

ROMAN ARCHITECTURE GUIDE

The Ancient Rome civilization grew from a small village in Rome to an Empire dominating vast territories around the Mediterranean Sea in Europe, North Africa and Asia.

Roman Architecture covers the period from 509 BCE to the 4th Century CE. However, most of the structures, that can be admired today dates from around 100 CE or later.

When looking at Roman ruins, it's not always easy to recognize what you are looking at & to know how grandiose such structure was.

With this mini guide, it is a little bit easier! The top drawing shows you what a structure might look today. The bottom one shows you what it would have looked like centuries ago.



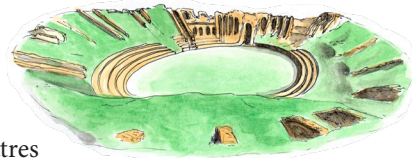
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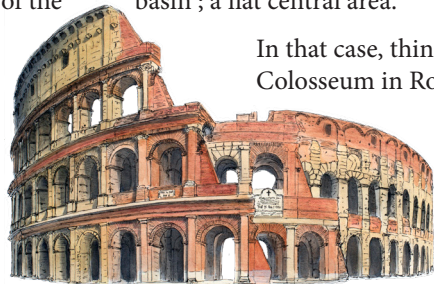
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AMPHITHEATRE



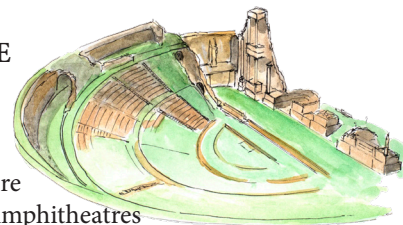
Amphitheatres were open air venues with raised seating which were used for event such as gladiator combats.

What you may see: remains that look like concentric stairs ; a downward hill which forms a circular or an oval basin ; Remains of arches or passages ; strong walls pointing toward the center of the basin ; a flat central area.



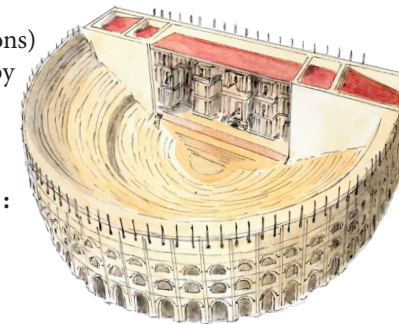
In that case, think of the
Colosseum in Rome!

THEATRE



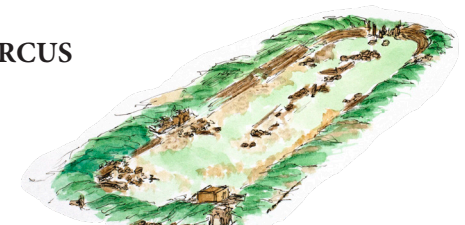
Theatres were similar to Amphitheatres but had a semicircular form, which enhances the natural acoustics. They were used for theatrical representation, concerts and orations.

What you may see: similar to Amphitheatres remains; raised flat area used as a stage with a high back wall (scaenae frons) supported by columns.



What it looked like :

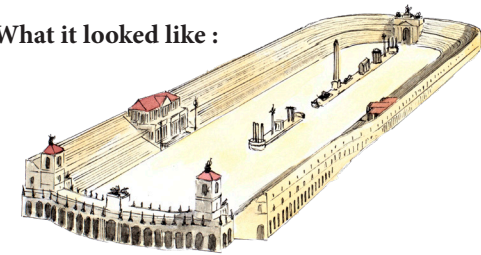
CIRCUS



The Roman circus was a large open-air venue used for chariot & horse races as well as commemoration performances.

What you may see: an extremely large and elongated field ; encircling walls or remains of what look like stairs (seating area) ; a central thin and elongated structure (the spina).

What it looked like :



INFRASTRUCTURE

Romans left us impressive infrastructure works. With the invention of the Roman concrete, they were able to create new daring structures.

Roman roads and even 'army highways' connected most of the Empire.

Bridges were built, which many are still used today.

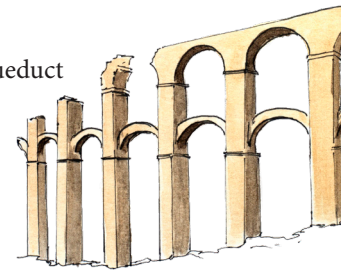
Water management was important to Romans and they created aqueducts to carry water from afar, dams and cisterns to store such water as well sewage systems to dispose of waste water.

Roman cities were protected by defensive walls, some of which are still existing.

Roman civil-engineering work can still be found all over Europe.

