"Porta de la Vila Roja"** (D), that has not survived to this day.

The **"Porta de la Vila Roja"** (D) was situated to the north west of Alcúdia's medieval fortification. Owing to the scarcity of information available, it is difficult to draw up an accurate description of it, although it seems that it was the most vulnerable of the gates and for this reason it was besieged on numerous occasions.

**The bridge** (D), just like the ones on the other wall gates, was a drawbridge and made of wood. At a later date, in the 17th century, these were all replaced by stone bridges.

According to a description by Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria, "The Porta de Vila Roja is austere and simple; it presents only traces of the drawbridge above the moat which has now been replaced by a bridge".

During the 20th century and until 2004, it became lost in the overgrown moat. Now that it has been restored, it presents three arches, one small and two larger, as well as the original stone paving.

This moat, after excavation, is now a public space for open-air activities such as concerts and plays, with the bridge as a backdrop.

The **"Porta de Mallorca"** or **"Porta de Sant Sebastià"** (C) linked the town of Alcúdia with the royal route from Palma de Mallorca. The moat is still conserved and has the same appearance that it took on during its restoration in 1963 by G. Alomar (two free-standing towers linked by a large machicolation, crowned with battlements). A coat of arms can also be seen, dating from the 16th century.

The **"Porta del Moll"** or **"Porta de Xara"** (B) is situated at the other extreme of the axis that divides the town into two halves, opening out towards the Puerto Mayor. It has a structure that is very different to the other gate, its two towers being joined by a guardhouse with a small window that was originally protected by a machicolation of which only the supporting brackets remain. The large gate with a rounded arch opens to a covered, vaulted space where the portcullis can still be seen that closed the gateway.

## 16th-century bastions

Other important elements in this first walled enclosure are the bastions, distributed along the length of its perimeter and built during the first half of the 16th century to allow artillery to be positioned there. Two of these constructions are still conserved to this day: the Bastions of *Vila Roja* (D) and *Xara* (B) near to this gate.

## Renaissance wall (G)

The passing of time and the evolution of war and weapons technology enabled the construction of a walled enclosure to be built that was more in line with the needs of the town, during the 17th century.

The star-shaped layout of low bastions was perfect for positioning the artillery, whilst also serving to withstand attacks made by this type of weapon. This wall ran alongside the first enclosure, leaving a space between the two that formed the parapet walk.

Nowadays only the Bastion of *Sant Ferran* and several remains of the Bastion of *La Reina* and the Bastion of *El Rei* have survived from this second enclosure, as the bullring was built in its interior. Within the structure it is still possible to make out the reinforcement line that runs along it, as well as a sentry house.

## Main façade of Church of Sant Jaume

P



## Church of Sant Jaume (P)

The parish church is situated beside the medieval walls, occupying a plot where the primitive 14th-century church was built. This construction, closely linked to the history of Alcúdia, originally had the appearance of a fortification and from its rooftop, surveillance tasks were carried out. Its structure formed part of the walls.

In 1870, the chapel's state of deterioration caused part of the roof to collapse, leaving the church unuseable. It was subsequently knocked down and rebuilt in a neo-Gothic style in the same spot where the primitive construction had once stood. The works continued until 1893.

The church today consists of one single nave and side chapels covered by a ribbed vault. The presbytery is presided over by a neo-Gothic altarpiece made by L. Ferrer and M. Arcas, dedicated to Saint James.

On the main façade, the tympanum at the entrance contains a sculpture of Saint James by Remigia Caubet. A large rose window illuminates the interior of the church, and above this, crowning the façade, is Alcúdia's coat of arms.

The *Museu Parroquial* (Parish Museum), where one can enjoy an interesting exhibition of religious art, rounds of the visit to this church.

## Chapel of Sant Crist (P)

This construction adjoining the church was built at the end of the 17th century. It was erected for the safe custody of the image of Sant Crist, a 15th-century painted, wood carving to which the miraculous events that occurred in 1507 are attributed.

