



**MENORCA
TALAYÓTICA**
Candidata Patrimoni Mundial



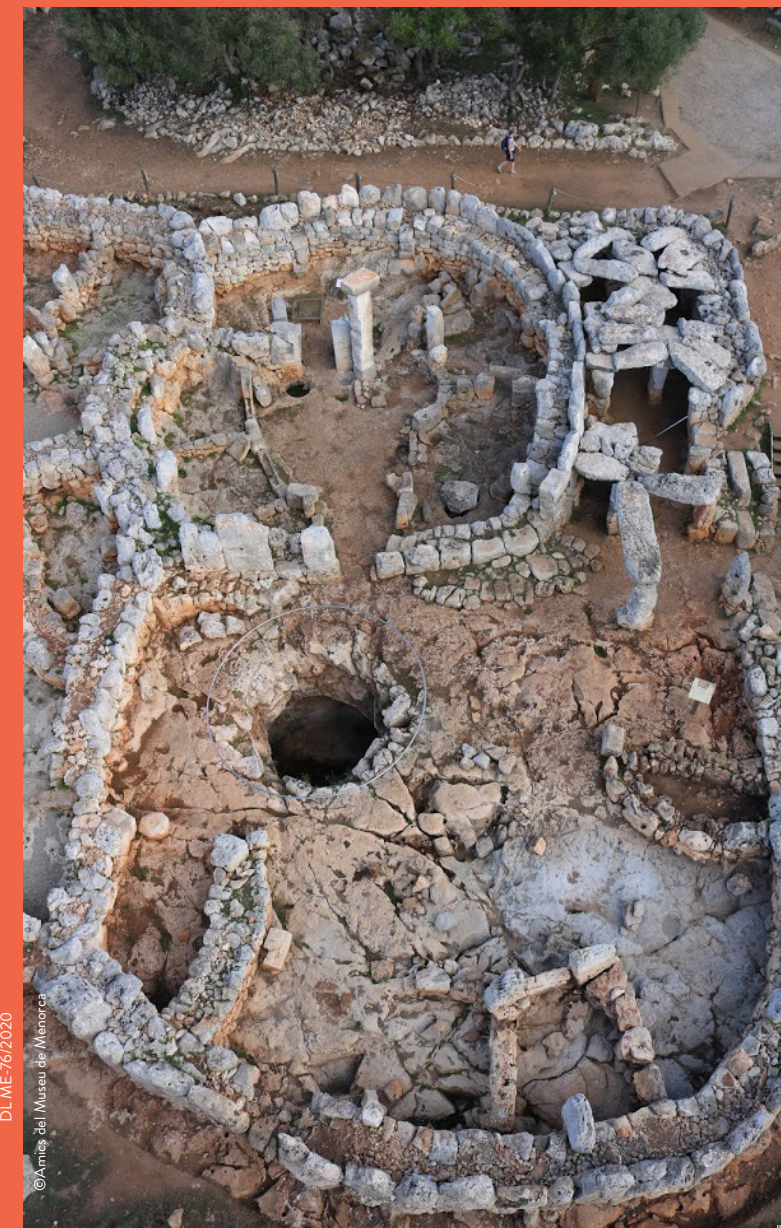
RECEPTION



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TORRE D'EN GALMÉS



MENORCA
cultural

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LOCATION AND CHRONOLOGY

Torre d'en Galmés is a large talayotic settlement located to the south of Menorca. It can be reached from the road linking Alaior town and Son Bou beach by taking the first turning to the left down a tarmacked lane. The Interpretation Centre is about half a kilometre from the turn off and the settlement itself is a bit further along. This settlement is one of the largest and most impressive archaeological sites in the Balearic Islands.

At the Interpretation Centre, visitors will find comprehensive information about what is to be seen in the settlement: two videos, reproductions of several artefacts found during the digs, explanatory panels and a virtual reality experience. The information is educational and is available in several languages and will provide the context to fully appreciate the site visit.

Torre d'en Galmés is located on the crest of a small hill that slopes gently to the south, with views over a large part of the southern side of the island. The mountains of the neighbouring island Mallorca can be seen from here on a clear day. During prehistoric times, a good number of Talayotic villages were visible from here; it is therefore believed that Torre d'en Galmés might have had sovereignty over these other villages.

The settlement was at its peak between 1200 BC and 200 BC, although there is evidence the area was in use from around 2000 BC and at least partially in use until the medieval Christian conquest in AD 1287.

PREHISTORY IN MENORCA

Latest research suggests that prehistory in Menorca commenced around 2300 BC. Megalithic tombs such as Roques Llisès (at Torre d'en Galmés) are characteristic constructions of that time. By around 1800 BC naviform style dwellings were built, like the ones at Son Mercer de Baix (in Ferreries). Burial navetas were built by about 1400 BC; examples include Rafal Rubí, Argentina and the Naveta des Tudons (along the main road Maó-Ciutadella). The Talayotic period (1200-123 BC) was characterised by an increase in the size of villages, when very large constructions (talayots) were built for communal use, as well as dwellings. The famous taula enclosures were built during the later Talayotic period (550-123 BC). The name comes from the gigantic T shape in the centre of these enclosures, known as a taula. The circular dwellings also date from the later Talayotic period. These circular dwellings contained a central patio, an area for collecting water, water cisterns, etc. Burial rites were performed in natural caves or in hypogea excavated in cliffs looking out to sea or in ravines. Settlements and necropolis all continued to be utilised for several centuries, although with a number of significant changes in design and use.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TORRE D'EN GALMÉS SETTLEMENT

It is an extensive settlement that covered about 5 hectares. The village was built around several very large communal constructions (three talayots and a taula) constructed on the crest of a hill. The village extended southwards at different periods. In some places the settlement boundary is protected by stretches of ramparts, whereas in other areas it is the exterior walls of the dwellings which act as boundaries.

