

# CARTAGENA NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED



Many travel guides about Spain and tourism advertisements focused on Spain tend to make an important slip: they forget about Cartagena, the coastal city of the Murcia region with a lot more to offer than some travel literature may suggest. Indeed, many travel enthusiasts hearing the name Cartagena may confuse the Spanish city with its Colombian counterpart with the same name. 75% of foreign visitors to Cartagena come from the British Isles which points to the fact that the British value the area the most. The promotion of Cartagena in other areas of Europe is seriously lacking though.

This is about to change. The Spanish have spent around €1 billion on revitalising the port of Cartagena. Portraying the importance of the port has been considered of particular importance in the Far East. Indeed, Cartagena is one of Spain's largest and most prominent naval bases, one of the earliest settlements of its kind. There is the national underwater archaeology centre, unfortunately on dry land, yet home to an array of awesome real-size artefacts from beneath the waves. The treats for visitors include a real-size replica of an old trading ship dug up by divers. The divers of Cartagena are continuing in the search for more relics to add to the existing collection.

Away from the ocean, the Murcia region has also great aviation tradition, including annual balloon exhibitions. Cartagena is home to the Spanish nation's best aerobatic team. Other attractions of the area include churches, palaces (built both under Christian and Moorish influence), a vast array of museums and kilometres of splendid coastline. This is why it is difficult to understand the reason for Cartagena not being more glorified in travel literature. Perhaps the huge investment into the local port will change the situation in the positive direction.

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