



## Lusitânia

*This article concerns the Roman province. For other uses, see Lusitania (disambiguation).*

Roman province of *Lusitania*, 120 AD

**Lusitania**, an ancient Roman province approximately including current Portugal (except for the area between the rivers Douro and Minho) and part of western current Spain (specifically the present autonomous community Extremadura), named after the **Lusitani** or Lusitanian people. The Lusitani were strong warriors whose origins are uncertain. Its capital was *Augusta Emerita* (currently Mérida)

### Origin of the name

The etymology of *Lusitania*, like the origin of the Lusitani, is unclear. The name may be of Celtic origin: *Lus* and *Tanus*, "tribe of Lusus". others say that Lusitania means "City of light".

Ancient Romans, such as Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 3.5) and Varro (cited by Pliny), speculated that the name *Lusitania* was of Roman origin, as when Pliny says *lusum enim liberi patris aut lyssam cum eo bacchantium nomen dedisse lusitaniae et*

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*pana praefectum eius universae*: that Lusitania takes its name from the *lusus* associated with Bacchus and the *lyssa* of his Bacchantes, and that Pan is its governor. *Lusus* is usually translated as 'game' or 'play', while *lyssa* is a borrowing from the Greek 'frenzy' or 'rage' (and sometimes the personification thereof). Variant translations take these as proper names: *Lusus* and *Lyssa* become flesh-and-blood companions of Bacchus. The *Os Lusíadas* of Luís de Camões, which portray Lusos as the founder of Lusitania, follow this translation.

### Lusitanians

The Lusitani may have come from the Alps and established themselves in the region in the 6th century BC, but historians and archeologists largely discuss their ethnic origins. Some modern authors consider them to be autochthonous and initially dominated by the Celts, before gaining full independence from them. This hypothesis is also backed by Avienus, who wrote *ORA MARITIMA*, inspired by documents from 6th century BC. The investigator Lambrino defended that the Lusitanians were a tribal group of Celtic

origin related to the Lusones (a tribe that have inhabited the east of Iberia). Possibly, both tribes came from the Swiss mountains. But some rather prefer to see the Lusitanians as a native Iberian tribe, resulting of intermarriage between different tribes. The first area colonized by the Lusitani was probably the Douro valley and the region of Beira Alta; in Beira they stayed until they defeated the Celts and other tribes, then they expanded to cover a territory that reached Estremadura before the arrival of the Romans. [edit]

### **The war with Rome**

The Lusitani are mentioned for the first time in Livy (218 BC) and are described as Carthaginian mercenaries; they are reported as fighting against Rome in 194 BC, sometimes allied with the Celtiberians.

In 179 BC the praetor Lucius Postumius Albinus celebrated a triumph over the Lusitani, but in 155 BC, on the command of Punicus (perhaps a Carthaginian general) first and Cesarus after, the Lusitani reached Gibraltar. Here they were defeated by the praetor Lucius Mummius.

Servius Sulpicius Galba organized a false armistice, but while the Lusitani celebrated this new alliance, he massacred them, selling the survivors as slaves; this caused a new rebellion led by Viriathus (who was soon killed by traitors pay by romans). Romans scored other victories with proconsul Decimus Junius Brutus and Marius (113 BC), but still the Lusitani resisted with a long guerrilla war; they later joined Sertorius' troops



and were finally exterminated by Augustus. Viriathus was born in Lobriga (the roman city of Loriga), actual Loriga in the central Portugal.

### **Roman province**

With Lusitania (and Asturia and Gallaecia), Rome had completed the conquest of the Iberian peninsula, which was then divided by Augustus (25-20 BC) into the southwestern *Hispania Baetica* and the western *Provincia Lusitana*. Originally Lusitania included the territories of Asturia and Gallaecia, but these were later ceded to the jurisdiction of new *Provincia Tarraconensis* and the former remained as *Provincia Lusitania et Vettones*. Its northern border was along the Douro, while on its eastern side

its border passed through *Salmantica* and *Caesarobriga* to the *Anas* (Guadiana) river. Elaborate geometrically patterned mosaic floors survive at Conimbriga. The capital of Lusitania was *Augusta Emerita* (currently Mérida). Near modern Coimbra, the Roman city of Aeminium and near modern Condeixa-a-Velha, the Roman city of Conimbriga was not the largest city of Lusitania, but it is the best preserved. Built on a long-inhabited site, it was sacked by the Suevi in 468, and its inhabitants fled to Aeminium, which inherited its name and is nowadays known as Coimbra. Conimbriga's city walls are largely intact, and the mosaic floors (*illustration, right*) and foundations of many houses and public buildings remain. In the baths, visitors can view the network of stone heating ducts (the *hypocaust*) beneath the now-missing floors. Archaeologists estimate that, though excavations began in 1898, only 10 percent of the city has been excavated.

Under Diocletian, Lusitania kept its borders and was ruled by a *praeses*, later by a *consularis*; finally, it was united with the other provinces to form the *Diocesis*

