Timgad (1982)

Timgad (Arabic, تيمقاد Thamugadi, called Thamugas by the Romans, was a Roman colonial town in North Africa founded by the Emperor Trajan around 100 AD. The ruins are noteworthy for being one of the best extant examples of the grid plan as used in Roman city planning.

The ruins of the town are located in modern-day Algeria, about 35 km from the town of Batna. The city was founded *ex nihilo* as a military colony, primarily as a bastion against the Berbers in the nearby Aures Mountains. It was originally populated largely by Parthian veterans of the Roman army who were granted lands in return for years in service.

Located at the intersection of six roads, the city was walled but not fortified. Originally designed for a population of around 15,000, the city quickly outgrew its original specifications and spilled beyond the orthogonal grid in a more loosely-organized fashion.

The original Roman grid plan is magnificently visible in the orthogonal design, highlighted by the *decumanus maximus* and the *cardo* lined by a partially-restored Corinthian colonnade. The *cardo* does not proceed completely through the town but instead terminates in a *forum* at the intersection with the *decumanus*.

At the west end of the *decumanus* rises a 12 m high triumphal arch, called Trajan's Arch, which was partially restored in 1900. The arch is principally of sandstone, and is of Corinthian order with three arches, the central one being 11' wide. The arch is also known as the Timgad Arch. Don't get this arch confused with Trajan's arch. Trajan built many other arches known as Trajans arch.

A 3,500-seat theater is in good condition and is used for contemporary productions. The other key buildings include four thermae, a library, and basilica.

The Capitoline Temple is dedicated to Jupiter and is approximately the same dimensions as the Pantheon in Rome. Nearby the capitol is a square church with a circular apse dating from the 7th Century AD. Southeast of the city is a large Byzantine citadel built in the later days of the city.

The city enjoyed a peaceful existence for the first several hundred years and became a center of Christian activity starting in the 3rd Century, and a Donatist center in the 4th Century.

In the 5th Century, the city was sacked by the Vandals before falling into decline. In 535 Byzantine general Solomon found the city when he came to occupy it. In the following century, the city was briefly repeopled as a primarily Christian city before being sacked by Berbers in the 7th Century and being abandoned. The city disappeared from history until its excavation in 1881.

At the time of its founding, the area surrounding the city was a fertile agricultural area, about 1000 meters above sea level. The encroachment of the Sahara on the ruins was ironically the principal reason why the town is so well preserved. Because no new settlements were founded on the site after the 7th Century, the town was partially preserved under sand up to a depth of approximately one meter until it was excavated. Timgad was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1982.

-- Wikipedia [http://www.wikipedia.org]