

Archaeology In The Rome Area

Archaeology in the Rome area means ancient Etruscans and Romans. As neighbors, their histories were entwined, Etruscans ruling Rome and influencing Roman culture, then Rome conquering and absorbing Etruria into the Roman State and the Etruscans into Roman civilization. This brief 5-day tour will be an introduction to the Etruscan and Roman civilizations.

The Etruscans were the first civilization native to ancient Italy and a dominant power on the peninsula for some 300 years, during part of which time Etruscan kings ruled Rome and bestowed on it the attributes of a city. The Etruscans have been regarded as a mysterious people, a misleading label, because most of the mysteriousness is simply a product of the paucity of information that archaeologists and historians have been able to wrest from very meager sources. The purpose of this brief tour is to discover a little known and much misunderstood people.

The Romans fashioned the ancient world's greatest Empire and an advanced civilization. The Roman Empire stretched from Scotland in the west to Syria in the east and from Germany in the North to North Africa in the south and encompassed a vast array of differing peoples that the Romans, with their genius for organization, melded into a single entity by urbanizing each conquered people in turn.

Day 1

Arrival in Rome. Brief bus tour of the city with panoramic views from the Gianicolo Hill and other heights. Afternoon free for rest & leisurely individual sightseeing. Dinner at a local restaurant followed by an evening walk around Rome's historic center: Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, Campo dei Fiori & Piazza Farnese.

Day 2

We begin our tour with a visit to the National Etruscan Museum, the world's foremost collection of Etruscan art and artifacts. It is housed in a Renaissance villa created from an earlier villa by Pope Julius III shortly after 1550 to entertain his guests and to get away from the pressures as head of the Church and of the Papal States, which covered much of central Italy. Next we drive out to Cerveteri, site of one of the most powerful of Etruscan city-states, to the necropolis which furnished some of the objects in the Villa Giulia Museum. Here we see tombs and large burial mounds laid out along streets forming a true city of the dead. After lunch we shall visit a totally different type of cemetery, where monumental tombs in the shape of cubes, vaguely imitating the houses of the living, are cut out of the face of a cliff. Etruscans loved to stay in touch with their departed ancestors and would often carve tombs into the face of a cliff in full view from the city on the other side of the ravine. Dinner and overnight.

Day 3

A full day in Tarquinia, another important Etruscan city a bit further to the north of Cerveteri, which is largely unexcavated and is famous for its frescoed tombs dating from the 6th to 2nd centuries B.C. These are unmatched in the ancient world for their sheer number, their engaging color, and their vitality. They amply reveal the

Etruscan outlook on life and death. Tarquinia's Etruscan museum, which is housed in a Gothic-Renaissance palace, is truly a jewel. In the museum's very fine collection, there is a truly unique piece, a sculpted terracotta decorative plaque depicting a pair of winged horses. This sculpture once adorned the pediment of an Etruscan temple, the ruins of which we will visit after lunch at the site of the ancient city on a nearby plateau, conditions permitting. Dinner and overnight.

Day 4

Focal point of Roman daily life, the Forum was where people gathered to shop, vote, revere their Gods, submit to justice, hear political speeches, gather news, and, of course, gossip. When Rome grew too large for the Forum to continue to serve its function, other forums were built nearby. Trajan's Forum was perhaps the most grandiose, and something of its grandeur can still be appreciated, despite the fact that it is still largely unexcavated. At the center of Trajan's Forum is his column, which celebrates his victories over the Dacians through a strip of relief sculpture that spirals up from the base to the top. Next to Trajan's Forum are his markets, which, at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., were the height of modernity both functionally and architecturally.

The Colosseum needs no special introduction, but a brief visit would be meaningful, since it, too, played a central role in Roman life. Next to the Colosseum stands the Arch of Constantine. Roman emperors marked special events and celebrated their reigns with imposing memorial arches, the best preserved of which is Constantine's, which recently underwent a thorough cleaning. On the way to San Clemente, our next stop, we see below street level a miniature amphitheater, which was the training center for gladiators and was connected to the nearby Colosseum by a tunnel.

