

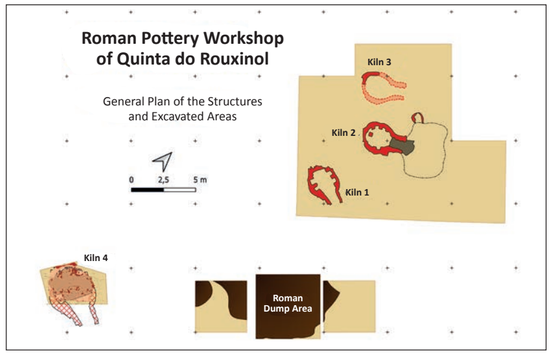


SEIXAL
MUNICIPAL
ECOMUSEUM

ROMAN POTTERY
WORKSHOP OF QUINTA
DO ROUXINOL

Two thousand years ago, fire
transformed clay here, linking the Tagus
estuary to the wider Roman world.

Where Clay Becomes History









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Roman pottery workshop of Quinta do Rouxinol

On the banks of the Corroios inlet, in a landscape that today appears calm and unassuming, stood one of the most important pottery production centres of Roman Lusitania. Here, clay was transformed into amphorae, domestic wares and building materials through a process that combined technical expertise, skilled craftsmanship and intensive labour.

Discovered in 1986 during sewerage works, the Roman Pottery Workshop of Quinta do Rouxinol revealed an extensive complex dedicated to ceramic production. Archaeological excavations carried out between 1986 and 1991 uncovered kilns, working areas and waste deposits, providing direct evidence of an industry that flourished between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD and may have originated even earlier.

Designated a National Monument in 1992, Quinta do Rouxinol is now recognised as one of the most significant Roman pottery production centres known in Lusitania.







A landscape of production and trade

During the Roman period, the Tagus estuary formed a vital route for the movement of people, goods and ideas. Functioning as a vast inland waterway, it enabled the efficient transport of products throughout the region and beyond.

The abundance of clay deposits, the availability of fuel and the proximity of important centres of consumption, such as the city of Olisipo (modern Lisbon) and numerous fish-processing establishments, encouraged the development of pottery workshops along the estuary's shores.

Within this productive landscape, Quinta do Rouxinol formed part of a wider manufacturing network that supplied both local and regional markets, playing an important role in the economy of Roman Lusitania.



From clay to ceramic

Ceramic production followed a carefully organised sequence of operations:

1. Preparing the Clay
Clay was extracted, cleaned of impurities and mixed with water until the desired consistency was achieved.

2. Shaping the Vessels
Objects were formed on the potter's wheel, in moulds or by hand, producing amphorae, oil lamps, domestic pottery and construction materials.

3. Drying
Before firing, the vessels were left to dry slowly to prevent warping and cracking.

4. Firing
The pottery was fired in kilns reaching temperatures between 800°C and 900°C.
Without thermometers or measuring instruments, potters monitored the process by observing the colour of the glowing ceramics.
Following a gradual cooling period, which could last several days, the finished products were ready for use, storage or transport.

Potter working at the wheel



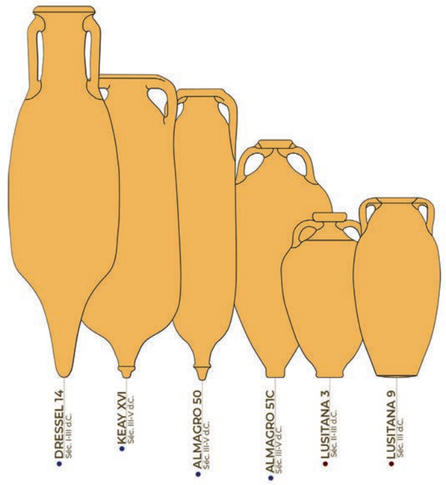
Producing for an empire

The workshop produced a wide range of ceramic goods, most notably amphorae, the essential containers used to transport commodities such as wine and fish products throughout the Roman world.

These vessels travelled along river and maritime routes, becoming part of extensive commercial networks that connected Lusitania with other provinces of the Roman Empire.

