

Dig the Spanish Civil War and the Medieval Town of Belchite (Zaragoza – Aragon – Spain)

1. General Information

The **Sanisera Archaeology Institute for International Field Schools**, which has been running archaeology courses since 2008, takes part in 2027 as a partner institution in the archaeological research project that the Spanish Association of Military Archaeology has been carrying out for years in Belchite, in the province of Zaragoza, with the support of Belchite Town Council. The project is directed by Dr. Alfonso Fanjul Peraza, president of the association, director of the Cuetu Civil War Museum (Lugones, Asturias) and leader of numerous excavations related to the Spanish Civil War. Thanks to this partnership, Sanisera students can join the project's excavation teams.

Belchite is one of the best-known scenes of the Spanish Civil War. In August and September 1937 the town was destroyed during one of the hardest battles on the Aragon front, in which the International Brigades also took part, and it was never rebuilt: the old town was left in ruins as a testimony to the conflict, while the inhabitants moved to a new town built next to it. Beneath those ruins the layout of the **medieval town** is still preserved. The excavations begun in 2021, the first ever authorized in the ruins, showed that Belchite has been inhabited since Roman times, and in 2024 they led to an extraordinary discovery: the **medieval synagogue**, one of the best-preserved in Spain. Since then the project has focused on the excavation of the **synagogue** and of the **Jewish quarter** in which it was built, while continuing to study the remains of the 1937 battle.

The 2027 research has two goals: to continue the excavation of the **medieval synagogue** and the **Jewish quarter**, with test pits in the medieval quarters to study the origins of Belchite, and to record on a map all the materials from the 1937 battle found in the old town. The course therefore offers an unusual experience, combining the archaeology of a modern conflict and the archaeology of a **medieval town** at the same site.

2. What you will learn

2.1. In the Fieldwork:

- How to dig and which archaeological techniques are used.
- Use and handling of the tools that are used during the excavation process.
- Basic principles of stratigraphy.
- Recording the data obtained during the excavation using the Harris Method.
- Locating and mapping the materials of the 1937 battle (ammunition, shrapnel, remains of military equipment) in the old town.
- Recognition of medieval and modern archaeological materials.
- Basic procedures for sample collection.

2.2. In the Laboratory

- Cleaning, labelling and typological classification of the recovered objects: medieval ceramics, metals, glass, faunal remains and war materials.
- Relative dating based on the classification of archaeological objects discovered in stratigraphic sequence.
- Preparation of finds inventories.

2.3. Theory

- History of the Spanish Civil War and of the 1937 Battle of Belchite.
- Introduction to conflict archaeology and military archaeology.
- History of Belchite: the medieval town, its Jewish quarter and the synagogue.
- Archaeological methodology applied to medieval and modern sites.

3. Directed at

The training you will receive in this course and the experience you will gain will support you if you are thinking of pursuing archaeology professionally. If you are considering taking part in a field school as a volunteer for the first time, this course may be a good option. The programme accepts participants with or without previous experience.

You will learn the techniques and methodology of excavation from the very beginning. During the fieldwork, remains from two very different periods will come to light, the Middle Ages and the Civil War, which you will learn to identify in the laboratory. The complete experience you will gain will help you decide whether you want to continue archaeology at university or as a profession.

No previous knowledge or experience in archaeology is required. The minimum age is 18.

4. Field School Life & Language

The fieldwork focuses on conflict archaeology and medieval archaeology. On the first day there is a guided tour of the ruins of the old town as an introduction to the project, and on that same day talks are given on the history of the area, the work plan and the safety rules.

An excavation day starts early, at 7 a.m., to avoid the heat. The accommodation is in the new town, about a ten-minute walk from the site, so the trip is made on foot. During the morning the students dig, record the contexts and recover the finds. After the lunch break there is free time, with access to the municipal swimming pool, and in the afternoon laboratory work is carried out together with a series of seminars on different aspects of the Civil War and the history of Belchite.

Each two-week session includes between 9 and 10 days of fieldwork, an excursion around Belchite and the battlefield, and days off. The course is taught in English and Spanish.

5. Certificates

At the end of the Field Program, students will receive a certificate of participation stating the hours and activities of the course. Participants that perform exceedingly well in the course may receive a letter of recommendation from our organization upon request.

6. Sessions & Cost

Sessions	Dates	Cost
Session #1	2027 July 19 – August 01	\$ 1650
Session #2	2027 August 02 – August 15	\$ 1650
Session #3	2027 August 16 – August 29	\$ 1650

7. Course fee

- Course tuition.
- Accommodation in the new town of Belchite, a ten-minute walk from the excavation, with kitchen and free laundry.
- Work materials.
- Lectures and seminars.
- Excursion around Belchite and guided visit to the battlefield.
- Certificate of participation.
- [In case of needing to process Schengen Visa](#) the mandatory letter of invitation will be written so you can travel.

Belchite has a pharmacy and a medical centre for any emergency or eventuality.

Optionally, for an additional 200 €, you can take Spanish language classes in the afternoons at the language school in the town.

Meals are not included. The accommodation has a kitchen and there are reasonably priced restaurants and supermarkets in the town; the daily cost of meals is around 22 € /day.

Airfare or travel from the student's home to Belchite (Spain) is not included.

*** How to get there.** There are daily trains and buses from Madrid and Barcelona to Zaragoza and, from the central bus station in Zaragoza, a service with ten departures a day to Belchite. A timetable will be provided. The high-speed train can be expensive; the bus is the cheapest option.

8. Spaces available

The course is limited to 15 participants per session. Reservations are only effective when payment of the registration fee is received. If for any reason the course is cancelled, payment is returned according to the field school refund policy.

9. Information and reservations

Contact:

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