

Italy - Rome
Day 12
Tuesday, March 14 2023

[Forum](#)
[Mamertine Prison](#)
[Colosseum](#)
[Ostia Antica](#)

Forum

The Roman Forum, also known by its Latin name Forum Romanum, is a rectangular forum surrounded by the ruins of several important ancient government buildings at the center of the city of Rome. Citizens of the ancient city referred to this space, originally a marketplace, as the Forum Magnum, or simply the Forum.

For centuries the Forum was the center of day-to-day life in Rome: the site of triumphal processions and elections; the venue for public speeches, criminal trials, and gladiatorial matches; and the nucleus of commercial affairs. Here statues and monuments commemorated the city's great men. The teeming heart of ancient Rome, it has been called the most celebrated meeting place in the world, and in all history.[2] Located in the small valley between the Palatine and Capitoline Hills, the Forum today is a sprawling ruin of architectural fragments and intermittent archaeological excavations attracting 4.5 million or more sightseers yearly.[3]

Many of the oldest and most important structures of the ancient city were located on or near the Forum. The Roman Kingdom's earliest shrines and temples were located on the southeastern edge. These included the ancient former royal residence, the Regia (8th century BC), and the Temple of Vesta (7th century BC), as well as the surrounding complex of the Vestal Virgins, all of which were rebuilt after the rise of imperial Rome.

Other archaic shrines to the northwest, such as the Umbilicus Urbis and the Vulcanal (Shrine of Vulcan), developed into the Republic's formal Comitium (assembly area). This is where the Senate—as well as Republican government itself—began. The Senate House, government offices, tribunals, temples, memorials and statues gradually cluttered the area.

Over time the archaic Comitium was replaced by the larger adjacent Forum and the focus of judicial activity moved to the new Basilica Aemilia (179 BC). Some 130 years later, Julius Caesar built the Basilica Julia, along with the new Curia Julia, refocusing both the judicial offices and the Senate itself. This new Forum, in what proved to be its final form, then served as a revitalized city square where the people of Rome could gather for commercial, political, judicial and religious pursuits in ever greater numbers.

Eventually much economic and judicial business would transfer away from the Forum Romanum to the larger and more extravagant structures (Trajan's Forum and the Basilica Ulpia) to the north. The reign of Constantine the Great saw the construction of the last major expansion of the Forum complex—the

Basilica of Maxentius (312 AD). This returned the political center to the Forum until the fall of the Western Roman Empire almost two centuries later.

Mamertine Prison

The Mamertine Prison (Italian: Carcere Mamertino), in antiquity the Tullianum, was a prison (carcer) with a dungeon (oubliette) located in the Comitium in ancient Rome. It is said to have been built in the 7th century BC and was situated on the northeastern slope of the Capitoline Hill, facing the Curia and the imperial fora of Nerva, Vespasian, and Augustus. Located between it and the Tabularium (record house) was a flight of stairs leading to the Arx of the Capitoline known as the Gemonian stairs.

The church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami now stands above the Mamertine. The entrance to the prison records that Saint Peter and Saint Paul were imprisoned there. It is not known when the prison went out of service permanently, but the site has been used for Christian worship since medieval times, and is currently occupied by two superimposed churches: S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami (upper) and S. Pietro in Carcere (lower). The Cross on the altar in the lower chapel is upside down, since according to tradition Saint Peter was crucified that way. It has been long referenced that St. Peter was imprisoned at the Tullianum, and that the spring in the bottom of the pit came into existence miraculously to enable him to conduct baptisms, but the Catholic Encyclopedia points out that the spring had existed long before, and that there is little first hand account of St. Peter's imprisonment there other than being the only single celled prison available for VIPs deemed threats to the state. Saint Paul's imprisonment is well referenced by his Roman citizenship and decree of execution by Nero.

Colosseum

The Colosseum is an oval amphitheatre in the centre of the city of Rome, Italy, just east of the Roman Forum. It is the largest ancient amphitheatre ever built, and is still the largest standing amphitheatre in the world today, despite its age. Construction began under the emperor Vespasian (r. 69–79 AD) in 72[1] and was completed in 80 AD under his successor and heir, Titus (r. 79–81).[2] Further modifications were made during the reign of Domitian (r. 81–96).[3] The three emperors that were patrons of the work are known as the Flavian dynasty, and the amphitheatre was named the Flavian Amphitheatre (Latin: Amphitheatrum Flavium; Italian: Anfiteatro Flavio [amfite'a:tro 'fla:vjo]) by later classicists and archaeologists for its association with their family name (Flavius).

The Colosseum is built of travertine limestone, tuff (volcanic rock), and brick-faced concrete. It could hold an estimated 50,000 to 80,000 spectators at various points in its history,[4][5] having an average audience of some 65,000;[6] it was used for gladiatorial contests and public spectacles including animal hunts, executions, re-enactments of famous battles, and dramas based on Roman mythology, and briefly mock sea battles. The building ceased to be used for entertainment in the early medieval era. It was later reused for such purposes as housing, workshops, quarters for a religious order, a fortress, a quarry, and a Christian shrine.

Although substantially ruined by earthquakes and stone robbers taking spolia, the Colosseum is still an iconic symbol of Imperial Rome and was listed as one of the New7Wonders of the World. It is one of Rome's most popular tourist attractions and also has links to the Roman Catholic Church, as each Good Friday the Pope leads a torchlit "Way of the Cross" procession that starts in the area around the Colosseum. The Colosseum is depicted on the Italian version of the five-cent euro coin.

The Colosseum is generally regarded by Christians as a site of the martyrdom of large numbers of believers during the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire, as evidenced by Church history and tradition. On the other hand, other scholars believe that the majority of martyrdoms may have occurred at other venues within the city of Rome, rather than at the Colosseum, citing a lack of still-intact physical evidence or historical records. These scholars assert that "some Christians were executed as common criminals in the Colosseum—their crime being refusal to reverence the Roman gods", but most Christian martyrs of the early Church were executed for their faith at the Circus Maximus.[54][55] According to Irenaeus (died about 202), Ignatius of Antioch was fed to the lions in Rome around 107 A.D. and although Irenaeus says nothing about this happening at the Colosseum, tradition ascribes it to that place.

Several 19th century popes funded repair and restoration work on the Colosseum, and it still retains its Christian connection today. A Christian cross stands in the Colosseum, with a plaque, stating: The amphitheater, once consecrated to triumphs, entertainments, and the impious worship of pagan gods, is now dedicated to the sufferings of the martyrs purified from impious superstitions. Other Christian crosses stand in several points around the arena and every Good Friday the Pope leads a Via Crucis procession to the amphitheater.

Ostia Antica

Ostia Antica is a large archaeological site, close to the modern town of Ostia, that is the location of the harbour city of ancient Rome, 15 miles (25 kilometres) southwest of Rome. "Ostia" (plur. of "ostium") is a derivation of "os", the Latin word for "mouth". At the mouth of the River Tiber, Ostia was Rome's seaport, but due to silting the site now lies 3 kilometres (2 miles) from the sea. The site is noted for the excellent preservation of its ancient buildings, magnificent frescoes and impressive mosaics.