San Clemente presents us with 3 levels of past life in Rome, one at street level and two below, which are partially excavated, and all of which can be visited. The uppermost layer at street level is a 12th century Christian basilica which contains a most beautiful mosaic in the apse, in addition to a chapel containing Renaissance frescoes. Below are the ruins of the preceding church of the 4th century, which rests on 2 Roman buildings of the 1st century A.D., separated by a narrow alley. Peeking through the floor of one of the Roman buildings are the tops of the walls of earlier Roman buildings destroyed on the fire that is blamed on Nero. This layering effect is common all over Rome and can even be seen in the façade of single buildings. It is a basic characteristic of Rome and its use and reuse through the ages of earlier structures. It is particularly evident at San Clemente. Dinner and overnight.

Day 5

All-day visit to Ostia Antica, ancient Rome's port city abandoned in the late Empire. A large part of Rome's supply of necessities, as well as luxuries passed through Ostia. A high proportion of building in Ostia were devoted to commerce and trade, and through one central building, we can gain an idea of how the Romans organized this effort. Like Pompeii Ostia offers a glimpse of ancient Roman life,

from shops to shrines, from bars to public laundries, and from houses to public latrines. Unlike Pompeii, Ostia provides our only complete documentation of ancient Roman apartment houses uncannily similar to their modern Italian counterparts built between the two world wars. We shall begin our tour with a visit to the museum of the ships, which houses five buried Roman ships found during construction of outlying parts of Fiumicino airport. Behind the museum we can see the breakwater of the Roman port that replaced Ostia, as Rome's imports grew beyond Ostia's ability to handle them. Dinner and overnight.

Day 6

An all-day tour of the surviving elements of the aqueducts, ancient Rome's ingenious system of urban water supply, including a walk inside the water channel (conditions permitting). The origin of the public conception of an aqueduct as a series of arches supporting a water channel derives from a majestic arcade of some 53 uninterrupted arches which lies 10 km. south of Rome. This is a survivor of what was once an arcade that marched majestically the last 6 miles into ancient Rome. An aqueduct, however, has a variety of other elements, chief among which are the underground channel that makes up the major part of an aqueduct's length and the bridges that carry the channel across ravines and valleys. Some 20 bridges lie hidden in forgotten ravines and farmland east of Rome, survivors of a larger complement of 40 such bridges that existed in ancient times. The aqueducts were one of the supreme achievements of Roman engineering, and Roman writers eulogized them as being greater than the Egyptian pyramids for their combination of beauty & functionality. Dinner and overnight.

Day 7

The Roman road system provided rapid communications between the cities of the Empire. Today we shall make a very brief visit to the ruins of a Roman postal way station and a stretch of the ancient Via Cassia, one of the main roads which linked ancient Rome to Florentia, Roman Florence. This will be followed by a tour of a live archaeological excavation, consisting of the Via Amerina (a lesser Roman road which branched off the Via Cassia and proceeded into Umbria), and its bridges and tombs. The historical background of the site and the goals and progress of the dig will be explained.

We shall make a brief stop in the medieval section of Civita Castellana, the ancient Faliscan city of Falerii (completely destroyed by the Romans in 241 B.C.) to see a very fine example of a medieval Italian church in the Romanesque style. On to the remains of a walled Roman town, Falerii Novi, where the Romans moved

the survivors of the destroyed city of Falerii onto the plain where they could not easily defend themselves. That is certainly one way to end rebellions. Picnic lunch along the way. On our return, we shall stop at Sutri, an ancient Etruscan-Faliscan town taken by the Romans in the 4th century B.C. As we approach Sutri, Roman tombs appear along the roadside, and as the medieval town perched on its tuff stone outcropping comes into view, we see Sutri's Roman amphitheater on the left, entirely carved out of the volcanic bedrock, a most unusual sight. We shall also take a peek at an 8th-century Christian church implanted in what had once been in Roman times a subterranean Mithraic temple.

Day 8

Departure for return flight home.