



Opening hours:

From 16th March to 1st November, daily from 10:30 a.m. until 05:30 p.m.
From 2nd November to 15th March daily from 10:00 a.m. until 04:30 p.m.

Closing times:

Closed at 25th December and at 1st January of each year

Reservations:

Tel: +39 0588 86099

Price:

2,50 € full ticket
under 6 free

Acropoli Etrusca

Inside the Enrico Fiumi archaeological park, it is possible to visit the archaeological excavations of the Etruscan city's acropolis. The Fiumi Park is the main green space of the city, a large urban park placed on the highest plain, sheltered by the Medici fortress.

The finds it holds, along with the discoveries in the rest of the city, indicate that in the area of Volterra already to the beginning of the Villanovan period, in the 9th Century B.C., there existed settlements of certain significance. These villages, probably inhabited by a few dozens of families each, were distributed everywhere on the hill: on the southern peaks in the area of the Ripaie, on the west slope at the Balze, on the Poggio alle Croci to the East, as well as, naturally, on the summit.

The settlement of the acropolis must have been one of the most important; continuous occupation from the Mid-Bronze age (18th-14th Century B.C.) is documented here. In addition to the few ruins that attest to the oldest phases of settlement, an interesting stratification of buildings was found; that is, from the 7th Century B.C. to the 3rd Century A.D.

Cultural buildings of significant importance always occupied the area, which was affected by very in-depth archaeological investigations. From the 8th Century B.C., this area was probably adapted as a space for community worship and thus was occupied by sanctuaries attended by the inhabitants of all the villages that are found on the hill. The few elements surviving from the oldest phases of occupation of this site consist of the rubble of walls, the oldest of which dates back to the 7th Century B.C. Today, these are invisible to visitors, who can understand their location only thanks to the panels along the route.

The 7th Century construction phase corresponds to the true birth of the city, when the inhabitants of various villages united and formed a single large settlement that occupied the entire hill. A large temple was built toward the end of the 6th-early 5th Century B.C. Today, only some of the architectural decorations that decorated it remain; they are displayed at the Guarnacci museum. Another sacred building was constructed around 480 B.C.

The scarcity of ruins is due also to the materials with which the buildings were built. The Etruscan architecture, compared to the Greek or Roman, in fact, was distinguished by the use of large quantities of perishable materials, such as wood, terracotta and raw clay, with which all the buildings were built, even the most important, such as the temples. To improve stability and protect the walls from erosion, the buildings could have a stone foundation, which is the only thing visible today of the acropolis of Volterra, as in the rest of Etruria.

What is still possible to admire in the acropolis's archaeological area is what remains of a major urban and architectural renovation that involved the entire area in the Hellenist era (4th-2nd Century B.C.).

The main buildings that stand out from the rest of the complex are two temples, called conventionally temple A and temple B. The oldest temple (temple B) is more to the west, placed precisely at the border of the plain of acropolis and dates back to the end of the 4th Century B.C.; on the other hand, temple A dates back to around the mid- 2nd Century B.C.

Temple B was oriented north-west/south-east direction and maintains only at the foundation level; part of the building was buried in a landslide that involved this area in recent times. Based on what occurred, we can understand that its architecture was of pure Etruscan tradition. It was composed of two parts of equal width: the latter part consisted of a closed cell that is almost entirely lost, while the one before consisted of a colonnade. The temple was built on a platform and accessed by a stairway of which only one step remains.

At the same time as the construction of temple B, the cisterns intended to collect the rainwater were made. One of these is visible, built precisely in front of temple and was designed to collect the rain that fell in the space in front of the access stairway.

Temple A, which was oriented north-west/south-east, presents an elongated floor plan. The walls of the platform were partly preserved, composed of parallelepiped square blocks, and some blocks finished in moulded grey sandstone. The inside of building consisted of a closed cell, surrounded in the back and at the sides by columns; the front had an access stairway. With the construction of this temple, some service structures were destroyed, but one of the oldest cisterns was saved by encasing it inside the base of the temple; in this way, it was possible to draw water from inside the building and from the exterior street.

The cistern, of imposing size (approximately 8 m of depth), is visible even today, and it is possible to admire the construction technique: having performed the excavation in the ground, the walls were finished with a layer of clay to make it waterproof; the structure was then protected with a stone wall that prevented landslides. Along with the construction of the new temple was completed the wall that enclosed the sacred area called Temenos and the road between the temples was paved.

To this same phase also belongs a building that was raised at the western border of the plain. The floor plan has not been delimited and its function is rather obscure, but the construction stands out for the wealth of its decoration. One room was in fact covered with a rich fresco composed of panels of various colours: green, red, black, yellow, white and burgundy placed with a geometric pattern can be partly seen in its section preserved at the Guarnacci museum.

This is an exceptional find; up to now, it is the oldest fresco known in southern Etruria. Its creation is attributable to skilled workers of Greek extraction, the presence of which is noted in Volterra also for other types of production, such as ceramics and urns.

The two main temples perhaps continue to be used also in Roman era, but the area ended by being frequented in the first half of the 3rd Century A. D. For a long time, a great part of this area was used for cultivation and, new buildings were constructed only in the first decades of the 13th Century; we know of the existence of two towers and of a series of buildings aligned on two new roads that would have connected the area of the castle with the lower part of the city.

In 1472, after the conquest of the city, the area was abandoned and the houses demolished.