THE TALAYOTS

Talayots are the most characteristic constructions of prehistoric Menorca. Their name originates from the word atalaya or watch tower. They are an integral part of the Menorcan landscape because of their location, visible from afar, their tower shape and solid appearance. Although some talayots have been found to contain an inner chamber, many talayots had some small structure on the top covered with stones (such as the talaïot at Torelló), or wood (like the one in Biniparratx Petit).

At Torre d'en Galmés there are three well preserved talayots. Between the central talayot and the western talayot there is an open space which could be considered a square, or plaza. The three talayots are located on the highest point of the settlement and are therefore visible from afar. Archaeologists believe these towers might have had distinct albeit complementary functions, such as territorial control and surveillance.



TAULA ENCLOSURE

A taula enclosure is a horseshoe shaped area, with a large stone pillar more or less in the centre. The pillar is a rectangular stone slab placed vertically in the ground with another horizontal slab on top. It looks rather like a gigantic table, hence the vernacular name taula (meaning table in Catalan), which is now its scientific name. Taulas were built exclusively in Menorca, having been found nowhere else in the world.

The horizontal top stone of the taula in Torre d'en Galmés lies on the ground between the entrance to the enclosure and the vertical pillar on top of which it used to be. The surrounding wall is in a good state of preservation. Two different building techniques can be spotted in the wall: the apse is built using large stones, while the sides by the entrance are formed of smoother slabs of stone.

Taking into account the finds uncovered within the taula enclosures, it is probable that sheep and goats were sacrificed here, and that offerings of food and drink were made – possibly wine, considering remains of amphora were discovered within the enclosures. Entering the taula, on the right hand side, evidence of fire has been uncovered, that was presumably to burn continuously. A small bronze statue of the Egyptian demigod Imhotep was found in the enclosure, to the left, at the foot of one of the pillars. Imhotep was an architect venerated for his medical knowledge during the Late Period of Ancient Egypt. The cult to Imhotep extended all round the Mediterranean during the 4th and 3rd century BC.



Taking into account the layout of the enclosure with the taula as the main component and all the evidence uncovered, archaeologists consider taula enclosures to have been a place used for rituals and worship by the people who lived in these villages.

DWELLINGS

Many dwellings in talayotic times were built in a similar style: they were circular buildings of double faced walls with a central patio where the various living spaces converged. These living spaces would be used for different purposes: workshops, grinding grain, storage and areas for sleeping. The central patio was open air and would contain a fireplace with small silos used for daily chores and in some cases a water deposit dug out in the ground.

Opposite the taula along the path through the settlement there is a dwelling adjoint to a preexisting cave. This dwelling was modified during Roman times. A feature of many dwellings in the settlement is that they are adjoining, with walls that are quite well preserved. At the southern end of the settlement there are a number of houses that can be entered to see their layout. One dwelling is particularly interesting: the one named Carteilhac, in honour of the first archaeologist, the Frenchman Émile Cartailhac, who in the late 19th century published a treatise concerning these circular dwellings. This particularly large dwelling was excavated and restored recently and it is known to have been inhabited between the years 250 and 100 BC approximately.

Some other dwellings have been discovered dating from Islamic times, which contain areas for food preparation and where a number of artefacts have been found.



HYPOSTYLE CHAMBER

At the southern end of the settlement there are some constructions adjoining the circular dwellings, which archaeologists have defined as hypostyle chambers. These chambers are covered with large stone slabs held up by pillars or columns. The real use of these chambers is still uncertain, although it is acknowledged they might have been used for storage. The interior pillars are Mediterranean in shape, meaning they are wider at the top and narrower at the bottom.



WATER COLLECTING SYSTEM

It is interesting to see the rainwater collection system in the southern part of the settlement. The system consisted of various channels dug in the rock, which conducted rainwater into small deposits originally full of rounded stones and pebbles. These deposits worked as filters: the rainwater coming down the hillside would be filtered as it went through the deposits and all impurities (soil, leaves, etc) removed. The water would then be collected in larger deposits or cisterns dug out of the rock. A hypogea originally used as a tomb during pre-talayotic times was subsequently used as a water deposit.

CAVES

There are several caves to be seen within the settlement. Before Torre d'en Galmés settlement came into existence, these caves in pre-talayotic times might have had some other function; it is however known they were used for funerary purposes, considering their layout and the presence of small hollows which were possibly used for placing offerings or for burning aromatic herbs. These hollows are commonly found in burial caves within ravines. There are two caves on site that must be visited: one has a number of tombs excavated out of the rock and was in use during the late Roman Empire; the other cave located close by contains remains of stone mills. These stones were used for extracting olive oil during Muslim times (903-1287 AD) when the settlement was probably used for farming.

TWO OTHER SITES IN THE VICINITY

Walking on past the settlement, about 700m from the entrance, there are two other very interesting sites: Roques Llisès, a megalithic tomb; and Na Comerma de Sa Garita, the remains of a construction with an apse and columns that would originally have been covered with stone slabs, and an area surrounded by a wall of large stones.