

Holiday with a religious connection:
The monasteries, retreats and churches of northern Mallorca
Part 3: Alcudia Old Town



Portal del Moll, the entrance to the walled town of Alcudia, Mallorca.

We picked another fine day to explore the ancient settlement of Alcudia, not to be confused with the nearby holiday resort of Port d'Alcudia. The old town is a maze of narrow streets enclosed by carefully restored medieval ramparts. There were Phoenician and Greek settlements here, but the town reached its heyday in 2nd century BC when the Roman invaders made in their capital.

Destroyed by the Vandals in 6th century, the town returned to greatness under the Moors, who built 'al-kudia' - the town on the hill. The walls to be seen today were added after the Spanish Conquest in the 14th century.



The charming streets of the old town of Alcudia.

A church at Alcudia is mentioned in 1248, in the pope's list of Mallorcan churches. The church we visited was originally begun in 1302 in the time of King James II. However this building collapsed in 1870. The building of the new church was completed in 1893.



The main entrance to the parish church of St James, Alcudia.



The altar in the Saint Christ Chapel at the church of St James, Alcudia.

One of the most impressive sites in the church is the baroque altar in the Saint Christ Chapel. A polychromed wood carving from the 15th century dominates the Altar. It represents the Saint Christ, and is taken out in procession every three years. It is a part of the Saint Christ baroque altarpiece, which was made in 1718 by the sculptor Mateu Juan i Serra.

It was believed that Saint Christ had sweated water and blood in 1507 in the cave of Sant Marti (on the outskirts of the city) to implore for rain during a drought.



The high altar at St James Church, Alcudia.

The main altar piece was constructed over two periods - the stonemasonry is that of sculptor Llorenç Ferrer i Martí, the rest was made by Miquel Arcas. In the centre of the altarpiece is an image of Saint James, patron saint of Alcudia and the parish.



There is a magnificent oriel window that lights the church of St James from the east end.



An exhibition of ecclesiastical robes in the gallery at St James, Alcudia.



The beautiful square outside the church of St James, showing the oriel window.



On leaving the church of St James, we went for a walk along the top of the town walls.

Keen to explore the Roman occupation of Alcuia (when it was known as 'Pollentia', and became their capital), we visited the 'Roman City'. This is an extensive site – it's certainly not Pompeii, as most of the buildings only have their foundations left. However there is much information on boards about the discoveries from numerous archeological excavations that continue to provide new insights - and it's a very pleasant walk.



The site of the Roman City of 'Pollentia' at Alcuia – the church of St James in the background.

The foundation of Pollentia, following the conquest of the island by the consul Quintus Caecilius Metellus in 123 BC, signified the beginning of urban life in Mallorca.



The remains of the Forum at Pollentia in the centre of the site.

The Roman Theatre, (first century AD) is on the outskirts of the Roman city. There are three sections: the cavea seated the audience; the orchestra; and the escena where the actors performed. In the late Roman era the theatre was used for burials.



A plan of the theatre at Pollentia.



Martin seated in the 'cavea': semicircular and cut into rock, it seated the audience at the theatre in Pollentia.

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First edit

Next - Part 4: the dramatic road to the Lighthouse at Cap de Formentor