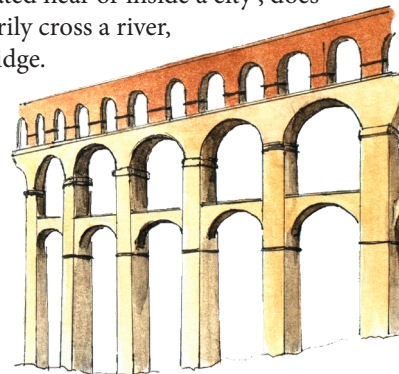
AQUEDUCT

Romans built aqueduct to bring water from distant sources to cities to supply public baths, latrines, fountains, etc.



What you may see: a single or double row of arches ; located near or inside a city ; does not necessarily cross a river, unlike a bridge.

What it looked like :



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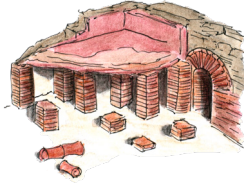


THERMAE

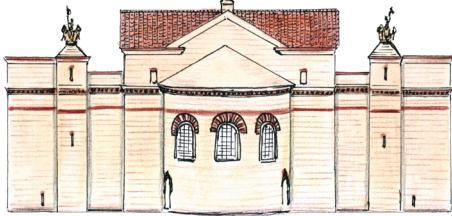
Roman baths were found in all cities and were used for bathing, exercising and socializing.

What you may see:

In most cases, the only remains are the hypocaust which was the central heating system ; The foundations of some of the walls of the building.



What it looked like : A richly decorated and complex building with multiple rooms and multiple baths.



BASILICA

The Roman basilica was a rectangular public building with a large central open space. Basilicas served as court-house, council chamber and meeting hall. They did not have religious functions & were always part of the Forum.

TRIUMPHAL COLUMNS

Triumphal columns were erected to commemorate victorious battles. Typically stood on a base and were crowned with a victory symbol like a statue. Some were huge (over 30m – 100 feet).

DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

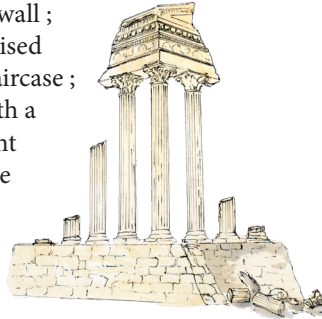
Statues of all sorts were standing on large pedestals and fountains could also be found.

Statues and other decorative elements were painted in various bright colors. Roman architecture was colourful inside and outside.

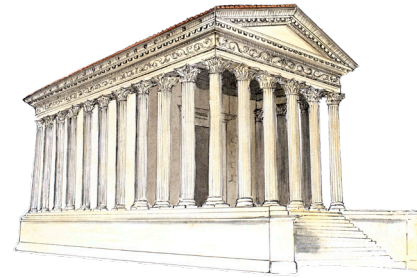
TEMPLE

Roman temples were among the most important and richest buildings in the Roman culture. Emphasis was on the front of the building which looked very much like Greek temples. Temples were often rectangular but various circular kinds of temples were also built. The inner chamber or cella, was usually a single room with a statue of the deity venerated and a place to receive offerings. Public religious ceremonies took place outdoors.

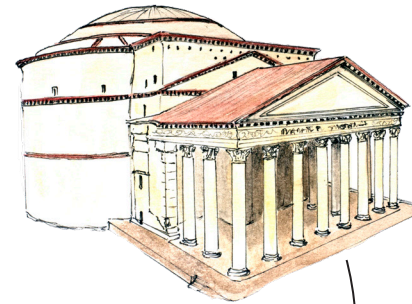
What you may see: a row of free standing columns on a raised wall ; the remains of a raised podium ; single staircase ; walls ; columns with a triangular pediment above ; a colonnade screen ; the walls of the cella.



What temples looked like :



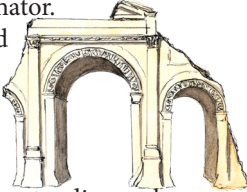
Most temples were rectangular but some were round:



TRIUMPHAL ARCH

A triumphal arch was an archway with one or more arched passageways, often designed to span a road. It was designed to commemorate the victories of a triumphator.

A Triumphal Arch would have 1, 2 or 3 archways, and stood freely or can now be part of a wall.



What you may see: A free standing arch or several arches ; decorative columns ; part of a entablature.

What it looked like:



FORUM

The Roman Forum was Ancient Rome's showpiece center, a grandiose district of temples, basilicas and vibrant public spaces. It served as a marketplace and was usually located at or very near the intersection of the main North-South and East-West streets (the *Cardo Maximus* and the *Decumanus Maximus*).



MACELLUM

A macellum was an indoor market, located in a usually square building. Shops or *Tabernae* were arranged around a courtyard which had a central *tholos* (a round structure, usually built upon a couple of steps, with a ring of columns supporting a domed roof). Macellums could have upper stories where additional shops or storage could be found.

COLUMNS

Columns were used in many different ways in Roman architecture. Attached to load bearing wall, standing alone, topped by a statue or not. Grouped in a colonnade and joined by their entablature, to create a covered or open space.

