



Segesta Archaeological Park

Segesta was one of the main cities of the Elymians, people who, according to ancient tradition, came from Troy. Fairly hellenized in appearance and culture, the city played a leading role among Sicilian centres and in the Mediterranean basin, to the extent that it involved both Athens and Carthage in its secular conflict with Selinous. After the destruction of Selinous by the Carthaginians (409 BC), Segesta's circumstances fluctuated throughout the following period until the city was conquered by Agathokles of Syracuse (307 BC), who renamed it Diceopolis (City of justice). Later on Segesta took back its former name and, in the course of the

first Punic war (264-241 BC), was conquered by the Romans. The latter, due to the legendary common Trojan origins, exempted the city from paying tributes, gave it a huge territory and granted it a new phase of prosperity. Between the 2nd and the 1st century BC, Segesta was entirely replanned on the model of Asia Minor's big cities, obtaining a greatly scenographic appearance.

Recent researches have found a late – Roman phase and the evidence of a large Muslim village, followed by a Norman-Swabian settlement, dominated by a castle built on the summit of Monte Barbaro. Segesta is well known for its two principal monuments: the Doric temple and the theatre.



Parco archeologico di Segesta

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Opening hours

From 9 am to
5 pm from November to February
6.30 pm March and October
7.30 pm from April to September
Last admission one hour before closing time

Tickets

€6.00

Reduced: €3.00 (18-25 year olds and teachers)

Free: The first Sunday of every month; EU citizens under the age of 18; disabled visitors and companion; university students of faculties related to cultural heritage
Cost of bus transfert from the ticket office to the agora: €1,50

How to get there

By car from Palermo:

Take the highway A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo, direction Alcamo Trapani, exit at Segesta

By car from Trapani:

Take the highway A29 direction Palermo, exit at Segesta



The visit can be made by foot and includes the following sites: the temple, the porta di valle, the fortified system of porta di valle, the *agora*, a church of the 15th century, the medieval fortified area, the castle, the mosque, the theater, a rocky house, the fortification wall, the sanctuary in contrada Mango.

The map shows the Archaeological Park: the ancient city occupied the summit of Monte Barbaro (two acropoleis separated by a col) naturally defended on the East and West sides by steep rocky slopes, while the less protected side was provided in the classical age with a wall and

monumental gates, later replaced (during the early imperial age) by an upper line of defence. There are two important sacred sites along the ancient access roads outside the city walls: the Doric temple (end of the 5th century BC) and the sanctuary in contrada Mango (6th - 5th century BC). Outside the wall there used to be a hellenistic necropolis. Segesta's ancient town planning is still under research. Today we can still see several roads, the *agora* area and some houses cut in the rock. The latest ruins of Segesta are visible on the northern acropolis, where is also located the Norman-Swabian castle, the mosque and a church, founded in 1442 on a multistratified site.



The Temple is an unfinished Greek-Sicilian doric peripteral of 6x14 columns. After the raising of the colonnade (around 420 BC), the construction was interrupted probably in 409 BC, when the city fell under Carthaginian dominion. The cell, of which today there is no trace on the surface, had been planned and initiated, as shown by some traces of foundation discovered during archaeological excavations. The knobs on the steps, which were usually taken away only during the last building phase, show the incompleteness of the temple. In its general proportions and in its stylistic characteristics (capitals, cornices, curving of horizontal lines) the temple faithfully followed the models of classical architecture of Greek cities in Sicily, especially of nearby Selinous. Some particular shapes (palmettes on the ceiling of corner entablatures, mouldings of the tympanum) and the proportions of architectural elements also indicate a good knowledge of contemporary architecture of Attica. There is no evidence of the cult and of the altar where it was practiced.

However, the modest remains of an earlier, simple sacred building, found during the excavations in the centre of the temple, indicate the existence of a fairly ancient cult area.





The Theatre. Starting from the 2nd century BC, when the city was under Roman sphere of influence, many public buildings, including the *agorà*, the *bouleutèrion*, the *gymnasium*, the theatre and a temple, were erected in the northern acropolis on Monte Barbaro. A large paved road brought to the theatre, built in local limestone and characterized by typical features of Greek architecture, even though, unlike these, it was entirely sustained by a massive supporting wall (*anàlemma*). The *cavea*, that could host up to 4000 people, is divided horizontally by a large corridor (*diàzoma*), which is framed by backed seats and, vertically, by six small rows of steps that form seven wedge-shaped sections (*kerkides*) of various dimensions. Recent research has documented the presence of a *summa cavea* between the two entry ways, partially filled in by a Muslim necropolis and by Medieval houses. A well and a water tank, that have survived in the western part of the *anàlemma*, were probably meant to satisfy the needs of the public and of the actors. The orchestra could be accessed from side entries (*pàrodoi*). A few rows of blocks allow to reconstruct the plan of the *skené*, a two-storey building in Doric and Ionic styles, with two lateral advanced bodies (*paraskènia*), adorned by satyrs sculptured in high relief. At the beginning of Roman Imperial Age the theatre was modified; the orchestra was extended by eliminating a row of seats and the front of the *skené* was also enlarged. During the Medieval age (12th and 13th centuries) the theatre and the nearby road were re-occupied by dwellings, as attested by the big two-storey house that is visible in the western *media cavea*.