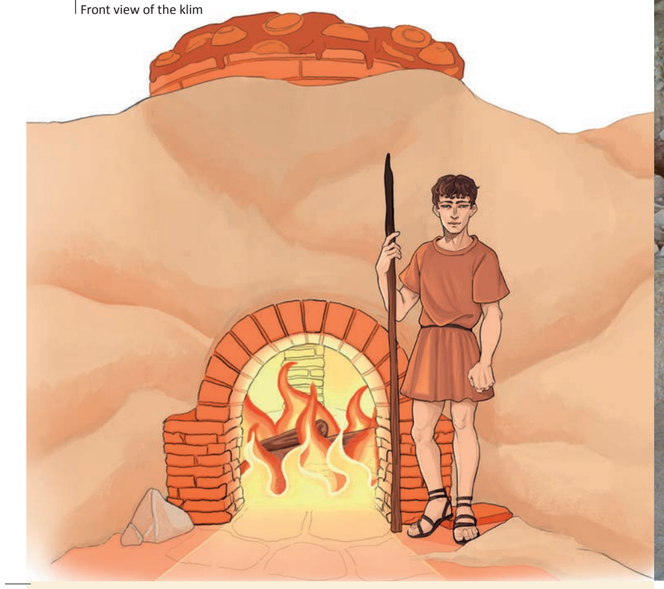
Today, scientific analyses allow archaeologists to identify the origin of ceramic fabrics and reconstruct ancient patterns of production and distribution, offering valuable insights into the Roman economy.





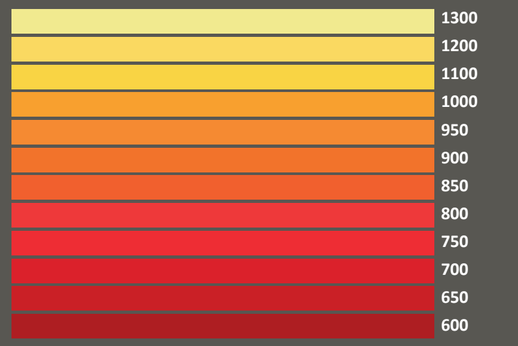
- Amphorae intended for the transport of prepared fish
- Amphorae probably intended for the transport of wine

Front view of the klim





Did you know?
- A single firing could last for more than twelve hours.
- Potters estimated temperature by observing the colour of the heat inside the kiln.
- Some kiln components may have been dismantled and rebuilt between firing cycles.





Technology and the mastery of fire

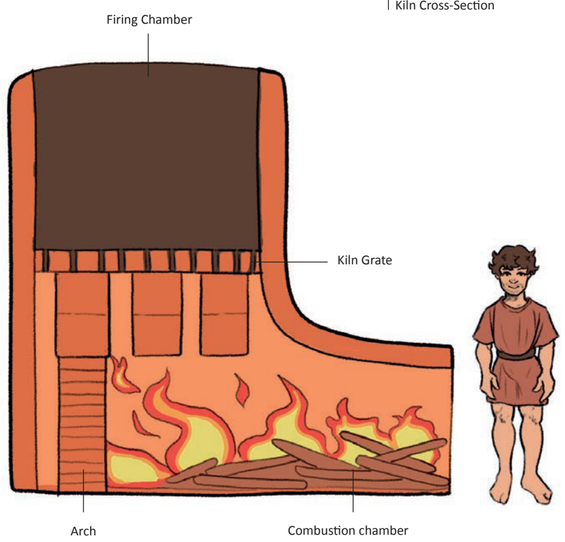
Archaeological investigations have identified four kilns at the workshop. Built in brick masonry and partially cut into the hillside, these structures demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of heat management.

Each kiln consisted of a lower combustion chamber, where the fire burned, and an upper firing chamber, where the pottery was stacked for firing. This design ensured an efficient and even distribution of heat.

Fuel was fed through an external stoke pit, where potters maintained the fire continuously for many hours in a demanding and highly skilled operation.



Kiln Cross-Section





A heritage to discover

The Roman Pottery Workshop of Quinta do Rouxinol provides a remarkable insight into industrial production in the Tagus estuary during the Roman period.

Today, as part of the Seixal Municipal Ecomuseum, the site offers visitors the opportunity to explore the work of Roman potters, the technologies they employed and the crucial role of ceramics in everyday life and trade.

Standing among these remains, it is possible to imagine the rhythm of production, the intense heat of the kilns and the constant activity of a workshop that connected this corner of Lusitania to an empire that spanned three continents.