The chapel is in the Baroque style and can be accessed from inside the parish church. Its ceiling has a cupola in the central section. In the chancel of the church and also in the Baroque style, there is an altarpiece niche that contains a carving of Sant Crist, which can be reached by two side steps.



P

Chapel of Sant Crist  
(Church of Sant Jaume)

## Alcúdia's Renaissance "Casals"

Throughout the historic centre there are a number of stately homes in the Renaissance style, known as "casals", and which, during the 16th-17th centuries, underwent major transformations that especially affected their façades in an attempt to adapt them to the stylistic rules of the period. During the "Guerra de les Germanies" (Revolt of the Brotherhoods) in 1521-1523, noblemen from "Ciutat" (Palma) found refuge in Alcúdia, where they introduced their humanist ideas that were warmly accepted by the local aristocracy. With these ideas, a new design language was introduced that from this moment was applied to work on the most important houses in the town.

Most of these buildings have survived to this day almost without alteration, and thanks to this there are plenty of examples to be admired, such as *Can Castell* (L); *Can Fondo* (Home of the Municipal Historical Archive and exhibition space); *Can Canta* (Q) (*Can Barrera*); *Can Domènec* (N) (Offices of the Roman City of Pol·lèntia Consortium); and *Can Costa* (D) (*Can Sureda*), to name a few.



M

'Can Torró' House



Q

Close-up of Renaissance window



L

'Can Fondo' House

# THE ROMAN CITY OF POL·LÈNTIA

## History of the site (H)

The first reports relating to Pol·lèntia date back to the 16th century, thanks to several significant and fortuitous discoveries such as that of the bust of Veiled Augustus, which set off the series of studies that have continued to this day. The first systematic excavations began in the '20s with Professor Gabriel Llabrés Quintana and Rafel Issassi.

In 1936, the Civil War marked a pause in investigations, which would nevertheless later be resumed and continued right up to the present day, with the involvement of distinguished names such as Almagro, Tarradell, Arribas and Wood. As of the '50s and through the creation of the *Centro Arqueològic Hispanoamericano* (Hispano-American Archaeological Centre) under the patronage of the William Bryant Foundation, work carried on until the latter years of the 1950s, then being taken over by the Consortium of the Roman City of Pol·lèntia.

## Archaeological zone

The Roman city of Pol·lèntia is located to the south of the historical centre of Alcúdia, in the direction of the port. Archaeologists believe the dimensions of the city extended over 16 to 18 hectares. Many different areas have been excavated revealing numerous, interesting features that depict the lifestyle enjoyed in the city during Roman times:

**La Portella:** This area, situated to the south of the parish church, is the closest to the historical centre. The ruins that can still be seen correspond to a neighbourhood with houses: there is the house of the "Dos Tresors", of which the original floor layout is still conserved with the central courtyard or atrium; the house of the "Cap de Bronze"; and the house called "Nord-oest", as well as a series of structures that have been catalogued as workshops.

The roadways can also still be seen, as well as a fragment of the Roman walls dating from the 3rd century CE.





## Current state of the Roman forum



**The Forum:** This space formed the social and religious centre of the city. Inside, the remains of several structures can be seen including the Capitoliun Temple and a group of *Tabernae* (shops) that formed the commercial area. Also worth noting is the *Aedicula* (or small shrine) where most of the studies into the urban layout of Pol-lèntia are centred at this time.

The Forum is where excavations are currently carried out during the summer months. The long use of this area culminated with the establishment of a necropolis (around 600 CE).

**The Roman Theatre:** Situated on the outskirts of the city of Pol-lèntia, this formed the recreational centre for the entire population from the 1st century CE onwards.

Of its semi-circular structure without a roof, a good part of the seating or grandstand, the orchestra space and the stage have been conserved. Also to be seen, as in the Forum, are the remains of a necropolis on theatre structures. Worth highlighting is the fact that the theatre was dug out of rock, in contrast to the majority of Roman theatres.



## Pol-lèntia Roman theatre



## Pol-lèntia Monographic Museum (O)

This is located in the historical centre, in a building that was formerly a hospital in the 16th century. In the museum there are a number of artefacts found during excavation work carried out in Pol-lèntia, a significant collection of ceramics, as well as various objects made of glass, plus jewellery, etc. The three marble sculptures found in the area of the Forum are highly interesting, as is a bronze head of a female that gives its name to one of the houses (*Cap de Bronze*) in the zone of Portella where it was found. There is also a space dedicated to the necropolis in Pol-lèntia, with the inscription "*Cornelio Àtico*".



Craftwork on exhibit at the museum



## Inside Pol-lèntia Monographic Museum

# OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST



**S** Main façade of 'La Victòria' Hermitage

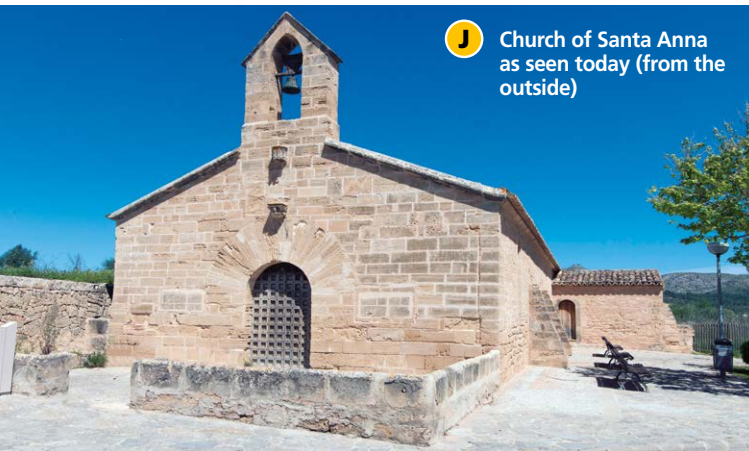
## 'La Victòria' Hermitage (S)

The first hermits that we know of in Alcúdia date back to the 14th century, with the alchemist hermit, Fray Diego.

This small chapel remained a place of worship associated with the image of the *Mare de Déu de la Victòria de les Germanies*.

The sanctuary that can be seen today, and where the defensive character of the first building can still be appreciated, was built during the 17th-18th centuries. It consists of a single nave with a barrel vault ceiling in the Baroque style, as is the altarpiece, with a niche where the image of the *Mare de Déu de la Victòria* can be worshipped, a painted, wooden carving dating from the 15th century and probably brought to this place by Fray Diego himself.

The hermitage is located in beautiful natural surroundings, with spectacular views across the Bay of Pollença.



**J** Church of Santa Anna as seen today (from the outside)

## Church of Santa Anna (T)

This construction is situated halfway between Alcúdia and its port, and dates from the 13th century. It was possibly the work of Diego Español and appears documented in ancient sources as *Santa Maria de la Torre*. In 2004, it was declared a Site of Cultural Interest and is one of the best conserved examples of churches of the first Christian re-population on the island.

The interior consists of one single nave with a pitched roof. The façade is presided over by the image of *Mare de Déu de la Bona Nova*, situated above the main door and crowned by a rounded arch and a bell gable.

## Torre Major (U) Camí d'Alcanada (Port d'Alcúdia)

In 1598, a Royal Charter saw the improvement of the entire defensive layout in the municipality, although the construction of the *Torre Major* tower was not begun until the reign of Philip III. The king completed the fortification of the zone by ordering the construction of a fort in the Bay of the Port Major, hence the name *Torre Major*, which became one of the five lookout points on Alcúdia's coastline. In 1602, coats of arms were added above the door (by the sculptor Antoni Verger) even though there is evidence that in 1613 building work was still not finished. It seems that towards 1860 the tower was already uninhabited, although its military use would continue until well into the 20th century.



**U** External view of the Torre Major





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